

Working Groups Action Plan

May 2008



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
HIO Working Groups.....	1
Employer Council of Champions – Endorsement and Support	3
Barriers.....	4
Workplace Readiness	4
Cultural Issues.....	5
Language	5
Qualifications and Work Experience	6
Credential Recognition	6
A special note about Security Clearance.....	6
Progress to Date	7
Stakeholder Linkages.....	7
Networking and Coaching Activities	8
Process Improvements.....	8
Internship, Bridging and Mentorship Programs.....	8
Action Plan	9
Networking.....	9
Recruiting	10
Coaching.....	10
Internship	11
Bridging	12
Mentorship	12
Tracking and Reporting	13
Review Policies, Practices and Processes	14
Educating and Informing	14
Tools and Resources	15
Working Group Activities	16
Appendix A: Action Plan Reference Sheets	17
Appendix B: Action Plan Implementation Template	23
Appendix C: Working Group Member Organizations	24

Executive Summary

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) is a project designed to create opportunities for the integration of immigrants into the Ottawa labour market. The prime objective of HIO is to increase the number of employers who hire skilled immigrants. This will be achieved through a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- an Employer Council of Champions (ECC) featuring top Ottawa employers that will champion the integration of skilled immigrants into the labour force;
- a number of Working Groups including members from business organizations, employers, immigrant agencies, unions, government, and educational institutions working to address systemic barriers in the health care, information technology, finance and public sectors; and
- a local awareness campaign to promote greater understanding of the social and economic value that immigrants bring to Ottawa.

This document consolidates and summarizes the action plans that have been produced by each of the HIO Working Groups, and highlights their achievements to date.

HIO Working Groups

Four sector-specific Working Groups were established in May 2007, representing employers and stakeholders in health care, information technology, finance, and the public sector. Each working group has been meeting monthly since that time, with the exception of July and August 2007. In addition to the four working groups, a federal government roundtable has been established to coordinate related activities among participating departments in the federal government.

The working groups applied a methodology that involved a monthly series of theme-based meetings. The agenda for each meeting focused on a particular theme regarding the challenges faced by employers in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants at skills appropriate levels within their organizations. The sequencing of themes reflected a problem-solving process of identifying barriers and finding solutions.

The working groups have identified the main barriers that hinder the effective hiring of skilled immigrants into their respective organizations. The main barriers are workplace readiness, cultural issues, language (including bilingualism and non-verbal language), qualifications and work experience, and credential recognition.

The working groups have also developed a set of planned actions and recommendations to address specific barriers. The planned activities include networking and coaching events, process improvements, participation in internship, bridge training, and mentoring programs, cultural awareness and education, and making use of new and emerging tools and resources.

Some of the actions are already underway, and significant progress is being made in addressing some barriers. Some highlights of the initiatives already underway in the working groups include:

Stakeholder Linkages

Local immigrant service agencies and educational institutions are key stakeholders in the HIO initiative. They have been enthusiastic participants in the activities of the working groups and as a result there has been a tremendous strengthening of the relationships between these stakeholders and the local employers represented by the working groups.

Networking and Coaching Activities

Working groups have begun to host and participate in networking and coaching events involving employers and skilled immigrants. Through such events immigrants and employers are beginning to break down some of the cultural and workplace barriers.

Process Improvements

Many employers have begun to review and revise their HR processes and practices that relate to the hiring of immigrants. Many are also making better use of immigrant service agencies to recruit skilled candidates.

Internship, Bridging, and Mentoring

Employers have begun to explore and, in a couple of cases, participate in existing programs that provide immigrants and employers with opportunities to gain work experience as well as new skills and knowledge.

Download a copy of the Working Groups Action Plan at: www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca

Employer Council of Champions – Endorsement and Support

HIO's Employer Council of Champions (ECC) strongly supports the action plan developed by the working groups, and will support and promote implementation of the action plan within their organizations and also within the community.

Specifically, the ECC and its members will:

1. Continue to support their organization's participation and membership in the ongoing operations of the HIO Working Groups;
2. Provide leadership in ensuring that appropriate elements of the action plan are undertaken within their organizations; and
3. Take advantage of opportunities to promote the action plan in their professional networks and activities (e.g. presentations at conferences, speaking engagements, and discussions with colleagues at networking events).

