

# MINING WORKFORCE TRANSITION KIT - A Tool to Support Employees at Mine Closure



## Module 1 Decision Makers

Canada

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M I H R  
R H I M

MINING INDUSTRY  
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CONSEIL DES RESSOURCES HUMAINES  
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## MODULE 1 – DECISION MAKERS

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## About the Mining Workforce Transition Kit



*The fact you are reading this likely indicates the company you work for or represent is preparing for a significant layoff or mine closure. Someone may have suggested that you consider a workforce transition support project to help the transitioning workers. Fortunately, while you may have a limited knowledge of workforce transition, many others have been through the process, and have left a legacy of advice and experience to guide you and help you make good decisions.*

We hope this Workforce Transition Kit will help guide interested parties step-by-step following layoff or mine closure announcements. It reviews all the basics, from the initial discussions through the selection and training of a Transition Committee and setting up an Action Centre, helping workers meet a variety of transition needs — and land on their feet.

### Module 1 – Decision Makers

This module focuses on the key decision makers — management, union and/or worker representatives. It explains who is involved in the initial decision-making process and suggests a way to begin a workforce transition support project. The module describes unique, invaluable supports that a support project provides for transitioning workers and their families.

### Module 2 – Transitioning Workers

Workers can use this module independently or in an Action Centre to help find the supports they need to land on their feet after losing a job. These resources are intended: to help workers cope with the initial shock and any ongoing stress (financial or otherwise); to suggest ways to regroup and review options; to come up with a plan of action and to succeed in a positive transition. Unemployment can be stressful but supports are available. No employee needs to go through this alone.

### Module 3 – The Transition Committee

The third module provides a road map for a new Transition Committee. It helps them get organized and explains the roles and responsibilities of committee members. The module includes useful resources such as a sample agenda for committee meetings and selection criteria for a chairperson. It also reviews information to help determine the requirements of transitioning workers and assessing whether the services meet those needs.

#### Module 4 – The Action Centre Team

The fourth module will be useful to Transition Committee members and Action Centre staff. It discusses the transition services that a committee should consider offering workers and suggests ways to introduce them. The module provides guidance and practical tools to help with the efficient, day-to-day running of an Action Centre, including communications with workers, potential employers, government and community agencies and educational institutions.

#### Module 5 – Transition Resources

The fifth module provides a wealth of material to help Transition Committees. It includes information on provincial programs and college and university training. It also contains suggested websites and books related to financial planning, job-search techniques and other information useful to committees and workers.

#### About MiHR

*The Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR), in conjunction with industry stakeholders, produced this Transition Kit, with financial support from the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program.*

In addition to the Mining Workforce Transition Kit, MiHR offers the Canadian Mining Credentials Program. The program provides all industry players with comprehensive, objective ways to: verify the skills, knowledge and experience of workers; target training requirements; and enable workers from other industries to make smooth transitions to jobs in the Canadian mining industry.

The Canadian Mining Credentials Program is the cornerstone of the mining industry's efforts to:

- recognize the skills, knowledge and experience of mining workers,
- provide workers with portable credentials,
- accredit training programs for mining workers,
- enable employers to accurately and consistently verify the skills and experience of job applicants and support ongoing professional recognition for their employees.

Occupational certification under the [Canadian Mining Credentials Program \(CMCP\)](#) will give workers from mines that are closing a validated record of all of their training, workplace experience and demonstrated competencies. A Skills Passport that has been completed by a trained and registered Workplace Assessor will document an individual worker's skills so that they are recognized by potential employers at other mines or in other industries. Similar to a trades qualification, CMCP certification will enable employers to identify candidates who already have the required skills and experience to quickly and efficiently transition into productive jobs.

For more information about MiHR and its programs, please visit their website at [www.mihr.ca](http://www.mihr.ca).

