



The Employer's Roadmap

UPDATED: MARCH 2016

HIRING AND RETAINING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS IN HAMILTON



Workforce Planning Hamilton
Planification de main d'oeuvre de Hamilton



Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Acknowledgements

This is an updated publication based on the **Regional Employer Roadmap for Hamilton** produced by The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC). Originated in 2009 and developed by Aurelia Tokaci for TASC, The Employer's Roadmap to Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers was created with the support of the Foreign Credentials Recognition Office (FCRO) of Citizen and Immigration Canada (CIC). This roadmap is a practical guide for employers in small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and provides information about practices, policies, and programs at a local and national level.

The information included in this guide is accurate as of the date of publication. While every attempt has been made to all current relevant information, there may be other resources available for employers not listed here.

Contact Workforce Planning Hamilton at 905-521-5777 to obtain this report in a larger print format.



Date of last update: March 2016

HAMILTON



Hamilton is part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area, the most densely populated region in Canada with over 11 million people. Home to a very intense and diversified economy, the region is responsible for generating close to **\$70 billion in GDP**.

Demographic projections over the next 30 years include a population **growth by almost 4 million people** for this area, which will drive an important increase and diversification of economic activities, and the creation of jobs worth approximately **\$1.7 million annually**.

City of Hamilton Supports Diversity

The attraction and retention of an increasingly skilled and diverse population has been a major priority for the city in the past five years. The City of Hamilton led the process that established the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC), a local network

of leaders from various sectors collaborating in the development and implementation of a made-in-Hamilton Immigration Strategy for the attraction, retention, and economic integration of immigrants.

About the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC)

HIPC is a community-based group whose mandate is to help newcomers feel welcome in Hamilton. Since 2009, HIPC has made significant progress strengthening community partnerships by creating strong links for newcomers to their new community - Hamilton. HIPC brings together leaders from a number of sectors - including housing, health, employment, education, language training, research, settlement services, local government, businesses, community-based organization and the media – and truly leverages the collective power of the local community.

About HIPC's Employment Working Group

The Employment Working Group works to better support and integrate immigrants to employment. The group is comprised of employment service providers who provide support to employers to meet their recruitment challenges and who focus on introducing employers to the valuable talent pool that is immigrants in our community. This group has been working for over five years on issues related to the integration of immigrants in the local economy.

As our labour force ages and skills shortages emerge across our local economy, the meaningful and efficient integration of immigrants into the labour market gains greater momentum. Making the most of immigrants' skills, abilities, experience and connections is not merely an altruistic imperative but an economic one.

About Workforce Planning Hamilton

Workforce Planning Hamilton is a community-based organization that gathers local labour market information and works with partners with our community on workforce development initiatives. WPH recognizes the value that immigrants bring to our local economy and partners with HIPC to promote the skills and talents of newcomers.

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1 WHY THIS ROADMAP?

The world around us is changing: increased globalization and labour mobility translate into an increasingly diverse customer base. Placed in the heart of the most dynamic economic region (the Golden Horseshoe Area), Hamilton is characterized by great demographic diversity. With close to 25% of all its residents born outside Canada, Hamilton continues to be the third most diverse city in Canada, after Toronto and Vancouver.

If you are a business operating in Hamilton or anywhere in the Golden Horseshoe Area, you know that your bottom-line and the economic vibrancy of the region are highly dependent on an increasingly diverse immigrant population.

Internationally trained individuals (ITIs) are recruited by the Canadian government for their skills, experience, and ability to adapt in a new country. A large number of recent immigrants are highly trained professionals and trades people, have higher levels of education compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, and are in the “prime working age” of 25 – 45.¹ Thus they are a valuable source of talent.

This document is designed for employers and offers information and connects you with the appropriate programs, tools, and resources to support your efforts to hire and retain world-class skills and talent.

