

HIRE IMMIGRANTS OTTAWA

TAPPING INTO TALENT: A CASE STUDY

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Introduction

This case study describes the history and evolution of an ongoing community-based response to the issue of underemployed skilled immigrants in the Ottawa region. The focus is on the development and implementation of the Hire Immigrants Ottawa initiative.

Since the late 20th century, immigration has become the major contributor to Canada's population and labour force growth. Between 1991 and 2001, 71 per cent of the net labour force growth in Canada was attributable to immigration. At that time the Conference Board of Canada estimated that this figure would rise to 100 per cent by 2011. In other words, the size of Canada's workforce would hit a demographic ceiling, and growth would require that recent immigrants be employed. The declining birth rate, the lower number of entrants to the workforce and the aging workforce gave increased impetus to accelerating the economic integration of internationally trained workers.

In urban centres across the country, recently landed immigrants have had a considerably lower labour force participation rate and a significantly higher unemployment rate than people born in Canada. An analysis of the 2001 census data revealed that the length and intensity of unemployment among recent immigrants had worsened, compared to the Canadian average and to the situation that prevailed 20 years ago, amounting to "a transition penalty"¹. Another study observed that, despite a higher average level of education, compared to previous immigrant cohorts and Canadians as a whole, the employment rate and earnings of recent immigrants are lower².

The local situation in Ottawa has been consistent with national trends. Between 1996 and 2001, immigration made up 38 per cent of Ottawa's population growth. About 3 per cent of all immigrants to Canada during that period settled in Ottawa. Remarkably, 51 per cent of those who immigrated to Ottawa in 2002 held a university degree, and more recent data indicate that a large percentage of those without a degree are either children, students or non-economic immigrants. Also in 2002, 5.7 per cent of new immigrants with a PhD intended to settle in Ottawa. The number of immigrants to Ottawa with a doctorate in that year exceeded the annual number of PhDs granted by the two local universities combined. Yet, despite a high level of language knowledge and education levels on par with or higher than those born in Canada, Ottawa immigrants aged 25 to 44 with a university degree were four times more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be unemployed.

The underemployment of skilled immigrants has a clear economic impact. In its 20/20 Growth Management Plan, the City of Ottawa noted that the underemployment of immigrant workers costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$5.9 billion annually — and that the Ottawa community is absorbing a significant portion of that loss. In 2000, the City declared this issue as one of the region's top 10 economic challenges and opportunities in the coming decade.

¹ *Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2003*

² *McIsaac, 2003*

Concerned about the challenges of the economic integration of skilled immigrants, a group of community partners in Ottawa came together in 2002 to develop a locally coordinated approach to facilitate the integration of internationally trained immigrants into the labour market. This led to the formation of the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership - Ottawa (ITWP). The ITWP's activities and objectives focus on the economic integration of internationally trained immigrants rather than on more general settlement activities.

During the years 2002 through 2006, while expanding to include a broader group of stakeholders, ITWP conducted a series of consultations as well as in-depth research to gain a comprehensive understanding of local labour market issues (challenges, gaps and opportunities) and employer needs. The primary outcome of this work was the development of a framework that served as a blueprint for the Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) project. Since its launch, HIO has actively supported employers in their efforts to more effectively recruit, hire and integrate skilled immigrants into the local workforce.

The issue remains as important today as it was in 2002. While significant progress is being made through a number of interventions to improve labour market outcomes for immigrant job seekers, there remain a number of challenges to be addressed and many more employers to engage.

Recent demographic data show that Ottawa continues to add to its rich pool of highly skilled talent, which remains largely untapped. These are some of its key quantitative characteristics:

- On average about 3,300 immigrants join Ottawa's labour force every year.³
- An average of 77 per cent of Economic Class immigrants (which includes dependent children) have post-secondary education and 64 per cent have a university degree.⁴
- The unemployment rate tends to be approximately eight per cent higher among very recent immigrants (landed in past five years) than non-immigrants.⁵
- Fifty-eight per cent of recent immigrants indicated they are not working in their intended occupation.⁶

Recent data from Community Foundations of Canada⁷ further illustrate that it remains important for communities across Canada to address this issue:

"Despite the fact that Canada will soon rely on immigration to replenish its shrinking labour force, newcomers with professional credentials are suffering unacceptably high unemployment rates ...

