



The Government of the Northwest Territories
Report on the Affirmative Action Policy Review

November 1998

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1. Introduction

One objective of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is to create a Public Service that is representative of the people that it serves. This objective is addressed through the Affirmative Action Policy as well as through an integrated system of human resource practices within the GNWT. This system supports equality, fairness and competency within the Public Service.

The current Affirmative Action Policy was implemented in 1989, when it replaced the Northern Hiring Policy. The GNWT conducted a public review of the Policy beginning in 1994. Extensive consultation was undertaken with employees of the GNWT as well as members of the public. A report, Original Affirmative Action Policy Review – Report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations, was presented in 1996. The Standing Committee on Government Operations was critical of this report, saying that it lacked specific strategies to address identified concerns with the Policy. A Working Group of the Standing Committee on Government Operations was established and produced a report, The Report of the Working Group on Affirmative Action and Human Resource Management, in June 1997. This report focused on four areas: the Affirmative Action Policy, the Hiring Process, Human Resource Management and Post-division. The GNWT responded to the Standing Committee on Government Operations in October 1997 with a report on the status of the Affirmative Action Policy Review. The Premier then made a commitment to table a report on the Affirmative Action Policy Review in the Legislative Assembly in November 1998.

This report addresses the recommendations of the Working Group and describes the GNWT programs and initiatives that are currently in place and being developed. These programs and initiatives are components of integrated human resource planning and implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy.

2. The Affirmative Action Policy

The GNWT is committed to creating a representative Public Service. The Affirmative Action Policy will be revised to address the changes that will occur following the creation of two new territories and as a result of the continually evolving role of government.

The following recommendations were made by the Working Group, specific to the Affirmative Action Policy:

2.1 The Premier and his Cabinet issue a public statement, making a commitment to the Affirmative Action Policy.

The Premier has on several occasions confirmed Cabinet's commitment to the Affirmative Action Policy and is now tabling the Government of the Northwest Territories Report on the Affirmative Action Policy Review in the Legislative Assembly.

A process and appropriate timeline for the revision of the Affirmative Action Policy will be developed in the context of the unique opportunity presented by the creation of two territories. The revision will combine the successful aspects from the current Policy, together with the new ideas arising out of the review, research and legal consultation, to further improve the Policy as an effective tool in developing and sustaining a representative Public Service.

2.2 The GNWT change the name of the Affirmative Action Policy to Employment Equity.

Changing the name of the Affirmative Action Policy to the Employment Equity Policy provides the opportunity to re-focus and reinforce the positive impact of this policy direction on the composition of the Public Service and therefore service to the public.

2.3 Representation goals by occupational grouping and region be set, annual assessment of hiring priorities be done and headquarters staff be representative of the entire NWT.

Initial analysis has been done on the rates of representation in occupational groups, departments and regions. This information is available in the report tabled in March 1998, Achieving Excellence Through Diversity: Affirmative Action in the NWT Public Service.

Further Affirmative Action Policy data will be collected and analyzed, and used to redefine goals, plan new strategies and measure progress toward a representative Public Service. The data collected will identify the demographics of the Public Service as well as the overall population.

The analysis will highlight areas where action is required to create a representative Public Service at all levels, in all occupations and in all regions throughout the territory.

Regular review will also highlight areas where the hiring priorities need to be changed. A critical consideration in setting targets is the change in the composition of the general population as a result of the creation of two territories. Another major factor that affects the ability to achieve representativeness is the formal education level of some Affirmative Action Policy candidates. Strategies to develop the workforce go beyond the Affirmative Action Policy and are long term plans for occupational groups that have been traditionally under-represented.

2.4 The definition of long-term northerner be revised to include anyone who has been a resident of the NWT for 10 continuous years, immediately prior to applying under this priority.

2.5 The definition of indigenous aboriginal person be revised to more clearly address southern aboriginal people.

The Working Group's recommendation to redefine long term northerner and indigenous aboriginal person would support individuals that have demonstrated a commitment to the NWT through length of residency. Research and consultation will be done to establish new definitions and classifications within the Affirmative Action Policy in the context of the vision of the Public Service of the future.

2.6 The GNWT support the Affirmative Action Policy with a commitment of funding to support training and other initiatives.

The GNWT is committed to including Affirmative Action Policy groups in training and development initiatives as an investment in all employees. Many departments currently use constructive initiatives such as staff training and development courses, professional development opportunities as well as on-the-job-training through transfer assignments, special projects and the chairing of committees to develop the skills and competence of employees. Government-wide initiatives, supported by the Human Resource Committee, include training for Human Resource Practitioners in Human Resource Planning as well as targeted management training for all departments in every region. Future training and development resources will be made available through internal funding reallocations while ensuring continued high levels of service to NWT residents.

The GNWT has identified strategies and action plans for developing Affirmative Action Policy candidates. These are included in the Human Resources Development Strategy (West) which has been submitted to the Federal Government with a request for funding.

3. The Hiring Process

The objective of the GNWT hiring process is to recruit employees who have the knowledge, skills and commitment to do the work. The Affirmative Action Policy ensures that priority consideration is given to groups that are under-represented in our workforce. With this process in place, there will be a representative Public Service for the future.

