
**Aligning Canada-Alberta Job Grant Usage with Government of Alberta
Priorities: Options for Program Improvements**

Sena Kowalsky, MPA candidate

School of Public Administration

University of Victoria

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- Client:** Mr. Don Gardener, Manager, Strategic Policy
Alberta Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour
- Supervisor:** Dr. Kimberly Speers, Assistant Teaching Professor and MPA Master's
Project Advisor
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria
- Second Reader:** Dr. Bart Cunningham, Professor
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria
- Chair:** Dr. Herman Bakvis, Professor and Graduate Advisor
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research report is to determine how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve to ensure that it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests. The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is a new provincially designed and administered employer-directed program that jointly funds training for new and existing employees. The first fiscal year of the new program was completed on March 31, 2015, thus allowing for an opportunity to analyze the first year's program usage.

Alberta is currently experiencing significant economic and political changes. Low oil prices have shaken the prosperity and low unemployment rates that many Albertans may have previously taken for granted. Moreover, the province elected a new Alberta New Democrat Party majority government in May 2015, and this new political reality means that different priorities and philosophies will be adopted in the Government of Alberta.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant represents a significant transfer of federal funds to the province in support of labour and skills development in Alberta. Analyzing Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage and the new Government of Alberta policy preferences and direction is a means to connect skills development in the province to reflect current provincial government interests.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This formative evaluation research project conducted a needs assessment study through a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were used to assess the alignment of first fiscal year program usage with the new provincial government priorities. As a first step in the needs assessment process, the current state of Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage was analyzed. Through a document and social media review, the desired future state was then determined, based on Government of Alberta policy platforms, speeches, and social media sources. A gap analysis identified discrepancies between the current and desired future state of Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage. Finally, options to consider and recommendations are proposed to help determine how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve to better reflect new Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

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MAIN FINDINGS

Industry and Regional Program Use

First year program usage suggests that the Construction and Manufacturing sectors are large users of the program. Most industry sectors in Alberta do not make considerable use of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. However, there is significant small and medium size business program uptake, along with rural areas being well-represented in program participation.

Employer applicants tend to use the program to train around three employees for just under two weeks each. The average funding amount per trainee is around \$1680 in government contributions, with very few employers seeking overall training contributions above \$200,000 up to the program maximum of \$300,000. Training is taking place under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant from a variety of training providers. The main training organizations used are post-secondary institutions, private trainers, and industry associations.

Trainee and Demographics

Although voluntary to disclose, program usage data indicate that very few trainees under the program self-identify as Aboriginal, visible minority, or as a person with a disability. Men are strongly represented, with around 85 per cent of all active application trainees being male. The program is being used to mostly train Canadians in skilled management and non-management occupations, in addition to a contingent of low-skilled management trainees as well.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is open to new and existing employees. However, the program has been used to almost exclusively train current employees, as opposed to assisting individuals in moving into employment as a result of being trained and hired.

Change in Policy Focus

The new Alberta government direction has shifted to emphasize a more social focus. Narratives tend to be around strong communities and families, as well as support for individuals, Aboriginal Peoples, and women. This social focus does not immediately align with current program usage demonstrated through the demand-driven, employer-oriented nature of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

Current program usage tends to mostly favour individuals who are male and highly skilled in a few particular sectors. Consequently, many groups are not benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to the extent as the broader population in Alberta. Consequently, there are opportunities to shape the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to better reflect emerging Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The following seven recommendations are geared towards evolving the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to align with Government of Alberta priorities. The recommendations are structured into short, medium, and longer term activities.

The first three recommendations begin with the organizational, knowledge, and evaluative base to lead proposed program changes. A new working group, along with activities to analyze developing program-relevant information and monitoring and evaluation activities, is recommended. This organizational structure and activities will contribute to accountability and informed decision-making, while respecting resource constraints.

While there are numerous ways to diversify program trainee usage, recommendations four, five, and six aim to target specific groups or areas where relationships and expertise with other provincial government ministries can be leveraged. Furthermore, proposed targeted trainee groups, specifically women and Aboriginal Peoples, reflect heightened provincial government priorities and interests.

Finally, the seventh recommendation reflects the source of Canada-Alberta Job Grant funding, through the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement with the federal government. By seeking to undertake negotiations with the federal government, the province may be able to constructively alter program funding arrangements to better reflect provincial interests. Furthermore, recent government changes as a result of the October 2015 federal election may further provide an opportunity to revisit the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement funding structure.

Short-term Activities:

1. Form a program policy and administration working group, reporting to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant steering committee, to plan and lead program changes.
2. Monitor and analyze developing Government of Alberta priorities, second year program usage results, and other provinces' best practices, to determine any implications for proposed Canada-Alberta Job Grant programs changes.
3. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, considering a goals-based approach, to ascertain information collection requirements, evaluation questions, and measurement of goal attainment.
4. Engage with the Alberta Status of Women Ministry to develop a plan for and encourage increased gender diversity in program trainees.

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Medium-term Activities:

5. In partnership with Alberta Aboriginal Relations, explore engagement, consultation, partnerships, incentives, pilots, and government commitments, to encourage Aboriginal trainee participation in the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.
6. In conjunction with Alberta Advanced Education, analyze out-of-province training requests to determine any indications of structural unmet training needs within Alberta.

Longer-term Activities:

7. Negotiate funding changes to the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement with the Government of Canada, taking into consideration federal priorities, other provincial/territorial government interests, diverting funding to other priorities, and any Agreement changes to support greater gender, Aboriginal, and other diversity in program usage.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research report is provide options to consider and recommendations to explore how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve to ensure that it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

Employment plays an important role in society, contributing to economic and social quality of life. People make decisions to devote vast amounts of resources towards education, often with an interest in obtaining suitable future employment. Most individuals, for vast periods of their life, seek and obtain some sort of employment. As labour market participants, these workers' skills play an important role in finding and keeping jobs. Employers demand certain skills, and employees have certain skills to supply.

At the crux of the skills supply and demand interaction are government attempts to shape and encourage desired labour market outcomes. Job training programs are at the centre of labour market policy in most developed countries (Osikominu, 2013, p. 313). The Canada-Alberta Job Grant was launched October 9, 2014 (GoC, 2014, para. 1), and is Alberta's main skills development program. By jointly funding employer-demanded training, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant seeks to encourage skills development and employment of Albertans (Government of Canada (GoC), 2014, para. 2).

Since the launch of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, considerable political and economic changes have taken place in Alberta. With the election of an Alberta New Democrat Party (NDP) majority government, the May 2015 provincial election resulted in the first governing party change in Alberta in 44 years ("Alberta Election", 2015, para. 6). At the same time, low oil prices have weakened the Alberta economy, resulting in a slowing labour market, and reduced earnings and spending (Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, 2015, p. 1).

By conducting a formative evaluation utilizing a needs analysis framework, the completion of the first fiscal year of program administration provides an opportunity to assess program usage. It also is an opportune time to analyze program usage in relation to newly developing provincial government priorities. Determining any gaps between actual and desired program usage sets the stage to suggest program policy options to consider and recommendations to align Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage with Government of Alberta priorities.

1.1 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The main problem being addressed in this report is the lack of analysis in determining how Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage can better reflect new Government of Alberta priorities. As of March 31, 2015, the first fiscal year of program implementation was complete, providing data to consider for the aforementioned problem.

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Program policy and design for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is employer-focused in nature, with employers being applicants to the program. The employer is the decision maker in terms of choosing what eligible training new and existing employees will undertake. Analyzing program usage data will allow for an understanding of how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is being used under this demand-driven policy design.

Alongside, the outcome of the May 2015 Alberta provincial election resulted in a newly formed government. The new Alberta NDP majority government has differing priorities and interests. Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage may or may not reflect newly developing provincial government focus. By addressing the research problem, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can be improved to better align with Government of Alberta priorities and interests. Being Alberta's main skills training program, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant needs to be leveraged to comprehensively reflect new and emerging Government of Alberta priorities.

1.2 PROJECT CLIENT

The client for this project is Mr. Don Gardener, Manager, Strategic Policy, in the Labour Force Policy and Strategies branch of the Alberta Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour. Mr. Gardener's area was responsible for creating the Alberta program policy and design for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

A separate work area from Mr. Gardener administers the program. Mr. Gardener sits on the steering committee for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. His team is also responsible for Canada-Alberta Job Grant policy development and interpretation. Being a new program, a formative evaluation assessing program usage alignment with government priorities will allow for improved understanding of how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is being used and how it can improve.

The results from answering this project's research questions will be options to consider and recommendations that can be used by Mr. Gardener's Strategic Policy team to form the basis for changes for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Given the resource constraints and competing priorities in Mr. Gardener's work area, this project provides an opportunity to consider formative evaluation program policy research questions that would not have otherwise been considered.

1.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to provide options to consider and recommendations to improve the Canada-Alberta Job Grant as a result of analysing discrepancies between first fiscal year program usage characteristics and new Government of Alberta priorities and interests. A needs analysis framework will be utilized to complete this formative evaluation.

The main research question is: How can the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program improve to ensure it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests?

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The following three secondary research questions support the primary research question and are expected to be answered through this project:

1. What are the characteristics of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage for the first fiscal year?
2. What are Government and Alberta priorities and interests that are relevant to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant?
3. Are Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage characteristics reflective of Government of Alberta priorities and interests?

1.4 BACKGROUND

The background section of this report provides contextual understanding in how federal and provincial developments led to the eventual creation of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Subsequently, the program and application process is described.

1.4.1 FUNDING AGREEMENT AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The instigation of a new federally funded, provincially designed and administered skills training program began with the federal government. As part of the 2013 Economic Action Plan, the Government of Canada originally announced its intention to “...transform skills training in Canada...” (GoC, n.d., para. 1). The main skills training funding agreements between the federal government and the provinces, known as Labour Market Agreements, were expiring in March 2014 (GoC, n.d., para. 2).

The expiration of Alberta’s Labour Market Agreement opened up an opportunity for the federal and Alberta provincial governments to negotiate a new funding agreement. As a result of these negotiations, the Governments of Canada and Alberta signed the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement on April 24, 2014 (Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), 2015).

The Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement represents mutual agreement on labour market funding and programming in Alberta. The Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement sets out a shared vision, responsibilities, and funding amounts provided to Alberta with respect to labour market development programming (ESDC, 2014). Both parties “...share a common vision to create a strong, resilient, and adaptable workforce with the skills needed to succeed in Canada’s economy” (ESDC, 2014, para. 4), with Alberta being primarily responsible for labour market program design and delivery (para. 5).

Under the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement, the Government of Alberta then developed the provincial program policy necessary to create and launch the Canada-Alberta Job Grant in Fall 2014.

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1.4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is an employer-driven training program, with training jointly funded by the employer and government (Government of Alberta, 2015a). In terms of funding amounts: "...employers will cover a minimum of one-third of direct training costs, with up to a maximum of \$10,000 in government contributions" (Government of Alberta, 2015a). For example, an employer could fund a new or existing employee to take \$9000 in project management training, with the employer paying for \$3000, and the government funding \$6000 of the training costs.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant demarcates a change in government training policy, moving from a focus in supply-side training policy over to a demand-driven model. This demand-driven approach to skills development means that employers are applicants to the program and decide who and what type of training will take place for new and existing employees. Funding for skills training programs now flows through the employer, rather than directly to a training institution or individual.

Annual fiscal year funding for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant will reach a peak of \$34 million in 2017-18 (Government of Alberta, 2015b). Figure one illustrates the process for an employer participating in the Canada-Alberta Job Grant for the full duration of the program lifecycle. The figure also highlights how training under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is employer instigated and directed.

The process is broken up into four stages:

- Pre-application;
- Application;
- Training and partial reimbursement; and
- Training completion and final reimbursement.

