

BACKGROUND SUMMARY REPORT PRESENTED TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Enhancing Labour Market Attachment of Skilled Immigrants within the Okanagan: An Environmental Scan

Possibility Concepts will work with key Immigrant Serving Agencies in the Okanagan to complete two main objectives. The first key objective is to complete an environmental scan of the Career Assessment & Planning Services and the Integrated Bridging Services. The scan also will determine the capacity of the Integrated Bridging System. The second key objective will be to develop a series of recommendations that will inform future labour market attachment initiatives within the region.

Upon completion of this project – the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS) will be able to assess the capacity of the Integrated Bridging System. The Ministry will also have recommendations developed by the Advisory committee that can be used to inform future direction. These recommendations will focus on identifying initiatives that are both innovative and cost effective and that can integrate strategic opportunities, local priorities and enhance or develop the regional capacity to increase effectiveness of labour market attachment of skilled immigrants.

Description of Region: The Okanagan Region is made up of South, Central & North communities. According to the 1996 census data, in the South Okanagan, (Penticton, Keremeos, Oliver, Osoyoos and Summerland) 17% of the population are immigrants. In the Central Okanagan, (Kelowna, Lake Country and Peachland) 15% of the population are immigrants. While in the North Okanagan, (Armstrong, Coldstream, Enderby, Lumby, Spallumcheen and Vernon) 12% of the population are immigrants. Penticton, Kelowna and Vernon are the urban centres of their respective communities. Each is also the center of service delivery within their sub-region. For the purposes of this project, given the limited timeframe, activities will be focused in these three cities.

The population of the Okanagan is just over 284,081, while the immigrant population is comprised of 40,650 or 14% of the population. It is a growing segment of the population. Skilled immigrants, those individuals with a trade, other non-university education, post secondary education or a degree, make up just over 54% of the total immigrant population. This is a highly skilled segment of the population and can make significant contributions to the Economic Development of the Region. The integration of these skilled immigrants could assist in alleviating the emerging skill shortage in the Okanagan.

Labour Market Attachment Initiatives undertaken by the Ministry need to be supported through an inventory of community assets and gaps. This will ensure the success of those initiatives building local ownership and avoiding duplication of services.

Participating Organizations: Please note: some agencies provide more than 1 funded employment program, and other agencies provide the same service in Kelowna and/or Vernon and/or Penticton. Kelowna: The Economic Development Commissions,

Netwercc and other groups did not participate in the Survey but have contributed their expertise and expressed the views of business.

Penticton:

1. Penticton & District Multicultural Society
2. Open Door
3. Connections
4. Employment Express
5. Speaking Out Services Inc.
6. Economic Development Commission – South Okanagan

Kelowna:

1. Kelowna Community Resources – Settlement Program
2. Community Futures – Community Employment Offices
3. Gerhardt Henderson,
4. Career Contact Centre for Youth
5. CBD
6. Rucastle Schiller
7. Employment Express
8. Speaking Out Services Inc.
9. Okanagan University College (Kelowna, Vernon & Penticton)
10. DS Consulting
11. Spectrum Rehabilitation Services Inc.
12. Accurate Translations Inc.
13. Economic Development Commission – Central Okanagan Region
14. NETWERCC (regional Employment Counselors Networking Group)

Vernon:

1. Vernon & District Immigrant Services Society (VDISS)
2. VDISS Employment Program
3. BCITPN (hosted at VDISS)
4. Community Futures – Community Employment Offices
5. North Okanagan Employment Enhancement Society
6. Career Directions
7. Career Technology Achievement Centre
8. Economic Development Commission – Greater Vernon Region
9. Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
10. Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

Valley Wide

1. Okanagan Partnership Initiative: HR Cluster Groups – Life Sciences, Knowledge Industry and Aviation
2. Okanagan Science & Technology Council
3. Interior Health Authority – Recruitment & Retention
4. HRSD

Individual Skilled Immigrants:

1. Erlinda Carreira
2. Marzena Mielniczuk
3. David Webb
4. Ulrich Zacharias & Partner

To Date:

- 34 organizations and five Skilled Immigrants participated.
- Three immigrant serving Society, One training institute – Okanagan University College, 14 employment service agencies. One issue that emerged is that the HRSD funded organizations are in transition. Some were closing down programs while others were establishing new programs.
- Please note: several employment service agencies in Kelowna provide services also in Vernon or Penticton.
- The BCITPN (BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network: <http://www.bcitpn.net>) – The Okanagan Chapter of this group has been informed of the project. The BCITPN has been supportive of this initiative – some members here today.
- All agencies providing Career Assessment & Planning services also provide service to Skilled Immigrants. With the exception of Kelowna Community Resources Settlement Workers program, Skilled Immigrants as a group are not tracked. However, some agencies estimate the # of S.I.'s at between 5 -25%.
- Only Vernon has employment services that are funded to specifically assist Skilled Immigrants through HRSD. However; there are pockets of knowledge, expertise and interest. Some agencies are knowledgeable about the issues and assist SI through one-on-one service and through adapting group interactions. Some agencies will create mentorship when possible through a buddy system with other Canadian seeking employment or business were they have developed relationship.

