



**TO EMPLOYMENT:
SERVICES FOR SKILLED IMMIGRANTS IN THE TORONTO REGION
SEPTEMBER 2006**

Introduction

Established in September 2003, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) is a multi-stakeholder collaboration comprised of members representing employers, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, assessment service providers, community organizations, and all three levels of government.

TRIEC was created to address a need of the Toronto Region – effective integration of immigrants into the labour market. TRIEC's primary goal is to find and implement local solutions that lead to more effective and efficient labour market integration of immigrants in the Toronto Region. To achieve this goal, the council is focused on three objectives:

- Increasing access to value added services that support labour market integration of skilled immigrants;
- Working with key stakeholders, particularly employers, to build their capacity in recognizing and valuing immigrant skills; and,
- Working with governments to increase coordination and collaboration in planning and programming around this issue.

With respect to the third objective, TRIEC convened an Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGR) to increase the communication and coordination horizontally and vertically in government. IGR includes representatives from the federal government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Service Canada, Industry Canada, and Canadian Heritage), the provincial government (Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade), and local governments in the Toronto Region (City of Toronto, Region of Peel, Region of York, and Halton Region).

This document is the result of the collaborative work of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee, which undertook a mapping exercise to review government funded programs and services that support labour market integration of skilled immigrants. Each department or ministry reviewed and shared data on its current activity in the various program areas identified and participated in the joint analysis to identify gaps and potential opportunities for specific action or collaboration.

For the purposes of this document, skilled immigrants are defined as individuals who have immigrated to Canada with post-secondary education and/or professional training and experience. The document follows the experience cycle of a skilled immigrant in their process toward labour market integration. Each section provides a rationale for programs and services, and while not encompassing all services delivered in all areas and programs, outlines a range of existing provisions of these in the Toronto Region (City of Toronto, and Regions of Peel, Halton, York and Durham). Each section concludes with an analysis that identifies any gaps and overlaps, followed by TRIEC's recommendations for policy responses, including what needs to be done, who the players are, and what the delivery model could look like.

To Employment is intended for use by TRIEC and its members as a tool for input to all levels of government. Services needed by immigrants and the required funding allocations change over time. It is the intention of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee to revise this document on an ongoing basis, as circumstances and service needs change.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/Bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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1. Information

As a first step in the immigration process, skilled immigrants require access to information on a wide range of issues in order to make informed decisions: information about particular communities and labour markets, specific employer information, occupational requirements and licensure, credential and skills assessment, education and training opportunities, as well as broader settlement information. From the perspective of the immigrant, the need for information is critical, and the earlier in their immigration process that they are able to access accurate and relevant information, the more effective their labour market integration will be once in Canada.

Online Information

Before immigrants arrive in Canada, their primary formal source of information is web based. Many websites already exist, and there are early indications of coordination among these sites. A national Internet portal, **Going to Canada** is a joint initiative of five federal departments; CIC, HRSDC, Industry Canada, Health Canada and DFAIT. The initiative has a five year development plan intended to assist prospective and new immigrants through the immigration and integration processes. Key features will include, but are not limited to, on-line qualifications and language assessment tools; orientation to Canada; educational programs; mentoring opportunities; job search preparation; and labour market information tailored to the needs of immigrants. The site coordinates and provides national and regional labour market, community and cultural information to support regional, rural and community development strategies.

Launched in March 2006, **Ontarioimmigration.ca** is a provincial site hosted by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. The portal links to over 300 websites, with information needed from pre-arrival to after arriving in Ontario, including guides on living, working, studying, and doing business in the province. The Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has developed a portal website **2ontario.com** providing information on employment for immigrants, including skilled workers, with a particular emphasis on self-employment and how to start a business in Ontario. **Settlement.org** is a community based site, funded by CIC and the government of Ontario, providing a wide range of information on settlement issues for newcomers to Ontario; job search links and resources, language training, housing, health, family sponsorship, etc.

The City of Toronto website, **toronto.ca**, provides a general orientation to immigrants with links to sites on how to find employment, as well as broader information about the City of Toronto, services and programs. **211toronto.ca** provides information over both phone and internet regarding over 20,000 community resources. In York Region, **YorkLink** provides program and service information in a range of languages to members of the community.

A significant and sometimes overwhelming amount of information has become available through the Internet. The problem is not one of lack of information, but rather co-ordination and access. Efforts are being made to coordinate and establish links between the various sites. **Going to Canada** is the largest umbrella, providing links to most of the above mentioned sites. Prospective and current immigrants often are not aware of the portals and how to access other labour market information, and it is often difficult to navigate the sites to allow users to quickly drill down to the specific information they need. Most of the web portals and printed publications offer information on how to immigrate, settle, study, and search for employment or language training in the province of Ontario. However, immigrants need clear, simple and specific information on their particular occupation (industry prospects, skills required, academic credentials required, licensing for regulated professions, employer information, etc.).

Information counselling

One of the first sources of information immigrants receive once in Canada is provided by Newcomer Information Centres funded by CIC under the Immigrant Settlement and Adjustment Program (ISAP). As well, information counselling is provided through community based agencies under ISAP funding as well as the provincial Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP). These programs provide basic information and refer newcomers to the specific services they need.

