

Integration best practices in Canada: Labour market inclusion of skilled immigrants

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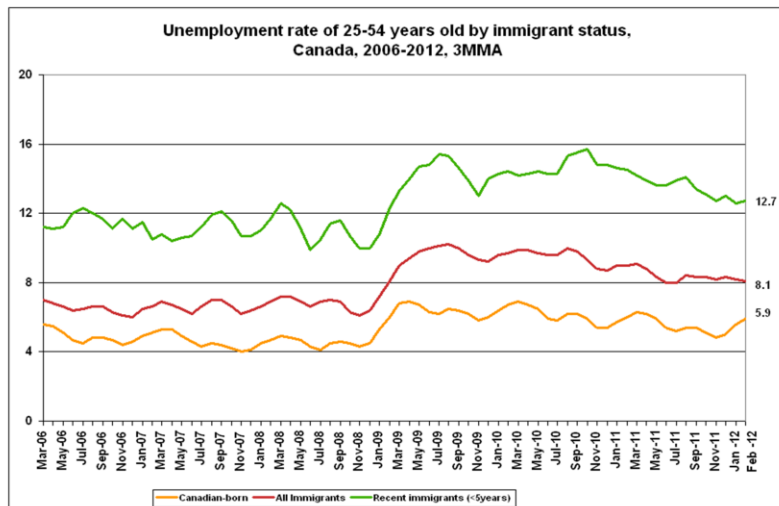
Labour market attachment, or more simply finding a job, is one of the most critical indicators of successful settlement and inclusion of new immigrants.

In 2011, just over **280,000** immigrants arrived in Canada as permanent residents - **69%** of whom came under what is called the “economic class”. Within this group, the vast majority are what we call “skilled workers”.

Immigrants arriving under the skilled worker category are well educated: **70%** of the principal applicants, which means the head of the family, had a university education, **28%** had a masters or PhD.

Among the spouses and dependents in this class, **43%** had at least one university degree. By contrast, **24.6%** of Canadians have completed a university degree.

Labour market context



However, immigrants' outcomes in the labour market are not what we would expect.

One key indicator is the rate of unemployment. Here we see the national unemployment rate for Canadian-born, all immigrants and recent immigrants, from 2006 to 2012. Consistently, the rate of unemployment of recent immigrants, those who have arrived within the last five years, are roughly double that of Canadian-born.

Another key indicator for understanding the labour market outcomes of immigrants is the rate of underemployment; meaning someone with a university degree or higher who is working in a job that requires high school or less. The rate of underemployment for skilled immigrants in Toronto is also almost twice that for the Canadian-born.

While some are successful and find appropriate employment for their skill level, many do not. Only 40% of skilled immigrants find work that is in their field. This generally means that the other 60% who are finding work, are finding jobs below their skill level. Research has found that Canada loses \$3-5 billion per year from the non-recognition of credentials. This hurts immigrants and it hurts the Canadian economy.

In very simple terms this can be seen as a labour market failure as the labour market is not leveraging the opportunity that skilled immigrants offer.

Almost 5 years ago we ran a media campaign to highlight this failure, and to raise awareness of the problem, and I think this captures the idea in very simple terms...





What is TRIEC?



Leadership council



Vision: A Greater Toronto Region that prospers by fully engaging the contributions of skilled immigrants.

In 2003, in response to this labour market failure, a new mechanism for finding solutions was created – TRIEC, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council – launched initially as a project of the Maytree Foundation, and 8 years later, an independent not for profit charitable organization.

The thinking behind TRIEC was that it takes all stakeholders to work together to find ideas and shape solutions that will work. With all the actors at one table, the solutions developed are shaped and have the buy-in of all the relevant players.

In the case of immigrant employment, the actors are many; employers, private and public sector, colleges and universities, professional and industry associations, regulatory bodies, labour, the community organizations that provide services to immigrants, and of course all three levels of government; federal, provincial and municipal. We created a large table – we have more than 70 council members today. But this is not a decision making body – it is a group of senior leaders, civic leaders, who are champions and ambassadors for finding solutions and making change.

