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Introduction

In fiscal year 2017/2018, Alberta began recovering from the worst economic downturn in decades. After peaking at 8.1 per cent in August 2017, Alberta’s unemployment rate decreased to 6.3 per cent in March 2018.¹ In the context of Alberta’s evolving economic and labour market conditions, the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement helped to support Albertans in finding and maintaining employment.

Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement

In April 2014, Alberta entered into the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement with the Government of Canada, represented by the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada. This labour market transfer agreement was borne out of a common vision between the Governments of Canada and Alberta to create a strong, resilient and adaptable workforce with the skills needed to succeed in Canada’s economy.

The Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement provides Alberta with funds to be used towards the costs of programs that address areas of current and emerging labour market priorities. The goal of the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement is to increase the participation of Albertans in the labour force and help them develop the skills necessary to find and keep meaningful and long-term employment. In order to achieve this goal, the Governments of Canada and Alberta agreed to pursue these objectives:

- encourage greater employer involvement in training to ensure skills are better aligned to job opportunities, particularly in sectors facing skills mismatches and shortages;
- make it as easy as possible for eligible Albertans to get the help they need to develop the skills necessary to quickly find and maintain employment; and
- demonstrate that public investments are achieving the best possible results through increased labour market participation of eligible Albertans.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of reporting to Albertans on the results achieved under this agreement. In this report, a breakdown of expenditures for the period from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018 and highlights of work completed are provided.

¹ Unemployment rate is defined as the number of people who are unemployed as a percentage of the active labour force (i.e. employed and unemployed).
http://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/Unemployment
Ministry Partners

In 2017/2018, Alberta was allocated approximately $66.9 million through the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement. Four Ministries shared this funding allocation to deliver programs and services for individuals and employers across the province:

- the Ministry of Labour, which focuses on meeting the needs of employees and employers and building a skilled workforce;
- the Ministry of Advanced Education, which focuses on the province’s adult learning system and financial supports for adult students;
- the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which leads income, employment, disabilities and community-based supports; and
- the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, which works with Indigenous communities and organizations, the Government of Canada, industry and other stakeholders to enhance the quality of life of Indigenous peoples in Alberta.

Eligible Programs

Under the Canada-Alberta Job Fund, Alberta delivers two streams of eligible programming:

1. **Canada-Alberta Job Grant**: An employer-driven training program; and

2. **Employment Services and Supports**: Eligible programs and services under this stream include:
   - skills development/training, ranging from basic skills such as literacy and numeracy to advanced skills training;
   - on-the-job training and workplace-based skills upgrading;
   - employment assistance services, such as employment counselling, group interventions and job readiness assistance;
   - labour market connections, such as services to facilitate matching supply and demand and services that promote and enhance labour market efficiency; and
   - benefits and wage subsidies, such as living allowances for learners in training.
Eligible Beneficiaries

For the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, eligible beneficiaries include:

- unemployed individuals who need training to obtain a job;
- under-employed individuals who need training for a better job; and
- individuals who are employed but who need training for a better job.

Beneficiaries participating in Employment Services and Supports include:

- unemployed individuals who are not Employment Insurance recipients; and
- employed individuals who are low-skilled.

Highlights

The following offers an approximate breakdown of Canada-Alberta Job Fund expenditures for programs and services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canada-Alberta Job Fund Program Spending</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Skills Development / Training</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Assistance Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits / Wage Subsidies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada-Alberta Job Grant</strong></td>
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2 Note: The program spending listed does not include expenditures on program administration. Program administration included staffing, improving information technology systems and evaluating programs and services to ensure their effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.
Canada-Alberta Job Grant

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is an employer-driven training program, where employers select the new and existing employees who will be trained as well as the type of training. Under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, employers and government share the cost of training new and existing employees to increase their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of Alberta’s changing economy. In addition to contributing financially, participating employers must have jobs available for Eligible Beneficiaries upon completion of training. The objective of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is to train current and new employees with the skills required to not only improve performance in existing roles, but also to provide the skills required for future employment. In 2017/2018, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant was expanded to:

- better support employers to hire and train unemployed Albertans;
- increase access to training opportunities by assisting small and medium-sized employers outside of Edmonton and Calgary with travel costs; and
- support small business growth by allowing sole proprietors to train new and existing employees.