1.1 BENEFITS OF HIRING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED INDIVIDUALS

Whether you are looking for talent and skills or are considering expanding your customer base or market share, consider some of the many benefits of adding internationally trained individuals to your workforce. Internationally trained individuals:

- Have international skills, experience, creativity, new ways of thinking, and fresh ideas for solving problems;
- Are dedicated and hardworking with a strong work ethic;
- Have the determination to prove their skills and to succeed;
- Can help organizations compete in a global market;
- Help your business better serve a diverse customer base; and
- Can assist in future recruitment efforts.

1 Statistics Canada (2003): Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects.

2 OVERCOMING BARRIERS

As an employer, you may be concerned about how an internationally trained individual will fit in your organization. In fact the most common concerns for employers are:

- Understanding and assessing foreign education and credentials;
- Canadian experience;
- Language skills; and
- Cultural differences.

With information and supports outlined in this Roadmap, these concerns need not become barriers.

2.1 EDUCATION AND CREDENTIALS

If you are an employer or HR manager looking for specific answers on how education from overseas compares with Canadian standards, consult the website of the [Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials](#) (CICIC), which has a wide range of information and resources on:

- Assessment of foreign credentials;
- Recognition of qualifications;
- Prior learning assessment and recognition; and
- Comparative evaluation services in Canada.

While education systems are different in other parts of the world, it is important to understand that these differences are not judgments about “higher/ lower” standards. Rather, they are about **different** standards and contexts. In fact, there are many reputable schools around the world. The [Times Higher Education](#) (THE) World Education Rankings offers a comprehensive ranking of the Top 400 universities around the world. Educational institutions from Singapore, Hong Kong, China, and many European countries have been consistently ranked above many reputable Canadian universities. The key for Canadian employers is to understand the overseas credentials of the prospective employee.

Occupation-specific regulatory bodies oversee the credential recognition, entry, right to practice, and licensing for the regulated occupations, but only 20% of all occupations in Canada are regulated. For all non-regulated occupations in Ontario, the assessment of foreign credentials and education is performed by specialized organizations:

- [International Credential Assessment Service of Canada](#);
- [Comparative Education Service](#); and
- [World Education Services](#).

An education assessment by any of the organizations listed above will assist you in understanding the qualifications of applicants trained outside Canada and can inform your hiring decisions.

2.2 RECRUITMENT CONCERNS

Hiring against core job requirements is the basis of sound recruitment. Hiring only those who have “Canadian experience” limits your choices and prevents you from accessing a pool of highly qualified candidates.

Requiring “Canadian experience” may be relevant in some cases where certain positions require the employee to have demonstrated knowledge and experience with certain codes, standards, or scope of practice. However, it is not always a bona fide requirement, and employers requesting “Canadian experience” can be legally challenged to prove the relevancy of the requirement for the job.

Employers should carefully consider and articulate the actual skills, knowledge, and competencies required for any position. What is it you are really looking for when you ask for “Canadian experience”?

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the non-recognition of skills and experience of immigrants costs the Canadian economy as much as \$5-billion annually.

“The recognition of peoples’ experience and learning credentials and the transfer of credentials within and between educational institutions, Canadian provinces/territories and workplaces remains central to making the most of our labour force in the face of global competition.”

Source: The Conference Board of Canada Exploring the Learning Recognition Gap in Canada, 2001

2.3 LANGUAGE SKILLS

Language proficiency required to perform many occupations has been already assessed and benchmarked using the [Canadian Language Benchmarks](#) (CLB). This is a practical, fair, and reliable national standard for second language proficiency with a wide applicability in educational, training, community, and workplace settings. Most communities have a [Language Assessment Centre](#) that can assess the language proficiency of your candidates.

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks provides a downloadable series of “Can Do Checklists” for each level of language competency. These checklists can be used for needs assessment, goal setting, or self-assessment in relation to language learning.

For more information, contact: YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services
25 Main Street West, Suite 105, Hamilton, ON L8P 1H1
Tel: 905-526-8452

Other useful Language Assessment Tools include:

- [Test of English as a Foreign Language](#)
- [Test of English for International Communication](#)

2.4 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

A global economy requires global competencies. The diversity of your employees, when properly nurtured, may provide you with a great competitive advantage and connections to new markets. Culturally healthy organizations:

- value and measure diversity;
- address cultural challenges and concerns appropriately;
- integrate diversity in the organizational culture; and
- have policies and procedures that reflect cultural diversity.

