

Labour Education and Training Research Network
Réseau de recherche en formation et travail

Requests for Proposals
Deadline: February 14, 1999

The analytical framework adopted by the Labour Education and Training Research Network identified three types of providers or sectors in the training market: public; commercial (for-profit); and community-associative (community-based and union providers) sectors. Even in the short life of this Network, the landscape of Canadian training has undergone a tremendous degree of change. Changes to funding formulas and the unemployment insurance system, devolution of responsibility for training from the federal to the provincial governments, and increasing degrees of commercialisation and privatisation have each profoundly affected the training system.

To ensure that the nature of these changes and their consequences are documented, the Network is issuing Requests For Proposals on three topics for this round of funding. These areas are:

- commercialisation and the role of the commercial, for-profit sector;
- the position and role of the community based sector;
- and devolution of training to the provinces and cross-provincial comparisons.

Brief descriptions of the topics and sample research questions pertinent to each are provided below. Project proposals cannot be expected to address all the issues and questions indicated, but should provide a clear statement indicating the theoretical coherence and importance of the scope of the project.

Proposals which fall within these parameters will be given priority. *The Network will continue to accept proposals submitted under its framework research themes.* It will also consider proposals that are not explicitly outlined but which may fall under the categories indicated above.

PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT PROVIDERS AND COMMERCIALISATION

Among the changes the Network seeks to examine is the trend towards commercialised provision of education and training. “Commercialisation” includes: the growth of the for-profit training sector; the expansion of commercially oriented programmes offered by public and non-profit education and training providers; and the outsourcing of enterprise training to external providers or consultants.

The private, for-profit sector is becoming an increasingly significant sector in the Canadian training market. The Network therefore places a priority on proposals for projects that will identify the changing contours of private, for-profit training in Canada. An important aspect will be an analysis of the role of this sector in providing training, including the effect of direct and indirect public funding programmes. Projects should seek to identify the causes, impact and implications of the growth of the private, for-profit sector in education and training.

Scope of Research and Methodology

Data on private training companies are difficult to find. Any significant contribution to gauging the scale and characteristics of the private, for-profit training sector - on a national or regional basis - will receive serious consideration. Contributions to methodology that may be replicated are also welcome. (One Network-supported study of commercial for-profit training in Newfoundland is currently underway. Research projects will be strengthened if complementary studies provide the bases for comparative analyses. Interested researchers should contact the Network Coordinator for more information on the Newfoundland project.)

- Proposals should clearly identify the geographic scope of their study.
- Proposals should identify the types of private, for profit training companies that will be examined. The Network does not wish to impose a particular taxonomy. Researchers may wish to organize their research around the client base of private trainers (i.e., corporate seat purchase, individual tuition or government seat purchase contract), the type of training provided (e.g., information technology, trades, technical, etc.), size of operations, etc.
- Proposals should also indicate if they have a strategy to assess the quality of training provided by private, for-profit training companies.
- Proposals should examine the factors that have contributed to the growth of private, for-profit training and the future growth prospects of the private for-profit training sector.

Selected research questions

Investigators are invited to utilise or select from the following list to frame their proposals.

Sector profile:

- How big is the sector, and how has it changed in size and scope in the last 20 years?
- To what factors can the growth of the private for-profit sector be attributed?

- What industries and/or occupations do these private for-profit providers train for?
- Who are their main competitors and in what areas?
- Why do students (or employers) choose private over public or community based providers?
- What are their sources of funds? And what is the proportionate share for each type of funding source? What part of their revenue base is supported by student loans?

Student profile:

- How many students are taking their courses?
- What proportion of students complete their programmes?
- What is the demographic profile of the students? How has it changed in the last 20 years?
- How do tuition costs at private for-profit institutions compare with other providers?
- How do students finance their training at private for-profit institutions? What sources do students and/or their families use? How much comes from student loans?
- What are the trends in debt loads and default rates for students attending private for-profit institutions?
- How accessible are private for-profit providers? Are there equity implications?
- How successful in the labour market are graduates from private for-profit providers?

Training profile:

- What types of training and course content are offered? What are its scope and modes of delivery?
- Are there types of training that are more or less suitable to private supply?
- What is the quality of training that is provided?
- What regulatory requirements are in place for registration? Accreditation? Tuition recovery?
- What mechanisms of accountability are in use and how effective are they?
- Do the regulations serve to encourage or discourage the expansion of private for-profit training?