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Canada-Alberta Job Grant Application Process

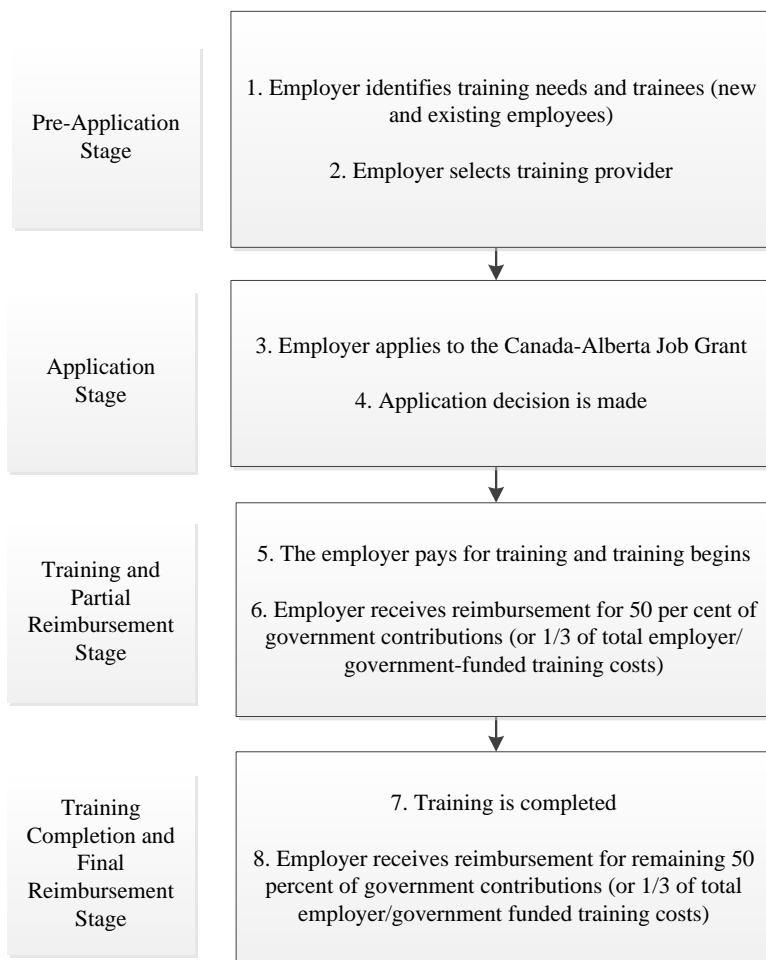


Figure 1 – Canada-Alberta Job Grant application process.

Adapted from “Canada-Alberta Job Grant: Introduction and Eligibility”, by the Government of Alberta (2014).

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1.5 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

The subsequent sections of this report commences with a literature review. The literature begins with exploring concepts relating to program evaluation, formative evaluations, and needs assessments, in order to provide a theoretical foundation to conduct the research in this report. Following, the literature review expands to provide a foundation in private sector training-related economic theory, as well as economic outcomes related to private sector training decisions. This focus supports the client's strategic policy area in further understanding the theoretical foundation and economic outcomes for employers making training decisions. This is done from an economic demand-side, employer-driven perspective.

Following the literature review, a conceptual model is presented. Methodology is described, detailing the completion of a formative evaluation through the use of a needs assessment framework. Data collection methodology is elucidated, then moving onto the data analysis. The three phases of a needs assessment are described, as well as how the primary and secondary research questions align with each phase. Finally, the project limitations and delimitations section discusses the project scope and considerations involved in defining the study.

The findings chapter addresses the first two secondary research questions. The first year usage of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is broken down by employer applicants, trainees, and program and training usage. Following, a document and social media review provides evidence of the Government of Alberta's priorities and interests. An overall summary of government priorities is provided, along with various economic and social interests in greater detail.

The discussion and analysis section of this report begins with a gap analysis, linking current program usage, desired usage as evidenced by Government of Alberta priorities, and any consequently determined discrepancies. Gap analysis results are provided in complementary descriptive and table form.

Based on the previous research, options to consider and recommendations are provided. The options are categorized by theme, with corresponding suggestions for each area. The ensuing recommendations are streamlined, and reflect a more practical and targeted approach for the client to consider.

A conclusion then completes the main body of the report. References and appendices are also provided. The appendices detail a list of characteristics of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage of interest to this project, program usage data tables, and a listing of resources reviewed to determine current government interests and priorities.

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2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 PURPOSE AND FOCUS

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an understanding of scholarly research in order provide a foundation for research analysis. In addition, the literature also informs academic knowledge related to private sector training-related economic labour theory and economic outcomes related to private sector training decisions. This area of concentration was also chosen with the goal of expanding the knowledge of policy analysts who make program policy decisions for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. With the structure of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant being demand-side focused (i.e. – employer-driven), this literature review considers employer decision making regarding training and outcomes.

The focus of this literature review begins with a broad understanding of program evaluation, and then narrows in on formative evaluations in particular. The concept of a needs assessment in relation to formative evaluations is also discussed. Following, human capital theory is explained, providing an economic theory foundation in predicating how employers make decisions to train employees. Subsequently, studies that seek to demonstrate outcomes of private sector training are discussed.

The following search words were used for this literature review: **program evaluation, formative program evaluation, needs assessment, human capital theory, training, employer sponsored training, government sponsored training, Canada Job Grant, and training programs Canada**. Accessed through the Government of Alberta, all databases contained in EBSCOhost were used, along with University of Victoria library academic database sources.

2.2 PROGRAM EVALUATION

While there is no agreed upon definition for the term evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, p. 6, 2011), an early definition in the field was described by Scriven (1967) (as cited in Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011) as “...judging the worth or merit of something” (p. 7). Little and Hagedorn (1976) characterize evaluation in a manner as “...a comparison of actual program operations and results against a standard” (p. 3). Further expanding terms, Bustos and Arostegui (2012) define program evaluation as a “...process to collect information intended to value quality, achievements, and shortcomings of programs to support decision making...in order to improve the outcomes of the programs evaluated” (p. 169).

Program evaluations within an environment balancing resource constraints and cutbacks are increasingly common. Evaluation provides a useful tool when program managers need to make decisions to cut or create new programs during times of scarce resources (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, p. 4, 2011). Mertens and Wilson (2012, p. 528) provide a reminder that political factors can loom over evaluations, including having direct budgetary implications.

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Posavac and Carey (2011, p. 159) emphasize that that qualitative and quantitative methods should be used in complementary ways. Bamberger, Tarsilla, and Hesse-Biber (2016) highlight the importance of moving beyond evaluating intended objectives and to consider evaluating unintended outcomes as well (p. 2), as it can influence equitable access to program usage (p. 6). Amongst many qualitative evaluation methods, Posavac and Carey (2011, p. 152) emphasize examining documents, such as official and unofficial records, as it can assist evaluators in understanding the intended program functionality.

2.3 FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Program evaluation is often categorized into planning, formative, and summative evaluation areas (Yoon et al., 2015, p. 1743). The separation of formative and summative evaluations was originally distinguished by Scriven (1967) (as cited in Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011, p. 20). A formative evaluation can be described as "...an evaluation designed to provide feedback and advice for improving a program (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorne, 2013, p. 485). In contrast, a summative evaluation generally informs decision making done towards the end of a program (Mathison, 2005, p. 403). Chambers (1994, p. 10) distinguishes between purpose and timing, suggesting that the categorization as a formative evaluation should be based on the use of the evaluation information.

Some common reasons to conduct a formative evaluation involve gaining insight into program relevance, effectiveness, appropriateness, or need (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorne, 2013, p. 199). Formative evaluations allow for an understanding of how a program is unfolding and the ability to make decisions about midcourse corrections (Hall, Freeman, & Roulston, 2014, p. 151). Similarly, Stetler et al. (2006, p. 7) emphasize formative evaluations as being important to early stage identification of issues that may require modifications, in addition to contributing to the likelihood of credible summative evaluation results regarding said changes.

Although formative evaluation is widely regarded, there are research gaps in terms of the use of formative evaluation findings (Brown & Kiernan, 2000, p. 129). Chambers (1994, pp. 10-11) suggests that there may be various reasons for intended or unintended ineffectual use of formative evaluation results, including administrative difficulties, budget constraints, for monitoring purposes only, or politics. In order to better solve social problems, Reichardt (1994, p. 280) argues that formative evaluators must move beyond solely program assessment over to program creation as well. When dealing with negative feedback about aspects of a program, Brown and Kiernan (2002, p. 141) suggest for evaluators to exercise care when interpreting criticism.

2.4 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Deemed an important part of program evaluation (p. 15), Barrett and Sorensen (2015) define a needs assessment as a "systematic determination of level and/or type of need" (p. 15).

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Altschuld and Kumar (2005) connect the concept of a needs assessments to resources and improvements, defining the term as "...a process or systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about program or organizational improvement or allocation of resources" (p. 276).

McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) comment that "Needs assessments are a practical, increasingly common part of evaluation-related activities that are conducted in public and non-profit sectors" (p. 227). Needs assessments can provide evidence for decisions in how services are offered, often within an environment of fiscal restraints and political influences (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 227).

Little and Hagedorn (1976, pp. 99-122) break up needs assessments into six methodology types: key informant, community forum, nominal group approach, rates-under-treatment, social indicator approach, and epidemiologic surveys. In particular, Barrett and Sorensen (2015, p. 17) describe the rates-under-treatment needs assessment approach as involving the analysis of current program usage, suggesting that less subjectivity and the evaluation of current users as advantages.

2.5 HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

Human capital theory is the main perspective used in understanding the economics of private sector training (Leuven, 2005, p. 91). Originally synthesized by Becker in 1962, human capital can be defined as "...the collection of productive skills embodied in a person that can be used to generate earnings in the labour market..." (Weiss, 2015, p. 27). The concept of human capital suggests that greater understanding of human behaviour can be obtained through considering people as parallel to a form of capital (Chiswick, 2007, p. 5). In 1974, Jacob Mincer contributed to human capital theory by incorporating the concept of on-the-job training (Teixeira, 2011, p. 686). Barron and Loewenstein (1985, p. 431) characterize human capital theory as emphasizing schooling and on-the-job training as productivity enhancing.

Human capital theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding whether the private sector will invest in training for employees. With training being viewed as an investment, there must be sufficient motivation for private sector employers to expend resources on training. Employers therefore consider perceived or actual financial benefits when deciding whether or not to train employees.

Human capital theory differentiates between general and firm-specific training (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998, p. 79). General training will make a worker more productive and desirable to other employers, whereas specific training involves productivity improvements applicable to only a specific employer (Acemoglu & Pischke, 1998, p. 79). Human capital theory suggests that firms would not generally pay for general training (Becker, 1962, p. 13), while firms would share the cost with employees in providing firm-specific training (Weiss, 2015, p. 28).

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2.6 PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

With Human Capital theory's focus on productivity, it would be expected that increased workplace-related training would contribute to improved productivity and likely consequent economic outcomes; however, there is mixed evidence in economic training literature regarding employer economic benefits resulting from training investments. In general, research tends to lean towards some economic benefit at the organizational level resulting from employee training.

Barron, Black, and Loewenstein (1989, p. 16) found that on-the-job training is a strong factor impacting productivity growth. Likewise, analysis from Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) summarize that "...many studies have gathered support for the benefits of training for organizations...", including productivity and profitability (p. 459). Although less optimistic, Tharenou et al. (2007, p. 270) found the relationship between training and financial performance to be generally weakly related.

2.6.1 PRODUCTIVITY AND INDUSTRY SECTORS

Analysis from Percival, Cozzarin, and Formanek (2013, p. 29) found that training improved productivity for 12 out of 14 Canadian industries studied; however, only four industries showed a positive return on investment. While such results may suggest that many employers would not benefit from investing in training, Percival, Cozzarin, and Formanek (2013, p. 29) offer an explanation that training is required to keep pace with technological development and at least maintain current labour productivity levels.