Cultures are not homogeneous structures but dynamic, ever-changing systems, made up of many different individuals, each with different upbringings, experiences, abilities, skills, and perspectives. Cultural differences can be explained through a variety of systems that offer broad insights into some of the characteristics of different groups and cultures. Learning about other cultures will assist you to efficiently use the creative potential of your workforce, while better addressing the expectations of your customers.

For assistance, contact: [Hamilton’s Centre For Civic Inclusion](#) at 905-297-4694.

3 HIRING AND INTEGRATING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS

As an employer or HR Manager, you are already familiar with the steps for success in the hiring process. This Roadmap offers you some tips so that you and your organization are better equipped to welcome internationally trained individuals into your workplace.

Figure 1 (below) outlines the different steps involved in hiring and integrating internationally trained individuals.

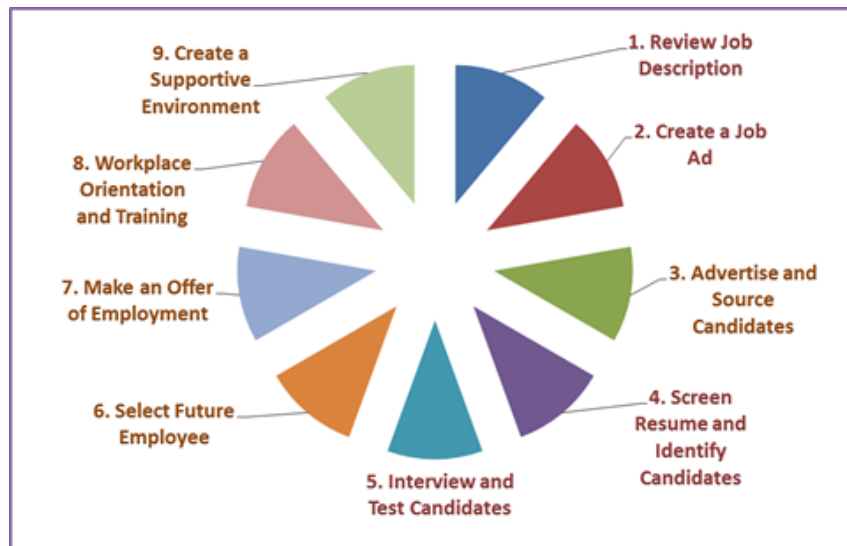


Figure 1 – The Hiring and Integration Process

These nine steps are explained in the following section, under the broad categories of:

Recruitment

- 1. Review Job Description
- 2. Create Job Ad
- 3. Advertise and Source Candidates

Selection

- 4. Screen Resumes and Identify Candidates
- 5. Interview and Test Candidates
- 6. Select Future Employee

Hiring

- 7. Make an Offer of Employment

Orientation and Training

- 8. Workplace Orientation and Training

Integration and Retention

- 9. Create a Supportive Environment

3.1 RECRUITMENT

When recruiting candidates for a job vacancy, you need to consider the job description and job posting as well as the process and sources you will use to find the prospective candidates.

The Job Description and Job Posting

Finding the best candidate for your job vacancy starts with a good job description. Your industry association and the [National Occupational Classifications](#) may be able to provide assistance in defining the job you want to fill. The manner in which the position is described, the stated selection criteria, the tone and content of the job posting, and even the choice of imagery (if any) will significantly impact the attractiveness of the position for potential applicants. Any aspect that is exclusionary (such as the requirement for “Canadian experience”) or communicates the message that certain demographics or socio-cultural characteristics are preferred will limit the range of applicants.

Are you recruiting for skills?

