

Skills FACTS

Questions and Answers for Staff: Apprenticeship Revitalization and Community Outreach

Number 1: Winter 1993

1. What is "Apprenticeship Revitalization" and where did it come from?

In late 1991, the government announced its intention to expand and enhance Ontario's apprenticeship training system.

Apprenticeship Revitalization was one of a few new initiatives accepted from across government for the 1992/93 Budget. Cabinet approved a set of detailed proposals on September 30 and formally announced them in the Legislature on October 5.

Apprenticeship Revitalization will provide new services and new products to a range of new clients. It has seven objectives, which are listed on the back page.

The new clients will be acquired by expanding apprenticeship as a school-to-work option for young people, and by increasing the participation of designated target groups (i.e. women, racial minorities, persons with disabilities, francophone and aboriginal persons) in apprenticeship.

The new products will be new trades and new inter-provincial standards, as well as initiatives to improve training quality in existing trades-both on-the-job and in-school. Activities to reduce drop-outs and improve client service will make up the new services.

2. What specific initiatives will be funded under Revitalization, and how much will it all cost?

\$13.6 million was approved for three specific initiatives over the next three years.

First is the expansion of SWAP - the Secondary School Workplace Apprenticeship Program. The cost for this initiative is \$3 million over three years.

Second is the development of apprenticeships in new trades and occupations, and the updating of existing trades. Over three years, \$3.9 million will be spent to develop standards and examinations. The funding will be used to expand trades updating courses, and offer train-the-trainer programs for tradespersons.

Third - and the one that will have a particular impact on day-to-day operations in the field - is community outreach. Up to \$6.7 million will be used to forge new partnerships in the community to improve access and increase the numbers of individuals from designated groups in apprenticeship.

3. Are there any new staff positions attached to the three initiatives?

New staff are associated with all three of the new initiatives, and almost all of the positions will be assigned to district and field offices.

A Program Standards co-ordinator, a SWAP co-ordinator and two or three outreach staff will be assigned to each district.

These staff will not be the only people responsible for Revitalization and community outreach. They will be co-ordinating and providing technical support for activities that will eventually become the responsibility - to a greater or lesser extent - of all field staff.

4. Why reform apprenticeship now, when OTAB will have a council devoted to improving apprenticeship?

There is no better time than now to begin rebuilding Ontario's apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship has a lot to offer in today's labour market, but as one ITC put it "it's a system that was designed in the 1950s that's trying to meet the needs of the market in the 1990s."

Revitalization will strengthen the apprenticeship program that will be transferred to OTAB. OTAB will continue to ensure that apprenticeship training meets current and future needs and will expand apprenticeship as required.

5. **There is no point in recruiting more people from equity groups or anywhere else - for apprenticeship in the current economy. What is the use of spending more money on apprenticeship when no one is hiring apprentices right now?**

The time to prepare for economic recovery and expansion is now. Apprenticeship is a long-term training program, and today's training can influence tomorrow's economic growth.

Our initiatives also include developing new trades in occupations and industries where employment is expanding and opportunities are growing. We recognize that the jobs of tomorrow will be in new and emerging occupations.

One of the key components of the community outreach initiative will be to work with current and new apprenticeship employers and with local industry associations to develop new sources of apprenticeship placements.

6. **Employment equity is a key priority with the government, yet specific money is not identified for equity programs. Where does equity fit in to Revitalization?**

Equity/access underlies all three of the initiatives, and specific equity targets will be set for each initiative. Equity considerations, like community outreach, will become a regular part of the way that business is done in the field.

The overall equity targets for Revitalization are ambitious. Ultimately, designated group participation in apprenticeship will reflect designated group participation in the labour force - 46.4% women; 8.6% racial minorities; 8% persons with disabilities; 6% francophones; and 2% aboriginal persons.

Current participation by designated groups in apprenticeship is low: under 5% are women; 2.5% are racial minorities; 0.25% are persons with disabilities; and 0.4% are aboriginal persons. (Data on francophone participation in apprenticeship is not available at this time.)

Currently, the apprenticeship system does not adequately serve large segments of society, yet these groups will become an increasingly large portion of the labour market in the future.

7. **Does emphasis on designated groups and young people mean that existing apprentices will be squeezed out of the system?**

No. Increased representation by these groups will be achieved by expansion of the apprenticeship system, rather than by replacement of current clientele.

8. **Expanding SWAP and adding new trades is self-explanatory, but what does "community outreach" mean?**

The goal of the outreach strategy is to provide more and better training to client groups that reflect the diversity of Ontario's labour market. That means that young people and members of designated groups will have to be registered as apprentices and retained in the apprenticeship training system.

In turn, that means each district's outreach plans will include work with employers and employer groups and with "process stakeholders" such as Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and Local Apprenticeship Committees, as well as activities with community groups representing designated groups.

