

GENDER EQUITY FRAMEWORK PROJECT
SKILLS NOW!

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*Equity in Apprenticeship not have
only included
here —
passed by PAB*

General Comments: Retraining Workers in their Communities

Probably due to a high pressure work environment in the Skills Development Division, the GEA's input was most often solicited to add a "gender and/or equity perspective", rather than being integrated into planning and strategic aspects of programming. This may be the result of unclear definition of the role of an equity advisor in the functions of programming and funding. Whereas a number of programs may have had "equity objectives" and "equity components", the GEA was not able to discern a planned equity approach. This was further evidenced by a seeming necessity to sacrifice equity-dedicated positions as peripheral to program delivery. There appears to be a past history of tension with some equity groups and issues in the Division, which has the potential of prompting a "we/they" reaction among some staff. As well, the focus for adjustment programs on business partnerships suggests to staff, in the absence of an alternative strategy, the need to downplay equity in "business-driven" programs.

Theme Three, Recommendation 5: Adjustment Programs develop a plan or framework for equity for funding and program approaches, delineating specific objectives, activities and deliverables, measures and evaluation plans. These could include:

- *a program focus linked to Internal employment equity and Multicultural plans*
- *approaches and strategies for equity group relations and partnerships with equity-seeking groups*
- *a strategy to work with business and other partners to encourage and develop a capacity for equity in projects*
- *clear objectives, approaches and skills for program and field staff to enhance equity outcomes in their work*

As a quality check on the experience of equity-based community program proposals in this system, the GEA shadowed the trajectory of an equity-focused community program proposal which seemed logically to fit the Adjustment Program funding criteria. The proponent's experience was reported to the GEA as a maze of directions, responsibilities and eligibilities, requiring multiple phone calls, and repeated dead ends. The Ministry has already noted the need to streamline and simplify frontline contact and referral with Skills Now! programming. While this is an issue for applicants generally, it may be perceived as a particular barrier to equity projects or equity applicants.

Training or orientation on how to "do" equity programming should be provided where this is not understood. This plan could be packaged for communication purposes, and a strategy for communication, integrated with plans in other Skills Now! areas, could be developed.

Theme 4: Welfare to Work

Related programs are administered mainly through the Training and Employability Branch, Skills Development Division. The consuming focus of the Branch until summer, 1995 has been putting into place the administrative structures and procedures for delivery, including transferring and adapting Ministry of Social Service staff and program and funding responsibilities, opening Skills Centers for a field delivery capacity establishing an operating and funding budget, and moving toward a regionally-managed funding process based on Requests for Proposals

members of other equity groups.

Programs are directed to income assistance recipients, and are designed to respond to clients who often face multiple barriers to training and employment (eg. women, youth, etc.). But there are complications in meeting equity expectations for these programs. Social development objectives which were a significant part of some programs when the Ministry of Social Services managed them are superseded by training for employability objectives of MSTL's mandate. The Training and Employability Branch, in partnership with communities, clients and service delivery agencies is redefining funding structures and policy approaches for the programs. This is particularly so for the Community Employment Programs (CET) which have developed a high profile with women's and other equity advocacy groups. MSTL has undergone considerable criticism and pressure regarding the changes in focus and client relations associated with the transition of CET programming.

The GEA has been an active player in these issues, raising them within the Ministry at the program and senior executive level. She has also liaised with specific projects and community advocacy groups, as well as the ministry of Women's Equality. On July 28, the GEA convened an information exchange meeting between Training and Employability staff and Ministry of Women's Equality, to put the issues on the table. This productive meeting will be followed up by informal contact, action by MSTL in some areas of concern, and retention of the contact as a joint forum for discussion. Issues referred for resolution and further action include: the need to review some elements of Bridges program RFPs to include aspects such as "harm reduction", now contained in the Youth Employment RFPs; establishing stronger links between MSTL and MWE field staff; the need for awareness raising for MSTL field staff in setting up community partnerships, review processes and input which are proactively "equity interested" – this may include training and orientation for MSTL field staff concerning equity issues, equity community relations, equity partnership processes, and equity awareness.

