

# TIP SHEET

## Language Proficiency: Tips for Recruiting Skilled Immigrants

### Employer Challenge

Strong language skills is one of the most common requirements in job descriptions. However, achieving a good match between the language requirements of a job and an applicant's proficiency can be a challenge to recruiters. What can employers do to assess an applicant's language skills, and, if required, help an employee improve those skills on the job?

### Employer Tips

These e-tips can help strengthen your organization's ability to accurately define occupational language requirements, assess and support language competencies of immigrant job candidates, and more effectively recruit from Ottawa's diverse talent pool.

#### *Cast a language lens on your organization's recruitment and hiring practices*

- Be precise about the language proficiencies and abilities required for any given position you are looking to fill. Overestimating language requirements is likely to screen out qualified job candidates.
- Formally document the language proficiencies required for specific occupations and use situational or task-based language testing to evaluate job candidates.
  - Consult the [Essential Skills Profiles](#)<sup>i</sup> developed for over 350 occupations. The profiles describe how workers in an occupation use the nine essential skills, including reading, document use, writing, and oral communication.
- Raise awareness and understanding of the cross-cultural issues that might lead to unconscious biases. In an interview, sector-specific jargon as well as slang, idioms, and colloquial language can be difficult for immigrants, but are usually learned quickly through experience.
  - Develop culturally competent interviewing skills through [Hire Immigrants Ottawa's training program](#)<sup>ii</sup> for HR and hiring managers.
- Use a diverse hiring panel to enhance the interview and adjudication process to gain a more accurate understanding of immigrant job seekers' qualifications and competencies.
- Consider the strategic advantages that multi-lingual job seekers may give your organization, whether in terms of client and customer service, expansion into new markets, or in global operations.

#### *Use adaptive strategies to accommodate and support language skill development*

- Understand the terminology used to describe language proficiencies and the services available in Ottawa to assess language skills of newcomers.
  - The [Canadian Language Benchmarks](#)<sup>iii</sup> (CLB) are the national standards used for describing and measuring second language proficiency of adult immigrants. Immigrant job applicants may refer to language benchmarks on their resumes.

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- Employers can refer any job applicant for a CLB assessment to ensure that his or her language skills meet job requirements. The CLB assessment is free for qualifying newcomers to Canada. In Ottawa, the YMCA-YWCA [Language Assessment and Referral Centre](#)<sup>iv</sup> is a centralized screening, assessment and referral centre for newcomers.
- An on-line English [CLB self-assessment tool](#)<sup>v</sup> is available.
- Encourage and support your immigrant employees and new hires with training programs that improve workplace language competencies.
  - The government of Canada funds Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC), which provides free English/French language training for eligible individuals at [LINC training sites in the Ottawa area](#)<sup>vi</sup>.
  - Visit Ottawa Job Path for a [list of programs and resources](#)<sup>vii</sup> available through school boards, colleges and settlement agencies.
- Offer alternative or flexible work arrangements to accommodate language training of employees.

*This Tip Sheet was informed by the proceedings of a HIO Joint Working Group meeting held in December 2015, where participants discussed the topic “Proficiency, Fluency, Accent or Interpersonal Skills – How do we deal with issues related to language?”*

Visit the HIO website for a schedule of Learning Events.

i [http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/essential\\_skills/profiles/index.page?](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/essential_skills/profiles/index.page?)

ii <http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/for-employers/what/training-program/>

iii <https://www.language.ca/>

iv <http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Adults/languageassessment/>

v <http://clb-osa.ca/about/clb-osa>

vi [http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Larc2/schools\\_e.htm](http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Larc2/schools_e.htm)

vii <http://ottawajobpath.ca/acquiring-language-skills.php>

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**Hire Immigrants Ottawa**  
*is an initiative that works with employers to enhance their capacity to effectively hire and integrate skilled immigrants into the workplace.*

[www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)  
[info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](mailto:info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)  
613-228-6700

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