In addition, immigrants who are settled in Canada form the basis of informal networks for their family and friends overseas, who are potential immigrants to Canada. Ensuring that these informal networks have accurate information is therefore critical. Keeping communities well informed about immigration programs and services will ensure that accurate information is given through these informal networks.

Labour market information

The Labour Market Partnership program of Service Canada funds projects to collect and disseminate labour market information. Most labour market information is generated by Service Canada through the Labour Market Information (LMI) division, which provides information on the development of the labour market in Canada, the provinces, and economic regions. Service Canada has an up-to-date website and publications to make this information available to the public. As well, programs that offer job search support provide LMI publications and statistics. If anything, there may be too much information and an immigrant may feel at a loss deciding where to start, what to look for and how to interpret this information.

Occupation and sector-specific information

The Labour Market Integration Unit within the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has funded the development of career maps in 22 professions and 12 trades. These maps provide comprehensive, up to date information about entry to practice requirements and labour market conditions in different regulated occupations in Ontario. Regulatory bodies and professional associations offer a broad range of information on their web sites and through publications. Information includes registration and licensing processes as well as labour market issues pertaining to specific occupations.

Recommendations

- 1.1 **Coordination of Internet Portals:** Ensure that coordination mechanisms are in place to facilitate and enhance the exchange of information and direct links between different portals. Existing and new portals should provide multiple points of access to accurate, reliable, integrated, generic and occupation-specific information and on-line tools. Federal, provincial and municipal leads need to work together on achieving coordination on the development and proliferation of web portals on immigration to Canada.
- 1.2 **Marketing of Information Resources:** Implement a coordinated marketing strategy to increase access and awareness of immigrants to information both overseas and in Canada. Immigrants should be made aware of information resources when they apply for immigration. As well, the flow of good information to informal channels and ethno-specific communities should be undertaken deliberately and strategically. The use of ethnic media should be enhanced as a vehicle for accurate information dissemination. Citizenship and Immigration Canada should be the lead for marketing overseas and domestically, however, this should be coordinated with marketing efforts of provinces and municipalities.
- 1.3 **Labour market information:** Ensure updated and coordinated information on provincial and municipal labour markets, and develop sector-specific navigation tools that allow users to drill down more effectively to find the particular information that is useful in an actual job search; that is, employer information, job growth and opportunities, transferability of skills, and other occupation and sector specific information. Service Canada/HRSDC should be the lead for this initiative but this will require partnerships with employers, professional associations and regulatory bodies, post-secondary education institutions, and departments in all levels of government.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/Bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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2. Assessment

To enter the Canadian labour market, skilled immigrants often require assessment in a number of areas: academic credentials, employability, language skills and occupational competency.

Academic Credentials

Assessment and validation of academic credentials is normally required of skilled immigrants for licensure, further education, and often for employment. In Ontario, World Education Services (WES) signed an agreement with the Government of Ontario to be its mandated credential evaluation service, and to provide services to immigrants, employers, academic institutions and occupational regulatory bodies. In addition, many post secondary institutions and most of the large occupational regulatory bodies offer credential assessment services.

The federal government elected in January 2006 has promised the establishment of a new Canadian Agency for Assessment and Recognition of Credentials. As the focus and objectives of this agency are being determined, it will be important that it build on the existing infrastructure in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, work closely with employers, and focus on the acceleration of appropriate employment opportunities for skilled immigrants.

Employability

A first step to labour market integration is the assessment of an individual's barriers to employment and development of an appropriate action plan. Service Canada's employment supports, funded through the Employment Assistance Services (EAS) program, begin with a client assessment that considers the key employability dimensions: personal management, career decision making, skill enhancement, job search and job maintenance. After this assessment, an action plan is developed that identifies appropriate steps and referral to interventions that support the client's path to employment. Assessment services are available to all clients seeking to enter or re-enter the labour force through Service Canada's network of employment assessment centres. While not immigrant-specific, the assessment process relates to employment needs that are pertinent to all clients – newcomers included. In addition, Service Canada funds several specialized services for internationally educated professionals (IEPs) that include an employment assessment component. In 2004 these services totalled \$2,300,000 and supported 5,700 clients in the Toronto region.

For some immigrants, access to an employability assessment may come through the Ontario Works program if they are in receipt of social assistance. Under the Employment Assistance component of the Ontario Works program, municipalities in the GTA oversee the delivery of a range of internal and externally purchased employment supports. In Toronto, for example, Toronto Social Services (TSS) has fee for service agreements with 26 organizations that deliver 33 different pre-employment assessment and development programs, eight of which are specific to immigrants and newcomers. The goal of these programs is to assist clients prepare to enter/re-enter the work place. Community based organizations assist clients in addressing their personal, educational and skill-building goals, while developing a plan for their eventual return to work.

CIC's Enhanced Language Training (ELT) program provides an integrated labour market language training and employment supports service that helps to provide skilled immigrants with early linkages to the labour market at the community level. ELT is still in the pilot stage, and a variety of service delivery and partnership models are being tested. Preliminary reports indicate that in many cases formal and informal employability assessments for skilled immigrants are taking place. For example, COSTI's ELT project includes language, education and job-readiness assessment, and The Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre's ELT project also operates using a case-management approach that includes

language, education and professional experience assessments, followed up with an action plan specific to each individual.

