

# **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY OF THE BAHAMAS**

## The Mandate

- i. To build a competency based training and job placement system that is flexible and responsive to the actual requirements of the workplace via a network of suitable training institutions, organizations, and programmes involved in the process of supplying qualified and skilled labour for the Bahamas.
- ii. To provide for the allowance of job creation through training and employment schemes including internships, special job projects, entrepreneurial opportunities and the expansion of the modern national apprenticeship program in keeping with the Government's policy on apprenticeship training.

## Vision

The creation of a workforce that is transformative, highly productive, service oriented, globally competitive and responsive to the dynamics of the Bahamian economy.

## Mission

To encourage and establish public and private sectors and civil society stakeholder partnerships and relationships to facilitate the operation of a flexible and competency based training and job referral system; using a network of approved and accredited Industry Training Providers and Programmes.

## Core Values

Believe in Bahamians; Committed to "Excellence 365"; Quality in products and services; Meet and satisfy customer requirements; Stakeholder partnerships; Individual ability counts; Courtesy, Respect, Integrity; Improvement in quality of life.

### Policy Rationale

Since majority rule, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the Progressive Liberal Party has remained focused on education and training for the general populace. The party won the 2002 general elections and formed the government under the leadership of the Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie.

One of the major policy decisions of the government was to encourage and promote foreign investment by way of developing what was referred to as “anchor property” development throughout The Bahamas. This led to the necessity for the government to develop strategies to produce a better trained, better equipped and more productive workforce, especially at the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled levels.

In 2006, Prime Minister Christie made a Cabinet adjustment initiating a policy shift that allowed for the primary Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution, Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (B.T.V.I) to be removed from the portfolio of the Ministry of Education and be placed under the portfolio of a newly framed Ministry of Immigration, Labour and Training, headed by the Honorable D. Shane Gibson. It was thought that this would facilitate a more effective integration of TVET training and the skills and vocations needed to supply the workforce with trained productive labour.

Consideration was also given to the fact that The Bahamas has a relatively small workforce, approximating 195,000 persons and experiences the need, periodically, for imported labour especially in areas requiring professional, highly skilled workers as evidenced by the number of work permits that are issued to foreign workers annually. Adding to this was the realization that a high percentage of foreigners were and still are utilized in those areas of the workforce that require semi-skilled and unskilled labour.

The economy of the Bahamas is largely service-based with a substantial percentage of jobs falling in skilled and semi-skilled categories of labour and Government recognized that with comprehensive, standardized, basic training especially if the training was based on industry standards, Bahamians would be capable of filling most, if not all, of such jobs. The Government also recognized that the creation of a national entity to address such issues and co-ordinate and lead the efforts to remedy and improving the TVET delivery system would be beneficial in reaching its policy goals.

## Background

### I. The Establishment of A National Training System (Bahamas)

It is widely recognized and accepted that in order for a country to be competitive, its workforce must be knowledgeable, well trained and equipped with employability skills. The workforce must also be productivity focused and ever conscious of the need to elevate the quality of service delivery to a standard of world class excellence.

The skills training, human resources development and man power planning functions in The Bahamas appear fragmented by separate administrative arrangements, incorporate different delivery systems, and have many examination and qualifications standards.

Recognizing that TVET institutions and schools in The Bahamas are autonomous and come under the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, it was envisioned that the N.T.A would collaborate with the existing TVET structure to build a competency based training and job placement system that is flexible and responsive to the requirements of the workforce.

Currently the major providers of technical & vocational education and training include the Department of Education; The College of The Bahamas, which incorporates The Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services (CEES) and The Culinary and Hospitality Management Institute; BTVI and several cadet programs via the public utilities corporations.

Research revealed that past efforts to address the question of a coordinated approach to developing a highly trained, relevant workforce capable of sustaining economic growth and development culminated in the formation of The National Training Council in the early 80's. A draft bill to establish the National Training Council was created in 1986 but was never brought before Parliament. The Council has therefore remained an inactive body since its inception and as far as can be determined has been and still is inactive.