COMMUNITY BASED PROVIDERS

Community based training (CBT) has a lengthy history in Canada. The Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects defines community based training as “a participant-focused model of training and/or pre-employment preparation. CBT is developed and delivered by registered, not-for-profit organizations.”

CBT has been affected by a number of changes in the training environment, including a shift from programme to project funding and the adoption of different methods of evaluation. The Network seeks proposals for projects to document the changing scope, role and programming priorities of CBT in providing training in Canada. Projects should analyse its contribution to the provision of education and training and assess the implications of policy changes and the changing structure of the training market for CBT.

Scope of Research and Methodology

Data on CBT are limited. Any significant contribution to gauging the scale and characteristics of CBT - on a national or regional basis - will receive serious consideration. Contributions to methodology that may be replicated are also welcome. (One Network-supported study of community-based training in Québec is currently underway. Research projects will be strengthened if complementary studies provide the bases for comparative analyses. Interested researchers should contact the Network Coordinator for more information on the Québec project.)

- Proposals should clearly identify the geographic scope of their study.
- Proposals addressing community-based training at the sector level should indicate the survey method and/or sources to be used.
- Proposals should also indicate if they have a strategy to assess the quality of training provided by CBT providers.
- Proposals should examine the factors that have affected the size and scope of CBT its future prospects.

Selected Research Questions

Investigators are invited to utilise or select from the following list to frame their proposals.

Sector profile:

- How big is the CBT sector, and how has it changed in size and scope in the past 20 years?
- What factors have affected its size and scope of delivery?
- What type of training has typically has been provided by CBT providers?
- Do they compete with other types of providers? In what areas?
- What has been the effect of competition in the training market?
- Why do students (or employers or other agencies) choose community based training?

- What are CBT providers' sources of funds? And what is the proportionate share for each type of funding source?
- What have been the effects of changes in funding formulas?

Student profile:

- How many students are taking courses with community based training providers?
- What proportion of students complete their programmes?
- What are the students' demographic profiles? And what changes, if any, have occurred in their demographic profiles?
- How do tuition costs of CBT providers compare with other providers?
- How do students finance their training at CBT institutions? What sources do students and/or their families use?
- How do CBT providers accommodate students without income supports?
- How accessible are CBT providers? Are there equity implications?
- How successful in the labour market are graduates from CBT providers?

Training profile:

- What types of training and course content are offered? What is its scope and modes of delivery?
- What is the quality of training that is provided?
- What mechanisms of accountability are in use and how effective are they? How have these changed?
- How have changes in (federal, provincial, municipal) programme criteria affected training programmes? What effect have these had on the ability of CBT to provide services to marginalised clients?
- What standards of evaluation have been used to assess community based training programmes? What has been the effect of changes in these standards?
- What has been the effect of funding and programming changes on the type and quality of training programmes offered?

DEVOLUTION AND THE PROVINCES: MODELS, COMPARISONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Among the most significant changes in the Canadian training environment has been the “devolution” of federal government responsibility for training and labour market programmes to provincial and territorial governments. Under Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA), the federal government has transferred funding to the provinces and territories (except Ontario) and given them responsibility for training and labour market programmes.

The draft report of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, “The State of Labour Market Programs and Services in Canada”, raises questions about changes in the modes and levels of funding and their implications for access and equity. The Network seeks projects to identify the effects of devolution on levels and type of funding, types of education and training offered, and the implications for access and equity. Projects should seek to identify the implications of provincial and federal strategies for effective training policy and programmes and for a national “training system”.

Scope of Research and Methodology

Projects are not required to provide a national survey. Appropriate provincial comparisons are encouraged however.

- Proposals for provincial comparisons should indicate and explain the bases for comparison - whether models of LMDAs or other criteria.
- Proposals should indicate the significance of the case study(ies) and the possibility for generalising conclusions.

Selected Research Questions

Investigators are invited to utilise or select from the following list to frame their proposals.

- What have been the provincial strategies in policy, programming and provision?
- What have been the federal government’s responses and subsequent strategies?
- What have been the effects of the LMDAs and government strategies on:
 - The direction of government policies and programmes?
 - Providers of education and training?
 - Participants in education and training and labour market programmes?
 - National training standards and forms of accountability?
 - Funding?
 - Types and scope of education and training offered?
 - Access for designated equity groups?