In 2009, recent immigrants (lived in Canada for five years and less) with a university education had an unemployment rate that was 4.1 times higher (13.9 per cent) than that of Canadian-born workers with a university degree (3.4 per cent)."

³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, No date. Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario) - Permanent residents by labour market intention, occupation and skill level. (table) Facts and Figures 2009 – Digital Library (database).

⁴ Ibid, Permanent residents by 15 years of age or older by category and level of education.

⁵ Statistics Canada, Labour force characteristics by immigrant status of population aged 25 to 54, by province; (<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/labor89a-eng.htm>) September 2010, CANSIM table 282-0102 (accessed November 26, 2010).

⁶ Statistics Canada. 2003. Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Progress and Challenges of New Immigrants in the Workforce. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-615-XIE. Ottawa, Ontario. p. 9; www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-615-x/89-615-x2005001-eng.pdf (accessed July 21, 2009).

⁷ <http://www.cfc-fcc.ca/news/news.cfm?intNewsID=1692>



INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS PARTNERSHIP - OTTAWA

Internationally Trained Workers Partnership - Ottawa

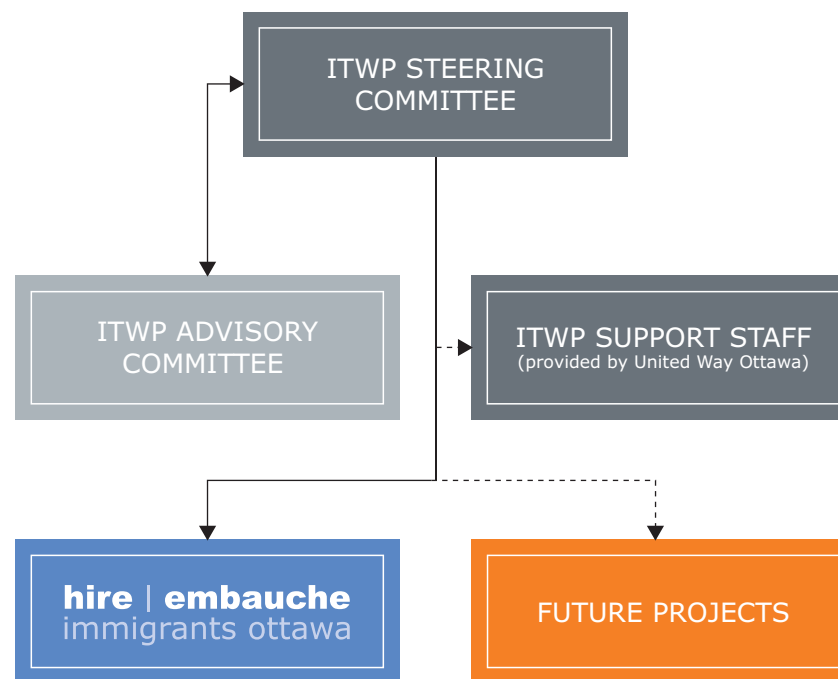
The Internationally Trained Workers Partnership (ITWP) was formed in 2002 to develop a locally coordinated approach to integrating immigrants more effectively into Ottawa's labour market. ITWP began as a grassroots initiative by community partners who recognized the importance of addressing the challenges of the economic integration of skilled immigrants. The founding partners of ITWP were United Way Ottawa, LASI World Skills Inc., and the Canadian Labour and Business Centre.⁸ As ITWP's research and employer engagement activities expanded, other community stakeholders became involved, including the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) and Le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA).

ITWP's objectives are to:

- foster solutions to barriers to hiring immigrants;
- increase the number of employers who hire and recruit immigrants in Ottawa; and
- increase the number of immigrants hired into skills-appropriate professions.

ITWP is governed by a steering committee with input from an advisory committee. United Way Ottawa provides logistic support and coordinates the work of ITWP.

ITWP Governance Model



Research and Stakeholder Consultations

During the years 2002 through 2006 ITWP conducted a series of consultations as well as in-depth research to gain a comprehensive understanding of local labour market issues (challenges, gaps and opportunities) and employer needs. The results of this research are published in the following documents:

⁸ The CLBC was dissolved as an organization in 2006.

