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ITA Briefing Paper
Foundation Programs: A New Framework
for Pre-Apprenticeship Training

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FOUNDATION PROGRAMS: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Industry Training Authority has commenced implementation of a new framework governing pre-apprenticeship training. It has been designed to build on the strengths of existing Entry Level Trades Training (ELTT) programs, and to facilitate the industry-led development of new pre-apprenticeship options – all of which will be referred to as Foundation programs. This will result in the creation of a category of program participants, “trainees”, who (like apprentices) will be registered and tracked by the ITA. Key advantages of this new framework include consistent provincial standards, ITA certification for all graduates, and defined credit towards apprenticeship completion. Agreement has been reached with the public trainers on the standardization of existing ELTT programs. Alignment of existing ELTT programs with the Foundation programs framework is an early-phase priority, with a particular focus on the development of program profiles.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The Industry Training Authority (ITA) has approved a new framework for pre-apprenticeship training in British Columbia, which it will implement over the next several months. The new category of industry training programs, called Foundation programs, will encompass both existing Entry Level Trades Training Programs (ELTT) and comparable new programs proposed and developed by industry.

Pre-apprenticeship programs account for a significant portion of the ITA’s investment in industry training program delivery. They are offered in most of the highest-participation trades and are often in strong demand. The following summarizes key features of pre-apprenticeship programs, comparing the former state with the requirements of the new framework.

Key Features	Former Framework	New Framework
Terminology	Entry Level Trades Training (commonly known as)	Foundation Industry Training Programs
Type of Training	School-based, no employer required	School-based, no employer required
Program Standards	Variable; no defined process for province-wide industry input	Consistent provincial standards, developed with rigorous industry input
Registration	Participants not registered with ITA	All participants registered with ITA
Certification	No ITA certification	ITA Certificate of Completion
Credit Toward Apprenticeship	Variable; not automatic	Pre-defined; automatic

Foundation training offers benefits for both trainees and industry. Trainees do not need to find employment or sponsorship to participate. Training typically links to, and will generally provide credit towards, apprenticeship completion. Employers benefit from higher job-readiness when they sign-on apprentices who have pursued trade-specific Foundation training. The ITA anticipates that industry demand for pre-apprenticeship training will continue.

Colleges and other training providers in BC have made significant investments in the development and coordination of ELTT programs, the quality of which is widely recognized. Until now, however, there has been no defined provincial policy framework governing these programs. Programs structures and lengths vary, and while level one credit in the relevant trade is a preferred and common outcome upon completion, it has not been until now a standard or automatic one. Training providers typically engage with employers with respect to program content, but this process also lacks provincial standardization, and there is no requirement for a formal industry commitment to support these programs or employ their graduates.

Furthermore, key program success measures – such as completion rates and continuation to apprenticeship – are not tracked on a province-wide basis, nor are there clear accountabilities in this respect. The ITA neither registers the participants nor certifies them upon completion.

The new Foundation programs framework responds to all of these concerns. Broadly speaking, the objectives are to:

1. establish clear and industry-driven standards, consistent outcomes and a higher level of accountability relative to existing pre-apprenticeship type (ELTT) programs;
2. create a mechanism through which emerging industry needs for new Foundation programs will be effectively responded to; and
3. provide for the registration of all trainees in Foundation programs with the ITA.

The new Foundation programs policy and framework has therefore been designed to maintain and enhance the strengths of existing pre-apprenticeship programs, while addressing deficiencies and supporting system growth.

KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS OF FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

With the implementation of the Foundation programs policy, all industry training programs funded by the ITA will fall into one of two categories:

1. *Apprenticeship Programs*: involving both school and work-based training relating to a particular occupation or trade, and leading to a Certificate of Qualification. Apprenticeships are in either Recognized Training Programs (provincial standards) or Accredited Training Programs (national/Red Seal standards). Apprenticeship programs are employment-based and apprentices must have an employer/sponsor to register.
2. *Foundation Programs*: involving entry-level, school-based training (possibly with a limited on-the-job component) with a linkage to one or more apprenticeship programs, and leading to a Certificate of Completion. Foundation programs are not employment-based and trainees do not require an employer/sponsor to participate.

Until now, the ITA has used the terms “apprentices” and “trainees” interchangeably. For clarity, the term “apprentice” will now refer only to those with a sponsor and registered in an apprenticeship program, while the term “trainee” will refer to those registered in a Foundation program. All participants in both categories of programs will be registered with the ITA, with a clear differentiation between the two types. This will provide a basis for much broader and more consistent tracking and reporting of outcomes than is currently possible.

