

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas as' Public Employment Service System

An Overview

By

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Historical Context

- In December, 1960, The Bahamas Employment Exchange was established as a unit within the Department of Labour to facilitate improved functioning of the Bahamas Labour Market, bringing employers and employees together with a view to finding job placements for workers so as to encourage the full utilization of Bahamian manpower and implement The Government's Bahamianization Policy.

Mission of The Public Employment Exchange Unit

- To support and contribute to the economic development of The Bahamas and the financial independence of its citizens through a system that provides consistently efficient and effective workforce services to employers and job seekers.

Initial Functions of the Unit

- The service initially provided a system of freely chosen employment for workers and was mainly concerned with:-
 - (a) the collection of information concerning job vacancies
 - (b) the preparation of a register of those seeking work; and
 - (c) the placement of workers in employment

Location of facilities

- The Public Employment Exchange of the Bahamas has its main operations in the capital Island of New Providence where the city of Nassau is situated with sub-offices in the major family islands of Andros, Abaco, Bimini, Eleuthera, Exuma and Grand Bahama
- Particulars of job vacancies received in any Labour Office are circulated in all the departments, including those in the Family Islands, enabling workers to enhance their employment opportunities in other districts

Articulation of PES with workforce development (training) systems and information system.

• Question 1:

- The government through its Employment Service provides daily one on one counseling for persons seeking employment. Counseling is focused on specific areas such as job readiness, personal hygiene, work ethic, self esteem, networking etc.
- The government through its Employment Exchange also facilitates a Job Readiness Program with inmates at Her Majesty's Prisons with the sole intent of preparing them for reintegration into society.
- Additionally the department works in tandem with the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) in an effort to prepare young unskilled men and women to train in specific careers.

Articulation of PES with workforce development (training) systems and information system Question 1: (Cont'd).

- Yes, there is coordination with workforce development. The government through its agencies, the Department of Labour and The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) implemented an Apprentice Program with private sector employers in the construction industry to train and subsequently engage the services of the young unskilled men and women. The program specifically targeted 11th and 12th grade students.
- Our achievement thus far is notable, in that those young unskilled men and women are now skilled and fully engaged in gainful employment with options of moving from one employer to another.

Articulation of PES with workforce development (training) systems and information system.

Question 1: (Cont'd)

We are now examining how these efforts can be duplicated for the Agricultural Sector

- Lessons learned: The success of any PES depends on the level and quality of Tripartite co-operation between the government, Trade Unions and Employers as well as other non-governmental agencies. Adopt best practices, Continue to engage and encourage employers and Trade Unions to participate in programs.

Articulation of PES with workforce development (training) systems and information system.

Question 1: (Cont'd)

- Government intervention is absolutely essential.
- In the case of The Bahamas it was mandated that all heads of agreement between the Government, Local and foreign investors would provide for the setting aside of budgetary allocations to facilitate training for persons entering the workforce.
- Social Dialogue is essential to the success of any PES
- Ministries of Labour must ensure that workers are given access to decent Labour Conditions

Question: 2

- Yes, the government through its One Stop Service Centre (Employment Exchange) is certainly playing a more active role in job counseling and in follow-up after job placements. In fact our referral cards contain information that employers must return to us. Additionally, each Employment Officer is trained to follow-up and monitor their respective clients progress in the workplace and to provide periodic updates to the supervisor as the need arises.

QUESTION 3:

- The relationship between the Labour Market Information Focal Point or the observatory and the PES. Is a recurrent one as administrative data is provided by the Department of Labour to the focal point (Bahamas Department of Statistics) on a regular basis and this information is critical to policymakers
- Question: 4
- Yes the feedback comes in the form of reports and Newsletters that provide the social partners with important Data that assists with their strategic planning

Future Plans

- It should be noted that the Public Employment Services division of the Ministry of Labour of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas shall remain the Government's sole employment agency offering services to the citizens of The Bahamas free of charge, providing vital Labour Market Information to our social partners and safeguarding the Bahamianization policy

Future Plans Contd.

- **We will continue to work with our employers and workers organizations, our colleagues in other governmental agencies as well as NGO's to improve and expand our services**
 - **We will continue to cooperate and collaborate with our regional partners to develop and maintain best practices**
 - **Having regard to the provisions of Employment Services Convention 88 of the ILO and having ratified the convention we remain steadfast in our resolve to comply with its provisions**
- **Thank You**