BARRIERS:

- Language – written, verbal, accents, and vocational specific language. English words that are different in the Host country.
- Not familiar with a) Canadian Labour Market practices (culture), b) Okanagan Labour Market practices: includes - not knowing how to do a resume, person doesn't have Canadian work experience. The Employers are not sure how the SI's qualifications transfer to Canadian standards. 85% Hidden job market in Kelowna,
- One partner gets a job –engineer their spouse also professionally trained (doctor) can't get work. Has had papers assessed but can not get an internship.
- Qualification assessment – access to credential evaluation is either too costly or too time consuming – not a “user-friendly” process. Some people know about it but for the most part only the Immigrant serving agencies have any familiarity with the process. It can be HRSD funded but not many service agencies know this.

- Individualized action plan 9
- Workplace practice opportunities 6 limited + 1 Wage subsidies for E.I. clients
- Internship or preceptor ship 2 limited
- Co-op placement 1 limited
- Job Shadowing 3 limited
- Mentorship 3 limited
- Other: Employment Counselling 2

- Organizations are pretty familiar with each other and each other's services but not with specialized services that might assist SI. – Internet services, Assessment organization – Prior Learning Services
- Skilled Immigrants can upgrade Language Skills at OUC but the classes are not designed to meet their vocational needs.
- A few agencies are familiar with resources; tool and/or curriculum developed to assist with Career Assessment and Planning Services and/or Integrated Bridging Services for Skilled immigrants but most are not. Most agree that they are not accessible for SI.

KELOWNA MEETING
April 16th, 2004

Participants:

| <u>Agency</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Accurate Translations | Evi Mayer |
| Community Futures Kelowna, Community Employment Office: | Merran Davies |
| Skilled Immigrant | Marzena Mielnicauk |
| Kelowna Community Resources – Settlement Program: | Jayne Williams and Elizabeth McCleod |
| OUC ESL Program | Barb Delgatty |
| Gerhardt and Hendershon | Heather Merkley & Jennifer Ostle |
| Skilled Immigrant | David Webb |
| HRSD Program Officer | Diane Marit |

Definitions:

Skilled Immigrant: Someone who enters Canada with existing qualifications, 2 years or more of education after completion of high school graduation (Professional or trades) and/or experience.

Services: Language assessment, career assessment, career planning, job search, credential evaluation, accrediting bodies, job-specific ESL, technical upgrade/review, work experience, mentoring, volunteer in field of expertise.

Bridging Programs for SI's Includes: Job-specific ESL, technical review/upgrade, work experience or job shadowing, mentoring, CLB minimum requirement, PLA or PLAR or portfolio assessment, credential evaluation, job search techniques.

Benchmarking: Using the success factors of excellent programs as a baseline for new programs.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- EDC Partners Program
- ESL
- Translation
- Funding for credential evaluation-HRSD community Employment Services
- Targeted wage subsidy programs past/current EI
- Families with children-help with legal issues, day care, outreach program
- Welcoming
- Host programs
- ICES credential evaluation
- Employers that are immigrants themselves open to hiring others
- Realize that SI has to fill the gaps
- Skill gap, shortage of workers
- Networking opportunities good
- Education for kids
- Ability to challenge exams
- Partners are here need to get them together
- Cluster groups
- CIC/HRSD working together
- Recent funding for this initial announcement
- Project literacy will help individuals with resumes job search
- Volunteers

Weaknesses

- Lack of funding
- ESL no life beyond ELSA
- Fragmented
- Hard to find all resources
- Jobs available are low paying
- No continuity, coordination between service providers
- Financial services-eg. Credit card application, credit rating should take into account credit ratings from other countries.
- Don't understand how financial services work
- Not a wide range of services-not enough to attract SI
- Citizenship/pension less
- Not enough programs specific to SIs eg. for entrepreneurs
- Spouse needs work
- Employers can't provide job shadows, mentorship opportunities etc...
- Lack of community awareness re: SI needs/issues
- Specialized non-service to provide orientation to Canadian culture, work place

etc...