At present, The Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute (BTVI) is viewed as the main provider of technical and vocational training in the country. BTVI's legal status was regularized by the enactment of The Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute Act of 2010 by the Parliament of

The Bahamas. It must be noted, however, that research shows a shift in training practices away from that of institutions being the major players in TVET, manpower planning, and human resource development to one where various relevant ministries of Government are administratively involved in articulating training policies and strategies to ensure that these are in conformity with employment policies.

One area of national employment policy that has a direct bearing on the nation's training and development policy is immigration and the issuance of multiple work permits in complementary based vocations and careers that can easily be filled by Bahamians if they are adequately trained. It is therefore imperative that any national plan for further development of skills training in The Bahamas be made in collaboration with the labour and immigration policies of these respective ministries.

Research of regional development in TVET reveals that most of the Caribbean community, CARICOM, has adopted a Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) model for vocational training in CARICOM member states. This frame work was first successfully implemented by Heart Trust/NTA of Jamaica and later by other countries such as Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago.

For training delivery to be more effective in The Bahamas, a national system of training must be developed with functional linkages to educational institutions, TVET institutions, public and private sector organizations and businesses and other training organizations and programs involved in human resources development, manpower planning and skills training.

The establishment of a National Training System coordinated and managed by a National Training Agency is essential for growth, expansion and effective delivery of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in The Bahamas. The system and its management agency will not only facilitate the goal of producing and maintaining a well-trained, skilled workforce, but will also positively impact one of the nation's most pressing challenges- reducing the unemployment rate.

In The Bahamas, as in many other countries in the region and in the global community, the unemployment rate is highest among youth and young adults under the age of twenty-six. The National Training System will aggressively address the challenge of preparing this demographic for successful entry into the workforce. This, however, does not mean that training will be accessed by this group only.

In order to effectively address the challenge of unemployment through relevant, responsive training, the training system must be stake-holder driven and facilitate co-operation between

employers and employers' organizations, business communities, trainees and the government in human resource development and employment generation activities. The system will seek to harmonize the relationship between institutional and in-plant training sub-systems and facilitate the goal of producing and maintaining an adequate pool of skilled labour from which business, industry and the government (public sector) can recruit.

Committed action towards establishing a National Training Agency began in earnest in 2006, when the Government of The Bahamas, led by the Rt. Honorable Perry Gladstone Christie, recommended that Ms. Agatha Marcelle, Member of Parliament for South Beach and Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Training, lead a delegation on a fact finding mission to the Heart Trust/ National Training Agency of Jamaica.

Other National Training Agencies, including those of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago were studied and it became evident that even though structures, organizational components and coordinating mechanisms showed differences in the delivery of TVET, they all had adopted a Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) model for vocational training.

Ms. Marcelle was appointed as Consultant/Director in 2007 to produce the framework and blueprint for the establishment of the National Training Agency in accordance with Government policy initiatives and strategies. This appointment never took effect as the opposition F.N.M. party won the General election of 2007 and formed the government which did not include the establishment of a National Training Agency as a part of its policy agenda.

However, the initiative was revived when the PLP won the 2012 General Election and again appointed Ms. Marcelle, July 2012 as Consultant/Director of the NTA Project Secretariat.

The National Training Agency was created under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and National Insurance and was officially launched July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, by Prime Minister, The Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie and the Honourable D. Shane Gibson, Minister of Labour & National Insurance, with responsibility for Public Service. The National Training Agency Act 2013 came into effect on the "appointed day" of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013 making the National Training Agency an autonomous entity.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY**

The N.T.A is established as a legislated autonomous body. In establishing this entity it is recognized that it must be stakeholder driven and must facilitate co-operation among industry partners such as: employers and employers' organizations, the business community, civil society, training institutions and programs, Urban Renewal 2.0 and the government.

