
Canada-Alberta Workforce Development Agreement

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Canada-Alberta Workforce Development Agreement: 2020/2021 Annual Report | Alberta Labour and Immigration
© 2022 Government of Alberta | April 21, 2022 | ISBN 978-1-4601-5408-3 | ISSN 2562-7996



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Introduction

The Canada-Alberta Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) addresses labour market needs to build an integrated, client-centred, outcomes-driven, employment and training framework that responds to the evolving needs of individuals, employers and communities in Alberta.

To achieve the goals of increasing the participation of Albertans in the labour force and helping Albertans develop the skills needed to find and keep meaningful and long-term employment, the Governments of Canada and Alberta agreed to:

- foster inclusive labour market participation: help all individuals access labour market opportunities and support successful integration of those facing obstacles to finding and maintaining employment;
- align skills with labour market needs: help workers and employers access the skills they need to adapt to the changing requirements and encourage employer involvement in training and continuous learning opportunities for workers; and
- create efficient labour markets: support a strong and responsive labour market infrastructure and timely, effective programs that contribute to improved productivity and economic growth.

Ministry partners

In 2020/2021, Alberta received approximately \$292 million in WDA funding, which includes base funding of approximately \$83 million and a top up of \$23 million plus \$185 million in additional funds. Approximately 60 per cent of the 2020/2021 WDA allocation was available for carry forward into 2021/2022 as a result of the circumstances created by the pandemic. Five ministries shared this funding allocation to deliver programs and services to individuals and employers across the province and to track the results:

- Labour and Immigration, which focuses on meeting the needs of individuals and employers and building a skilled workforce;
- Advanced Education, which focuses on the province's adult learning system and financial supports for adult students;
- Community and Social Services (CSS), which leads income, employment, disabilities and community-based supports;
- 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; and
- Agriculture and Forestry, which supports the growth, diversification and sustainability of Alberta's agriculture and forest industries.

Eligible programs and services

The following programs and services are eligible for funding under the WDA.

Individual-focused Activities

- Skills Development:
 - Occupational Skills Training: Training that leads to a certificate or diploma.
 - Short-Term Training: Training that addresses specific skills, job or labour market needs.
 - Literacy, Essential Skills, Language Training and Adult Basic Education: Training that includes upskilling and assistance to prerequisite high school or equivalency courses.
 - Other: Skills development activities
- Work Experience:
 - (Targeted) Wage Subsidies: Support for individuals employers would not ordinarily hire to provide work experience and/or on the job training.
 - Self-Employment Assistance: Support for individuals starting a new business.
- Employment Assistance Services:
 - Job Search Assistance: Supports to assist individuals in job search activities, including resume writing, interview and job preparation, and job finding clubs.
 - Counselling / Case Management: Supports that monitor individuals' progression in their service plan and/or provide assessments and diagnostic services related to physical, social, intellectual, and/or psychological traits that may have an impact on their ability to participate in training or to occupy specific jobs.
 - Unassisted Services: Information available at employment resource centres about the local labour market, employment opportunities, career planning, education and training programs, and equipment to support unassisted job search, career planning, occupational requirements, and training programs.

Programming for Persons with Disabilities

- Employment Assistance Services:
 - Includes job search assistance and other employment assistance or disability-related employment support services.
- Skills Development:
 - Short-term skills development, including literacy, essential skills, language training and adult basic education.
 - Other skills development activities, i.e., transitional vocational program (TVP).

Employer-focused Activities

- Employer Sponsored Training:
 - Includes skills-based training where employers determine the type of training and share the costs.
- Employer Awareness Activities:
 - Includes tools and activities that support employers to plan and manage their human resource needs.

Eligible beneficiaries

Eligible beneficiaries of WDA funding support include:

- Canadian citizens;
- Permanent residents;
- Protected persons within the meaning of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act entitled to work in Canada; and
- Employers with the exception of federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and federal Crown corporations and agencies.

Stakeholder engagement

In 2020/2021, guided by their respective mandates, each partner ministry engaged with employers and other stakeholders to help identify the labour market priorities, to shape the design and delivery of programs to meet current needs, and to adapt to the public health measures in place as a result of the pandemic.

Partner ministries, including the Francophone Secretariat, also met regularly to discuss policy changes and cross-ministry issues such as services available and identify gaps in services across the province.

