



# > Employer's Guide

to Integrating Immigrants  
into the Workplace





*"Our Ottawa community is increasingly multi-cultural, and so it's becoming more and more important for local businesses to have the benefits and talents of a diverse workforce contribute directly to a stronger competitive edge. This guide will help our business owners recruit, hire, and retain skilled immigrants and capitalize on their real value in order to expand the customer base of the business."*

Richard Clayman,  
Board Chair, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce

*"This guide is packed with useful information, practical tips, and other resources for employers looking to attract talent and diversify their workplace. It includes some of the most effective strategies that our HIO Working Groups have been using. We're very excited that this information is now available to all employers in the region."*

Hicham Adra and Rosemarie Leclair,  
Co-Chairs, HIO Employer Council of Champions

# > TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION .....	2
WHY HIRE IMMIGRANTS? .....	3
LANGUAGE .....	5
FOREIGN CREDENTIALS AND WORK EXPERIENCE .....	8
WORKING WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES .....	10
PREPARING YOUR WORKPLACE .....	15
RESOURCES .....	23
INDEX .....	26

## > INTRODUCTION

---

- 2 -

This document is intended for employers in Ottawa who are interested in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants. The document is a reference guide that provides information about and insight into the most common challenges faced by local employers when recruiting and integrating immigrants into the workplace. The guide offers practical tips and suggestions for employers to address these challenges, highlighting local resources.

The guide is particularly aimed at small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) which typically do not have dedicated Human Resource (HR) departments and staff. If you are an owner or manager in such an organization, you should find the information and suggestions appropriate and useful for yourself, for any managers responsible for hiring, and for anyone in your organization with HR-type responsibilities. The guide is structured for quick reference and ease of use. It includes numerous links and references to detailed information so that you may choose to pursue specific topics in more depth. These additional resources are highlighted in context in the body of the document and also in the Resources section at the end of the document.

This guide was developed by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Hire Immigrants Ottawa initiative. Funding was provided by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Global Experience @ Work initiative with support from the Government of Ontario.

The guide is designed for easy access to information that will help you understand and deal with the most common issues you are likely to encounter when actively seeking to diversify your workforce. We hope that you will find it a practical and useful resource and will refer to it frequently.

The Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) initiative was launched in 2006. Much of the information in this guide is based on the activities of the HIO Working Groups. Four sector-specific working groups were established in mid-2007, representing employers and stakeholders in health care, information technology, finance, and the public sector. The working groups have identified the main barriers that hinder the effective hiring of skilled immigrants into their respective organizations. They have also developed an action plan to address these barriers. Some of the planned actions are already underway, and significant progress is already being made.

Among the planned actions of the HIO working groups is an intention to share their experiences and best practices with other employers in the region, particularly SME employers. HIO and its partners encourage you to contact them to learn more about their activities and to get first-hand, practical guidance from employers who are having success facing challenges that you may also be facing. Contact information for HIO can be found at [http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page\\_id=5&language=en](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page_id=5&language=en).



## > WHY HIRE IMMIGRANTS?

---

Changing demographics are having an impact on businesses in Ottawa and many other Canadian municipalities. The workforce is shrinking as unprecedented numbers of workers retire and fewer new workers enter the labour market. Demand for skilled labour is growing, signalling impending labour shortages. At the same time, Ottawa is becoming home to a greater proportion of Canada's immigrants. Yet local employers are finding that it's not always a simple matter to recruit and retain skilled immigrants as part of their workforce. While there are some challenges for employers, there are many benefits.

---

- 3 -

Ottawa is now the second largest recipient of immigrants in Ontario. Visible minorities will play an increasingly important role in our economy—as employees, as consumers, and as connectors to the increasingly important emerging markets. As a business owner in Ottawa, you have a real opportunity to recognize this pool of skilled immigrants as a business asset and use this asset to its fullest advantage.

Whether or not your business is operating in global markets, you can benefit from hiring skilled immigrants. You will gain employees with great diversity in their education, training, on-the-job skills, and life experience. This diversity of education and experience brings fresh perspectives and diverse points of view to existing business practices.

### BENEFITS TO ALL BUSINESSES

Your customer base may be purely local but it's changing rapidly as consumers become more diversified. The consumer demographic in Ottawa (and throughout Canada) is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. By hiring skilled immigrants, you can put your organization in a position to:

- better understand and respond to your increasingly diverse customer base
- tap into new local markets, expanding your customer base through improved cultural awareness and communications
- enhance creativity, productivity, and decision-making through diverse approaches

- broaden your talent pool for recruiting new employees
- attract and retain top talent in an environment of labour shortages

### ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES WITH GLOBAL MARKETS

Many of Ottawa's businesses are operating within an increasingly global context, or perhaps could do so with some additional expertise. If your business fits this description, hiring skilled immigrants offers additional benefits, allowing you to:

- improve understanding of existing international customers and of new international markets
- improve understanding and connections with the global business context
- achieve a competitive edge by engaging more effectively with diverse customers, clients, suppliers and partner companies internationally
- improve employee relations through increased diversity
- enhance corporate image among international customers
- reduce training costs by hiring required international skills and experience

And all of this leads to bottom line results—whether measured by profits, shareholder value, customer satisfaction, the number of new products designed and brought to market, or the effective delivery of programs.

## IT'S JUST GOOD BUSINESS

Several studies and publications have identified bottom-line reasons for businesses to tap into the available pool of skilled immigrants. For business owners it's not a matter of social benefit or the public good. There's a strong business case; diverse hiring practices are simply good business practices.

- 4 - Here are some other resources<sup>2</sup> developed for employers that illustrate the business case.