Barriers

The working groups identified a number of barriers that hinder the effective hiring of skilled immigrants into their respective organizations. These barriers are presented here to provide the context for subsequent discussion, in which planned actions will be seen to address specific barriers.

Each of the following barriers was separately and independently identified by each of the four working groups. Some barriers were considered more applicable in some working groups than in others, and the discussion of the barriers in each working group was somewhat different. A consolidated listing and description of the common barriers is presented here in no particular order – no ranking or hierarchy of barriers is implied.

Workplace Readiness

Most members of the working groups felt that their organizations try to 'find the right fit' when considering prospective employees, and that these well-intentioned efforts may result in screening out very qualified and capable immigrants at some point in the hiring process. Every organization has its set of policies, practices, knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes related to hiring immigrants. Together these represent an organization's 'readiness' to effectively recruit, hire, and integrate immigrants into its workplace.

An important distinction between policy and practice was recognized. While a policy may be inclusive with respect to immigrant candidates, it may break down in practice. In some organizations HR staff may present well qualified immigrant candidates to a hiring manager but the hiring manager may be unfamiliar with the candidate's background and experience (e.g. their academic credentials). The hiring manager may also anticipate that perceived differences with respect to the candidate's cultural practices might affect their ability to 'fit in' with the team. As a result the hiring manager may not have a good comfort level and may perceive a higher degree of risk with the immigrant candidate compared with other candidates. It's felt that hiring managers, often working under tight hiring timelines, sometimes take the easy way out by not fully considering immigrant candidates due to the "FUD Factor" – fear, uncertainty and doubt.

Encouragingly, it was also recognized that the organization as a whole owns its culture, is able to change it – and is responsible for doing so. Working Group members felt that there is much opportunity to influence positive change and improve their organization's readiness to successfully hire and integrate immigrants into their workplace. Policies and practices can be reviewed and revised; HR staff can be equipped with better assessment tools; and through education all staff – particularly hiring managers – can become more informed and accepting about cultural differences and less concerned about an immigrant's ability to 'fit in'.

It may be more difficult to address this barrier in health care organizations delivering in-home services, or for financial or IT consulting organizations. These organizations have heightened concerns about positions that involve direct, front line client/customer service – concerns about negative client reactions to an employee who isn't perceived to 'fit' in the client's environment.

Cultural Issues

Employer concerns about cultural differences in the workplace can be a strong barrier when considering immigrant applicants in the hiring process. These cultural differences can have negative impacts when the underlying differences in attitudes and behaviours among employees are exhibited. In fact, many employers suggested that this 'cultural differences' issue may underlie their clear preference (and often requirement) for Canadian work experience when considering employment candidates.

Existing employees in an organization often lack awareness about different cultures, and can be uncomfortable when dealing with unfamiliar cultural practices or appearances of their new colleagues. In some cases there may be uniformed negative attitudes and biases among existing employees (e.g. the 'taking our jobs' myth). The organization might also find itself struggling to make reasonable accommodations for different behaviours in the workplace (e.g. religious practices).

On the other hand, recent immigrants often lack awareness about the Canadian work environment. They can have great difficulty presenting and marketing themselves in the hiring process due to cultural differences that discourage them from speaking confidently and positively about their own abilities and accomplishments. Small but important factors often result in a poor first impression with prospective employers (e.g. eye contact, handshakes, behavioural interviews). On the job, immigrants may struggle with many new and unfamiliar requirements and attitudes in the workplace. (e.g. socializing with colleagues, gender roles).

The working groups feel that progress can be made on this issue, especially with respect to the role of the organization in educating and raising awareness among its existing employees and strengthening its relationships with immigrant service agencies.

Language

Strong oral and written communication skills are very important in most workplaces. Oral skills can be more troublesome than reading or writing when the speaker has a heavy accent, especially in roles that involve front line customer service. Immigrants often have difficulty with sector-specific terminology and jargon as well as with slang, idioms, and colloquial language.

In Ottawa, and especially in the Federal Government, official bilingualism (English and French) is a unique barrier. Many immigrants are multi-lingual, but not necessarily officially bilingual.

