

Chapter 13

Advanced Education – Working with Advanced Education Sector

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of Advanced Education improved its processes to work with the advanced education sector to achieve Ministry strategies by implementing one recommendation, and partially implementing the other recommendation we made in 2015.

By March 2018, the Ministry analyzed its oversight tools and used this analysis to determine how to best engage post-secondary institutions to contribute to meeting sector expectations. The Ministry established a common set of expectations for the advanced education sector, and communicated these expectations to post-secondary institutions.

In September 2015, the Ministry initiated the post-secondary indicators project to establish consistent and comparable sector-wide reporting. The Ministry and post-secondary institutions are establishing indicators for use across the advanced education sector. The Ministry aims to have all institutions report on a common set of indicators by September 2020.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

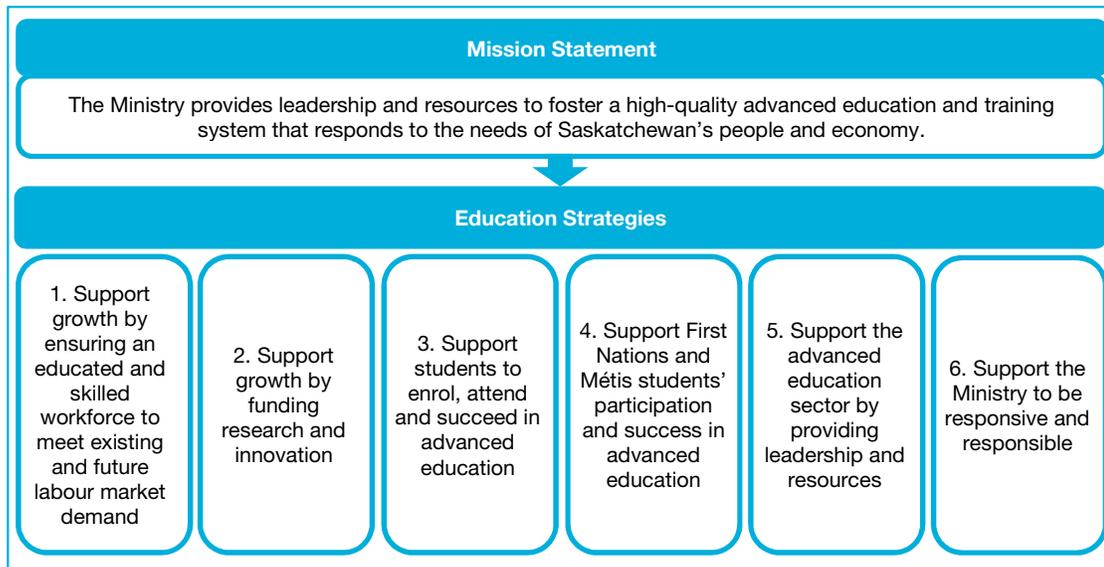
This chapter describes our follow-up of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015.

Our *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 7 concluded that for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry had, except in the areas of our recommendations, effective processes to work with the advanced education sector to achieve the Ministry's strategies for the sector as set out in the *Ministry of Advanced Education Plan for 2014-15*. We made two recommendations.

As shown in **Figure 1**, the *Ministry of Advanced Education Plan for 2014-15* sets out the Ministry's mission and six related strategies. The Ministry has aligned its strategies with those of the Provincial Government.¹

¹ The Provincial Government's strategies for the advanced education sector, as set out in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond*, include the following:

- Align programs provided by Saskatchewan's training institutes and workforce readiness activities to the current and future needs of employers in the province, while working with employers to increase the number of industry-sponsored training seats in Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions.
- Work with First Nations partners, employers, and post-secondary institutions to build on promising programs underway that assist in transitioning First Nations students moving off reserve to pursue jobs and educational opportunities.
- Make the attraction and retention of international students a cornerstone of the province's international immigration strategy, with a goal of increasing the number of international post-secondary students studying in Saskatchewan by at least 50% by 2020.
- Support science and research activities through the province's post-secondary institutions.

**Figure 1 – Ministry of Advanced Education 2014-15 Mission and Six Strategies**

Source: Adapted from *The Ministry of Advanced Education Plan for 2014-15*.

To conduct this audit follow-up, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (including CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Ministry's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Ministry management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform our follow-up, we discussed actions taken with Ministry management, and reviewed ministry analysis, planning documents, and public reports.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at March 23, 2018, and the Ministry's actions up to that date. We found that the Ministry had implemented one recommendation and partially implemented the other recommendation.

3.1 Gaps to Achieving Strategies Analyzed

We recommended that the Ministry of Advanced Education analyze gaps in achieving the Ministry's strategies for the Advanced Education sector, and use the analysis to determine how to best engage post-secondary institutions to contribute to the strategies. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 14, 2016)

Status – Intent of Recommendation Implemented

In 2016-17, the Ministry analyzed its oversight tools (e.g., current practices, agreements, legislation) and identified gaps and opportunities to enhance engagement with post-secondary institutions to contribute to meeting sector expectations. The Ministry used

this analysis to determine how to best engage post-secondary institutions. For example, at March 2018, the Ministry drafted a memorandum of understanding to formalize the financial reporting requirements between it and the federated colleges.²

Since our 2015 audit, the Ministry worked with post-secondary institutions to establish a common set of expectations for the advanced education sector. The expectations are for the sector to be accessible, responsive, accountable, sustainable, and offer high quality standards.

The Ministry's goals, as set out in its annual plan, align with these sector expectations. Per the Ministry's *2017-18 Plan*, its goals are:

- Students succeed in post-secondary education (accessible)
- Meet the advanced education needs of the province (responsive, high quality)
- Saskatchewan's post-secondary education sector is sustainable (accountable, sustainable)

The Ministry communicates sector expectations and encourages post-secondary institutions to align their strategies with the expectations.

3.2 Specific, Measurable Targets and Timelines Needed

We recommended that the Ministry of Advanced Education use specific, measurable targets and timelines to monitor progress towards achievement of its strategies. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 14, 2016)

Status – Partially Implemented

In September 2015, the Ministry initiated the post-secondary education indicators project. The objective of the project is to support consistent and comparable sector-wide reporting. The Ministry, as well as representatives from various post-secondary institutions, are participating in the project.³ The participants are establishing indicators for use across the advanced education sector. By March 2018, they had developed 14 indicators.

In December 2017, the Ministry collected data on three indicators from three institutions and was analyzing the results. The Ministry told us the following. It plans to release a public report on these indicators in 2018. In addition, it plans to develop additional indicators and continue to collect data from more institutions over the next two years, with the goal of having all institutions report on all indicators by September 2020. At that time, the Ministry plans to conduct additional analysis to set measurable targets and timelines for the sector.

Without specific, measurable targets or timelines, the Ministry is hindered in analyzing and reporting progress towards achieving its strategies.

² Federated colleges include Campion College, Luther College, First Nations University of Canada, St. Thomas More College, and St. Peter's College.

³ University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology, and the seven Regional Colleges.