- The Looking Ahead initiative has produced an online guide for employers. The guide includes a section titled 'The Business Case'.  
<http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/employer/index.cfm?chp=2>
- The hireimmigrants.ca program provides employers with the tools and resources they need to better recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants. Several key business drivers for hiring immigrants are identified and explained.  
<http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/why/why2.php>
- The Skills Without Borders program has produced an Employers' Resource Guide that includes a section titled 'Why Should Businesses Hire Immigrants?'.  
<http://www.skillswithoutborders.com/resourcesguide.htm>

- The Conference Board of Canada has produced a report titled 'Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities'. This Employer's Guide includes a section titled 'The Benefits to Organizations of Focusing on Visible Minorities'. The guide is available through the Conference Board's e-library service.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>

However, hiring and retaining immigrants is often a challenge. It is one thing to embrace diversity as a concept; it is quite another to achieve organizational diversity and leverage it for success.

The remainder of this guide focuses on the most important challenges you may face as you progress towards a culturally diverse workplace.

---

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Conference Board of Canada has reported that immigrants are expected to provide 100% of net labour force growth by 2011. It is estimated that by 2025, Canada will face a skilled labour force deficit of 1.2 million people, and that by 2031 immigrants will provide 100% of all net population growth.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the material in this section of the guide is drawn from these resources.



## > LANGUAGE

---

Strong language skills are very important in most workplaces. Employers often have real concerns about whether the language skills of an immigrant job applicant are adequate. A resumé may be well written, but what about the immigrant's oral language skills, including accent? Also, many jobs in Ottawa require both English and French language skills. What can you do to assess an immigrant applicant's language skills, and help him or her improve those skills on the job?

---

- 5 -

Language is a very important factor when you are considering an immigrant job applicant. Employees in many workplaces use a lot of sector-specific terminology and jargon as well as slang, idioms, and colloquial language. These terms can be difficult for immigrants, and are usually only learned over time and through experience. Oral language skills are often more troublesome than reading or writing, especially when the speaker has a heavy accent in roles that involve front line customer service.

There are several programs and services available to help immigrants assess and improve their language skills. As an employer, being aware of these programs and the associated benchmarks can help you recognize some of the terminology you may encounter in

an immigrant's job application, and what the terminology means in terms of language proficiencies.

### ASSESSING LANGUAGE SKILLS

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) ([www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca)) is the national standard-setting body for the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Niveaux de Competence Linguistique Canadiens (NCLC). The CLB and NCLC are recognized as the official Canadian standards for describing, measuring and recognizing the language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada, in both English and French. They also provide common standards for all the immigrant-serving agencies.

---

### DID YOU KNOW...?

The Center for Canadian Language Benchmarks has produced mini-posters that cover benchmark levels 1 to 10 and provide a very clear 'Can Do' description of the language skills designated by these levels. You can download these posters in PDF format. See the bottom of the page at [http://www.language.ca/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=572](http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=572)

If an immigrant's job application or resumé includes results from a CLB assessment, you can use the benchmarks to easily understand the applicant's language skills.



The CLB is a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in speaking and listening, reading and writing. There are 12 proficiency levels<sup>3</sup> that use real life language tasks to measure language skills.

CLB assessment is free for qualifying newcomers to Canada. Job applications and resumes that you receive from newcomers to Canada may include results from a CLB assessment. The assessment, conducted at an official CLB assessment centre, determines the existing level of language proficiency of the newcomer through a process that usually takes about three hours. The result of a CLB assessment is a report provided to the newcomer specifying the benchmark levels in speaking and listening, reading and writing that he or she demonstrated during the assessment. For information about the Ottawa assessment centre visit <http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Adults/languageassessment/>

## LANGUAGE TRAINING

Newcomers to Canada usually participate in one or more of the following types of language training available to them. You may find reference to these programs in an immigrant's job application.

- **ESL/FSL** (English and/or French as Second Language) training is available at no charge for newcomers to Canada, and many skilled immigrants seeking employment in Ottawa will have completed various courses. There are many levels of ESL/FSL training that correspond to a broad range of CLB benchmarks (see <http://www.eslottawa.com/canadianlanguagebenchmarks.html>)

<sup>3</sup>It is purely coincidental that the number of benchmark levels is 12 – which happens to be the same number of elementary and secondary grade levels in the Ontario school system. There is no relationship between CLB levels and Ontario grades.

### HIRING CONCERN:

Skilled immigrants may not have strong enough language skills to work effectively.

### SOLUTION:

A good occupation-specific language assessment will ensure that businesses hire immigrants who have sufficient communication skills for the job.

### TIP

We all have accents, but if *intelligibility* is a concern, ESL courses/coaching could be the solution.

### TIP

You can use the CLB benchmarks to understand the level of language proficiency that you require in a particular job. Now you know exactly what you're looking for in a job applicant's language skills – whether or not the applicant is an immigrant! You can refer any applicant for a CLB assessment to ensure that his or her language skills meet your requirements.



- **Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)** is a settlement program funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This ESL program provides basic English language instruction to eligible adult newcomers - immigrants and those to whom Canada intends to grant permanent resident status - to facilitate their social, cultural and economic integration into society. These programs are provided by different agencies and organizations to help immigrants during the post-landing settlement and adaptation phase.
- **Enhanced Language Training (ELT)** programs have been developed for some specific trades or professions, to provide skilled immigrants with the required job-related language skills in their trade or profession. ELT Programs are a pre-condition to meet the requirements of some professional regulatory bodies for licensing and practicing

in Canada. For more information about ELT programs in Ontario visit [http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs\\_detail.asp?faq\\_id=4000690](http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs_detail.asp?faq_id=4000690)

#### EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

- If language skills need improvement, refer learners to the Ottawa CLB assessment centre <http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Adults/languageassessment/> for a Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT). Test results will be used to direct the learner to the most appropriate training program: ESL/FSL, LINC, ELT.
- Providing on-site ESL or FSL upgrading at your workplace is a win-win option for learners and other employees.
- Free online ESL lessons for learners are available on various sites. Try <http://a4esl.org>



## > FOREIGN CREDENTIALS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

---

When you look at the resumé of an internationally trained immigrant you'll see academic qualifications from an educational institution in another country – likely an institution that is unfamiliar to you. You may also see that the candidate has some international work experience. What can you do to better understand and assess the qualifications and work experience?

