
**A Comprehensive Career Assessment and
Planning Service Model for BC's Skilled
Immigrants**

**Burnaby School District 41
Adult and Continuing Education**

for

**The BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal
and Women's Services**

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Executive Summary

The Burnaby Adult and Continuing Education Division, School District #41 is pleased to submit this research report and the program model, Comprehensive Assessment and Career Planning Services for BC's Skilled Immigrants. While skilled immigrants are recognized as a valued driver of provincial economy and an invaluable human asset to the province's businesses and employers, there is little specific and directed service provided to allow for, and efficiently generate, their rapid attachment to the labour force. In fact, in recent years specific bridging services and labour attachment initiatives have been reduced by federal and provincial policy and service delivery changes.

The objectives of this research project are twofold:

1. To research and identify models and best practices of career assessment and planning services that integrate the needs of immigrant professionals, employers, and professional associations.
2. To develop a comprehensive career assessment and planning model that can be incorporated in whole or in part by the multiple stakeholders working with skilled immigrants.

Key research findings gathered from surveys and consultations with employers, service providers and skilled immigrants have identified many of the career planning and assessment service and resource gaps currently faced by BC's skilled immigrant job seekers. Most notably service providers and skilled immigrants identified:

- the lack of resources specifically designed for this group
- a lack in available training to service providers to more effectively understand and meet the specific needs of this group
- a lack in consistent and effective skilled immigrant job search skills programming
- a lack of time, resources and techniques to devote to building more connections with employers and the professional community
- a lack of an accepted and systematic approach to moving skilled immigrants through the steps from English acquisition to a meaningful contribution of their skills in the workforce
- the time wasted due to the difficulty skilled immigrants have in locating services and resources

Employers clearly declared the value of skilled immigrant workers across occupations and identified the following areas as employment barriers:

- a lack of understanding of the labour market particularly, information related to the needs of the employer;
- a lack of local experience;
- an inability of skilled immigrants to adequately express their understanding of the employer's needs and their occupational suitability due to inadequate English; and
- a lack of a culturally acceptable manner of presenting themselves and their job search documents.

All the above identified gaps and difficulties were considered and have been addressed by at least one component of the Career Assessment and Planning model presented in this report. This model has several key features which meet the real needs of the skilled immigrant job seeker.

This “three tracked” model recognizes that skilled immigrants land in BC with diverse needs and levels of English, career clarity and job search ability. This model allows skilled immigrants to enroll in the component that best meets their needs and to continue to the next track only if required.

The model has been designed with not only employment but “self-sufficiency” as a goal. Skilled immigrants will complete this model employed or “self-sufficient”; they will have a career path, effective job search documents and “know-how”, a network, the skills to grow their network, continued access to resources and, most importantly, the confidence in themselves and their ability to search for employment now and in the future.

The model is flexible and accessible in its delivery; a six week job search program (Track I) can be run at least 7 times in a year offering multiple start dates. The six week assisted job search (Track II) operates on a continuous intake model which prepared applicants can begin at any time.

In order to assess and develop strategies for increased employer connection and involvement, employers were surveyed regarding their role in assisting skilled immigrants to meaningfully attach to the labour market. Almost 40% responded that skilled immigrant attachment to the workforce is an important Human Resource issue. However, only 16.7% have practicum or internships in place and only 8.3% of respondents have mentoring programs in place. This data indicates both an awareness of the need for increased employer involvement and a willingness to consider and develop initiatives.

In providing recommendations to accomplish this, it was recognized that both employers and service providers are often limited in resources, personnel and, in the case of employers, by the constraints of union and other workplace policies. Therefore, specific recommendations have been offered at three levels of time and resource commitment.

It is the intent of this report that these recommended strategies and the manner in which they have been presented will facilitate consideration and the planning of initiatives related to the skilled immigrant population.

Introduction

While it is widely recognized that skilled immigrants are an important, if not critical, component of BC's human capital, a comprehensive and consistent career planning and assessment service model has yet to be developed or delivered in the province. In fact, due to restrictions in program delivery funding (both contract and core funding) and changes in federal program policy such as limitations on work experience, services for skilled immigrants are declining. In addition, skilled immigrants seeking career planning and assessment services are faced with a disparate array of training and employment assistance programs, many of which are tailored to entry-level occupations. Often these programs deliver the targeted employment outcomes; however, they fail to address the participants' essential requirement of entering into skilled or professional employment, and therefore fail to capitalize on the inherent human capital of this population.

All too often skilled immigrants find themselves placed in "general" job search programs for immigrants. The information is not specific enough to satisfy the unique and complex issues the skilled immigrant seeker faces. Also, very often, skilled immigrants "jump the gun", skipping English classes to immediately join a job search program; a choice that is often made on the false hope that the class will get them a job related to their field. In the model this project proposes, attaining the level of English required to conduct a professional job search is the foundation. It is not until this level of English has been achieved that a skilled immigrant job seeker should begin a professional job search. A professional job search attempted with insufficient language skills will be a frustrating and likely unsuccessful pursuit; valuable time and financial supports will have been wasted, often forcing the skilled immigrant into a "survival" job. The survival job trap is hard to escape from and better avoided altogether. Early intervention and assessment of language and occupational skills and qualifications, is the cornerstone to the development of a career path destined for success.

Lastly, skilled immigrants are not a homogenous and easily definable population. Rather, BC's skilled immigrants are characterized more by their unique professional situations and experiences, diversity of ethno-cultural backgrounds, varying English language capabilities, and diverse understanding of Canadian workplace cultures and professional norms, etc. Therefore, in developing an applicable and effective model of service for this group, the following considerations are key: flexibility, individual service needs and requirements, varying occupational entry requirements, language skills, and individual capability for quick integration into the workforce.

Objectives

In order to address the specific needs of skilled immigrants in a comprehensive career planning model it is important to first understand the requirements, experiences, and practices of the key stakeholders: skilled immigrants, employers, and the community of service providers. Their experience and understandings of these issues will not only shed light on the successful components of labour market initiatives already in place and identify gaps in the delivery of career planning models, but will provide the foundation for the development of the model presented in this report.

The specific objectives of this project are:

1. To research and identify a comprehensive model of career assessment and planning services that will integrate the needs of immigrant professionals, employers, and professional associations.
2. To create a model that can be incorporated in whole or in part by the multiple stakeholders working with skilled immigrants.

In addition to the above overriding objectives the projects' further aims include:

- To develop a model that can be replicated across jurisdictions.
- To provide curriculum recommendations for job search programs to the skilled immigrant.
- To recommend strategies and methods of direct employer involvement to enhance labour market attachment of skilled immigrants.

Research Methodology

As outlined in the initial proposal, this project is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Furthermore, the project is cross-sectional (point in time) rather than longitudinal. The research and development for the project incorporated four key steps: 1. a review of primary and secondary literature; 2. inquiries and interviews with employed and unemployed skilled immigrants; 3. one-to-one consultations with service providers and educational institutions serving skilled immigrants; and 4. a survey of Lower Mainland employers. Specific steps and procedures for these four steps are outlined below.

Literature Review:

- Research and review of Government, service providers, community services, professional associations print and web-based material on existing procedures and practices relating to career planning and assessment for the skilled immigrants.
- Review of program models and skilled immigrant services external to BC.

40 Interviews with working and non-working skilled immigrants:

- Interview candidates were identified from a combination of Burnaby School District English as a second language classes, service providers' employment and career planning programs (graduates and current participants were included), community agency referrals, and direct referrals from skilled immigrants participating in the project.
- Participants were selected on a first come first served basis.
- A set questionnaire (Appendix 2) was developed for collection of data and descriptive information, and all participants were presented with the same questions.
- All participants received the questionnaires in advance in order to facilitate the interviews, by e-mail or fax.
- Telephone interviews and questionnaire transcriptions were conducted by the researchers.

11 one to one consultations with educational institutes and service providers to skilled immigrants:

- Interview candidates were identified from the BC Lower Mainland community of immigrant service providing agencies, college training or adult education departments, private employment and training institutes.

- All participants were selected for direct experience working with skilled immigrants.
- A set questionnaire (Appendix 3) was developed for collection of data and descriptive information, and all participants were presented with the same questions.
- Questionnaires were specifically directed to program delivery level staff.
- All participants received the questionnaires in advance in order to facilitate the interviews, by e-mail or fax.
- Telephone interviews and questionnaire transcriptions were conducted by the researchers.

Employer survey:

- 200 employers were identified as recipients for the survey, spanning a broad cross section of industries, public and private sector organizations, and trade and professional occupations.
- Geographically candidates were identified from within BC, predominantly from the Lower Mainland (as outlined in the proposal).
- Candidates were selected randomly from BC employer and company directories.
- All candidates were contacted by telephone for identification of an appropriate recipient (those with hiring experience or in a human resources capacity) and for confirmation of contact information.
- A set questionnaire (Appendix 1) was developed for collection of data and descriptive information, and all participants were presented with the same questions.
- A set letter of introduction establishing the purpose of the project, contact information, and a confidentiality agreement was sent to all survey recipients.
- Surveys and the accompanying letter of introduction were e-mailed or faxed based on the availability of contact information or the stated preference of recipients.
- Responses were returned by e-mail or fax.

Two methods of analysis were used in analyzing the results of the questionnaires. Quantitative data were obtained from the responses and input into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted on the scale items to compare frequencies, means and dispersion. Written responses to open-ended questions were compiled for each question, and common themes from these responses were developed through content analysis. The themes reflect both positive and negative perceptions/attitudes. Through qualitative analysis, these themes can assist in the positive reinforcement of certain practices, while they can also assist in the identification of certain gaps or disconnects that may require further research or enhancement.

The research involving human subjects maintained both confidentiality and anonymity of their participation. Free and informed consent was obtained from the subjects by letter and verbal approval. All subjects were provided the opportunity and decision whether to participate or not. There was minimal to no risk to the human subjects in participating in this research, and the benefits of the research will aid future skilled immigrants in achieving employment success. Only the results of the research will be shared with Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services, while the original data will be kept confidential with the researchers.

Defining the Skilled Immigrant

Of course, defining the “skilled immigrant” is nearly an impossible task as there is possibly no segment of the population more diverse. In fact, this diversity is one of the main causes of the difficulty experienced in developing resources, services and programs for the skilled immigrant population. Each new immigrant is an individual arriving with a unique and complex combination of skills, education, experience, language ability, family and financial support, cultural differences, motivation, etc.; although the list is potentially endless, it is important to be aware of some of the more commonly shared characteristics of the newly arrived skilled immigrant and the barriers to employment that they face. And that, regardless of where the newcomer emigrates -- from Britain or Vietnam – the vast majority require some form of assistance to attach to the local labour market.

Generally, skilled immigrants share the following characteristics:

- A combination of marketable skills and experience
- Optimism about their future career prospects in Canada
- A positive work ethic
- A willingness to enter their field in BC at any level
- A commitment and motivation to work in and contribute to their field of expertise
- A desire to learn about their field of expertise in Canada
- Unemployed for the first time in their working career

Barriers Faced by Skilled Immigrants:

As mentioned above, this population is extremely diverse. Regardless of country of origin the skilled immigrant is hindered by at least one of these barriers and, in some cases, by several of these barriers. To develop an understanding of the skilled immigrant, it is important to have a sense of the barriers they face. These barriers include:

- Lack of knowledge of how their career or occupational field is practiced locally
- Difficulty identifying transferable skills

- Lack of awareness of employability skills sought by Canadian employers
- Lack of knowledge of the current labour market
- Lack of information about Canadian job search etiquette and the necessity to directly contact employers
- Lack of Canadian-style job search skills
- No “Canadian experience” or references
- Few or no local contacts in their profession. Immigrants have left their professional network behind in their country of origin and are unsure how to build a new local network
- Little or no recognition of their foreign experience and / their credentials
- Difficulty conducting occupational research due to inadequate English or a culturally different style of communication
- A general lack of confidence

A Complicated and Frustrating Job Search:

Lacking “Canadian style” job search techniques, the newly landed skilled immigrant typically applies to ads in the newspaper and wait for responses from employers. After several months of flooding the market with their resumes, they are confused and frustrated by the lack of response to their applications. With limited resources and without a network of professionals in their new environment, it is very difficult for newcomers to learn about the local labour market and where they should go to look for work. Many do not know why they have been unsuccessful in their search for work. If they do manage to speak with professionals in their field, they may become aware of obstacles such as:

- hiring practices which exclude applicants with no Canadian or local work experience
- little or no recognition of education and training from outside of Canada
- hesitation to hire people with English as a Second Language
- preferences for hiring local graduates
- insistence that "new hires" have a BC Grade 12, even for non-professional work and
- ineffective or incomplete job search documentation.

Often, by the time skilled immigrants find their way to some form of job search assistance, they have lived in Canada for several months or longer, and many are close to giving up. The effect of this time lost can be devastating; savings have been spent, morale and confidence have been significantly depleted, and skills have become dated. Throughout our research we encountered many frustrated and disillusioned people who feel there is no place in BC for them to contribute their skills and experience meaningfully, despite the expectation of opportunity prior to immigration. While this is beyond the scope of this project, there is value indicated in researching to assess the labor market information skilled immigrants are receiving at the immigration level.

Research Findings – Employer Surveys

Employer Survey Individual Item Results:

The survey instrument (Appendix 1) for employer information has been categorized into four main sections: A) Company Information, B) Perceptions, C) Experience and/or Barriers to Hiring Skilled Immigrants, and D) Interest in Developing Further Labour Market Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants. Some sections use a 5-point Likert-style scale with 1 being very important and 5 being not important. Other sections use yes/no and true/false responses to gain information along with general comment sections.

Frequencies and some descriptive statistics are reported for the individual items. Within each section, both quantitative and qualitative findings are identified. Qualitative analysis was conducted on the responses to the open ended questions. Themes are identified for the responses to the open ended questions. As with any self-reporting survey, variances may occur in the interpretation of each question.

Company Information:

Figure 5.1 indicates the size (number of employees) and frequency of the organizations responding to the Employer Survey.

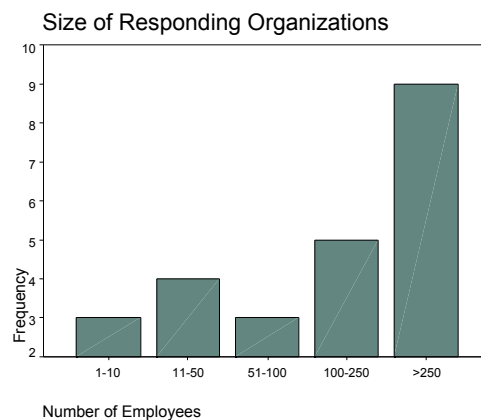


Figure 5.1: Size of Responding Organizations

The majority of the respondents (58.3%) were organizations with greater than 100 employees. Of the 200 surveys distributed, there were a total of 24 respondents, or a 12% response rate. Although the rate of response in general is good, the overall sample is too small to test reliability of the survey itself. Responses to the individual questions may actually be magnified by a larger sample.

Employers provided responses as to the various occupations that characterize their organizations. A representative listing of these occupations follows.

- Office administration
- Technical trade workers
- Coaches
- Caregivers
- Glaziers
- Professionals (engineering, computing)
- Sales positions
- Woodworkers
- Manufacturing positions
- Visual arts specialist
- Educators
- Researchers
- Electricians
- Telecommunication workers
- Scientists
- Plumbers
- Food, beverage & housekeeping positions
- Environmental consultants

Employer Perceptions:

Employer perceptions of skilled immigrant employees in the organization are indicated in Figures 5.2-5.4. Employers responded to a true/false set of questions concerning whether or not skilled immigrants are currently employed or if more will be employed in the future, and whether or not the skills and experience of the skilled immigrants are sufficient for the organization/industry in which they are employed.