- Not aware (providers) of services
- Not enough options (job wise)
- Not enough eg. engineers to provide job-specific ESL
- Lack of individualized support in test taking
- Immigrant scattered across Okanagan, numbers too low for critical mass
- No info sheets about regions in specific internet sites.
- Hard to find jobs (90% not advertised)
- Not enough written LMI info (Labour Market Info) re: specific jobs
- No choices at providers

Opportunities

- Employers are aware of need
- Centre for Professionals, library, contact with employers, business members, work job shadowing, one stop shopping large thing (Marzena)
- Large subsidy for SI
- Job developers
- Gap analysis- which professions most in demand
- Design program for them, ESP advertise
- Develop program from scratch
- Using benchmarks (rather than support from elsewhere)
- Expand existing imm. serving service to meet needs better
- If you build it they will come
- Entrepreneurship (to absorb the number of workers into the job market)
- Demographics of imm. in region:

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 17% South Ok | 1996 census |
| 15% Central Ok | |
| 12% North Ok | |

(54% are skilled immigrants)

- Glossary of Canadian terminology
- UBC education
- More coordination/clustering between service agencies educators, gvt.
- Initial help and information plan with guidance (individual)
- Sector councils-employment issues

Threats

- Lose good people from Foreign countries. Labour shortage is global – Canada must stay competitive in order to attract S.I's
- Immigrants because the immigration process takes too long (18 months +)
- If we don't do it, economy will decline
- Over populating, quick growth- infrastructure threat, supply of jobs
- Province and Feds won't work together
- Social service sector stretched, want to work together, lack of resources to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educators should:

- Look at innovative service delivery models for language service (vocational language, benchmark 1-10, accent training). Example: Through the internet and support with tutors and study groups.
- Provide a continuum of ESL services to the level necessary for employment in the chosen area.
- Provide testing support for trades and professions after conversational/interview/workplace language classes.

2. Employers should:

- Partner with immigrant services to be able to access skilled workers and understand their needs to gain Canadian experience, provide job shadow opportunities and assist with work related language requirements.
- Prepare for changes in the community (ie. increase of immigrant population) as well as increase awareness of benefits of diversity in the workplace and decrease the rigidity of the hiring process. Sector councils- Reps from various industries to discuss growth/opportunities
 - SI is one part of solutions
 - Labour Market Information can be made more available and communicated – in and outside of the region.
 - Job developers should participate

3. The Government should:

- Provide funding to current service providers to assist immigrants with bridging (ie. working language and community job development).
- Regional funding decisions should be made locally through processes of establishing priorities and partnerships.
- Implement a one stop holistic service for all immigrants in the Okanagan under partnership funding.
- Develop labour market information occupational fact sheets specific to the Okanagan under partnership funding.
- Make it attractive for employers to hire skilled immigrants (financial assistance), speed up the immigration process and better target immigration, and provide more information for newcomers to Canada.
- Increase funding for services through government partnerships in all levels: Federal/Provincial/Municipal/Regional.

4. In general we should:

- Make sure the general community continues to welcome immigrants and sees S.I.s participation in the labour market as being in the the community's best interest.
- Access and make use of services, agencies and education already available.
- Improve visibility of the jobs availability.
- Make it easier to settle by reducing fear of the unknown.

- Do more research regarding labour market availability? Demand versus Supply
- Have media to promote the issue.
- Be aware of online resources and links from sites (ie. HRDC, EDC, City of Kelowna, Chambers- local, provincial, national).

5. Skilled immigrants should:

- Be matched up with a mentor in their specific specialties/area as well as receive information sheets of services in their language.
- Have a means of reducing immediate cultural acclimatization issues by having information provided early.
- Research their new country and region (Labour Market Information).
- Work as a group to promote their abilities and skills among employers; there are two community support groups.

6. Service agencies should:

- Increase awareness between service providers of services being provided.
- Form general client population, identifying specific target clients and make special effort to link them with resources.
- Coordinate employment services to make them user friendly to newcomers.
- Spearhead projects that close the gap between research results and industry cluster needs in the employment community.
- Receive adequate funding to offer necessary services.
- Increase knowledge of existing tools/resources available on internet/portal (national/provincial).
- Create survey (ie. customer satisfaction).
- Job developers- specialize in employment services and work with employers and channel of info re: clients, from other services to provide JD.