---

- 8 -

Job applications and resúmes from internationally trained immigrants can be difficult to assess. Terms like job titles, industry sectors, academic qualifications, and names of educational institutions and programs don't always translate well into more familiar Ontario terms. That's a big reason why, as an employer, you may prefer to see several years of successful Canadian work experience in an immigrant job applicant's resumé. This would be evidence that the applicant's skills and knowledge are transferable, and also that the applicant has been able to culturally adapt to the Canadian workplace.

But, of course, every skilled immigrant arrives in Canada with no Canadian experience. You're likely to have some uncertainty and doubt about what the international qualifications and experience really mean. There are resources to help you

remove some of that uncertainty and doubt. You could find that an immigrant applicant with no Canadian education or work experience is an excellent match with your skill requirements.

**ASSESSING FOREIGN CREDENTIALS**  
World Education Services-Canada (WES Canada - [www.wes.org/ca](http://www.wes.org/ca)) provides research and intelligence about foreign academic credentials and institutions. WES provides credential evaluation reports that offer clear and consistent analysis of foreign credentials and academic qualifications, and equate these to more familiar degrees, diplomas, or certificates issued by Canadian educational institutions. WES has been contracted by the Government of Ontario to deliver academic credential assessment service in Ontario.

---

### DID YOU KNOW...?

Canadian employers seem to show a strong preference for hiring job applicants who have Canadian work experience. But preferring "Canadian experience" can unfairly prevent or discourage people from applying, and can create a discriminatory barrier. This preference is often based on the uncertainty and doubt related to understanding an internationally trained immigrant's academic qualifications and work experience.

---

### TRY THIS:

If you would prefer "Canadian experience" it might be helpful to ask yourself if you have questions about the candidate's technical or "hard" skills, or their "soft" skills. If it is the latter, try making a list of the soft skills essential to the position. If, for example, strong teamwork skills are important to you, ask a question in the interview that requires the candidate to provide evidence of his or her experience working in a team.

## FOREIGN CREDENTIALS: ASSESSMENT VS. RECOGNITION

It's important to distinguish between credential assessment and credential recognition. Credential assessment is relatively straightforward. You, or any immigrant seeking employment, can have foreign credentials assessed for a reasonable fee through WES Canada. This will provide a comparison of foreign credentials to more familiar local credentials.

Credential recognition, however, refers to the process that an immigrant must go through in order to work as a professional in a regulated profession (e.g. a doctor, lawyer, teacher, accountant, or many other professions). An assessment might suggest that a foreign credential is similar to a particular local credential – but that's not the same as actually having the local credential.

It is often very difficult and time consuming for immigrants to obtain recognition for their international credentials, and to gain the required Canadian credentials to qualify for skills-appropriate employment in their profession. Generally speaking, the higher the level of clearance required the more difficult and

time-consuming it can be to obtain, and hence the more difficulty you may have in finding a qualified immigrant.

As an employer you generally have little or no control over this process. While the procedures and associated delays are a frustration felt primarily by the immigrants, it can also be very frustrating for you as an employer wanting to hire an otherwise qualified immigrant. While governments, labour, industry associations, credentialing bodies and other stakeholders continue to work to improve the situation, it remains a significant hurdle in some sectors.

Employers in several sectors in the Ottawa region - particularly finance, information technology, and health care professionals who would work for government - often require bonding and security clearance. This can be a very lengthy process. An immigrant from certain countries (and this list of countries changes often) needs to be in Canada for 5 or more years in order to be eligible for a security clearance.

## TIP:

Some of these techniques can help you determine whether an applicant with international training or education meets the requirements for the job:

- Ask for certification papers and additional course documentation
- Review portfolios or dossiers of relevant documents that might not appear in the resume
- Obtain an assessment of credentials through a credential evaluation service
- Discern skills through the interview process
- Assess technical demonstrations at the worksite
- Focus on skills and competencies rather than on specific credentials

## > WORKING WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

---

However capable potential employees may be in the technical aspect of their jobs, their effectiveness as workers is largely based on their ability to apply for employment, to succeed in an interview, and to be retained in the workplace in the Canadian way. Those who culturally integrate are most successful.

---

- 10 -

A bridge is a good metaphor for workplace cultural adaptation. Initially, the employer is at one end of the bridge spanning the cultural differences and the new Canadian is at the other end. The ideal bridging process has both parties meeting somewhere on the bridge. Most commonly, however, the new Canadian is crossing to the

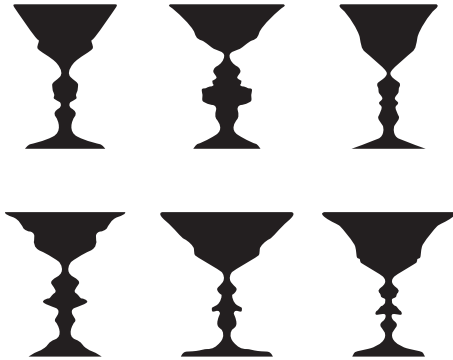
workplace solo. He or she is expected to assimilate the existing workplace norms.

Recognition of several (of the many) cultural elements of this bridging process can greatly facilitate your experience with new Canadian employees and their experiences with you.



## PERCEPTION

You may see goblets or silhouettes in this perceptual exercise of Zeke Berman entitled “Faces or Vases”.