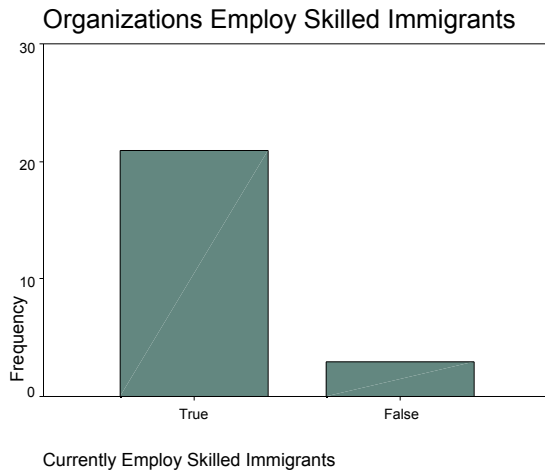


Figure 5.2 Organizations Employing Skilled Immigrants

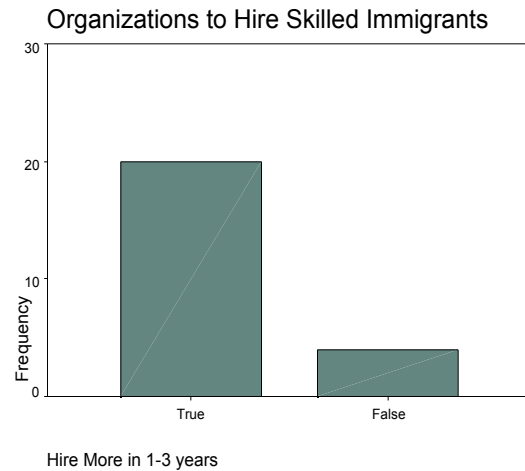


Figure 5.3 Organizations to Hire Skilled Immigrants

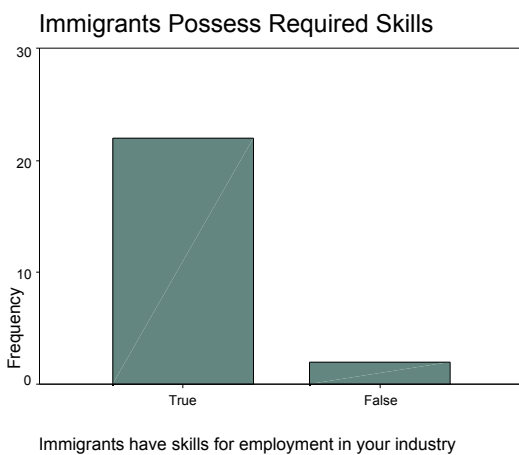


Figure 5.4 Immigrants Possess Required Skills

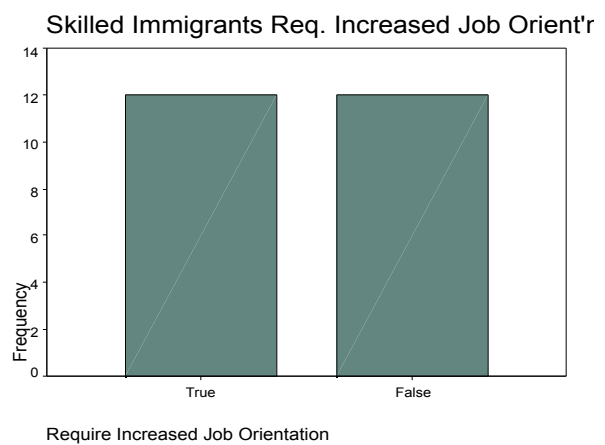


Figure 5.5 Skilled Immigrants Required Increased Job Orientation

The overwhelming majority (87.5%) of respondents currently have skilled immigrants in their organization and anticipate hiring additional skilled immigrants or foreign trained professionals in the next 1-3 years (83.3%). They also perceive that skilled immigrants have the skills and experience required for employment in the particular industry reported. The employers reported an even split as to whether or not they perceive that skilled immigrants require longer periods of job orientation and work place familiarization. This can be directly related to the industry in which the skilled immigrant was working.

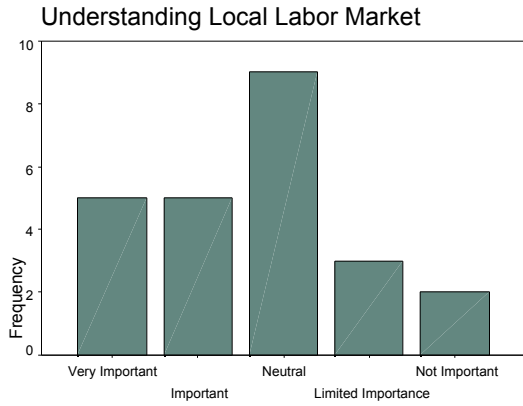
Employers responded to the various difficulties encountered in hiring skilled immigrants. The survey provided nine items from which to choose, with employers responding to those difficulties within each organization. Space was also provided for comments concerning additional difficulties that were not listed. Only one employer did not respond to this question. Table 5.1 outlines the difficulties experienced by descending percentage corresponding to the greatest to least difficulty encountered.

Difficulties Employers Encounter in Hiring Skilled Immigrants	N	Valid Percent
English language barriers	23	95.7%
Lack of local or Canadian experience	23	79.9%
Lack of understanding of company or industry culture	23	73.9%
Inadequate or poorly presented job search documentation	23	43.5%
Misinterpretation of job title or other vocational terminology	23	39.1%
Lack of interview and presentation skills	23	34.8%
Lack of relevant experience	23	30.4%
Lack of required/recognized certifications or credentials	23	30.4%

Table 5.1 Difficulties employers encounter in hiring skilled immigrants

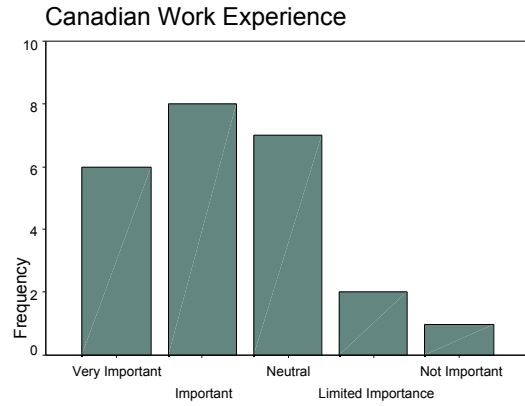
The majority of employers perceive there to be English language barriers, a lack of local or Canadian experience, and a lack of industry and company cultural understanding. Implications for action are to provide increased training in all three of these areas.

Employers responded as to how important various items are for skilled immigrants to secure work in the respective organization/industry. A five-point scale was used for responses. Only those levels of importance indicated by the respondents are reflected in the figures below.



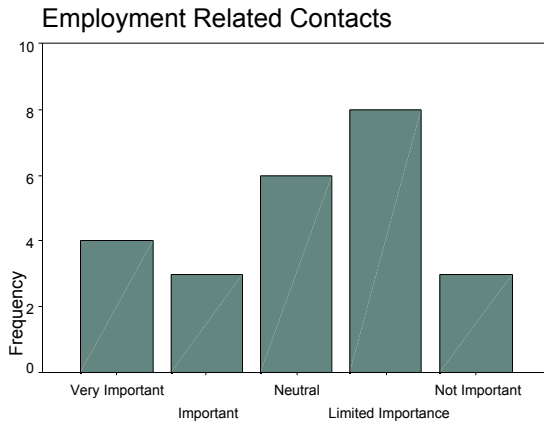
Understanding Local Labor Market

Figure 5.6 Understanding of Local Labour Market



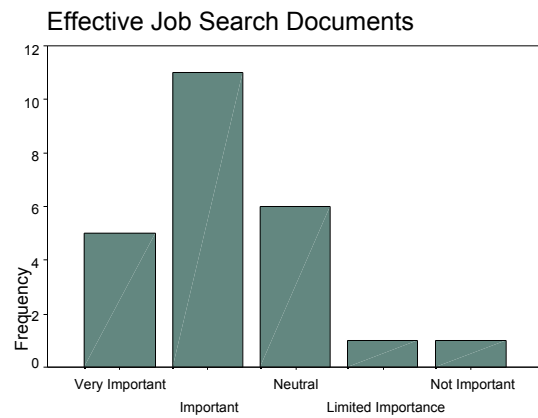
Canadian Work Experience

Figure 5.7 Canadian Work Experience



Employment Related Contacts

Figure 5.8 Network of Employment Related Contacts



Effective Job Search Documents

Figure 5.9 Effective Job Search Documents

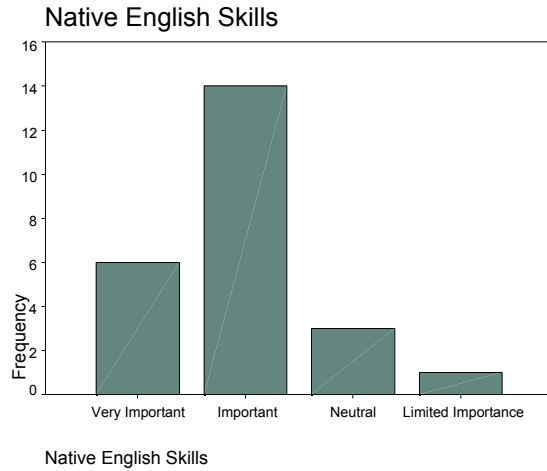


Figure 5.10 Near Native English Skills

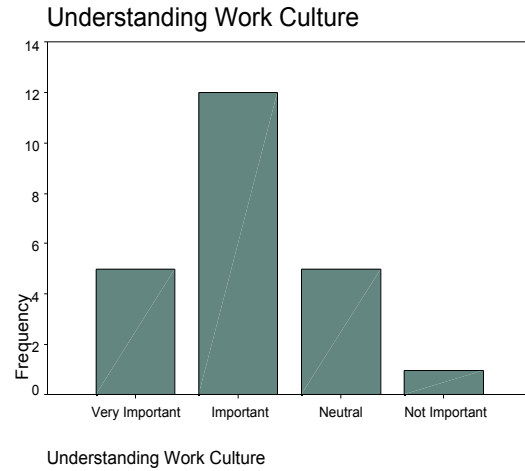


Figure 5.11 Understanding of Canadian or and Canadian Work/Culture Communication

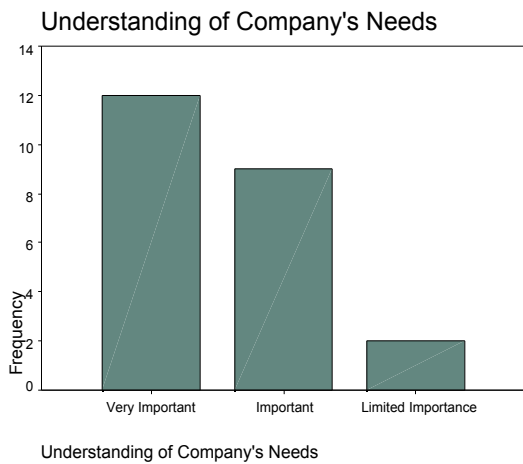


Figure 5.12 An Understanding of Company's Company's Needs

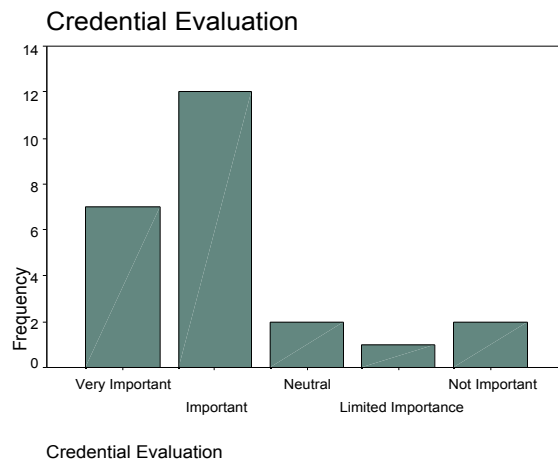


Figure 5.13 Credential Evaluation/Trade Certification

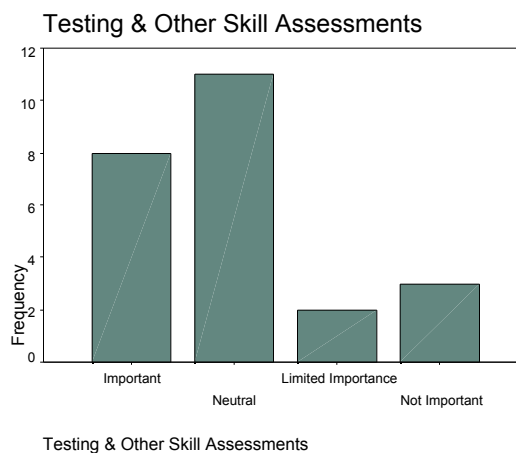


Figure 5.14 Testing and Other Skills Assessment

Table 5.2 outlines the items of perceived importance to employers by ascending means. The employer responses for the categories important to very important are indicated in the valid percentage column.

Items of Perceived Importance to Employers	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Valid Percent
Understanding of company's needs	23	1.00	4.00	1.65	.88	91.3%
Near native English skills	24	1.00	4.00	1.96	.75	83.3%
Credential Evaluation/Trade Certification	24	1.00	5.00	2.13	1.15	79.2%
Understanding of Canadian work culture/communication	23	1.00	5.00	2.13	.92	73.9%
Effective job search documents	24	1.00	5.00	2.25	.99	66.6%
Canadian work experience	24	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.09	58.3%
Understanding of local labor market	24	1.00	5.00	2.67	1.20	41.6%
Testing and other skills assessments	24	2.00	5.00	3.00	.98	33.3%
Network of employment related contacts	24	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.30	29.2%

Table 5.2 Items of perceived importance to employers

The most important items in Table 5.2 correspond to the difficulties encountered in hiring skilled immigrants; i.e., English language skills, a lack of local or Canadian experience, and a lack of industry and company cultural understanding. The response to this section of the survey

indicates there are implications for action in increased training in these areas, as stated previously. It is interesting to note that the need for credential evaluation is among the most important items to employers and is not a difficulty experienced in hiring skilled immigrants.

Employer Experience and/or Barriers to Hiring Skilled Immigrants:

Employers were requested to respond to the various elements or practices involved in the recruitment and hiring process. The survey provided eleven items from which to choose, as well as an open-ended question for comments concerning additional elements that may not have been listed. Table 5.3 outlines the elements experienced by descending percentage corresponding to the greatest amount to least amount experienced.

Elements Involved in Recruitment and Hiring Skilled Immigrants	N	Valid Percent
Interview	24	100.0%
Preliminary screening of job search documents	24	91.7%
Reference checks	24	91.7%
Second or multiple interviews	24	83.3%
One-on-one interview	24	75.0%
Telephone interview	24	66.7%
Panel interview	24	41.7%
Certification or credential verification	24	41.7%
Skill testing	24	37.5%
Work simulations	24	37.5%
Language Assessments or testing	24	29.2%

Table 5.3 Elements or practices involved in recruitment/hiring process

These results are self-explanatory, however it is interesting to note that only 29.2% of the employers responding to this question indicate that language assessments or testing is involved in the recruitment and hiring of immigrants. In Table 5.2, employers indicate that a command of the English language is of greatest importance to them. This lack of testing may be attributed to a lack of know-how or a suitable tool with which to conduct such testing. An implication for action is that standardized testing be part of the employer hiring process. Additional practices noted were criminal record checks, drug testing, and personal references.

Employers responded to their perceptions of which barriers to hiring skilled immigrants seemed to cause the most difficulty for the skilled immigrant candidates. Table 5.4 outlines these perceived barriers for the skilled immigrants by descending percentage corresponding to the greatest to least difficulty. Three employers did not respond to this question.

Perceived Difficulties for Skilled Immigrant Candidates as Barriers to Hiring	N	Valid Percent
Interview	21	47.6%
Preliminary screening of job search documents	21	38.1%
Reference checks	21	23.8%
Language Assessments or testing	21	23.8%
Certification or credential verification	21	14.3%
Second or multiple interviews	21	9.5%
Panel interview	21	4.8%
Telephone interview	21	4.8%
Skill testing	21	4.8%
One-on-one interview	21	0%
Work simulations	21	0%

Table 5.4 Perceived difficulties for skilled immigrant candidates as barriers to hiring

It is natural for employers to be somewhat reticent in responding to this question as they are trying to relate difficulties for which they may not be that knowledgeable. However, the responses indicate that the majority of perceived barriers correspond to the results outlined in Tables 5.1 and 5.2; i.e., the perceived barriers relate to English language barriers, a lack of local or Canadian experience, and a lack of industry and company cultural understanding. Employer comments indicated that English language difficulties are the greatest barrier to communication, and that interview stress can increase these difficulties. Implications for action include conducting further research with current skilled immigrants to determine their perceptions as to the barriers to hiring, and to increase training concerning the English language, Canadian/company culture, and preparation of job search documentation. Another implication for action is to initiate/enhance training in interview skills, as 100% of the employer respondents use interviews in recruiting skilled immigrants, and it is perceived to be the greatest difficulty experienced by skilled immigrants.

Employers were requested to respond to a list of ten types of documentation they require in the recruitment and hiring process. Table 5.5 outlines the documents used by descending percentage corresponding to the most to least documents commonly used by employers.