## Module 1- Decision Makers

**A LAYOFF OR CLOSURE, EVEN WHEN EXPECTED,** can be an unnerving and unsettling experience for everyone. As a company decision maker, you no doubt will want to offer workers a fair and dignified exit. One way to achieve this goal is to work with MiHR's Workforce Transition Service, first signing a Transition Agreement and then getting behind a Workforce Transition Project. This module:

- Defines a Workforce Transition Project
- Answers some frequently asked questions related to it
- Outlines the basic steps involved in setting up the project
- Describes the role and functions of an Action Centre for workers

## Why Negotiate a Transition Agreement?



*As a cyclical industry, the mining industry has periods of boom and bust. When metal prices are high and mines are opening, it can be hard for companies to find and retain skilled workers. In tougher economic times, layoffs occur.*

*In addition, mines close because ore bodies are played out or the ore remaining can no longer be mined economically. Workers of many years standing then have to find new employment.*

The loss of jobs has had far reaching effects on workers, their families and the communities in which they live. Employers often have different expectations and workers need more assistance to prepare them for sustainable re-employment in today's labour market.

A **workforce transition support project** helps workers who have lost their jobs to make some of the necessary changes to find suitable employment, to secure support for retraining (where necessary), to find quality counselling and to navigate the maze of red tape that often confronts them. The support project can also be helpful to those workers who are planning to retire. Equally important, the project enables workers to realize that they and their families are not alone in steering their way through the financial, vocational, social and emotional challenges of some tough transitions.

Workforce transition support projects that include a joint employer/employee committee structure and work with volunteers, will be the most valuable. Co-workers know and understand each other, their skills, strengths and weaknesses. Co-workers will know best how to help each other and the actions that have to occur.

An employer will want to consider a workforce transition support project because it's the right thing to do. Employees have provided long and loyal service. A transition project is a relatively inexpensive way to thank them for that service and help reduce the negative impacts of job loss. An employer who contributes and participates in a workforce transition support project can also soften the blow for the entire community, if the mine is located in one.

A union will want to be involved in negotiating and preparing for a workforce transition support project even if other efforts are being mounted to try and save the jobs. In a non-union setting, worker representatives may want to be involved in a project for similar reasons. A workforce transition support project can provide invaluable and unique services to displaced workers.

## What is a Workforce Transition Project?

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*A company normally establishes a **Workforce Transition Project** when it lays off significant numbers of employees, with the layoff expected to be long-term or permanent.*

The purpose of a workforce transition support project is to provide assistance to displaced employees and help them with a broad range of transition needs (personal, vocational or financial counselling, job search, etc). The services provided support a variety of short and long term goals, including employment elsewhere, self-employment, educational or skills upgrading and semi or full retirement.

## FAQs About Setting up a Workforce Transition Program

Business managers make decisions on a daily basis. Before they make those decisions they need to evaluate how the decision will impact the business. In this case the question is “Should we sign a Transition Agreement?”

The answers to some “**Frequently Asked Questions**” may help with that decision.

<p><b>What does it cost?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2010, the cost of setting up a full-scale workforce transition support project is about \$225 to \$300 per affected employee. Factors such as the timing and number of layoffs, the demographics of the workforce and labour market conditions will be considered.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What do we get in return?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The capacity to deliver specialized professional assistance to employees and assistance that will help them access available programs.</li> <li>• A system and process that will manage the transition process for your organization.</li> <li>• You are involved in a manner that allows you to control the extent of your involvement, resources and financial commitments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How long are we committed for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In practice the committee’s activity runs only as long as there is a demonstrated need for services for a significant number of the effected employees. This time period may range from six months to one year.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What are other advantages to the project?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At a time when it's important for you to focus on your business, having a workforce transition support project in place will let you direct many employee enquiries to the Action Centre. The centre will communicate with workers about benefits, severance, employment insurance, etc., allowing you to direct your focus and energy where it's most needed.</li> <li>• Employee frustration is redirected into positive activities.</li> <li>• Employers who are downsizing find that a workforce transition support project instituted prior to layoffs results in better attendance for affected employees and less disruption to quality. (Often there is improvement in these areas).</li> <li>• Remaining employees are positively affected since they experience less “survivor syndrome” and have concrete evidence of the employer’s concern for workers.</li> <li>• Corporations recognize the need to be good corporate citizens within a community. Signing a Transition Agreement helps the community in a difficult time.</li> <li>• You may be currently downsizing, relocating or closing. In the future, however, your organization may want to retain certain employees or re-hire them. Hiring new employees and staff retention are two vital human resource functions. Your treatment of employees at a time of layoffs will influence the success of future endeavours, sales and staffing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do I ensure value for money?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A budget is established for the term of the contract outlining the projected costs and expenditures which the Transition Committee then approves.</li> <li>• The employer has the choice of equal representation on the committee and, in all circumstances, can monitor costs and reporting.</li> </ul>