VERNON MEETING
April 22, 2004

Participants:

| <u>Agency</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Community Futures | Norm Metcalf |
| BCITP | Annette |
| HRDC | Monica |
| VDISS | Carol Wortze |
| Bowen Employment Services | Dianne Churchill |
| Target Wage Subsidies | |
| Accurate Translations Ltd. | Evi Mayer |

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Benchmarking: Using the success factors of excellent programs as a baseline for new programs.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Vernon & District Immigrant Services Society (VDISS) as a focal point for issues that affect or impact Immigrants in Vernon
- Specialized employment program that covers settlement
- Cooperative spirit between service providers
- Informal/formal network of integration of services
- Try not to duplicate
- Combined expertise/staff retention
- Skill matching- employers begin to approach the service agencies
- Motivation Level of SI (their residency):
- VDISS HRSD funded employment program has an 85% success rate of employment attainment (not necessarily in the S.I.'s field)
- Leading to networking
- SI specific employment service- developed curriculum over eight years
- UDISS- three other networking groups including HRSD contractor monthly meeting

Weaknesses

- Lack of employer participation in development of local strategies
- Policies of government that don't foster partnership between companies
- Profit margins slim and time becomes a commodity
- Not enough attention to demand side, benefits of partnership and/or collaboration lost
- Not enough information regarding job market, supply agencies in SI-language of origin
- More community education
- Unique employment situation in Vernon
- Language- look of advanced and terminology specific
- Networking opportunities for S.I.'s - but not too much
- Not funded to skill match/employers don't have capacity and given that there are many employees, no incentive
- Sunshine tax- people new to the area are surprised to find that they are paid less in the Okangan even within their field of expertise.

Opportunities

- Forum in place to dialogue partner
- To develop community welcoming of people from outside area
- Follow up funding
- Hot issue

Threats

- SI overwhelmed by how different Canada is- especially Europeans because people aren't "physically" different, cultural differences aren't as apparent
- Changing governments that insist on "retooling" services, lack of continuity. For instance HRSD funding changes has resulted in many local agencies closing down and others taking over, often confusing for organizations to figure out where to send a "client" now.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General should:

- Employment developer specializing in SI's that provide service in more than one community in the region.
- Symposium on issue of immigration for community leaders hosted by CIC.
- CIC- (almost warning to new immigrants) - needs to make clear that because you make the point system that it's no guarantee of employment.
- Focus groups (A.C.) have created learning opportunity for other employment servicing agencies.
- CIC in Kelowna- what are they doing? Inform the communities- needs to be more actively involved with community development.
- Labour market, economic market, regional "issues" etc... Need to be available in one centralized place- CIC portal.

2. Employers should:

- Incentives (tax break or wage subsidies) for involvement.
- Become more knowledgeable about Foreign trained workers.

3. Government should:

- Federal and Provincial need to engage local municipality.
- Continue to fund and sustain existing program that supports participation of qualified staff.
- Partnership of Federal (CIC and HRSD and Regulatory Bodies also need to work together) and Provincial government funds.
- Speed up process of credential evaluation working with professional bodies, and association. Also, make the process "user friendly".
- Needs to change criteria (be more flexible, broaden it) so it meets needs of SI's (three month plan for credential process not realistic given time for evaluation).
- Province needs to make English level 4 and up available on-line with local tutors, and study groups similar to distance education programs now offered.
- Province needs to ensure that on-line learning is supported through access to public internet sites at existing ELSA service provider agencies.
- HRSD needs to make public that credential evaluation can be funded, and whom through: 1) Self-employment programs 2) Wage subsidy.
- Program needs to be expanded beyond EI.

4. Skilled Immigrants should:

- Continue to network and lobby for changes.
- Research before and after immigrating.
- Flexible and adaptable.

5. Educators should:

- Make English level 4 and up available on line with local tutors, similar to distance education programs now offered.
- Qualified teacher and study groups.
- Portable regional services for SI
- On line practise tests for English exams, trades exams and professional exams (eg. RNABC Nurse's exam).

**Vernon Second Meeting
May 12, 2004**

Participants:

| <u>Agency</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| North Okanagan Employment Services | Lynn Beshler |
| VDISS | Carol Wortze |
| BCITP | Annette |
| VDISS (HRDC funded contract) | Monica |

Agenda:

- Review notes
 - Recommendation
 - Select 4-5 recommended
 - Develop Action Plan
-
- The planned Canadian and BC Portal, after its created will need to be advertised
 - Access to a Portal is limited as it requires English and computer skills. Not all S.I.'s have previous computer knowledge.
 - but it could provide improved communication and access by people working in the field as employment counselor, settlement worker, and/or ELSA teacher
 - If people who work in this field are able to access this information then they can make the information available to clients
 - improved access to settlement services for Immigrants who speak higher levels of English.
 - Many people think settlement services are for Immigrants who don't speak English but even English speaking foreigners would benefit from some of the general information available about Canadian institutions such as the banks, hospitals, schools etc...

