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KENTVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA
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BUSINESS PLAN 2007-08: Service Canada Initiatives Only

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1. Mission Statement and Values;

Working in conjunction with Service Canada and other funding sources the organization continues to strive to meet the needs of the community as identified through the organizations initial review and community consultative process: Currently the organization continues to advocate and promote changes in the way African Nova Scotians:

- Identify Community needs
- Maintain the mechanism for service delivery
- Access the process for long term Community growth

VANSDA'S goal as supported by Service Canada is to deliver employment related services to targeted Valley residents. Our focus continues to be, increasing employment opportunities for members of the African Nova Scotian community.

The VANSDA staff is able to provide expertise in areas of job readiness and preparation, facilitate and assist in the job search process and will provide general employment counseling.

Mission Statement

To improve the Quality of Life for African Nova Scotians in the Valley by building Partnerships in Employment, Training and Government/ Economic Development.

2. Stakeholders

- All African Nova Scotian community members living in Western Nova Scotia (Annapolis Valley Region)
- Unemployed and under-employed (less than 20 hours per week) African Nova Scotians including community members who may be considered non visible living in the Annapolis Valley
- Clients referred from other partner support agencies and community contacts
- Funding agents and partner organizations

3. Priorities and Objectives

Employment Services:

During the 2006 -07 fiscal year VANSDA through lengthy consultation process asked for and received permission to renegotiate its EAS contract. Utilizing the opportunity to renew the contract under the recently announced flat rate funding formula the organization signed a new agreement with Service Canada beginning January 1, 2007 which has a term of 27 months ending March 31st 2009. This new funding arrangement will provide increased organizational stability and continues to send a clear message to the community of the commitment to ensure long-term results are attained.

The cornerstone of VANSDA services; employment assistance initiatives continues as a necessity in assisting community members alleviate problems related to employment opportunities. With the primary office located in Kentville, the organization continues to ensure the staff is accessible to all communities and community members within its' operating zone. The operating zone includes the area from Hantsport to Annapolis Royal. To assist in ensuring the needs of the community are met the organization has partnered with like minded organizations and has shared office space in the communities of Middleton and Annapolis Royal. This more visible presence within the communities across the region has meant a greater access for those needing assistance. In serving in the role of Community Coordinator, VANSDA has undertaken the responsibility of direct intervention and by securing financial resources to provide Skill Development support and Targeted Wage Subsidy support to eligible clients and employers. As both programs continue to evolve, their impact is becoming increasing apparent. The Skill Development initiative continues to show rapid growth. We believe that The Targeted Wage Subsidy initiative has the opportunity for growth as well. The reasons behind this optimism are founded in our realization that while there are targeted programs for youth, and older workers the gap in service delivery for those individuals aged 35 to 50 remains a very real concern and the target group best positioned to take advantage of this program.

Activities:

During the period 2006 – 2007 conducted the following activities under an EAS agreement, as its core activities for the fiscal year:

- Work towards the integration for African Nova Scotians into non-traditional employment positions and aid in developing those opportunities
- Provide access to employment information and other support resources
- Identify training/ upgrading opportunities
- Provide job readiness and employability skills workshops
- Hold monthly information sessions on the usage of the on site computer services for job searches and resume development in conjunction with other partners
- Provide employment information in the Organizations Quarterly newsletter
- Employment Counseling: Return to work: Action Plan, Client Case Management, Job Development
- Strengthen and further develop partnerships with the public and private employers in promoting employment opportunities for African Nova Scotians
- Advocate training and other upgrading opportunities

Community Capacity Building:

While not a financially funded goal of the organization, the process of Community Capacity Building is ongoing. The success of the organization has in the advancement of community employment opportunities is by its very nature capacity building. The organization has through its various initiatives continues to take a leadership role in building the resources and opportunities for the African Nova Scotian community.

Through its' various projects more than just developing skills and processes is expected. Altering the way people think and building upon the community and its role in society is a priority. Service Canada while no longer able to fund such initiatives, through its continued partnerships with VANSDA has enabled the organization to source alternate methods and funding whenever possible so that "marginalized" citizens have wider access, involvement and participation in productive socially responsible activities. For the communities to be strengthened VANSDA will continue to advocate in this capacity.

VANSDA will offer these services and activities in community capacity building:

- Working with youth prepare to enter the Job Market
- Assist where appropriate in developing entrepreneurship and business opportunities
- Working with community members access services to assist them in achieving employment goals
- Partner with like minded groups increasing the education process of the entire community resulting in greater awareness and understanding of the historical and social barriers confronting many members of the African Nova Scotian community.
- Continued Professional Development for Staff

Infrastructure Development:

Through use of a new funding flexibility available with the changes within the Service Canada funding models, VANSDA now hopes that in initiatives previously unable to be completed will now have sufficient resources, allowing for increased community outreach work, and maintain the focus of working towards a goal of securing and sustaining high employment rates for the African Nova Scotian community members of Western Nova Scotia.