In 2017/2018, more than 10,000 Albertans participated in training through the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, which was launched in 2014. In its fourth year, Canada-Alberta Job Grants totaling $19.1 million were committed to 2,140 employers. Of the 10,650 that participated in training, 99 per cent were employed prior to commencing training.

Small and large-sized employers comprised the majority of Canada-Alberta Job Grant recipients.

<table>
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<th>Employer Size (Employees)</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Small (50 or fewer)</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium (51 – 499)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (500 or more)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Employers in all industry sectors submitted applications for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, with the following being the top five industries represented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Sector</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)(^3)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services(^4)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>8%</td>
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The majority of Canada-Alberta Job Grant supported training activities were for the purpose of upskilling or upgrading, so that participants could acquire skills required to advance, progress or move to a different and/or better job. The majority, or 85 per cent, of Canada-Alberta Job Grant supported trainees learned specialized/technical skills, such as those required to operate a particular machine or use a certain technology, or soft skills, such as job readiness and personal management.

\(^3\) As defined in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2017 version 2.0, this sector comprises establishments, not classified to any other sector, primarily engaged in: repairing or performing maintenance on motor vehicles, machinery, equipment and other products; providing personal care and other services to individuals; organizing and promoting religious activities; supporting various causes through grant-making, advocating, and promoting and defending the interests of their members.

\(^4\) As defined in NAICS Canada 2017 version 2.0, the main components of this sector are legal services; accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services; architectural, engineering and related services; specialized design services; computer systems design and related services; management, scientific and technical consulting services; scientific research and development services; and advertising, public relations, and related services.
Employment Services and Supports

In 2017/2018, more than 8,500 Albertans participated in programs and activities as part of the Employment Services and Supports stream. Under this programming stream, the Canada-Alberta Job Fund supports a diverse array of programs and initiatives delivered by four Government of Alberta Ministries. These include:

- skills training to enable individuals to pursue further job related training and/or to find a job and improve their employment situation;
- employer-driven work site training and paid work experience opportunities for those that are unemployed and experiencing barriers to employment;
- partnerships with Indigenous communities, government departments, industry and other interested stakeholders to facilitate the participation of Indigenous people in training projects;
- training in language, workplace culture, skills and more to support the labour market attachment of immigrants, including those who have post-secondary education and experience in their field of training but who need to bridge knowledge or skill gaps in order to gain entry to their occupations in Canada; and
- English as a Second Language training to improve English language competencies for individuals whose first language is not English.

Examples of Employment Services and Supports

Integrated Training

Integrated Training is a competency-based, occupation-related training program intended to provide unemployed or marginally employed Albertans with a unique blend of occupation-related skills, work experience placements, and skills required for employment. Integrated Training is based on the assumption that learning is more effective and meaningful when individuals can see the connection between various parts of their training program and apply their learning to real work situations. In Edmonton, Integrated Training supported a program designed to provide opportunities for immigrants and refugees with language and/or other employment barriers to gain training and Canadian work experience as Health Care Aides. The program incorporates the Government of Alberta Health Care Aid Program with English as a Second Language training, clinical practicum placements and job search assistance. Successful learners earn the Government of Alberta Health Care Aide Certificate and are qualified to work in group homes, long term care and assisted living facilities and hospitals. In 2017/2018, 23 learners participated in this training. 83 per cent of these learners were employed six months after the program.
The Alberta Job Corps Program – Bridging Youth to Success

The Alberta Job Corps program provides structured, supportive training and work experience for individuals who have a sporadic employment history. The program gives participants the opportunity to work on projects for their local communities and earn a wage while learning reliable employment skills. There are Alberta Job Corps locations in Calgary, Calling Lake, Edmonton, Lac La Biche and Medicine Hat. The Alberta Job Corps program works in cooperation with employers, training providers, Indigenous groups, community organizations and schools. In 2017/2018, the Canada-Alberta Job Fund helped to support more than 550 participants throughout Alberta.