The working groups feel that it is primarily the immigrant's responsibility to acquire the necessary language skills for employment. Employers and government can (and sometimes do) help by offering or supporting language training. The groups also recommend that posted language requirements genuinely reflect the language abilities necessary to effectively perform the duties of the position.

Qualifications and Work Experience

Employers face an additional time/cost factor in trying to assess international qualifications and experience, and this in itself represents a barrier when considering immigrant applicants. While affordable services are available for assessment of academic qualifications, it is more difficult to assess international work experience, and to contact/communicate with references.

To circumvent this need for assessment, many employers look for successful Canadian work experience as evidence of transferable skills and knowledge as well as cultural adaptation. While this might remove the assessment barrier from the employer's perspective it simply places another barrier in front of the immigrant, who now needs to gain Canadian work experience within an employer community that prefers not to hire candidates without it.

Credential Recognition

It is often very difficult for immigrants to obtain recognition for their international credentials, and gain the required Canadian credentials to qualify for skills-appropriate employment in their profession. Also, within organizations there is a general lack of familiarity and knowledge about assessing foreign credentials; the need to do so is an additional time/cost factor for employers and hence a barrier to the hiring of immigrants.

In health care it is frequently very difficult and time-consuming for immigrants to obtain recognition for their foreign credentials and receive the required local professional credential or license. An immigrant may also require residency training – another sometimes lengthy process. Unions are an important and very powerful stakeholder in some sectors (e.g. health care), and are increasingly more receptive to contributing to solutions. All health care professionals need police checks; those who would work for government also need security clearance, and encounter the same delays mentioned above.

Canadian citizens are given priority at the time of appointment in the Federal Public Sector, and so many immigrants who are not yet citizens may be screened out early in the hiring process.

There are sometimes complex regulations and conflicting policies that affect an immigrant's pursuit of required skills and credentials. For instance there may be restrictions upon how soon after a person has immigrated before they are eligible for student loans, and access to certain services like language and job search training may be denied after a person has resided in Canada for more than three years, depending on the funder. Getting partial credit from Ontario's post secondary educational institutions for education acquired outside of the country can be extremely difficult.

A special note about Security Clearance

Many employers in Ottawa work closely with or contract to the Federal Public Sector. For these employers, along with the Sector itself, the requirement for security clearance for workers can be a major barrier to hiring immigrants. These immigrants may have all the required skills to immediately contribute to the success of the

Federal Public Sector but, depending on the level of security clearance being asked for, these screenings can take years to achieve. In light of this, the working groups would like to recommend that

- a) all parties engaged in the screening and assessment process are resourced to the extent that clearances can be achieved in as short a time as possible; and
- b) that security levels are set at levels that truly reflect the sensitivity of the information to which the worker will have access

Progress to Date

The working groups have already made significant progress in addressing some of the above barriers. The working groups are receiving strong support from local stakeholders, including immigrant service agencies and educational institutions. All groups have initiated specific activities and each group is showing leadership in certain areas.

Working group members have begun sharing their experiences and best practices with each other. Information sharing is a routine part of each agenda at all working group meetings, and HIO staff share relevant information across all working groups. Practices that have been proven successful for one employer or working group are being replicated in others. For instance, a successful coaching event took place in January 2008 involving members of the finance working group and a number of skilled immigrants pre-qualified by immigrant service agencies. Detailed information about this event was shared with other working groups, and employers in the information technology working group have subsequently held a similar event.

Some highlights of the initiatives already underway in the working groups include:

Stakeholder Linkages

HIO has strong partnerships with two sets of stakeholders that have a key role to play in the HIO initiative: immigrant service agencies, and educational institutions. Representatives from both of these stakeholders have been active and supportive participants in all working groups.

Some of the key local immigrant service agencies have organized themselves to provide a single point of contact to the HIO working groups. LASI World Skills represents these agencies for purposes of the HIO project, and provides the working groups with coordinated and comprehensive access to the local community of skilled immigrants seeking employment.

Educational institutions offer bridging programs and mentoring programs that are highly relevant to employers and skilled immigrants.

As a result of stakeholder participation there has been a tremendous strengthening of the relationships between local employers, immigrant service agencies, and educational institutions. This has made a significant impact and has begun to pay dividends in terms of specific activities such as placing and fulfilling job orders, arranging the participation of skilled immigrants in networking events, educating employers regarding cross-cultural issues; and employer awareness of and plans for participation in bridging and mentoring programs.