Adult Learning Stakeholders

Advanced Education (AE) attended annual general meetings and conferences of stakeholders, including the Alberta Student Awards Personal Association, the Provincial Academic Upgrading Committee, and the Provincial English as a Second Language Committee, to share information, monitor trends and gather feedback. Feedback on the impacts of COVID-19 on training access and delivery confirmed the need for flexibility as well as the ability to adapt programs quickly to maintain high quality regardless of the delivery method.

AE's Foundational Learning Supports (FLS) stakeholder relations team is responsible for sharing information, communicating and consulting with training providers. Training providers suggested a focus on skills development and employment outcomes to support Alberta's Economic Recovery Plan and ensure unemployed Albertans gain the skills required to find and maintain employment in key industry sectors. Their allocation projection plans provided information about anticipated demand for training and training priorities in their area, as well as their capacity to deliver the training. The information helped support funding allocation decisions and promote alignment between learner demand (as identified by training providers), current and future labour market needs, and the funding priorities of the ministry.

Community Stakeholders

CSS consulted formally and informally with stakeholders to share labour market information, identify/address service delivery issues, identify opportunities for employers, employees and small businesses, and develop best practices and innovative strategies to achieve goals.

The Realizing Results event in January 2021, with representatives from Labour and Immigration and the Calgary chapter of the Private Career Development Contractors Association of Alberta, was an opportunity to present current labour market information, share data and discuss how to work together more effectively.

Contract service providers helped identify options and/or solutions for maintaining service delivery during the pandemic through virtual methods. Their recommendations also addressed perceived service delivery gaps/impacts and offered ways to improve the client experience; for example, clients without access to computers and printers or internet services could receive workshop packages by mail and participate in a workshop by telephone.

CSS attended local community events and meetings throughout the province with partners and stakeholders to identify needs and address gaps in programs and services for francophone populations, youth, immigrants, women and other vulnerable Albertans.

Stakeholders with Disabilities

CSS consulted the disability community to seek feedback and promote social inclusion and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The Disability Advisory Forum, held two to four times a year with the disability community, helped inform decisions about CSS policy, programs and services. The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and the Provincial Parent Advisory Council provided advice on the inclusion of and services for individuals with disabilities and their families. Service providers, committees and working groups for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) provided recommendations for improving program design and delivery and called for increased opportunities for inclusion through post-secondary education, employment and employment services.

AE's Integrated Foundational Program (IFP) is for adult Albertans who face barriers or require different pathways to build their foundational competencies and prepare for further education/training or employment. The call for applications in 2020/2021 focused on community and labour market needs and resulted in 13 new IFP programs that provide regional variety and target the key industry sectors in all areas of the province.

Indigenous Stakeholders

Indigenous Relations (IR), Employment Partnerships Program worked with other governments, Indigenous communities and other non- and for-profit organizations to increase labour market attachment for Indigenous people in Alberta. Stakeholder feedback informed IR's ability to manage funding and prepare clients for future programming.

- In 2020/2021, IR worked with the 20 Alberta Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (ISET) agreement holders, who are the main stakeholders for Labour Market Transfer Agreement funded activities.
- IR connected with stakeholders throughout the year to discuss community priorities and goals, through scheduled formal meetings and continuous weekly correspondence.

Stakeholders focused on understanding the economic environment and targeting in demand sectors and jobs to identify employment opportunities. 2020/2021 saw unique perspectives within Indigenous labour force planning due to pandemic restrictions and the loss of opportunities in multiple sectors. IR supported the development of labour force plans to help ISET agreement holders adjust current programming and plan for future workforce demands and skills training.

Labour and Immigration's Indigenous Partnership Coordinators connected with stakeholders through virtual meetings or phone calls because of the public health restrictions to maintain communication and receive new project requests. Stakeholder groups included Treaty 6,7,8 First Nation ISET holders/sub-agreement holders, three on-reserve employment centres, various Indigenous organizations, employment and training community stakeholders, employer/industry organizations, other Labour and Immigration staff and Government of Alberta ministries, federal government departments, training providers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous post-secondary institutions. Projects are

community-led and customized according to community needs in collaboration with training institutions and employers to ensure they benefit participants, employers and the community. Projects are evaluated throughout and at completion to identify challenges, strengths and learnings to help build capacity and mitigate risks in the future.

Employers and Industry Stakeholders

Partner ministries seek input from their stakeholders to identify training needs and gaps as well as the demand for new and updated skills development. The results help to establish training and employment priorities for WDA funded activities.