In Medicine Hat, Alberta Job Corps delivers a Bridging Youth to Success program, to support out of school youth. When one participant entered the program, she had been out of school for some time due to struggles with bullying. She developed a career and education plan with the help of Alberta Job Corps, with the goal of working on her social skills and upgrading on courses in which she had not done well. One component of the Bridging Youth to Success program is for participants to gain work experience with a community non-profit organization, with support from the Canadian Mental Health Association. While working on her education, the participant gained work experience and customer service skills, eventually being offered a full time position. She has since graduated from high school and is working full-time, with plans to continue with her post-secondary education in the Fall.

Oteenow Employment and Training Society - Software Testing

Alberta is investing in technology programs to ensure Albertans get the education and training they need to participate in the economy of the future. A Canada-Alberta Job Fund supported grant provided Indigenous people with the skills and experience to work as software testers. Software testing ensures the development of effective and successful software applications and is an emerging occupation in response to technological advances and consumer needs. Through the Oteenow Employment and Training Society Software Testing Program, participants received training that provides workplace essential skills and instruction in software testing in conjunction with an internship. Of the 15 participants that participated in this program, 80 per cent achieved employment. Building a network of software testers will help address the underemployment of Indigenous people as well as the growing talent shortage in the technology field.
Prospect Human Services - Forces@WORK

The Canada-Alberta Job Fund also supports Prospect Human Services Forces@WORK, which works with more than 240 employers and other partners to provide employment placement services to Canadian Armed Forces veterans, medical releases, reservists and family members of serving personnel. In 2017/2018, Forces@WORK served more than 130 individuals. In one instance, a military spouse relocated with her family to Edmonton with relatively short notice. As a result, she needed to leave her massage therapy job in Ontario and was unable to become registered and licensed to practice in Alberta prior to the move. With the help of an employment placement specialist, this individual was able to navigate the licensing requirements for massage therapy in Alberta and has found a position with an income that exceeds her original career goal.

Customer Care: Cultivating the Culture and Language of Service

For many newcomers to Canada, their first jobs are entry level positions in retail and hospitality organizations where customer service is critically important; however, customer service is a culturally-based soft skill that requires instruction and continual practice to develop. The “Customer Care: Cultivating the Culture and Language of Service” project was a hybrid, part-time course that promoted the development of customer service skills from both a language and cultural perspective for learners. The course integrated face-to-face training, online instruction and one-on-one individual mentorship components. This provided a customized experience that facilitated learning directly transferable to workplace situations for 36 participants. All of the participants that completed this course provided feedback that their language skills had improved for application in customer service.

Conclusion and Looking Forward

The Government of Alberta recognizes the critical importance of providing timely, relevant employment and training programs and services to help Albertans connect with the labour market. Alberta’s success is based on engaging and partnering with diverse stakeholders, including business, industries, training providers, local communities, Indigenous stakeholders and other levels of government. The province also applies targeted strategies to increase the labour force participation of groups that are underrepresented in the labour market. These efforts help support a skilled, productive, inclusive and adaptable labour force in Alberta. As innovation and technology continue to evolve our society and economy, Alberta is focused on promoting economic diversification and job creation as well as improving access to education and skills training.
Having concluded the fourth year of the Canada-Alberta Job Fund, the Governments of Alberta and Canada remain committed to working together to address the needs of Albertans. The Governments of Alberta and Canada have signed the new Workforce Development Agreement, which consolidates the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement, the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities and the former Targeted Initiative for Older Workers. The Government of Alberta is now working on implementation of the new Workforce Development Agreement, with a focus on delivering programs and services that respond to the diverse and emerging needs of Albertans.