Networking and Coaching Activities

Working groups have begun to address the barriers of Workplace Readiness and Cultural Issues through networking and coaching activities involving employers and skilled immigrants. Through such events immigrants and employers can gain exposure to each other outside the context of a specific job interview, and can begin to break down some of the cultural and workplace barriers.

Some examples of activities that have taken place or will soon take place are:

- In the Finance and IT sectors, working group members have hosted networking events that included delivering coaching sessions to job-seeking skilled immigrants. Participating immigrants gained valuable networking experience, developed new skills, had an opportunity to speak with employers, and became better prepared to seek employment. Participating employers gained valuable insight into the suitability of skilled immigrants as employment candidates.
- In the Health Care and Information Technology sectors, several working group members plan to host skilled immigrants at their regular sector networking events. During the event employers can demonstrate networking skills, can introduce the immigrant to prospective employers, and can share useful information and observations.
- Employers in all working groups participated in a cultural competency workshop delivered by LASI World Skills.
- All sectors, including the Public sector, will participate in networking activities such as those included in the May 2008 HIO Summit.

Process Improvements

Many employers have begun to review and revise their HR processes and practices that relate to the hiring of immigrants (e.g. diversity policies). Several of these employers have found that relevant policies may exist but are not being fully implemented. The process of policy review is reminding employers of the importance of communicating and reinforcing the policies throughout the organization. As a result, employers are becoming more engaged in making sure that their policies and processes are not only reviewed and updated where appropriate, but also well communicated and consistently implemented throughout the organization.

Many employers have begun to track the number of immigrants hired and are reporting this to HIO on a monthly basis.

Employers in the working groups are also making better use of immigrant service agencies in their HR processes (e.g. to recruit skilled candidates and to educate their HR staff and hiring managers about cross-cultural issues in the workplace).

Internship, Bridging and Mentorship Programs

An employer in the Finance working group conducted a pilot internship program. The pilot program took place throughout the fall of 2007, and the employer intends to continue the program beyond the pilot stage. The expected outcome is to provide paid work experience to a qualified immigrant, and to provide the employer with an opportunity to assess the candidate's suitability for full time permanent employment. During the pilot program the employer monitored the intern's performance and

provided support as required when cultural and other challenges were encountered. The employer's representative in the Finance working group provided regular progress and status updates to the other members of the working group, and HIO provided these updates to the other working groups whose employers might be considering a similar program.

One of the employers in the Health working group has begun to work closely with Algonquin College in two separate initiatives: two employees are receiving mentoring support through the College's Connections Ottawa Mentorship Program, and the College's palliative care certificate is being incorporated into the employer's training program.

Action Plan

This section presents a detailed discussion of each of the main actions in the action plan. This discussion complements a summary of the action plan which is presented in a tabular format in reference sheets in Appendix A.

The elements of the action plan are presented in no particular order – no ranking or hierarchy of actions is implied.

Networking

Description: A number of different types of networking opportunities involving both employers and internationally trained immigrants are planned. Some activities and events, described earlier, have already taken place. These networking activities will provide opportunities for education, skills development, and job placements.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues

Activities:

- The May 2008 HIO Summit program included a networking event of several hours duration in the evening. Working group members hosted the event and recruited colleagues to attend.
- Most members of the working groups are also members of professional organizations or associations that operate within their sector. Many of these organizations or associations hold regular networking events. Some working groups are planning to host and facilitate/coordinate the inclusion of skilled immigrants at these routine networking events. This hosting will include payment of associated event fees if possible. Where appropriate, working group members will escort and coach the immigrant throughout the event providing introductions, helpful commentary, and observations.
- Some working groups are planning to host and participate in special networking events designed specifically for groups of internationally trained workers with appropriate sector skills and qualifications. It is anticipated that these events, while not 'job fairs', will increase awareness among both employers and immigrants and may lead directly to employment for some immigrants.
- Immigrant service agencies will play an important role in pre-screening, selecting and, if possible, coaching qualified immigrant participants for networking events.

