

Specializations in Public Administration And Business Administration

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Specialization in Public Administration and Business Administration

The Northern Alberta Clearinghouse Project is a partnership of northern colleges who each year identify a number of priority research topics. The partner colleges are Fairview College, Grand Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Lakeland College and Northern Lakes College. The investigation of requirements for program offerings in the field of public administration and business administration in northern Alberta was one such priority topic.

Background

The field of public administration is large and complex. The most obvious groups are in the employment of federal and provincial governments. Municipal governments are also large employers in the public sector. Less visible are those who administer local services such as water facilities and public works. Aboriginal band and community administrators are also considered public administration.

Those who work in the non-government (NGO) sector fall in the definition somewhere between public and business fields. Administrators for charitable organizations, fund raising groups such as the United Way, local Chambers of Commerce and advocacy groups are included in this group. This list is as long as the number of not-for-profit organizations in any community.

Business administration occurs throughout the for-profit sector. Unlike many occupations in the public administration and the non-government sector, a wide range of professional workers require extensive training and certification in order to practice their profession. In addition, requirements for yearly professional upgrading, in order to maintain certification, are common.

Methodology

In order to define the scope of each of the defined occupational groups, representatives of a number of professional organizations, major employers and training providers were contacted. Also, a search for relevant websites was conducted. Training providers supplied information about their major course participants and outlines of training programs.

The goal of this approach was to determine what training was available and accessible and to determine where training needs were identified and were not being met.

Programs Currently Offered

Local Government

The University of Alberta, Faculty of Extension, offers a well-established series of certificate programs for local government officials. Government Studies offers the Local Government Certificate Program (LGCP), the Senior Executive Fellows Program (SEFP), the Information Access and Protection of Privacy Program (IAPP) as well as the National Advanced Certificate in Local Authority Administration (NACLAA) Program.

Under provincial regulations, the LGCP and SEFP serve as the educational standard for professional recognition by the Local Government Administrators Association. The International Institute of Municipal Clerks recognizes Local Government Certificate and Senior Executive Fellows programs. Alberta's real property assessors enroll in selected LGCP courses to complete their professional education requirements.

Other Government Studies programs include the Elected Officials Symposium, and the Banff Refresher Course. Following the municipal election cycle, Government Studies sponsors an Elected Officials Training

Program, a Candidate for Local Office Orientation Program and a conference for newly elected officials.

These programs are offered online at <http://www.munimall.net/>.

Provincial Government

The province's Personnel Administration Office (PAO) has a delivery arrangement for management development programs with the University of Alberta. These programs range in suitability for new entry managers through to issues for senior managers. The design is generic in order to be appropriate across departments.

Professional development for technical staff upgrading is the responsibility of individual departments. Existing offerings of professional associations and post-secondary programs appear to be serving this requirement adequately.

The Training and Development component of Alberta Corporate Services is relatively new and long-range strategic planning is not yet complete. However, the Acting Manager reported that there would be a future requirement for a workshop approach to a range of workplace skills such as conflict resolution, team building and contract management.

The Federal Government

The Canadian Government depends largely on a centralized staff development process located in Ottawa; the Canadian Centre for Management Development. Other programs for federal employees are offered on-line through the Leadership Network.

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC)

IPAC is a national organization for public administration practitioners and academics in the field. Membership comes from all three orders of government and from the academic community. In addition to a considerable research and publication function, it supports local chapters and national dialogue through the sponsorship of conferences and seminars. In Alberta, the local chapters are active only in Calgary and Edmonton. The organization has limited impact outside of the two major centres.

Needs Identified in the Interviews

The Alberta Apprenticeship Blue Seal Program

The Blue Seal Program was initiated by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board as a means to recognize the business skills acquired by the province's journeymen. The rationale for the development of this program was based in the understanding that many tradespeople use business knowledge to operate their own business or acquire their business skills in the course of career progression.

The Board acknowledged the existence of a network of highly credible full-time and continuing education programs throughout Alberta's post-secondary system. With that in mind, the Board was clear in its direction that no new courses or programs should be created to support this initiative.