- **Tapping the Potential: A Statistical Profile of Ottawa's Immigrant Workforce⁹**

This 2002 report describes the importance of skilled immigrants to the Ottawa community, labour force and economy. It identifies the education, skills and experience of recent immigrants. The problem of skills recognition and underutilization is discussed. The report also outlines some of the challenges that immigrants face in finding skills-appropriate employment.

- **Moving Forward: A Strategy for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers in Ottawa¹⁰**

This 2004 report describes the development of a community-based strategy for the integration of internationally trained workers in Ottawa, summarizes the results of extensive consultations, and outlines barriers and solutions identified by five sector groups.

- **Ottawa@Work: Large Employers Workforce Needs Analysis¹¹**

This 2005 report identifies specific employer workforce trends and issues, and introduces city-wide workforce priorities. It provides a broad perspective on local workforce trends and includes some insight into the level of awareness among employers regarding skilled immigrants as a talent pool. Specific barriers and challenges faced by employers in their efforts to hire skilled immigrants are discussed.

ITWP's research included extensive consultation with local employers and stakeholders, as well as researching existing public documents. The consultations took the form of surveys, focus groups, meetings and telephone discussions, targeting the 25 largest employers in Ottawa, including the Government of Canada. Also targeted were:

- members of Ottawa's local business associations;
- immigrant service agencies;
- internationally trained immigrants in selected professions;

- regulatory agencies or bodies responsible for accreditation in selected professions;
- educational institutions;
- local, provincial and federal government representatives with responsibility for employment or professional development; and
- professional associations or unions representing workers.

The results of the research, including the documents listed above, were distributed to research participants, other stakeholders, policy-makers and funders. Distribution methodologies included media releases, websites and mail outs.

The research and consultations provided a basis for developing the framework for an initiative to address the systemic change required to tackle barriers and challenges that Ottawa employers face in the process of hiring skilled immigrants and integrating them into the workforce. A funding proposal to further develop and implement this framework was developed and discussions with various prospective funders were initiated. Project funding for an initial three-year-period was secured from the Government of Ontario in April 2006 for the Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) initiative.

The remainder of this document describes HIO by examining its operating model and elements, its implementation and lessons learned to date.

⁹ http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/Fitting_In/Statistical_Profile_of_Ottawas_Immigrant_Workforce.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.itwp.ca/site/files/itw_report05.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.itwp.ca/site/pdf/Ottawa@Work.pdf>



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Hire Immigrants Ottawa

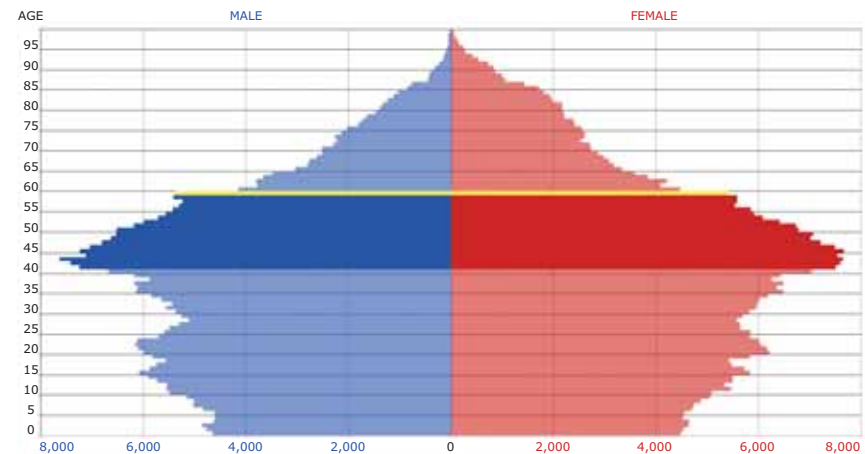
Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) began operation in 2006 as a project of the ITWP following extensive research and stakeholder consultations. It is a community-based initiative that brings together employers, immigrant-serving agencies and stakeholders to enhance employers' ability to access the talents of skilled immigrants in the Ottawa area.

HIO's goal is to help employers to effectively tap into the local pool of skilled immigrants, enabling employers to consider these candidates for skills-appropriate positions on an even playing field with other candidates. To do this, HIO facilitates and promotes systemic change in the practices and processes that Ottawa employers use to recruit hire and retain the best available talent.

