

Call for proposals for \$13 million Competency-Based Training fund begins

THE first Call for Proposals inviting applications to a new \$13 million training grant for employers and training providers has begun, following a series of information workshops for over 100 prospective applicants.

The Competency-Based Training Fund (CBTF), a Government of Barbados/Inter-American Development Bank initiative, has been established to better equip the Barbadian workforce with the skills and competencies they need to excel in the 21st century market place. A key component of the government's Skills for the Future education and labour initiative, the CBTF will disburse \$13 million over a three-year period in four cycles of funding.

Last Friday, April 11, at the official start of the Call for Proposals, Fund Manager, Anderson Lowe explained that proposals would be evaluated "in a competitive fashion to support interested partnerships of employers and training providers to develop and provide competency-based training aimed at improving the skills of employed and unemployed persons in Barbados."

Successful partnerships will receive up to \$800,000 in funding with a maximum of two years to complete their training programmes.

Lowe outlined that, "Only those proposals that comply with the following criteria will be reviewed and ranked by the CBTF's Technical Reviewing and Selection Committee: (1) those submitted by a partnership of at least one private employer and one training provider; (2) where the training to be provided is based on competency-based occupational standards; and (3) where the training leads to certification by a recognised awarding body."

Proposals that do not meet the criteria will be sent back to the partners with comments. Those partnerships will also be invited to resubmit their proposals in a subsequent cycle.

The Fund Manager also explained that additional criteria, though not necessary for eligibility, would be used to prioritise the selection of proposals. These criteria are: the number of workers to be trained under the proposal exceeds those working in the employer's business; the participation of sector associations and the merging of firms in partnership with the training provider; and a clear strategy of sustainability after the CBTF funding period. All details can be obtained from the Fund's website, www.cbtf.com.bb, or by calling the CBTF office at (246)



Manager of the Competency-Based Training Fund (CBTF) Management Unit, Anderson Lowe (right) announces the Call for Proposal while Executive Director of the TVET Council, Henderson Eastmond listens.

227-9090.

Mr. Lowe said that the Call for Proposals formally signified that the Fund was officially open for business and accepting proposals. "It also gives potential applicants key information on how to apply, when, and where to get relevant information. We also want to give every employer and every training provider, whether large or small, an equal opportunity to participate in the fund. It's for everyone."

Vision to make Barbados more competitive

Speaking to the long-term benefits of the training that the CBTF will fund, Mr. Lowe said, "The larger vision is to raise the level of training in the workforce and to improve the level of certification thereby making us more competitive so we can go out and offer services that are world class. We're expecting to have some good proposals from the hospitality sector which is our main foreign exchange earner, and from emerging sectors such as health and wellness. We're also expecting to have at the end of the three years of the fund a vibrant renewable energy sector where we have a key number of players, good human resources, and good skills. I'm looking for an all-round increase in the level of productivity and the sustainability component of the fund is to ensure that programmes continue to develop Barbados into the foreseeable future."

With regard to the number of proposals anticipated, Executive Director of the TVET Council, Henderson Eastmond said, "If we receive 20 training proposals from major training providers and employers and get those sustained over a period of time, that is a core with which we can start to transform the education and training system in Barbados with the employers taking the lead in developing the curriculum or content of programmes." He added that this would make the provision of



Paul Murphy, Programme Director, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation



The Barbados Community College, represented by Business Development Officer, Gomell Elcock (right), is submitting a training proposal to the Fund in partnership with Intimate Hotels.

training more efficient because, "We won't be training for training's sake but to meet the demands of the country. So this is the start of a whole transformation of our educational system."

Eligibility requirements for employers and training providers

With regard to eligibility, Lowe explained that all private employers who were registered or incorporated in Barbados for at least two years were eligible to apply and small businesses and entrepreneurs could join with other businesses or trade associations in order to submit a joint proposal in partnership with a training provider.

Training providers may be public, private, local, regional or international, but must be registered or incorporated in their home country and operating for at least two years prior to participating in the CBTF. This includes secondary and post-secondary institutions. Local training providers should be NIS compliant.

Business Development Officer at the Barbados Community College (BCC), Gomell Elcock, said that her institution was looking to submit proposals for four major projects including languages, sports, agriculture

and the alternative energy sector. "We see the CBTF as bridging the gaps in these sectors and creating opportunities for our nationals to go overseas and work."

Ms. Elcock also lauded the Fund for creating an opportunity for training providers to partner with the private sector. "As training providers we've complained about not being able to partner with industry and this is the perfect opportunity to do so. The concept of 'it takes two hands to clap' is provided by the Fund for industry and training providers to work towards a common goal."

BCC is partnering with Intimate Hotels of Barbados to submit a proposal for language training. Gayle Headley-Lowe, Executive Director of the hotel group, also sees the Fund as a "wonderful opportunity because a well-trained employee will deliver good service; and service is what the tourism industry is built on. We welcome the language training opportunities because the majority of workers in the industry do not speak a second language. However, we are seeking new markets so languages are very important."

Paul Murphy, Programme Director, Ministry of Education,

Science, Technology and Innovation under whose aml the Skills for the Future programme falls, said that one the Fund's unique components was its development of partnerships. "We wanted to develop relationships which were not forced but which came natural and we believe those natural relationships will last a lot longer than something forced upon employers and training providers. This is one of the reasons that we wanted to approach it in this manner."

Call for Proposals ends May 23

The Call for Proposals ends May 23, 2014 at 4:30 p.m. with funding to the successful employer/training provider partnerships beginning in August 2014. Further details can be obtained from the Fund's website www.cbtf.com.bb, or by calling the CBTF office at (246) 229090.

Competency-based training is a learning system which considers learners competent in an occupational area based on the demonstration of mastery skill knowledge and attitudes. This is its key difference to traditional education which relies on acquiring content-based knowledge alone.