The N.T.A will operate a competency based education and training (CBET) system, flexible and responsive to the actual requirements of the workplace. Competency based education and training incorporates the appropriate ***knowledge, skills*** and ***attitudes*** into the workforce preparation activity. Competencies are based on the specific requirements of various occupations and conform to industry standards. The N.T.A. will also provide career guidance, professional counseling and mentorship for its clients.

Delivery of training will be accomplished via a network of suitable and approved training providers (institutions, organizations, and programs) involved in the process of supplying qualified and skilled labour for The Bahamas.

The operation of the N.T.A will also provide for the allowance of job creation through training and employment schemes including internships, special job projects, entrepreneurial opportunities and the expansion of a modernized national apprenticeship program in keeping with the government's policy on apprenticeship training.

### **LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES**

The National Training Agency will provide leadership and structure for the development of industry standardized, competency based training and will collaborate with "Industry lead groups" to ensure that all programs offered by the Agency are responsive to the needs of industry and , in general, economic growth and development. The Agency will also provide leadership in developing an organized framework for the delivery of training, which will facilitate workforce readiness and expand opportunities for increased job placement.

### **FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES**

The successful administration of the National Training Agency functions will facilitate the realization of some critical national training objectives which include:

- ▶ Increasing the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce.
- ▶ Promoting, identifying and developing industry standards of occupations and training programs.

- ▶ Providing a national certification framework.
- ▶ Increasing the number of persons pursuing technical & vocational education and training and the quality of training.
- ▶ Providing professional counseling and career guidance.
- ▶ Providing a central registration unit.
- ▶ Providing referral and placement services.
- ▶ Providing competency based statistical data and information to government and relevant agencies.
- ▶ Developing a tracking and monitoring system.
- ▶ Promoting and encouraging national awareness.

#### **FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY**

The Agency will adopt CANTA TVET philosophy of subscribing to a “standards driven, outcomes-based approach to education and training, in the process of preparing people for the world of work” in the execution of its functions which include:

- ✓ The preparation and implementation of plans for workforce vocational training in accordance with national policies, economic needs and industry standards.
- ✓ Engagement in activities geared towards increasing the capacity of individuals; especially those that are academically challenged, socially disadvantaged or marginalized to participate effectively in the workforce.
- ✓ Identification, development and promotion of industry standards for occupations and training programs.
- ✓ Development of assessment instruments that meet regional and international standards.

- ✓ Increasing the quality of training by delivering competency based training through a more responsive and flexible delivery and assessment system.
- ✓ Networking and cooperating with the public-private sector in matters related to the development of competency based training.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY**

To build a competency based training and job placement system that is flexible and responsive to the actual requirement of the workplace via a network of suitable training institutions, organizations and programmes involved in the process of supplying qualified and skilled labour for the country.

- ✓ Engage in activities geared towards increasing the capacity of individuals to participate effectively in the workforce, thereby improving their productivity and employability.
- ✓ Identify and accredit a cadre of suitable industry training providers, and instructors.
- ✓ Partner with organizations such as City & Guilds for recognized assessment and certification.
- ✓ Provide a national certification framework that will establish national vocational qualifications that are recognized and accepted regionally and internationally.
- ✓ Increase the number of individuals pursuing technical, vocational education and training as a career and increase the quality of training.
- ✓ Provide a Centre to assess the interest, aptitude, literacy, functional skills, competencies and attributes of individuals with a view to facilitating improvement and development in these areas.
- ✓ Provide a central unit, (same facility as above), through which all interested trainees must register.
- ✓ Provide a trainee referral and placement service to employers, organizations, training institutions and programmes. (This does not interfere with the Department of Labour's Employment Exchange function which seeks to assist the unemployed).

