



Technical Bulletin Planning for a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy June 2018

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This Bulletin is an update from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) on planning for a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy.

Planning for a Distinct First Nations Labour Market Strategy

In keeping with First Nations objectives to be self-determining and have greater control over programs and services for First Nations citizens, the AFN Economic Sector has been working with First Nations leaders and their technical networks to coordinate a new strategy for First Nations Labour Market Development in Canada. The basis for the new strategy is a First Nations infrastructure supported by new fiscal arrangements. With this step, the First Nations component of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) will transition into a self-contained delivery system. It is expected that the achievement of measured labour market outcomes by the system will validate the underlying strength of enhanced First Nations government relationships, continuation of existing delivery organizations, and a renewed commitment to results.

This work is being undertaken with the guidance of resolutions from the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly, the Chiefs Committee on Human Resources Development (CCHRD), and the First Nations Technical Working Group on Human Resources Development (FN-TWG). The formulation of the new strategy is based on input from technicians from the First Nations agreement holders. The adoption of a new framework will be based on a mutual agreement with the Government of Canada.

A distinct First Nations framework governed by capacity to guide the strategy is proposed. This structure will have defined and clear authorities to meet the goals of the strategy, including how members are appointed, terms of appointment, and qualifications required. While labour market services and results are led by First Nations and their agencies, additional capacity will be established to enhance delivery and services to make the strategy work. Key responsibilities include liaison with the federal government, research and development, capacity building for delivery organizations, communications and reporting.

One of the most prominent elements of the strategy based on a new level of autonomy will center on a new fiscal relationship that acknowledges First Nations jurisdiction and the adoption of a national First Nations model for funding agreement holders. This will be a key aspect to step away from the existing historical model based on “Aboriginal” funding to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) regions and then to “Aboriginal” agreement holders, some of which are First Nations. In addition to establishing a First Nations envelope, it is anticipated

that a long-term predictable funding plan will follow that includes escalators for inflation and population in the agreement.

Another pillar of planning for the new strategy centres on communication. The flow of accurate and current information to and among the different types of stakeholders is expected to optimize the strategy. Active input from First Nations rights holders, targeted information for industry partners, and ongoing liaison with government will combine to maximize benefits.

The scope of this transition is ambitious. The adoption of an autonomous approach to First Nations labour force development is a solid example of a mature relationship between First Nations and Canada. The federal government will gain significant economies as many processes will move outside of government. The expected reporting and accountability provisions will meet contemporary Treasury Board guidelines and First Nations will have jointly delegated responsibility to a national delivery network with First Nations-based decision-making.

Budget 2018 has identified \$1.2 billion over five years, and \$235.7 million per year ongoing, for a First Nations Labour Market stream. Work has begun to implement a new framework with a stronger focus on training for higher-quality jobs rather than rapid re-employment, and to assist First Nations people to gain greater skills and find jobs that will support long-term career success.

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