2.6.2 RESEARCH GAPS: TRAINING RETURNS AT THE EMPLOYER LEVEL

Overall, there tends to be a research gap in terms of understanding economic results related to training decisions at the employer/organizational level.

In terms of evaluating training results, there has been considerably less research done at the employer level (Arago-Sanchez et al., 2003, p. 975). In a similar vein, Tharenou et al. (2007) confirm that the "...effects of training on results criteria remains sparse, especially at the organization level of analysis" (p. 252). Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) suggest that further research is needed on how individual training level benefits can transfer to the organizational level (pp. 466-467). Similarly, from a financial perspective, most studies related to training and financial return and productivity tend to focus on the macro or individual level (Percival, Cozzarin, & Formanek, 2013, p. 22).

In a meta-analysis of studies on training and organizational level outcomes, Tharenou et al. (2007, p. 255) point out challenges involving assessing studies due to lack of consistency in methodology, key variable measurement, and data analysis. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) comment that training research is increasingly broken up into a variety of academic areas (pp. 452-453). More specifically, research on training and organizational-level outcomes is fragmented in

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multiple disciplines and lacks a coherent direction (Tharenou et al., 2007, p. 267). Consequently, there are opportunities for researchers to improve understanding of the financial results of workplace training at the organizational level.

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2.7 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The following depicts the conceptual model that will be used for this formative program evaluation research, integrating the three stages of the needs assessment framework. The current state of the program, which details program usage characteristics, is found in the Phase I box of the conceptual model. The next section of the conceptual model is the Phase II: Ideal Future State box. This box details the various policy areas that embody Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

These two sections correlate with the first two phases in a needs assessment framework. An arrow then joins the two sections together, following along to sections prioritizing needs and a gap analysis. This represents determining what prioritized discrepancies exist between Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage (Phase I) and Government of Alberta priorities and interests (Phase II). As a result, the arrow in the conceptual model then moves onto Phase III, which involves developing solutions as a result of the prioritized gap analysis input. This correlates with options and recommendations.

See Appendix 1 for expanded data elements for Phase I characteristics of Canada-Alberta Job Grant Usage.

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Needs Assessment Framework

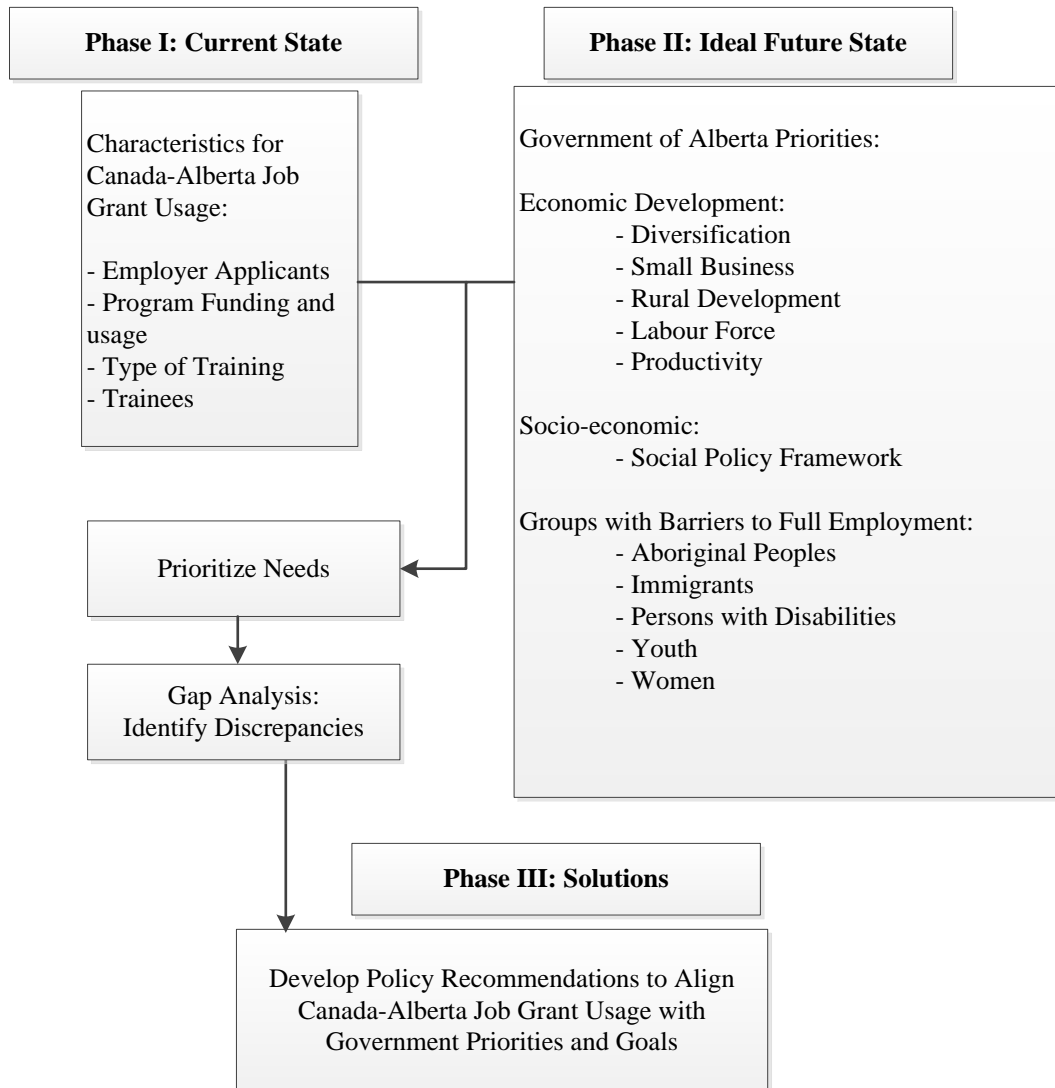


Figure 2 – Conceptual model for research project.

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3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGY

In completing a formative evaluation of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, a needs assessment approach was used to conduct this research. Altschuld and Kumar (2010, p. 20) describe a needs assessment as a process involving identifying and prioritizing needs, developing needs-based decisions, allocating resources, and finally implementing actions to address the underlying needs. A needs assessment can be broken up into three phases (Altschuld & Kumar, 2010, p. 22):

1. Phase I – Pre-assessment: Determine areas of focus/concern and current information
2. Phase II – Assessment: Collect new information and assess prioritized needs causally to potential solutions
3. Phase III – Post-assessment: Design and implement solutions to needs

The needs assessment for this project used a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to assess the alignment of first fiscal year program usage with Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

To understand how the program and Government of Alberta priorities can better align, an understanding of program usage characteristics for first fiscal year usage was required. Subsequently, Government of Alberta priorities and interests were identified. The program usage and government priorities then formed the basis for a gap analysis and to improve understanding of any program usage discrepancies. These gaps then informed the development of program policy options to consider and recommendations of how the program could adjust to better align with government priorities.

A needs assessment model was helpful in providing a systematic framework to develop solutions to bridge the current and ideal state of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Being a focused process, a needs assessment supports clarity in determining specific areas of concern. Rather than attempting to formatively evaluate all aspects of the program, the needs assessment provides an avenue for address concerns with specific program elements.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

An ethics application for this research project was approved on July 31, 2015 by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. Data were collected for two areas for this research project: Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage and for a document and social media review.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage involves data from October 9, 2015 to March 31, 2015. Focusing on aggregate use, the target population was anonymized employers and

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anonymized trainees. Data were extracted from a database by the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program manager, put into Excel, and was reviewed and stripped of any individually identifying characteristics by a colleague. In addition, the data collection process was overseen by this research report's client as well.

For the document and social media review, an examination of government-related text and social media sources took place. Organized by ministerial area, the Alberta NDP election platform, swearing-in speech, official biographies, Government of Alberta news announcements, speeches, and Twitter feeds were reviewed. Documents and social media activities were reviewed for evidence of government interest in a variety of priority areas, and were organized into Table 2 *Summary of Government Priorities and Interests*. Further, see Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of document and social media areas reviewed, organized by ministry and date.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The follow describes how the research questions for this project link to the needs assessment phases for this formative evaluation.

3.31 PHASE I – PRE-ASSESSMENT

This phase answered the following secondary research question: What are the characteristics of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage for the first fiscal year?

The current state of the program was analyzed using data on Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage for the October 9, 2014 to March 31, 2015 period.

3.32 PHASE II – ASSESSMENT

This phase addressed the final two secondary research questions. The first secondary research question answered in Phase II of the needs assessment was: What are Government and Alberta priorities and interests that are relevant to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant?

A document and social media review of Alberta's economic, labour force, social, and any broad provincial priorities/strategies took place. These documents shape the future state of what priorities the Government of Alberta may consider in relation to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. These Government of Alberta documents are available to the public.

Next, a gap analysis informed the second secondary research question for this needs assessment phase: Are Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage characteristics reflective of Government of Alberta priorities and interests?

As part of the needs assessment, discrepancies between the current state of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage and future state of how usage should look (based on Government of

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Alberta priorities) were identified through a gap analysis. Any discrepancies will then be prioritized based on government interest and applicability to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

3.33 PHASE III – POST-ASSESSMENT

This final needs assessment phase answered the overall research question: How can the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program improve to ensure it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests?

Decisions were made, in the form of options to consider and recommendations, to resolve the needs identified in the Phase II assessment. These options aimed to provide suggestions on how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve in order to better meet Government of Alberta priorities.

3.4 PROJECT LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

3.4.1 LIMITATIONS

Limitations are possible weaknesses in a study that a researcher cannot control (Simon, 2011, p. 2). Further, these uncontrollable shortcomings or influences can confine a study's methodology and conclusions (Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS), n.d., para. 2).

A study considering a specific time period is dependent upon conditions taking place during said duration (Simon, 2011, p. 2). As such, oil price fluctuations and related layoffs in Alberta may have impacted which employers made use of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant during the program's first fiscal year. If Alberta's economy in the future is markedly different from the period being considered in the analysis, the resulting program improvement recommendations may not be as applicable.

There are complexities in regards to this being the first year of governing and unprecedented nature of Alberta's new government. Some government priorities may not exist yet, or are in the process of being articulated. Further, the government's response to Alberta's economic climate may alter previously expressed priorities. The dynamic nature of any potential government priority and interest shifts or changes may impact the applicability of research conclusions.

3.4.2 DELIMITATIONS

Simon (2011, p. 2) describes delimitations as controllable features of a study that limit scope and define boundaries. Through describing the parameters of the research, articulating delimitations is an opportunity to clarify why a researcher has chosen to not undertake certain activities, literature reviews, and methodological procedures (BCPS, n.d., paras. 5-6).

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The information used in the analysis will be data from first fiscal year program use, as well as documented government positions produced through a document and social media review. The context of the analysis will be Alberta-specific, and any usage results related to the Canada Job Grant in other Canadian jurisdictions will not be considered.

Program usage is demonstrated through data captured through actual program use, and does not explore why program applicants make such decisions. No program applicants or trainees were contacted for this research study. Given this focus, other aspects of the program that could be evaluated, such as internal staff experiences and second year program usage, will not be considered. In addition, this research does not involve conducting a training needs analysis. The development of options to consider and recommendations will be considered through a government-directed perspective.

The government document and social media review will primarily consider government information sources produced between May 5, 2015 and October 15, 2016. Additional documents relevant to the timelines, such as election platform or previously published government strategies will be considered as well.

Overall, the premise of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program (i.e. – the appropriateness of employer-directed and jointly-funded training) is not being evaluated. Any developed options to consider and recommendations will seek to work within or expand on fundamental program design in a complementary manner.

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4.0 FINDINGS

The following provides a description of research findings for the first fiscal year usage of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant and an explanation of Government of Alberta priorities. Subsequently, findings from the document and literature are explained, detailing Government of Alberta priorities and interests for a variety of policy subject matter areas.