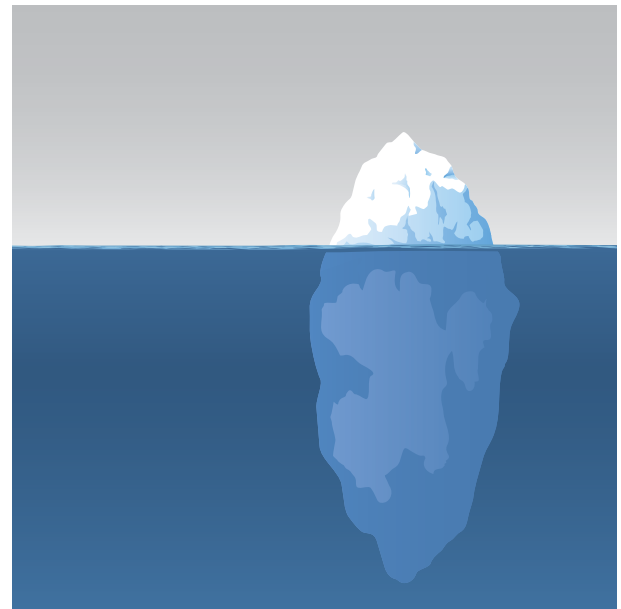


After a few seconds, most people can see both, but sometimes only with assistance from others. Similarly, employers and New Canadian employees begin effective communication by recognizing the existence of additional cultural realities. We all see the same things...but we see them differently!! Most of us need assistance in this perceptual shifting process and a body of cross-cultural research suggests that the ability to see situations from another person's perspective is a (or the) key factor in communicating effectively across cultures.

Most conflicts in multicultural workplaces are the result of differing cultural perceptions of the same event/situation. The need to create a successful multicultural workplace moves far beyond

acknowledging the “do's and taboos” of other cultures into the arena of understanding the underlying values, attitudes and beliefs of the cultures with which we interact.

While it's unrealistic to expect that any individual can fully understand all these underlying elements, every individual can learn to acknowledge that these cultural differences exist and to respect them. I may understand that I should not show the sole of my foot in some cultures; however, if I do not understand that there is a cultural context to this behaviour and do not respect the fact that it has meaning to members of that cultural group, I have failed to see anything deeper than the tip of the cultural iceberg.



---

## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT DIVERSE WORKPLACES:

- A cultivation of different viewpoints
- An understanding of different cultural norms and their impact on communication, problem solving, and conflict.
- A set of shared values that clearly articulate demonstrations of dignity and respect.

# 1.

## KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEES

Make it your business to learn about the deeper than visible elements of the cultures of those you are hiring. You might consider finding a “cultural informant” (a consultant or colleague who can help you understand a specific culture’s values, norms, perceptions, and more.)

Perhaps you have begun to hire immigrants who practice a spiritual faith that is unfamiliar to you. An excellent strategy for understanding is to have some of these individuals, or “cultural informants”, briefly discuss their faith with you and how they put it into practice. This discussion could focus on which aspects of practicing their faith specifically impact the workplace.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Workplaces that are successful in hiring and retaining multi-cultural staff provide on-going education to all staff about cultural elements (norms, values, style of communication, approach to conflict, etc.). Contact the Job Match Network (see Resources section) to identify cultural informants within local immigrant service agencies to help you.

# 2.

## COMMUNICATION STYLE

We discussed the importance of language fluency earlier in this guide, but Communication Style is *how we have conversations*. This includes small talk (not all cultures discuss weather and hockey in casual conversation!). Learning to engage in appropriate small talk discussions is often a struggle for new Canadians.

Communication style also includes: direct and indirect communication, linear and circular discussion, etc. Below is a brief dialogue between direct and indirect communicators. We can see how quickly different perceptions of each other’s style lead these individuals to misunderstanding.

### CASE STUDY - WORKING LATE

**Mr. Jones:** It looks like we’re going to have to put in some more time on this part of the project.

**Mr. Nu:** I see.

**Mr. Jones:** Can you stay late tomorrow so we can finish it?

**Mr. Nu:** Yes, I think so.

**Mr. Jones:** That would be a great help.

**Mr. Nu:** Yes, tomorrow’s a special day, did you know?

**Mr. Jones:** How do you mean?

**Mr. Nu:** It’s my son’s birthday.

**Mr. Jones:** How nice! I hope you enjoy it very much.

**Mr. Nu:** Thank you. I appreciate your understanding.

---

From this case study we can see that Mr. Jones is a direct communicator and Mr. Nu is more indirect. As communicators, we usually expect (wish for) the recipient to utilize our style. We may not be able to encode the message stored in the words of someone from a different style.

So, when Mr. Nu answers Mr. Jones' question "Can you stay late tomorrow?" with "Yes, I think so.", Mr. Jones hears only the "yes" and not the rest of the sentence. An indirect communicator uses a variety of qualifiers (i.e., I hope to, I'd like to, I plan to, etc.) when they have difficulty directly stating 'no' which is often seen as extremely rude in indirect cultures. Of course, in indirect cultures, the listener could probably encode the qualifier and see the speaker's intended meaning.

Mr. Nu leaves this dialogue believing that Mr. Jones has understood the importance of his son's birthday and thus given him the time off. Mr. Jones believes that Mr. Nu has indicated that 'yes' he can stay late tomorrow and may be disappointed or angry when Mr. Nu does not show up. Both parties could benefit from understanding each other's perception and communication style!