Canada-Alberta Job Grant (CAJG) communicated with employers, training providers and trainees from the application process to the completion of training via a dedicated email and toll-free telephone lines. Industry Workforce Partnership Officers and Workforce Consultants promoted the CAJG program and gathered feedback for improvement via telephone, email and during information sessions. Information sessions were held in September 2020 with Energy Safety Canada for 64 energy sector companies (including Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, Petroleum Services Association of Canada, Canadian Energy Pipelines, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and LNG Canada), and in October 2020 for Indigenous organizations in eight First Nations communities and the Métis Nation of Alberta. CAJG also received recommendations from other program areas and ministries, MLA constituency offices, correspondence to Ministers and industry associations. CAJG program monitoring and evaluation is also supported by an annual employer survey and monthly trainee surveys that measure outcomes and seek feedback on areas for improvement.

The Training for Work team consulted industry, community and economic development stakeholders to identify skill development and training needs. Through program evaluation processes and stakeholder feedback, they found that a curriculum based on a three to four year program can become outdated quickly and a “just-in-time” training approach may better equip learners with the skills they need in a particular job or industry. For example, the rapid pace of change in the technology (TECH) sector requires training to be more responsive to meet the needs of individual learners and employers.

Agriculture and Forestry consulted agricultural producers, agri-businesses and food processors for feedback on the types of training needed during the pandemic. They found that training for new hires and additional supports needed to establish and maintain safe work environments, including those in meat processing operations, were top on the list. They met with Olds College to discuss how employers could collaborate in the development and delivery of training.

Immigrant Stakeholders

The Immigrant Settlement and Language Programs of Labour and Immigration addressed issues related to training and labour market attachment for newcomers to Alberta. Stakeholder engagement about immigrant needs included feedback and information gathered from advisory committees and in meetings with immigrant-serving organizations, post-secondary institutions, and training providers as well as federal government partners.

Feedback in 2020/2021 prioritized training opportunities for barriered newcomers, responding to employment gaps and employer needs resulting from COVID-19, and providing newcomers with the skills and abilities to help grow the economy.

WDA supported training embedded with an English as a Second Language (ESL) component for employment readiness, in-demand, occupation-specific courses, and support and training for entrepreneurs and under-employed professionals.

Results and Expenditures

WDA 2020/2021 Program Expenditures

The table below provides a breakdown of spending on programs and services under the Canada-Alberta WDA, including program administration, i.e., staffing and program and service evaluation. Skills Development/Training, Work Experience, Employment Assistance Services, Programming for Persons with Disabilities and Employer-focused Programming are expenditure categories under the WDA. Programming for Persons with Disabilities are cost shared with Alberta.

EXPENDITURES

| WDA Eligible Programs | Expenditures |
|--|---------------------|
| Skills Development/Training | \$29,877 |
| Work Experience | \$4,315 |
| Programming for Persons with Disabilities (See breakdown below) | \$16,120 |
| Employer-focused Programming | \$31,457 |
| Benefits/Wage Subsidies | \$21,804 |
| Administration | \$13,254 |
| TOTAL | \$116,827 |
| Cost Shared Programs for Persons with Disabilities | Expenditures |
| Career Development Services/Disability Related Employment Supports | \$10,757 |
| PDD Employment Preparation and Placement Supports | \$22,015 |
| Foundational Learning Programs/Work Foundations | \$6,019 |
| Total Provincial Expenditures | \$38,791 |
| Federal Contribution | \$16,120 |

Source: Government of Alberta Canada-Alberta Workforce Development Agreement: Statement of Contributions and Expenditures for the Year ended March 31, 2021

WDA 2020/2021 Program Results Individual-focused Activities

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

| Federal Categories | Alberta Intervention Titles | # of Clients ¹ | # of Interventions |
|---|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Occupational Skills Training | Occupational Training | 6 | 6 |
| Short Term Training | Integrated Training | 363 | 374 |
| Literacy, Essential Skills, Language Training and Adult Basic Education | Academic Upgrading | 1284 | 1946 |
| | Basic Skills | 269 | 358 |
| | Immigrant Skills and Language Training | 142 | 142 |
| | Integrated Foundational Pathways | 173 | 182 |
| | Language Training | 1218 | 2432 |
| | LES/ABE Sub-Totals | 2935 | 5060 |
| Skills Development/Training TOTALS | | 3289 | 5440 |

WORK EXPERIENCE

| Federal Categories | Alberta Intervention Titles | # of Clients | # of Interventions |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| (Targeted) Wage Subsidies | Workplace Training | 55 | 57 |
| | TWS Sub-totals | 55 | 57 |
| Self-Employment Assistance | Self-Employment | 44 | 44 |
| Work Experience TOTALS | | 99 | 158 |
| TOTAL INDIVIDUAL-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES | | 3388 | 5598 |

Source: LMTA Co-Located Database

¹ The client totals may not equal the itemized client counts because some individuals take more than one program during the time period.