Services:

Core/Essential need to be consistent

Employer Developer:

- Knowledgeable of Okanagan employment Market
- inventory of skill needed or knowledge of the employment "demand side" needs to be developed linking through Economic Development Commissions and Okanaganpartnership Human Resource Flagship "the Skills Pipeline" initiative.
- access to funds available for targeted wage subsidy

- creating Networking Opportunities
- Mentorship/Work placement (note: Program needs money for liability Insurance so that clients covered under agencies WCB)

Funds available for:

- Short-term training such as exam fees, study groups, computer software, practice exams, travel to sit exams, credential fees, food safe, WHMIS, first aid
- Then client gets a workplace (unpaid) work training (2 weeks) placement
- Employer gets a subsidy but has to provide a job description and a training plan that will assist the worker to transition into paid work placement
- partner with employer to create a ladder approach with a long-term goal of employment in the person's field. Plan should include integrated English Language Training.
Example, A foreign trained nurse, - the Employment Developer would work with Interior Health to develop a ladder approach working toward full employment as a nurse. The nurse would work as a care attendant or in Home care worker and also work at improving their English Language skills, at the same time their nursing credentials would be sent for assessment – long term goal – to employ the person as Nurse.
- RN-acknowledging first or second year (challenging exams)
- Prior learning assessment
- work with the Prior Learning Assessment coordinators at OUC to facilitate challenging nature of exams
- Access to English Language beyond level three-student must be assessed for ELSA level and computer skills
- a) Study Group focused on preparing for equivalency exams: TOEFL, IELTS, LPI
- b) Study Group focused on occupation clusters: Business, Health, Trades
- c) Computer Lab-open learning and teacher on-site (teaching three hours=3)
Computer basic training one week intense course, once a month offered during the day, afternoon and evening rotation
- Teacher qualification certificate in TOEFL
 - ESL teacher
 - TESL Canada recognized min. two years experience teaching ESL and demonstrate knowledge of Settlement
 - computer literate

**Penticton Meeting
May 13, 2004**

Participants:

| <u>Agency</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Skilled Immigrant | Jaswinder Kaur Grewal |
| Skilled Immigrant | Sukhwinder Kaur Saran |
| PDMS – Settlement Worker & S.I. | Margarita Wood |
| Skilled Immigrant | Ratwinderpal Teja |
| PDMS – Settlement Worker & S.I. | Mandy Channa |
| Skilled Immigrant | Ulrich Zacharias |
| PDMS – Former Ex.Dir. | Lyn Wells |
| Speaking Out Services | Janet Black |
| Open Door Centre | Alex Grace |
| Vertek Diversified Services | Bev Deets |
| Employment Express | Larry Hall |
| Human Resources and Skills Development | Sandra Boel |

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Benchmarking: Using the success factors of excellent programs as a baseline for new programs.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Small community
- Easy to network and make referrals
- Community Development- cohesiveness
- Familiarity with each other
- S.O. Resource Centre good access to outside Penticton
- Good variety of programs funded through HRDC
- Supportive employer base interested in skill level and job performance
- Stability of staffing

Weakness:

- Settlement service not well known
- Services are in English and sometime assume computer skill but not accessible to newcomers who don't speak English or may not have computer access
- Critical mass-when do we provide service in another language
- Knowledge gap
- Communities change but it takes time for services to catch up
- Programs change to often for clients or community to know where service is...
- CIC Point system creates impression that when you arrive you will have work in your field
- Access to ESL beyond Canadian Benchmark Level 3
- Lack of employment that match their skills
- Supply/demand sides are not matching
- Lack of services to teach how to become employed in Penticton
- Need higher level ESL classes (distance learning is a good suggestion)
- Need better integration of employment services for SI
- Need to improve Canada's immigration laws to bring the point system into alignment with reality; ie: perception created in the minds of immigrants that they will find employment in their fields
- Need pre-employment training for immigrants re: job culture

Opportunities:

- Immigrants speak two languages
- Okanagan Partnership
- Canadian Social Policy is opening
- Provincial and Federal want more SI outside major centres
- Okanagan is growing
- Hi Tech industries establishing
- More people equal more capacity, critical mass
- Help existing Agencies/Resources understand what additional assistance new immigrants require-be specific

Threats:

- Do Canadians want to integrate Immigrants?
- Hidden job market
- Racism does exist
- Conflicting message Canada open but barriers do exist
- Perception that SI are advantaged
- SI over qualified
- Inertia, compliancy, ignorance
- Hiring policy of larger organization-need to be reviewed-expanded to reflect current realities
- Protectionist attitude of Professional Association
- Lack of understanding of Immigrant needs

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SS Agencies should:

- Teach strategy for how to penetrate/contact the Indo-Canadian community
- More need for communication between Immigrant community and services being offered by current agencies
- Provide more help to Immigrants having no computer skills and not knowing the Canadian culture
- Know more about PDHS
- Skill Immigrants/ working one to one advising workers