Language

While most training and educational programs require an assessment of language skills as part of the entrance criteria, employers are increasingly also seeking an assessment of applicants' language skills. Employers often define language skills as including broader cultural communication competencies and occupation-specific terminology. From the point of view of the skilled immigrant, language assessment can provide important information about the gaps that they may need to fill in order to be eligible for training, or to be competitive in the labour market.

CIC funds various language assessment centres that determine the appropriate placement in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) programming. In the Toronto Region, four organizations manage nine locations to provide these assessment services. The centres are located in York, Peel, Durham and the City of Toronto. These assessment services are limited, however, in that they only assess for placement in LINC programming which currently is restricted to up to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 6. Many training programs and employers look for CLB 7/8 as a minimum requirement. ESL/FSL delivered through school boards conduct assessments either centrally or within the classroom and may be continuous for adult non-credit continuing education

Through the ELT initiative CIC and MCI are funding the development of two assessment tools (Workforce Language Assessment and Enhanced Language Training Placement Assessment) for placement in ELT language training and bridging activities. The assessment tools are in varying stages of development and validation, and it is anticipated that they will be implemented in the fall of 2006. Currently, a variety of informal and formal methods are used by service provider organizations to assess the language levels of clients for placement in language classes and bridging activities. Also through ELT, an online self-assessment tool for CLB levels 1-10 is being developed. This tool is scheduled to be completed in July 2006. It is meant to provide the immigrant with an easy to use tool to assess her/his proficiency in English and French in two skill areas (reading and listening), but will not be recognized as an official assessment.

Some of the bridging projects funded by the Labour Market Integration Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration include language assessment. Although these assessments do not necessarily use Canadian Language Benchmarks, the overall level required is benchmarked at or above CLB 6/7. Examples of programs that assess occupation-specific language skills include:

- Midwifery Pre-Registration Program – language entry test “English for Midwives”
- Access and Option for Health Care Foreign Trade Professionals – CLB level 6 and above
- International Pharmacy Graduate – TSE and TOEFL, TSE and MELAB, CanTEST, or IELTS
- Career Bridge – WLA tool and pre-screen measure up to CLB level 12 for employment purposes

As well, some service providers undertake basic language assessment for placement in non-LINC ESL programs, but data is not available to determine the reach of these assessments. The provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has also funded the development and pilot testing of the Workplace Language Assessment test and pre-screening tool developed for higher level language training (CLB 7-10) in Job Connect and Municipal Social Service offices. This tool is expected to be ready for use by summer 2006.

The existence of many language assessment tools creates confusion among service providers, immigrants and employers. Often, immigrants who attend different programs in an effort to prepare for employment are being tested more than once using different language assessment tools. This results in wasted time and financial resources of both skilled immigrants and assessing organizations. There is a need for an effective, commonly recognized language assessment tool that is focused on labour market requirements, is portable, and assesses CLB levels 6-10. Such a tool will need to be tested and validated with employers in order to have their confidence and recognition. An understanding of the language assessment tool, supported by a language assessment exit document, will ease the process and increase employer confidence in the assessment.

Occupational Competencies

Increasingly employers are asking for a way to assess previous international work experience of skilled immigrants in comparison to Canadian standards. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is a tool sometimes used and administered by post-secondary educational institutions for program placement and advanced standing. PLAR is also used for skilled immigrants for admission to some bridging programs. A few employers, especially in the IT sector, have begun to use skills assessment tools, similar to PLAR, as part of their hiring process.

Most regulated professions have a process in place to assess the occupation-specific competencies of internationally educated professionals, and some use a form of PLAR in their assessment for licensure. Regulatory bodies however, set their own rules, which leads to a multitude of access, assessment and registration procedures varying widely from one occupation to another.

By and large, assessment of occupational competencies is not commonly available to skilled immigrants as it is necessarily occupation-specific, and therefore resource intensive.