Most Common Documents Used in the Recruitment and Hiring Process	N	Valid Percent
Resume or C.V.	24	100.0%
List of Referees with telephone numbers	24	75.0%
Cover letter	24	66.7%
Trade or technical certificate	24	54.2%
Diploma/degree	24	41.7%
Transcripts	24	25.0%
Completed application form	24	20.8%
Credential evaluation	24	20.8%
Reference letters	24	20.8%
Portfolio	24	12.5%

Table 5.5 Most common documents used in the recruitment and hiring process

There would naturally be variances in the responses to each of these documents as they pertain to the type of job; e.g., skilled versus unskilled positions. An implication for action is to conduct future research as to which documents are used in the different levels and nature of positions being filled. An increase in training concerning job search documentation should focus on the targeted resume and cover letter.

Employer Interest in Developing Labour Market Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants:

Employers were asked whether or not they perceive the development of initiatives to support the attachment of skilled immigrants to the workforce as an important Human Resource issue. They were also asked if they have such initiatives in place, and if so, to indicate which initiatives.

Table 5.6 outlines these responses.

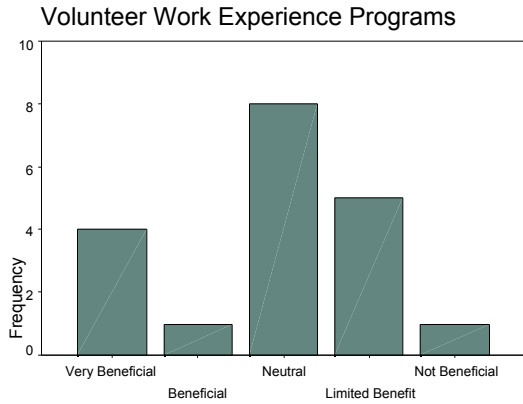
Perception of Developing Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants	N	Valid Percent
Employers perceiving the development of initiatives to support the attachment of skilled immigrants to the workforce an important Human Resource issue in his/her company.	23	39.1%
Employers with initiatives in place to support the attachment of skilled immigrants to the workforce.	24	37.5%
Initiatives in place:		
Skills upgrading or professional development Opportunities	24	20.8%
Practicums/Internships	24	16.7%
Mentoring	24	8.3%
English language instruction	24	8.3%
Work experience	24	8.3%
Academic or degree sponsorship	24	4.2%

Table 5.6 Perception of developing initiatives for skilled immigrants

Only 39.1% of the employers responding to this question perceived the development of initiatives to attach skilled immigrants to the workforce as an important Human Resource issue for their companies. In comparison, the majority (87.5%) of those employers responding to the survey indicate that they have skilled immigrants in their workforce and anticipate hiring more skilled immigrants in the next 1-3 years (83.3%). Only 8.3% of the respondents indicate that they provide English language instruction, while 83.3% of those respondents indicated in Table 5.2 that near native English skills is important to very important in order for skilled immigrants to secure work in their organization. Some employers responded that those initiatives that are offered are provided as company programs for all employees and not just targeted towards skilled immigrants.

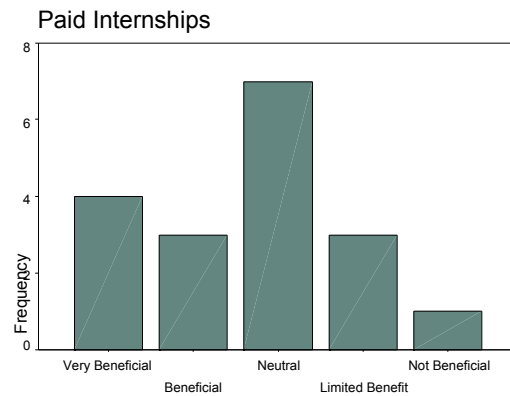
An implication for action is to conduct further research to determine whether or not such initiatives in place at certain organizations increase the success rate of skilled immigrants in those organizations, and if so, to develop increased awareness of the benefits of these initiatives.

Employers were then asked to respond to a list of practices that would be beneficial to the organization. Respondents were requested to indicate the degree of benefit on a 5-point scale with 1 being very beneficial and 5 being not beneficial.



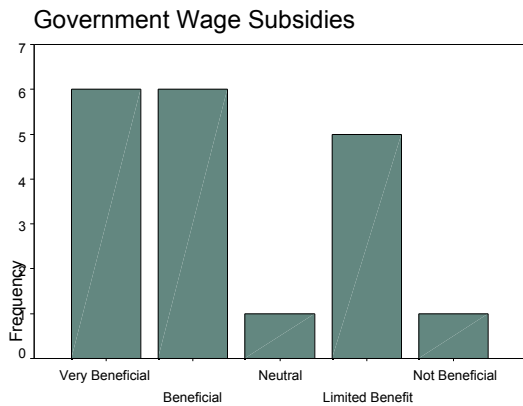
Volunteer Work Experience Programs

Figure 5.15 Volunteer Work Experience Programs



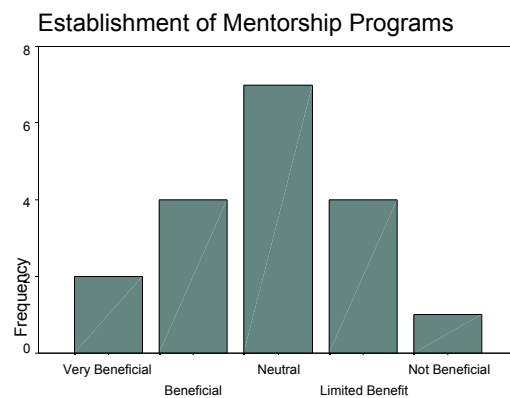
Paid Internships

Figure 5.16 Paid Internships



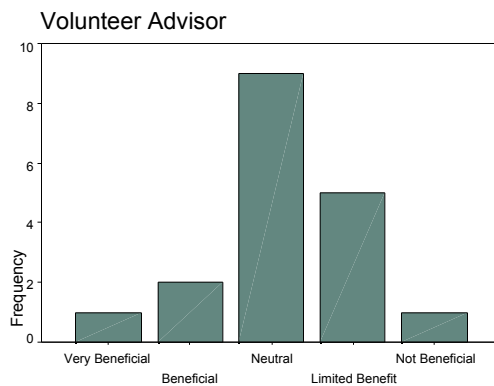
Government Wage Subsidies

Figure 5.17 Government Wage Subsidies



Establishment of Mentorship Programs

Figure 5.18 Mentorship Programs



Volunteer Advisor

Figure 5.19 Volunteer Advisor

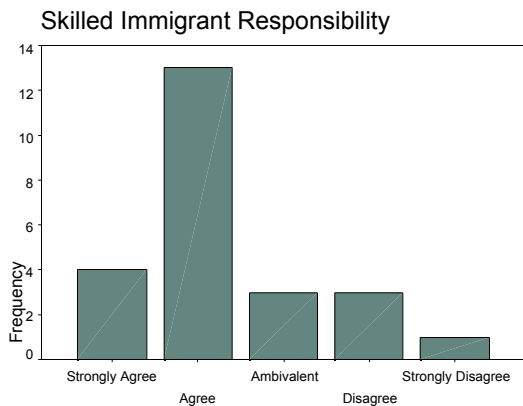
Table 5.7 outlines the perceived benefit of initiatives to employers by ascending means. The employer responses for the categories beneficial to very beneficial are indicated in the valid percentage column.

Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants Beneficial to Employers	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Valid Percent
Government wage subsidies	19	1.00	5.00	2.42	1.35	63.2%
Paid internships	18	1.00	5.00	2.67	1.19	38.9%
Establishment of mentorship program	18	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.08	33.3%
Volunteer work experience placements	19	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.20	26.3%
Volunteer advisor	18	1.00	5.00	3.17	.92	16.7%

Table 5.7 Initiatives for skilled immigrants beneficial to employers

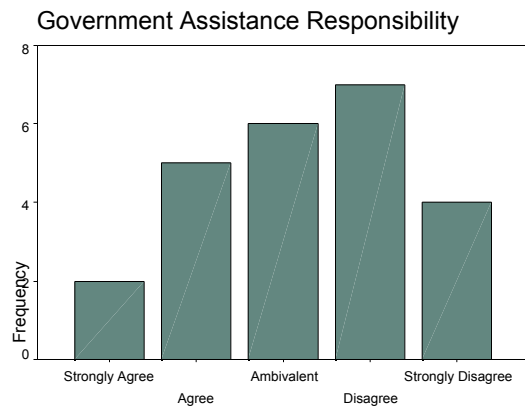
The only initiative that the majority of respondents perceive as beneficial to very beneficial is that of Government wage subsidies. This is counteracted by one comment from an employer that for-profit companies should not receive government subsidies for filling positions.

Employers were requested to indicate the perceived degree of agreement concerning four statements with 1 as strongly agree and 5 as strongly disagree.



Skilled Immigrant Responsibility

Figure 5.20 Skilled Immigrant Responsibility



Government Assistance Responsibility

Figure 5.21 Government Assistance Responsibility

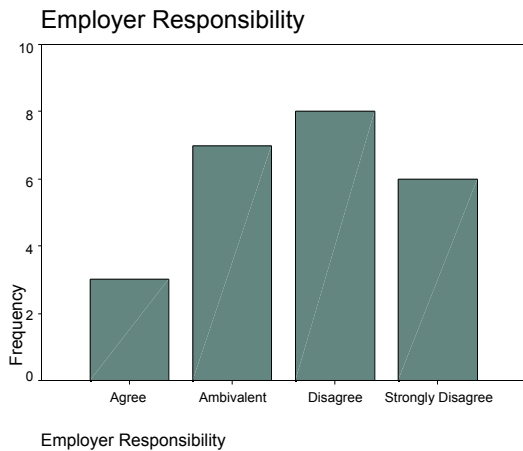


Figure 5.22 Employer Responsibility

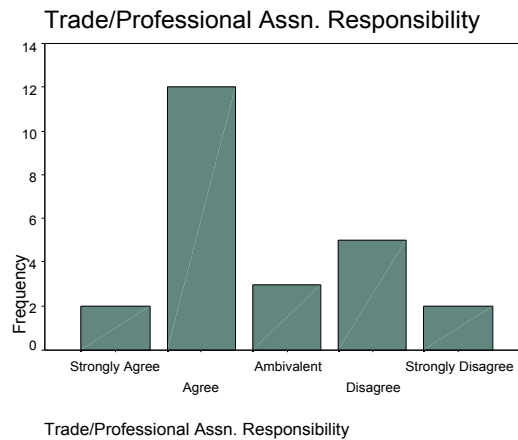


Figure 5.23 Trade/Professional Association Responsibility

Table 5.8 outlines the employer perceived agreement with statements by ascending means. The employer responses for the categories agree to strongly agree are indicated in the valid percentage column.

Employer Perceived Agreement with Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Valid Percent
It is fully the responsibility of skilled immigrants to search and find employment.	24	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.05	70.8%
It is the responsibility of Trade and Professional Associations to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.	24	1.00	5.00	2.71	1.16	58.3%
It is the responsibility of the Canadian/British Columbian government to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.	24	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.22	29.2%
It is the responsibility of employers to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.	24	2.00	5.00	3.71	1.00	12.5%

Table 5.8 Employer perceived agreement with statements

The majority of employer respondents (70.8%) agree or strongly agree that skilled immigrants are responsible to search and find employment, and 58.3% of the respondents agree that trade and professional associations are responsible to find skilled immigrants employment in their related fields. Conversely, the majority (70.8%) of the respondents are either ambivalent, disagree or strongly disagree that it is the responsibility of the Canadian/British Columbian government to assist skilled immigrants in finding employment, while 87.5% of respondents are either ambivalent, disagree or strongly disagree that it is the employer’s responsibility to assist skilled workers in finding employment. An implication for action is that training programs through or in partnership with trade and professional associations need to be enhanced or developed to assist skilled immigrants in finding employment in their related fields. This does not address those skilled immigrants who cannot qualify for membership in a trade or professional association, therefore organizations still need to be identified to assist these skilled immigrants with the transition into the Canadian workforce.

Those employers responding to the survey were asked whether or not they would participate in a volunteer advisory capacity for labour market attachment programs developed for skilled immigrants as a measure of overall corporate/employer interest.



Figure 5.24 Your company as a volunteer advisor

Of those responding, 45.8% indicated that they would participate in such a capacity as an advisor for volunteer attachment programs.

The respondents were then requested to identify a realistic time commitment that they could contribute to volunteer attachment programs in the categories of 1-2 hours weekly, 1-2 hours monthly, 1-2 hours quarterly, and 1-2 hours semi-annually.

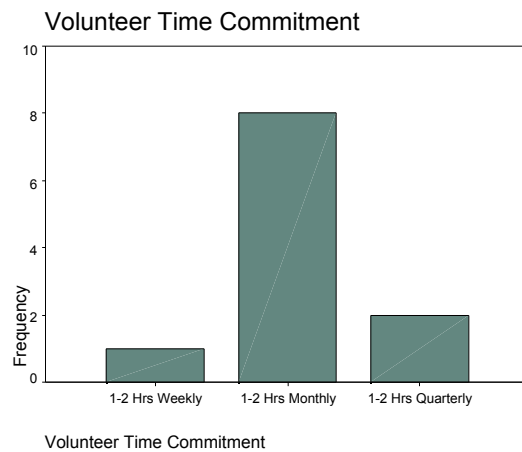


Figure 5.25 Employer time commitment contributed in volunteer advisory capacity for labour market attachment program development

Of those eleven employers responding, 72.7% indicated a reasonable time commitment would be 1-2 hours monthly. Although this is a very small sample, the results do give somewhat of a guideline for expectations concerning participation as volunteers in market attachment programs for skilled immigrants.

Additional comments from the respondents concerning labour market initiatives for skilled immigrants could be clustered into the following themes:

- Applicable work experience is required.
- Organizations benefiting from hiring the skilled immigrant should pay for initiatives as governments pay for their family's education, medical assistance, employment insurance and income assistance.
- Skilled immigrants result in positive experiences with strong work ethics, dedication and motivation brought to job.

Overall, the responses to the employer survey provide insight as to the employer perceptions concerning the recruitment and hiring of skilled immigrants. The findings are valuable in providing an understanding as to the importance employers place on various elements, practices and barriers experienced in the recruitment and hiring of skilled immigrants.

Research Findings – Skilled Immigrant Questionnaires

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) for skilled immigrant interviews has been categorized into three main sections: A) Personal Information, B) In-depth Questions, and C) Opinions on Securing Work in B.C. Some questions use either a 5 or 7 point Likert-style scale, while other questions use yes/no, or request a choice of responses from a list provided, along with general comment sections.

Frequencies and descriptive statistics are reported for the individual items excluding the in-depth questions and general comment sections. Within each section, both quantitative and qualitative findings are identified. Qualitative analysis was conducted on the responses to the open ended questions. Themes are identified for the responses to the open ended questions. As with any self-reporting survey, variances may occur in the interpretation of each question.

Skilled Immigrant Personal Information:

The researchers conducted personal interviews with 40 skilled immigrants from a variety of organizations for this study. Of those 40 people interviewed, personal information concerning age, gender, employment status, occupation or profession, education level, Canadian education experience, and the year they immigrated to Canada was collected.