Programming for Persons with Disabilities

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

| Federal Categories | Alberta Intervention Titles | # of Clients ² | # of Interventions |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Other Skills Development | Transitional Vocational Program | 28 | 28 |
| Literacy, Essential Skills, Language Training and Adult Basic Education | Academic Upgrading | 112 | 170 |
| | Basic Skills | 26 | 32 |
| | Integrated Foundational Pathways | 9 | 9 |
| | Language Training (ESL) | 26 | 45 |
| Skills Development/Training TOTALS | | 195 | 284 |

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE SERVICES

| Federal Categories | Alberta Intervention Titles | # of Clients | # of Interventions |
|--|--|--------------|--------------------|
| Job Search Assistance | Job Placement | 713 | 735 |
| Other Employment Assistance Services | Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) | 33 | 33 |
| | Employment Assistance for PWD | 560 | 700 |
| | Other EAS Sub-Totals | 593 | 733 |
| Employment Assistance Services TOTALS | | 1287 | 1368 |
| TOTAL PROGRAMMING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES | | 1482 | 1652 |

Source: LMTA Co-Located Database

Employer-Focused Activities

Canada-Alberta Job Grant (CAJG):

- The objective of the CAJG is to train current and prospective employees with the skills required to improve performance in existing roles and/or provide the skills required for future employment.

Aboriginal Training to Employment Program (ATEP) and First Nations Training to Employment (FNTEP):

- ATEP and FNTEP are the primary funding programs for Indigenous businesses and organizations to support their community, region and industry-specific training projects.

Attraction and Retention Partnerships (ARP):

- ARP projects involve partnerships of employers, employer associations and other stakeholders to assist in the attraction and retention of workers.

² The client totals may not equal the itemized client counts because some individuals take more than one program during the time period.

EMPLOYERS AND PARTICIPANTS

| Employer-focused Activities | Number of Employers | Number of Participants |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|
| Canada-Alberta Job Grant (CAJG) ³ | 2023 | 6902 |
| Aboriginal Training to Employment Program (ATEP) and First Nations Training to Employment Program (FNTEP) ⁴ | 20 | 354 |
| Attraction and Retention Partnerships (ARP) ⁵ | 20 | 2937 |
| TOTAL EMPLOYER-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES | 2,063 | 10,193 |

TYPES OF EMPLOYERS, INDUSTRIES, SKILLS AND PARTICIPANTS BY DESIGNATED GROUPS

| Employer Size | CAJG | | ATEP & FNTEP | | ARP | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Small (50 or fewer employees) | 892 | 44% | 16 | 80% | 16 | 80% |
| Medium (51-499 employees) | 770 | 38% | 4 | 20% | 4 | 20% |
| Large (500 or more employees) | 361 | 18% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 2,023 | 100% | 20 | 100% | 20 | 100% |

| Type of Employer | # | % | # | % | # | % |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Private | 1780 | 88% | 1 | 5% | 1 | 5% |
| Public | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 10% |
| Not for Profit | 238 | 11.8% | 0 | 0% | 13 | 65% |
| Other | 5 | 0.2% | 19 | 95% | 4 | 20% |
| TOTAL | 2,023 | 100% | 20 | 100% | 20 | 100% |

| Top Industry Sectors to access grants | # | % | # | % | # | % |
|--|-----|-----|---|----|---|-----|
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services ⁶ | 230 | 11% | 0 | 0% | 6 | 30% |
| Oil and Gas Extraction | 187 | 9% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 5% |
| Construction of buildings | 135 | 7% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

³ CAJG data source: CAJG Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

⁴ ATEP and FNTEP data source: Indigenous Training to Employment Program System (ITEPS) CRM.

⁵ ARP data source: Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) Grant Tracker.

⁶ As defined in the North American Industry Classification System (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.