Expected Outcomes:

- employers gain increased awareness about the suitability of skilled immigrants as employees, and their 'fit' within the organization
- skilled immigrants gain increased awareness about job opportunities and the Canadian approach to recruiting and hiring
- immigrants develop new and improved professional networking skills, along with a better understanding of their importance
- improved linkages between employers and skilled immigrants
- employers gain improved understanding of the skills and qualifications of internationally trained immigrants

Status/Timeline: Ongoing; May 2008 for Summit event

Recruiting

Description: LASI World Skills, on behalf of several local agencies serving immigrants, provides HIO working group members with coordinated and comprehensive access to the local community of skilled immigrants seeking employment. Employers seeking employment candidates are able to send their 'job order' to LASI, who will match job requirements with the candidate databases of participating agencies and provide employers with resumes of the most qualified immigrant candidates.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness

Activities:

- Employers send job orders to World Skills, describing available position/opportunity as well as candidate's required skills, qualifications and experience.
- World Skills matches candidates to opportunities and directs employers to pre-qualified candidates

Expected Outcomes:

- employers have single-point-of-contact access to pre-qualified skilled immigrants as employment candidates
- internationally trained immigrants gain paid Canadian work experience

Status/Timeline: Ongoing since Fall 2007

Coaching

Description: Coaching opportunities are provided to immigrants seeking employment. Employers coach skilled candidates (pre-qualified by immigrant service agencies), providing advice and tips on resumes, interviewing, and other relevant topics.

Coaching opportunities can also be provided to staff in organizations seeking to hire immigrants. LASI World Skills has experience in developing and delivering customized coaching sessions to HR staff and hiring managers, and has the capacity to do so for working group members.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues

Activities:

- Employers host and deliver coaching sessions to job-seeking skilled immigrants in their sector. These events will typically involve several employers and will be hosted at an employer's location to provide immigrants with direct experience of a workplace. LASI World Skills will pre-screen qualified employment candidates in the given sector.
- Employers participate in sector-specific coaching sessions offered by agencies serving immigrants. HR staff and hiring managers will participate.

Expected Outcomes:

- Immigrants better prepared to seek employment
- Employers gain improved skills and knowledge about hiring immigrants
- Improved linkages between employers and immigrants

Status/Timeline: Early 2008 and ongoing

Internship

Description: Internship programs are short-term employment programs that give applicants an opportunity to learn about the Canadian workplace while working. The programs are usually from three months to a year in length. Interns generally receive a salary or stipend.

Internships are felt to be potentially useful by most employers, and some working groups have begun to take action. An employer in the Finance working group conducted a pilot internship program in the fall of 2007; the employer intends to continue the program beyond the pilot stage. In the public sector, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) currently operates an existing internship program for skilled immigrants in Toronto; HIO is encouraging the OPS to expand the program to Ottawa.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues, Qualifications and Experience

Activities:

- Continue internship program beyond pilot stage (Finance sector)
- Encouraging OPS Internship for Newcomers be expanded to Ottawa (Public sector - Provincial)
- HIO to continue to investigate new and emerging internship programs for skilled immigrants

Expected Outcomes:

- Employers are able to assess suitability of skilled immigrants as potential permanent employees
- Internationally trained immigrants gain paid Canadian work experience

Status/Timeline:

- pilot program: Fall 2007 (Finance working group)
- OPS Internship for Newcomers expansion to Ottawa: TBD

Bridging

Description: Bridging programs provide skilled immigrants with formal training as well as work placements to bridge their prior education and work experience so they meet the requirements to practice within their professions in Canada. Bridge training programs often involve several partners such as educators, employers, and regulatory bodies or professional associations as well as an agency to provide job search preparation, client screening and selection, and language and cross cultural training. The programs tend to include the following components: assessment, gap analysis, skills training, language training, cross cultural training and an introduction to the workplace (co-op placement or internship). Participating employers are generally able and encouraged to provide input into training at the local level.