Fundamentally, HIO's objective is to increase the capacity of employers in the Ottawa region to effectively integrate skilled immigrants into the local workforce. Activities are anchored in a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- an Employer Council of Champions (ECC) featuring senior executives from leading Ottawa employers who promote the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour force;
- sector Working Groups that address systemic barriers in their respective sectors; and
- a local awareness campaign that promotes greater understanding of the social and economic value that immigrants bring to Ottawa.

Age Pyramid for Ottawa, 2006



Demographic shifts are a central component of the business case that demonstrates the value of the skilled immigrant labour pool to Ottawa's employers. In 2011, the first cohort of Ottawa's baby-boomers (represented by the yellow bar)—more than 10,000 persons—will reach the age of 65.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Making the Business Case

HIO's approach to employer engagement is to make a strong business case for hiring skilled immigrants. For employers, the many benefits of hiring and effectively integrating immigrants into their workforce include:

- *Growing local markets:* The existing customer base can be expanded through improved cultural awareness and communications. As well, hiring immigrants often leads to greater organizational diversity, which can provide businesses with a better capacity to understand and respond to an increasingly diverse customer base.
- *Connecting to global markets:* Untapped foreign markets can be developed by leveraging skilled immigrants' international experience and cultural awareness, and global business connections can be improved. As well, businesses can engage more effectively with diverse customers, clients, suppliers and partner companies internationally, and can enhance their corporate image among international customers.
- *Fostering innovation:* Creativity, productivity, and decision-making among employees can be enhanced when the diverse approaches that immigrants can bring are introduced. As well, when diverse groups are effectively managed employee relations can be improved through increased diversity.
- *Alleviate skills and labour shortages:* Businesses can broaden the talent pool for recruiting new employees while leveraging international skills, experience and perspectives of recent immigrants. They can also bolster efforts to carry out effective succession planning and reduce training costs in an increasingly competitive labour market.

All of this contributes to bottom line results, greater customer satisfaction, greater product/process innovation, an expanded customer base, deeper market penetration, more effective program delivery and greater operational efficiency.

Employer Council of Champions

In May 2007, HIO launched the Employer Council of Champions (ECC), a cross-sector council of senior executives, influential business associations and labour groups. The ECC gives employers a collective

voice, which enables them to promote the successful integration of skilled immigrants into the workforce. Its role is to:

- promote and champion the issue and lead by example;
- develop employer-oriented solutions;
- prepare organizations to compete for the best new talent; and
- learn from and network with like-minded businesses.

The ECC's objectives are to:

- create an environment of cross-sector collaboration for the delivery of effective and innovative programs;
- stimulate strategic investments and partnerships, building capacity to encourage and enable more of Ottawa's employers to hire immigrants; and
- act as a catalyst, initiating action on new ideas, innovation, excellence and improvement.

The ECC achieves its objectives primarily through its operational arm — HIO's sector-specific working groups.

Working Groups

In conjunction with the ECC, four sector-specific working groups representing employers and stakeholders were established in May 2007: health care, information technology, finance and the public sector. A biotechnology working group was established in 2009.

Working 'on the ground', each group tackles issues and challenges that their sector faces in hiring and retaining the best available talent. Participants include HR professionals representing employers, immigrant agencies, labour groups, government, educational institutions and professional associations.

The objectives of the working groups are to:

- recommend and implement solutions to common barriers faced by employers when hiring immigrants and integrating them into the workplace. Common barriers include Canadian work experience requirements, language, cultural differences, access to professional networks, and human resource processes.
- identify service/process gaps that affect employers' ability to hire and retain immigrants, share information about these gaps, identify areas for improvement, and implement action plans to reduce the gaps; and
- create hiring opportunities by linking qualified immigrants with local employers.

At their monthly meetings the working groups focus on specific issues and share information about promising practices and useful tools and resources.

In 2008 the working groups produced an action plan¹² that highlights the main barriers and challenges faced by employers when hiring and integrating immigrants into the workplace, and recommends activities and programs to address those barriers. Employers from all working groups work independently to implement elements of the action plan within their respective organizations. They also collaborate on common initiatives (e.g., networking and coaching events).