Bridges Evaluation

Both the GEA and MWE are involved in the MSTL Policy Planning and Research Division committee set up to manage the evaluation of Bridges programs. They play a significant role in keeping the review sufficiently broad to explore program and policy elements that may extend beyond the MSTL mandate, and require decision-making at a senior, interministerial level. This process, as well as MSTL/MWE liaison on CET have potential to generate senior decision-making, policy and program analysis, assessment and practical adjustments to make welfare to work programming more responsive to equity issues, particularly those concerning women.

Aboriginal Women

Members of the Salishan Pathways Human Resources Society have requested a meeting with provincial officials in MSTL, BCLFDB, MWE and MEI to discuss what they perceive as impediments to fairness in the administration of programs attended by both on- and off-reserve women. This forum/discussion is scheduled to take place in August, 1995, and has potential as a first step in an ongoing dialogue.

Equity in Apprenticeship Course

Funded by Apprenticeship Branch, this contracted project was designed and managed by the GEA, to provide information, orientation and awareness of equity issues for counselors and coordinators, and improve service and accessibility for women and other equity groups. Completion is scheduled for late August 1995, and piloting with Apprenticeship Coordinators will be scheduled for September 1995. This course, designed specifically for apprenticeship coordinators and counselors, could be adapted for use by SSAP career counselors, and by Crown Corporations and other employers participating in equity apprenticeship initiatives. The course is being developed through a consultative, collaborative process. The project is being conducted by a team of people who have participated in apprenticeship training, equity training and programming, and apprenticeship. It is being led by Deanna Rexe, Public Consulting Group of British Columbia.

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 3:
That a strategic approach be developed within Apprenticeship and MSTL generally to ensure the application of the Equity in Apprenticeship Course and follow-up for counselors and coordinators, as well as adaptations and applications through the SSAP, the PAB, and with employers.*

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 4:
That the Equity in Apprenticeship Course be reviewed by the Equity Subcommittee of the PAB, as well as by the MSTL ERG, or alternate bodies established by the Ministry.*

Equity in Apprenticeship Resource Package

Funded by Apprenticeship Branch, this contracted project was designed and managed by the GEA, to assist counselors and coordinators to be aware of and use resources to promote equity in apprenticeship. Completion is scheduled for late August 1995. This package, which will have regionally-specific versions, is being designed specifically for apprenticeship coordinators and counselors. It could also be adapted for applications in the SSAP for use by career counselors, and could be useful for Crown Corporations and other employers participating in equity apprenticeship initiatives.

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 5:
That a strategic approach be developed within the Apprenticeship Branch and MSTL generally to ensure the distribution, promotion and use of the Equity in Apprenticeship Package by counselors and coordinators, as well as adaptations and applications in the SSAP, the PAB, and with employers.*

The Package is being developed through a consultative, collaborative process, led by British Columbia leaders in equity in apprenticeship, and training and employability. This project is being developed simultaneously with the Equity in Apprenticeship Course (described above) with the same Principal Consultant and the involvement of a number of the same specialists. As well, this project contains a mentorship component for two immigrant visible minority women learning to apply their research and writing skills as Canadian contractors.

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 6:
That the Equity Resource Package be reviewed by the Equity Subcommittee of the PAB, as well as by the MSTL ERG, or alternate bodies established by the Ministry*

The GEA has been an active participant in this Subcommittee, with involvement in the following:

- relaying concerns about the PAB logo, and clarifying its use as a PAB symbol only;
- supporting and attending the federal (HRDC) course "Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Workers"
- reviewing and making recommendations on the collection of statistics on women in apprenticeship
- facilitating and participating in drafting the Ministry's response to the PAB report on Equity.

Outcome Four, Recommendation 7: member of the Equity Resource Group or other body designated by the Ministry to continue to liaise with the subcommittee and regularly attend the meetings.

PAB Equity Subcommittee Recommendations

The GEA had intended to undertake jointly with the Director of Apprenticeship Branch, a response to the recommendations of the PAB Equity Subcommittee. This task is overdue, since the recommendations were submitted to the ministry some time ago. However, with the reorganization of Apprenticeship in the ministry, and the possibility of a newly delineated plan, this task could be undertaken under the new Executive Director's direction.

Outcome Four, Recommendation 8: The Executive Director, as soon as is feasible, assign the task of responding to the PAB Equity Subcommittee recommendations within his area, with timelines; and that response, once it has been approved, be communicated formally to the PAB and the Equity Subcommittee.