4.1 CURRENT STATE: CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT FIRST FISCAL YEAR PROGRAM USAGE

Phase I of the needs assessment answers the following secondary research question: What are the characteristics of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage for the first fiscal year?

4.1.1 CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT PROGRAM USAGE HIGHLIGHTS

INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL PROGRAM USE

In terms of employer sectors, program usage is concentrated to a few industries, namely Construction, Manufacturing, and Healthcare and Social Assistance. The private sector is likely making greater use of the program compared to the non-profit sector. Small and medium employers make up the majority of program applicants. There does not appear to be any bias in terms of small and medium employers being more likely to be declined in the application process in comparison to large employers. Employers in both small and large municipalities are taking advantage of the program.

Employers tend to be using the program to train a few employees each, with the average funding request per employee far lower than the maximum allowed (\$10,000). Training tends to be for just under two weeks, and almost one-fifth of all active application training requests involve training taking place outside of Alberta.

There is a diversity in types of educational providers that are requested as trainers under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Post-secondary institutions were the most common training providers, followed by private trainers, and then industry associations.

TRAINEE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, trainees in the program tend to be highly skilled, mostly male Canadian employees in non-management and management occupations. In addition to existing employees, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is intended to assist unemployed individuals to become employed through training and subsequent hiring; however, the program is generally not being used for this purpose. The vast majority of individuals accessing training opportunities are already employed, and mostly higher skilled from a variety of age ranges. One exception is training for a concentration of lower skilled management occupations. Women, Aboriginal Peoples, and Persons with Disabilities are all under-represented as trainees benefiting from the program.

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4.1.2 EMPLOYER APPLICANTS

In total, 1286 applications involving 3841 trainees were received for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant from October 9, 2014 to March 31, 2015. Table 1 provides an overview of the breakdown in applications by following three stages in the program lifecycle. Of these applications, 172 or 13.4 per cent, have completed all training and received full reimbursement of training costs. Stages are broken down by the following:

- **Stage one: Application**
 - a. Applicants must be approved in order to move to stage two.
- **Stage two: Reimbursement**
 - b. Employers must successfully apply for partial reimbursement of training costs in order to move to stage three.
- **Stage three: Completion**
 - c. Employers must successfully apply for reimbursement of remaining eligible training costs in order to fully complete the program.

Table 1 *Breakdown of All Applications by Program Stage*

		Stage 1: Application	Stage 2: Reimbursement	Stage 3: Completion	Completely Done
	Received	Approved	Approved	Approved	
Initially in this category	1286	1286	554	254	172
Not processed yet		379	186	46	
Forms rejected, declined, incomplete, or withdrawn		353	114	36	

In Appendix 2, see Table 4 for further count breakdowns within the three stages.

In current state program usage analysis, the terms “active” applications versus all applications are used. Active applications are defined as applications that are in the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program lifecycle that have not been rejected, declined, been deemed incomplete, or withdrawn at any point in the process. Active applications include forms that are waiting to be processed.

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INDUSTRY SECTOR

Usage of the Canada-Alberta job grant is concentrated in certain sectors. The highest sector usage is Construction, with 20.9 per cent of all applications. Manufacturing makes up a further 11 per cent of applicants, and Healthcare and Social Assistance account for 10.5 per cent of applications. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction make up 7.5 per cent of applications.

Many industry sectors do not make substantive use of the program. Of the twenty industry categories, fourteen sectors make up less than five per cent each of program applications.

A comparison of industry sector breakdown by all applications versus only active applications yields a fairly similar breakdown. This suggests that certain sectors are not disproportionately more likely to have applications be unsuccessful.

Employers classified as Other Services make up 13.0 per cent of applicants. Examples of businesses classified as Other Services include: animal hospitals, boiler services, computer services, automotive services, power equipment services, oilfield services, biotechnology, and disability support services. In some instances, employers may be incorrectly classified under Other Services, when more appropriate sector categorization could apply. Additionally, the industry categorization used is federal in scope, and may not as easily capture the unique sector breakdown of Alberta's economy.

In Appendix 2, see Table 5 – *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Industry Sector* for further information on industry sector.

PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT PROGRAM USAGE

Only private and non-profit entities are eligible to apply to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant; yet, the program application form does not have a field for applicants to state that they are non-profit or private. While information is captured to verify that the applicant operates in Alberta and is not a public organization, it is problematic to determine the exact breakdown between private and non-profit applicants. Determining this would require manually checking each applicant to verify organizational status through their Alberta Corporate Access Number (or approximating a category based on organizational name). Despite this difficulty, nonetheless, a preliminary assessment suggests that private sector users make up the majority of Canada-Alberta Job Grant users, rather than non-profits.

EMPLOYER APPLICANT SIZE

Small and medium-sized employers make up the majority of applicants under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Small employers, with 1-50 employees, make up a total of 40.6 per cent of all program applications. Medium employers, with 51-150 of employees, are a further

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28.7 per cent off applications. There is no material difference between employer size breakdown for all applications versus only active applications. Consequently, there does not appear to be any trend in terms of a particular size of business (e.g. – smaller businesses) being over-represented in terms of unsuccessful applications.

In Appendix 2, see Table 6 – *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Employer Size* for further information.

EMPLOYER LOCATION

Employers in both small and large municipalities are taking advantage of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Around one-third (32.3 per cent) of all applications under the program originate from businesses found in small municipalities with populations of less than 25,000 each. The remaining around two-thirds (67.7 per cent) originate from larger municipalities. Larger municipalities with populations over 25,000 each are Airdrie, Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc and County, Red Deer and County, and St. Albert.

Using the proportional population distribution found in Alberta Municipal Affairs' 2014 Population List as a comparison, there is a slight over-representation of program applications from larger municipalities (58 per cent of the population, versus 67.7 per cent of applicants). There is no material difference between small and large municipal distribution between all applications and only active applications; accordingly, there is no observed likelihood of employers from small municipalities being more likely to be unsuccessful.

See Appendix 2, Table 7 – *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Employer Geographical Location* for further information.

4.1.3 TRAINING

TRAINING PROVIDER TYPE

Training is taking place under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant through a variety of training providers. A total of 1545 training providers were applied for under active applications (note: applications can request training from more than one training provider). The largest training provider for active applications is post-secondary institutions, at 45.5 per cent. Private training accounts for 29.1 per cent of training providers, with industry associations following at 21.4 per cent. The remaining breakdowns of training provider types are private vocational schools and unions at 3.9 per cent and 0.1 per cent, respectively.

In Appendix 2, see Table 8 – *Count and Breakdown of Training Provider Type* for further information.

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TRAINING FUNDING CAPS

There is a maximum of \$300,000 per year in government training contributions per employer. It is not common for employers to reach the maximum in allowable funding per employer under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. For the first fiscal year, only two employers applied for funding above \$200,000. Eight employers applied for total funding of between \$100,000 to \$200,000.

TRAINING USAGE PER APPLICATION

Overall, active program applications tend to be used to train a few employees, with funding requests far lower than the maximum allowable (\$10,000 per trainee).

For active applications, there was an average of 3.3 trainees per Canada-Alberta Job Grant application. The minimum trainee funding requested was \$250, and the maximum was \$36,000. The average funding amount per trainee was \$1681.21 in government contributions. A total of \$4,329,116 in government training funding was requested for active applications.

For duration of training, the average number of hours of training per trainee for active applications was 73.7 hours, representing around 1.8 weeks. However, some caution should be used to interpret this average, as there were some data outliers (e.g. – one thousand hours of training each for seven trainees for one application).

TRAINING OUTSIDE OF ALBERTA

Employers are using the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to obtain training not found within Alberta. Canada-Alberta Job Grant training can only take place outside of the province when similar training is not available in Alberta. For active applications, 10.6 per cent of training providers are located outside Alberta but within Canada, with Ontario and British Columbia being most common. A further 6.8 per cent are located in the United States. This results in a total of 17.4 per cent of all training providers prospectively providing training outside of Alberta.

Some out-of-province training requests tended to be for very specialized skill areas, such as aerospace engineering, environmental regulations, and cathodic protection. In some instances, training was for “train the trainer”-style training, which may indicate that skills developed outside of Alberta would then be further dispersed within the province.

See Table 16 – *Count and Breakdown of Training Providers by Location* for further information.

4.1.4 TRAINEES AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, trainees in the program tend to be highly skilled, mostly male Canadian employees in non-management and management occupations. The following provides further details regarding Canada-Alberta Job grant trainees.

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PRE- AND POST-TRAINING EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is intended to train new and existing employees. For new employees, employers would train a previously unemployed individual, with the intention to hire after the training is completed. This is meant to assist employers experiencing skills shortages by training individuals in the desired skill set, as well as to assist unemployed Albertans in getting into the workforce.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is assisting very few unemployed individuals in moving to employment due to employer-directed training. For all applications to the program, only 11 individuals out of a total of 3841 prospective trainees identified as unemployed as their pre-training employment status.

Post-training response rates for employment status were low. Only 12.8 per cent of post-training employment statuses were reported. Consequently, it is difficult to draw conclusions from such a small number of responses; nonetheless, it is likely that most trainees continued to be employed after completing training under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

See Appendix 2, Table 9 – *Count of Pre-Training and Post-Training Employment Statuses, and Non-Response Rates* for further information.

TRAINEE OCCUPATIONAL SKILL LEVEL

The majority of trainees under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant work in occupations that are classified as highly skilled under Canada's National Occupational Classification (NOC) system. Consequently, the program tends to fund training for individuals who are already highly skilled.

For active application non-management trainees, 68 per cent of all trainees are in occupations classified at the highest skills level (NOC level A). For active application management trainees, 53 per cent of all trainees are classified at NOC-A as well. The program is also being used to train lower skilled (NOC-D) male management trainees, accounting for 25 per cent of active application management trainees.

Many different types of training were requested under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. On the whole, training requests tended to be geared more so towards technical skills, as opposed to soft skills. Some examples of training requests included commercial class driver training, meat cutting, project management (in particular with a construction sector focus), first aid, computer skills, and accounting-related courses.

See Appendix 2, Table 13 – *Count and Breakdown of Active Application Male and Female Non-manager and Manager Trainee Occupations by National Occupational Classification* for further information.

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TRAINEE AGES

Individuals from a variety of age groups are being trained under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. From those trainees that disclosed age, the 30-39 years old age range had the largest percentage of trainees involved in active applications, at 32.8 per cent. The second largest age range was 20-29 years old with 25.9 per cent, followed by 40-49 year olds at 23.1 per cent. Some caution should be exercised in reviewing age breakdowns, as the response rate for trainee ages was only 29.4 per cent for active applications.

See Appendix 2, Table 10 – *Count of Trainee Age Ranges for Active and All Applications, and Non-Response Rates* for further information.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Few trainees have received non-parental Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in the past three years. A total of 78 trainees involved in applications under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant have declared to have claimed non-parental EI benefits in the last three years. Out of a total of 3841 total trainees for all applications, this represents 2.1 per cent of prospective trainees formerly claiming EI. Similar to pre-training employment status reporting, this suggests that trainees involved in the Canada-Alberta Job Grant have generally already been employed in the workforce for the past several years.

CITIZENSHIP STATUS

The majority of all trainees involved in applying to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, at 95.3 per cent, are Canadian citizens. Permanent residents account for 4.6 per cent of trainees. The remaining statuses are Protected Persons and Other.

There is a general increase of permanent resident trainees when comparing active applications and all applications. Permanent resident trainees account for 4.6 per cent of all trainees involved in applying to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. In comparison, permanent residents increase to 5.9 per cent of all active applications. This suggests that permanent residents as trainees may be more likely to fully complete training under the program. Further, female permanent residents appear to be particularly successful, with 50 out of 56 applications being active.