Several bridging programs exist in the Ottawa region. Currently, in the context of the HIO working groups, the existing programs are most relevant to the Health sector. Employers in this working group plan to thoroughly investigate available programs and participate as appropriate. One employer has already begun to participate.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Qualifications and Experience, Credentials

Activities:

- Inclusion of Algonquin's Palliative Care Certificate into employer's training program (Health Care sector)
- Employers to investigate existing bridge training programs for internationally trained health professionals

Expected Outcomes:

- Employers access skills of internationally trained health professionals
- Internationally trained immigrants gain Canadian work experience
- Qualified immigrants enhance existing skills and gain professional certifications and credentials required to practice locally

Status/Timeline: Early 2008 and ongoing

Mentorship

Description: Mentoring programs have proven to be very beneficial for skilled immigrants and their mentors. Mentors are people who have a combination of knowledge and Canadian business experience and agree to coach a newcomer in the same field. There are two general types of mentoring for immigrants: pre-employment mentoring and on-the-job mentoring.

Pre-employment mentoring refers to a skilled immigrant who is un-or-under employed being matched with an employed professional in a relevant field. These mentoring programs are generally formal (managed through a third party agency) and have set goals and time commitments. The goals are negotiated by both parties at the beginning of their relationship, and typically involve a variety of activities through which the mentor supports and encourages the immigrant in their efforts to become professionally established.

On-the-job mentoring refers to an immigrant being matched with a mentor within their organization once they have been hired. This may be a less formal

arrangement, managed within the organization, through which an experienced employee assists a new employee in learning about and becoming integrated into the corporate culture.

Mentoring programs are available in Ottawa. For instance, Algonquin College, in partnership with LASI World Skills, operates the Connections Ottawa Mentorship Program (COMP), a pre-employment mentoring program that is currently active in the health care sector. Local stakeholders, with HIO support, are planning to coordinate and enhance mentoring programs in Ottawa, and the working groups will support those efforts. All working groups have expressed an interest in learning more about mentoring programs, and some will consider adopting a program. One of the organizations in the health care working group recently began participating in COMP – two employees are now receiving support from mentors.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues, Qualifications and Experience

Activities:

- Employers to learn about and participate in mentoring programs where appropriate
- Local stakeholders involved in mentoring programs to coordinate and enhance activities and programs. HIO will support, and keep working groups informed and engaged.

Expected Outcomes:

- Organizations, employees and skilled immigrants seeking employment gain improved cross-cultural understanding and competencies
- Experienced professionals gain new skills (e.g. leadership development) and help immigrants establish themselves professionally
- Skilled immigrants develop and expand professional networks
- Skilled immigrants improve their job-search skills and are more likely to gain and retain skills-appropriate employment

Status/Timeline: Early 2008 and ongoing

Tracking and Reporting

Description: The HIO Working Groups have developed this action plan to address the main barriers that hinder the effective hiring of skilled immigrants into their respective organizations. In order to measure impacts and outcomes of the action plan as they are implemented, organizations need to be able to track and report on the number of immigrants hired. This generally requires at least some adjustment to the organization's information databases and/or administrative procedures in the hiring process. Some organizations may already be well prepared to begin tracking and reporting on this information, and can begin to do so quite quickly; in other organizations it may require significant change – and time.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness

Activities:

- Develop a set of criteria that can be used by all employers to characterize and identify an immigrant whose hiring should be tracked and reported.

- Employers review existing information databases and administrative procedures used in the hiring process. Where necessary, revise databases and procedures to effectively measure and track the number of immigrants (matching the accepted criteria) that are hired.
- Submit monthly reports to HIO re: number of immigrants hired.

Expected Outcomes:

- Allows employers to measure and demonstrate success in hiring immigrants
- Provides opportunity for employers to create success stories
- Allows HIO to report on numeric targets to program funders and partners

Status/Timeline: Fall 2007 and ongoing

Review Policies, Practices and Processes

Description: Organizations can increase their capacity to recruit and retain skilled immigrants through effective policy and practice. A strong diversity policy is most important. In order to be effective, a diversity policy must not only exist within the organization – it must be well communicated and implemented throughout the organization. All related policies, practices and processes within participating organizations should be reviewed, revised where appropriate, and communicated to all employees.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness

Activities:

- Employers review and, if necessary, revise/develop an effective diversity policy within their organization
- Implement a communications campaign throughout the organization to raise employee awareness of diversity and related policies and procedures.
- Include diversity as a performance management measure within the organization
- Develop diversity inventories
- Employers adopt and adapt an action plan implementation template (see Appendix B).