Recommendations

- 2.1 **Credential Assessment:** The federal and provincial governments should build on the strengths of the existing credential assessment infrastructure, including the Alliance of Credential Assessment Services of Canada (ACASC). Portability of assessments should be enhanced and the existing framework of credential assessment services should be strengthened. Relationships with end users, and other credential assessment providers, including occupational regulatory bodies and post secondary educational institutions, should be supported. A common data bank of international universities could be established, joint evaluation missions overseas of credential issuing bodies, and agreements among service providers on assessment standards and mutual recognition could be developed; as could a central referral source to the appropriate provincial, regulatory body, or post-secondary institution academic credential service for immigrants before they arrive.
- 2.2 **Language Assessment:** Access to language assessment for employment (CLB levels 7 and above) should be available through a delivery system that uses existing networks that offer language assessments. The assessment should be portable, recognized by end-users and provide a certificate with a certified benchmark level. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement offers an opportunity for governments and their partners to collaborate in the design and implementation of such an assessment tool. While federal and provincial departments and ministries would be lead players and funders, municipalities should also play a significant role, given their cost share funding and service delivery agent role in Ontario Works. Assessments for employment purposes should include additional components, such as: capacity to measure broader communication skills (i.e. presenting, reporting, etc.), and technical / occupation-specific vocabulary.
- 2.3 **Occupational Competencies:** Information and self assessment tools regarding the particular competencies required to practice an occupation should be easily accessible online to immigrants both overseas and in Canada. Immigrants should be made aware of the kinds of documentation and evidence of previous work experience and competencies they should bring with them to Canada to assist in the assessment and recognition process. Some aspects of PLAR portfolio development could begin while the immigrant is still overseas and continue with the relevant assessment body in Canada. The development of this model could be a possible role for HRSDC to consider for the proposed new Federal Agency in collaboration with provincial governments, professional regulatory bodies, post secondary educational institutions and service providing organizations. Governments should consider making the successful PLAR models currently available in some bridging programs and community colleges more generally accessible to skilled immigrants locally in Canada through a variety of access points. Work-experience programs for skilled immigrants should be available as an additional method of assessing on-the-job competencies. (This topic is further discussed in the “Work Experience” section of this document.)

2.4 **Qualification Recognition:** Assessment tools (language, academic credentials or occupational competencies) should have the confidence of employers and other stakeholders. Sector councils, other sector-specific employer associations and regulatory bodies should be supported by the federal and provincial governments to participate in the development, recognition and promotion of sector-specific language and occupational competency assessment tools. There is a need for a marketing strategy aimed at employers that will enhance their understanding of, and confidence in the assessment tools, including academic credential assessment by provincially mandated organizations. This is a potential role for the proposed Federal Agency for Assessment and Recognition of Credentials, in partnership with sector councils, occupational regulatory bodies, professional associations and academic credential assessors.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/Bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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3. Language Training

Language skills are key to employment. In focus groups that TRIEC held in 2005 with employers across the Toronto Region, lack of language proficiency was identified as the main barrier to hiring skilled immigrants. There is a relatively large number of government funded English language training programs across the Toronto Region, funded primarily by CIC through LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration which has now assumed responsibility for adult ESL/FSL/CL (citizenship and language) non-credit continuing education programs previously funded by the Ministry of Education. While the majority of funding currently available is directed toward basic language training, up to Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) Level 7, most skilled immigrants arrive with post-secondary education and are looking for professional positions that require a higher level of language skills. Additional higher level language training is provided by school boards, community colleges, universities and private schools that teach English as a second language, and since January 2004, through the CIC's ELT partnerships with the Government of Ontario, colleges and universities and community organizations.

There are three main streams of government funded language training programs for immigrants available in Ontario:

- Basic training (up to CLB level 6 for reading and writing, CLB 7 in listening and speaking)
- Occupation-specific language training (CLB levels 7-10)
- Labour market language training (CLB levels 7-10)

Basic training

LINC centres offer language training up to CLB level 7. There are 144 basic language training centres in the Toronto Region: 99 in the City of Toronto, 11 in Halton, 25 in Peel, 5 in York and 4 in Durham. This reflects where the service providers are located, not necessarily where the immigrants live. The trend in LINC centres has been a decrease in enrolment among skilled immigrants, and an increase among family class immigrants. LINC programs are only available to permanent residents and those with confirmed refugee status. Once an immigrant or refugee becomes Canadian citizen, they are not eligible to participate in the LINC program.

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is responsible for funding adult ESL/FSL non-credit continuing education programs offered through 39 school boards. Statistics on programs within each Board have been managed locally. In the future province-wide statistics will be available.

Although the above programs are funded and administered separately, the distinctions between the two are not always clear to immigrants, and can lead to confusion and inefficiencies.

Occupation-specific language training

Bridging programs funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration provide advanced language training as part of the program curriculum. These programs usually have a language assessment requirement for entry to the program, most of which are between CLB 5 and 7. Additional occupation specific language training may be provided up to CLB level 10. Some post secondary institutions also offer occupation specific language training in their continuing education streams.

Labour market language training

Increasingly, immigrants need language training to improve their communications skills in the workplace. Skilled immigrants seek employment that is relevant to their education and experience, often in professional and mid-management positions. However, the majority of existing language training programs do not prepare them adequately for this level of employment. Immigrants and employers have expressed the need for enhanced language and communications skills, beyond CLB 6/7.

In 2004, CIC implemented the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) program. ELT projects address Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 7 to 10 and offer employment related language training at these levels. ELT combines language training with labour market support, such as: information on Canadian culture and the labour market, job search, licensure preparation, internships and mentoring. Costs of the program are shared among the governments, employers, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. While ELT is a national initiative, a high percentage of the clients and services delivered are in Ontario. In 2005-06, 54 per cent of the 51 ELT projects funded nationally were conducted in Ontario. In the GTA 23 projects were allocated \$2,387,197 and served 2020 participants. ELT (through National Headquarters) also funded two assessment tools.

In addition to ELT and bridging programs, school boards, community colleges, universities and private language schools offer advanced language training. These programs are generally available for a fee and offer advanced writing, public speaking, and business communication skills. Private training schools are not regulated in Ontario so their programs are not always aligned with CLB levels.