See Appendix 2, Table 11 – *Count and Breakdown of Citizenship Status for Active and All Applications, Including Gender* for further information.

TRAINEE GENDER

Females are under-represented as trainees under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Only 12.0 per cent of trainees under all program applications are female, representing 460 out of 3841 trainees. In terms of active applications, females comprise 14.8 per cent, at 381 trainees out of a

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total of 2575. As trainees, females tend to be slightly more likely to successfully move through the Canada-Alberta Job Grant policy lifecycle, in terms of being part of active applications.

See Appendix 2, Table 12 – *Count and Breakdown of Male and Female Trainees for Active and All Applications* for further information.

GENDER AND SKILL LEVEL

Overall, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant tends to be mostly used to train female and male individuals that are already highly skilled.

For active applications, female trainees tend to be highly skilled in management and non-management positions. For active application non-management trainees, 71 per cent of all female trainees are working in jobs classified as National Occupational Classification (NOC) skills level A. Similarly, 69 per cent of all active application female management trainees are also classified as NOC level A.

Similar patterns are found with male trainees, although to a lesser degree. Training tends to be strongly geared towards males in highly skilled (NOC level A) management and non-management occupations. For active applications, 66 per cent of non-management males are in occupations at NOC-A, and 52 per cent of management males are also classified as NOC-A. There is some increased program usage for low-skilled NOC-D management for males (e.g. – janitorial manager), with 27 per cent of all active application male manager trainees.

See Appendix 2, Table 13 – *Count and Breakdown of Active Application Male and Female Non-manager and Manager Trainee Occupations by National Occupational Classification* for further information.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, AND VISIBLE MINORITY TRAINEE SELF-IDENTIFICATION

It is likely that Aboriginal Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, and Visible Minorities are under-represented as Canada-Alberta Job Grant trainees. Self-identification from these groups is optional for trainees, with very few trainees voluntarily self-identifying. For active applications, a total of 12 trainees self-identified as an Aboriginal person (0.47 per cent), one person self-identified as a person with a disability (0.04 per cent), and 67 individuals (2.60 per cent) declared as visible minorities.

Given that self-declaration is voluntary, it is challenging to determine the exact number of trainees that are part of various groups. Nevertheless, it is probable that individuals who identify as Aboriginal, persons with disabilities, or visible minorities are not benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to the same extent as the broader population.

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See Appendix 2, Table 14 – *Count of Aboriginal, Persons with Disabilities, and Visible Minorities, for Active and All Applications, Including Non-Responses*, as well as Table 15 – *Percentage of Trainees that are Female, Aboriginal, Persons with Disabilities, and Visible Minorities for Active and All Applications* for further information.

4.2 FUTURE STATE: IDENTIFYING GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA PRIORITIES IN RELATION TO THE CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT

Phase II of the needs assessment sought to answer the following secondary research question: What are Government and Alberta priorities and interests that are relevant to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant? New and emerging Government of Alberta priorities were assessed in order to provide a foundation for understanding gaps between current and desired program usage.

Government of Alberta interests were identified through a document and social media review, specifically, the 2015 Alberta NDP election platform, official biographies, speeches, government news releases, social media comments (Twitter), and current government strategies. Priorities and interests that are broadly or specifically applicable to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant are described in the following section. Table 2 provides a summary of relevant quotes from the document and social media review, organized by priority area. In addition, see Appendix 3 for a summary and timelines of documents and social media areas reviewed.

4.2.1 OVERALL FINDINGS

On the whole, the priorities of the current Alberta government tend to have a stronger social and individual focus, as opposed to an economic and business orientation. Economic considerations are often described as a means to an end for quality of life and stronger families and communities. The vision of the NDP government involves striking “...a balance between a strong economy, environmental responsibility and social justice” (GoA, 2015c, para. 5).

Diversification tends to be a main economic policy focus in the Government of Alberta, as opposed to an oil-driven narrative. Small businesses are also seen in a positive light. The economy is seen as a way to strengthen Albertan families and communities.

Alberta’s government has stressed the importance of new relationships with Aboriginal Peoples in Alberta. This includes reviewing current policies in relation to the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (GoA, 2015f, para. 1). In addition, interest in women’s issues is also strong, as the province recently created a Ministry for the Status of Women. Youth, particularly in relation to job creation, is also on the policy agenda.

Current priorities in terms of the labour force development focus strongly on worker protections and increasing minimum wage. The labour force is viewed through the perspective of

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the individual, rather than the employer. Training and education is acknowledged as contributing to opportunities for better jobs for individuals.

4.2.2 FINDINGS BY PRIORITY AREA

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification is a main economic concept that forms a common theme for the current Alberta government. The concept is linked in the Alberta NDP election platform and government speeches to broad economic policy and good jobs. On October 14, 2015, a Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy, focusing on growing and diversifying Alberta businesses (GoA, 2015i) was announced. As an alternative to an oil-driven narrative, a focus on diversification provides a differing avenue for economic development in the province. In addition, on October 22, 2015, a new Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was created, which will be "...guided by the advice of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy" (GoA, 2015l, para. 3).

With the Canada-Alberta Job Grant open to all sectors, diversification is an economic narrative relevant to program usage.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Similar to diversification, small business and entrepreneurship is viewed in a positive light. The Alberta NDP government supports entrepreneurial culture and the concept of small businesses as a job creation mechanism.

The Labour Force Policy and Strategies area of Alberta Job, Skills, Training and Labour is currently developing a program to encourage employee training in small businesses. This program, the Alberta Skills Fund, is complementary to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. With the Alberta Skills Fund geared towards meeting small businesses' training needs, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can likely focus elsewhere in terms of prioritization of government interests.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Topics related to rural development are not strongly emphasized in current Alberta NDP priorities. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Oneil Carlier, has indicated that the government will undertake a review to remove the exclusion of farm workers from health and safety and employment standards legislation (Wood, 2015, para. 2). This review – unrelated to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant – will likely be a considerable priority related to the rural labour markets for the government.

LABOUR FORCE AND INNOVATION/PRODUCTIVITY

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Although important, labour force development and productivity are not prominently featured in current government priorities. The Alberta NDP government's focus on labour has been strongly geared towards worker protections. Minimum wage increases and reviewing legislative protections for farm workers are examples of this. Similarly, innovation and productivity, is yet to be strongly prioritized as an interest.

SOCIOECONOMIC POLICY

Concepts around strengthening the family are common in Alberta NDP speeches and platform. The economy is a means to serve and fortify Albertan families and communities. To this end, skills development and education has been acknowledged as important and contributing to better jobs for individuals.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Alberta's NDP government has stressed the importance of new relationships with Aboriginal Peoples in Alberta. As part of this commitment, the province has committed to reviewing current policies and programs in relation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (GoA, 2015f, para. 1). With this cross-government initiative underway, it is likely that programs like the Canada-Alberta Job Grant will need to be considered through a perspective of Aboriginal workforce and socio-economic development.

WOMEN

With the creation of the Alberta Status of Women Ministry, led by the Honourable Shannon Phillips, Alberta has placed a new emphasis on women's issues. In the past, topics relating to women's equity were under the responsibility of the Alberta Ministry of Human Services. Moving away from being the last province in Canada without a minister dedicated towards the status of women (Kleiss, 2015, para. 1), Alberta is expected to see an increase in interest in women's issues. Program usage by female trainees is relevant to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

YOUTH

The Alberta NDP government committed to "...help create 3000 jobs for students this summer by restoring the Summary Temporary Employment Program..." (Alberta NDP, 2015, para. 1). In light of this promise, the Labour Force Policy and Strategies area of the Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour is currently developing a wage contribution youth employment program. The eligibility for this under-development program encompasses youth, including students and graduates. Given this activity, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, while complementary, may not need to focus on youth to such as large extent.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND IMMIGRATION

Government priorities related to immigration and persons with disabilities have yet to be articulated in NDP discourse. While the subject remains important, more time may be needed to understand government direction in these areas.

CURRENT GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

With the exception of Alberta's Social Policy Framework, the vast majority of strategic policy in the Government of Alberta is focused through an economic lens. Moving away from a primarily economic focus, these strategies may not be viewed as relevant as in the past when considering government interests.

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4.3 FINDINGS SUMMARY

This chapter describes findings that are pertinent to the first two stages in the needs assessment model. Characteristics of first year Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage were discussed, correlating to the first phase, or current state, in the needs assessment process. The findings suggest that the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is mostly being used to train male, non-designated group, highly skilled trainees. The program is assisting individuals already in the workforce, as opposed to new hires. In a more diverse vein, small and medium-sized businesses are using the program, and applicants are located in both rural and urban areas. Understanding these usage characteristics provides a basis to understand the current state of the program, and allows for the eventual progression towards suggested solutions for program improvements.

The second phase of the needs assessment process was considered in articulating emerging Government of Alberta priorities and interests. This future state envisions what the Government of Alberta aims to fulfill as a result of following direction from the recently elected government. Through a document and social media review, priorities relevant to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant were identified. Government interests are focused more so on individual and social needs, with economic aspects being a means to achieve greater social elements. Determining government priorities in relation to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant provides an understanding of elements that are desired in the future state of the program.

The following chapter will connect the two previously discussed stages in the needs assessment model to determine if Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage characteristics are reflective of Government of Alberta priorities and interests. Utilizing a gap analysis, this exploration will then lead into the final stage of the needs assessment process, articulating options and recommendations.

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Table 2 *Summary of Government Priorities and Interests*

Priority Area:	Alberta New Democrat Party 2015 Election Platform	Speeches/Ministerial News Releases/Social Media	Current Related Government of Alberta Strategy
Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Our top priorities are creating jobs in a diversified, 21st century economy...” (Notley, 2015a, p. 3). • “As our province’s finances recover, we’ll work to actively support economic diversification...” (Notley, 2015a, p. 6). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech from the Throne (June 15, 2015): “Albertans are working together to build a prosperous, entrepreneurial, diversified economy full of opportunity for us all” (GoA, 2015e). • Premier Rachel Notley’s Stampede Investment Forum Speech (July 7, 2015): “Growing prosperity and creating good jobs requires an increasingly diversified economy” (GoA, 2015d). • Speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce (October 9, 2015): “...there is only one way to succeed. And that’s by supporting an open, sustainable and increasingly diversified economy” (GoA, 2015h). • Premier Rachel Notley announced on October 14, 2015 a Premier’s Advisory Committee on the Economy, focused on growing and diversifying Alberta businesses (GoA, 2015i). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta’s economic development framework encourages “...diversification that complements and adds value to our resource base” (GoA, 2014c, p. 9).
Small Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current small business tax rate will remain the same (Notley, 2015a, p. 22). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech from the Throne (June 15, 2015): Recognizes entrepreneurs and small businesses as job creators (GoA, 2015e). • “#AB has one of the strongest entrepreneurial cultures in Canada” (Innovation and Advanced Education, 2015, June 19). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta’s small business and entrepreneurship strategy seeks to increase investment in workplace training (GoA, 2014b, p. 9).