# 3.

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We know that non-verbal communication accounts for somewhere between 75-90% of our message. By definition, non-verbal communication conveys information beyond the words of a message. It can include information conveyed by things like:

- eye contact
- use of time
- appearance/demeanor/posture
- facial expressions
- laughter
- tone of voice
- conversational distance
- scent
- grooming and dress
- use of silence
- gestures

---

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Work towards awareness and articulation of your own culture's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

- Identify your own learned generalizations, stereotypes and filters.
- Clarify your comprehension of cultural messages or use "cultural informants" when needed
- Listen, observe and describe rather than evaluate.
- Recognize that initial perceptions are often inaccurate and allow for additional interpretations of a situation to arise.
- Work towards developing empathy. Try to see a situation from your own and your employee's cultural perspective.
- Check assumptions. Don't assume another culture is similar to yours.

The goal in acknowledging non-verbal communication as a key component of a message is not only awareness of meanings other than our own (around eye contact for example) but determining how and when to work towards suggesting modification that would make communication more effective in your particular workplace. For example, if an employee does not engage in Canadian-style eye contact but is required to make presentations as part of his/her job, you may need to address the employee's different non-verbal style and the importance of eye contact in presentations in Canadian culture. If the employee recognizes that effectiveness of communication is enhanced, he or she can often make the adjustment.

It can be helpful to examine your own perceptions around various non-verbal messages. For example, in many western cultures, prolonged silence is a source of discomfort and often signifies a failure to communicate, that one is in disagreement, or possibly angry or annoyed.

Silence can also be an active form of communication. Silence often designates thought, or shows one is giving consideration to a comment. It can indicate a second language learner is determining how to use English or French appropriately. It can also mean one is hesitant to say "yes" or is not completely happy with a suggestion.

Effective multicultural workplaces are aware of the power of non-verbal messages and are continuously verifying perceptions to make sure communication is accurate. Clarify! For example, if you have an employee who engages in long periods of silence in dialogue, you might ask "I notice that you wait longer than I would when responding to questions. I am wondering what is occurring in that silence?"

# 4.

## ORIENTATION AND MENTORING

Many of the cultural ideas in this chapter can be addressed during:

- **ORIENTATION TO THE WORKPLACE:** Conducted at the beginning of a new hire's employment, Orientation is designed to set expectations and clarify workplace policies and procedures. Orientation for new Canadians should include more specific behaviours than might be appropriate when we all share a similar cultural background. Using the metaphor of the Iceberg mentioned earlier in this document, it is usually the values and behaviours that are below the water line that are most important to clarify for a newcomer.
- **MENTORING:** Both formal and informal mentoring within the workplace are effective integration and promotion strategies for new immigrants. An on-the-job mentor is a knowledgeable and experienced employee in the organization who agrees to coach the newcomer. Mentoring allows employees to learn the intangibles that are needed to succeed in the workplace. New immigrants especially can benefit from a mentoring relationship, because they need to learn about the Canadian workplace as well as your specific company.

These two elements are key components in all workplaces that have effective multicultural working teams. We'll explore these elements further in the next section.

## > PREPARING YOUR WORKPLACE

---

Every organization has its own culture, and it's important that you 'find the right fit' when considering new employees. Your culture includes a set of practices, perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes related to hiring immigrants – whether or not these are stated in formal policies. Sometimes an organization's culture may unknowingly cause it to screen out or fail to identify qualified and capable immigrants who could fit in very well. Is your organization ready to effectively recruit, hire, and integrate skilled immigrants into the workplace?

---

- 15 -

An organization's culture is dynamic. It changes. Its leaders can influence change - and are responsible for doing so. If you want to improve your organization's ability to successfully hire and integrate skilled immigrants into your workplace, it's a good idea to look at ways to create a more inclusive work environment.

Generally speaking, the smaller the organization the more readily it can adapt its culture. As a

leader in a small-to-medium size organization, you have many opportunities to influence positive change. You can ensure that recruiting and hiring policies and practices are reviewed and revised; you can equip HR staff with better assessment tools and resources; and you can provide opportunities for all staff – particularly hiring managers – to become more aware of cultural differences and more accommodating of those differences in the workplace.

### LEADERSHIP MODELS<sup>4</sup>

Effective leadership requires different approaches in homogeneous and diverse workplaces. Here are some examples:

Aspect of Leadership	Homogeneous Model	Diversity Model
Management Philosophy	Golden Rule Management: I treat everyone the way I want to be treated.	Expanded Golden Rule: I find out how people want to be treated and I respond accordingly.
Perception of Difference	Difference = Less Than	Difference = Value Added
Leader's Role	Mentor and Coach: emphasis on helping people fit into existing culture	Facilitator and Catalyst: flexibility and knowledge of other cultural norms shape evolving workplace culture
Communication Mode	Communication is direct and 'to the point'	Communication can be less directive; attention to individual preferences

---

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowel *Diverse Teams at Work*

## POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Many small and medium size enterprises don't have Human Resource departments or formal hiring policies and practices. But hiring occurs, and it does so according to some kind of policy and practice, even if unwritten and informal. You can make sure that these policies and practices are identified, reviewed, adapted where necessary, and communicated throughout your organization so that you can more successfully recruit and hire qualified immigrants.



- 16 -

## THE FUD FACTOR

Fear. Uncertainty. Doubt. These concerns sometimes prevent employers, often working under tight hiring timelines, from fully considering immigrant job applicants. You may be unfamiliar with the candidate's foreign credentials and work experience, or may anticipate that perceived differences with respect to the candidate's cultural practices might affect his or her ability to fit in with the team. As a result you may not have a good comfort level with the immigrant applicant and may feel that there's a higher degree of risk compared with other applicants. Cultural familiarity and demonstrated cultural adaptability are the main reasons that many employers prefer to hire candidates with successful Canadian work experience.

Cultural familiarity, however, can work both ways; remember the cultural bridge we described in the previous section. You and your workplace will become more familiar with other cultures – and thereby reduce the FUD factor – through your own experiences in hiring immigrants and going part way across the bridge. The foundation of the 2-way bridge is a set of workplace policies and practices that support and encourage diversity.