Recommendations

- 3.1 ***Program Evaluation:*** LINC and ESL programs need to be evaluated against the needs of a changing, highly skilled and educated immigrant population. This could easily be done under the terms of the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Immigration. An evaluation of programs needs to be undertaken by independent experts, focusing on how they are meeting the specific language and communication needs of immigrants. Based on the outcomes of the evaluation, there should be a strategy implemented to build on existing initiatives with a focus on meeting the needs of today's and future immigrants. Funding formulas should also be reviewed to ensure maximum delivery opportunity and program access for immigrants. The ELT cost-sharing formula (recently changed to 80/20 from 50/50) has limited the participation of many service providers in the program, and consequently, has limited access of many skilled immigrants as well.
- 3.2 ***Program Coordination:*** There is a need to coordinate the delivery of government funded language training programs to ensure that federal and provincially funded programs are complementary, and provide the range of language/communication training courses necessary to respond to the needs of a varied client group. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement provides an opportunity to implement a coordinated system for delivery, tracking and evaluation.
- 3.3 ***Workplace Relevance:*** For skilled immigrants seeking immediate and appropriate access to the labour market, language training programs need to be made more relevant to their objectives. The following recommendations support this objective:
 - Expansion of LINC, ESL and ELT programs to CLB 10
 - Inclusion of components that address broader workplace communication skills.
 - Linkage of programs with other bridging and work experience programs
 - Flexibility of program design to ensure accessibility to immigrants prior and during employment

- Inclusion of broader array of delivery agents (post-secondary educational institutions and private sector) for these programs

3.4 **Employer Engagement:** Employers need to be aware of existing language training programs and assessment benchmarks so that they can better understand how the skills obtained from such programs are translated into workplace skills and competencies. Employers' feedback on how workplace communications and language training is meeting their needs is also required. To this end, the following initiatives are recommended:

- Publicly funded language training providers should be required to issue exit documents upon completion of training certifying the level of proficiency achieved according to standardized language benchmarks.
- Under the terms of the Canada-Ontario Agreement, governments should design, develop and implement a language/workplace communication training marketing strategy aimed at employers.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/Bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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4. Job Search Support

For the purposes of this document, job search support includes a number of activities focused on supporting skilled immigrants in their job search in Canada: resume preparation, researching labour market information, networking, accessing the hidden job market, and preparing for interviews. Key funders of these activities include Service Canada through the Employment Assistance Services (EAS) Program, Citizenship and Immigration Canada through Job Search Workshops and ELT, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities through Job Connect, and the Ministry of Community and Social Services with municipalities which deliver and cost-share the funding of Ontario Works.

Service Canada

Most of Service Canada's programs are focused on providing all Canadians who are out of a job with a path to finding a new job, and are not designed to meet the specific barriers or needs of any one group, including skilled immigrants. Employment Resource Centres and Human Resource Centres of Canada are significant areas of investment for these services.

In 2003/2004, then HRSDC job search support funding specifically for skilled immigrants in York Region and Toronto, totalled \$6.8 million reaching about 8500 clients through almost 20 different projects. One example is the Job Finding Clubs for Newcomers, which helps immigrants by expanding their networking abilities, getting them in touch with people in their desired professions and other immigrants that have overcome the initial barriers. In the same year Service Canada began funding the Mentoring Partnership in the Toronto Region through EAS grants. Mentoring is a deeper and more intense form of job search support that builds the job searcher's social capital. In the first year of delivery, the Mentoring Partnership is expected to deliver 1000 mentoring matches, with 60-70% of participants finding full time, appropriate employment.

Internationally trained professionals who participate in Service Canada funded job search programs can receive assessment services, free of charge, as part of their transition to the labour market.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

In 2003/2004 Citizenship and Immigration Canada provided approximately \$4,400,000 to 31 agencies in the Toronto Region to provide Job Search Workshops (JSW) to 10,600 clients: Halton (1), Durham (1), Peel (6), York (2), and Toronto (21). JobSearch workshops offer short-term pre-employment workshops (16-24 hours in duration) designed especially for recent immigrants who have been in Canada less than three years.

Bridge to work activities such as work placement/practicum, workplace cultural orientation, employment counselling, resume writing, job search skills development and mentoring are required as part of all ELT delivery projects. Since January 2004, CIC has provided over \$4 million, on a cost-sharing basis, to partners to provide labour market levels of language training and employment supports in Ontario.

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

The first two components of the Job Connect program, funded by MTCU, are oriented to job search support: Information and Resource Service (IRS) and Employment Planning and Preparation (EPP). IRS provides information on careers and occupations, the local labour market, training opportunities and job search strategies. Specific resources are available for internationally trained individuals seeking employment commensurate with their skills. EPP helps people to clarify their employment needs, establish short and long-term goals, develop an action plan, and search for a job. Job Connect has experienced increased numbers of skilled immigrants in the program. In 2004-2005 Job Connect served 5,650 skilled immigrants in the province of Ontario. The target for 2005-'06 is 8,600 skilled immigrants.