Communications and Public Awareness

An ongoing communications campaign creates community awareness of the facts and issues concerning the effective integration of skilled immigrants into the local labour market, and promotes greater understanding of the social and economic value that immigrants bring to the city. Elements of the awareness campaign include:

- quarterly HIO Communiqués that are distributed to stakeholders and interested individuals;
- print media and online advertisements;
- periodic media advisories and press releases, as well as local media coverage of events;
- articles contributed to industry publications;
- presentations at conferences, workshops, business association meetings and to employers; and
- the HIO website, which provides access to employer-focused tools and resources.

The Role of HIO – Programs and Services

HIO offers a number of programs and services to help employers as they develop their capacity to recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants. HIO also provides useful tools and resources, and organizes learning opportunities and events to connect immigrants to the market.

Building Capacity and Awareness

Information Sessions and Presentations

HIO periodically hosts information sessions where employers are presented with the business case for integrating skilled immigrants into the workplace (with a focus on the implications of the changing demographics of Ottawa's labour force), as well as with an overview of resources, such as the services of the Ottawa Job Match Network (OJMN), to help them leverage the talent of skilled immigrants. HIO staff also outline activities and events such as cross-cultural workshops for managers and staff, as well as networking and coaching

¹² The Working Groups Action Plan can be downloaded from the HIO website at <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/English/For%20Employers/tools-resources.php>

events that help employers connect with immigrant talent. Employers are also introduced to the resources available on the HIO website.

Additionally, HIO uses presentations at relevant conferences, workshops and to business associations to engage new employers and increase awareness about the economic integration of skilled immigrants, the HIO initiative and available employer- oriented resources.

Cross-Cultural Competency

HIO provides cross-cultural training seminars and workshops to employers, aimed at improving their employees' cultural competency in the workplace. These workshops help employers better prepare themselves and their organizations for a more culturally diverse workplace.

The modules covered at these interactive seminars and workshops¹³ include:

- Introduction to Cultural Competency-Building
- Intercultural Problem-Solving Strategies and Understanding Verbal and Non-Verbal Messages
- Effective Cultural Adaptation Strategies
- Performance Management and Feedback
- Creating the Workplace that Accommodates Effectively
- Dimensions of Inclusiveness

Employer Council of Champions Summit and Employer Excellence Awards

At the annual ECC Summit, business and community leaders gather to celebrate successes, highlight promising practices and recognize employer achievements. The Summit is also an opportunity for ECC members to introduce their peers to the work being done by HIO and its stakeholders. The Employer Excellence Awards¹⁴ are presented

at the Summit to recognize local employers for their innovative recruitment and retention policies and their promising practices relating to the integration of skilled immigrants into their organizations.

Stakeholder Collaboration

HIO has been a catalyst in strengthening relationships among local employers, immigrant-serving agencies and educational institutions.

For example, in response to a need expressed by employers, HIO facilitated the creation of the Ottawa Job Match Network (OJMN) to provide an innovative centralized candidate screening and matching service. As a partnership led by LASI World Skills Inc. and including the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) and the National Capital YMCA-YWCA, the OJMN is an example of building community capacity to address the economic integration of immigrants into the local workforce. Through its ongoing work with HIO, the OJMN has developed a strong relationship with employers and has adapted and enhanced its services.

Engaging stakeholders also builds awareness, not only about the issue, but also about what others are doing. For example, HIO's engagement with the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce has expanded the range of employers that are becoming aware of the business case, the resources available to them and the promising practices being implemented by other employers.

¹³ Employers can register online at <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/English/About%20Us/sessions%20registration.php>.
¹⁴ <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/English/Employer%20Awards/recipients.php>.

Connecting Immigrants to the Labour Market

Networking Events

Working Groups host networking events that bring together employers and skilled immigrants. These informal events are generally two hours long, and provide opportunities for immigrants and employer representatives to have discussions and interactions related to their sector and profession. Through these events immigrants and employers can begin to break down cultural workplace barriers and become familiar with each other outside the context of an actual job interview.

Coaching Events

Working group members also host and participate in coaching events for skilled immigrants. These events typically involve several employers within a specific sector. Immigrants meet with HR personnel, who review and provide feedback on résumés and offer sector-specific information and career guidance.

Networking and coaching events are often held at an employer workplace. The OJMN identifies and prepares qualified candidates for these events.