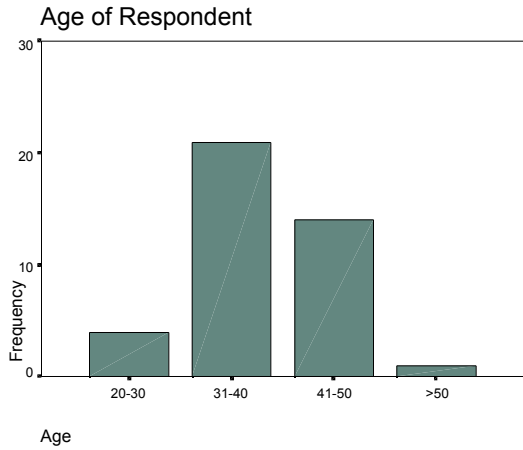


Figure 5.26 Age of respondent

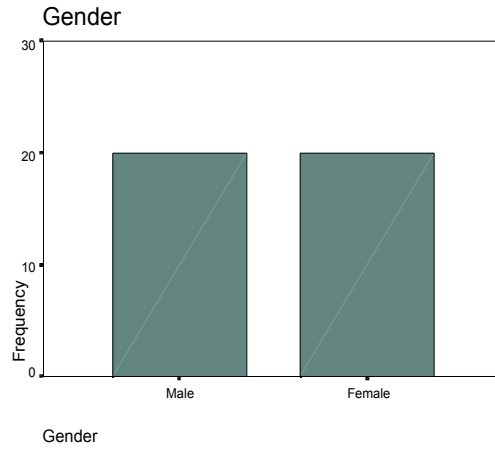


Figure 5.27 Respondent gender

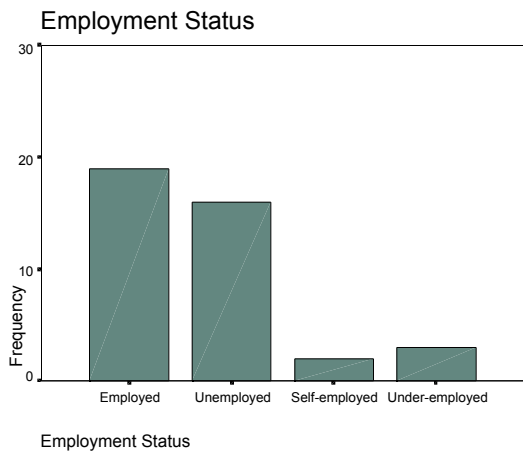


Figure 5.28 Respondent employment status

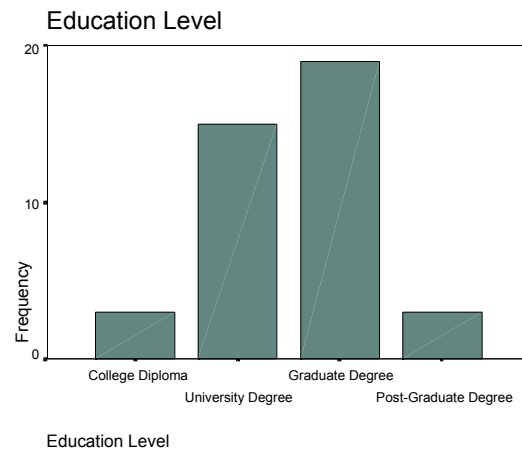


Figure 5.29 Respondent education level

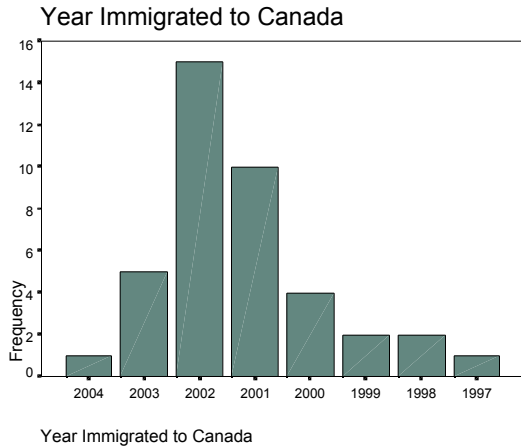


Figure 5.30 Year immigrated to Canada

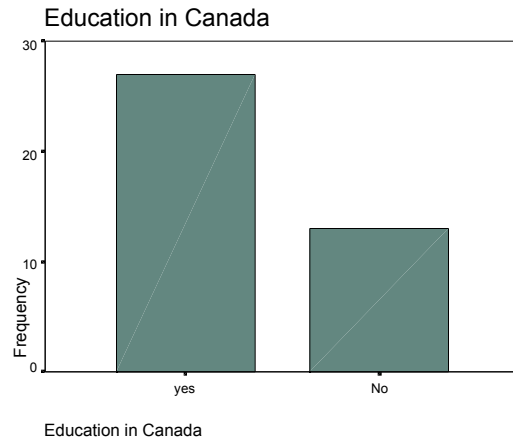


Figure 5.31 Education taken in Canada

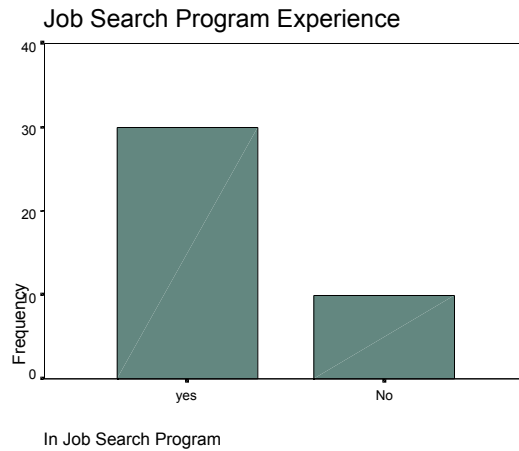


Figure 5.32 Experience in Job Search Program

As indicated in the foregoing figures, 87.5% of the skilled immigrant respondents are between the ages of 31-50, the sample has equal number of females and males, the majority of respondents are either employed (47.5%) or unemployed (40.0%), with the remaining 5% self-employed and 7.5% under-employed. Of the seven categories presented for education levels, the entire sample group had at least one of the following: a college diploma, university, graduate or post-graduate degree. All of the respondents immigrated since 1997, with 87.5% since the year 2000. Of those responding, 67.5% had taken some education and professional development since coming to Canada, and 75.0% of them had participated in a job search program.

A cross tabulation was conducted to determine the level of education achieved by age of respondent. Not surprisingly, it was found that the older the respondent, the higher the education achieved.

Education Level	20-30	31-40	41-50	>50	Total
College Diploma	1	1	1	0	3
University Degree	3	9	3	0	15
Graduate Degree	0	10	8	1	19
Post Graduate Degree	0	1	2	0	3
Total	4	21	14	1	40

Table 5.9 Education level achieved by age of skilled immigrant respondent

A cross tabulation was also conducted to determine any variances between gender and the level of education achieved by the respondents. The level of education was fairly evenly distributed between the genders.

Education Level	Male	Female	Total
College Diploma		3	3
University Degree	9	6	15
Graduate Degree	10	9	19
Post Graduate Degree	1	2	3
Total	20	20	40

Table 5.10 Education level achieved by gender of skilled immigrant respondent

A cross tabulation was run to determine any variances between the gender of respondents and employment status. Employment status was fairly evenly distributed between the genders with the exception that only males were self-employed.

Employment Status	Male	Female	Total
Employed	9	10	19
Unemployed	7	9	16
Self-employed	2		2
Under-employed	2	1	3
Total	20	20	40

Table 5.11 Employment status of skilled immigrant respondent by gender

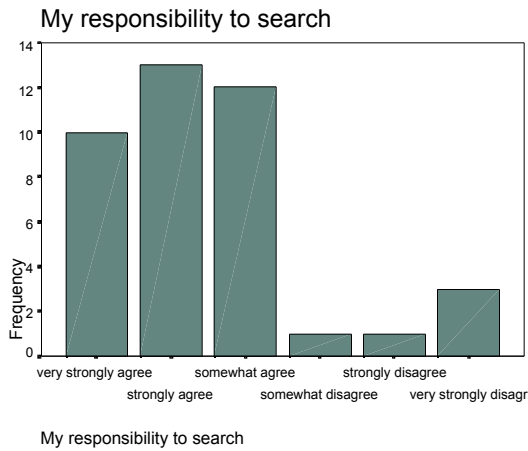
In responding to the open-ended questions the skilled immigrants expressed a wide variety of observations and experiences in relation to their involvement in job search programs, their labour market attachment efforts and strategies, and their perceptions of the barriers they faced. Despite the wide variety of responses, a number of general observations and themes are evident. Foremost, when asked on where and when they first accessed BC labour market information over half of the respondents identified that they had done so prior to arrival in Canada. Secondly, the most prevalently identified sources of BC labour market information were the internet and networking with friends.

One question asked participants to identify “what would have quickened your access to labour market information?” Five respondents identified an early point of contact or referral, and five respondents answered expressed the desire to have received sufficient or better labour market information at the airport upon arrival. Most notably, however, eighteen respondents answered “nothing” or “I don’t know” indicating a lack of awareness of appropriate avenues for labour market information, but also a lack of understanding of the information they required.

When asked about those elements of job search programs that were most effective, the participants identified a wide variety of supports such as interview preparation, resume and cover letter development, telephone technique, etc. However, many respondents also identified the need for one-to-one support and encouragement. Conversely, when asked what was lacking from the programs the majority of respondents identified direct contact and involvement with employers including the participation of or access to successful graduates or working skilled immigrants.

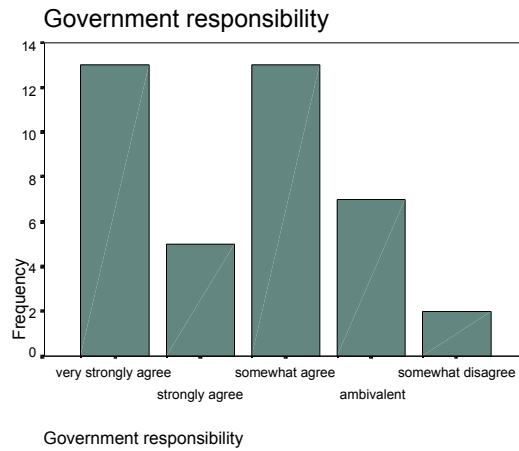
A lack of English skills was self-reported as the single highest barrier to employment, followed by a lack of Canadian work experience, and a lack of local education, knowledge and credentials. Conversely, when asked how these barriers might be overcome, the respondents acknowledged the need for English classes and skills and education assessments or accreditation. The most common response however, was for initiatives specifically designed to address the needs of skilled immigrants or foreign trained professionals.

The skilled immigrant respondents were requested to indicate on a 7-point scale their agreement/disagreement concerning the responsibility of finding employment, with 1 being very strongly agree and 7 being very strongly disagree.



My responsibility to search

Figure 5.33 Respondent’s responsibility to search and find employment



Government responsibility

Figure 5.34 Government’s responsibility to assist respondent in finding employment

Of those responding, 87.5% somewhat agree to very strongly agree the individual skilled immigrant is responsible for searching and finding employment, while 77.5% somewhat agree to very strongly agree that the Government is responsible to assist the respondent in finding employment related to his/her field.

The respondents were requested to indicate on a 5-point scale the level of importance of ten statements concerning securing work in British Columbia. Only those levels of importance indicated by the respondents are reflected in the figures below.

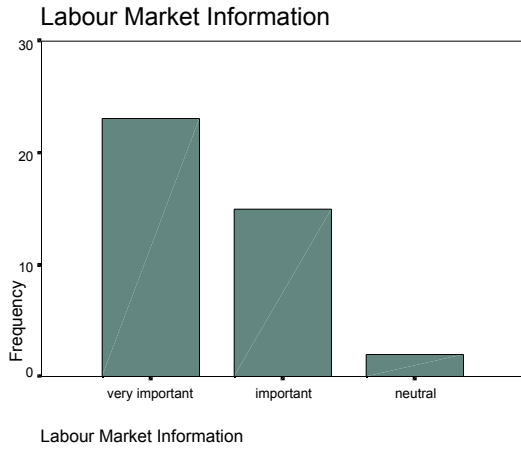


Figure 5.35 Labour market information

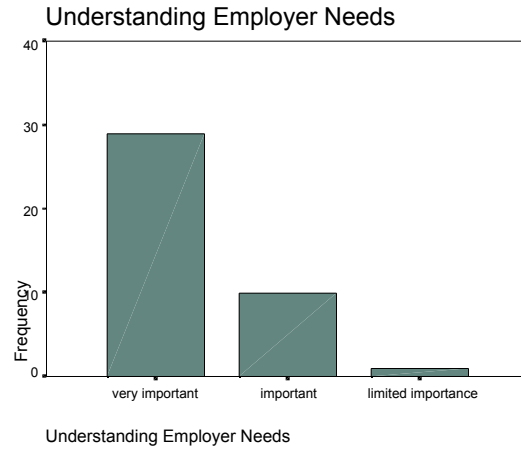


Figure 5.36 Understanding of employer needs

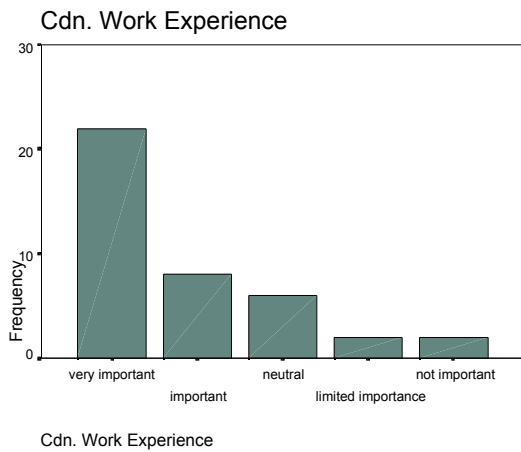


Figure 5.37 Canadian work experience

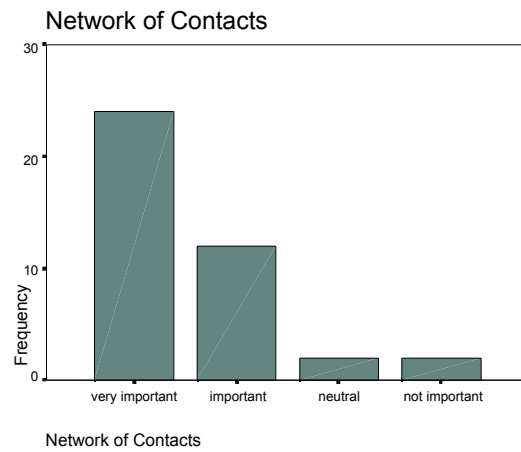
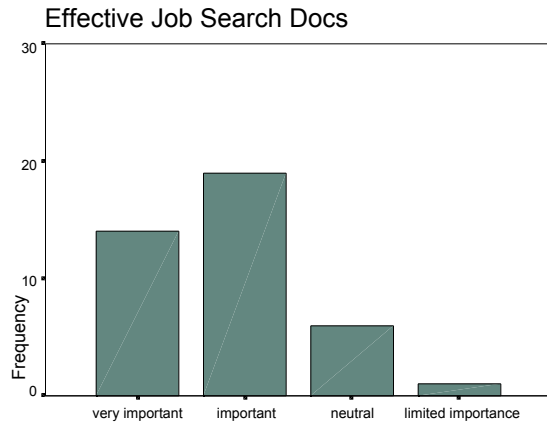
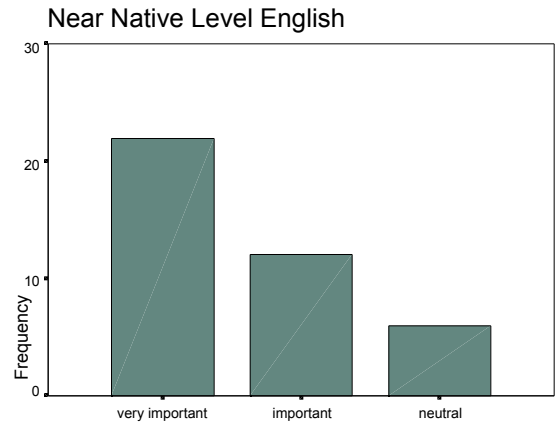


Figure 5.38 Network of employment related Contacts



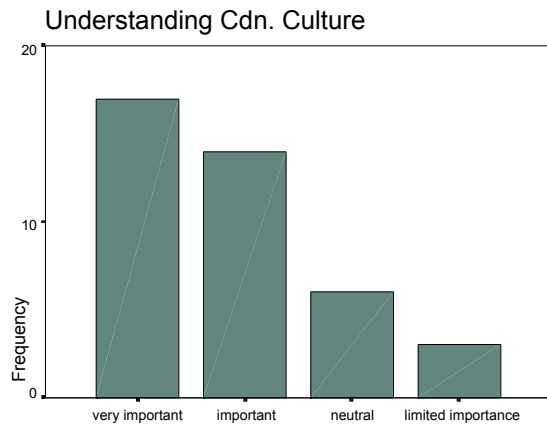
Effective Job Search Docs

Figure 5.39 Effective job search documents



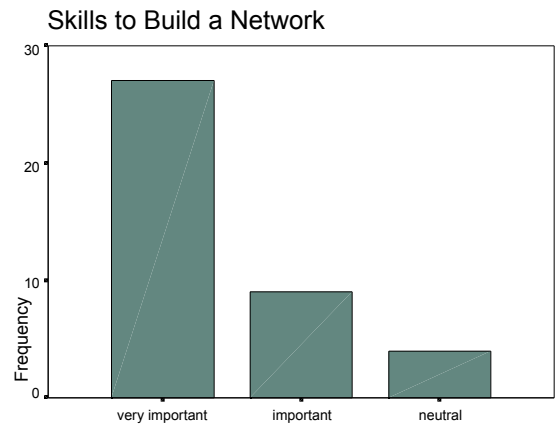
Near Native Level English

Figure 5.40 Near native level English skills



Understanding Cdn. Culture

Figure 5.41 Understanding of Canadian work culture/communication



Skills to Build a Network

Figure 5.42 Skills to build a network

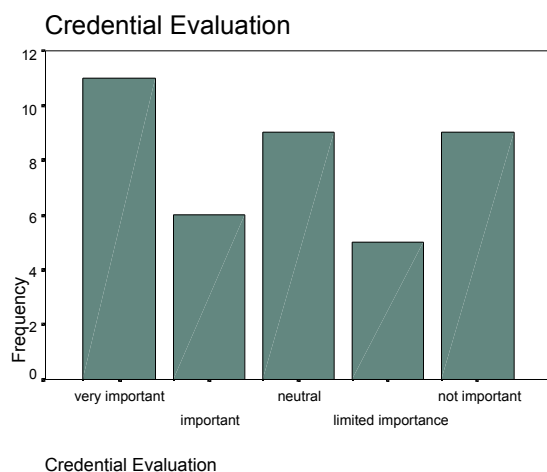


Figure 5.43 Credential Evaluation

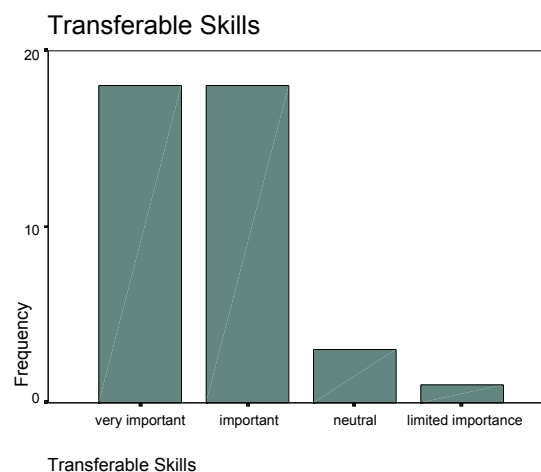


Figure 5.44 Transferable Skills

Table 5.12 outlines the perceived importance of the foregoing statements by ascending means. The skilled immigrant employee responses for the categories important to very important are indicated in the valid percentage column.