Applicants for certification must demonstrate mastery of the established competency standards. Consideration is given to completed courses or workshops from any one of the colleges or universities in the province. There is no application examination; the emphasis is on learning outcomes.

Colleges can apply to the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board for accreditation of their existing business programs. To date, Athabasca University, SAIT and NAIT have applied for and received accreditation.

The Athabasca accredited program requires the successful completion of five out of twelve possible course offerings available either in print or on-line format. Prior learning assessments that grant credit for relevant work experience are available. The courses completed can be applied to a further University Certificate in Administration and several Bachelor's degrees.

The NAIT accredited program can be completed in either two 13-week courses or ten 16-hour weekend modules. Journeymen who have completed the NAIT Business Management Certificate are also eligible for the Blue Seal Certification.

The SAIT program is comprised of fourteen scheduled workshops. Each workshop is 15 hours in length and is balanced between theory and practical application.

Complete information about the Blue Seal Certificate program can be found at: www.tradesecrets.org. Go to the "What's New" link.

Professional Associations

Organizations that provide certification and maintain standards were contacted to obtain information concerning continuing education requirements for their members. The organizations included: Certified Management Accountants, Certified General Accountants of Alberta and Chartered Accountants of Alberta.

Certified Management Accountants require post-designation learning of their members, specifically, the acquisition of 30 post-designation learning credits in each year of a five-year block. Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Lakeland College and Keyano College are cited as accredited institutions for the courses.

Further information can be found at the Learning Portal link at the Association's website: www.cma-alberta.com.

Chartered Accountants engage in continuing professional education in one of two streams depending on whether they are public accountants or in private business. The requirements are flexible, allowing members to choose courses, seminars and conferences that are relevant to individual professional needs.

There are two criteria for judging suitability of the learning. The first is that the experience must be relevant to the chartered accountant's current work. The second is that the content must contain significant technical, professionally related academic content. Since the organization has 8000 members, a yearly random audit of individual achievement is conducted, rather than tracking the total membership.

The Certified General Accountants of Alberta requires members to claim 100 continuing education credits over a three-year period. Eligible credits can occur through completion of the Association's own distance learning programs, existing post-secondary programs and relevant seminars. As well, members can claim credit for development and delivery of workplace seminars and courses, related volunteer activity and innovative work-related projects.

Band and Metis Settlement Administration Training

Banff Centre – Aboriginal Leadership and Management Program

This is a well-established program, now entering its thirtieth year of operation.

Leadership Development programs are intended for individuals with cognitive skills at the post-secondary level. The programs on four defined

areas are: building leadership capacity; team leadership and facilitation; leading and managing for results and; leading strategically. The Program is affiliated with the Banff Centre for management. The focus has been on management, change management, performance management, people management, facilitation, planning, critical thinking and creativity. A case study approach is used for instruction.

For the next academic year, new courses to be added will concentrate on the theme of nation building and sovereignty. Courses will include: negotiation skills, Aboriginal Board and Tribal Council governance development, and financial management and accountability.

Complete course outlines are available at the Banff Centre website at:
<http://www.banffcentre.ca/departments/leadership/leadership.asp>.

The Aboriginal Leadership Institute

The Aboriginal Leadership Institute Inc. is based in Winnipeg and operates throughout North America. The Institute's mandate is to "actively promote good governance by identifying needed training and by providing unique educational and skill-building opportunities". The target group is composed of band chiefs, band counselors, administrators and senior executives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations.

Courses offered include topics such as: government-to-government relations, financial management and accountability, tribal law, nation building, media training, and negotiation and dispute resolution. Upcoming seminars will be held in Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Ottawa, Tucson, Kamloops, Thompson, Toronto and Hamilton.

Further information is available at: <http://www.ali.ca/>.

College of the Rockies

The College of the Rockies, in Cranbrook, has added a one-year Management in Aboriginal Communities Major to its Public Administration Certificate. The program was created in response to a request from a local Tribal Council to address the need for First Nation management personnel. Students who complete 30 credits receive a Public Administration Certificate with a major in Management in Aboriginal Communities. Articulation with the Business Administration diploma program allows students to complete an additional 40 credits to qualify for the diploma.