Check the job posting to ensure that it is barrier-free:

- ✓ Distinguish between essential criteria and those that are merely desirable
 - ✓ Distinguish between skills and attributes
 - ✓ Avoid exclusionary and/or ambiguous language, or jargon
- ✓ Does not use demographic or socio-culturally biased expectations

Finding Candidates

There are many strategies to communicate job vacancies and reach out to appropriate audiences. The interactive website, hireimmigrants.ca, is a great place to start with a wide range of general tools and information on barrier-free recruitment and hiring.

Local Sources for Internationally Trained Workers

There are many highly skilled internationally trained individuals already living in our region and ready to work, including:

- New or recent immigrants to Canada;
- Refugees;
- Canadians that received their education outside of Canada;
- Foreign students studying in Canada; and
- Temporary foreign workers employed in Canada.

To get introduced to some of these qualified people, meet your own temporary labour needs, or test out the skills and abilities of these newcomers, consider an introductory program before making that ultimate hiring decision. These programs, often available through local community-based organizations or post-secondary institutions, might include:

1. Internships
2. Co-op or student placements
3. Volunteer opportunities
4. Mentoring
5. Job Trials or Bridging.

For example, the Ontario government supports programs that “bridge” internationally trained individuals to occupations in their field—providing training that enhances skills and addresses identified gaps. Such bridging programs are usually highly structured and occupation-specific and may help internationally trained individuals obtain required licensing.

[Bridging programs](#) are delivered as partnerships between employers, universities, occupational regulatory bodies and community organizations. An integral component of all bridging programs is clinical or workplace exposure. Bridging programs offer you a unique opportunity to assess potential job candidates while they attend a placement with your company.

Employment Ontario and bridging programs offer a variety of services that benefit employers, including:

- Training subsidies;
- Co-op, internship, volunteering, and job trials; and
- HR-related advice, resources and training.

Contact the following organizations to find out about the bridging programs that they are currently offering:

- [CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses](#) | 905-521-1777
- [YWCA Hamilton](#) | 905-522-9922
- [Mohawk College](#) | 905-575-2177

If you're ready to hire for a specific position, consider advertising in local ethnic media publications and websites like [Magnet](#) or using social media. The following list of **local community organizations** specialize in immigrant-specific employment and bridging services:

- City of Hamilton Career Development Centre | 905-546-2424 ext. 2695
- [Collège Boréal](#) | 905-777-1562 or 905-777-1JOB
- [Employment Hamilton](#) | 905-522-4902
- [Goodwill Career Centre](#) | 905-526-8482
- [Mohawk College](#) | 905-575-2177
- [PATH Employment Services](#) | 905-528-6611
- [Immigrant Working Centre](#) | 905-529-5209
- [VPI inc](#) | 1-888-336-9550
- [Wesley Urban Ministries](#) | 905-528-5629
- [YMCA Employment Services](#) | 905-540-9679
- [YWCA Hamilton](#) | 905-522-9922
- YMCA Employment Services - Waterdown | 905-690-9927

Overseas Sources for Internationally Trained Workers

If you experience difficulty filling your vacancies in Canada, you may want to seek candidates from overseas. Recruiting skills from outside of Canada can be an essential part of your business strategy. This potential labour pool can help fill labour shortages when Canadians and permanent residents are not available.

Several government programs can help you recruit internationally trained workers outside of Canada.

Federal Skilled Worker Program - Express Entry

Skilled workers are people with professional work experience who are chosen as permanent residents based on their ability to contribute to the Canadian economy. As of January 1, 2015, potential candidates interested in applying to the Federal Skilled Worker Program must go through the [Express Entry](#) system. The Federal Skilled Worker Program uses six selection factors to assess immigration applications: education, language skills, experience, age, arranged employment, and adaptability.

As a Canadian employer, you can hire Express Entry candidates to meet your labour needs when you are not able to find Canadians or permanent residents to fill job vacancies.

You can use the same recruiting and hiring practices you use now. You have access to candidates through [Canada's Job Bank](#) or private sector job boards and [Provincial Nominee Programs](#) (PNPs) in some cases.