Developing and Promoting Resources

HIO develops and maintains an online repository of tools and resources¹⁵ to ensure that employers are equipped with current knowledge, research programs, resources and events. The tools and resources consist of materials developed by HIO and other organizations. Materials developed by HIO include:

- *Employer's Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace*: a quick reference resource that provides information about and insight into the most common challenges faced by employers when hiring and integrating skilled immigrants into the workplace.

- *Working Groups Action Plan*: a document that outlines the preliminary activities and action plans of the working groups after their first year. An update to this document, *Employers in Action*, helps employers enhance their efforts to hire and integrate skilled immigrants. Both documents highlight identified barriers that employers face and recommend strategies that they can adopt or adapt. An implementation template helps employers measure the outcomes of these activities.
- *Employer Success Stories* provide examples of successful and innovative initiatives undertaken by local employers.
- *Labour Market Fact Sheets* highlight employer workforce needs, demographic trends and labour market developments.

Website links to similar initiatives across the country, and to other relevant research, help employers develop and present their own internal business cases and action plans.

¹⁵ See submenus under the For Employers tab at <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/English/For%20Employers/why-hire.php>

A man in a light-colored shirt and patterned tie stands at the front of a meeting room, pointing with a pen at a flip chart. The flip chart displays a diagram with the heading "Value Based Selling" and four sub-sections. Several people are seated around a large conference table in the foreground, looking towards the presenter. The table is equipped with laptops, glasses of water, and a plate of snacks. A framed abstract painting is visible on the wall to the left. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned

Labour market integration of skilled immigrants is an economic issue.

For an initiative addressing the labour market integration of skilled immigrants to be successful, it needs to respond to a skills shortage in the community. Unless local employers are already having difficulty finding skilled workers, they tend to lack sufficient motivation to make the necessary systemic changes in their organization. While employers typically recognize the 'social justice' aspect of the initiative, it is the business case and organizational need that will trigger the required action and results. Predictably, it is more difficult for an initiative to gain traction in the community during an economic downturn.

Labour market research is the basis for sound planning.

Sound research and shared understandings produce effective action plans. Research is an important ongoing activity; it is never finished because the local labour market is constantly changing.

The initial research phase of the initiative takes time, but it is extremely important. There is no point in developing labour market interventions for occupations that have little local demand or no available supply of internationally trained workers. The research and stakeholder consultations conducted by ITWP provided the information for developing a solid foundation and effective program structure for the HIO model.

Employers need to play a leadership role.

Employer involvement is absolutely critical to the successful integration of skilled immigrants into the labour force. Leading employers in the community need to champion immigrant employment solutions, articulating the business case to their peers and promoting effective strategies and programs in workplaces. Employers' input and feedback can provide valuable information for shaping program design and identifying solutions to their challenges. Employers must be kept aware of the current and future demographic challenges as well as available resources to support their ability to effectively tap into the skilled immigrant talent pool.

A multi-stakeholder approach is highly effective.

A number of stakeholders in the Ottawa region are involved in the HIO initiative. They include the municipal government, business associations, educational institutions, immigrant-serving agencies and employers. The process of planning together, forming partnerships, and sharing information and resources in order to achieve a common goal resulted in a clear understanding of the complementary, rather than competing, roles that each stakeholder plays.

The municipality has a key role to play.

In any region, the municipal government plays a key role in defining the region's framework and strategy for local economic development. In 2000, the City of Ottawa recognized and highlighted immigration as an economic and social priority. As a partner in the ITWP/HIO initiatives, the City has remained involved from the outset, and has produced several relevant research reports.¹⁶ In 2007, City Council passed a motion to endorse the establishment of an Immigration Ottawa Initiative¹⁷ (IOI). The objective of the IOI is to develop a city-wide strategy, linked to local economic development priorities, that improves the social inclusion and labour market integration of Ottawa residents, including immigrants.

Progress is made by focusing on specific problems and solutions.

ITWP and HIO continue to engage local employers to understand their specific concerns and barriers with respect to hiring and integrating skilled immigrants into their workplaces. Sector-specific working groups ensure that planned activities are focused and tailored to their specific needs. The focus on solutions attracts and retains employer interest by fostering confidence that their involvement will have a positive impact on their businesses or organizations.

