



GUIDELINES

Deadline for submissions

December 11, 2026

www.hireimmigrantottawa.ca

About Hire Immigrants Ottawa

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) is an initiative that brings together employers, immigrant agencies and stakeholders to enhance employers' ability to access the talents of skilled immigrants in the Ottawa region. HIO's objective is to increase the number of employers in Ottawa who hire skilled immigrants to positions commensurate with their education.

About the Employer Excellence Awards

The Hire Immigrants Ottawa Employer Excellence Awards recognize local employers for their innovative workplace policies and practices around the recruitment and integration of skilled immigrant employees into their organization. Introduced in 2008, the awards program has recognized over 40 Ottawa based private, public, and not-for-profit organizations.

Up to **four** awards will be presented annually as determined by an independent selection committee made up of Human Resource executives and/or professionals, and other stakeholders.

Awards will be presented at the Employer Council of Champions Summit in March 2027, an event attended by senior executives, civic leaders, key stakeholders, media, and Human Resources professionals.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Employer Excellence Awards, organizations must be able to demonstrate the following:

1. They work in East Ontario - Ottawa, Prescott-Russell, Lanark and Renfrew Counties. (The organization can be headquartered in the region or be a division of a parent organization.)
2. Immigrant employees are working in bona fide positions at the nominated organization and are paid accordingly.
3. Immigrant employees are generally employed in roles that are commensurate with their skills, experience, education and/or professional training.
4. Organizations mandated to provide settlement services to immigrants are NOT eligible for the Employer Excellence Awards.

*Please note: Past award recipients **ARE** eligible to submit a nomination.*

Definitions

For the purpose of the Employer Excellence Awards, the following terms are defined as:
Skilled Immigrant

1. People who immigrated to Canada with relevant post-secondary skills training and/or education, professional credentials and/or work experience, and
2. Who are permanent residents of Canada or new Canadian citizens, and
3. Have lived in Canada for less than ten (10) years.

Selection Process

All nominations are reviewed by an independent selection committee made up of Human Resource executives and/or professionals, and other stakeholders. (Hire Immigrant Ottawa staff members oversee but are not involved in the selection process.)

Nominations are scored against a 40-point system: 10 points for the first four questions. Using the aggregate scores as their primary criteria, the judges then collectively select the recipient organizations by consensus.

Note. Recipient organizations are not chosen for any one specific reason, but rather for their overall policies and practices that create a strong and ongoing commitment to promote the integration of skilled immigrant employees into their organization.

Recipient Benefits

Recipients will receive:

- Employer Excellence Award certificate
- Be profiled on the Hire Immigrants Ottawa website and marketing materials
- Exclusive use of the 2026 Employer Excellence Award logo
- An invitation to participate in cross-cultural sessions, specifically designed to help organizations with workplace enhancement to recruit and retain a diverse staff
- An invitation to attend the Employer Council of Champions Summit

Submitting a nomination

Completed nominations can be submitted electronically by email to:

awards@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca

All nominations must be received by December 11, 2026. A confirmation email will be sent when Hire Immigrants Ottawa receives your completed nomination package.

By submitting a nomination to the 2026 Employer Excellence Awards, your organization grants Hire Immigrants Ottawa the rights, title, and interest to reproduce the work reference in the nomination for media, print, and electronic venues. Hire Immigrants Ottawa will consult with your organization prior to publication.

Questions?

Contact us at: awards@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca or 613-683-3370.

The profiles and videos of past Award recipients are available on the [HIO website](#).

Nomination

The Employer Excellence Award nomination is split into five parts, outlined below. Each part will assist the selection committee understand your organization's Human Resources practices in the recruitment and integration of skilled immigrants.

Under each part is a list of related questions. These are included to provide examples of areas you may wish to discuss in your response that reflect your organization's policies and practices. The questions are optional and only to serve as a guide. No points are deducted for questions that are not answered.

Detailed descriptions of your programs, policies, and practices, can improve the strength of your answer. Example:

Answer: "We use bias free interview methods."

Stronger Answer: "We use bias free interview methods, which include avoiding slang and acronyms in interview questions, asking all interview candidates the same questions, taking a flexible and individualized approach to assessing an applicant's qualifications and skills and creating an interview team to reduce individual biases."

Answers can be provided in point-form or paragraph style. A minimum of 250 words must be provided in each part.

Past Award Winners

If your organization has received a HIO Employer Excellence Award within the past two years, please highlight, throughout your responses to the questions below, any new or enhanced practices, strategies or initiatives implemented since receiving the award. Where applicable, demonstrate how these efforts have further strengthened the recruitment, integration, retention or advancement of newcomer talent.

Part 1: Explain how your organization recruits immigrant employees.

When answering this section, questions to consider may include:

1. What changes have been made to your organization's recruitment practices to attract skilled immigrants? (Examples: Marketing employment opportunities using ethnic directed media, employee referral programs, and recruitment agencies.)
2. What screening methods does your organization use to ensure that the qualified pool of applicants includes skilled immigrants?
3. What steps has your organization taken to create bias free hiring processes?
4. What changes have been made to the interview process to accommodate the cultural differences of job applicants?
5. What resources or support programs does your organization use to recruit and integrate skilled immigrants? (Examples: Agencies serving immigrants, mentoring, internship or bridging programs)
6. What measures does your organization take to recognize international academic and professional qualifications?

Part 2: Explain the onboarding process for immigrant employees.

When answering this section, questions to consider may include:

1. What support is provided to new employees to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to succeed in your organization?
2. Are the job expectations, goals, and performance review systems clearly communicated?
3. Is there an opportunity for skilled immigrants to ask job-related questions or receive feedback? (Examples: One-on-one meetings, mentoring relationships, buddy systems.)
4. What type of training is provided to skilled immigrants? (Examples: On-the-job training, language development, Canadian workplace culture training.)
5. Describe any unique barriers or challenges that skilled immigrants might face in your industry. How does your organization help skilled immigrants overcome these barriers?

Part 3: How does your organization help to maximize the success of immigrant employees?

When answering this section, questions to consider may include:

1. Cultural background may impact how skilled immigrants present themselves at meetings or in the company of management. What steps have been taken to encourage skilled immigrants to contribute their ideas and knowledge?
2. What changes have been made to your organization's policies / procedures to accommodate the cultural differences within your workplace (Example: What changes have been made to your performance review system to recognize cultural differences?)
3. How many skilled immigrants in your organization have been hired or promoted into a management position?
4. Are internal career opportunities clearly communicated? What steps has your organization taken to create bias free internal job postings?
5. What internal/external career development tools are provided to skilled immigrants? (Example: coaching or training)
6. What external education or coaching is offered to employees looking to advance their career?

Part 4: How does your organization promote a diverse and inclusive workplace?

When answering this section, questions to consider may include:

1. How do leaders and managers assist in the creation of an inclusive workplace?
2. What diversity training, awareness campaigns, or other support programs were offered to all employees last year?
3. What accommodation policies and/or practices are in place for employees who may have religious or cultural observances? (Examples: Holidays, prayer rooms, dress code.)
4. How is the cultural diversity of your organization celebrated at workplace social events? (Example: Diversity Days, multicultural pot-lucks, inclusive activities.)
5. Does your corporate social responsibility include cross-cultural activities?

Part 5: How has recruiting immigrant employees improved your organization?

Optional – Please include other supporting information such as testimonials from employees, media stories etc.