Employers will be required to demonstrate that you are unable to find Canadians or permanent residents to fill the job and document your efforts in a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). A copy of the form may be found on the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) (IRCC) website. You may wish to seek professional assistance to complete this form.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program

The [Temporary Foreign Worker Program](#) (TFWP) allows employers to hire foreign nationals to fill temporary labour and skill shortages when qualified Canadian citizens or permanent residents are not available. This program also requires a [Labour Market Impact Assessment](#) (LMIA).

Canadian Experience Class

You may come across resumes from temporary foreign workers or international students who are already in Canada, working or attending educational programs. International students can be an excellent source of motivated and creative skilled labour, adding a global perspective to your workplace. They are allowed to work part-time while attending school and may be eligible to stay in Canada for up to three years after graduation. You can find these students through the career centre of your local college or university. Make sure that the student you intend to hire is permitted to work (has a work permit). Consult the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) (IRCC) website to learn more about this class of worker.

3.2 SELECTION

The selection process is when you narrow down the qualified candidates, first as you review their resumes and cover letters, and then through interviewing and testing. Here are some tips for making the most out of your selection process so that you don't miss out on great candidates:

- Assess the candidates' knowledge, skills and experience against well-articulated job requirements;
- Check your perceptions when you see "foreign" names;
- Focus on content versus format—look for skills and competencies;
- Recognize that gaps in work history may be due to immigration or licensing transitions;
- Consider more than just Canadian work experience or education;
- Be aware of any biases (conscious and unconscious);
- Be culturally sensitive to the responses and behaviours of the candidate;
- Apply each requirement consistently to all candidates;
- Assess the candidates' results, not style; and
- Listen to what the candidate is saying and don't get distracted by "foreign" accents.

Being aware of differences in style and presentation, and your own reactions, will help you make an informed decision and prevent a missed opportunity to hire a qualified person. Consider the services offered by specialized community organizations (outlined in the previous section) to assist you in eliminating bias and selecting the candidate with the best skills for the job.

Part of your selection will include employment-related background checks. Remember that newcomers to Canada may not have Canadian work references; however, they might be able to provide contacts for other type of references within Canada, such as a settlement counselor or a teacher. These references can provide relevant information related to some attributes of your candidate, including punctuality, determination or initiative and other important "soft skills."

Some candidates may provide you with letters of reference or reference contacts from abroad. If you need translation support, check with local settlement organizations for international translation and interpretation services.

And if you are still not sure how the candidate's education compares to Canadian levels, ask the candidate to produce an Education Assessment from one of Ontario's [specialized credential assessment services](#).

3.3 HIRING

So you've identified your preferred candidate and now it's time to prepare the contract and make the offer.

When making the offer of employment, take the time to explain the immediate and future expectations of the position, including wages and benefits, reporting structure, probationary timelines, and potential opportunities for advancement. Offer time enough for the newly hired employee to review the employment contract/agreement before signing it and then review the key elements in person, being open to answer any questions.

3.4 ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

A strong orientation and training process is critical to the retention of new employees. Studies have shown that employees make a decision whether or not to stay with an organization within the first few months of their employment.

There are many positive steps you can take to welcome your new employee:

- ✓ **Provide an orientation package that includes:**
 - General background information on your organization
 - Names and contact numbers
 - Current organizational and personnel policies and procedures
 - Health and safety requirements
 - Emergency and security procedures

- A glossary with important terminology and acronyms
 - Training, development and support services offered
 - Reporting relationships
 - Wage structure and benefits
 - Job description with duties and responsibilities
 - Hours of work (including breaks and meals)
- ✓ **Have an established Day One welcome and orientation process.**
 - ✓ **Introduce the new employee to the people he/she will be working with and explain how they will work and interact with one another.**
 - ✓ **Assign someone to be available to respond to their questions.**

Since safety regulations are different in other countries, it is critical that your workplace has a well-articulated Health and Safety Orientation Program. A good understanding of roles and responsibilities in regards to safety is imperative for both the employer and the employee. Visit the website of Ontario's [Ministry of Labour](#) for more information.

