

Fact Sheet: Ottawa Employers' Workforce Needs

Over the next five to ten years the labour market participation rate will be dropping, unprecedented numbers of workers will be retiring and, relative to the size of the population, there will be proportionately fewer new labour force entrants. These conditions will require employers to look beyond their traditional sources of new employees to meet their current and emerging workforce requirements. It is therefore not surprising that by 2011, immigrants will provide 100% of the net new growth in Ottawa's workforce.

In 2004, 25 large employers and 12 small and medium sized enterprises (SME) were consulted by a joint research effort between TalentWorks, a program of the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) and the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership. The results identified specific workforce needs of Ottawa's employers in both the public and private sectors.

Workforce requirements

More and more employers are reporting difficulties finding qualified workers, with increasing scarcities of skilled and entry-level workers. Hiring immigrants to fill these shortages often presents a challenge unto itself. The following captures key challenges identified by Ottawa employers regarding integrating skilled immigrants into their workforces.

Challenges

The HIO working groups have identified a number of challenges that hinder the effective hiring of skilled immigrants into their respective organizations.

- Lack of organizational readiness to effectively recruit, hire, and integrate immigrants into its workplace
- Cultural issues
- Language requirements (including bilingualism)
- Challenges in evaluating qualifications, international work experience and credentials
- Immigrants and employers not in the same networks
- Requirements related to security clearance and citizenship

Solutions

Employers identified a range of remedies they believe would make a difference in hiring more skilled immigrants into their workforces.

- **Networking** – participating in functions where they can meet and interact with skilled immigrants in their sectors
- **Recruiting** – utilizing immigrant-serving agencies to source candidates, advertizing in publications/on-line boards that target immigrants
- **Coaching** – providing information to both skilled immigrants and immigrant serving agencies on how best to enter the sector in the Ottawa region
- **Internship Programs** – providing work experience to skilled immigrants
- **Bridging Programs** – working with colleges and immigrant serving agencies to ensure that gaps in skills or education for immigrants are addressed
- **Mentoring** – either inside of their workplaces or through immigrant serving organizations, providing professional guidance and support
- **Tracking** – identifying ways to measure progress
- **Review Policies, Practices and/or Processes** – looking to see that internal practices do not prevent employers from accessing the talents of skilled immigrants
- **Educating / Informing** – ensuring that colleagues and other stakeholders are aware of issues and promising practices, tools and resources
- **Utilize Tools and Resources** – taking advantage of the resources and tools that exist to assist employers and build their capacity to recruit and integrate skilled immigrants into their workplaces

If you are an employer and want more information on how Hire Immigrants Ottawa can support your organization in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants, please contact us at 613-228-6715 or email us at info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca.

Download the Working Groups Action Plan at www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca for more information on the challenges and potential solutions identified above.