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Priority Area:	Alberta New Democrat Party 2015 Election Platform	Speeches/Ministerial News Releases/Social Media	Current Related Government of Alberta Strategy
Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “...we will strengthen Alberta’s rural communities by ensuring better access to...post-secondary learning...” (Notley, 2015a, p. 7). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech from the Throne (June 15, 2015): Emphasizes needing to support rural areas in having tools to contribute to prosperity (GoA, 2015e). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta’s Rural Economic Development Action Plan includes a strategy to attract and retain workers to rural Alberta (GoA, 2014d, p. 11).
Labour Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support is indicated to review employment standards (Notley, 2015a, p. 16). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government of Alberta announced that “Alberta will take first steps towards a \$15 per hour minimum wage by 2018” (GoA, 2015g). Premier Rachel Notley’s Royal Bank of Canada NYC Capital Markets speech (September 29, 2015): “We will invest in the building blocks of the economy, including safe, modern public infrastructure, and a highly trained, highly skilled workforce” (GoA, 2105j). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta’s economic development framework encourages the development of a labour force development strategy “...to better anticipate and meet the needs of employers and workers” (GoA, 2014c, p. 13).
Productivity and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and productivity not mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Premier Rachel Notley’s Stampede Investment Forum Speech (July 7, 2015): “Innovation is relevant to all industry sectors” (GoA, 2015d). Premier Rachel Notley’s Empire Club of Canada Speech (October 2, 2015): “Looking for new opportunities in our energy economy, and pioneering advanced technologies – all this will continue to require investment on a large scale” (GoA, 2015k). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta’s economic development framework aims to grow knowledge-intensive companies and productivity” (GoA, 2014c, p. 20).
Priority Area: Socioeconomic			

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Priority Area:	Alberta New Democrat Party 2015 Election Platform	Speeches/Ministerial News Releases/Social Media	Current Related Government of Alberta Strategy
Socio-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocates for a "...better economy that serves the needs of you and your family" (Notley, 2015a, p. 2). Common theme of "family" and "you and your family", appearing 25 and 10 times, respectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech from the Throne (June 15, 2015): "...investing in skills and education is the single best investment our province can make to ensure future prosperity" (GoA, 2015e). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta's Social Policy Framework recognizes the role that businesses play in creating opportunities for training and employment (GoA, 2013, p. 16).
Priority Area: Groups with Barriers to Full Employment			
Aboriginal Peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the need to build renewed partnerships with Indigenous peoples (Notley, 2015a, p. 20), and cites that they continue to face barriers and exclusion (p. 16). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta will assess programs and policies in relation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (GoA, 2015f, para. 1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GoA has committed to developing an Aboriginal workforce strategy (GoA, 2011, p. 3).
Immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigrants or temporary foreign workers not mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta's immigration framework suggests that economic growth could be constrained by lack of economic immigration (GoA, 2005, p. 1).
Persons with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabilities not mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta Human Service's Twitter feed provides links to encourage hiring of individuals with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta's Employment First Strategy recognizes the importance of training and skills development in helping persons with disabilities meet career goals (GoA, 2014e, p. 5).

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Priority Area:	Alberta New Democrat Party 2015 Election Platform	Speeches/Ministerial News Releases/Social Media	Current Related Government of Alberta Strategy
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises to restore the former Summer Temporary Employment Program (Notley, 2015a, p. 14), a youth wage subsidy program cancelled by the former government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth encounter unique labour market challenges (GoA, 2006, p. 9).
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises to create a new women's ministry to support gender equality (Notley, 2015a, p. 16). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women face barriers to employment (GoA, 2006, p.8).

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5.0 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter begins with discussing gap analysis results, thereby joining Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage results with identified Government of Alberta priorities and interests. Subsequently, this section of the report concludes with a discussion on the implications of compounding variables that may impact program usage.

5.1 GAP ANALYSIS

Continuing with the second stage in the needs assessment process, a gap analysis compared first fiscal year program usage with new Government of Alberta policy interests. A gap analysis aims to analyze the discrepancy between "...a situation as it exists and the situation as we would like it to be" ("Gap analysis", 2005, p. 160). This gap analysis addresses the final secondary research question of: Are Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage characteristics reflective of Government of Alberta priorities and interests?

Similar to Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage characteristic findings, the gap analysis was organized by priority areas. Each priority area discusses current and desired future program use, relevancy of priority area, and a description of any identified gaps. The relevancy of the priority areas were identified through assessing applicability to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant and urgency of government interest, as demonstrated in the document and social media review.

5.1.1 GAP ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS

Gaps exist in terms of alignment of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage and new Government of Alberta priorities. The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is fundamentally employer-driven in design. Evidence from first fiscal year usage suggests that the employer-driven design is resulting in training for generally only some groups of Albertans. Women, lower skilled workers, Aboriginal Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, and the unemployed, are not benefiting as much from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage is aligned with government priorities in terms of supporting small businesses and rural development. With small businesses using the program, and a diversity of rural and urban applicants, no gaps are identified in small business and rural development priority areas.

Overall, the gap analysis suggests that there is a need to better balance employer and individual trainee needs. Employers are only training certain existing staff, and this leaves out considerable portions of the Alberta population. Consequently, there are opportunities to address discrepancies between current and desired Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage, based on government priorities.

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5.1.2 GAP ANALYSIS RESULTS BY PRIORITY AREA

Table 3 provides a summary of the gap analysis, linking priority areas with program usage, desired future state, priority area rating (high, moderate, low), and any identified gaps. The following provides a further explanation of identified gaps, expanding upon the summary information found in Table 3.

DIVERSIFICATION

Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage is heavily concentrated in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and healthcare and social assistance. Out of a total of twenty sectors, fourteen sectors make up less than 5 per cent each of Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage. With diversification being a broad economic priority for the Government of Alberta, there is room for improvement in terms of a greater variety of sectors benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program.

SMALL BUSINESS

Small businesses, with 1-50 employees, make up the largest applicant group under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, accounting for 40.3 per cent of all applications. The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is in alignment with Government of Alberta views of encouraging small businesses.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Employers in both small and larger municipalities are using the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Although larger municipalities are slightly over-represented in terms of program usage in comparison to provincial population distribution, there is nonetheless reasonable rural use of the program. The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is currently used as a tool to train organizations located in rural areas, thereby encouraging rural prosperity.

LABOUR FORCE, AND PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION

A variety of training providers are used to train under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. In terms of training providers, no gap is identified for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is mostly used to train individuals who are already higher skilled. In order to contributing to a socially progressive and open program, there are gaps in terms of the program assisting trainees with lower skills levels.

SOCIOECONOMIC

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is meant to assist new and current employees in skills development training. However, employers have used the program mostly to train existing, higher skilled employees. As such, there is a gap in the program assisting individuals from moving from unemployment over to being a new employee by subsidizing training.

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With employers being the applicant and main decision-maker, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is employer-driven. This focus is very demand-based, while government priorities have shifted to supply-based. There are gaps in terms of prioritizing trainee needs, as opposed to employers.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

It is voluntary under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant for trainees to self-identify as Aboriginal, Visible Minority, or Person with a Disability.

Very few trainees voluntarily identified as Aboriginal. With the Alberta government's renewed focus on relationships with Aboriginal Peoples, there is a gap in the program serving Aboriginal trainees in skills training.

IMMIGRANTS

Trainees under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant must be Canadian citizens, permanent resident, or a protected person under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)*. The vast majority of trainees are Canadian Citizens.

With immigration outside of the focus of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, no gaps are identified.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Only one trainee voluntarily self-identified as a person with a disability for the first fiscal year of the program. This suggests that the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is not currently meeting trainee needs for this group of individuals. There is a gap in terms of persons with disabilities benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

YOUTH

With a variety of trainees found across age groups, no gaps are identified. While the government has prioritized youth employment, it has chosen to do so through the development of a wage subsidy youth employment program. A youth employment program will be complementary to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

WOMEN

Female trainees are vastly under-represented as participants under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. With the recent creation of the Alberta Status of Women Ministry, women's issues are at the forefront of the government agenda. There is a gap in females receiving training under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

5.2 FURTHER DISCUSSION

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5.2.1 PROGRAM USAGE

While the results of first year Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage provides clarity on general program use, some of compounding influencing factors may be less clear. Meeting various industry training needs, program awareness, administrative burden, and current economic climate may impact program usage to varying degrees.

The concentration of program usage in certain sectors may relate to many possibilities. In some instances, third-party training may not meet employers' training needs. In addition, level of program awareness is unknown. Some sectors or employers may not generally be aware of the existence of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program for training purposes. Relating the concentration in program sector usage to trainees may be relevant as well. If an industry sector tends to be under-represented in terms of having a diverse workforce, it may be considerably difficult to encourage recruitment of trainees with diverse backgrounds.

Administrative burden can create disincentives for some employers to decide to not use a program. For program policy analysts, finding a balance between accountability and stewardship of program funds, while also appreciating the time investment of employer applicants, is delicate. Some businesses, anecdotally often larger companies that already fund training, may not be willing to fill out the paperwork required, and understand and conform with program rules.

Alberta's current economic climate may play a factor in how employers use the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Certain sectors or businesses facing economic stresses are not likely to be willing to expend discretionary funds on training. This could also relate to an employer's lack of willingness to train new hires.

There are many different avenues of potential research on the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. As the program matures, accessing data and assessing the state of training programs in Alberta and other provinces and territories may be of interest to researchers. A comparative analysis of different provincial and territorial approaches to Canada Job Grant training could be of interest as well. In terms of evolving Canada-Alberta Job Grant program development, there could be benefits in gaining feedback from various program stakeholders. Employers, trainees, trainers, and administrative employees could all provide insights into the program's operation and suggested ways to improve the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

In seeking to align the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to reflect desired usage in line with government priorities, understanding influencing factors is helpful. The ability to understand employer motivations and realities will assist in being able to better close the gaps in employers and a diverse array of trainees benefiting from the program. Proposed solutions needs to take into consideration program usage variables to be able to achieve desired program alignment changes.

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5.3 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS SUMMARY

This chapter tied the literature review into Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage. In addition, the gap analysis linked together program usage and government priorities, providing a basis in determining gaps in Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage. Prioritized gaps were identified in areas relating mainly to lack of diversity in Canada-Alberta Job Grant trainees. No priority gaps were identified in areas such as rural and small business usage. Given this analysis, there are opportunities to better align program usage with government priorities. Understanding gaps between current and ideal future program usage form a foundation for the subsequent chapter in this report, where options to consider and recommendations are provided in order to address gaps in program usage in relation to government priorities.

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Table 3 *Gap Analysis of Current and Desired Situation*

Area:	Desired Situation:	Current State: Canada-Alberta Job Grant:	Priority as Related to Job Grant:	Gap:
Diversification	Increasing diversification of Alberta economy	- Which industries are using the grant?	High	With fourteen out of twenty sectors making up less than 5 per cent each of program usage, there is room to encourage a greater variety of sectors benefiting from the program.
Small Business	Small business support	- How many small businesses use the grant?	Moderate	Small businesses are using the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. No gap identified.
Rural Development	Support for education in rural Alberta	- Rural versus Edmonton/Calgary	Moderate	Rural areas are using the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. There is no perceived gap in rural usage of the program.
Labour Force	Protected workers with good jobs	- What type of training is being taken?	Moderate	Most training under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is geared toward individuals in higher skilled occupations. While this likely reinforces quality employment, there are be gaps in terms of the program serving lower skilled Albertans.
Productivity and Innovation	Relevant to diversification	- What type of training is being taken?	Moderate	Training is being provided under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant from a diverse group of training providers, such as industry associations, post-secondary institutions, private trainers and private vocational schools.
Socioeconomic	The economy strengthens the family	- New versus existing employees breakdown?	High	The program focuses on the needs of employers, as opposed to the needs of workers. The Grant is primarily used for existing employees, as opposed to new ones.
Aboriginal People	Prosperity and respect for rights	- How many trainees identify as Aboriginal?	High	There is minimal usage of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant by trainees who voluntarily self-identified as Aboriginal peoples. There is a gap in Aboriginal Peoples benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

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Area:	Desired Situation:	Current State: Canada-Alberta Job Grant:	Priority as Related to Job Grant:	Gap:
Immigrants	Undetermined	- n/a	Low	No gaps are identified. Note: temporary foreign workers are not eligible under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.
Persons with Disabilities	Socially progressive program access	- How many trainees identify as persons with disabilities?	Moderate	There is virtually no usage of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant by trainees who voluntarily self-identify as a person with a disability. There is a gap in persons with disabilities benefiting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.
Youth	More good jobs for youth	- Are younger people being trained?	Moderate	The ages of trainees were diverse, with usage of trainees ages 20-29. With the government prioritizing the development of a youth employment program, no gaps exist.
Women	Greater equality in the workplace	- How many trainees are female?	High	Women are under-represented as program participants. With a strong government focus on women's issues, there is a gap in women benefitting from the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

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6.0 OPTIONS TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A total of 11 policy options were developed to consider in determining how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve to better align with Government of Alberta priorities. A main theme of the policy options involves balancing employer and individual needs within the program, thereby supporting a socially progressive and inclusive program.