Ontario Works

The Ontario Works program requires that recipients participate in a range of activities designed to expedite job placement and retention. Program costs are shared between the provincial and municipal governments with some provincial funding (particularly for employment programs) dependant upon municipal service providers achieving employment related targets. Third party organisations are used in combination with internally delivered services to provide assistance with job search preparation and support, unpaid work experience, matching, job placement, and in some cases, job retention services. Organisations often work directly with employers to identify employment placement opportunities, and some provide job retention support. Financial incentives are available to employers that place clients who require additional training and supports. In Toronto 18 community based agencies have service agreements to deliver this program, with three providing services specifically to immigrants and newcomers.

Municipalities are often challenged in supporting the client group adequately because of the limited provincial and municipal employment funds available and the fact that most recent immigrants do not qualify for federal programs and services that are available only to clients eligible for Employment Insurance (EI). The performance based funding structure of Ontario Works and the accompanying service contracts provide a potential vehicle for the expansion of targeted services through the Immigration Agreement and the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA).

Analysis

The profile of skilled immigrants has changed significantly in recent years; they are more educated and are seeking more highly skilled positions in the labour market. But these changes are not always reflected in the job search support programs. Job search support programs offer the necessary basic services leading to employment but do not respond to the level of today's immigrants and need to be enhanced with more work experience components. A collaborative approach is key to designing higher quality services. New successful initiatives, such as The Mentoring Partnership need to be supported and replicated.

Recommendations

- 4.1 ***Program responsiveness:*** Job search support programs need to respond to the employment needs and objectives of skilled immigrants, including those in receipt of social assistance through Ontario Works. As such, they need to be enhanced with new features that more effectively prepare skilled immigrants for more appropriate employment opportunities. From resume preparation to networking, skilled immigrants need access to more sophisticated services that recognize their level of education and professionalism. Additional features, such as mentoring with a work experience component should be made available as an element of job search support programs. The LMPA once implemented is a good vehicle to facilitate and provide funding to support these changes.

4.2 **Municipalities as partners:** Given the geographic distribution of immigrants in the GTA, regional municipalities and organizations in those areas have to be supported to provide more job search support programs to skilled immigrants living across the region. Canada-Ontario agreements provide an opportunity to recognize the position of municipal governments and allow them to play the role of a partner in the implementation of these agreements.

4.3 **Employer involvement:** Employers need to provide input in the design of the programs; they need to recognize their validity and outcomes both as stakeholders and as users, ensuring that programs are relevant to their needs. There is a need to increase employer awareness of the programs that are available to prepare skilled immigrants for employment. Employer involvement should not be ad hoc and fragmented, but continuous and engaging.

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5. Skills and/or Bridge Training

Bridging programs are intended to identify and fill the gaps individuals have from their previous learning and work experience to meet Canadian standards in their professions. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) has funded the most extensive array of bridging programs for skilled immigrants in Canada. Service Canada and Ontario Works (OW) also fund skills training programs, but these are generally not specific to the particular barriers experienced by skilled immigrants. Bridging programs and skills training are generally offered by not for profit organizations or educational institutions in collaboration with employers, regulatory bodies, and community organizations.

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

A number of occupation-specific and/or sector based bridging programs have been developed and implemented. In these programs, key stakeholders – employers, occupational regulatory bodies and educational institutions – work together to assess existing skills and competencies, provide training where needed, including occupational specific language training, and often workplace experience. The objective is to integrate professionals more quickly into the labour market without duplicating what they have already learned elsewhere. Priority is given to sectors where there is labour market demand.

Bridge training projects funded to date include various sectors. Within the health care sector, projects have been funded for nurses, midwives, medical radiation technologies, medical laboratory science technologists, respiratory therapists, dieticians, and pharmacists. Projects in engineering, precision machining and tooling, information technology for the financial services sector and health informatics, biotechnology and apprenticeship preparation for construction and manufacturing trades have all been developed. As well, there have been two projects funded for internationally trained teachers.

While the outcomes have been promising, the programs reach a fairly small population and are not yet fully self-sustaining. Immigrants enrolled in bridging programs do not have the same access to financial resources for training or academic upgrading as other Ontario students enrolled in post secondary degree or diploma programs. There is a need for a loans program that will allow them to pay for courses, equipment, and materials and to have some income support while re-training. The recently announced loan program by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is an excellent start in this direction. Another policy implication however, is that the funding formulas to post secondary educational institutions need to be adjusted to support and encourage the development of bridging initiatives in a way that is sustainable and integrated into the broader systems of training and education.

Service Canada

Service Canada funds a variety of projects across the Toronto Region through diverse channels that deliver services directly to clients. Elements of Service Canada programming provide access to skills upgrading, however they are not immigrant specific and are tied to Employment Insurance eligibility. They

are therefore not accessible to new immigrants without previous labour market attachment. If these programs were more broadly accessible, immigrants could upgrade certain technical skills to make them more marketable in the Canadian labour market. The Canada/Ontario Labour Market Partnership Agreement which would allow for targeted training programs specifically for immigrants has not yet been funded by the federal government.