What does TRIEC do?



Objectives

1. **Make connections.** Convene and collaborate with partners, creating opportunities for skilled immigrants to connect to the labour market.
2. **Build awareness and capacity.** Work with key stakeholders, particularly employers, increasing their awareness and capacity to better integrate skilled immigrants into the workforce.
3. **Shape public policy.** Work with all levels of government, enhancing coordination and effecting more responsive policy and programs for skilled immigrant employment.

The core mission of TRIEC is to find solutions that will connect skilled immigrants to the right jobs more quickly.

And we do this by: finding new ideas for making these connections, by building the capacity of employers to be better able to include and integrate immigrants in their workplaces, and by working with policy makers, government, to help shape public policy that will better support these ideas.

In each case, we look at solutions that will focus on the key barriers or challenges that immigrants face. For highly skilled immigrants, which is our focus, the key issues are the requirement of Canadian work experience by Canadian employers, credential recognition, lack of social capital or professional networks in Canada, access to information, readiness of Canadian employers to integrate and include skilled immigrant employees, and communications skills of many immigrants.

Today I would like to share a couple of ideas from our work that address some of these barriers.


TRIEC
 Toronto Region Immigrant
 Employment Council

Opening doors through mentoring

THE
MENTORING
PARTNERSHIP





















TORONTO REGION IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL (TRIEC) | NEW REALITIES. NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

The first idea is mentoring. When immigrants arrive in Canada, or any new country, they bring with them their education, their experience, their skills. But they have left behind their professional networks and they are not yet connected to their Canadian colleagues. But when any of us thinks about finding a job, our first step is usually to talk to our professional network, to tap the hidden market, to find out who's hiring where, and when, and what they're looking for.

Mentoring is a simple idea – it connects a newly arrived immigrant with their Canadian colleague. So we match an immigrant who is a civil engineer who builds bridges, with an established Canadian civil engineer who builds bridges. We built a program that makes these matches, and guides the mentor and the mentee through a 24 hour partnership over the course of 4 months – it works out to an hour or so a week, which is often a conversation over coffee. The mentor offers advice on the resume, suggestions for where to look for opportunities, helps the mentee with practice interviews, and shares their network of contacts and helps to make introductions. The mentor is not responsible for the finding the mentee a job, they only help them learn how to search for a job, and how it works in Canada.

To find mentors, we have worked with “corporate partners” – or employers that are willing to recruit volunteers from among their staff. What's in it for them? Their staff have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, their ability to work across cultures, and build their own network. We have corporate partners from both the private and public sectors, and across industries. They tend to be large employers, many of them multi-nationals – so they understand the value of global talent. Last year we had 30 active corporate partners.

What difference has this made? In the last six years, we have made over 6000 matches. On average, almost 80% find work within 6 months of completing the relationship – 70% in their field. And we are beginning to see a new trend, after being mentored and finding success, mentees are returning to the program to be mentors. We also see 30% of mentors returning to mentor again, some as many as 10 times. It is a proven win-win for the mentor and mentee, and for corporate partners. And now we are seeing the program replicated in cities across Canada, and as far away as Auckland New Zealand.

Making connections – building networks



Objectives:

1. Building capacity
2. Making connections
3. Developing leaders

www.NetworksForImmigrants.ca













TORONTO REGION IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL (TRIEC) | NEW REALITIES. NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

Just as mentoring helps connect new immigrants to their established Canadian colleagues and helps to build their professional networks, there is an emerging field of networks that immigrants are building themselves, to connect to one another in a professional capacity. A couple of years ago we began by undertaking an environmental scan to identify the networks and associations that are run by immigrants, to support other immigrants in their employment goals. In a fairly rough scan, we identified 70 of these groups in the Toronto area, and began to build a vision with them to create a network of networks. The objectives of the project are threefold:

Our first goal is to **build the capacity of the networks** and we do this in a number of ways. We convene **learning exchanges** where network leaders can learn from each other and other experts on developing their organizations or helping their members achieve their employment goals. Our **new website** is designed to serve as an **online community** for network leaders and partners to learn, connect and share.