9. **Aren't we doing outreach already when we go out and talk to students and community groups?**

Apprenticeship staff across the province are doing a lot of work in their communities. The community outreach strategy will build on that work and give it focus, so that maximum results can be achieved. However, most of the community work that we are doing right now is concentrated on information-sharing: telling community groups about apprenticeship.

Through the community outreach strategy, staff in each district will begin to develop new types of partnerships with different community groups. These community partners may provide us with advice on tailoring the delivery of apprenticeship programs to meet the needs of the community. Or, they may run different types of projects, or provide different types of apprenticeship client services in the community, almost like an extension of our own offices.

Eventually, ITCs and other field staff may be spending more time working with community partners than they do working with individual apprentices !

10. What types of groups will we be dealing with under the outreach strategy, and what types of projects will they run?

The community outreach strategy is designed to give individual communities and potential community partners maximum flexibility to design projects specific to their own particular needs. Similarly, we hope to deal with a wide range of possible partners in the community, and make some long-term commitments to those partners.

We will also be talking to traditional labour market partners, such as Local Apprenticeship Committees and Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. Going out into the community and finding new partners who represent new client groups will be a large part of the outreach strategy.

11. How will outreach affect my job? Will I have to start working with community groups even if I've never done that kind of work before? Will the work that I am doing in the community be reassigned to those new staff?

Outreach and Revitalization will eventually become everyone's responsibility ... and hopefully, revitalization will give everyone a chance to add new and interesting dimensions to their work.

Revitalization does not mean that every ITC and every other field staffer will be doing the same thing. New staff positions will be added in each district to co-ordinate outreach activities.

There will also be opportunities for other field staff to participate in outreach activities from project management to making presentations, and in the new trades and improved quality initiatives. While community partners may eventually undertake various client service functions, staff will still be directly involved with client service, particularly as registration in the system grows!

12. It is already difficult to serve our current clients. Should we first concentrate on improving client service, then move on to something new?

Improving customer service is an ongoing process. Customer service can be a lot better, but it will never be perfect, so we will always be improving it! We all know that some aspects of the apprenticeship system are

working better than others. The Ministry is working on identified deficiencies through a series of special customer service initiatives and as part of the day-to-day operation of the system.

13. Does outreach to designated groups mean that we have to change standards and dilute training?

No. The integrity of apprenticeship as portable, employer-based training in highly-skilled occupations will be maintained. Indeed, it is these very qualities - and the economic advantages they confer - that make apprenticeship an attractive option for designated group members.

What may change is the manner in which we deliver apprenticeship. Alternative models for in-school training and examinations, for example, may be better suited to the learning styles of different groups.

14. Will field staff receive the skills needed to do community outreach?

Ongoing training and development for all staff is a necessary support for the outreach strategy. Together staff and management-on an individual basis and through the Employee Relations Committee-will design appropriate development packages to meet the new requirements and competencies implied by Revitalization. A key component will be training for all client service staff in sensitivity to cultural diversity, which we plan to deliver before the end of the current fiscal year.

15. There have been a number of "apprenticeship reform" initiatives attempted in the past. What makes this one any different?

Revitalization and outreach are being implemented as part of the general shift of decision-making responsibility to the district and field offices. These initiatives are both responsive to local community needs and consistent with overall government priorities. And, they will build on the established expertise of apprenticeship field staff across the province.

16. What happens next? How will Revitalization and community outreach be implemented?

Just as we will be developing new partnerships in the community as part of outreach, we will also be developing new internal partnerships to

implement Revitalization and outreach. Over the coming weeks a number of teams will be created to pool expertise from management and staff, and from field and head offices, and work on the various initiatives.

One staff member in each district has been temporarily assigned to plan and co-ordinate district outreach activities as part of an Outreach Working Group. These outreach co-ordinators are currently working with district management to plan outreach activities, including an initial set of community access projects. Other activities include community apprenticeship meetings or open houses in apprenticeship offices across the province.

If you have questions or concerns about Apprenticeship Revitalization or the community outreach strategy, please contact your district outreach co-ordinator, or any other member of the Outreach Working Group.

Presentations on Revitalization are being scheduled for district meetings in the coming weeks and months, and another Questions & Answers paper will be published as soon as more questions are received !

OBJECTIVES FOR APPRENTICESHIP REVITALIZATION

1. Expand apprenticeship as a school-to-work transition vehicle, making it the third pillar in the post-secondary education system, along with college and university.
2. Expand apprenticeship into new trades and occupations.
3. Expand apprenticeship in existing trades in skills shortages areas.
4. Expand participation of under-represented groups in apprenticeship training.
5. Reduce drop-outs from apprenticeship.
6. Improve the quality of in-school and on-the-job training and increase the number of national standards.
7. Improve client service.

OUTREACH WORKING GROUP

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