Expected Outcomes:

- Organizations have an effective diversity policy and it is implemented consistently throughout the organization
- High level of employee awareness of diversity policy throughout organization
- Increase organizational capacity to hire and retain internationally trained immigrants

Status/Timeline: Fall 2007 and ongoing

Educating and Informing

Description: Information and education can help organizations, employees, immigrants, and the community at large achieve greater success with integrating skilled immigrants into the workplace. Employers can share promising practices and success stories with each other, and can provide diversity and language training and education to employees, including recent immigrant hires.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues, Language

Activities:

- Employers share promising practices and success stories with each other during workgroup meetings and their professional networks
- HIO shares information among different workgroups, including results of periodic reviews of relevant information from other communities and initiatives
- Employers provide or facilitate language training for employees
- Immigrant service agencies provide cross cultural (diversity) training for staff in participating employers (HR staff, senior management, hiring managers, and other staff as appropriate)
- Employers celebrate multiculturalism in the workplace

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and understanding of cultural issues in the workplace
- Employers adopt innovative initiatives/practices that have proven successful
- Organizations, particularly HR staff and hiring managers, are more aware of available skills and talent within immigrant communities
- Improved language skills in the workplace

Status/Timeline: Fall 2007 and ongoing.

Tools and Resources

Description: Other communities across Canada are also engaged in efforts to assist immigrants in gaining skills-appropriate employment. As a result of these initiatives there is a growing set of resources available to assist employers in their efforts. Resources include HR workshops, information about assessment services and language training providers, as well as information about bridging, internship and mentoring programs. The hireimmigrants.ca website maintains an up to date listing of available resources. HR workshops are available for immediate downloading and adaptation. Resources continue to be developed, including a SME Employer Guide that is being developed by HIO.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness, Cultural Issues

Activities:

- HIO to provide working group members with an orientation to the tools and resources currently available at hireimmigrants.ca
- HIO staff to continue to research new resources, inform working groups as useful resources become available, and provide convenient access to the resources via the HIO website.
- HIO to produce a SME Employer Guide as a resource to assist small and medium enterprises in their efforts to recruit and hire skilled immigrants. The guide will include information and tips on how to deal with common cross-cultural issues, and will also provide references to other useful resources.

Expected Outcomes:

- The SME Employer Guide will provide practical guidance targeted to small and medium sized employers who want to hire skilled immigrants
- Employers will become aware of and make use of existing tools and resources to assist them in recruiting and hiring skilled immigrants

Status/Timeline: Early 2008 and ongoing.

SME Employer Guide will be available online in late 2008 at www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca

Working Group Activities

Description: When the HIO working groups were established, members agreed to participate until early 2008 when this action plan would be produced. It was recognized that the Working Group structure should be reviewed at this time to ensure that it remained an appropriate structure for implementation of the plans.

This review has been completed and working groups have determined that they should continue to operate. Members have renewed their ongoing commitment to participate.

Barrier(s) Addressed: Workplace Readiness

Activities:

- Working groups will continue to meet on a regular basis.
- Working group members will continue with appropriate action plan initiatives already underway in their organizations and will look for opportunities to expand their participation in other initiatives.
- Develop detailed implementation strategies for action plan initiatives not yet underway.

Expected Outcomes:

- Implementation plans associated with the action plan
- Build on progress and results achieved to date

Status/Timeline: Early 2008 and ongoing

Appendix A: Action Plan Reference Sheets

The following table summarizes the action plan produced by the HIO Working Groups and indicates the barrier(s) addressed by each action.

This is a consolidated view of the results from all working groups. Not all working groups are planning to pursue all Action Items or Activities, and not all members of a given working group will necessarily participate in all Action Items or Activities planned by that working group.

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Summit Networking Activities, recruit colleagues to attend Hosting Skilled Immigrants at existing sector events Facilitating/coordinating the inclusion of ITIs in existing sector events Working Group members hosting events for groups of ITIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educating and informing both skilled immigrants and employers Linking employers to skilled immigrants “Softening” the workplace – enhancing awareness and understanding of ITIs qualifications 	•	•			
Recruiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sending Job Orders to World Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers access talent, fill positions ITIs gain paid Canadian work experience 	•				