- ✓ Provide statistical data and information to government and relevant agencies.
- ✓ Develop a tracking and monitoring system designed to measure results of the NTA efforts.
- ✓ Promote and encourage an enabling environment conducive to lifelong learning.
- ✓ Engage in activities that will promote and encourage national awareness of the need for work-based training and the creation of a new, national corporate culture that will improve the national work ethic and promote service excellence as a way of life.
- ✓ Be a catalyst to reduce unemployment especially among younger and marginalized persons.

### **Immediate Action**

- ✓ Commence the operation of a flexible and responsive training and job placement system.
- ✓ Create the framework for job creation through training and employment projects including entrepreneurial opportunities.
- ✓ Consult with relevant government ministries and agencies and with industry lead groups regarding the expansion of a modern national apprenticeship program in keeping with government's policy on apprenticeship training (Collaboration with BTVI's existing program).
- ✓ Network with Department of Labour Employment Exchange for direction and assistance with the placement of persons seeking employment.
- ✓ Create the framework for collaboration with all relevant stake holders with regard to:
  - (a) The development, promotion and maintenance of national, occupational (industry) standards.
  - (b) The production of The Bahamas National Vocational Qualification (BNVQ) within the framework of the national training system.
  - (c) The facilitation of program articulation, certification, accreditation, and validation.
- ✓ Develop the framework for the organization and maintenance of a national register of trainees and trained individuals, job referrals and job placements. (Network with Department of Labour).

### **Enabling Legislation**

The following Acts were benchmarked September 2012, and provided the template for N.T.A legislation.

- Public Hospitals Authority Act 1998.
- National Insurance Act (Statute Law of The Bahamas- revised edition of 2000, chapter 350).
- Utilities Regulations & Competition Act of 2009.
- The Human Employment and Resource Training Act, 1982, (Jamaica).
- Draft copy of a “proposed” National Workforce Development Council Bill, 2010.
- N.T.A legislation was enacted 2013.

### **The N.T.A Act (2013)**

“An Act to ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY; TO DEVELOP A COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING AND JOB PLACEMENT SYSTEM AND FOR CONNECTED PURPOSES”.

The N.T.A Act (2013) accomplished, among other things, the following:

1. Established the National Training Agency as an autonomous entity with broad powers to operate a flexible and responsive training system.
2. Established a Fund to which grants, covenants, donations, gifts, fees or payments for services rendered shall be credited.

### **Purpose of The N.T.A Fund**

To develop, encourage, monitor and provide financing for training and related services for trainees.

### **Organizational Structure of the N.T.A**

- i. An autonomous body governed by a 10 – member Board of Directors, headed by an appointed chairman.
- ii. The N.T.A is managed by an Executive Director, who is an ex officio member of the Board of Directors and who reports to the Chairman of the Board.
- iii. The composition of the Board is as follows:
  - a) Chairperson and deputy Chairperson (appointed by The Minister)

- b) The Ex. Director of The Agency, Ex Officio
- c) Representatives from:
  - 1. The Department of Public Service,
  - 2. The Ministry of Labour,
  - 3. The Ministry of Education, Science & Technology,
  - 4. The Bahamas Hotel Association,
  - 5. The Chamber of Commerce,
  - 6. Urban Renewal,
  - 7. Labour Union.

### **Divisions of The N.T.A**

- 1. Registration, Guidance, & Referral Centre (RGRC)
- 2. Service Assessment & Quality Control Unit (SAQC)
- 3. Industry Standards & Qualifications Development Unit (ISQD)
- 4. Administration
- 5. Information Centre
- 6. Vocational Institute for Professionals(VIP) and Convention Centre (not yet operational)

#### **1. The Registration Guidance and Referral Centre (RGRC)**

- Facilitates the workforce readiness of persons, focusing in particular, on the school leavers and young adults, who may be academically challenged, have never worked, the marginalized and unemployed, as well as individuals needing re-training and retooling for successful entry or re-entry into the workforce.
- Assesses the interest, aptitude, literacy, numeracy, competencies and functional skills levels of trainee registrants.
- Provides guidance, counseling and basic practical preparation for entry to the workforce.
- Conducts a “Mandatory Workforce Preparatory Program” for all registrants.
- Registers applicants at N.T.A and provide applications to all Urban Renewal 2.0 Centres.