The second goal is to **help make connections**. We have created a PINs directory that lists over 40 immigrant networks in the Toronto Region that are actively involved. Engaging employers is of huge interest to member networks. One way we connect networks to employers is by forwarding targeted job postings. In 2011 alone, we forwarded more than **100 job opportunities** from over **25 employers** – and this is before we have developed a strategy. Through the website, employers and other partners can now connect directly with networks to establish relationships or even post job opportunities, program information or upcoming events. As well, we have hosted networking events that bring together the PINs and employee resource groups or affinity groups from our corporate partners.

And our third objective is to **develop the individual leaders** within the networks. We've organized and connected leaders to professional development workshops covering strategic planning, board governance, working with the media and effective communication. We want the voices of leaders to be heard and so we have shared their stories through media referrals or as best practices. We also help to connect stakeholders to leaders to get insight and input on programs and policies impacting immigrant employment.

Going forward we want to deepen and widen our network of networks. This includes working with TRIEC's counterparts across Canada. At the launch of the website last month we had over 30 networks and 25 partners profiled on the website, and we expect this to grow exponentially over the next year.

Building awareness & capacity



- Media and public relations
- Recognizing employer excellence and innovation
- HR tools and resources @ hireimmigrants.ca
- Workshops and training for employers – **TRIEC Campus**



And the last idea I would like to share with you is the work we have done to build employer awareness and their capacity to act differently. As you saw earlier, we have carried out public awareness campaigns, using television, radio, and print ads. We have partnered with local media, including Toronto's largest daily newspaper to publish special sections on the issue, and have worked hard to have business reporters see this as an issue for their pages - and we have seen success.

As part of this goal, we focus on telling stories of success, shining the light on good ideas and practices that employers have implemented and that have a positive impact on immigrant inclusion in the workplace. To this end we have developed the Immigrant Success Awards or IS Awards. We set out to recognize leadership and innovation among employers, and partnered with Canada's largest bank, RBC, as a sponsor and Canada's national broadcaster, CBC, the national Human Resources publication, Canadian HR Reporter, and the Toronto Star, Toronto's largest daily newspaper as media partners and storytellers. To date we have recognized 25 employers and individual leaders from both the public and private sectors, and large and small businesses.

And finally, to help build the capacity of employers to behave differently, we have developed an array of learning resources to support them. Human resource professionals are often well aware of the value of immigrant skills, but they need help to be champions in their organizations, and they need tools and resources to help them improve recruitment, retention and talent management strategies. As a first step, we researched "promising practices" among employers that were successful, and organized and compiled these into a website for employers – hireimmigrants.ca. We organized the learning around the HR lifecycle in an "**employer roadmap**" to allow employers to connect to case studies, tools, and templates. We also created **workshops** that used much of the content of the "roadmap" but were delivered by community college partners – recognized institutions of learning. We also developed **training videos** as key curriculum resources to these workshops, addressing practices in recruitment, integration and cross-cultural teamwork. To make these resources more accessible, we have built an e-learning platform which will serve as a clearinghouse of curriculum, resources and training opportunities – an **employer campus**.

Are employers interested? I think the answer is yes, and growing. Roughly 400 employers have participated in in-person workshops. The training videos are available on multiple websites, and have

been viewed almost 30,000 times with more than 2200 downloads.

Thank you!

Visit TRIEC at: www.triec.ca

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These are some of our experiences so far. And we have other solutions and approaches that we continue to work on as well. Ultimately for us, the challenge is in creating a labour market which recognizes and includes the skills of immigrants, and we continue to see employers as essential partners in realizing this vision. We are remarkably grateful to the employer leaders and champions that have helped to make much of this possible, and also our government and funding partners.

Thank you.