

# Leveraging Newcomer Talent to Empower Canada's Workforce

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) Community of Practice (CoP) is a pan-Canadian network for skills and workforce development stakeholders across diverse sectors and industries to connect, share, and learn from each other. As part of the CoP, Research Impact Canada, in collaboration with FSC, is hosting virtual themed Peer Learning Groups to facilitate an open discussion among peers in an informal shared space.

On August 28th 2024, we hosted a Peer Learning Group called *Leveraging Newcomer Talent to Empower Canada's Workforce*. In this session, we discussed how organisations can support the integration of newcomers into the Canadian workforce, examining the impact on employment, skill requirements, and the broader economy. The session began with a presentation by Patrick MacKenzie, CEO of the Immigrant and Employment Council of BC, who shared insights from the FAST program, a national initiative which supports skilled immigrants across multiple sectors.

Participants were invited to join small breakout groups for free-flowing moderated discussions, responding to the question:

***How have you/your organisation worked to support newcomer integration in the workforce? Are there specific strategies, tools, or partnerships that have been particularly effective?***

## WHAT WE HEARD

### **1. More inter-connection within newcomer services would be beneficial to the sector**

- Different organisations focus on various aspects of newcomer integration, from pre-arrival, post-arrival, building networking skills, to leveraging employer networks. Some of the participants shared programs that prioritise bridging programs and bursaries, while others focus on trust-building and cultural fit.
- Having more connection and sharing between these organisations will only benefit everyone's work - linking a clear pathway to meet different needs, reducing duplication, and expanding networks.
- Overall, attendees recognized that integration efforts (at all stages) need to go beyond entry-level roles, with more support for newcomers in executive-level positions.

### **2. Soft skills are crucial for cultural integration**

- Emphasising soft skills is crucial for employment readiness. While technical skills are usually understood to be transferable, understanding and adapting to the Canadian work culture is essential.
- A mindset shift from "cultural fit" to embracing diversity is needed, with a strengths-based approach to job-searching rather than a deficit-based one.

### **3. There is a need for holistic and collaborative approaches**

- There is a strong call for more holistic strategies that involve not just the job-seekers, but also employers and educational institutions. This includes, but is not limited to, creating "ready to go" packages of resumes and references, platforms for newcomers to understand their skills and strengths, and better matching for employers.
- Collaboration between employers, job-seekers, and support organisations like the Immigrant and Employment Council of BC is crucial for creating effective pathways to employment. Wrap-around supports, Work-Integrated Learning opportunities, and mentoring are essential components of this approach.

## WHAT WE HEARD

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### 4. Post-secondary institutions have a role to play in skills development and assessment

- Participants highlighted the role of post-secondary institutions in recognizing and facilitating pathways for newcomers, though there was a sense that this is underutilised in the sector. Integration service providers and educational institutions need to work more closely on credential recognition and skills assessment.

### 5. Newcomer integration into the workforce is a two-way street

- Participants spoke about integration as a two-way street, where both the newcomer and the employer need to be prepared. This includes crafting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training for employers to better integrate newcomers.
- There is also a need to help newcomers understand the Canadian employment landscape, including the prevalence of SMEs as employers.

### 6. Credential recognition is a barrier, but microcredentials can help bridge the gap

- Recognizing unfamiliar credentials and work histories is critical from a policy standpoint. Offering microcredentials as a substitute for traditional credentials can help newcomers better position themselves in the job market.
- Direct referrals from integration service providers to employers were suggested as a way to enhance newcomer employment outcomes.

### 7. Relationship building is key to navigating the hidden job market

- Building and maintaining relationships with employers and other organisations is seen as vital for accessing the hidden job market. Referrals and personal connections play a significant role in job placement for newcomers.

## RESOURCE COMPILATION

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Participants shared the following resources throughout the session. The resources are grouped across different categories.

### 1. Programs and initiatives for newcomer employment

- **Newcomer Employment Champions (NEC) Program**: This program aims to support local employers beyond Cultural Competency Training by giving them the support, resources and practical tools to hire, onboard, and retain newcomers effectively.
- **National Employer Learning Hub**: Compilation of solutions, tools, and resources to support employers in attracting, hiring, training, and retaining qualified and highly skilled immigrant workers, provided by The National Network of Immigrant Employment Councils (IECC) – a collaborative group that aims to assist employers in effectively integrating immigrant talent into the Canadian labour market.
- **TRIEC's Career Advancement for Immigrant Professionals (CAIP) Program**: A collection of free resources with practical steps for managers and immigrant professionals to support more inclusive career advancement. These resources are based on insights gained through the development and delivery of TRIEC's Career Advancement for Immigrant Professionals (CAIP) project
- **Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub (NEH)**: This hub focuses on entrepreneurship as a pathway for newcomers, offering support in innovation and business development.

# RESOURCE COMPILATION

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## 2. Training and capacity building for employers

- **Workplace Inclusion Charter:** This provides modules and training for inclusive hiring practices, which are essential for preparing employers to effectively integrate newcomers. The Workplace Inclusion Charter makes it easy to support the health, success, and retention of your diverse team members.
- **Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT):** ADaPT is a skills development and work placement program aimed at preparing post-secondary graduates and students in their final semester for a changing world of work.
- **Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT):** This tool is designed to support organisations, particularly SMEs, to develop their EDI strategies aligned to their business needs. The DAT offers an opportunity for organisations to examine their policies, processes, and practices and obtain best practices from other organisations in order to develop a strategy that not only complies with legislative requirements but also creates a welcoming and productive workplace.

## 3. Research and publications

- **Canadian Diversity Special Issue: Newcomer Pathways to Employment:** This publication provides in-depth research and case studies on newcomer employment, making it a valuable resource for organisations seeking evidence-based strategies.
- **HBR Article on Collaboration:** This article “*What Today’s Rainmakers Do Differently*”, emphasises the importance of collaboration for achieving goals, relevant to organisations involved in multi-stakeholder efforts to support newcomers.
- **Employer and Employee Perceptions of Microcredentials:** This study evaluates emerging evidence on microcredentials and examines how employers and learners assess their value as a measure of quality of work. It is relevant for organisations exploring alternative credentialing to support newcomer employment, especially in rapidly changing industries.

## 4. Specialised platforms and tools

- **TRIEC Mentoring Partnership:** Provides mentoring tools and resources specifically for immigrants, including webinars, interactive e-learning modules, PDF documents, mentor insights, inspiring mentee interviews, authentic testimonials, and practical tool pages. These resources are geared to offer critical information on Canadian workplace culture, information on job search strategies, and building networks

## 5. Events and networking opportunities

- **Pride at Work Canada Symposium:** SPARK is a transformative half-day symposium bringing together Senior Executives, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) leaders, and Talent Acquisition professionals for shared learning, networking, and innovation.

## JOIN US!

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