Like current ELTT programs, Foundation programs will be school-based. To the extent that they may include on-the-job components, trainees will not be required to find an employer in order to participate. This maintains the accessibility of this entry point.

Foundation programs will have the key characteristics described below. Adherence to these criteria will benefit both trainees and industry, and will ensure the consistency of pre-apprenticeship training with other key ITA initiatives and operating principles. It will also enhance the appeal of Foundation programs to participants, thereby giving training providers a potential marketing benefit.

Industry Initiated and Led: New Foundation programs will be approved by the ITA based on industry-developed proposals. Increasingly, sector-based Industry Training Organizations will assume responsibility for developing and maintaining such programs. Approval criteria will include clear evidence of industry demand for the relevant skills, and intent to hire program graduates and facilitate their progression onward towards apprenticeship. Industry will play a central role in the development of program standards and evaluation tools.

Clear Standards: A concise program profile will be developed for each Foundation program, comparable to those that exist for each apprenticeship program. It will describe the industry-endorsed competencies that trainees will acquire, and serve as the basis for learning materials

and rigorous assessment tools. There will also be a defined process for regular review of program profiles, with substantial industry input. This will ensure the currency of Foundation program content on an ongoing basis.

Linkages to Apprenticeship: All Foundation programs will link to one or more apprenticeship programs, and provide an optional entry point to them. A Foundation program Certificate of Completion will in most cases provide defined credit towards completion of the relevant apprenticeship(s). It may, for example, be equivalent to completion of level one of apprenticeship technical training. (Most programs originating as ELTT programs will result in level one credit on a default basis, although industry may subsequently recommend a different scope and level of certification.) While it is likely that Foundation programs will prove to be ends in themselves for some trainees, who will subsequently pursue employment rather than apprenticeship, there will always be a clear pathway via which graduates can progress to further training and certification.

Standardized Credentials: Successful completion of a Foundation program will in all cases lead to an ITA Certificate of Completion. This will address the anomalous situation of the ITA directing significant amounts of funding to programs whose graduates it does not credential. It will also provide trainees with a standard, government-endorsed verification of the attainment of defined competencies, which will be to their advantage as they pursue further training and/or employment. In many cases, depending on the scope of the Foundation program, a Certificate of Completion will also automatically result in defined credit towards apprenticeship completion.

Proportionate and Non-Duplicative: The ITA anticipates that Foundation programs will vary in duration by program, from as little as several weeks to as much as several months depending on industry needs. This flexibility will ensure that these programs are proportionate to sector and trade-specific requirements. Short-duration programs with basic content may result in limited or no credit towards apprenticeship completion. More extensive programs will be comparable to the existing ELTT model, where completion is often deemed equivalent to level one of apprenticeship technical training. To the extent that a Foundation program fully covers content also encompassed in apprenticeship technical training, credit will be awarded so that apprentices do not have to cover the same material twice.

Subject to Registration and Tracking: All participants in Foundation programs, like apprentices, will be registered with the ITA. This will facilitate comprehensive and separate tracking of participation levels, completion rates, and progression onwards to apprenticeship. Any credit granted towards apprenticeship completion, on the basis of Foundation program completion, will be automatically recorded. Registration will be a basis for heightened accountability for program effectiveness – on the part of the ITA, industry, and training providers – and for ongoing program improvement.

TRANSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation of the Foundation program policy is a significant initiative for the ITA, involving:

- timely responses to proposals from industry for new Foundation programs (either already received or expected imminently);
- close liaison with the public trainers and other training providers to address registration and other logistics; and
- a conversion process by which all existing ELTT programs will be aligned with Foundation programs criteria;

The ITA is finalizing a work plan through which each of these elements will be addressed.

Steps have already been taken – as part of a separate Financial and Accountability Framework agreed upon between the ITA and a consortium of public colleges – to move towards standardized funding and outcomes for existing ELTT programs. The ITA and the public trainers have worked together, along with input from industry to come up with standards for existing ELTT programs. These standards will be documented in the form of Program Profiles and will be managed over time by Industry Training Organizations to ensure they continue to remain relevant and meet the needs of industry.

Questions regarding Foundation programs and the ITA's transition plan – as well as requests to receive future updates – can be directed to:

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