

Improving Access to the Canada- Alberta Job Grant (2023)

Issue

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant provides financial assistance to employers wishing to cover education and training costs for their employees' job-related upskilling. Presently, the Grant allows business owners of microbusinesses with four employees or less access to funding for their learning. Raising this threshold to owners of small businesses with 100 employees or less would help more small business owners gain the necessary skills for increasing the economic activity their business generates. Many small business owners with more than four employees would benefit highly from accessing the Grant but need access to this funding as their business is considered too large to be eligible.

Background

The Canada-Alberta Job Grant allows employers to apply for Grant funding for present or future employees' training costs. The amount that is covered depends on whether the training is offered to existing employees or for hiring and training a presently unemployed Albertan.

Employers contribute one-third of the total costs for existing employees, and the Government donates the remaining two-thirds, up to \$10,000 per year for each trainee. When hiring and training an unemployed Albertan, the Government contributes up to 100% of the costs for each trainee up to \$15,000.

Business owners may also access the Grant to receive training for themselves. However, only owners of microbusinesses with four or fewer employees may do so.²⁸²

Limiting business owners' access to training through the Grant to only those who employ four or fewer employees is preventing access to some business owners who would benefit immensely from the program. Many industries only produce revenue streams that allow for the reinvestment of that revenue into educational opportunities for their owners once they are much larger than four employees. This restriction leads to many businesses whose owners would most benefit from learning not being able to enroll in learning opportunities without help from the Grant.

Expanding access to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant to owners of small businesses that employ up to 100 people will help them get essential training and knowledge to manage and grow their businesses more effectively. As well, it would only represent approximately a 12% increase in total eligible businesses in Alberta and 87% of Alberta businesses are considered microbusinesses already eligible to receive grant funding.²⁸³ Updating these requirements will generate more jobs and economic activity from business owners better equipped to run their businesses well.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Alberta:

²⁸² Government of Alberta. "Canada-Alberta Job Grant Applicant Guide", accessed February 24, 2023, <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/lbr-cajg-applicant-guide.pdf>

²⁸³ Business Council of Alberta. "Jobs and job growth in Alberta by business size", accessed February 17, 2023, <https://businesscouncilab.com/work/jobs-and-job-growth-in-alberta-by-business-size/>

1. Increase the eligibility for the grant to include company owners of businesses with up to 100 employees;
2. Review comparable programs in other jurisdictions and ensure program access to the Canada-Alberta Job Grant is comparable to other provinces.