Many employers participating in the HIO initiative have begun to review and revise their HR processes and practices that relate to recruiting, hiring, and retaining immigrant employees. Several of these employers have found that relevant policies may exist but are not being fully implemented. The process of policy review is reminding employers of the importance of

communicating and reinforcing the policies throughout the organization. As a result, employers are becoming more engaged in making sure that their policies and processes are not only reviewed and updated where appropriate, but also well communicated and consistently implemented.

## TIPS:

---

There are many things you can do to become more effective in recruiting, hiring, and retaining skilled immigrants. As you might expect, some are very simple and straightforward while others can be more challenging. Here are some good resources for your consideration. You can pick things that seem to make sense for your organization.

---

- 17 -

- The Hire Immigrants Ottawa Working Groups have produced an Action Plan to address the challenges faced by employers in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants at skills appropriate levels within their organizations. Relevant activities are described on pages 9 through 16 of the Action Plan.  
[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO\\_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf)
  - The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has produced an excellent checklist as a quick reminder of key areas to support your pre-employment and HR activities with immigrants who have English as a Second Language.  
[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/TenWays\\_BrochureWEB.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/TenWays_BrochureWEB.pdf)
  - The Looking Ahead initiative has produced an online guide for employers. The guide includes a section titled 'Recruiting'  
<http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/employer/index.cfm?chp=3>
  - The Conference Board of Canada has produced a report titled 'Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities'. This Employer's Guide includes a section titled 'The Benefits to Organizations of Focusing on Visible Minorities'. The guide is available through the Conference Board's e-library service.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>
  - The Skills Without Borders program has produced an Employers' Resource Guide that includes a section titled 'Improving Hiring Practices' on page 7.  
<http://www.skillswithoutborders.com/resourceguide.htm>
-



## FINDING QUALIFIED IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants arriving in Canada can benefit from the services of many local immigrant-serving agencies. These agencies provide a wide range of integration and settlement services, often including services related to finding appropriate employment. The agencies also provide services to employers (see the “Did You Know” box on this page). They can help you advertise your job posting within the immigrant communities and can also help you interpret immigrant resumé where some language may be unclear.

You can also consider participating in any of the following local programs as an affordable and low-risk way to identify and evaluate potential employees. Contact HIO for more information about these programs.

- Internship programs are short-term employment programs that give applicants an opportunity

to learn about the Canadian workplace while working. The programs are usually from three months to a year in length. Interns generally receive a salary or stipend.

- Bridging programs provide skilled immigrants with formal training as well as work placements (that’s where you can get involved) to bridge their prior education and work experience so they meet the requirements to practice within their professions in Canada.
- In pre-employment mentoring programs, an employed professional acts as a mentor to an un- or under-employed professional (often an immigrant) with qualifications and skills in a relevant field. The mentor – an employee in your organization - gains cultural awareness while potentially identifying a good potential employee.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Several immigrant service agencies in the Ottawa region are working in partnership through the Job Match Network. This network provides a one-stop service to local employers to identify qualified immigrants seeking employment.

The highest quality candidates from each of the participating agencies’ databases are efficiently matched with an employer’s skill requirements. Contact the Job Match Network (see Resources section) to provide your specific skill requirements and obtain information about qualified candidates.

## INTERVIEWING IMMIGRANTS

Part of being a good interviewer is being able to provide all job candidates with a fair opportunity to present themselves for a position. In some cases, candidates may have all the skills for the job but, because English is not their first language, they may find the interview questions difficult to answer. Often rephrasing a question will provide an opportunity for any candidate to tackle the question appropriately. Here's a resource that gives you some suggestions and reasons why rephrasing

allows you to recognize their ability to succeed at the job despite their lack of Canadian experience and credentials. However, a competency-based approach can still disqualify certain cultural groups from the selection process. For example, an assertive communication style may be included as a competency for a leadership position because it fits the current model of management. But a more collaborative approach may be just as effective.

- 19 -



an interview question sometimes can make all the difference when dealing with a person who has English as a second (or third) language:  
[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/RephrasingQuestions%20\\_HRfinal%20200207%20-AnneHI.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/RephrasingQuestions%20_HRfinal%20200207%20-AnneHI.pdf)

For more information on the competency-based approach to interviewing and how to prevent bias visit <http://www.hrmcanada.com/competencies.htm>

Many employers have moved to assessing competencies to predict job performance rather than the traditional approach that focuses on an individual's education and experience. Focusing on competencies and behaviours is appropriate when interviewing new immigrants because it

---

## TIP:

While many workplace orientation programs focus on the organization's history, culture, philosophy, mission, policies and procedures, a new Canadian will often have less experience with workplace norms in Canada and thus require more specific information about your workplace. Ask a seasoned new Canadian in your organization to help you develop orientation topics that challenged him or her when they started. If you do not have a seasoned new Canadian, contact the Job Match Network (see Resources section). They can provide access to a cultural informant in their workplace training department who can assist you.

---

### RETENTION: ORIENTATION AND MENTORING

Once you've hired a new Canadian, the challenge for both of you will be retention: how to ensure that the new employee becomes and remains effective and productive on the job.

The first thing you must do is provide workplace orientation that addresses more than policies and procedures. Orientation for new Canadians should include more specific behaviours than might be appropriate when we all share a similar cultural background. For example, when we say "We all utilize respectful and professional behaviour at all times", these terms need to be addressed in behavioural terms. Respect and professionalism are highly regarded norms in most cultures but the behaviours that demonstrate them can be quite different than those we learn here in Canada. For example, if being 'on time' is a sign of professionalism in your workplace, you may need to identify this behaviour as it translates to being to work on time, submitting reports and projects on time, etc.

Cultures with a more flexible use of time often have different designations about when it is appropriate to be exact in timeliness or see a designated time as a flexible guideline.