**Why is this program so effective?**

- The Mining Workforce Transition Kit is designed to meet the specific needs of companies in the mining sector.
- The array of government services available to workers can be confusing. The Transition Committee can clear up the confusion. It can also make sure that workers access the help they need in a timely manner and with the encouragement to make the assistance work.
- Co-workers who are trained to offer help and support can assist their colleagues to identify issues more effectively than other forms of intervention.
- The project doesn't "find jobs". It gives workers the tools to search and succeed in securing good employment.

## Different Paths... Same Direction

The path followed by each workforce transition support project is unique. The time and resources applied to the steps along the way will vary from workplace to workplace depending on the specifics of the sector, firm, community and needs, skills and demographics of the employees. The exact sequence of steps may differ. But workforce transition support projects generally follow a similar direction.

- ↓ Layoff or closure announced.
- ↓ Meeting with provincial program (where applicable).
- ↓ Transition Agreement signed between parties.
- ↓ Transition Committee established and trained.
- ↓ Chairperson hired.
- ↓ Coordinator and volunteers selected and trained for Action Centre Team.
- ↓ Initial Needs Survey conducted with affected workers.
- ↓ Transition Committee develops Budget and Action Plan.
- ↓ Action Centre opens.
- ↓ Individual Needs Assessments — preferably prior to the layoff.
- ↓ Action Centre assists workers on-site and also makes referrals.
- ↓ Transition Committee oversees Centre's work and evaluates progress.
- ↓ Final Report prepared and Action Centre closed.

## Start-up Basics: Five Steps to a Workforce Transition Project

- 1- Secure approval of management and union
- 2- Establish a Transition Committee
- 3- Locate and equip the Action Centre
- 4- Arrange training for Committee and volunteers
- 5- Arrange for individual needs assessments

### 1- Secure approval of management and union

- MiHR will visit your work site to present the basic structure of the workforce transition support project to management and union/employee representatives.
- To contact MiHR
  - e-mail: [info@mihr.ca](mailto:info@mihr.ca)
  - tel: 613-270-9696

### 2- Establish a Transition Committee

- A Transition Committee normally has management and worker representatives.
- Typically a committee includes at least five or six members, but this number may vary depending on factors such as the size of the project, the need to accommodate different shifts and so forth.
- The Transition Committee members (and any alternate members) will receive training so that they can oversee the workforce transition support project and Action Centre. The committee will need to decide on appropriate services and activities based on a review of the worker needs assessments. It will then hire an independent chairperson.
- The committee meets more often at the beginning of a project but after the project is underway, meetings may only occur monthly, usually for a few hours.
- A project normally lasts between six months and a year unless the committee decides to end earlier or the parties agree to extend it.
- The committee develops an action plan and budget and approves all expenditures and reports.

### 3- Locate and Equip the Action Centre

- The Transition Committee decides on the location for an Action Centre. Sometimes it is located in the workplace if appropriate space is available. Or, where appropriate, the centre may be located offsite in an office, storefront, union hall or community space leased for this purpose. The centre should be accessible and inviting so workers feel at home whether there for a workshop or just stopping by to chat, check the job boards or use a computer.
- The committee will need to ensure that the centre is furnished and equipped with computers, internet, fax, phones and a copier. It may lease this equipment or solicit an in-kind contribution from the company or community source.
- The committee determines the centre's hours of operation.
- The centre will be staffed with a coordinator and volunteers on a full-time or part-time basis. The committee normally chooses volunteers from among laid-off workers.