Ontario Works

In addition to job placement services, OW delivery agents refer participants to basic education, volunteer opportunities, self-employment support and where appropriate, to available skills training that helps participants become job-ready and find paid employment. Training is job-specific, aiming at providing a quick connection with employment opportunities and is restricted by limited provincial and municipal funding through the OW Program. Opportunities exist to leverage the infrastructure already in place to support immigrants through the existing Provincial/Municipal service agreement structure and potential additional funding through the LMPA. While there are limited resources for the provision of skill training, Toronto Social Services does offer some skills training for OW clients. To assist clients to gain employment, by improving their marketable skills through training and practical work experience, municipalities generally use both purchase of service agreements and individual client purchases. Through customized employment focused activities like Toronto’s *Skill Training Directly Linked to Employment*, community organizations assist clients to prepare for and obtain employment by improving their marketable skills and knowledge through job specific skill training and practical work experience, while partnerships with employers support job placement that corresponds with the client’s skills. In addition, and in consultation with municipal OW caseworkers, individuals conduct research on service providers to determine which training program or service meets their specific skill development needs. Fees associated with specific skill building courses and participating in bridge training programs are approved through the individual purchase of training option.

Most immigrants cannot access skills development programs as they do not meet the Employment Insurance eligibility criteria of Service Canada programming, or are not in receipt of OW. When immigrants begin working at ‘survival’ jobs, it becomes far more difficult for them to re-enter their skilled occupation. Access to the broader array of programs would provide the same supports available to the Canadian public, as well as more access to training opportunities.

Recommendations

- 5.1 **Funding formulas** The Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities should consider alternatives for funding formulas for bridge training and modularized curriculum development and delivery in colleges and universities. This would increase the availability and sustainability of gap filling approaches for skilled immigrants and expedite their labour market integration.
- 5.2 **Training Loans** There is a need for a loans program that will allow immigrants to pay for assessments, courses, equipment, uniforms, and materials and to have some income support while re-training. The recently announced loan program by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is an excellent start in this direction.
- 5.3 **Implementation of the LMPA:** Immigrants not eligible for training programs as a result of being ineligible for EI should benefit from similar programmatic initiatives under the LMPA. These new initiatives should take into account their particular circumstances and needs. The LMPA provides an excellent opportunity to design new initiatives responsive to the needs of skilled immigrants. Funding for the implementation of the agreement should begin to flow quickly.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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6. Work Experience

A skilled immigrant may have all the academic credentials, language skills and technical skills required to practice her/his occupation, but s/he may be lacking sufficient knowledge of the Canadian workplace; for example, employment standards and occupational health and safety legislation, workplace cultural expectations and practices, organizational structures, or effective communication styles. This experience can be acquired through co-op placements, internships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training. Among employment support programs, work experience programs that involve employers directly have the most effective outcomes in terms of full time, appropriate employment outcomes. These opportunities provide employer references and “Canadian experience” which can bring comfort to risk-averse employers. However, most funding is directed to job search rather than job experience programs.

Service Canada

Service Canada funds a number of generic programs that provide work experience at some level through Targeted Wage Subsidies (TWS), Job Creation Partnerships (JCP), or projects funded through Employment Assistance Services (EAS) which provide other forms of internship or co-op. Targeted Wage Subsidies (TWS) provide funding to an employer who hires eligible candidates. The client looks for a suitable employer and refers them to the counselling agency that approves the placement. TWS are only available for individuals who are EI eligible, which makes its relevance to immigrants limited, since most will not have had a previous labour market attachment. The Job Creation Partnerships (JCP) employment benefit is a program designed to support projects that create jobs providing opportunities for participants to gain meaningful work experience. The length of placement is up to one year, and the wage and overhead costs are assumed by Service Canada. Again, only EI clients are eligible for these programs, and so they have limited relevance for new immigrants.

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

In 2003, when the Access to Professions and Trades Unit was located within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Career Bridge, an internship program designed by the Career Edge Organization to address the “Canadian work experience” barrier faced by immigrants was funded as a pilot. The program provides four to twelve month paid internships, where the employer pays the cost of the stipend and a program fee. To date, 379 paid internships have been provided with over 140 employers, and 80% of participating immigrants have found full time employment.

Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities

The third component of Job Connect, Job Development and Placement Support (JDPS) provides job placement opportunities for clients. Where there are training needs, a training plan is developed with learning objectives. An incentive is negotiated with the employer to offset the costs of training the new employee to a maximum of \$4000 over six months. However, this component of the program is not available to all clients. Among the 8,600 skilled immigrants to be served by Job Connect in 2005-'06 in Ontario, only 1,600 are expected to benefit from job placement services.

Ontario Works

The underlying assumption of social assistance and labour market access programs is to reconnect people as soon as possible to the labour force and ensure job retention. All recipients of Ontario Works are required to participate in one or more employment assistance activities as a condition of eligibility for financial assistance. They are encouraged, and sometimes required, to take an initial job to access income, with the idea that they can continue to build skills and seek out more appropriate employment. The result is that the recipient's ability to move into a more appropriate position, commensurate with skills, may be delayed or compromised. As part of the OW program, participants are supported to obtain unpaid work experience opportunities within the public and non-profit sectors. However, resources are currently insufficient to market and source opportunities, match clients to job opportunities and provide ongoing support to both client and employer to ensure ongoing success. As well, funding to offset employer

training and administrative costs for job placements is limited and restricts the opportunities that might otherwise be available.

