

The Greater Toronto Area

...is one of Canada's primary destinations for newcomers. International immigrants are the most significant source of migration to the area. In 2012, the GTA expects to welcome close to 85,000 newcomers: that number is predicted to grow to 110,000 by 2015. Newcomers are the source of the majority of new entrants to the labour force. Policies and practices that ease newcomers' labour market integration are crucial to future economic growth and prosperity. Ontario's strong, diversified economy attracts many immigrants.

In 2009, Ontario welcomed 42.4 per cent of all immigrants to Canada and 51.3 per cent of these were classified as economic immigrants. Toronto and surrounding areas became home to 32.8 per cent of these immigrants.¹ The chief source countries for those coming to Toronto were China, India and the Philippines.² Forty-three per cent of this new immigrant population was highly educated; 29.8 per cent had a Bachelor's degree, 11.6 per cent a Master's degree and 2.2 per cent a Doctorate degree.³

Recent data suggests Ontario's labour market has stopped deteriorating.⁴ Anticipated growth in green construction, the financial services sector and the professional, scientific and technical services sector in general as well as in the information, communications technology sector (ICT) will require highly qualified workers to meet market demand.⁵

In order to stay competitive globally, Ontario has recognized the need for economic restructuring, placing more emphasis on education and skills training. The province has strengthened investments in postsecondary education and in employment and training programs to help Ontarians, including newcomers to the province, gain skills, acquire credentials and find work in the knowledge economy. Sector specific bridge training programs are an important element of Ontario's strategy to capitalize on the abilities of highly educated newcomers.

Executive Summary

As labour shortages emerge in specific sectors and/or in relation to skills sets, the need to find successful policies and practices to move new immigrants into the labour force has placed a priority on programs addressing successful integration. Bridge training programs are intended to help qualified internationally trained and/or educated individuals move quickly into the labour market in Canada, attaching them to positions that match their skills, education, qualifications and professional credentials. The intent of this research was to identify best or promising practices used in sector-specific bridging programs to help Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) attain commensurate employment.

These programs are primarily funded by government and provided by non-profit employment/training service delivery agencies or academic institutions. They provide training and Canadian workplace experience without duplicating what IEPs learned in their country of origin. Bridging programs vary both by sector and program delivery model.

The research consists of a brief literature review and interviews with staff managing or providing bridging programs. In addition, interviews were conducted with stakeholders such as the Maytree Foundation and the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council. These organizations, while not providing direct services, are important contributors to the work of attaching highly qualified newcomers to appropriate employment.

The best or promising practices found through this research fall into the following categories:

1. Employer engagement — programs that engage or involve employers in all aspects of program delivery are successfully attaching newcomers to commensurate employment.
2. Networking and collaboration — effective networking and high levels of collaboration among and between agencies and other stakeholders improve programs' success.
3. Staff skills and training — staff who are experienced in and knowledgeable about the specific sector the program targets are central to ensuring that bridging program is meeting client needs.
4. Program models — those that have a combination of mentoring, coaching, practicum or internship and employer engagement are the most successful.

ABOUT THE TORONTO WORKFORCE INNOVATION GROUP

The Toronto Workforce Innovation Group conducts research, disseminates information and convenes stakeholders to address workforce development trends, gaps and opportunities in Toronto. Incorporated in 1998 as the Toronto Training Board, the organization changed names in 2009 to better reflect the innovative research and consultations that comprise our work. Among similar organizations in Toronto, our multi-stakeholder approach is unique; we work on issues across many sectors and engage stakeholders from a variety of perspectives. Our research is an ongoing and continuous process which includes our monthly electronic bulletin, *On Topic*.

TWIG researches and analyzes workforce development trends, skills shortages and training opportunities in Toronto and acts as a resource to inform stakeholders (community groups, trainers and educators, labour, employers, governments and media) about Toronto workforce development issues.

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