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers hosting and delivering coaching sessions to job-seeking skilled immigrants in their sector Employers participate in sector-specific sessions offered by immigrants serving agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigrants better prepared to seek meaningful employment Linkages between employers and immigrants 	•	•			
Explore and/or Participate in Internship Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piloting internship (Finance sector) Developing Internship program (Public sector) Encouraging OPS Internship for Newcomers be expanded to Ottawa (Public sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers able to test new hires ITIs gain Canadian work experience 	•	•		•	
Explore and/or Participate in Bridging Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of Algonquin's Palliative Care Certificate into GEM's training (Health Care sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers able to provide input into training Employers access ITIs skills ITIs address skills gaps, gain Canadian work experience May lead to certification for ITIs 	•			•	•

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMP • Ad hoc occurrences • Explore new emerging/coordinated programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating and informing both skilled immigrants and employers • Links skilled immigrants to networks in their profession • Improves job search outcomes for mentees • Leadership development for mentors • Improves cross-cultural understanding 	•	•		•	
Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitting Monthly Reports on numbers of Skilled Immigrant Hires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows employers to measure and demonstrate success • Provides opportunity to create success stories • Allows HIO to report on numeric targets 	•				

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Review Policies, Practices and/or Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and, where appropriate, revision of diversity policies Raise employees awareness of policies Include diversity in portfolio of business development, performance management measures Develop diversity inventories (Public sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises awareness within organization Address and minimize barriers to hiring and retaining ITIs 	•				

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Educating / Informing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Promising Practices • Sharing Success Stories • Employers Providing/Facilitating Skills Training for employees • Employers Providing/Facilitating Language Training for employees • Providing Cross Cultural Training for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Human resources ○ Senior Management ○ Hiring Managers ○ All staff • Celebrating multiculturalism in the workplace (Finance sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and understanding • Allows employers to adopt innovative initiatives/practices that have proven successful • Raises awareness of the issue, makes hiring managers more aware of talent available • Develops more qualified/language proficient talent pool • Helps to overcome language barriers • Helps to overcome cross cultural issues 	•	•	•		

Action Item	Activity	Expected Outcomes	Barrier Addressed				
			Workplace Readiness	Cultural Issues	Language	Qualifications & Experience	Credentials
Develop or Utilize Tools and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing Employer Guide for SMEs Orientation to hireimmigrants.ca tools and resources HIO staff to research new resources and distribute to/inform Working Group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Guide will provide practical guidance targeted to small and medium sized employers on cross cultural issues as well as available resources to assist with linking to and integrating ITIs Becoming comfortable with and utilizing existing tools and resources will enhance employer effectiveness at integrating ITIs 	•	•			
Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue meeting on a regular basis Continue to develop new activities and initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on progress Develop Implementation Plans 	•				

Appendix B: Action Plan Implementation Template

<i>Objective:</i>									
To Increase Organizational Capacity to Hire and Retain Skilled Immigrants at Skills Appropriate Levels									
Action Item	Activities	Outcome(s)	Resources Needed	Responsible	Target	Timeline	Performance Measurement		

Appendix C: Working Group Member Organizations

Organization	Sector			
	Health	Information Technology	Public	Finance
Algonquin College	•	•	•	•
Alterna Savings				•
Arlene Wortsman & Associates	•			
Bell Canada		•		
Calian	•	•		
Canada Public Service Agency	•	•	•	•
Catholic Immigration Centre	•			
Certified General Accountants of Ontario (CGA), Ottawa Chapter				•
Le Conseil Economique et Social d'Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC)	•	•	•	•
CGI		•		
Champlain Community Care Access Centre	•			
City of Ottawa			•	
Certified Management Accountants (CMA) Ontario				•
Community Care Access Centre	•			
Export Development Canada				•
GEM Health Care	•			
Hydro Ottawa			•	

Organization	Sector			
	Health	Information Technology	Public	Finance
Information Communication Technology Council		•		
La Cité collégiale			•	
LASI World Skills	•	•	•	•
Local Health Integration Network	•			
MBNA				•
MDS Nordion		•		
Ministry of the Attorney General			•	
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities			•	
Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation		•		
Ottawa Community Loan fund				•
Ottawa Hospital	•			
Ottawa Police Service			•	
SCO Health Services	•			
Scotiabank				•
Shopper's Drug Mart	•			
United Way Ottawa			•	
University of Ottawa		•	•	
YMCA-YWCA Job Connect	•	•	•	•