2. The Government should:

- Review Pre-Immigrant policy re: job opportunities
- Review certification process for all professional jobs
- Make ESL available at higher level
- More and higher level ESL and computer labs-no tech industries established in this area who need high skilled workers
- Pay more attention to this community
- Pay more attention to the skills and talents of Immigrants
- Develop a database of skilled Immigrants-need funding to do this

3. Educators should:

- Be more informative about the resources existing in the area
- Learn how to approach Immigrants
- Make language training more accessible
- Encourage use of English at home

4. In General we should:

- Find out the Immigrant needs, what skills there are in the Immigrant community
- More open to discuss issues
- As PDMS we need to advertise more
- Stability of staff-trusting
- Everybody needs to know that we exist; more promotions about the Immigrants
- Network

5. General Recommendations:

- Special needs of SI need to be addressed
- Cultural awareness
- Appropriate ESL levels for SI
- More stats-what skills do Immigrants have when arrive, what additional skills do they need
- Match supply and demand
- Change point system, do not give impression that there will be employment and then not have it available for SI
- Make process of international accreditation more simple

6. Multi-C.C. should:

- Work closer with local employment agencies to educate counsellors re: special needs of skilled (and unskilled) workers re: employment
- Perhaps co-facilitate job searching process (work with employment counsellors and settlement workers as a team, identify goals and skills and labs, MKF opportunities)

7. Employment Agencies should:

- Make a greater effort to be more inclusive and to support skilled immigrants better
- Look at hiring more Immigrants ourselves
- HRDC should provide some funding to upgrade skills of employment programs to facilitate special needs of SKI's

**Kelowna Second Meeting
May 14, 2004**

Participants:

| <u>Agency</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Oracle Database Solutions (UK) | David Webb |
| LC CEC | Merran Davies |
| CBD Network | Laurie Mills |
| Dini Steyn (Investing) | Dini Steyn |
| Guent | Erlinda carreira |
| OUC ESL Program | Barb Delgatty |
| Speaking Out Services | Crystal Croteau |
| Speaking Out Services | Cindy Shaw |
| Skilled Immigrant | Sunil Dwand |
| Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society | Marion McCarthy |
| Kelowna Community Resources | Elizabeth McCleod |
| | Jayne Williams |
| HRSD | Diane Marit |

Review of Vernon and Kelowna minutes.

Kelowna Recommendations:

- Wage subsidy for one-on-one volunteer placements with employers in field of expertise (matching) includes connecting with other services-includes ongoing support after placement
- “Employer Developer” (speaking out CAP)-need financial support
- Wage subsidy incentive for employers that would increase Labour Market Attachment of SI
- Wage subsidies or placement (Job search/ CAP speaking out)
- 1 on 1 with employers- volunteer placement-led to work
- Centralized information
- Resume that is understandable to Canadian employer
- Access to funding for evaluation of foreign credentials in a specific place that is both “user friendly” and fast
- Some kind of mapping of who your former employer was

Skills identification:

- Identification of who the employer was
- a description of size of employer/work that was done “Canadian equivalent”
- integration of settlement and employment services

Employment Counseling:

-Services Includes: skill identification, skill matching, skill gaps, employer description, S, Personal Touch (individual Assistance)

Employer Developer:

- educates employers about SI
- quality employment match in SI field or skill set
- builds relationship with employer market
- must be a marketer and feeds to the employment counseling service
- business oriented
- integrated service so that the SI doesn't have to bounce around
- website with information that links to a "Canadian and BC portal" and with Labour Market information for the Okanagan
- local "Okanagan" labour market information that is up to date
- partnership creating networking opportunities for SI
- labour law/regulation

Language Criteria:

- Basic level=CLB placement 2
- higher level English
- ELSA level 4, 5, 6
- Need for standardized English within our region between OUC and Immigrant serving societies
- Some occupation bridging language-
- cultural education about Canadian/Okanagan Employment culture

Person Who Supports SI:

1. Preparation for tests and practice test available on-line (more affordable)
2. Test centre-someone who can supervise local test taking
3. Prior Learning Assessment
4. Challenge Testing Trades Qualification
5. Portfolio, E-Portfolio

Available:

- On-line ELSA upper levels attached to computer/language lab and at least one teacher or tutor with conversation class or study groups
- tracking of student profile and success rate and support until labour market attached
- Definition of eligible target group

The Website:

-Potential partnering for an Okanagan Website – Labour Market website:

- a) Okanagan Partnership
- b) Economic Development Commission
- c) City Municipalities
- d) OSTECC

-linking to other sites

An example of a “model” site: workdestination.ca (or com) –relocate to housing/food

-website should include general information regarding Kelowna such as:

- Housing information – cost of owning or renting
- labour market, what are the Labour Market demands
- services available
- food
- language level
- cost of living related to standard of living
- schooling
- lifestyle information

Parking Lot Notes:

- Immigrant Agent and how much they get paid
- Credential Evaluation HRSD funded
- Volunteerism
- It takes a period of time 2-3 year before a program is well known
- Also, employers will not access without “trust” that service will be there

**Penticton Meeting – Second Meeting
May 27, 2004**

Cancelled due to poor turn out.