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|----|----|-----|---|-----|
| Support activities for mining, and oil and gas extraction | 132 | 7% | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| Social assistance | 110 | 5% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Educational Services | 0 | 0% | 2 | 10% | 0 | 0% |
| Aboriginal Public Administration | 0 | 0% | 17 | 85% | 6 | 30% |
| Warehousing and storage | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 10% |

| Type of Training for Skills Development | CAJG | | ATEP & FNTEP | | ARP | |
|---|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Entry Level | 797 | 7% | 508 | 48% | - | - |
| Upskilling or Upgrading | 9782 | 81% | 296 | 28% | - | - |
| Maintenance | 1554 | 13% | 261 | 24% | - | - |
| TOTAL | 12,133 | 100% | 1,065 | 100% | - | - |

| Type of Skills Learned | # | % | # | % | # | % |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------|---|---|
| Essential Skills | 2045 | 17% | 396 | 56% | - | - |
| Specialized or Technical Skills | 5096 | 42% | 213 | 30% | - | - |
| Management Skills | 4666 | 38% | 0 | 0% | - | - |
| Soft Skills | 326 | 3% | 100 | 14% | - | - |
| TOTAL | 12,133 | 100% | 709 | 100% | - | - |

| Number of Participants by Designated Groups | # | % | # | % | # | % |
|---|------|------|-----|------|---|---|
| Indigenous | 160 | 2% | 354 | 100% | - | - |
| Recent Immigrants | 458 | 7% | 0 | 0% | - | - |
| Immigrants | 99 | 1% | 0 | 0% | - | - |
| Persons with Disabilities | 25 | .04% | 0 | 0% | - | - |
| Women | 3103 | 45% | 60 | 17% | - | - |
| Youth | 405 | 6% | 70 | 20% | - | - |

Examples of WDA Programs and Services

Rapid Employment Supports and Skills Development for Youth with Disabilities

This multi-year Career and Employment Information Services (CEIS) program, coordinated by NPower Canada and its employer partners, Accenture, Compugen, Deloitte, Husky Energy, Long View Systems and Suncor, was launched in Calgary January 1, 2019 and will run until February 28, 2022. Its goal is to connect under-served youth to careers in Information Technology (IT) and the target population is low-income, diverse young adults, including Aboriginal, racialized and newcomer youth, LGBTQ youth and persons with disabilities. The program strives for gender parity with 50 per cent female enrollment. Program components include:

- *IT Boot Camp*: Two weeks of IT career exploration, aptitude assessment and life skills coaching to prepare for and pursue a career in information technology.
- *Rapid Skills Development*: Fourteen (14) weeks of industry-informed technical and employability skills training, including certifications from Google and Microsoft, needed to pursue various IT career paths.
- *Employment Supports, Job Placement and Alumni Services*: Direct job placement with an employer partner, followed by five years of post-program supports including connections with industry mentors, ongoing placement and retention coaching, continued networking and professional development opportunities, and advanced education such as Cloud Computing and Automation. Individual follow-ups with each participant at 90 days post-program completion, followed by quarterly check-ins for a five-year period.

NPower Canada anticipated the following results:

- 85 per cent to progress into the full 15-week training program;
- 80 per cent to graduate from the program; and
- 80 per cent to secure employment and/or enroll in further education post-program.

To date, of the 820 youth enrolled in the program, 82 per cent of the participants placed in employment positions in October 2020 remain employed. Based on these positive results, an amendment completed in March 2021, increased its scope to include 40 additional young adults (ages 18-29) with disabilities/barriers.

Security Officer Training Program on Louis Bull First Nation

Historically, Garda Security has delivered security training on the Louis Bull First Nation. Many program graduates (certified Security Officers) found employment in work camps in northern Alberta but, with the economic slowdown and the steep drop in the price of oil, most oil and gas companies laid off their security officers. Since they were unemployed, the security officers let their licenses lapse. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown resulted in an immediate and critical need for Security Officers for the First Nations pandemic response teams.

In response, Garda adapted its curriculum to online delivery and Louis Bull First Nation purchased laptops for the participants and began conducting assessments. It quickly became evident that participants were struggling with online learning. It was difficult to study at home with children being home-schooled and little social support because the First Nation was under lockdown. There were also concerns about individual reading abilities, as many participants preferred activity-based learning, and about their ability to pass the proctored exam.

The steering committee agreed immediate interventions/changes were required to better support the participants. Garda provided an instructor to provide in-person tutoring for participants. Louis Bull First Nation found a training environment that allowed for social distancing. The province provided additional funding to cover the cost of the instructor's transportation and expenses, COVID-19 PPE and a value-added flagging course. The efforts paid off. Fifteen of the original 20 participants completed the course and passed the exam. Three of the former graduates did not pass the exam. Garda worked with them to recertify and have their licenses reinstated. At the 90-day follow-up point, 18 participants were working full-time with the Louis Bull Emergency Operations Security Department.