- Refers trainees, where applicable, to network institutions, organizations and programs for further enhancement of skills and competencies and/or supplemental functional literacy learning.
- Networks with private and public sector employers and organizations/businesses to facilitate the placement of trainees in the workplace via internships, on-the-job training and other employment schemes.
- Maintains a national register of trainees, training received, referrals, placements and related data which will provide useful information that can be utilized to influence governments' policies and decisions regarding TVET.

## **2. Service Assessment and Quality Control Unit (SAQC)**

- Provides and monitors quality standards for Training Providers, Instructor suitability and training delivery.
- Coordinates the accreditation of Training Providers and Instructors.
- Ensures and monitors Training Providers' compliance with N.T.A's criteria for Training Providers.
- Ensures compliance with City & Guild's qualification guidelines and assessment framework.
- Monitors the applicability of material content and the effectiveness of instruction methods.
- Liaise with City and Guilds to ensure trainees are registered for exam competencies assessments and that payment deadlines are met.

## **3. Industry Standards & Qualifications Development Unit (ISQD)**

- Identify, network and liaise with 'Industry Lead Groups' for the development and implementation of industry competency standards in training delivery.
- Assess and ensure compatibility of industry standards with City & Guilds qualifications framework and guidelines
- Network and collaborate with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Technical/ Vocational institutions and programs, as well as other youth and young adult programs related to TVET.
- Develop the framework to conduct industry training needs analysis in order to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of the N.T.A's training offerings.
- Function as the Examination Secretariat for the delivery of City and Guilds certification.

- Co-ordinate skills assessment activities for N.T.A trainees and N.T.A's external clients.
- Organize and coordinate the delivery of C&G higher qualifications levels (levels 2-4).
- Develop the framework for the Bahamas National Vocational Qualifications (BNVQ).

#### **4. Administration**

- Management of daily operations of the Agency.
- PR/Media/Marketing Activities.

#### **5. Information Unit**

- Establishment of a registry.
- Collection of data and statistics.
- Maintenance of manual and electronic records.
- Production of documents and reports.
- Network with Labour Employment Exchange database.
- Establishment of a National Register of certified trainees.
- Develop and maintain a tracking system to record trainee job placements.

#### **6. Vocational Institute for Professionals (V.I.P) and Convention Centre**

- Coordinate and deliver management and leadership training via City & Guilds Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).
- Provide training, meeting and conference facilities.

### **CURRENT OFFERINGS TO TRAINEES**

#### **1. Mandatory Workforce Preparatory Program**

All registrants will have the opportunity to participate in this behavioral transformation training, which will be conducted over a four weeks period (three half days per week). Successful completion of this program is the pre-requisite for the referral to skills training.

**2. Vocational Training**

Responsive to the needs of the economy. Training culminates in the assessment of trainees' competencies and skills, primarily by practical demonstration. Certification provided by City & Guilds.

**3. Internship/ Special Jobs Projects**

These types of opportunities are short term, specific, job related training that may or not involve payment or stipends to trainees. Trainees receive special N.T.A/ organization certificates.

**4. Apprenticeship**

N.T.A, in collaboration with B.T.V.I will vigorously pursue opportunities within all industries for the placement of trainees as apprentices, within the framework of The Apprenticeship Act, Chapter 294 of The Statute Law of The Bahamas.

**5. Job Referral/ Job Placement**

This service will be provided for registrants who are "workforce" ready by referrals to the Labour Employment Exchange and by N.T.A networking with industry partners.

**6. Adult Literacy and Numeracy**

Will be provided for registrants who lack basic literacy/numeracy competencies and aptitude to function effectively in the workplace.

**N.T.A Training Paths Profile**