Items of Perceived Importance in Securing Work in British Columbia by Skilled Immigrants	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Valid Percent
Understanding employer needs	40	1.00	4.00	1.33	.62	97.5%
Skills to build a network	40	1.00	3.00	1.43	.68	90.0%
Labour market information	40	1.00	3.00	1.48	.60	95.0%
Near native level English	40	1.00	3.00	1.60	.74	85.0%
Network of contacts	40	1.00	5.00	1.60	.98	90.0%
Transferable skills	40	1.00	4.00	1.68	.73	90.0%
Canadian work experience	40	1.00	5.00	1.85	1.17	75.0%
Effective job search documents	40	1.00	4.00	1.85	.77	82.5%
Understanding Canadian culture	40	1.00	4.00	1.88	.94	77.5%
Credential evaluation	40	1.00	5.00	2.88	1.52	42.5%

Table 5.12 Items of perceived importance to skilled immigrants

The majority of respondents perceived all statements to be important to very important with the exception of credential evaluation as illustrated in Figure 3.42. It is understandable that there is largely agreement on these items of importance, as 75.0% of the respondents had participated in a job search program. Those having participated in a job search program would naturally have a

keener sense of the job search elements that are required for employment success. The wide distribution of responses (45% important to very important, 22.5% neutral, and 35% limited importance to not important) on credential evaluation may be due to respondents having such a variety of backgrounds, skills, and occupations with different types of organizations that do not require the same level of credential evaluation.

The in-depth personal interviews with skilled immigrants provide greater knowledge of the skilled immigrant employee views and perceptions of searching and obtaining employment in Canada. The interviews gave further insight into the level of support and information required for these individuals to achieve employment success.

Summary of Key Survey and Interview Findings:

In comparing the findings between the employer survey and the skilled immigrant interviews, there were certain similarities. For example, the skilled immigrant findings indicate that 87.5% somewhat agree to very strongly agree that the individual skilled immigrant is responsible for searching and finding employment, while 70.8% of the employer respondents agree or strongly agree that skilled immigrants are responsible to search and find employment.

However, differences also exist. For example, 77.5% of the skilled immigrants somewhat agree to very strongly agree that the Government is responsible to assist him/her in finding employment related to his/her field, while 70.8% of the employer respondents are ambivalent, disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. The strong response from the skilled immigrants indicates there is a need for support and assistance in finding employment in Canada. Of the employer respondents, 87.5% are either ambivalent, disagree or strongly disagree that it is the employer's responsibility to assist skilled workers in finding employment, while 58.3% of the employer respondents agree to strongly agree that trade and professional associations should assist skilled immigrants in finding employment. There needs to be an increased emphasis on determining the appropriate organizations/associations to provide this level of support in order for skilled immigrants to experience employment success.

A comparison of Table 5.2 items of perceived importance to employers and Table 5.12 items of perceived importance to skilled immigrants is summarized in Table 5.13.

Items of Perceived Importance in Securing Work in British Columbia by Skilled Immigrants	Skilled Immigrant Ranking	Employer Ranking	Items of Perceived Importance to Employers
Understanding employer needs	1	1	Understanding of company's needs
Skills to build a network	2		
Labour market information	3	7	Understanding of local labour market
Near native level English	4	2	Near native English skills
Network of contacts	5	9	Network of employment related contacts
Transferable skills	6	8	Testing and other skills assessments
Canadian work experience	7	6	Canadian work experience
Effective job search documents	8	5	Effective job search documents
Understanding Canadian culture	9	4	Understanding of Canadian work culture/communication
Credential evaluation	10	3	Credential evaluation/Trade certification

Table 5.13 Comparison of items of perceived importance to skilled immigrants and employers

Although the terminology was somewhat different for each sample group, Table 5.13 outlines similar levels of importance to both skilled immigrants and employers; such as, understanding employer needs, near native English skills, Canadian work experience, transferable skills, and effective job search documents. It is interesting to note where there are gaps in placing importance on some of these items; such as, labour market information, network of contacts, understanding Canadian culture, and credential evaluation. These differences can be explained by differing points of view from searching for a position to that of recruiting for a position.

However, there is an implication for action to further study these differences, and to include this information in future training programs, as these differences could impact some of the barriers experienced in the recruitment and hiring of skilled immigrants.

A major finding is that the overwhelming majority (87.5%) of the employer respondents currently have skilled immigrants in their organization and anticipate hiring additional skilled immigrants or foreign trained professionals in the next 1-3 years (83.3%). They also perceive that skilled immigrants have the skills and experience required for employment in the particular industry reported. This bodes well for future employment for skilled workers. It is also indicative of the need to enhance or increase training in relation to English language, the Canadian and corporate culture, the Canadian labour market, job search documents, and interview skills.

While 83.3% of the employer respondents indicate that near native English skills are somewhat important to very important, only 29.2% of the employer respondents conduct language assessments or testing. This may be attributed to a lack of know-how or a suitable tool with which to conduct such testing. Employer respondents also indicated that English language difficulties are the greatest barrier to communication, and that interview stress can exacerbate these difficulties. Standardized testing would be beneficial to both the employer and the skilled immigrant, as it would indicate a standard level of acceptance for language mastery. Future research should be conducted on establishing such a tool and suitable level of acceptance for near native English proficiency.

The findings overall indicate items for action concerning training programs and future required/recommended research. Having both employer and skilled immigrant employee groups researched together provides for a solid base of knowledge from which to develop program alternatives and recommendations.

Research Findings – Service Provider Consultations

Eleven Service Providers from the Lower Mainland were consulted for this project. All eleven work for agencies or institutions offering various programs and services to assist immigrants attach to the labour market. Five of the eleven offer Job Search and Career Planning programs designed for the general immigrant population. Four contributed their experience from working in programs specifically designed for skilled immigrants. One offered insight from running a Professional and Technical Job Search Program in which approximately 30% of the participants are skilled immigrants.

Four of our service providers worked in programs or services in which 100% of the participants were skilled immigrants. Of the seven remaining, all had significant involvement assisting skilled immigrants; most stating that more than 50% of the past year's clients were skilled immigrants. Two service providers reported that less than 30% of the past year's clients were skilled immigrants.

Of note, two of the Service Providers consulted were not involved with skilled immigrant job search programs at the time of this project. These individuals were consulted for their former involvement with successful programs that were specifically designed for the Foreign Trained Professional. They were chosen to be included in this consultation process because of their expertise; very few other service providers locally have had the opportunity to work in programs solely dedicated to the skilled immigrant.

The questionnaire (Appendix 3) for service provider interviews has been categorized into four main sections: A) General Information, B) Understanding Current Practices, Resources and Tools, C) Input on Best Practices, and D) Input On Perceived Gaps In Service and Information. Questions used either a 5 point Likert-style scale, requested a choice of responses from a list provided, or open-ended questions.

Resource Gaps Identified:

1. Information Prior to Arrival:

Four Service Providers identified a gap or differences in the information skilled immigrants are receiving at the immigration level and the actual demands of the local labour market. One respondent stated, “Immigration Canada is bringing in the best of the best and then when they (skilled immigrants) land, their qualifications are not accepted”. The point was raised that a great deal of information exists and could be accessed by many immigrants prior to departure from their native country but it is scattered and difficult to access. It was noted that this information gap often results in unrealistic immigrant expectations; time is then required to assist the skilled immigrant to deal with their frustration and to develop a more realistic career plan.

2. Access to Skilled Immigrant Specific Information

It was noted that both Skilled Immigrants and Service Providers struggle to find information to meet the unique needs of skilled immigrants; a great deal of information exists but it exists in “bits and pieces” and is difficult to find efficiently

3. Labour Market Information

General Labour Market information was cited by several Service Providers as lacking; specifically mentioned were: information on current and upcoming “hot careers”, information clearly outlining provincial Labour Market differences and wage information.

4. Academic Resource Information

Several Service Providers cited a lack of resources devoted to academic and skills upgrading information to assist skilled immigrants to make smart career and educational plans. Prior Learning Assessments and Bridging Programs were two areas specifically noted.

5. Credential Evaluation Information Resources

Two Service Providers cited a lack of easy to access and clear Credential Evaluation information.

6. Access to Company Databases

Company directories and databases that offer details about companies locally were cited as an extremely useful resource but costly and not widely available to service providers or skilled immigrants.

7. Resources that Promote Connection to Local Business and the Community

Two Service Providers mentioned the development of Business Advisory Councils (BAC); these councils comprised of local business people offer opportunity for skilled immigrants and the business community to meet. For the immigrants, this would “demystify the job search and the discomfort of approaching employers”. For the business community, it would offer an opportunity to explore the skills and experiences of an often untapped market. However, due to the unpredictable nature of funding, it is difficult to set up program supports like BAC’s as they require a great deal of energy and commitment from service providers and the business community.

8. Up to Date Information Regarding Programs and Services Available to Skilled Immigrants

Service Providers state there is no central source of information regarding which agencies are receiving funding for programs and services. This was seen as important in order to work together and to facilitate referrals.

Of note, two programs offered within post-secondary institutions reported no resource gaps because of access to abundant resources for both clients and staff.

Service Gaps Identified:

1. Lack of Programs Designed Specifically for Skilled Immigrants

It was noted that foreign trained immigrants are unique and have specific job search issues. While many of these can be addressed in general job search programs, this group is more appropriately served by a specifically tailored program.

2. Lack of Access to Programs

Many Skilled Immigrants are not immediately aware of the programs and services available to assist them to develop a career plan and to conduct a job search. Other Skilled Immigrants cannot access job search programs and assistance because these are typically offered only during the day when many skilled immigrants are working at survival jobs. As well, fewer seats are available to those who are not EI eligible. Several service providers spoke of the challenges of a “Late Intervention”. Clients who must wait for assistance have often given up hope to find work related to their professional background; the loss of work identity has affected their finances, their family, and their physical and mental health.

3. Lack of Consistent Funding

Lack of funding for programs for skilled immigrants and more specifically a lack of consistent funding and short-term funding impede the ability to develop respected relationships with employers, to build a bank of resources and to train service providers adequately.

4. Lack of Training for Consultants Dealing with Skilled Immigrants

Few consultants have had access to the training required to adequately understand the unique needs of skilled immigrants.

5. Lack of Time to Dedicate to the Development of Cultural Understanding/ Communication/Presentation

Funding tends to dictate shorter programs and so workshops dedicated to the development of cultural understanding, the improvement of communication and the importance of presentation is limited. Professional and technical English language skills were specifically mentioned as a service gap.

6. Lack of Job and Work Experience Placement Services

Service Providers stated that time and funds were not available to support developing stronger relationships with business and community representatives or member in order to facilitate job and work experience placements.

7. Lack of Intermediate/Advanced English Language Classes

Service Providers state it is difficult to assist skilled immigrants in their search for a skilled job when the immigrants lack the language to meet workplace expectations.

8. Lack of Connection to “business” and the Labour Market

Service Providers state they do not have the time to develop direct relationships with employers and the business community. Skilled immigrant clients are seeking an introduction to the business and employer community and “we don’t have this type of relationship with the people who are going to hire”. In the absence of a working relationship or a known contact, employers and HR personnel are often reluctant to act as a resource of industry information particularly if the contact is a skilled immigrant.

9. Lack of Funding to Support One-to-one Meetings

Many Service Providers spoke of the value of one-to-one meetings with skilled immigrants. A component of these meetings is advocacy; that is, assisting the skilled immigrant client to get and interpret the information and to market the client.

10. Lack of Government Understanding

Service Providers complained of programs that had to be designed to meet “stat mandates” in order to receive funding. This type of programming forces Service Providers “to get skilled immigrants jobs, any jobs; this approach does not serve this population”.

Suggested Resources:

1. Resources/Training/Certification for Employment Counselors of Skilled Immigrants

The Service Providers consulted identified a need for further training in order to serve the skilled immigrant population more effectively. The following training suggestions were made:

- **Specialized training and/or certification** for employment consultants of skilled immigrants.
- **An association** for employment consultants of skilled immigrants that would offer membership, training/professional development, newsletters, labour market updates, professional and trade regulations and qualifications, etc.

- **A toolkit** for counselors serving skilled immigrants. The toolkit might include information/sections on Credential Evaluation, workplace language development tips and materials, technical writing, mentoring, etc. This resource could be supplemented semi-annually or annually as well as have a place on-line.
- **An Internet “portal”** providing information and links to sites pertinent to skilled immigrants and the career development of skilled immigrants.
- **A monthly or quarterly update** of service providers and programs being offered to assist skilled immigrants.

2. An Association of Successful Skilled Immigrants

Service Providers identified the creation of a network or association of successful skilled immigrants as a valuable resource. This association could offer: contacts for newly arrived skilled immigrants, motivating speakers for workshops, mentoring, and specific industry information.

3. A “Help-line” for Service Providers and Skilled Immigrants

The development of a help-line for service providers or skilled immigrants. This line could be used as a resource locally or could be accessed prior to arrival.

4. A System of Collaboration

Service Providers identified a need for a system in which clients were shared and referred to the agency offering the most appropriate program or service for the individual client.

Suggested Services

1. The Job Search Program

Nine service providers outlined a 4 to 6 week employment Job Search Training Program. All of these saw the importance of the following workshops: resume writing, job search letters, and telephone techniques.

2. Work Experience/Mentoring/Job Shadowing/Job Placement

Seven service providers recommended a Work Experience component: a volunteer work experience placement, job shadowing or mentorship. Service Providers identified numerous benefits to the skilled immigrant including the opportunity to:

- demonstrate abilities
- have his or her skills assessed
- build contacts
- gain local experience
- increase understanding of local rules, regulations, codes, laws, etc.
- begin to develop communication skills around things like teamwork
- gain an understanding of work and company culture
- understand the relationship between manager/boss and employee (more lateral here than hierarchical like it is in many other cultures)
- practice “real language”
- have his or her language ability assessed or to self-assess

3. More Career Exploration and Planning

Service Providers cited the need to add more robust Career Exploration and Planning components to programs for skilled immigrants. It is generally understood that skilled immigrants require a considerable amount of time to develop an understanding of the local labour market and how their qualifications, skills and experience will fit. Time is required for Service Providers to assist clients with needed research and time is required by the client to process the information. Time is also required to develop a short-term plan and a long-term strategy for success.

4. One-on-one Job Coaching

Many service providers stated the importance of one-to-one meetings to create action plans. This components was seen as critical given the diverse nature of the client group. It was also suggested by at least two service providers that these weekly one-to-one meetings continue after program end; a period of 12 weeks was suggested.

5. An Extended Follow-Up Period

Service Providers felt that the typical 12 week follow up period does not capture true success rates; six month and one year follow up periods were considered to be more reflective of labour market attachment for skilled immigrants.

6. More Attention to Development of Soft Skills and Presentation Skills

Service Providers shared that many skilled immigrants come with the attitude of “I have credentials, so hire me”. Time is required to assist clients to understand that having credentials and being able to present them are two different things. Time is required for clients to understand how to present themselves and the importance of these “soft skills” once on the job. Further time is required for clients to develop the ability to present themselves well. Half of the Service Providers stressed the importance of presentation and the need for workshops dedicated to presentation skills and cultural awareness.