Another common and very effective workplace integration technique is to assign a mentor to work with and be available to the new employee. An on-the-job mentor is a knowledgeable and experienced employee in the organization who agrees

to coach the newcomer. In addition to coaching the newcomer in the tasks to be performed, the mentor is a cultural informant - someone who helps the newcomer understand anything that is beneath the cultural iceberg. The mentor assists a new employee in learning about and becoming integrated into the corporate culture.

Mentoring can be as informal as pairing a new employee with an existing employee in a "buddy system" to a more formal approach with developed training modules and a coordinator. Mentoring is highly conducive to promoting talent within a company because it is about building relationships and allows employees to learn the intangibles that are needed to succeed in the workplace. New immigrants especially can benefit from a mentoring relationship, because they need to learn about the Canadian workplace at large as well as the specific company's culture.

## TIP:

The Looking Ahead initiative in British Columbia has produced an online Employer Resource Guide that contains a very good discussion of mentoring and a comprehensive set of resources and references. See <http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/employer/index.cfm?chp=4&page=6#4.6.2>

## INTEGRATING CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SKILL BUILDING INTO WORKPLACE PRACTICE

Employers participating in the HIO initiative have identified and begun to implement several activities intended to integrate cross-cultural awareness and skill building into their workplace practices. Activities include:

- **Education and Training:** employers are arranging for some of their HR staff and hiring managers to participate in information and training sessions dealing with cross-cultural issues in the workplace. LASI World Skills offers a *Workplace Culture Training* program. The objective of the program is to provide learners with a foundation of cultural understanding as well as specific tools necessary to develop cross-cultural competence and effectiveness. Training goals include fostering the process of developing concepts and skills that facilitate changes in attitude and behaviour.
- **Pre-employment Mentoring:** occurs prior to an immigrant's employment and is not primarily a recruitment activity for your organization. An employed professional – a current employee in your organization –

acts as a mentor to an un- or under-employed immigrant with qualifications and skills in a relevant field. Mentoring allows for the sharing of knowledge and experience between mentor and immigrant. Through a series of structured activities, the mentor supports and encourages the immigrant in his or her efforts to become professionally established. These mentoring programs are typically managed through a third party agency.

- **Networking and Coaching:** employers have begun to host and participate in networking and coaching activities involving employers and skilled immigrants. Through such events, immigrants and employers can gain exposure to each other outside the context of a specific job interview, and can begin to break down some of the cultural and workplace barriers. Employers gain valuable insight into the suitability of skilled immigrants as employment candidates, while immigrants gain valuable networking experience, develop new skills, have opportunities to speak with employers, and become better prepared to seek employment.

Contact HIO for more information about these activities.



Multicultural workplaces are most effective when they are inclusive – when both new Canadians and the workplaces they enter understand the benefits of learning how the other works and thinks. It's been shown that inclusive workplaces have much higher employee retention and satisfaction ratings.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The HIO Working Groups have developed an action plan to address the challenges faced by employers in hiring and retaining skilled immigrants at skills appropriate levels within their organizations. ([http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO\\_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf))

This Action Plan contains an Implementation Template (Appendix B) that you might find particularly useful. Members of the working groups are very interested in reaching out to other employers in the Ottawa region to share their experiences and best practices. Contact HIO ([http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page\\_id=5&language=en](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page_id=5&language=en)) to connect with employers like yourself who can help you face similar challenges.

The information, tools and resources in this guide can help you take some important steps towards creating an inclusive workplace. By doing so, you will move part way across the bridge of workplace cultural adaptation. Both you and your new Canadian employee will be better able to cross the cultural gap.



## > RESOURCES

---

You are encouraged to contact Hire Immigrants Ottawa for further discussion or information on any aspect of this Guide:

[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page\\_id=5&language=en](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page_id=5&language=en)

Hire Immigrants Ottawa  
United Way/Centraide Ottawa  
363 Coventry Road, Ottawa ON K1K 2C5  
T: (613) 228-6700 F: (613) 228-6730  
[info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](mailto:info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)

The Ottawa Job Match Network (OJMN) is a partnership between LASI World Skills, Algonquin College, the National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA and Hire Immigrants Ottawa. Their staff works with internationally-trained individuals at three Ottawa locations whose services provide full preparation for newcomers entering the Canadian workforce. The OJMN connects Ottawa's employers to a richly skilled and diverse pool of job-ready candidates. You are encouraged to contact the Job Match Network for further discussion or information about recruiting qualified immigrants for specific job openings in your organization, or with specific inquiries about cross-cultural issues.

The Ottawa Job Match Network  
T: 613-233-0453 ext. 325  
[ojmn@ottawa-worldskills.org](mailto:ojmn@ottawa-worldskills.org)

### OTHER EMPLOYER GUIDES

- The Looking Ahead initiative in British Columbia (<http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca>) has produced a very good online guide to hiring immigrants for employers. It includes a 5 Step Solution (<http://www.5stepsolution.ca/>) that you might find useful. It provides a good outline that you can adapt to the Ontario environment as necessary.

- The [hireimmigrants.ca](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca) program provides employers with the tools and resources they need to better recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants. Several key business drivers for hiring immigrants are identified and explained.  
<http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/why/why2.php>

- The Skills Without Borders program has produced an Employers' Resource Guide that includes a section titled 'Why Should Businesses Hire Immigrants?'.  
<http://www.skillswithoutborders.com/resourceguide.htm>

- The Conference Board of Canada has produced a report titled 'Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities'. This Employer's Guide includes a section titled 'The Benefits to Organizations of Focusing on Visible Minorities'. The guide is available through the Conference Board's e-library service.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>

The remainder of this section provides additional references for your further investigation, following the same organization as the document itself.