The organization's long- term goal of work towards development and operation of a Multiuse Community Centre for the Valley African Nova Scotian Communities remains a priority. However funding for such a building however will need widespread community support and action to enable this vision to be realized.

To accomplish this task it will be required to:

- ❑ Establish a separate Management Board
- ❑ Build extensive partnerships with several government departments and the private sector. A suitable individual will be required to draft a Business Plan (feasibility study, design, sustainability and budgeting) for the Multiuse Centre.
- ❑ Have the Executive Director include the organizational process as part of his/ her workload.

Note: This vision will see the an increase in meaningful employment and business opportunities

* This goal continues to be carried over from the original business plan, but still maintains its status as an integral piece of the community business plan.

Community Coordinator Option – Skills Development

The organization has taken great pride in the growth, development and ownership of Skill Development funding process. Eligible VANSDA clients have benefited from a faster turnaround and access to training/ upgrading opportunities. The ability to make the decisions at the point of client contact has elevated the organization from that of a provider of resources to a provider of services. The continued growth of this initiative has validated the organization. All decisions are based not solely upon client wishes but also that which is part of the individuals longer term career planning process.

The objective of this project is to provide financial assistance to unemployed, insured individuals who are members of the African Nova Scotia community, residing in the area between Hantsport and Annapolis Royal to access skills training. Strict adherence to Service Canada, guidelines and policies continues to govern use of the funding available, but has not limited access to community members who are eligible. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and Career Path Counselors negotiate the terms of funding support with individual clients to determine their financial needs in

order to attend skills training in a course, which is recognized under provincial legislation.

Activities

Clients will be recommended by the Career Path Counselors through the cooperative process of developing a Return to Work Action Plan including financial statements and review of all expenses including need of child-care support and travel assistance.

- ❑ The client will be explained the process, rules and regulations and determine prospects of sustainable employment once program is completed
- ❑ Client eligibility must be cleared and determined by Service Canada staff
- ❑ Executive Director will negotiate financial assistance for each individual client using the financial negotiation form designed for this purpose. The Executive Director will determine that the course and institution are recognized in accordance with provincial legislation.
- ❑ Once financial negotiation has taken place, an agreement will be developed and signed by the client and Executive Director on behalf of VANSDA.
- ❑ A schedule of support payments will be prepared
- ❑ The Executive Assistant will prepare all necessary documents for the Bookkeeper to release funds on behalf of the Client
- ❑ During the agreement with the client, the Executive Director or Executive Assistant will monitor all expenditures to ensure that the client is using the funds in accordance with the agreement.
- ❑ The Executive Director will prepare a report on the activities of the program for submission to the Board of Directors monthly

The training supported under this program shall include and be defined as skills training, adult basic education (academic upgrading and literacy/ numeracy) or second language training (English or French). Training offered by the federal public sector, other employers (in exceptional circumstances), university courses (only with Service Canada approval), correspondence courses, distance education, internet-based education, work placements and clinical placements may also be supported. Only allowable expenses will be considered.

Community Coordinator Option – Targeted Wage Subsidy

The organization is now seeing the benefits of the work done to educate the business community and members of the target population in this the most labour intensive of the programs offered by VANSDA. The value of the program while never in dispute continues to be one of the least understood programs and least promoted activities by Service Canada. The net impact is that VANSDA staff has utilized considerable time in promoting and developing sufficient relationships with employers, in which the use of financial support is seen as a positive. The initial skepticism of employers is but one of a number of negatives that need to be overcome. We believe that the continued offering of this initiative will further serve to build partnerships between the organization and the business community and that, it also allows VANSDA clients a greater opportunity to secure employment.

The objective of the project is to provide financial assistance to unemployed, insured individuals who are members of the African Nova Scotia community, residing in the area between Hantsport and Annapolis Royal to access employment through the use of direct financial subsidy assistance to an employer. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will negotiate with employers on behalf of individual clients to determine possible employment opportunities. Sustainable employment for the client at the conclusion of the subsidy period, will be the guiding factor in entering into agreements.