7. Increase Employer Contact

Many service providers identified a need for greater employer contact. Suggestions include:

- Hold forums with panels of “experts”: HR personnel, business owners, managers
- Service Providers need time to dedicate to developing relationships with employers
- Develop an employer speaker series

8. More Specialized Programs

Service Providers recognized that even with programs specifically designed for skilled immigrants there will be a huge variance in need. It was suggested programs be developed for different sectors; for example, a job search program specifically designed for foreign trained engineers, health providers, etc.

9. Credential Evaluations Prior to Arrival

Have credential evaluations done prior to arrival.

10. Credential Evaluation

More time dedicated to obtaining information about professional associations and assisting clients to make contact and/or make application as well as allotting time to explore Credential Evaluation and its value to the individual client.

11. Provisional or Transitional Status Offered

Have professional associations provide transitional or provisional status for international professionals and provide mentoring.

12. Employer Incentives

Provide incentives for employers to hire skilled immigrants.

13. Financial Assistance to Skilled Immigrants

Provide financial assistance to skilled workers to pay for upgrading/living costs while getting established.

14. Job Placement Funding

More programs supporting work experience placements are needed.

Best Practices Identified

A Review of Literature

Through a review of literature a number of best practices have been identified and listed below. This is by no means an exhaustive list but does capture a cross section of current programs and services targeted at assisting skilled immigrants integrate more effectively into the Canadian workforce.

Career Bridge Program

<http://www.careerbridge.ca>

Career Bridge is a successful pilot program funded by the Ontario government. Its goal is to match foreign trained jobseekers with suitable employers for 4 month internships. Career Bridge handles the pre-screening and offers a number of suitable applicants to the employer.

Centre for Foreign Trained Professionals and Tradespeople

<http://www.cftpt.org/index.asp>

This centre provides a five-week program to help foreign trained professional and tradespeople match their skills to the Canadian labour market by assisting them to develop a work search plan and learn effective work search techniques. The Centre also maintains a website profiling foreign trained resumes and professional profiles.

Immigrant Employment Loan Programs

The Immigrant Employment Loan Program has been set up to assist new skilled immigrants, who are not eligible for student or other loans, to afford to do the appropriate upgrading and career search.

<http://www.maytree.com/RefugeeImmigrantProgram/ImmigrantEmploymentLoanProgram/ImmigrantEmploymentLoanProgram.htm>

Programs for Foreign Trained Nurses

This project has been designed to assist foreign trained nurses get their license to practice.

<http://www.care4nurses.org/>

Networking Associations for Internationally Trained Professionals

BCITP aims to assist foreign trained workers to network and to build associations. Associations for doctors and surgeons and another for engineers are being developed.

<http://www.bcitp.net/>

The Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO)

AIPSO's goal is to assist internationally-trained physicians to integrate effectively and equitably into the Canadian health care system. The work of AIPSO has included: providing information to members; research related to access for international physicians and surgeons; network and coalition building; and participating with regulatory and government bodies in the consultative reform of the processes of integration.

<http://www.aipso.ca/>

Skills Improvement Programs

Ontario has pledged \$4-million to support skills improvement programs for internationally trained health care workers, pharmacists and technicians. Further Skills Improvement Programs for other occupational groups are also being developed.

www.clbc.ca/media_room

Bridge to Success for Trades Program -- Phase I: Industrial Electricians

<http://www.skillsforchange.org/trades/index.html> *and*

Program for internationally trained accountants and bookkeepers

<http://www.skillsforchange.org/itab/index.html>

Skills for Change is developing a number of bridging programs to assist different occupational groups make a transition into the Canadian workforce.

The Bamboo Network Host Mentoring Program

This program is assisting newcomers by providing them volunteer Canadian host mentors. Host mentors are volunteers recruited from the community who are professionals or tradespersons with a similar degree or training as the immigrant. Many are immigrants themselves who have managed to receive Canadian designation in their professions and are now able to assist new immigrants adjust to life in Canada and guide them in their future careers and professions.

<http://integration-net.cic.gc.ca/inet/english/region/cbc/2004-01.htm>

Program Model Overview

This model has been developed to incorporate several key features to meet the real needs of the skilled immigrant job seeker. The first key feature is English. Conclusions drawn from research indicate that English is a main barrier to employment. Given the varying levels of English ability skilled immigrants arrive with and varying rates of language acquisition after arrival, this model makes a clear distinction between English language upgrading and job search. The model assesses and refers applicants to programs that most effectively meet their immediate needs. The development of English sufficient for a thorough job search is a required foundation. Only with an adequate level of English can an immigrant begin the search for skilled work.

The second key feature is flexibility. This “three tracked” model recognizes that skilled immigrants land in BC with diverse needs and levels of ability and rather than attempt to make one program fit all, skilled immigrants are enrolled in the most suitable component and continue to the next track only if required. The model is further flexible in its delivery; a six week job search program (Track I) can be run at least 7 times in a year offering multiple start dates. The six week assisted job search (Track II) operates on a continuous intake model; allowing prepared applicants to begin at any time.

The third key feature is employer contact and the development of skills to make effective employer contact. This model has incorporated more direct employer contact in workshops and in personal consultations, and has dedicated time to developing communication and professional presentation skills through practice and by conducting an actual job search.

Further to these three key features, research findings indicate that the development and implementation of an effective career planning model for skilled immigrants must address the following 15 elements:

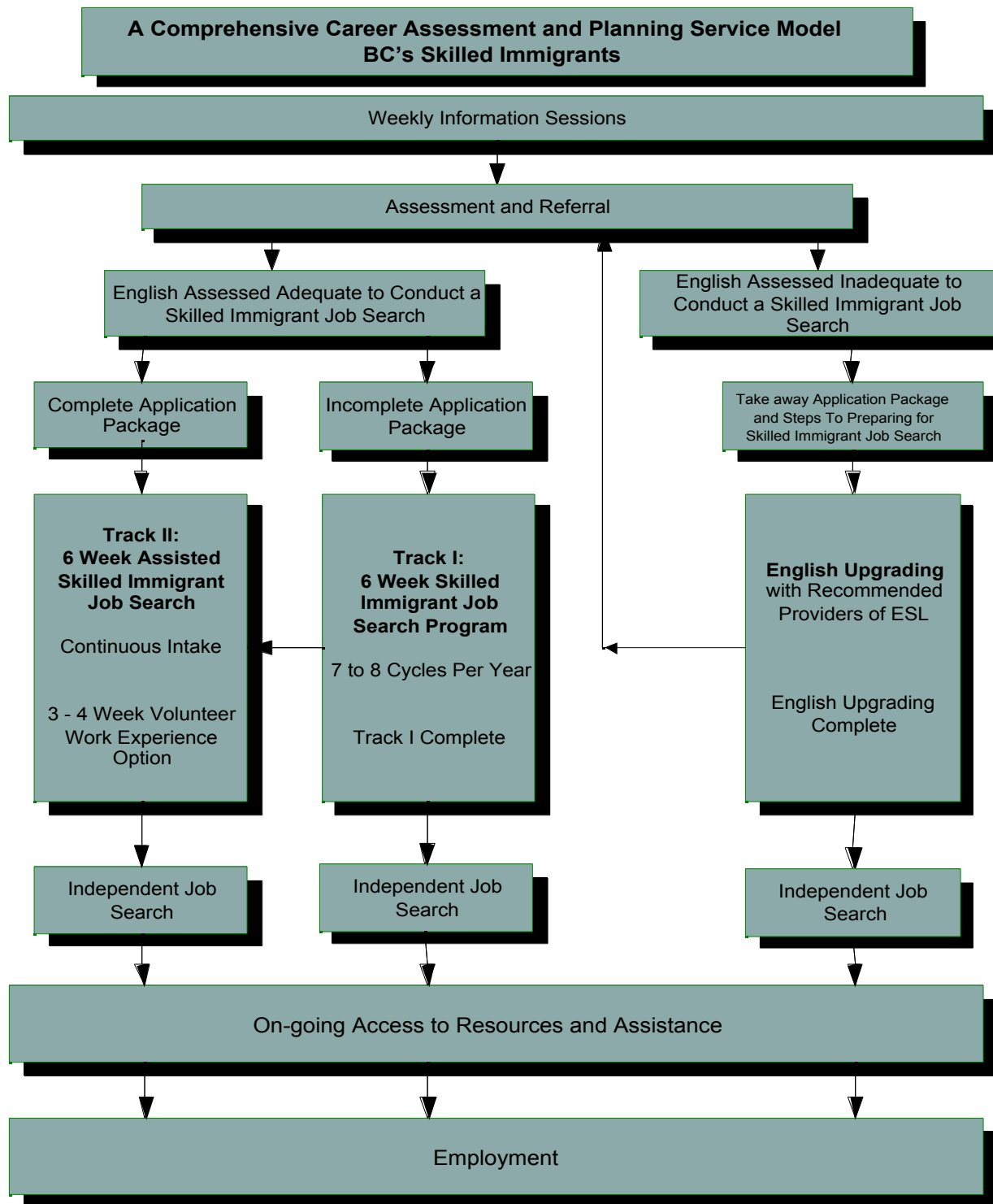
1. Earlier Interventions
2. Individualized attention; more one-to-one job coaching opportunities
3. English language development
4. More time devoted to Career Exploration and Planning
5. An understanding of employer needs
6. Job search documents that match occupational requirements
7. Cultural Understanding
8. Communication and Presentation Skills
9. A Network and the Skills to Build a Network
10. Understanding of the local labour market
11. Canadian Work Experience
12. More and earlier connections to employers and other industry professionals
13. Recognition of credentials and qualifications
14. A consistent and systematic method of skilled job search program delivery
 - a. Adequately trained service providers
 - b. Materials/Resources designed specifically to support skilled immigrant job search
15. Extended participant follow-up

These elements and their relative ranking by each group consulted have served as the guideposts for the development of this model.

The model breaks out into the following 3 main components:

1. **Assessment and Referral to:**
 - a. English Upgrading Classes
 - b. Track I: 6 Week Skilled Immigrant Job Search
 - c. Track II: 6 Week Skilled Immigrant Assisted Work/Work Experience Placement Search
2. **Track I -- 6 week Skilled Immigrant Job Search Program**
3. **Track II -- 6 week Assisted Work/Work Experience Placement Search**
 - a. 3 to 4 Week Work Experience Component
 - b. On-going access to resources and assistance until employment

See the following page for a diagram of the model.



Assessment and Referral

Assessment and referral are critical pieces of this model as they are the foundation of offering a consistent model of programming to BC's skilled immigrants. The demand from immigrants and service providers for *early intervention* and *a consistent and systematic method of skilled job search program delivery* and the clear indication from employers that *English remains a main barrier to employment* strongly influenced the development of this assessment component.

Key features of the Assessment and Referral Component of the Model are:

- Early Intervention Referral Points
- Contact
- Information Sessions
- Referral / Intake Interviews
- English Language Upgrading Referral

a) Early Intervention Referral Points

Likely referral points:

- Immigration Offices prior to arrival
- Immigration Offices upon arrival
- Community Airport Newcomers Network (C.A.N.N.)
- Immigrant Settlement agencies
- Self-referral

b) Contact

Interested applicants will contact service providing agency or program coordinator directly. Applicants will be booked to attend an information session.

c) Information Sessions

In this model all applicants will attend an information session and will immediately be booked for an individual intake interview. At the information session, applicants will receive an overview of the possible referral or program streams:

1. Referral to English Language Classes
2. Track I -- 6 Week Job Search Program for Skilled Immigrants
3. Track II -- 6 Week Assisted Work or Volunteer Work Search

Eligibility criteria will be clearly outlined. At the outset of the information session, applicants will be required to fill out a registration form including general personal and professional background information. Applicants will also be introduced to the application package (outlined in detail in section g below). If they believe they have the requisite English and they are interested in applying for either Track I or Track II, they will be given the application package to complete and bring to the referral interview. At the conclusion of the information session, completed registration forms will be collected and applicants will be scheduled for individual referral interviews.

For some information session attendees, an individual referral interview will not be necessary; the language of the information session will have been too great a challenge. In these cases, an immediate referral to a recognized provider of English language upgrading is recommended.

d) Referral / Intake Interviews

Scheduled referral interviews will take between 30 to 45 minutes. All applicants will be required to bring all their current job search documents to the scheduled intake interview. Those applicants interested in Track II will also bring a completed application package. The registration form, the interview and, when applicable, the Track II application form will form the basis of the assessment.

e) Assessing English

Many skilled immigrant job seekers fail to find work related to their field not because they lack the requisite skills and experience but because they lack the English to conduct a skilled job search, let alone support the duties and responsibilities of their occupation. Service Providers will assess skilled immigrant English in relation to their ability to conduct a skilled job search. Service Providers will be assessing the applicant's oral and written English abilities.

Assessment of Oral English

The intake interviews will be conducted very much like an employment interview. Similar personal, educational and experiential questions will be asked. The applicant's ability to handle these questions will form the basis of the oral assessment. If the applicant struggles with the English of the interview, he or she does not have the requisite English to conduct a professional job search and is referred to English upgrading classes. It is imperative that he or she understands clearly that without the English to support a professional job search, the search will be unsuccessful and therefore, time would be better spent improving English language skills before undertaking such an endeavor.

Assessment of Written English

The registration forms collected at the information session will be reviewed and used as an assessment of the applicant's ability to fill out an application form -- adherence to basic spelling rules, ability to follow written instructions, general clarity of written expression will be assessed.

f) English Language Upgrading Referral

As stated above, applicants with English language abilities assessed as inadequate to conduct a professional job search will be referred to recognized providers of English as a Second Language. The developers of this model recognize that applicants referred for English upgrading

will again be assessed by the language provider. It is also understood that applicants may be required to attend several English programs before they have acquired adequate English for a skilled immigrant job search.

Applicants referred for English upgrading should be given a handout outlining the steps to take to develop their career plan and job search while they are studying English. As well, they should take away a copy of the application package. It is important to note that although these applicants do not currently possess adequate professional job search English, they may begin preparing themselves and their documents for a professional job search. It is expected that these applicants, upon attaining adequate English language skills, may again be seeking job search assistance. At this time, these applicants may again be assessed and referred to either Track I or Track II.

g) Assessment of Job Search Documentation and Knowledge – Track I or II?

Applicants with English language abilities assessed as adequate to conduct a skilled job search will have their job search documents and / or the application package reviewed. See application package details below.

i) Application Package

Cover Letter -- A cover letter written by the applicant stating the candidate's readiness and suitability for the program must be submitted. The letter should include information regarding any job search programs or workshops taken, and methods and techniques the candidate is currently applying to his or her work search.

Labour Market Information Form – Candidates must submit this form listing 3 people from his or her field, including one person from an appropriate professional association. Candidates must outline in detail what information about their field they gained from these contacts.

Resume – Candidates must submit a resume clearly outlining their career objective, skills, educational background and work history.

References – Candidates must submit a reference list of 2 people who may be contacted by program staff. These referees should be able to speak to the candidate's professional skills and / or personal qualities as they pertain to work.

List of companies with contact people – Candidates must submit a list of 10 companies they have researched and wish to contact. This list must include company name, contact name and title, address, telephone and fax numbers. The contact person should be the manager of the department the candidate wishes to work or volunteer for; for example, Accounting Manager, Project Manager, or Lab Supervisor.

ii) Other Criteria

Applicants who present a completed application package will have their application assessed. The presentation of an effective package is fulfillment of Track II criteria and the applicant **may be considered** for registration. Those applicants who did not complete a Track II application or who did not submit a complete package **may be considered** for registration in Track I. **Final program referral** will be determined by applicants successfully meeting all of the following criteria:

Track I Criteria

Candidates for Track I:

- Have a high intermediate to advanced level of English; they are able to handle all communication, written and oral, necessary to conduct a professional job search
- Have little to no understanding of how to conduct a professional job search in BC and could not complete the Track II application package
- Can commit to attend and participate fully in all workshops and consultations
- Are willing and able to dedicate a minimum of 30 hours per week to their professional job search
- Often, but not always, have begun a professional job search and have a sense of their personal barriers to employment and the challenges of the local labour market
- Are able and motivated to work immediately

Track II Criteria

Candidates for Track II:

- Have a high intermediate to advanced level of English; they are able to handle all communication, written and oral, necessary to conduct a professional job search
- Have been conducting an active job search and have an understanding of the local labour market related to their occupation

- Have a very good understanding of how to conduct a professional job search in BC
- Are able to fully and independently complete the Track II application package
- Can commit to attend all consultations
- Are willing and able to dedicate a minimum of 30 hours per week to their professional job search
- Are seeking guidance and are motivated to find work or a volunteer placement related to their field

Once referred, it is expected that applicants will enroll in the appropriate program at the next available start date.