Site visit to Seattle: Apprenticeship Opportunities Project

With Gail Wilson Apprenticeship Area Manager; Deanna Rexe Public Consulting Group of BC, Brenda Ireland Aboriginal Advisor, BCIT; and Kate Pelletier Associate Dean, School of Trades Training, BCIT conducted site visit to the Apprenticeship Opportunity Project. The Apprenticeship Opportunities Project recruits people of colour, women and persons with disabilities into pre-apprenticeship training, then helps to place them in State approved apprenticeship programs and in jobs. The project works directly with individual businesses to meet their hiring needs and encourage use of apprenticeships. This model appears to have distinct applications to demand-based economic initiatives (eg. BC21, Columbia Basin Accord), as well as apprenticeship initiatives in the Crowns and with other employers. GEA has distributed and discussed this model with MEI Policy, Crown Corporation Secretariat, Apprenticeship staff, Training and Employability, and to the working group on Equity Orientation to Trades and Technology (EOTT).

General Comments: Apprenticeship Revitalization

The goal of increasing the number of women in apprenticeship has complex components, as has been noted many times. The apprenticeship system needs revitalization and to be made more accessible and welcoming to women and other equity group members. Thinking has to change, processes have to change, and commitment to that change has to be strong throughout the system. Encouraging women and other equity groups to participate in apprenticeship needs to start early, when young people are beginning to form their goals for post secondary training and work. The strategy for attracting and supporting equity group members to apprenticeship requires and deserves a strategic approach: a plan and stewardship. While Apprenticeship Branch leadership has been proactive in involving the GEA and initiating projects to promote equity, there remain entrenched attitudes among people working in this area, often reinforced by their contacts in the trades, and with union members, parents, schools and employers.

Accomplishing change is hampered as well by the lack of practical information, baseline data, analysis and comprehensive management of an equity approach in apprenticeship. The new structure for management of apprenticeship recently instituted in MSTL opens possibilities for a "fresh start" for implementing a commitment to equity. The following are some pressing needs for building an apprenticeship system that can achieve progress towards equity:

- Resources and expertise need to be applied to developing a system of documenting and monitoring the participation of women and other equity groups in apprenticeship. Presently, the collection and reporting of this data is inadequate, and analytic methodologies are needed for goal-setting, monitoring and evaluation. Associated with this, there is a need for effective and sensitive means of collecting equity information in apprenticeship. This issue was identified by the Director of Apprenticeship, and will require concerted work by an equity practitioner.

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 9:
That Apprenticeship initiate a project in cooperation with the Equity Subcommittee of the PAB to develop a data collection, statistical analysis system and reporting system for equity in apprenticeship.*

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 10:
That the data systems described in Outcome 4, Recommendation 9 be framed within a planning, monitoring and evaluation approach for equity in Apprenticeship where specific goals for equity are set, and outcomes and progress measured.*

*Outcome Four, Recommendation 11:
That resources be allocated by Apprenticeship to hire an expert in equity systems to design an appropriate format to collect equity data from Apprenticeship administrative forms.*

• Apprenticeship counselors and coordinators need to develop understanding and commitment to equity. Management approaches are needed to integrate activities and accountabilities. Counselors and others who liaise with employers require training and tools to effectively and appropriately promote equity to employers, gauge employers' and workplace readiness, and suggest supports. This can be partially achieved by use of the Equity in Apprenticeship Workshop and Resource Package, as well as the OLA course on Workplace Coaching (if it does indeed contain useful components on workplace equity). However, specific tools and skills are required to promote equity appropriately. Not all workplaces which indicate readiness to take equity candidates can support their success. As equity candidates are placed, there will be more pressure on the Apprenticeship Branch to ensure workplace readiness and retention.

Outcome Four, Recommendation 12. That Apprenticeship develop a strategy and training for promotion, placement and support of equity apprentices for field workers responsible for liaising with employers, including those finding placements connected with the SSAP.

Outcome 5:

Administrative and accountability measures, possibly including the establishment of an equity coordinator, will be in place to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the gender framework.

The GEA has worked toward administrative accountability for equity in MSTL by exploring existing frameworks and linking with other equity resource people in the ministry. In May 1995, the GEA initiated the Equity Resource Group (ERG) an informal gathering of some key people in the ministry working on equity issues. The responsibilities and activities of the ERG remain to be determined, but if it were constituted as the body to ensure coordination of equity efforts, a definition of administrative accountabilities would be built into its mandate and activities. This group has already worked with Strategic Relations and Research Branch, identifying problems and requirements for collecting and reporting statistics on equity groups; has informally reviewed the OLA Workplace Coaching course; and has identified the need for an inventory of MSTL equity efforts.