Activities:

- ❑ Clients referred from the Career Path Counsellors will have eligibility determined through examination of their Return to Work Action Plan
- ❑ The Client will be explained the process, rules and regulations and determine prospects of sustainable employment once program is completed
- ❑ Client eligibility must be cleared and validated by HRSDC staff
- ❑ Executive Director will negotiate financial assistance with each individual employer using the financial negotiation form designed for this purpose.
- ❑ Once financial negotiation has taken place, an agreement will be developed and signed by the employer and Executive Director on behalf of VANSDA.
- ❑ The Executive Assistant will follow up post negotiation and assist in the preparation of the schedule of claims and payment
- ❑ The Executive Assistant will prepare all necessary documents for the Bookkeeper to release funds on behalf of the Client
- ❑ During the agreement with the client, the Executive Director or Executive Assistant will monitor all expenditures to ensure that the employer is using the funds in accordance with the agreement and also during the activity.
- ❑ The Executive Director will follow up with the employer to ensure the client remains employed once subsidy is completed
- ❑ The Executive Director will prepare a report on the activities of the program for submission to the Board of Directors monthly

Expected Results

The focus of TWS is primarily based upon on the needs of clients and the provision of incentives to employers to hire them, rather than on the needs of employers. Our purpose will be to assist clients who need help to obtain stable full time permanent employment.

Skills Link Initiative

Through the continued use of this funding initiative the organization has been able to target and address needs of youth aged 18 to 30 in an internship style program designed to alleviate barriers and provide the necessary skills necessary for integration into the workforce. Now in its third year of operation this program has developed fully as a recognized alternative for African nova Scotian youth in the region and the successes of those involved well known within the community.

Expected Results

It is expected that by the end of the project a minimum of three participants will be employed furthering their skills training by returning to school and a maximum of three requiring further interventions before gaining sustainable employment.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

The organization continues its monthly reporting as required by Service Canada. The Executive Director oversees the daily running of the organization and submits specific reports to the Board as required. Together with the other members of the Board of Directors, which meets monthly, community concerns will be dealt with and aspects such as the finances of the organization can be reviewed. The organization maintains an office administrator with primary bookkeeping duties and the services of a Chartered Accountant to assist the management of the financial affairs. The organization maintains a ratified policy manual which serves as the guide to operation.

The organization holds an Annual General Meeting as well various community contact sessions to ensure that the needs and concerns of the stakeholders are, able to be voiced.

The operational reports will be generated monthly for the Board of Directors and Service Canada to support the claim form process as well the annual report which is submitted during the organization's AGM, and which presents a full year review.

6. Communication Strategy:

The communication strategy has a two-fold purpose: a) Maintain and nurture the unique culture and history of Valley African Nova Scotian communities. b) Increase awareness in the overall community about the African Nova Scotian legacy and history and foster an integration of the Valley African Nova Scotians in relation to employment opportunities found in the mainstream society in the Valley and beyond.

The following activities will help to realize the above purposes:

- Produce a Quarterly Newsletter (with special editions as required)
- Media Management: this is a task of the Executive Director to be able to make sure that good news i.e. increase on employment rates, organizational capacity, etc is shared with the general public.
- The use of internet technologies with the continued development of a web based site and e-mail to build upon the communication strategy of the organization.

Communication Plan

The communication of the organization objectives and results will be made using both the newsletter (The Habari) and web page (www.vansda.ca). The internet site has an updated feedback section built in which allows community members the opportunity to communicate directly with the Executive Director and voice concerns that they may have.

The organization also will periodically canvass / survey the community on a variety of issues affecting the employment prospects of community members

Results of the various projects will be made public at the annual general meeting, which will allow the stakeholders the opportunity to provide input regarding the service delivery aspect of the project and to provide them a chance to make recommendations to the Board in terms of any possible/ needed changes in operation.

Technical Assistance:

- Outside community expertise is useful when it is integrated into a facilitated process controlled a by community based organization. Often, communities have the collective wisdom on what matters to them. They know what their issues are and they can anticipate the potential solutions. However, often as well, an external view, support and assistance, is conducive to promote the communities’ potential.
- Appropriate external expertise will result in expanding the horizons and the identification of opportunities based on other experiences, technologies and concepts of other communities.
- Use of available technical assistance once identified is highly recommended to move forward the development process of the Valley African Communities.
- The organization partners with other service providers from the profit and non-profit sectors, to assist in providing services, training and employment opportunities.

7. Prior Year Projects (all initiatives):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Status</u>
Employment Assistance Services	Service Canada	Ongoing
Targeted Wage Subsidy	Service Canada	Ongoing
Skill Development	Service Canada	Ongoing
Mathieu Da Costa Heritage Trail	Dept.of Canadian Heritage	Ongoing
<u>C@P Site</u>	Industry Canada	Ongoing
Tutor Training Program	Nova Scotia Dept. of Education	Completed