Several graduates have expressed interest in tribal policing opportunities, emergency response teams, and security officer careers, and they are grateful for the opportunity to be of service to their First Nation and fellow tribal members.

Canada-Alberta Job Grant (CAJG)

CAJG is a grant program where an employer can recoup eligible training costs for present or future employees. Employers decide which current/future employees need training and the type of training they need. The program launched in October 2014 with the goal to increase participation of Albertans in the labour force by helping them develop the skills they need to find and keep a job. The program contributes to job creation and retention through two streams:

- the unemployed stream, which provides full reimbursement of the cost of approved training (to a maximum of \$15,000) for an unemployed person that is subsequently hired as staff; and
- the employed trainee stream, which provides up to two-thirds reimbursement of eligible costs (to a maximum of \$10,000) for re-training current staff for new roles.

In February 2021, CAJG implemented several permanent and temporary changes to assist with Alberta's economic recovery and reduce red tape by making the application process more efficient. Some of the needs these changes address are those specific to farmers, small businesses, contractors and the transportation industry. As a result, there have been significant increases in the number of new applications which will impact the budget and processing times for the program in the future.

Agriculture Training Support (ATS) Program

On May 25, 2020, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Agriculture Training Support (ATS) Program was approved to provide grant support to agricultural and horticultural businesses and services in the food supply chain to help address the impact of COVID-19.

Under the ATS program, employers were eligible for \$2,000 per new hire to offset costs for COVID-19 safety procedures, including the costs for personal protective equipment, occupational health and safety training and specific workplace training.

Approximately \$806,000 in grant funding supported 45 employers and created 405 new jobs in agricultural and horticultural businesses and services, including 176 meat-cutting positions.

Key Workplace Essential Skills Training (KWEST)

According to Alberta's industry outlook, the warehousing sector is experiencing significant employment growth and 89 per cent of the positions are full-time, long-term, sustainable employment opportunities.

Solomon College's Key Workplace Essential Skills Training (KWEST), a Labour and Immigration Settlement and Language Program, provides 12 weeks of full-time training for high needs/multi-barriered newcomers who aspire to

find employment in the warehousing industry. It helps newcomers develop their technical and English language skills in order to compete in the current labour market and find entry-level employment in the industry. The program includes:

- eight weeks of classroom instruction focused on the technological skills, workplace essential skills and safety certifications required in the warehousing and logistics industry sector; and
- four weeks of coaching and support to find employment, including how to write cover letters and resumes, apply for jobs online and prepare for interviews with potential employers.

At the halfway point, this program is reporting promising outcomes. Twelve of the fourteen learners (92 per cent) who participated in the first two training sessions achieved their employment goals and were still employed in the sector at the 90-day follow-up point. The employers participating in the program include: Sobeys, Michaels, Algin, Loblaw's Distribution Centre, and Connect Logistics.

Organic Alberta in Partnership with Young Agrarians: Growing a Workforce for Farming in Alberta

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated labour market challenges in the agriculture industry. Only 1.6 per cent of Alberta's population are farming and nine per cent of those are 35 years of age and younger. In a single generation, Canada has lost one-third of its farmers and two-thirds of its young farmers. Seventy-five per cent of farmers said they would be selling their farm in the next 10 years, representing one of the largest land and asset transfers in history.

This Attraction and Retention Program (ARP) will involve consultations with producers and agriculture extension groups to identify the barriers, needs, challenges and opportunities facing new farmers and farmworkers, and generate ideas and opportunities to recruit and train new entrants into the workforce. Project goals include:

- increasing awareness of agriculture as a viable career through a career awareness campaign that includes social media posts, success story blogs, media articles, newsletters and five videos promoting the agriculture industry and organic farming in Alberta; and
- promoting existing training programs and opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge required of new entrants in the agriculture industry.

The reporting periods for this 18-month project are in October 2021 and April 2022.

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 continues to collaborate with diverse stakeholders, including employers, industries, training providers, local communities, Indigenous stakeholders, other ministries and levels of government to increase the labour force participation of under-represented groups, grow the economy and get Albertans back to work.

Alberta's WDA partner ministries continued to deliver needed programs and services to build a skilled, adaptable workforce during this challenging year of COVID-19 health restrictions, business disruptions and closures, and changing labour market needs.

Although anticipating all of the short- and long-term impacts that COVID-19 will have on Albertans is not possible, the feedback received to date has confirmed that building flexibility into program design and offering virtual/distance options for program delivery has been successful and will continue to be important components in programs and services moving forward.