The following recommendations were made by the Working Group, specific to the Hiring Process:

3.1 Every time a position is filled, the position description be reviewed to ensure the education and experience required accurately reflect the demands of the job.

A staffing process is used consistently throughout the GNWT. Training in the staffing process and expert advice is provided for Staffing Practitioners to support managers in the hiring process. The review of a position description before a competition is opened to ensure qualifications are appropriate is one step in the staffing process and is encouraged. The implementation of the new job evaluation system further supports this approach.

3.2 At least three qualified candidates be interviewed for every job competition.

The GNWT Staffing Process implements fair and equitable measures to recruit qualified employees. Staffing Practitioners possess specialized skills and expertise that allow them to search out the most suitable candidates for a position. Interviews with at least 3 candidates are a recommended practice. Recent statistics show the average number of interviews per competition to be 2.7 (Source, GHRS, 1998). This number is very close to the 3 interviews per competition as recommended by the Working Group. There are situations, especially in remote locations, where 3 qualified candidates may not be available to interview.

3.3 An appeals process be established for management and excluded positions.

The GNWT had an independent review of this recommendation done. A report has been prepared and is currently under review.

3.4 The use of directed hiring practices be used to increase representation in the workforce.

In some circumstances, the competition process may not be the most effective method for filling a position. The GNWT supports the concept of using directed hiring practices to increase the representativeness of the workforce. The practices proposed by the Standing Committee are among those commonly employed. In addition to direct appointments and restricted advertising, transfer assignments and secondments are also being used to increase representation. The GNWT includes these practices in the training of Human Resource Practitioners to promote and support the Affirmative Action Policy.

3.5 A student employment office be established in each region, operated where possible by students.

The GNWT supports the concept of a coordinated approach to summer student employment in each region. A Summer Student Employment Program (SSEP) was established in Yellowknife in 1998 and was managed by a student. The 365 students who registered with the central data bank submitted resumes that were available to all departments. The SSEP resulted in easier access for both students and departments in the hiring process. There was also a close liaison with the career centres to provide service to students in resume writing, interviewing techniques and contacts with other potential employers. The SSEP will run again next summer in Yellowknife and potentially in each region.

4. Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management is the integrated effective implementation of human resource strategies and practices. Within the GNWT, these human resource strategies and practices, such as the Affirmative Action Policy, are designed to recruit, develop and retain capable and committed employees who provide valued service to the public.

The following recommendations were made by the Working Group, specific to Human Resource Management:

4.1 The GNWT develop clear accountability measures in the area of Human Resource Management for both Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

Ministers and Deputy Ministers are accountable for implementing government policy at the departmental level. The implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy includes planning, implementing strategies and annual reporting of results.

4.2 Departmental business plans should include specific Human Resource Management information.

Human resource planning is integrated into the business planning process. The 1999-2000 plan includes a section on human resources planning. Human resource managers participated in Human Resources Planning training prior to the development of the 1999-2000 business plan. Additional training for managers will be conducted in the future.

Additional information on human resource plans is included in the departmental affirmative action plans and training plans. Information on the Public Service and the Affirmative Action Policy is included in annual reports to the public.

4.3 Human Resource Management should have a much greater emphasis in Deputy Ministers' evaluations.

Deputy Ministers are accountable for their department's performance, including human resources management. Annual appraisals of Deputy Ministers address goals and results from the business plan in all areas of human resource planning including affirmative action.

4.4 The current guidelines requiring completion of annual performance evaluations be enforced.

Performance reviews for all employees are an integral part of the Human Resource Management process. The performance reviews are used to identify employees' achievements and career objectives and to chart career development. Annual appraisals are a requirement and all managers are encouraged to complete them with staff.

4.5 Managers work closely with staff to provide career development for all employees.

Employee development needs are identified as part of the performance appraisal process. These needs are addressed in a training and development plan. Opportunities include formal training, job assignments and special projects. Human Resource Practitioners provide support to managers in planning career development with employees. In addition, management training provided to managers includes sections on performance planning and career development.

4.6 Departments develop on-the-job training in areas where there is a low rate of Affirmative Action representation.

The GNWT has had a successful history of on-the-job-training initiatives. This is one of the many human resource strategies that support the advancement of individuals in the Affirmative Action Policy groups.

Some occupational groups that are currently under-represented by Affirmative Action Policy groups are occupations that require formal education (such as nurses, teachers and engineers) where on-the-job-training is not applicable. The GNWT will continue to promote the education of individuals in Affirmative Action Policy groups through initiatives such as mentoring and career counseling.

5. Post-division

The creation of two new territories in April 1999 will require revisions to the Affirmative Action Policy in order to maintain a Public Service that is representative of the population in the new western territory.

The following recommendations were made by the Working Group, specific to Post-division:

- 5.1 The Affirmative Action Policy be changed to a Northern Employment Policy.**
- 5.2 A monitoring process be established to ensure that Affirmative Action is actively supported throughout the organization.**

The vision for the future of the Public Service of the western territory is a competent Public Service that is not only representative but is also capable to serve the public well. New challenges will include revising the Affirmative Action Policy so that it is effective for the new territory in the context of northern employment.

The GNWT is committed to a Public Service that is representative of the people it serves. The revised Affirmative Action Policy will support this commitment. The GNWT will continue to assess the effectiveness of the Affirmative Action Policy and celebrate progress.