Track I: A Six Week Skilled Immigrant Job Search Program

This program is full-time; designed to be run 5 days per week, 6 hours per day. The program will be delivered through a combination of workshops, group and individual fieldwork assignments, independent work search activities, and weekly one-to-one employment counseling consultations with program staff. Workshops will feature lectures, group discussions, case studies, role plays, in-class assignments, work search videos, videotaped mock job interviews with human resources professionals, videotaped professional presentations, and guest speakers representing various trades and professions. A complete list of workshop topics and sample schedule is provided below.

Program Components

This program consists of three components:

1. Career Development Workshops focusing on these areas:
 - a. Job Search Skills and Techniques
 - b. Canadian Workplace Employability
 - c. Communication and Presentation Skills
 - d. Networking Skills and Network Development
2. Self-directed Job Search
3. One-to-one Weekly Consultations

Upon completion of this program, clients will have developed skills in the following areas:

a) Job Search Skills and Techniques

- set realistic short and long term career goals
- acquired job search strategies, skills and confidence
- employed strategies to overcome employment barriers
- developed effective job search documents

b) Canadian Workplace Employability

- understood and practiced Canadian workplace behaviors and communication
- conducted a self assessment of work-related skills and abilities
- acquired an understanding of Canadian workplace employability skills

c) *Communication and Presentation Skills*

- developed an understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication in Canadian culture
- initiated conversations to acquire necessary information
- improved ability to communicate effectively when presenting information

d) *Networking Skills and Network Development*

- gained strategies for approaching employers and other contacts related to their profession
- practiced the skills required to make contact with professionals within their occupational field
- gained an understanding of the importance of continuing to build and maintain their professional network
- developed the beginning of a professional network

Career Development Workshops

As cited earlier, research revealed 15 specific and unique career development needs of the skilled immigrant job seeker. Based on this information, 30 three hour Career Development Workshop Topics have been developed. These topics have been divided into four broad subject areas and entered into the tables below.

Job Search Skills and Techniques	
#	Workshop Topic
1	Program Orientation
2	Overview of Effective Job Search Strategies
3	Resume Writing I
4	Introduction to Resources and Leads List Development
5	Resume Writing II
6	Job Search Letters I
7	Job Search Letters II
8	Telephone Techniques I
9	Telephone Techniques II
10	Telephone Techniques III
11	Interview Preparation I
12	Interview Preparation II
13	Mock Job Interviews (Videotaped)
14	Mock Job Interview Group Reviews
15	Orientation to Assisted Job Search and Volunteer Work Experience Placements

Communication and Presentation Skills	
#	Workshop Topic
1	Communication Professional Presentation Skills
2	Communication Prof. Presentation Skills – Session 2
3	Communication Prof. Presentation Skills – Session 3
4	Communication Prof. Presentation Skills – Session 4

Networking Skills and Development	
#	Workshop Topic
1	Guest Speaker/Panel: Successful Skilled Immigrants
2	Guest Speaker/Panel: Human Resources/Employers
3	Introduction to Community Resources: Library Tour Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Canadian Workplace Employability	
#	Workshop Topic
1	Skills Analysis
2	Career Exploration and Planning I
3	Career Exploration and Planning II
4	Labour Market Information
5	Employability Skills in Canada
6	Exploring Cultural Differences and Corporate Culture
7	Time Management and Goal Setting
8	Teamwork and Community Connection

Sample Schedule: Six Week Skilled Immigrant Job Search Program

Although the sample below depicts a daytime schedule, research indicated a demand for more evening skilled immigrant programming. Many skilled immigrants struggle to gain job search skills due to the demands of “survival” employment or childcare. It is recommended that this be considered when implementing a skilled immigrant job search program.

Sample Schedule: Six Week Skilled Immigrant Job Search Program

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Wk. 1 a.m.	Program Orientation	Skills and Accomplishment Analysis	Career Exploration and Planning I	Career Exploration and Planning II	Employability Skills in Canada
p.m.	Self-directed job search				
Wk. 2 a.m.	Labour Market Information	Overview of Effective Job Search Strategies	Resume Writing I	Introduction to Resources and Leads List Development	Resume Writing II
p.m.	Self-directed job search				
Wk. 3 a.m.	Job Search Letters I	Job Search Letters II	Presentation Skills	Telephone Techniques I	Telephone Techniques II
p.m.	Self-directed job search				
Wk. 4 a.m.	Guest Speaker/ Panel	Telephone Techniques III	Presentation Skills	Exploring Cultural Difference and Corporate Culture	Interview Preparation I
p.m.	Self-directed job search				
Wk. 5 a.m.	Interview Preparation II	Guest Speaker/ Panel	Presentation Skills	Videotaped Job Interviews	Interview Reviews
p.m.	Self-directed job search				
Wk. 6 a.m.	Teamwork and Community Connection	Work Experience Orientation	Presentation Skills	Introduction to Community Resources	Time Management and Goal Setting
p.m.	Self-directed job search				

It is recommended that whenever possible workshops are developed to “stand alone”; that is, each workshop is complete with little to no carry over to future workshops. This is recommended for several reasons. Stand alone workshops:

- Facilitate the understanding of new concepts and skills
- Facilitate the immediate application of skills
- Facilitate the connection of Manual Materials to Workshops
- Workshops can be lead by any number of instructors/subject experts
- Workshops can be “shuffled” to accommodate schedules of workshop leaders/guest speakers, holiday facility closures, etc.

It is expected that participants attend all workshops. Full-time attendance is critical for three reasons. Firstly, although participants will enter the program with varying levels of local job search understanding, many skilled immigrants *do not know what they do not know* and will learn from each workshop and from their classmates. Secondly, it is important that participants demonstrate culturally important workplace behaviors; for example, attendance, punctuality, teamwork, initiative in group discussion, etc. Few skilled immigrants have local references and may request workshop instructors or programs coordinators to act as personal references. It behooves participants to present themselves professionally in the workshops as they would in a workplace setting. Thirdly, there is great value to be gained in “group job search”. Many skilled immigrant job seekers suffer from the isolation of an individual job search. They perceive that something must be wrong with them that they are cannot find employment, they may be lonely and frustrated by limited people contact and limited opportunities to practice their English, they can become frustrated, depressed or angry. Many of the immigrants interviewed who had attended a job search program, cited this connection to the group as being supportive, confidence building and motivating.

Self-Directed Job Search

After specific skills have been addressed in classroom sessions, it is expected that participants will immediately dedicate their time to applying these skills to their job search: resume development, job search letter writing, leads/company contact list development, industry research, telephone contact, etc. The ultimate goal of this program is employment; however, job

search self-sufficiency is also a goal. It is critical that clients apply the skills to master the techniques to conduct a professional job search. Through direct application and practice of the techniques and skills taught, the skilled immigrant job seeker acquires ***both the knowledge and the confidence*** to conduct a job search on his or her own. During one-on-one consultations, the clients' application of these skills will be enhanced by practice with and feedback from the program consultant.

One-to-one Weekly Consultations

Personal employment counseling consultations are exceedingly important in working with skilled immigrants. Due to the wide diversity of participants' career fields, work experience and background, one-to-one consultations are required to make course content relevant for each participant and for clients to get the assistance needed to overcome unique employment barriers. These weekly personal consultations serve the following purposes:

1. to assist clients to develop and, as more information is gathered, to refine short and long term career goals
2. to assist clients to gather and interpret labour market and job search information
3. to assist clients to establish a weekly plan of action
4. to correct language and pronunciation errors
5. to edit job search letters and customized resumes
6. to assist clients to develop and rehearse telephone scripts
7. to model effective telephone techniques by making calls for information on behalf of the client
8. to talk privately about individual employment barriers and to offer advice and assistance to assist clients to overcome these barriers
9. to talk privately about workplace concepts, job search activities or workshop dynamics that clients find confusing or objectionable. Often, difficulties clients are experiencing will not be raised within the group during a workshop, for fear of monopolizing class time, losing face, or appearing ignorant.
10. to motivate and encourage clients to work through a job search and a period of their life that is usually complex and frustrating

Track II: A Six Week Assisted Work / Volunteer Work Search

This segment of the program has been designed to assist skilled immigrants to find work or volunteer work experience placements. This program is designed for skilled immigrant job seekers with advanced job search skills and in-depth knowledge of where and at what level their skills fit into this local market. To enter this program, candidates must be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills for an active and independent work search campaign in BC by thoroughly completing the application package. Applicants may have English as a native language or have English as a second language at an intermediate or advanced level as outlined in the Assessment and Referral section.

It is expected that many of the candidates for this program will be graduates of Track I and that these graduates, if required and desired, would move seamlessly from Track I into Track II. It is important to note that it is not mandatory for graduates of Track I to continue to Track II. In many cases, graduates of Track I will be fully self-sufficient and have all the job search skills, contacts, and confidence to conduct an independent job search and transition into employment. Some Track I participants will have found work during Track I or may have “hot” employment leads and choose to continue their job search on their own. Others, due to financial or other reasons, must abandon assisted skilled job search to take a survival job.

Track II is structured to “stand alone”; as long as candidates can successfully complete the application process, they need not complete any formal job search training. In this way, Track II can accommodate a newly arrived skilled immigrant from anywhere, at anytime as long as they can demonstrate a need for assistance and the ability to conduct an independent job search.

Program Components

Like Track I, this program consists of three components:

1. Self-directed work and volunteer work search
2. 6 one hour personal consultations with an employment counselor
3. Volunteer work placement; unless participant secures paid employment

a) Self-directed Work and Volunteer Work Search

During Track II, participants will be engaged in a full time search for work or a volunteer work experience placement. Typically, participants will use their time to complete weekly action plan activities, and apply work search techniques such as:

- conduct information meetings
- develop and maintain network of professional contacts
- attend networking events
- compose and send work search correspondence to employers
- attend employment interviews
- make follow up telephone calls
- expand their leads list
- keep informed of developments and technologies in their field
- research local industry-specific employment prospects

Participants' progress, challenges, and further needs for support will be addressed and monitored during the individual consultations.

b) Personal Consultations

The personal consultations of Track II differ from the consultations offered in Track I. The consultations of Track I were general and used to assist clients through every aspect of job search. The consultations of Track II are much more focused and client driven. It is expected that clients will come to meetings able to identify problem areas in their work search and clearly articulate their needs for assistance. As client-driven as these consultations are, meetings will continue to be used to:

1. establish a weekly plan of action
2. assist client to maintain a log of activities, a plan for contacting employers and for timely follow-up actions

3. monitor client calls to employers and offering feedback for improvement
4. make calls on behalf of the client and acting as an the client's advocate
5. refer client to additional resources
6. brainstorm job search strategies with client and assisting client to design employer specific approaches
7. edit job search letters and customized resumes
8. correct language and pronunciation errors
9. motivate and encourage clients through the job search and a period of their life that is complex and frustrating

It is expected that clients secure their own volunteer placements, however, they will likely approach employers in collaboration with the program consultant during the personal consultation sessions.

The length of time required to locate a suitable work experience placement differs from individual to individual. Factors such as the amount of field research required, the number of existing network contacts, level of language ability, employability skills, employment opportunities within their field, and degree of work search activity, all influence the amount of time required to secure a placement. However, given the advanced level of job search understanding and network development that candidates enter Track II with, 6 weeks is viewed as sufficient time to accomplish this task.

c) The Volunteer Work Placement

Typically, a placement of 3 to 4 weeks is sufficient for the participant to obtain the following benefits:

- an assessment of their skills within the context of the Canadian workplace
- an opportunity to gain valuable occupational knowledge and skills
- exposure to both work and Canadian culture
- a clearer understanding of their career path and goals
- confidence in their goals and their new Canadian work identity
- an opportunity to network with professionals
- a local reference

In collaboration with the program consultant, the following aspects of the volunteer placement must be arranged to ensure a successful placement:

- A schedule of working days and hours agreed upon by both the participant and the employer (participants may consider negotiating a less than full-time placement in order to continue to job search);
- An agreement between the employer and the participant that outlines duties and expectations;
- An introductory call from the service provider to offer further program details, to answer any questions, to set up a monitoring visit for the last week of the placement. This monitoring visit is critical for the service provider to assist the participant to gain full feedback on skills and abilities in order to make necessary career/educational plan adjustments. The monitoring visit is also important for the development of relationships between the service provider and the employer and company.

On-going Access to Resources and Assistance Until Employed

On-going access to resources and assistance is highly recommended. A skilled job search for anyone is a complex and time-consuming process of developing an understanding of how skills meet local employers' needs, of building a network, and unearthing opportunities to present oneself and one's skills. It is an even more complicated and lengthy process for skilled immigrants. The skilled immigrants who complete the described program will be "self-sufficient" job seekers but still require and benefit from access to resources and assistance. It is expected that these job seekers will require little individualized assistance at this point but on-going access is a critical support. Research indicated that one of the greatest benefits of joining a job search program was the collegial connection to the group and the encouragement and security of knowing that the job seeker was not alone in going through this frustrating period of adjustment and transition.

On-going access to resources and assistance may include the following:

- Access to career development resources including: company databases and directories, newspapers and periodicals, resume and cover letter sample books, etc.
- Computer and Internet access
- Access to a fax machine and phone line
- The opportunity to attend additional employment related workshops or networking events hosted by the service provider
- Additional service provider assistance by email, phone or more one-to-one scheduled meetings.

Strategies for Increased Employer Involvement

Research for this report indicated that greater connections of skilled immigrants to employers and professionals within their occupational community will result in quicker and more meaningful attachments to the local labour market. Towards the development of strategies for increasing employer connection and involvement, service providers were consulted. Service providers clearly understood and expressed the benefits of increased employer involvement to the skilled immigrant. Many have work experience or mentorship programs and initiatives in place. However, many expressed time and funding limitations that impeded the establishment, or further establishment, of contacts with employers. A lack of strategies and tools for developing these connections was also cited.

Skilled immigrants were also surveyed to gain their perceptions of the role of employers in assisting them to attach to the labour market. Skilled immigrants listed understanding employer needs, a network and networking skills, labour market information and English language as the top five elements to a successful job search. They also expressed the understanding that the best way to obtain these elements was through increased employer contact.

Employers were also surveyed to gain their input on this point. Almost 40% responded that skilled immigrant attachment to the workforce is an important Human Resources issue.

However, only 16.7% have practicum or internship programs in place and only 8.3% of respondents have mentoring programs in place. This data indicates an awareness of need for further involvement and a willingness to consider and develop initiatives and strategies.

The tables below offer strategies for increase employer involvement and in providing these recommendations, it was recognized that both employers and service providers are often limited in resources, personnel and, in the case of employers, by the constraints of union and other workplace policies. Therefore, specific recommendations have been offered at three levels of time and resource commitment.