ENHANCING LABOUR MARKET ATTACHMENT OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS IN THE OKANAGAN – RECOMMENDATIONS

AS PRESENTED TO THE THREE COMMITTEES – VIA E-MAIL

(Committee members were invited to comment – comments were integrated into the final report).

The Committees recognized that in the region there are Employment Counselors, ELS teachers and other community workers who have specialized skills and knowledge that could assist in the development of a program that would integrated skilled workers into the workforce. Further, there is an opportunity emerging to recruit and retain Foreign Trained workers because there is a looming labour shortage caused by an aging population that is retiring earlier than in the past. Currently 18.5% of the population is over the age of 65 as compared to 13.5% for the rest of B.C. In addition, the number of retired citizens is estimated at 23% of the population and growing: “Kelowna today looks like Canada will look in 20 years.” (Capital News – Sunday, April 25th, 2004). The major employers, School Districts, the Interior Health Authority and the Municipalities are beginning to plan for this eventuality, in fact Gary Leirer states “that it’s time for Canada to become more accepting of foreign-trained professionals.

However, there continues to be resistance to new immigrants. According to Statistic Canada census report, the number of new immigrants in the Okanagan is down by -1% from 1996 to 2001. The Capital New speculates that racism might be at the root of the “slowly changing ethnic mix” (March 22, 2004). According to one Skilled Immigrant, racism in Canada is “subtle”. This person recounted a situation were they spoke to a client on the phone and made an appointment to meet. When the client came to the office, they meet this individual, a visible minority, and they refused service. Another Skilled Immigrant evaluated credentials were questioned. While Settlement workers continue to have a percentage of clients who decide to move back to the Lower Mainland because they are unable to find employment locally.

In order to ensure the Labour Market attachment of Skilled Immigrants in the Okanagan, one component of this program must focus on raising awareness. Community Leaders and the Business community must begin to understand that diversity is key to economic prosperity and that Skilled Immigrants who work in their field can contribute to the growth of the local economy. The following is a list of key components that a program should include. These four components should be integrated not only within this newly formed program but with Settlement and other Career Assessment and Planning programs in the region. This program may need to be mobile in order to be viable. There were several suggestions on how to make this work, one challenge for a mobile program is the expansive geographical region: South from the American border, North to Enderby and includes Kermeos to the West and Lumby to the East. Finally, the Committee has identified issues that the Provincial and Federal governments need to continue working on and must improve current policies that regulate these issues.

LANGUAGE COMPONENT

- Skilled Immigrants in this region need access to English Language beyond the Canada Benchmark of level 3.
- This program could be provided on-line if a TESL qualified teacher with knowledge of settlement were attached to the program.
- The teacher would be available in a Language Lab located ideally within the same premises of the ELSA agencies; they would be responsible for coordinating Study Groups, and conversational practice classes.
- This teacher should also be computer literate and be able to teach an introductory computer course (1 week intensive program offered 12 times a year or once a month on a rotational basis – Mornings for month 1, afternoons for month 2, evenings for month 3. This would ensure that students who work could fit the course into their schedules).
- The teacher would also coordinate study groups that would work toward preparing for equivalency exams (TOEFL, IELTS, and LPI) and would also support occupational language bridging based on occupational clusters such as Business, Health, & Trades.
- All professional exams should make practice exams available on-line and should allow students to take the exam in their own community (Test centre-someone who can supervise local test taking)
- The teacher would work with the OUC to develop standardized English within our region. They would also support students to challenge trades qualification and assist them with prior learning assessments.

CAREER COUNSELLING & PLANNING COMPONENT

- Education about Canadian and Okanagan Employment culture that focuses issues such as but not limited to how to network in the local community, the role of volunteerism and the “casual” dress code.
- Development of a portfolio or e-portfolio that would provide the Okanagan employer with confidence that the Skilled Immigrants experience is comparable with the work skills requirements for a new posting. The portfolio would also assist the Skilled Immigrant to market their skills and themselves.
- Skills identification and matching for placement in the field for which the individual is trained or within a field where their skills are being used. Development of a resume that a Canadian employer can understand. It must also “translate” the foreign work experience into the Canadian context. In other words, what is equivalent work, for instance in the Technology field, did your employer manufacture component parts for computers or did it specialize in developing software?
- Training for Employment counselors – diversity training and training about the specific barriers to employment faced by Immigrants.
- Educate Skilled immigrants regarding the local Labour market, Labour laws and regulations.

