



A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) is an umbrella group of agencies and programs delivering employment and training services to women in Ontario and beyond. ACTEW distributes information regarding labour force development policy, consults with various levels of government, conducts research projects designed to enhance our understanding of the training and education terrain, and advocates for women's access to quality employment and training services. Our mission is to address issues of women's equality in community-based training programs, and in the labour force. We promote and support community-based training opportunities for women.

Message from the Chair & the Executive Director

This has been a year of incredible activity for the organization. ACTEW's membership continues to grow and diversify as we welcome more agencies from outside the Greater Toronto Area. In keeping with our three-year strategic plan, we have officially changed our name to more accurately reflect our mission. This year also saw a considerable increase in the number of professional development workshops we offered to our membership. Traffic to the Women's Online Training Community web site at www.actew.org continues to rise and distribution for the ACTEW-L Email Bulletin is nearing 1,000 subscribers. We have also had a number of staff changes. Karen Lior, ACTEW's previous Executive Director, has gone to the Canadian Labour Congress. We will miss Karen greatly and on behalf of the ACTEW board and membership we wish her all the best. Jen Liptrot was hired in September as ACTEW's new Executive Director. Renata Burton has joined ACTEW as our new Project Coordinator. Danielle Thibodeau has also been hired as our Research Assistant. Our members tell us how much they value our work, our attention to their needs and the services we provide. Your involvement makes ACTEW's work possible. We appreciate and value your continued support.

Liz Creal, Chair
Jen Liptrot, Executive Director

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ACTEW gratefully thanks our members, donors, and the following agencies and foundations for their generous support. Their contributions allow us to work on behalf of the women's training community.

Funders

Status of Women Canada, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), The Volunteer @ction.online (V@O) Program, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, The Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), The Initiatives in the New Economy Research Alliance Programme, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), The Trillium Foundation, The Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) Program, Human Resources Development Canada, The Community Access Program (CAP), Industry Canada, The National Literacy Secretariat

In-Kind Supporters

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Meta Strategies, World Literacy Canada, Ottawa Women's Training and Employment Network (OWTEN)



WHO WE ARE

A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) began in 1985 as CATEW, the Community of Alternative Training and Education for Women. In a proposal to Status of Women Canada they had a (then) growing

concern that programs offered by traditional educational institutions "are not providing women with the essential core life and generic skills that will prepare them for long-term financial independence." The proposal noted that every effort must be made to ensure that women in and entering the labour force will have equal access to available employment and that the trends which have led to job and economic segregation be reversed." CATEW received a grant leading to the publication of "The Needs of Community-Based Training Programs for Women in Metro Toronto: Some Recommendations." This was the basis for the establishment of ACTEW. The organization was incorporated in 1987 as Advocates for Community-Based Training and Education for Women. This year, in response to our 2001-2004 strategic plan and feedback from our membership, we officially changed ACTEW's name to better reflect our mission and work. Our new name is A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW).

ACTEW is now a coalition of 70 community-based agencies and programs that provide employment and training services for women in Ontario. While many ACTEW members is located in the Greater Toronto Area, our membership is expanding and now includes agencies in South River, Hamilton, Ganonoque, Oshawa, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, and Kitchener. Our interactive Women's Online Training Community web site has raised our profile across the province and expanded our capacity to work in the women's training sector. Our publications and resources are circulated widely through our web site, our membership, and through our sister umbrella organizations.

WHAT WE DO

ACTEW's Values:

We believe that education and training can be the bridge between poverty and economic independence. Our members provide holistic and comprehensive employment and training services that enable and empower women to obtain and retain quality employment.

ACTEW's Core Functions:

1. **Information sharing and distribution** — ACTEW collects, distributes, and shares information on women's training and employment issues for our member agencies, for women seeking training, for governments and other institutions, and for the general public.

2002-2003 PROJ

- ❖ **Putting Women in the Picture: Labour Market Policy and the Women's Training Sector** — The goal of this 3-year project, funded by Status of Women Canada-Ontario Region, is to create a strong, coordinated network of women's training and employment service providers in Ontario. Changing federal and provincial policy regarding labour force development, employment insurance, and access to training services has resulted in programs that often do not meet the needs of the women trying to access the labour market. As part of our research we have conducted focus groups in Kitchener, Ottawa, North Bay, Toronto, and Hamilton, and will be releasing a report on labour market policy and the women's training sector in Ontario.
- ❖ **Content-Sharing Constellation** — Funded by the Office of Learning Technologies (HRDC), this three-year project is expanding the number of agencies participating in the Content-Sharing Constellation. Between 12-15 community agencies and groups will share their employment and training information online. The Women's Online Training Community web site at <http://www.actew.org> will be re-designed to make the content even more accessible. Regional community animators will be hired in 4 areas of Ontario to increase the amount of locally-specific information we can provide. The Constellation project will also increase our collaboration with other agencies and umbrella groups in the sector. Formal partners for the project are OAYEC, OCASI and Meta Strategies.
- ❖ **Beautiful Beginnings** — More than 20,000 women complete job-training and employment programs at community-based agencies each year. The mission of this project, funded by the Trillium Foundation, is to assist women in creating and maintaining a professional look for the Canadian workplace. Thirteen ACTEW members are referring their clients to the program.
- ❖ **Shortcuts for Career Development Resources for Girls and Women (Updated)** — Originally published in April 2001, this guide includes print and online resources that are sensitive to the career development needs of girls and women. Funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate, this updated version contains 60 additional resources and new sections on science, technology and the trades, business and entrepreneurship, and French-language resources.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