Options that involve better balance between employer and individual needs are accomplished through considering methods to increase program usage for trainees that are under-represented in the current program structure, negotiating funding flexibilities with the Government of Canada, continued monitoring and assessing best practices found in other provinces, and providing incremental funding to assist individuals with skills training outside the Canada-Alberta Job Grant program.

Following the options to consider, this report provides seven recommendations divided into short, medium, and long-term activities. In contrast to the diverse options provided for consideration, the seven recommendations seek to provide a targeted path to contribute to improving Canada-Alberta Job Grant alignment. Given resource and timing constraints, the recommendations take into account the need to prioritize and stagger proposed activities, taking into account government priorities.

6.1 OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

Needs Assessment: Phase III

The following provides options and a rationale for the client to consider in how the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can improve to ensure that it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

Balancing Employer and Individual Needs

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is fundamentally employer-oriented in nature. Employers are the applicants to the program and direct training and trainee decisions. This design was intended to ensure that training reflected the needs of employers in the economy. However, this has led to an imbalance, with employers disproportionately funding already employed, higher skilled, male individuals. In line with current government interests, the Canada-Alberta Job Grant can evolve to better reflect a more socially progressive focus that recognizes the needs of diverse Albertan trainees.

Option #1. Form a working group reporting to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant steering committee, with program policy and administration membership, to explore ways that the Canada-

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Alberta Job Grant can transform to be increasingly socially progressive and better balance employer and individual Albertan needs.

This may include exploring options to:

- Increase program use of diverse trainees (e.g. – Aboriginal Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, Visible Minorities);
- Increase gender diversity of program trainees.
- Encourage greater diversity of skill levels being training;
- Increase program use for trainees who will be hired post-training (i.e. – new employees); and
- Link incentives to encourage certain behaviors and sector usage.

Option #2. Continue to monitor emerging Government of Alberta priorities and Canada-Alberta Job Grant usage to ensure alignment of any proposed program changes. Future government activities, such as any possible economic stimulus spending, may also be relevant to the program. This may include utilizing a working group to consider:

- Any newly developing Government of Alberta priorities and direction, including economic stimulus spending (if relevant), that are applicable to Canada-Alberta Job Grant program policy; and
- Assessing second year Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage, when available in Summer 2016.

Leveraging Knowledge and Partnerships with Other Provincial Governments

Each province and territory in Canada was responsible for developing program policy for respective provincial Canada Job Grants. This has led to differing approaches in program designs and priorities. There are opportunities to work with provincial and territorial partners to improve program understanding, share best practices, and determine any common areas of negotiation with the Government of Canada.

Option #3. Engage with other provincial governments to assess:

- Any similarities and differences with Canada Job Grant usage between Alberta and other provincial governments;
- Any best practices existing in Canada Job Grant program policy with other provinces, with a particular emphasis on trainee needs;
- Any areas of common ground amongst provinces in relation to desired evolution of respective Canada Job Grant programs and funding agreements relative to the federal government.

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Negotiations with the Federal Government

The Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement, signed between Canada and Alberta, is the funding foundation for the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Any proposed changes to better balance employer and trainee needs must respect the Agreement. Exploring flexibilities can allow the province to evolve the Canada-Alberta Job Grant in a way that reflects both federal and provincial priorities.

The original Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement was signed under the former federal Conservative majority government. With the recent Oct. 19, 2015 federal election, there is now a new government in power. The federal Liberal government may be willing to consider new flexibilities, including the option to use funding for initiatives outside the program.

Option #4: Negotiate Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement changes with the federal government in order to support prioritized Canada-Alberta Job Grant changes.

This may include exploring options to:

- Alter funding streams to reallocate funding to other skills development programs and initiatives outside of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant;
- Better allow for funding of pilots, large scale project-based activities, training trusts, or unique projects to help improve program usage by certain industry sectors, groups and/or women; and
- Relax certain Agreement parameters, such as upfront employer commitments to hire trainees, in certain instances to support pilot programs.

Prioritizing Changes in Program Usage

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is expected to fully expend its 2014-15 fiscal budget. Current program uptake is on a first-come, first serve basis. Future demand for the program may exceed the existing program budget. This could be leveraged to partially move from a first-come, first-serve system to a system that prioritizes certain desired program usage, both from a diverse industry sector and trainee perspective. Prioritizing desired program usage means that Government of Alberta priorities, such as focusing on the individual, can be encouraged through the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

Option #5. Prioritize targeted Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage beyond the current first come, first serve system.

Encouraging Hiring New Employees and Training for All Skills Levels

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant is mostly used to train existing and higher skilled staff, as opposed to new hires or individuals with lower skills levels. Consequently, individuals that are

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unemployed or lower skilled are not able to benefit from training in order to become employed. True to the original intention of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant, mechanisms are needed to better encourage the training and hiring of new staff, along with training lower skilled individuals.

Option #6. Develop mechanisms to incent the training of new employees and lower skilled individuals under the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

Gender Diversity in Trainees

Females are under-represented as trainees benefiting from Canada-Alberta Job Grant training. Opportunities exist to work with the Alberta Status of Women ministry to support increased program usage of female trainees.

Option #7. Build relationships with and engage the newly created Alberta Ministry for the Status of Women, to develop a plan to encourage increased gender diversity in Canada-Alberta Job Grant trainees.

Encourage Diversity of Trainees

Option #8. Develop mechanisms to increase program usage by Aboriginal Peoples and persons with disabilities trainees through activities such as improved engagement, consultation, partnerships, incentives, and/or pilots. This may also include linking Canada-Alberta Job Grant program usage to existing or under-development Government of Alberta strategies to encourage labour force participation of Aboriginal Peoples and persons with disabilities.

Position the Canada-Alberta Job Grant in Alignment with Worker Protection Initiatives and Minimum Wage Increases

Worker protections and minimum wage increases have been the main focus of the government.

Option #9: Explore opportunities with the Safe, Fair and Healthy Workplaces Division of Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour to align the Canada-Alberta Job Grant with worker protection initiatives and minimum wage increases. This may include encouraging worker safety training, and encouraging program use to offset economic business pressures due to increasing minimum wage and changes to farm worker protections.

Assess Unmet Skills Training Needs

Canada-Alberta Job Grant training can only take place outside of the province when similar training is not available in Alberta. Employers that are applying to the program for training outside of Alberta may provide indications of unmet skills training infrastructure in the province.

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Option: #10: Undertake an analysis, in partnership with Alberta Advanced Education, of applicants applying for training outside the province to determine if there is any indication of unmet structural skills training needs in Alberta.

Address Gaps Created by the Federal Direction in Skills Funding

Through the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement, federal funding for skills training is increasingly shifting to being primarily employer-driven. There are segments of the Alberta population that are not benefiting from this funding approach. In considering the diverse needs of Albertans, there are gaps in funding for assisting individuals, such as those that are not already employed and lower skilled.

Option #11: Explore incremental funding opportunities to address the skills training needs of those Albertans not currently being met by the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.1 RATIONALE

This research paper has seven recommendations geared towards evolving the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to align with Government of Alberta priorities. The recommendations are structured into short, medium, and longer term activities.

The first three recommendations begin with the organizational and knowledge base to lead proposed program changes. A new working group, along with activities to analyze developing program-relevant information and monitoring and evaluation activities, is recommended. This organizational structure and activities will contribute to accountability and informed decision-making, while respecting resource constraints.

While there are numerous ways to diversify program trainee usage, recommendations four, five, and six aim to target specific groups where relationships and expertise with other provincial government ministries can be leveraged. Furthermore, proposed targeted trainee groups, specifically women and Aboriginal Peoples, reflect heightened provincial government interests and priorities.

Finally, the seventh recommendation reflects the source of Canada-Alberta Job Grant funding, through the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement with the federal government. By seeking to undertake negotiations with the federal government, the province may be able to constructively alter program funding arrangements to better reflect provincial interests. Moreover, recent government changes as a result of the October 2015 federal election may further provide an opportunity to revisit the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement funding structure.

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6.2.2 SHORT, MEDIUM, AND LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term Activities:

1. Form a program policy and administration working group, reporting to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant steering committee, to plan and lead program changes.
2. Monitor and analyze developing Government of Alberta priorities, second year program usage results, and other provinces' best practices, to determine any implications for proposed Canada-Alberta Job Grant programs changes.
3. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, considering a goals-based approach, to ascertain information collection requirements, evaluation questions, and measurement of goal attainment.
4. Engage with the Alberta Status of Women Ministry to develop a plan for and encourage increased gender diversity in program trainees.

Medium-term Activities:

5. In partnership with Alberta Aboriginal Relations, explore engagement, consultation, partnerships, incentives, pilots, and government commitments, to encourage Aboriginal trainee participation in the Canada-Alberta Job Grant.
6. In conjunction with Alberta Advanced Education, analyze out-of-province training requests to determine any indications of structural unmet training needs within Alberta.

Longer-term Activities:

7. Negotiate funding changes to the Canada-Alberta Job Fund Agreement with the Government of Canada, taking into consideration federal priorities, other provincial/territorial government interests, diverting funding to other priorities, and any Agreement changes to support greater gender, Aboriginal, and other diversity in program usage.

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7.0 CONCLUSION

The launch of the Canada-Alberta Job Grant in October 2014 represented a new, employer-driven approach to training and skills development in Alberta. Since the creation of the program, Alberta's context has changed. The province is faced with an unprecedented scenario of challenging economic times, along with a new provincial government. Alberta's NDP government brings a socially progressive and renewed focus on the individual, family, and community.

As the province's main skills training program, significant resources are being devoted towards the Canada-Alberta Job Grant. Options and recommendations have been provided to evolve the program into better balancing trainee and employer needs. This will help the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to improve to ensure that it meets Government of Alberta priorities and interests.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT USAGE OF INTEREST FOR THIS PROJECT

Program funding/usage:

- Average grant funding amount
- Number of employers using maximum allowed funding (\$300,000)
- Number of trainees per employer applicant
- Number of approved applications under the program

Employer applicant:

- Size of employer applicant (1-50, 51-150, 151-500, 500+ employees)
- Industry sector (Accommodation and Food Services; Administrative and Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; Construction; Education Services; Finance and Insurance; Healthcare and Social Assistance; Information and Cultural Industries; Management of Companies and Enterprises; Manufacturing; Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction; Other Services; Public Administration)
- Location of employer (rural versus urban)

Type of training:

- Hours of training per trainee
- Average duration of training (weeks)
- Training provider type (post-secondary, private vocational school, private trainer, union, industry association)
- Delivery type of training (classroom, workplace, online, distance, blended)
- Types of training costs (tuition, mandatory student fees, textbooks, examination fees)

Trainees:

- Employment status prior to training (unemployed, employed, self-employed)
- Employment status after training (unemployed, employed, self-employed)
- Skills levels of trainees (National Occupational Classification (NOC) code)
- Age
- Gender
- Is the trainee receiving Employment Insurance (EI) benefits while being trained?
- Citizen status (Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or protected person under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*)

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- Highest level of education completed by the trainee (less than high school, high school diploma/GED, 1-year certificate, 2-year diploma, applied degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, journey person)
- Visible minority identification
- Aboriginal Persons identification
- Identification as a person with disabilities

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APPENDIX 2: PHASE I – CURRENT STATE CANADA-ALBERTA JOBS GRANT TABLES