WEBSITE COMPONENT

Development of a Website

- The website should provide general information about the region:
 - ✓ Labour Market information: Should include list of major employers and what are the employment demands in the region.
 - ✓ Housing information – cost of owning or renting in Penticton, Kelowna and Vernon and in the outlying regions.
 - ✓ Detailed Geographic information
 - ✓ Shopping and services.
 - ✓ Cost of living related to the standard of living.
 - ✓ Educational opportunities for all members of the family
 - ✓ Food
 - ✓ Language Level required to function in the region (ex. Few services available in other languages).
 - ✓ Lifestyle information
 - ✓ Linking to other sites such as the Looking Ahead Initiative, BC Internationally Trained Professional Network, and the Workdestinations.org site.

- The committee recognized the potential partnerships for this website that could be accessed by Canadians from outside the region. Potential partners:
 - a) Okanagan Partnership Initiative
 - b) Economic Development Commissions
 - c) Municipalities & Regional Districts
 - d) OSTEC

Please note: the committees also noted that Internet sites while a component of a program has limitations. It assumes that one has advanced English Language skills in order to read the information; it also assumes that everyone has the computer skills needed to access the information. However, Internet programming could provide improved communication and provide critical pre-landing and post-landing information. It can provide access to English language skills and professional terminology. It can also create some access to networking opportunities through web based employer chat sites. Most importantly it can provide critical access to information by the people working in the field as employment counselor, settlement worker, and/or ELSA teacher who can then assisted Newcomer to access information they require.

LABOUR MARKET ATTACHMENT COMPONENT – EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPER

- The Employment Developer would be a specialized HR consultant with extensive experience in the local community and the local Employment market, they would be a business oriented, marketer, able to build a relationship with potential Employers.
- The Employment Developer would work with Employers to bridge between Career Assessment and Planning services and Labour Market Attachment.

- The Employment Developer would have the ability to inventory the skills the employer requires (demand) and link it to the skills of the Skilled Immigrants (supply).
- They would network with the Economic Development Commissions in the region and work with the Okanagan Partnership Human Resource Flagship or “Skills Pipeline” initiative.
- Access to targeted wage subsidy funds and/or other workplace incentives.
- They would work with Employers to create ‘networking’ opportunities.
- They would work with Employers to create a range of work placements that could include but not be limited to: 1) a ladder approach to employment, where a Skilled Immigrant would take an entry level position that would advance to a more skilled position. 2) Volunteer position, 3) Mentorship opportunity, 4) Internship.
- Placements would include a job coaching component that would ensure the success of placements.

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Committees recognize the need for credential evaluation services that are user friendly, faster and more efficient. The province and the federal government must work with professional associations, unions and other regulatory bodies to ensure that this process becomes transparent, accountable, accessible and quicker.
- Committees recognize the need for Provincial and Federal cooperation between Ministries and Departments. Services need to be integrated between all levels of government that provide services to either New Immigrants, or unemployed Canadians. Agencies include but not limited to: the Provincial Ministries of Skills Development & Labour, Advanced Education, Human Resources, Aboriginal, Community and Women’s Services and Federal departments such as Social Development, Human Resources & Skill Development, Citizenship & Immigration Canada and Heritage Canada. Further, this cooperation must filter down to the regions and involve Municipal governments.
- Provincial policies must be broadly developed to meet the unique needs of the region or immigration will continue to cluster in the Lower Mainland. For example, the funding received from the Federal Government for English Language and Settlement is divided into two envelopes. Half the funding is directed to colleges and half the funding is directed into MCAWS. This may be functional on the Coast where ultimately more than 70% of the funding is allocated. Outside the Lower Mainland this is not functional or prudent. If the government pooled those two pockets of funding and developed integrated services in each community, we would be able to avoid the competition that exists in the Region between ELSA service providers and the college. This competition for students is the result of attempting to develop viable programming on limited funding. OUC focuses its programs on foreign visitor and advertises ABE as an educational option for Foreigner educated students. Skilled immigrants desperate to improve their English proficiency end up in programs that do not meet their needs.

- Finally all committees would like the criteria developed for acquisition of English Language to be uniform. Students must be confident that the credited English they learn in Vernon will be recognized in Edmonton.
- Government needs to regulate Immigrant Agents, how much they can charge. They need to be able to demonstrate competency.
- Government must recognize that there is a period of time before a program is well known in a community. Communities don't want pilot programs because they don't trust the program will follow through on commitments.
- Clearer identification of the target group that requires services
- Tracking of student profiles from ELSA to determine their success rate – or rate of Labour market attachment.
- Improved marketing of Settlement services to new Canadians who are fluent in English Language.