



Assessment of prior learning programme for vulnerable youth

Promising Practice

Implemented by: National Training Agency

Where: Grenada

Status: Implemented between June 2019 and June 2022

Summary: The National Training Agency collaborated with the Climate Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) and certified vulnerable youth with Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Level II certification through an assessment of prior learning programme in various occupational areas.

Overview

The National Training Agency (NTA) was established by the Grenada Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (GCTVET) Act. This Act established two entities: the NTA, which has responsibility for overseeing the development and delivery of TVET in Grenada and the GCTVET, which has responsibility for providing guidance and supervision to the NTA and advises the Minister of Education on TVET matters.

NTA's vision is "a highly productive workforce improving Grenada's competitiveness" and its overall goal is "to increase the competence of Grenada's workforce through adoption of occupational standards and NVQ/CVQ certification". The realization of this goal is closely linked to the mission of "enhancing the employability of Grenada's workforce" since standards adoption and certification are prerequisites for achieving this.

Description

Partnering to provide skills training

NTA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SAEP for the provision of life skills and vocational skills training, assessment of prior learning, as well as Caribbean Vocational Qualification/National Vocational Qualification (CVQ/NVQ) certification. This project was funded by the Government of Grenada, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Trainees taking part in the accreditation programme

Certifying vulnerable youth

As part of the MOU, the agency implemented an accreditation of prior learning programme to certify vulnerable youth who are skilled, but not certified. Over a hundred candidates were targeted for the programme. These could potentially be awarded a CVQ Level 2 in six occupational areas: Food Preparation and Cookery; Early Childhood Development; Allied Health-Geriatric Caregiver; Plumbing; Electrical Installation; and General Construction. Sixty-four candidates successfully completed the programme and were certified in their respective occupational areas.

Selecting candidates for the programme

The programme was marketed and candidates were recruited in collaboration with the SAEP team. Candidates were selected based on predetermined criteria and on their performance on the self-assessment exercise administered by the NTA. There were several candidates from Carriacou, Grenada's sister island, who participated in the programme. All selected candidates received a scholarship award from SAEP, which covered the cost of the assessment process, verification and certification at a value of \$530 XCD (\$199 USD) per candidate. The candidates provided the materials needed for their assessment.

Involvement of different stakeholders

The NTA managed the assessment process and applied the relevant quality assurance procedures for the accreditation of prior learning.



Assessors and verifiers were contracted to carry out the pre-assessment activities, assessments and verification. Employers were also notified and informed of their workers' assessment schedules. In addition, arrangements were made with various approved training centres for easy access, as well as efficient and effective conducting of assessments. Some of the assessments were also conducted on the job.

Objectives

The initiative targeted unemployed and underemployed young men and women, between the ages of 16 and 35 in rural communities, throughout the tri-island state of Grenada. Candidates of the programme met at least two of the following conditions by which poor households are characterized:

- More than the national average number of three family members per household;
- The head of the household being single;
- One or more unemployed persons among adult family members; and
- One or more adult family members without secondary or tertiary education.

The objectives were to:

- Recognize the skillsets of youth through the accreditation of prior learning programme;
- Provide eligible candidates with a certification leading to self and other employment opportunities in areas that are market driven; and
- Increase the candidates' marketability, potential to earn incomes above the poverty level, ability to re-enter formal training, and improve their standard of living.

Recognizing competencies of vulnerable youth to improve their prospects of employment

Around 75% of workers in Grenada are skilled but uncertified. These workers acquire the competencies in different vocational areas informally, and in many cases are unable to engage in formal training for various reasons, including access and financing. The lack of certification often results in unemployment or underemployment. This initiative targeted young skilled workers, especially in the rural areas of mainland Grenada, and Carriacou, by recognizing their competencies and awarding them the CVQ in their occupational area, using the accreditation of prior learning model.

The programme helps youth to boost their confidence levels, aids in identifying their personal strengths and interests, and assists them to identify their knowledge and skills gaps. The latter enables them to be aware of which areas they need to develop. Furthermore, the certification enables youth to earn higher incomes for their households and empowers them to contribute to their communities.

Outcomes and impact

A total of 110 candidates were initially targeted for certification through the initiative. A total of 64 candidates successfully completed the programme and were certified. This reflects a 58% success rate: 26 males, or 41% and 38 females, or 59%.

The expected impact of the initiative is:

- Improved employment creation and income generation which leads to sustainable livelihoods for rural youth;
- Increased awareness of the occupational standards used for training and certification and the underlying knowledge, skills and attitudes required by industry;
- Increased awareness of options for training and certification in TVET for skilled persons through the NTA - an increase in the number of persons seeking certification through accreditation of prior learning has been registered following the completion of the programme; and
- Strengthened capacity of the workforce – there is an increased percentage of certified workers in six occupational areas.

Challenges

Supporting candidates financially

One of the challenges faced was related to financial support for candidates. While the scholarship award covered the cost of assessment and certification, the candidates were responsible for procuring the material needed for their assessment. In several cases, candidates were unable to buy the material due to the high costs involved. To address this, the NTA and supporters of the candidates made contributions towards the procurement of material for the assessment processes. In some cases, the assessments were conducted while the candidates were on-the-job instead of at the approved training centres, hence reducing costs further.

Scheduling assessment based on needs of candidates

Another challenge was related to scheduling. Some candidates lost interest or were unable to complete the assessment process due to interruptions in the assessment schedules arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some candidates were unable to adhere to agreed schedules due to competing responsibilities. To address this, timeline and assessment schedules were adjusted to accommodate candidates, as far as possible. This allowed candidates with other commitments to successfully complete the programme.

Lacking knowledge and skills in vocational areas

Based on pre-assessment activities conducted, there were several candidates who could not proceed with the accreditation of prior learning programme due to their lack of knowledge and skills in their vocational areas. To address this situation, the candidates ineligible to complete the assessment were encouraged to engage in bridging programmes or vocational skills training.

Insights

- When targeting vulnerable youth, candidates should also be assisted with the material costs as part of the scholarship award, especially for occupational areas that use costly materials.
- For some occupational areas, it is more efficient to conduct accreditation of prior learning on-the-job rather than at a training centre.

Next steps

Based on needs assessments conducted, there are several workers in the same and other occupational areas that can be certified through the accreditation of prior learning programme. The NTA will continue this initiative if financing is available.

Learn more

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To learn more about the National Training Agency, visit: <https://www.grenadanta.gd>

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