Strategies for Increased Employer Involvement		
Employer Resource Commitments	Strategy / Actions	Benefits / Implications
Low Resource Commitments	<p>Invite individual employers, professional association representatives, and successful skilled immigrants to speak at skilled immigrant job search workshops one to two times per program cycle</p> <p>Coordinate and host a “panel of experts” including Human Resources specialists, employers, association representatives, successful skilled immigrants one time per program cycle</p>	<p>Provides direct contact between job seekers and professionals</p> <p>Increases job seekers awareness of professional and trade associations and their role</p> <p>Increases job seekers specific occupational knowledge</p> <p>Develops skilled immigrant job seekers confidence to approach professionals for information</p> <p>Decreases skilled immigrants fears around approaching employers and human resources personnel</p> <p>Demystifies job search process and moves job search theory to application</p> <p>Assists job seekers and service providers to stay current with hiring and other human resources trends</p> <p>Develops employer and human resources awareness and understanding of skilled immigrant workers</p> <p>Builds relationship and rapport between employers and service providers</p> <p>Increases possibility of developing work experience placements and / or mentorships</p>

Strategies for Increased Employer Involvement

<p>Limited to Medium Resources Commitment</p>	<p>Coordinate a weekly guest speaker series including employers, human resources personnel, representatives from industry, trade and professional associations, successful skilled immigrants or past graduates</p>	<p>Provides direct contact between job seekers and professionals Increases job seekers awareness of professional and trade associations and their role Increases job seekers specific occupational knowledge Develops skilled immigrant job seekers confidence to approach professionals for information Decreases skilled immigrants fears around approaching employers and human resources personnel Demystifies job search process and moves job search theory to application Assists job seekers and service providers to stay current with hiring and other human resources trends Develops employer and human resources awareness and understanding of skilled immigrant workers Builds relationship and rapport between employers and service providers Increases possibility of developing work experience placements and / or mentorships</p>
<p>Limited to Medium Resources Commitment</p>	<p>Coordinate relevant company tours for skilled immigrant job seekers</p>	<p>Increases skilled immigrant understanding of Canadian workplace Facilitates development of work search documents as workplace becomes “real”</p>

Strategies for Increased Employer Involvement		
		Builds skilled immigrant confidence to directly approach employers
Limited to Medium Resources Commitment	Establish mentorship programs in partnership with local employers and professional and trade associations.	<p>Facilitates development of a meaningful career plan</p> <p>Expedites development of a network of professional contacts</p> <p>Expedites acquisition of current local labour market information</p> <p>Builds skilled immigrant confidence in themselves and their career goals</p> <p>Creates greater awareness, interest and involvement of community in issues related to skilled immigrants</p>
Limited to Medium Resources Commitment	Create a website for the skilled immigrant job search program and post skilled immigrant bios and resumes and profile employment success stories. Invite employers, hiring personnel, association representatives, skilled immigrants, and other service providers to visit site.	<p>Increases profile of available skilled immigrant workers</p> <p>Increases profile of available skilled immigrant job search programming and services within BC</p> <p>Highlights purposes and successes of skilled immigrant job search programming</p>

<p>Medium to High Resource Commitment</p>	<p>Establish a business advisory council. This would be a council of business people from various occupations volunteering 1 to 2 hours monthly.</p>	<p>Gains input at local level for improving linkages between skilled immigrant job seekers and employment Increases opportunities for establishing volunteer work experience placements and mentorships</p>
	<p>Develop a “matching” service; work with employers / hiring managers to establish their recruitment needs and present employers pre-screened applicants. Establish a fee structure to off set costs and / or apply for funding from government sources.</p>	<p>Facilitates employment of skilled immigrants by reducing amount of job competition Fulfills recruitment needs of employers while reducing recruitment costs Links service providers, skilled immigrants and employers in mutually beneficial manner</p>
<p>Medium to High Resource Commitment</p>	<p>Partner with government to develop incentive programs, wage subsidies or tax benefits, for employers involved with skilled immigrant employment initiatives.</p>	<p>Promotes increased involvement from business community Offers incentive to employers to increase amount of resources and personnel dedicated to volunteer placements, internships, advisory councils, mentorships, etc.</p>

Conclusion

The strength of this model of career planning and assessment resides in its comprehensiveness. The model addresses the importance of establishing a foundation of English, includes time for career research and planning, builds in multiple practice and real opportunities for employer contact and networking, and teaches “real world” communication and professional presentation skills. Skilled immigrants will complete this model employed or “self-sufficient”; they will have a career path, effective job search documents and “know-how”, in addition to a network, the skills to grow their network, continued access to resources and, most importantly, the confidence in themselves and their ability to search for employment now and in the future.

It is understood that this model shares characteristics and features with other employment programs and services, for example, workshop topics. It is not these individual workshop features or seminar topics that make this model distinct. Rather, it is the emphasis on the specific needs of the individual skilled immigrant and a real respect for the hiring expectations and experiences of employers. Employers are looking for the best candidate for their vacant position. Skilled immigrants may often be the best candidate but lack the skills to get to the employer and present these skills. Each component of the model presented has been developed in response to these expressed needs of employers and skilled immigrants.

The model acknowledges and respects its participants’ professional standing and aims to support skilled immigrants to find careers that will allow them to meaningfully contribute their professional skills to BC and its economy. By giving them an opportunity to adequately acquire the language of their new home, to self identify and explore options, to obtain career development skills and to establish networks, personal and professional, the model offers a solid beginning to a new life in BC. Indeed, for many skilled immigrants, the program’s provision of contact, collegial and social support, the assurance of shared experiences from fellow participants, and an on-going connection to resources and assistance will be the most significant contributing factor to their employment success.

While it is beyond the scope of this report, it is clear from the research that further examination of the requirements and preparation of staff expected to work with skilled immigrants needs to be conducted. In preparing skilled immigrants for the workforce, service providers not only require a systematic structure, but need to be equipped with an understanding of the very diverse needs of the skilled immigrant population. Service providers need to understand the challenges skilled immigrants face in developing adequate English language skills and in having their skills and credentials recognized. They need to have the skills and tools to assist foreign trained job seekers to develop a career plan that will lead, sooner than later, to contributing their talents to BC's workforce. They require strategies and time to increase the involvement of employers. In order to provide the best employment results for BC's skilled immigrants, service providers will require skilled and innovative, well trained and well resourced employees to provide the best possible assistance.

Annotated Bibliography

Alboim, Naomi. Fulfilling the Promise, Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy, April 2002

http://www.maytree.com/PDF_Files/FulfillingPromise.pdf Accessed March 2004

This report details several strategies for increased integration of foreign trained workers into the Canadian economy.

Backgrounder, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/04.01/bg0120.html> Accessed March 2004

Brief article outlining Ontario's funding plans for bridging programs for foreign trained teachers, engineers, pharmacists, and health care professionals over the next 3 years.

Goar, Carol. Turned Away At Every Door. Toronto region Immigrant Employment Council, www.triec.ca, The Toronto Star, Wednesday, April 21, 2004 Accessed April 2004

Goar tells the story of a foreign trained immigrant family that arrive in Canada with great hope and two years later must return to their native country having not found work related to their fields and having spent all of their savings. These immigrants feel the Canadian government must suspend recruitment of skilled immigrants or support them to integrate into the workforce in a meaningful way. This piece tells an all too common and sad immigrants experience clearly supporting the need for change in Canada's handling of skilled immigrants.

Immigrants Welcome, Roadblocks Ahead, February 18, 2004

http://www.clbc.ca/media_room/newsletters_archive/news_wt02180401.asp Accessed March 2004

This article outlines the difficulties skilled immigrants have in finding employment related to their field and a pilot project by the Ontario government called Career Bridge. While companies pay the employees' salaries, Career Bridge does the initial interviews, credential screening and language evaluations before presenting employers an array of qualified candidates. Interns complete a 4 month term with experience and reference. Ontario government has been delighted with the results and has provided funding for 3 more years.

Interim Report for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers Project, September 2003
http://www.clbc.ca/files/Reports/Consolidation_report.pdf Accessed March 2004

This report outlines the Ottawa Internationally Trained Workers' project which has the goal of developing strategies to facilitate accreditation and integration of foreign trained professionals into the Ottawa economy.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Facts Are In!
www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng_g/apt/facts02.pdf Summer, 2002. Accessed March, 2004

The research team of the Ministry of Training, colleges and Universities use data collected from interviews with 643 foreign trained professionals to outline the experiences of immigrants seeking employment within regulated professions in Ontario. The study outlines the importance of immigrants having information prior to arrival, settlement assistance, bridging assistance, language training academic credential assessments and Prior Learning Assessments. The paper outlines the steps the Ontarian government as taken to assist skilled immigrants. This paper sees the actions and the programs and services offered by the Ontarian government as a model for other provinces developing government led strategies to assist foreign trained professionals.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Employer Survey

A research project for the development of:
Comprehensive Assessment and Career Planning Services for
BC's Skilled Immigrants

Instructions

This survey has been designed to take as little of your time as possible. Most of the questions are “check box” style; to mark your selection, please enter an “X” in the brackets. In two cases, we have asked for your input in short answer form. We anticipate this survey will take about 15 or 20 minutes. When complete, please save the document and return as an attachment jody.johnson@shaw.ca. Or, print the document and fax to: 604 664 8448.

For the purposes of this research project, the term *skilled immigrants* is defined as those immigrants that have foreign professional or trade certification including: trades qualifications and/or post-secondary and technical diplomas, degrees or certificates.

Again, we thank you for your time and input.

Employer Survey

Company Information

- I. How many employees does your company/organization have? Please indicate below.

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 100 – 250
- over 250

II. Please list the occupation/s that characterize your company.

Perceptions

- 1. Skilled Immigrants are a component of your workforce.
True [] False []

- 2. Given our economy’s growing need for skilled workers, your company anticipates hiring more skilled immigrants or foreign trained professionals in the next 1 to 3 years.
True [] False []

- 3. Skilled Immigrants have the skills and experience required for employment in your industry/business.
True [] False []

- 4. Skilled Immigrants require longer periods of job orientation and work place familiarization.
True [] False []

- 5. Below are some of the difficulties employers encounter in hiring **Skilled Immigrants**. Please mark all those that your organization has encountered.
 - [] English language barriers
 - [] Inadequate or poorly presented job search documentation (resumes, cover letters, references, etc.)
 - [] Lack of relevant experience
 - [] Lack of local or Canadian experience
 - [] Lack of required/recognized certifications or credentials
 - [] Misinterpretation of Job Title or Other Vocational Terminology
 - [] Lack of understanding of company or industry culture

- Lack of interview and presentation skills
- Other (Please list below)

6. Rate the following in order of importance in securing work in your company:

1 – very important, **2** – important, **3** - neutral, **4** – limited importance, **5** – not important

An Understanding of the Local Labor Market

Canadian Work Experience

A Network of Employment Related Contacts

Effective Job Search Documents (resume, letters, etc.)

Near Native English Skills

An Understanding of Canadian and Canadian Work Culture/Communication

An Understanding of Company's Needs

Credential Evaluation/Trade Certification

Testing and Other Skills Assessments

Experience and/or barriers to hiring skilled immigrants

7. What elements or practices are involved in your recruitment and hiring process?
Please check all that apply.

- Preliminary screening of job search documents
 - Interview
 - Second or Multiple Interviews
 - Type of Interview:
 - Panel Phone One on One
 - Reference Checks
 - Language Assessments or Testing
 - Skill Testing
 - Work Simulations
 - Certification or Credential Verification
 - Other (Please list below)
-
-

8. Of those you selected, which cause the most difficulty for *skilled immigrant* candidates?

- Preliminary screening of job search documents
 - Interview
 - Second or Multiple Interviews
 - Type of Interview:
 - Panel Phone One on One
 - Reference Checks
 - Language Assessments or Testing
 - Skill Testing
 - Work Simulations
 - Certification or Credential Verification
 - Other (Please list below)
-
-

9. Which of the following documents do you require in your recruitment and hiring process? Please check all that apply.

- Resume or C.V.
 - Cover Letter
 - Completed Application Form
 - Reference Letters
 - List of Referees with Phone Numbers
 - Diploma/Degree
 - Transcripts
 - Credential Evaluation
 - Trade or Technical Certificate
 - Portfolio
 - Other (Please list below)
-
-

Interest in developing further labour market attachment initiatives for skilled immigrants

10. Do you perceive participation or the development of initiatives to support the attachment of *skilled immigrants* to the workforce as an important Human Resource issue for your company?

- Yes No

11. Do you have initiatives in place to support the attachment of *skilled immigrants* to the workforce?

- Yes No

If yes, please check all that apply:

- English Language Instruction
 - Mentoring
 - Practicums/Internships
 - Work Experience or Volunteer Placement Programs
 - Skills Upgrading or Professional Development Opportunities
 - Academic or Degree Sponsorship
 - Other (Please list below)
-
-

12. If you currently do not have workforce attachment initiatives for ***skilled immigrants***, of the following practices please indicate all those that would be beneficial to your company? Please rate them according to the following scale:

1 – very beneficial, **2** – beneficial, **3** - neutral, **4** – limited benefit, **5** – not beneficial

Volunteer Work Experience Placements

Paid Internships

Government Wage Subsidies

Establishment of a Mentorship Program

Volunteer Advisor to Job Search Program for ***Skilled Immigrants***

Other (please list below)

13. How do you feel about these statements? Please rate on the following scale:

1 – strongly agree, **2** –agree, **3** – ambivalent, **3** –disagree, **5** – strongly disagree

a. It is fully the responsibility of skilled immigrants to search and find employment.

b. It is the responsibility of the Canadian/British Columbian government to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.

c. It is the responsibility of Employers to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.

d. It is the responsibility of Trade and Professional Associations to assist skilled immigrants to find employment related to their fields.

14. Would your company participate in a volunteer advisory capacity for labour market attachment programs developed for **skilled immigrants**? (Please note, that this is not a commitment, but rather a measure of overall corporate/employer interest)

Yes [] No []

If yes, please indicate a realistic time commitment that could be contributed.

[] 1 – 2 hours weekly

[] 1 – 2 hours monthly

[] 1 – 2 hours quarterly

[] 1 – 2 hours semi-annually

15. Please use the space below to add other additional comments or suggestions on your experience, hiring, recruiting, and working with **skilled immigrants**, or any further suggestions for labour market initiatives that would aid their attachment to the workforce.

Appendix 2: Immigrant Interview Questionnaire

A research project for the development of: Comprehensive Assessment and Career Planning Services for BC's Skilled Immigrants

Skilled Immigrants Interviews

Participant Information:

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: Female
 Male

Employment Status: Employed
 Un-employed
 Self-employed
 Under-employed (work unrelated to your professional background)

Occupation or Profession: _____

Education level: High School Graduation University Degree
(select highest College Diploma Graduate Degree
level completed Technical Certification Post Graduate Degree
prior to immigration) Trades Certification Other _____

Education and professional development since coming to Canada:

Year immigrated to Canada:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2004 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2003 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1997 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2002 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1996 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2001 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1995 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prior to 1995 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1998 | |

Interview Questions

1st Contact for receiving Labour Market Information

1. Describe your experience accessing resources and assistance related to your job search.

2. Where and when did you access BC labor market/job search information?

3. What would have improved or quickened your access to Labour Market Information?

Barriers to Employment

4. What have been the barriers to obtaining employment related to your professional background?

- 5. What service or information do you think would assist you to overcome these barriers?

Services: Best Practices and Gaps

- 6. Have you participated in a job search program?

- a. If yes, what were the most useful components of the program?

- b. If anything, what was lacking or would have improved the program?

- 7. What job search and labour market information resource/s have been the most useful? Why?

- 8. Do you use print or on-line resources? Which do you prefer?

9. How do you feel about these statements? Please rate on the following scale:

1 – very strongly agree, 2 – strongly agree, 3 – somewhat agree, 4 – ambivalent, 5 – somewhat disagree, 6 – strongly disagree, 7 – very strongly disagree

- As a skilled immigrant, it is fully my responsibility to search and find employment

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- It is the responsibility of the Canadian/British Columbian government to assist me to find employment related to my field

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Rate the following in order of importance in securing work in BC:

1 – very important, 2 – important, 3 - neutral, 4 – limited importance, 5 – not important

Labor Market Information

1 2 3 4 5

Understanding of Employer Needs

1 2 3 4 5

Canadian Work Experience

1 2 3 4 5

A Network of Employment Related Contacts

1 2 3 4 5

Effective Job Search Documents

1 2 3 4 5

Near Native Level English Skills

1 2 3 4 5

An Understanding of Canadian and Canadian Work Culture/Communication

1 2 3 4 5

The Skills to Build a Network

1 2 3 4 5

Credential Evaluation

1 2 3 4 5

Transferable Skills

1 2 3 4 5

a. Please list the three components (from above) you consider most important.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

11. What are other Labour Market resources or services that you think would assist skilled immigrants find employment?

Appendix 3: Service Provider Consultation Questionnaire

Questions for Service Providers

1. What percentage (estimated) of your clients in the past year have been skilled immigrants?

2. What services for skilled immigrants have you offered?

- Job Search Programs
- Career Planning Services
- Job Placement
- Wage Subsidies
- Skill Development and Training
- Credential Evaluation and Assessment
- Labour Market Information Seminars
- Other _____

Understand current practices, resources and tools

3. Do you offer services or programs specifically designed to meet the needs of skilled immigrants? Please describe.

- 4. What on-line resources do you most often use to assist the skilled immigrant job search? Which one is the most useful? Why?

- 5. What print resources do you most often use to assist the skilled immigrant job search?

Which one is the most useful? Why?

- 6. Rate these career planning, job search, and labour force attachment components in order of importance in facilitating:

1 – very important, 2 – important, 3 - neutral, 4 – limited importance, 5 – not important

Labor Market Information

1 2 3 4 5

Canadian Work Experience

1 2 3 4 5

A Network

1 2 3 4 5

Effective Job Search Documents

1 2 3 4 5

Near Native Level English Skills

1 2 3 4 5

An Understanding of Canadian and Canadian Work Culture/Communication

1 2 3 4 5

The Skills to Build a Network

1 2 3 4 5

Credential Evaluation

1 2 3 4 5

Skills Assessments

1 2 3 4 5

Gather input on best practices

- 7. If you could develop a career planning and labour market attachment program for skilled immigrants, what elements would you include?

- 8. Are you aware of other service models or labour market attachment initiatives that have been highly successful? What do you believe made them successful?

Gather input on perceived gaps in service and information

- 9. What resource gaps, if any, have you identified?

10. What service gaps, if any, have you identified?

11. What has been your biggest barrier as a service provider, to assisting skilled immigrants?

12. What would improve your ability to assist the employment of skilled immigrants?