Establishing a Corporate Coordinating Mechanism for Equity

For a ministry the size and complexity of MSTL, coordination is essential if duplication and cross-purposes are to be avoided, and effectiveness, integration and accountability achieved. As is stated repeatedly in this report, the ministry requires a strategic framework to define and implement equity in terms of program goals and outcomes, to manage them, and to assign accountabilities for them. This effort is partially and unevenly underway. But because equity cannot presently be described as a corporate effort, many inside and outside the ministry are unaware of measures already begun. Equity needs to be an integrated aspect of corporate management. It should not be relegated to individual advocacy, personal commitment or isolated programming.

Outcome 5, Recommendation 1: That MSTL give priority to establishing a corporate approach to coordinating and promoting equity activities within the ministry, which includes all aspects of corporate responsibility, both internal (eg. employment equity, policy review, program design, delivery and evaluation, consumer relations, communications, etc.), and external.

British Columbia Labour Force Development Board (BCLFDB)

The GEA established strong links with Director of Equity, BCLFDB, and promoted liaison with the Board by Ministry of Women's Equality and Ministry of Employment and Investment. In the BCLFDB's role reporting to and advising the Minister on business, labour and equity labour market issues, it seems the Board could play a more direct role in promoting equity within the ministry and with Skills Now!.

Outcome 5, Recommendation 2: That regular liaison mechanisms be set up at the program level (in addition to the current policy liaison) with the BCLFDB Director of Equity: to explore equity functions and activities for the Board and the equity reference groups (including the Board's focus on income assistance recipients) in the delivery of Skills Now! programming, and the development of specific equity initiatives.

The BCLFDB has an organized focus on equity, with community-selected reference groups offering existing for a review and participation by community equity proponents. In addition to its current activities reviewing and reporting to the Minister on these issues, a closer relationship at the program level could be established, in particular through the existence of the equity reference groups. These latter have the potential to be resources and sounding boards for partnership and advice.

Outcome 5, Recommendation 3: That the Director of Equity BCLFDB become a member of the MSTL ERG, or any alternative equity coordinating group established by the ministry.

Communication

MSTL's efforts toward equity in Skills Now! need to be communicated. Although the ministry has not yet developed a framework for equity, communication of its intent to do so, and its investment in and the outcomes of the Gender Equity Framework Project, could be an important first step.

Outcome 5, Recommendation 12: That a plan be developed to communicate, both within the ministry and externally, MSTL commitment to developing an equity framework, and the outcomes of the Gender Equity Framework Project.

If the ministry adopts the recommendations for coordination, an early step could be to open a productive dialogue with equity partners. In the case of gender equity, links are needed with Women in Trades and Technology (WITT) and Women's Employment and Training Coalition (WETC). A follow-up Forum to that organized by Ministry of Women's Equality in November 1994, and attended by officials in MWE, MSTL and MEI would be timely and productive. The results of the Gender Equity Framework Project could be communicated to indicate which issues have been addressed.

Outcome 5, Recommendation 13: That the ministry consider collaborating with Ministry of Women's Equality and Ministry of Employment and Investments, concerning setting a follow-up meeting with women's and other equity groups concerning gender equity in Skills Now!

Conclusion

There exist both opportunities and barriers for the implementation of equity within Skills Now! programming. Some of these are listed below.

Some Opportunities

- There is an articulated, and in many cases, practical commitment to equity in the ministry. In addition to those with defined responsibilities in this area, there are a number of people who support a heightened emphasis on these initiatives, and a clearer focus.
- With regard to Skills Now! senior executive have expressed strong support for equity; it appears fairly consistently in program objectives, and in overall goals for Skills Now!
- There is a considerable amount of effort devoted to equity in the ministry in the form of formalized mechanisms and positions (e.g. Employment Equity Committee, Office for Disability Issues, Aboriginal Advisor, Post Secondary Education, etc.)

Some Barriers

- Equity efforts for Skills Now! are not well coordinated, and do not flow from a planned corporate approach.
- Equity planning was not substantially incorporated into program planning and design, so equity measures -- when present -- may occur as "add ons".