The Certificate program includes courses in Business Communication in Aboriginal Communities, Management Accounting in Not-for-Profit Organizations, Organizational Structures in Aboriginal Communities and Community Analysis and Economic Development. Other courses are standard accounting, computers and business law topics that would be found in their business diploma program.

Results of the Interviews

University of Alberta – Government Studies

Dr. Edd LeSage, Director of Government Studies, expressed interest in entering into discussion with colleges regarding articulation arrangements between his programs and college programs, particularly arts and social science programs. A recently adopted business plan outlines a forthcoming certificate program that has a two year academic content, then a one year internship, followed by a one year academic configuration.

University of Alberta

The University is reviving the former Master in Management Studies that offers a specialty in public administration. There are also plans to partner with Keyano College in the M.B.A. program. While there is a concern about developing a sufficient critical mass of students to sustain the program in the north, the University is optimistic about the possibilities of eventually offering both programs off campus.

Alberta Government: Alberta Central Services

The Acting Manager of Training and Development confirmed that the University of Alberta continues to meet the provincial government's needs for management development training. However, he did identify a number of requirements of line-department field offices.

Provincial employees are aging and retiring. The result is a cohort of new, younger employees who will need exposure to a number of learning opportunities as they progress through their careers. Suggestions were made to offer seminars of one to five days on topics such as team building, leadership, communication, conflict resolution and contract management.

The expense of sending employees from the field to major centres for training is a recurring theme in the north. An additional issue is the small numbers of staff in outlying offices; perhaps insufficient in number to justify a training program. The possibility of partnering with local municipalities to have the necessary numbers could be explored.

Professional Associations

All of the associations contacted indicated that their professional development needs were being met by existing programs both in public colleges and in association sponsored courses.

Municipal Management

Municipal government systems are facing the same demographics as other orders of government. It is estimated that up to 45% of municipal chief administrative officers will retire in the next five years. As with their provincial counterparts, municipal workers will need to acquire workplace skills to complement their technical knowledge.

The training needs of technical workers are reported to be well served by the existing system. Waste water treatment and water treatment training is available through distance learning. Municipal services workers are involved in trades training.

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training – Blue Seal Certificate

Athabasca University, NAIT and SAIT have had existing business programs accredited by the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board. As a result, these programs are promoted on the Apprenticeship and Industry Training website.

The First Nations and Metis Settlements Communities

One single response resulted from multiple telephone calls and voice-mail messages to seven First Nations and Metis communities and organizations. The respondent was very informative and provided all the data for this section. However it is recommended that the following information, as well as any conclusions reached about program opportunities, be tempered with the knowledge that the majority of the research subjects chose not to respond.

The respondent indicated that demand was high for local Band and Metis community members to be trained as entry level administrators. Turnover is high among such staff which contributes to the ongoing high level demand.

The respondent was very supportive of the content outlined in the College of the Rockies program. He indicated that it would be beneficial to promote a one-year program that would be perceived as relatively non-threatening, and that could lead to further certification.

Implications and Discussion

Training support for both business and public administration is generally well established with good participation. However, results of this study identified several areas where there is a need for training.

Workplace skills for provincial and municipal employees will be in demand as the current workforce ages and retires. This is particularly true for the northern region of the province. The representative of the central training agency for the provincial government suggested that he would be pleased to participate in joint sponsorship of seminars offered locally to employees of both orders of government. Seminars mentioned included: team building, leadership, communications, conflict resolution and contract management.

Northern colleges, having established good relationships with neighbouring Aboriginal communities, are in a good position to offer a successful entrylevel band and community administration program. There appears to be an opportunity to respond to a desire to have their own citizens trained to work in administrative capacities.

For those colleges that have an existing business administration diploma program, the development of a “seamless” articulation between a new Aboriginal Communities stream and the second year of the regular program is an interesting possibility.

Colleges that have an existing business administration program, either full-time or through continuing education, could benefit from gaining

accreditation from the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board for certification under the Blue Seal Program. At the very least, promotion of the college program could be advertised as “accredited for Blue Seal certification”. Accredited colleges are also listed on the Apprenticeship and Industry Training website, providing an additional source of college promotion.

Contacts

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