3.5 INTEGRATION AND RETENTION

Your employees are one of your greatest resources. Staff turnover has a negative impact at many levels, including production, performance, and efficiency. A successful retention program saves you costs associated with continuous recruitment, hiring, and training of new people.

The success of your retention strategies is dependent upon a number of factors such as:

- A well-articulated processes for recruitment, hiring, and training;
- Effective matching of job requirements with skills and abilities;
- Opportunities for continuous training;
- Fair opportunities for advancement and promotion;
- Fair and competitive wages;
- A competitive Extended Benefits Plan;
- Flexibility to schedule and accommodate diverse needs; and
- A culture of respecting and embracing differences rather than just tolerating them.

Consult with other companies in your sector to find out what they are doing to increase staff retention rates. Companies that have managed to integrate diversity well report a number of benefits at different levels, including:

- Increased productivity;
- Reduced turn-over and absenteeism rates;
- Expansion into new local and global markets; and
- Improved corporate image and reputation.

One tool for becoming an inclusive and respectful workplace is to include training on diversity and cultural awareness. Cultural awareness training is highly effective when implemented at all levels of the organization and supported by policies and decisions that embrace and promote diversity in all its forms.

For assistance in this area, contact:
[Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion](#)
 905-297-4694

4 LEGAL MATTERS FOR EMPLOYERS

4.1 ALTERNATIVES TO LICENSING

There are often many non-regulated occupations that assist or work closely with regulated practitioners. Newcomers to Canada may welcome an opportunity to work in an “assisting” occupation while they pursue their registration with a regulatory body. This is a win-win situation, as employers can hire a motivated worker with great expertise as they qualify for licensure, registration, or recognition.

Only 20% of all occupations in Canada are regulated and require a license/registration with a regulatory body. Here are some important points to note:

- Some occupations are regulated in certain provinces or territories and are not regulated in others or are regulated in a different way.
- In regulated occupations, it is illegal to use the title of the occupation without being registered with the regulatory body.
- Some occupations are not regulated by law, but may have voluntary professional bodies (i.e. where registration/membership is not mandatory).
- In some fields, employees in non-regulated professions can do some of the work a licensed professional can do, usually under the supervision of someone who is licensed.
- There are usually a number of assisting, non-regulated occupations associated with regulated occupations. For example, the occupation of pharmacist is regulated; however a pharmacist technician in Ontario is not. The [National Occupation Classification](#) (NOC) may provide a useful guide to identifying associated occupations.

There may be times when a candidate has the skills, education, and experience required to perform a regulated occupation but he or she is not yet registered with the regulatory body. Consider hiring such a candidate to fill a vacancy in a related non- regulated position to build your staffing pool.

4.2 LEGISLATION

Employers and employees have both rights and responsibilities. Knowing your legal responsibilities as an employer is important to the process of managing your workforce. It is equally important to understand and apply legislation correctly and to communicate it consistently throughout the organization. Be sure to stay current with Ontario’s Employment Standards.

A diverse workforce may prompt additional employer responsibilities related to accommodation. Consult the [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) website for more information on the duty to accommodate.

An employee’s rights to accommodation must be balanced with an employer’s right to run a productive workplace. An employer has a duty to accommodate the specific needs of employees so that they can perform to the best of their potential. However, the duty to accommodate is not unlimited.

5 **USEFUL EMPLOYER RESOURCES**

5.1 FEDERAL RESOURCES

[Canadian Human Rights Act](#)

[Canada Labour Code](#)

[Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#)

5.2 PROVINCIAL RESOURCES

[Employment Equity Act](#)

[Employment Ontario](#)

[Global Experience Ontario](#)

[Labour Market Information](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

[Ontario Bridge Training Programs](#)

[Ontario Employment Standards Act](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Workforce Planning Boards](#)

5.3 LOCAL RESOURCES

[Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council](#)

[Workforce Planning Hamilton](#)

5.4 OTHER RESOURCES

[The Employer's Roadmap to Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers](#)

[Magnet](#)

