

TRAINING FOR SMALL BUSINESS IN BC (2015)

According to the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills training there are over 300,000¹ micro businesses in the province and for the past two and a half years, the Micro Business Training (MBT) program has provided unparalleled access for small businesses in BC to effective training programs. The program is set to complete in the spring of 2015, but there are still thousands of small businesses seeking effective training programs, especially those in the trades and health industries.

The Micro-Business Training Program offered eligible, small business owners funded training programs in general business skills such as bookkeeping, marketing, social media, management and other areas with the goal of improving productivity, decreasing costs and generating new revenue.

The MBT program had key fundamentals that made it successful: flexibility in training available and types of training; minimal red tape making the approval process fast and efficient; and a great partnership with the BC Chamber of Commerce helping to spread the word around the province.

The program has seen over 1700 eligible participants utilize an average of \$1400 for a total of over \$4 million in strategic skills training. The program created jobs for trainers and institutions across the province and fostered positive relationships with chambers of commerce in many communities.

With all this success, a huge gap remains. Over 1050 businesses were deemed ineligible for the MBT funding. While the Canada Jobs Grant does offer significant funding for training, there is a requirement for business to contribute an equal amount and that can be challenging for micro businesses.

It is no secret that skills shortage is a major concern for the BC economy and something that the BC Government is working hard to overcome. Small business in BC can contribute to this need, but those businesses need to experience success in the current economy in order to be prepared for future needs, particularly in the trades industries. Training in bookkeeping, marketing, management etc. are all fundamentals that help business keep overhead costs low while maximizing revenues and developing strategies for success.

One of the biggest hindrances the program experienced was ineligibility because of formal training already completed, even if that training had no correlation with the requested training. For example, if a Registered Massage Therapist was looking for training in basic bookkeeping, he/she would be deemed ineligible because of her RMT designation.

Continuing the program with some minor adjustments would make great strides in helping BC businesses to be successful and be ready as skills shortage demands increase. Continued funding could be obtained from the Canada Labour Market Agreement.

¹ Small Business Profile 2014 – Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. reinstate the Micro-Business Training Program; and
2. change the formal education requirement to read:
“Not have any degree or other certification related to the training requested, regardless of where you received it.”

Submitted by The Kamloops Chamber of Commerce