Ontario Works service delivery agents and the skilled immigrants they serve need access to additional funding to respond to the needs of this particular population group. Despite limited resources, municipalities have developed specific employment assistance services and programs that have been customized and recognize the diverse needs of all client groups including skilled immigrants. For example, OW in Peel Region has funded a local initiative, *Breaking Barriers*, as a result of funding gaps at the federal and provincial levels in the region.

Recommendations

- 6.1 **Ontario Works:** The Ministry of Community and Social Services should work with municipal service delivery agents, particularly in areas of high immigrant settlement, to enhance employment outcomes for skilled immigrants through additional funding based on local needs and local solutions.
- 6.2 **Implementation of the LMPA:** Immigrants not eligible for workplace experience programs (TWS, JCP, EAS) as a result of being ineligible for EI should benefit from similar programmatic initiatives under the LMPA. These new initiatives should take into account their particular circumstances and needs. The LMPA provides an excellent opportunity to design new initiatives responsive to the needs of skilled immigrants. Federal funding for this agreement should begin to flow quickly.
- 6.3 **Employer engagement:** Employers need to be made aware of the availability of work experience programs. All levels of government should work collaboratively to facilitate this process, particularly with SME's. This may include the following:
- Work in partnership with intermediaries that have the confidence of employers.
 - Develop incentives to encourage employers to participate in these programs. In particular small and medium sized employers have shown interest in financial incentives, tax credits, or other supports.
- 6.4 **Government as employer:** All levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – should lead by example, as employers, in providing work experience opportunities for skilled immigrants.

Information	Assessment	Language Training	Job Search Support	Skills/bridge training	Work Experience	Education / Capacity
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7. Public Education and Capacity Building

In the area of public education and capacity building there are a number of departments, ministries and municipalities that have funded a diversity of initiatives. **Canadian Heritage**, through the Multiculturalism program, funds a number of projects focused on issues related to immigrant inclusion. The projects funded by the Multiculturalism program are issue-based and time limited but often span more than one year. The projects address issues of access, equity and social justice and are directed towards racial, cultural, linguistic and religious communities. These activities also include research.

Service Canada Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) fund projects that list public education, research and service bridging as part of their activities. LMPs fund projects of limited duration.

Immigrant Settlement and Adjustment Program (ISAP) is a core program of **Citizenship and Immigration Canada** aimed directly at facilitating immigrant integration and participation in Canadian

society. One of the ISAP streams funds indirect services, which include public education and coordination. These funds are being used to support TRIEC as a capacity building initiative in terms of local coordination.

The **Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration** has funded public awareness and capacity building initiatives with some key stakeholders, including colleges, universities, employer associations and regulatory bodies. TRIEC was funded by MCI to undertake research on the SME market and to develop employer capacity in hiring skilled immigrants. These initiatives are important because of the potential contribution to systemic change.

The **City of Toronto** funds a variety of public education, capacity building and research activities related to immigrant access to the labour market. Through the Access and Equity grant stream, approximately \$500,000 is allocated each year to fund community development / capacity building initiatives, community based research and advocacy work. The Community Services Grants at the City of Toronto include funding to community agencies for a variety of community services, including information and services to skilled immigrants. Grants are also made for community based research, social planning, advocacy and capacity building. Likewise, York Region, Peel and other GTA municipalities have also conducted various levels of research designed to highlight the needs of diverse communities while supporting agencies in a range of initiatives.

Recommendations

- 7.1 **Joint planning:** Existing initiatives on public awareness and capacity building are short-term and scattered. There is a need for a collaborative long-term strategy focused on systemic change. The Canada/Ontario Agreement on Immigration which also includes Municipal involvement would be an appropriate vehicle for the development and implementation of this strategy.
- 7.2 **Strategic stakeholder involvement:** Stakeholder groups need to be identified and an outreach strategy developed based on their needs and the role they can play in the integration of skilled immigrants in the labour market. Specifically, there is a need to increase employer awareness of available programs and supports that will enable them to be more effective in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants. While employers may have positive attitudes toward immigrants, often they do not have the capacity to assess international credentials, recognize international experience, or tap into labour market integration programs.
- 7.3 **Local coordination:** Local communities have an important role to play in convening local stakeholders and identifying local solutions to attracting, retaining, and effectively integrating skilled immigrants. The solutions for each community, the partners and stakeholders, and the strategies will vary. What is important is that the analysis, and subsequent approach and solutions, are grounded in the real conditions of the local community. There is a need for a dedicated funding stream that supports this convening capacity. The Canada/Ontario Agreement and its Municipal table would be an appropriate vehicle for the development and implementation of this approach.

CONTRIBUTORS

APPENDIX A

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Service Canada
- Canadian Heritage
- Industry Canada

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- City of Toronto
- Regional Municipality of York
- Regional Municipality of Peel

The Maytree Foundation

TRIEC (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council)