

ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

Program Area:	2.0	Workforce Development
Sub Program:	2.3	Supporting Recruitment, Retention and Advancement
Template:	2.3.6	Job Shadowing/Mentoring Program
Sponsor(s)	<i>Ainsworth Lumber Co. Ltd</i>	

1. Objective

This program is intended to assist a company in recruiting Aboriginal employees at entry-level positions through selection of suitable candidates in partnership with Aboriginal communities and provision of work-based experience in an industrial setting.

2. Description

Aboriginal communities/individuals feel there are barriers for them to overcome to be able to secure entry and higher level full-time employment in large manufacturing facilities. Specific barriers include: the application process for employment, job interviews, understanding the structured workplace environment, meeting employment expectations in a non-Aboriginal culture, and non-Aboriginal cultural awareness by Aboriginal people.

As a result, the Job Shadow/Mentoring Program has been implemented by Ainsworth Lumber Co. Ltd. at its OSB production facility at Grande Prairie. The program provides entry-level opportunities for Aboriginal people to be introduced and experience shift work in a performance-based production environment that may lead to permanent employment.

As part of the Job Shadowing/Mentoring Program, all Ainsworth managers, supervisors, team leaders and employee representatives are given Aboriginal cross-cultural awareness training. This training is necessary to ensure Ainsworth employees understand the program and the cultural differences that Aboriginals are faced with when trying to enter industrial workplace settings.

3. Implementation

Aboriginal communities in the Grande Prairie area are canvassed to provide up-to 6 candidates for the program. The Aboriginal group will screen community applicants for the best candidates and will ensure they meet the basic minimum employment pre-requisites, such as: grade 12 equivalency; very good health; must pass substance abuse testing; and workplace safety and first aid training an asset.

“Best” candidates will be reviewed with Ainsworth for acceptability. Once agreed upon, candidates will be given Ainsworth “new employee” job orientation training, and subsequently, will follow, work with and be mentored by Ainsworth employees at various entry-level positions in the OSB mill for a period of 4 to 6 weeks. They will be expected to attend all designated

shifts on time, both day and night shifts, 7 days a week. They may be asked/offered the opportunity to complete some work tasks. During this period, the sponsoring Aboriginal group will be responsible for any payments, accommodation or transportation.

Candidates will be required to ensure their conduct adheres to all Company policies and procedures. To do otherwise may result in dismissal from the program.

Upon completion of 4 to 6 weeks of Job shadowing, sponsored candidates will be evaluated for future employment prospects. Those candidates that meet or exceed expectations, and who are interested in pursuing full-time employment, will be offered the opportunity to be placed on the OSB Spare Board list. The Spare Board is the entry point for non-skilled, full-time employment in the OSB mill. Typically, a Spare Board person substitutes for full-time employees when they are on annual leave, sick leave, training, or during shut-down periods when additional labour is required. The hours worked in a week range from 15 to 35. They are paid at entry-level wages of \$21.50/hour, and need to be available when called upon.

All Spare Board individuals are evaluated based on their performance. Performance measures such as aptitude, skills, teamwork, production, flexibility, punctuality and availability, will determine if the candidate is offered full-time employment when the next full-time position becomes available.

4. Timeframe for Results

The program started in May 2003 at the Ainsworth Alberta OSB Plant at Grande Prairie. It will be assessed at the end of the first cycle of candidates and Spare Board placements. The program will run as Spare Board vacancies arise and potential candidates can be identified and supported from the Aboriginal communities.

5. Measurable Criteria

The program will be assessed based on:

- a) the number of Aboriginal candidates who successfully complete the initial 4 to 6 weeks of training;
- b) the number of Aboriginal trainees who are placed on the OSB Spare Board;
- c) the number of Aboriginal Spare Boarders who find permanent employment in the OSB mill; and
- d) Aboriginal community acceptance of the program.

6. Budget

The major Ainsworth cost is staff time spent in training and mentoring the Aboriginal recruits. Other items include fees for a program consultant (estimated at \$5,000 per 4 to 6 week cycle) and costs for cross-cultural awareness training of Ainsworth staff (estimated at \$5,000). The sponsoring Aboriginal group will be responsible for any payments, accommodation or transportation during the initial training period for the candidates.

7. Partners and Sponsors

Ainsworth Lumber is the program sponsor. Horse Lake First Nation, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation and Zone 6 Metis Association are the primary program partners. In 2006, the program partners

will be expanded to include additional First Nations and Metis communities, who will assist with the selection of qualified candidates and work with Ainsworth to help the candidates succeed.

8. Experience with the Program

This program was launched in May 2003 by Ainsworth Lumber at its Grande Prairie OSB operations. No candidates have been identified to date which is likely a result of the long distance of First Nation communities from the OSB operations. Ainsworth continues to believe in the program and is expanding the program partners to include other First Nations and Metis communities. As well, the issue of accommodations for candidates is being considered. A team made up of the Woodlands Manager, Mill Manager, Staff Program Coordinator and a Consultant are responsible for designing and implementing the program. Program acceptance and the nature of results will determine whether the program continues.

Ainsworth developed this program in response to Aboriginal communities concern that Aboriginal people were not securing opportunities to be hired or succeeding in maintaining full-time employment. Reasons for these failures was due to limited Aboriginal understanding of the industrial workplace hiring criteria, workplace performance expectations and the workplace setting, in addition to cultural hurdles limiting successful employment results.

9. General Applicability

This program may be of interest to companies wanting to consider strategies for selecting candidates and providing on-the-job training in a performance-based industrial operation to Aboriginal people.

10. Additional Information or Support

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