

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

November 26, 2008

A Major Renovation: Trades Training in British Columbia

Introduction

There are skilled trade occupations in every industry sector of British Columbia's economy. Ensuring these workers have the knowledge and ability to do their jobs properly is the purpose of trades training. Apprenticeship, a common form of trades training, typically takes four years to complete; 80% is provided on-the-job, and 20% is provided in school or online.

The trades training system in British Columbia involves a number of organizations and stakeholders, all with different interests and mandates. The Industry Training Authority (ITA) is the Crown corporation responsible for leadership within the system. Since its creation in 2004, the ITA has introduced a number of changes including the establishment of a new trades training governance structure and sector-based Industry Training Organizations (ITOs). Each is tasked with managing the trades training programs within its industry sector.

Purpose of the Audit

The purpose of our audit was to examine how well government and the ITA were leading and managing the trades training system.

Overall Conclusion

While the provincial government and the ITA have established a new model for trades training, the ITA has not provided sufficient guidance and direction to its partners and stakeholders when putting this model into practice. When assuming responsibility for leading the trades training system, the ITA did not sufficiently consult or collaborate with its stakeholders in developing its plans and strategies. Given the significance of the changes being introduced and the number of stakeholders involved, this was a large omission. The ITA's current efforts to improve communication and coordination are promising, but further improvements are needed.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Current leadership communication and consultation efforts need to be maintained

1. Moving forward, the ITA needs to develop, in consultation with key stakeholders, an action plan to address the issues identified in this report.

The ITOs require a clearer definition of responsibilities and an assessment of funding needs

The ITA should work with ITOs and industry to:

2. clarify roles and responsibilities and revise its policies and guidelines accordingly; and
3. determine the costs associated with each required responsibility and ensure the funding model is appropriate and sustainable.

Quality assurance needs to be strengthened

The ITA should:

4. develop a comprehensive quality assurance program to help safeguard the quality of trades training; and
5. strengthen its compliance monitoring mechanisms to provide greater assurance that training providers and apprenticeship sponsors are following program standards.

Information needs to improve to ensure good resource allocation

The ITA, the ITOs, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development and the colleges should work together to:

6. produce high quality information for assessing demand for trades training;
7. periodically assess the capacity of the trades training system to meet demand and address any issues or opportunities identified; and
8. ensure funding decisions are informed by a proper understanding of what it costs to deliver trades training.
9. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development should ensure that its funding allocations to public colleges for the purposes of supporting trades training are coordinated with the ITA.

Performance reporting needs to be accurate, transparent, and supported by effective records management

The ITA should:

10. improve the internal controls it applies to the calculation of its performance measures;
11. clearly and explicitly disclose its performance reporting definitions, sources and calculation methodologies; and
12. improve its records management to ensure it can easily access key participant information when needed.

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