- ❖ **Skills and Knowledge Profile Online** — This project is “digitizing” our print-based Skills and Knowledge Profile workbook into an online database-driven self-assessment tool. In this new online version, users will complete a series of modules that will guide them through identifying and validating their skills and experiences.
- ❖ **Making Connections: Meeting the Information Needs of Professionals Working with Immigrant Women.** This project followed up on our “Challenges and Connections” research and was funded by HRDC. The project offered a series of six professional development workshops to over 190 front-line practitioners working with newcomer women. Workshops were offered in Kitchener, Toronto, Mississauga, and Ottawa. Topics included a gender-based analysis of Canada’s new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; understanding the affect of global trends and domestic policies on the employment needs of immigrants and refugees; and exploring approaches to networking and mentorship for professionals working with newcomers.
- ❖ **Advocacy** — ACTEW, along with OAYEC, OCASI, ONESTEP, and COSTI met quarterly with HRDC to bring members’ concerns and issues to their attention. ACTEW representatives also met with the Honourable Jean Augustine, Secretary of State for the Status of Women.
- ❖ **General Members Meetings** — Our bi-monthly members’ meetings continue to be well attended and serve to introduce ACTEW members to a wide variety of services and resources. Guest speakers and topics included a spotlight on youth employment services, an update on the delivery of Ontario Works in Toronto, and teaching/understanding labour market trends.
- ❖ **Workshops and Presentations** — ACTEW presented workshops at the Opportunities Conference and the Making IT Work for Volunteers Summit. As part of our research work we also conducted focus groups in Hamilton, Kitchener, Ottawa, North Bay, and Toronto.
- ❖ **Training Sessions** — Jen, Renata and Karen have facilitated training sessions for the Office Workers Career Centre, the LEAP Program of the YWCA of Greater Toronto, the Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, the START Program at Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services (ACCES), the Association of Life Skills Coaches of Ontario (ALSCO), and Sistering.

2. **Research projects and publications** — ACTEW engages in research to document, analyze and report on women’s training, employment and education needs.

3. **Capacity-building projects and sector development** — Driven by the needs of our members and the women they serve, this work includes:

- Developing resources and tools designed to aid member agencies in serving women needing training and education
- Providing professional development opportunities for member agency staff and volunteers

4. **Policy analysis** — Grounded in our research projects and values, this work includes:

- Providing information, analysis and strategic advice to member agencies
- Public education through media, publications, our web site, forums and workshops
- Networking with other agencies and umbrella groups to exchange information and develop collaborative strategies

The Women’s Online Training Community web site at www.actew.org continues to expand our service delivery across the province. The site features:

- The Looking for Training? Directory, a comprehensive database, of our members programs and services across Ontario
- Events and job listings including free public postings
- News, press releases and community announcements
- Resources, a comprehensive database with information on women, education and training with over 410 listings
- Member’s discussion area, an online forum for working together

The ACTEW-L and News on the Net email bulletins continue to expand our outreach — we now have close to 1,000 subscribers across Canada. The Women’s Online Training Community site was initially funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship’s Volunteer @ction.online Program.

ACTEW is one of six members of an innovative “Content-Sharing Constellation” for our news, events and job listings. The constellation was initiated as a partnership between ACTEW and ONESTEP. Current constellations members are the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC), the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), the Possibilities Project, the iCoach Project of the Association of Life Skills Coaches of Ontario (ALSCO), and Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI).

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS THROUGH 2003-2004

In keeping with our strategic plan for 2001-2004, ACTEW has proceeded on a number of initiatives:

Core Functions: ACTEW continued to provide a mix of services including policy analysis and research, professional development opportunities at member meetings, capacity-building projects such as CAP and OLT, and educational workshops and presentations related to women's training needs and issues.

Identity: We have officially changed our name to A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women (ACTEW) to better reflect our mission and work. Over the next year we will also be updating our corporate identity — the "look and feel" of the ACTEW logo and the Women's Online Training Community web site.

Coordination and Planning: ACTEW will continue working on partnerships and coalition efforts in the sector. ACTEW continues to be a steering committee member for the Canadian Coalition for Community-Based Training (CCCCBT). Jen Liptrot also sits on the Toronto Training Board as the Women's Representative, and the ACTEW membership acts as an ad-hoc women's reference group for the board.

Membership: We continue to do extensive outreach to women's training providers outside the Greater Toronto Area. In addition we are expanding our outreach to programs in related sectors (such as housing, settlement, and violence prevention) that are providing career development services for their women clients.

What Members Say About ACTEW

The workshop was very useful for me — it's good to have an opportunity to share information and ideas with a forward-looking approach.

I have certainly enjoyed the articles and information distributed by ACTEW.

Just wanted to say yet again that you put together a fantastic e-mail bulletin. Great work and thanks for so much valuable info!!

Thank you for coordinating and facilitating the focus group in North Bay. I appreciated being in a room with my peers for such an important subject.

The resources ACTEW provides are invaluable and enhance my efforts in networking.

ACTEW also gratefully acknowledges the support we receive from our sister academic research centres and networks: The Work and Lifelong Learning Network at the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, and The Training Matters Network at the Centre for Research in Work and Society, York University.

Special thanks also goes out to the many workshop presenters that generously donated their time and participated at ACTEW's professional development events.

Membership in ACTEW

Membership in ACTEW is encouraged for all groups offering women a community-based training approach. Associate memberships are available to those supporting the ACTEW mandate and mission.

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