Table 4 *Count of Application Stages*

Stage Number	Application Stage	Count of All Applications
1	Application Approved	376
	Application CAJG Withdrawn	13
	Application Declined	301
	Application Employer Withdrawn	38
	Application Incomplete	1
	Application Initial Review Started	3
2	Reimbursement Approved	164
	Reimbursement CAJG Withdrawn	1
	Reimbursement Declined	19
	Reimbursement Employer Withdrawn	51
	Reimbursement Incomplete	43
	Reimbursement Initial Review Started	10
	Reimbursement Received	12
3	Completion Approved	172
	Completion Declined	18
	Completion Incomplete	18
	Completion Initial Review Started	2
	Completion Received	44
	Grand Total	1286

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Table 5 *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Industry Sector*

Industry Sector	Count of Active Applications	Breakdown of Active Applications	Count of all Applications	Breakdown of all Applications	Acceptance Rate
Accommodation and Food Services	23	2.9%	44	3.4%	52.3%
Administrative and Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services	7	0.9%	16	1.2%	43.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	15	1.9%	30	2.3%	50.0%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	10	1.3%	15	1.2%	66.7%
Construction	159	20.3%	269	20.9%	59.1%
Education Services	16	2.0%	29	2.3%	55.2%
Finance and Insurance	28	3.6%	32	2.5%	87.5%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	82	10.5%	125	9.7%	65.6%
Information and Culture Industries	7	0.9%	20	1.6%	35.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	9	1.1%	14	1.1%	64.3%
Manufacturing	86	11.0%	146	11.4%	58.9%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	59	7.5%	110	8.6%	53.6%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	102	13.0%	149	11.6%	68.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	64	8.2%	107	8.3%	59.8%
Public Administration	1	0.1%	10	0.8%	10.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5	0.6%	6	0.5%	83.3%
Retail Trade	31	4.0%	49	3.8%	63.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	28	3.6%	53	4.1%	52.8%
Utilities	33	4.2%	38	3.0%	86.8%
Wholesale Trade	18	2.3%	24	1.9%	75.0%
Grand Total	783		1286		

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Table 6 *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Employer Size*

Number of Employees	Active Applications		All Applications	
	Count of Employers	Breakdown	Count of Employers	Breakdown
1-50	315	40.2%	522	40.6%
51-150	232	29.6%	369	28.7%
151-500	112	14.3%	191	14.9%
500+	124	15.8%	204	15.9%
Grand Total	783		1286	

Table 7 *Count and Breakdown of Applications by Employer Geographical Location*

Municipality Size	Active Applications		All Applications	
	Count of Municipality Size	Breakdown	Count of Municipality Size	Breakdown
Small	250	31.9%	416	32.3%
Large	533	68.1%	870	67.7%
Grand Total	783	100.0%	1286	100.0%

Note: Municipalities with a population up to 25,000 is considered a small municipality; Large municipalities, with more than 25,000 population are: Airdrie, Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc and County, Red Deer and County, and St. Albert. Population figures were based on Alberta Municipal Affairs' 2014 Population List.

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Table 8 *Count and Breakdown of Training Provider Type*

Training Provider Type	Active Applications		All Applications	
	Count of Training Provider Type	Breakdown of Training Provider Type	Count of Training Provider Type	Breakdown of Training Provider Type
Industry Association	330	21.4%	545	22.6%
Post-Secondary Institution	703	45.5%	1045	43.4%
Private Trainer	450	29.1%	725	30.1%
Private Vocational School	61	3.9%	94	3.9%
Union	1	0.1%	1	0.0%
Grand Total	1545	100.0%	2410	100.0%

Table 9 *Count of Pre-Training and Post-Training Employment Statuses, and Non-Response Rates*

Employment Status	Count of Pre-Training Employment Status	Count of Post-Training Employment Status	Count of Non-Responses for Post-Training Employment Status	Non-Response Rate
Employed	3827	576	3247	84.8%
Self-Employed	3	-	3	100.0%
Unemployed	11	4	11	100.0%
Grand Total	3841	580	3261	

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Table 10 *Count of Trainee Age Ranges for Active and All Applications, and Non-Response Rates*

Age	Active Applications			All Applications		
	Count	Breakdown	Breakdown for those who provided info	Count	Breakdown	Breakdown for those who provided info
Age not given	1646	63.9%	-	2711	70.6%	-
18-19	1	0.0%	0.1%	2	0.1%	0.2%
20-29	241	9.4%	25.9%	284	7.4%	25.1%
30-39	305	11.8%	32.8%	376	9.8%	33.3%
40-49	215	8.3%	23.1%	261	6.8%	23.1%
50-59	136	5.3%	14.6%	164	4.3%	14.5%
60-69	29	1.1%	3.1%	41	1.1%	3.6%
70-79	2	0.1%	0.2%	2	0.1%	0.2%
Grand Total	2575	100.0%	100.0%	3841	100.0%	100.0%

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Table 11 *Count and Breakdown of Citizenship Status for Active and All Applications, Including Gender*

Citizenship Status	Active Applications				All Applications			
	Female	Male	Grand Total	Breakdown	Female	Male	Grand Total	Breakdown
Canadian Citizen	331	2090	2421	94.0%	403	3258	3661	95.3%
Other		2	2	0.1%	1	3	4	0.1%
Permanent Resident	50	101	151	5.9%	56	119	175	4.6%
Protected Person		1	1	0.0%		1	1	0.0%
Grand Total	381	2194	2575	100%	460	3381	3841	100%

Table 12 *Count and Breakdown of Male and Female Trainees for Active and All Applications*

Gender	Active Applications		All Applications	
	Count of Trainees	Breakdown	Count of Trainees	Breakdown
Females	381	14.8%	460	12.0%
Males	2194	85.2%	3381	88.0%
Grand Total	2575	100.0%	3841	100.0%

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Table 13 *Count and Breakdown of Active Application Male and Female Non-manager and Manager Trainee Occupations by National Occupational Classification*

National Occupational Classification Skill Level	Non Manager Trainee Occupations					Manager Trainee Occupations				
	Male	Breakdown	Female	Breakdown	All	Male	Breakdown	Female	Breakdown	All
A	1129	66.0%	206	71.3%	1335	239	49.5%	64	69.6%	303
B	440	25.7%	39	13.5%	479	25	5.2%	3	3.3%	28
C	119	7.0%	18	6.2%	137	88	18.2%	13	14.1%	101
D	23	1.3%	26	9.0%	49	131	27.1%	12	13.0%	143
Grant Total	1711	100.0%	289	100.0%	2000	483	100.0%	92	100.0%	575

Table 14 *Count of Aboriginal, Persons with Disabilities, and Visible Minorities, for Active and All Applications, Including Non-Responses*

Gender	Active Applications					All Applications				
	Aboriginal	Disabled	Visible Minority	No Status Reported	Grand Total	Aboriginal	Disabled	Visible Minority	No Status Reported	Grand Total
Female	5	1	29	346	381	6	1	29	424	460
Male	7		38	2149	2194	9		41	3331	3381
Grand Total	12	1	67	2495	2575	15	1	70	3755	3841

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Table 15 *Percentage of Trainees that are Female, Aboriginal, Persons with Disabilities, and Visible Minorities for Active and All Applications*

	Female	Aboriginal	Disabled	Visible Minority
Active Applications	14.80%	0.47%	0.04%	2.60%
All Applications	12.00%	0.39%	0.03%	1.82%

Table 16 *Count and Breakdown of Training Providers by Location*

Location	Count of Training Providers	Breakdown
Canada	1446	-
Alberta	1293	83.7%
British Columbia	38	2.5%
Manitoba	15	1.0%
New Brunswick	16	1.0%
Nova Scotia	7	0.5%
Ontario	74	4.8%
Quebec	2	0.1%
Saskatchewan	1	0.1%
United States	99	6.4%
Grand Total	1545	100.0%

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APPENDIX 3: ALBERTA NDP AREAS REVIEWED FOR RELEVANCY TO THE CANADA-ALBERTA JOB GRANT

Honourable Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations:

- Alberta NDP Election Platform (2015)
- Swearing-in Speech (May 24, 2015)
- Official Premier of Alberta biography
- Government of Alberta Newsroom Announcements
- Government of Alberta Twitter feed (reviewed for period May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)
- Rachel Notley's Twitter feed (reviewed for period May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Speeches:

- 2015 Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference opening ceremony speech (June 5, 2015)
- Pre-Throne Speech News Conference (June 15, 2015)
- Speech from the Throne (June 15, 2015 – delivered by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta)
- Stampede Investment Forum Luncheon speech (July 7, 2015)
- Montreal Chambre de Commerce speech (September 28, 2015)
- Royal Bank of Canada NYC Capital Markets speech (September 29, 2015)
- Empire Club of Canada speech (October 2, 2015)
- Calgary Chamber of Commerce Speech (October 9, 2015)

International and Intergovernmental Relations:

- Speeches (none)
- International and Intergovernmental Relations news releases
- International and Intergovernmental Twitter feeds (reviewed for period May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Deron Bilous, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Service Alberta

- Official biography
- Deron Bilous's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Municipal Affairs:

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- Speeches (none)
- Municipal Affairs news releases
- Municipal Affairs Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Service Alberta:

- Speeches (none)
- Service Alberta news releases (none)
- Service Alberta Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Note: As of October 22, 2015, a new ministry, Economic Development and Trade, led by Deron Bilous was created (GoA, 2015l).

Honourable Oneil Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry

- Official biography
- Oniel Carlier's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Agriculture and Forestry:

- Speeches (none)
- Agriculture and Forestry news releases
- Agriculture and Forestry's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Joe Ceci, President of Treasury Board

- Official biography
- Joe Ceci's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Treasury Board and Finance:

- Speeches (none)
- Treasury Board and Finance news releases
- Treasury Board and Finance Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable David Eggen, Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism:

- Official biography
- David Eggen's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Education:

- Speeches (none)
- Education news releases (none)

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- Education Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Culture and Tourism:

- Speeches (none)
- Culture and Tourism news releases
- Culture and Tourism Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Kathleen Ganley, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Minister of Justice and Solicitor General:

- Official biography
- Kathleen Ganley's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Aboriginal Relations:

- Speeches (none)
- Aboriginal Relations news releases
- Aboriginal Relations Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Justice and Solicitor General:

- Speeches (none)
- Justice and Solicitor General news releases
- Justice and Solicitor General Twitter feeds (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Sarah Hoffman, Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors

- Official biography
- Sarah Hoffman's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Health:

- Speeches (none)
- Health news releases
- Health Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Seniors:

- Speeches (none)
- Health news releases
- Seniors has a Twitter account, but has never tweeted

Honourable Brian Mason, Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation:

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- Official biography
- Brian Mason's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Infrastructure:

- Speeches (none)
- Infrastructure news releases
- Infrastructure does not have a Twitter feed

Transportation:

- Speeches (none)
- Transportation news releases
- Transportation Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Marg McCuaig-Boyd, Minister of Energy

- Official biography
- Marg McCuaig-Boyd's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Energy:

- Speeches (none)
- Energy news releases
- Energy Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and Minister Responsible for Status of Women:

- Official biography
- Shannon Phillips's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Environment and Parks:

- Speeches (none)
- Energy news releases
- Energy Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Status of Women:

- Speeches (none)
- No news releases
- No Twitter feed

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Honourable Irfan Sabir, Minister of Human Services

- Official biography
- Irfan Sabir's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Human Services:

- Speeches (none)
- Human Services news releases
- Human Services Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Honourable Lori Sigurdson, Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education and Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour:

- Official biography
- Lori Sigurdson's Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Innovation and Advanced Education:

- Speeches (none)
- Innovation and Advanced Education news releases
- Innovation and Advanced Education Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)

Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour:

- Speeches (none)
- Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour news releases
- Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour Twitter feed (May 5, 2015 to October 15, 2015)