### 4- Arrange Training for Committee

- MiHR can provide initial training for the Transition Committee, laying out the workforce transition support project and its basic components.
- The training usually lasts one to two days, depending on company preferences.

### 5- Arrange for Individual Needs Assessments (where funding permits)

- Committees use a Needs Assessment to develop an in-depth understanding of a worker's needs, skills and concerns. The assessment provides insights for the affected individual and general guidance for the Transition Committee.
- A Needs Assessment interview is confidential and lasts 45 to 60 minutes per individual. Professional counselors are best equipped to carry this out, if budget permits.
- No individual information is released to the Transition Committee. Instead, the counselors analyze the data and prepare a report for the committee on the aggregate numbers, including recommendations. For example, the results may suggest that the number of workers concerned about their finances warrants a budgeting workshop. Or, the company may need to develop a special program if, for instance, 15 workers have not completed grade 12. The needs assessment will also help the committee to prioritize its work.

## The Transition Agreement

### The Transition Agreement will:

1. **Identify who the contract is between:**
  - a. company
  - b. provincial government (where applicable)
  - c. union or worker representatives may sign as partners
2. **Provide the names of the:**
  - a. company representatives sitting on the Transition Committee
  - b. union or worker representatives sitting on the committee
  - c. any government advisors assigned to the project, where applicable
3. **Identify the number of employees affected, including union and non-union staff**
4. **Outline the objectives and activities of the Transition Committee**
5. **Outline the funding commitments**
6. **State the contract duration with a specified start date**
7. **Be signed and witnessed**

(Sample Transition Agreement Language)

#### Project Objectives

- To assist the affected employees of (company name) to develop a Transition Committee and Action Centre that will facilitate the transition of employees who have lost their employment.
- To recommend to employees and any participating governments various courses of action which the Transition Committee considers essential to developing an effective worker transition support project. The project should meet a full range of short- and medium-term transition needs for workers, including non-vocational needs, and assistance with re-employment and/or educational and skills upgrading.
- To use appropriately and effectively all applicable public programs and services.
- To operate and staff an effective Action Centre using a coordinator and volunteers to assist fellow workers to deal with the various impacts of job loss and to facilitate their successful transition to work or retirement.
- An independent chair and a Transition Committee will administer this agreement.

## Functions of an Action Centre

Every workforce transition support project provides similar services to help workers find sustainable re-employment. Projects also address unique individual situations. The staff in the Action Centre will coordinate and provide information and referrals for some of the following services.

Potential Action Centre Services	
<b>Job Search Assistance</b>	Contact local employers where applicable Set up job-posting boards and update daily Gather a library of relevant career-seeker resources (e.g., articles, magazines, MiHR career awareness tools)
<b>Coordinate Workshops</b>	Job-search skills Resumé writing assistance Employment Insurance information Budgeting/financial management Developments and trends in regional labour markets Educational and training opportunities Self employment Stress management Vocational counselling
<b>Communications</b>	Newsletters Information meetings Social gatherings Bulletin boards, Leaflets Web page and E-mail Phone and Fax
<b>Office – Work Area</b>	Bulletin boards Fax, telephone, photocopier Computers with Internet access and printer
<b>Skills Development and Training</b>	Basic Skills Apprenticeships Educational upgrading, high school completion or General Educational Development (GED) re-training, Truck driver, Welding, Computers etc.

## The Bottom Line

This module laid out the reasons for supporting a workforce transition project and some of its key elements.

- **Transition agreements** make business sense — they are a relatively inexpensive way to thank employees for their service and leave a community on a good note.
- **The five basic steps:**
  - 1- Secure approval of management and union
  - 2- Establish a Transition Committee
  - 3- Locate and equip the Action Centre
  - 4- Arrange training for committee members and volunteers
  - 5- Arrange for individual needs assessments
- **Action Centres can be set up onsite or in the community.** They help workers to be more effective job searchers and can also be a place for workshops on government programs, finances and other programs of interest to transitioning workers.

