

Human Services—Tuition-based Training to Learners Follow-up

Summary

In 2008, we audited the former Department of Employment and Immigration's systems for delivering training to Albertans who need to improve their employment skills. We made three recommendations in our *October 2008 Report* (pages 243–253). This year, we conducted follow-up work to assess the Department's progress in implementing the three recommendations.

The Department of Human Services has implemented two of our recommendations.

To fully implement the outstanding recommendation, the Department must:

- finish developing outcome and indicator reports, and use these reports to monitor whether training providers meet performance outcomes and expectations
- implement the monitoring policy, by monitoring and reviewing post-audit action plans that the training providers prepare

Findings and recommendations

Approving and renewing training programs—implemented

Background

In our *October 2008 Report* (page 249), we recommended that the Department improve its systems for approving and renewing programs by:

- developing clear performance expectations for each program and training provider
- clearly defining its criteria for approving each program
- using its monitoring results to decide whether to renew a program

Our audit findings

In implementing this recommendation, the Department:

- developed and communicated performance targets that require 70 per cent of learners to be employed or to have advanced to further training within six months of completing the program
- developed a policy that states training providers' obligations and the Department's expectations
- revised its program approval policy to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of training providers, as well as describe the processes, criteria and conditions upon which the Department will approve and renew programs

We reviewed the programs approval process and did not find any instances where programs were approved or renewed without following the policy.

Improve the use of information systems—implemented

Background

In our *October 2008 Report* (page 251), we recommended that the Department improve its use of information systems by:

- integrating its payment processing system with other learner databases, to ensure that tuition fee payments are accurate
- implementing adequate controls to ensure all key learner data is promptly updated in the system
- using exception reports to detect potential non-compliance problems

Our audit findings

The Department implemented this recommendation by:

- implementing MOBIUS, a management information system that integrates payment processing with databases for learners and tuition fees, and automatically calculates tuition fee payments
- developing manual and automated controls to safeguard the integrity of data in MOBIUS, thereby ensuring that tuition fee payments are accurate
- designing and using error reports to identify, analyze and correct any data entry and processing errors

Monitoring and enforcement of training providers—satisfactory progress

Background

In our *October 2008 Report* (no. 24—page 245), we recommended that the Department improve its monitoring of tuition-based training providers by:

- quantifying tuition refunds that training providers owe the Department
- implementing policies and procedures that outline steps and timelines for dealing with non-compliance problems
- assessing whether training providers were meeting the Department's performance expectations

Our audit findings

The Department has made progress by implementing an information system. MOBIUS automatically calculates tuition refunds based on withdrawal dates the training provider enters into the system.

The Department also issued a monitoring, auditing and remedial action policy that requires:

- the internal audit unit to assess the training providers' compliance with policies and regulations
- training providers to prepare post-audit action plans to deal with non-compliance issues
- regional offices to monitor the training providers' implementation of the post-audit action plans
- the internal audit unit, regional representatives and delivery partnerships unit to review results, at the end of the monitoring period, to ensure that post-audit action plans are implemented

By the time we had completed our work, the Department had started receiving post-audit action plans from training providers.

While the Department has established and communicated performance outcomes for training providers, we noted that it had not fully developed reports to compare actual performance to expected outcomes. Without these reports, the Department cannot effectively assess and monitor whether training providers are meeting its outcomes.