Comprehensive marketing and communications builds community awareness and employer engagement.

HIO undertakes a comprehensive marketing and communications campaign designed to promote employer-oriented tools and resources, make the business case for hiring skilled immigrants and raise public awareness about the contribution of immigration to the economic development of the city.

Leveraging existing resources enhances progress.

A substantial array of resources has been developed locally and in other jurisdictions. By leveraging these, stakeholders can allocate their limited resources to addressing their most pressing challenges rather than creating parallel or competing programs and services. This enables stakeholders to make progress more quickly while reducing cost and effort. In addition to local resources, numerous other resources, including research information and online services and tools, exist at the provincial and national levels.¹⁸

In establishing HIO, United Way Ottawa leveraged its well-established history of running workplace campaigns during its annual fundraising cycle. The existing strong relationships between United Way Ottawa and local employers facilitated employer engagement in the research and stakeholder consultations that took place in the ITWP's early years.

Coordinated employment services enhance project activities.

The mandate of LASI World Skills,¹⁹ an Ottawa-based coalition of immigrant-serving agencies, is to advance the integration of newcomers into the local economy. It does this by supporting the employment needs of newcomers and helping employers to integrate newcomers effectively into their organizations. LASI World Skills provides coordinated employment services through its relationships with all of the local settlement agencies. This work, which supported HIO's efforts to connect employers to available employment services, resulted in LASI World Skills implementing service enhancements such as the Ottawa Job Match Network.

¹⁶ For instance, a report entitled *Faces of Ottawa: A Snapshot of Immigrant Labour Market Integration* summarized information from existing sources such as previous reports, surveys and Statistics Canada data in order to develop benchmarks for Ottawa-area plans.

¹⁷ http://ottawa.ca/city_services/statistics/immigration/index_en.html.

¹⁸ www.hireimmigrants.ca.

¹⁹ <http://www.ottawa-worldskills.org/EN/>.

There is no silver bullet.

The issue of integrating skilled immigrants into the workforce is complex and involves many challenges. No single strategy will address all needs. Challenges differ among employers, and this calls for a range of strategies that can be adopted and adapted in order to generate meaningful results. Also, employers are in different states of readiness in their ability and capacity to address the issue. For this reason, it is counterproductive to try to move them all at once through a progressive series of lock-step activities and plans. Having a basket of resources, strategies and programs available provides employers the flexibility to choose which ones best suit their particular situation.

The effective integration of skilled immigrants into the workforce is a process, and the initial focus that HIO's employers placed on recruiting and hiring skilled immigrants is only the first part of a continuum. After successfully recruiting and hiring skilled immigrants, additional focus is required for onboarding support, effective orientation/retention practices and talent management strategies.



CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Since 2002 the Ottawa community has been taking action to address barriers and challenges to the effective integration of skilled immigrants into the local workforce. Through the early efforts of the ITWP, as well as the more recent activities of HIO, significant progress is being made in fostering immigrant employment solutions.

Successful workforce integration of skilled immigrants depends on a range of interventions including leadership, creating an inclusive workplace and enhancements to an organizations' human resources systems and processes: recruitment, retention and talent management. The work HIO does with employers in these areas has enabled them to improve their capacity to successfully access the skilled immigrant labour pool.

A growing area of focus is addressing workplace cultural differences. HIO activities focus on improving employers' understanding of the cross-cultural dynamics of assessing and interviewing skilled immigrants. That focus includes strategies for successful workplace orientation and other onboarding processes, such as creating a more accommodating workplace through cross-cultural competency development involving all employees. HIO-engaged employers now also address long-term retention, how skilled immigrant talent can be leveraged for innovation and productivity improvements, as well as considerations that affect succession planning.

The local economy benefits in many ways when skilled immigrants effectively participate in the workforce at a skills-appropriate level. Disposable income rises with higher earnings among previously underemployed workers. This, in turn, leads to increased consumer spending and tax revenue. Effective economic integration also fosters social cohesion.

With the emergence of long-term demographic shifts that will lead to a significantly tighter labour market, effective workforce integration of skilled immigrants will become an important consideration for a growing number of employers. HIO will continue to support employers with tools and solutions to enhance their capacity to leverage the talents of skilled immigrants.