### WHY HIRE IMMIGRANTS

Each of the Employer Guides listed above includes a discussion of why it makes good business sense to hire immigrants. For specific references see the box titled 'It's Just Good Business' on page 5 of this document.

The [hireimmigrants.ca](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca) initiative offers a downloadable workshop to involve key strategists in your organization in recognizing the value that skilled immigrants bring to the Canadian workforce. This workshop will help you promote discussion of business drivers and

---

analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) to determine if, when and how your organization can benefit. See <http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/resources/?resource=workshop&id=1>

## LANGUAGE

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks ([www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca)) is the centre of expertise in support of the national standards in English and French. These standards describe, measure and recognize second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada. The Centre promotes the recognition and use of the benchmarks as practical, fair and reliable national standards of second language proficiency throughout Canada in educational, training, community and workplace settings.

### Centre For Canadian Language Benchmarks Websites:

- [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca) is the main website
- [www.celban.org](http://www.celban.org) is the main website for the CELBAN (Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses) and the online CELBAN Readiness Self-Assessment
- [www.itsessential.ca](http://www.itsessential.ca) is the website for information and resources about the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the Essential Skills for the Workplace
- [elearning.language.ca](http://elearning.language.ca) is the website for CCLB's Online Professional Development resources and the Work Ready: CLB Resource Kit for Counselling and Hiring Immigrants

The Ottawa CLB Language Assessment centre is located at the YM/YWCA. See <http://www.ymcaywca.ca/Adults/languageassessment/>

Free online ESL lessons for learners are available at <http://a4esl.org>

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is monitoring CEFR activities and working to develop comparative mechanisms. [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_EN.asp)

## FOREIGN CREDENTIALS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

### World Education Services-Canada (WES Canada)

45 Charles Street East, Suite 700  
Toronto, ON M4Y 1S2 Canada  
Tel. (416) 972-0070  
Toll-free 1-866-343-0070  
Fax (416) 972-9004  
E-mail [ontario@wes.org](mailto:ontario@wes.org)  
[www.wes.org/ca](http://www.wes.org/ca)

### The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)

95 St. Clair Avenue West, Suite 1106  
Toronto, ON M4V 1N6 Canada  
Tel. (416) 962-9725  
Fax (416) 962-2800  
E-mail [info@cicic.ca](mailto:info@cicic.ca)  
[www.cicic.ca](http://www.cicic.ca)

### Comparative Education Service (CES)

University of Toronto  
Admissions and Awards  
315 Bloor Street West  
Toronto, ON M5S 1A3 Canada  
Tel. (416) 978-2190  
Fax (416) 978-7022  
[www.adm.utoronto.ca/ces](http://www.adm.utoronto.ca/ces)

---

**International Credentials Assessment Service (ICAS) of Canada**  
147 Wyndham Street North, Suite 409  
Guelph, ON N1H 4E9 Canada  
Tel. (519) 763-7282  
Toll-free 1-800-321-6021  
Fax (519) 763-6964  
E-mail [info@icascanada.ca](mailto:info@icascanada.ca)  
[www.icascanada.ca](http://www.icascanada.ca)

**The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)**  
PO Box 56001  
355 Slater Street  
Ottawa ON K1R 7Z0  
Tel. (613) 860-1747  
E-mail [info@capla.ca](mailto:info@capla.ca)  
[www.capla.ca](http://www.capla.ca)

### **Industry Sector Councils**

Many industries have national sector councils, in addition to professional associations, that address human resource issues in their specific industry sector. Information on sector councils in general and links to each council can be found through The Association of Sector Councils (TASC) at <http://councils.org>

### **WORKING WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

LASI World Skills offers a Workplace Culture Training program. The objective of the program is to provide learners with a foundation of cultural understanding as well as specific tools necessary to develop cross-cultural competence and effectiveness. Training goals include fostering the process of developing concepts and skills that facilitate changes in attitude and behaviour.

**LASI World Skills**  
201-219 Argyle Ave.  
Ottawa ON CANADA K2P 1H4  
Phone: 613-233-0453  
[ws@ottawa-worldskills.org](mailto:ws@ottawa-worldskills.org)

### **PREPARING YOUR WORKPLACE**

The HIO Working Groups have produced an employer oriented Action Plan, a resource for employers to enhance their efforts in hiring and integrating skilled immigrants. The action plan highlights identified barriers that employers face and recommends activities and programs that employers can adapt and adopt. An implementation template enables employers to measure the outcomes of these activities. The Action Plan is available online at [http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO\\_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/HIO_Working%20Groups%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

There are a number of local mentoring, internship, and bridge training programs. (see [http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page\\_id=6&language=en](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/?page_id=6&language=en)). These programs help familiarize newcomers with the Canadian workplace and facilitate employers' access to the skilled immigrant talent pool. For further information contact HIO.

The [hireimmigrants.ca](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca) initiative offers a number of downloadable workshops that have been developed in PowerPoint to help you implement some workplace strategies. See <http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/resources/?resource=workshop>

The Looking Ahead initiative in British Columbia (<http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca>) has produced a very good online guide to hiring immigrants for employers. It includes a 5 Step Solution (<http://www.5stepsolution.ca/>) that you might find useful. It provides an outline that you can adapt to the Ontario environment as necessary.



## > INDEX

---

<b>A</b>		<b>L</b>	
academic qualifications . . . . .	8	<b>Leadership Models</b> . . . . .	15
Action Plan . . . . .	17, 22, 25	<b>M</b>	
<b>Assessment vs. Recognition</b> . . . . .	9	<b>Mentoring</b> . . . . .	14, 18, 20, 21, 25
<b>B</b>		<b>N</b>	
Bridging . . . . .	10, 18	Non-Verbal Communication . . . . .	13, 14
<b>C</b>		<b>O</b>	
Canadian experience . . . . .	8	<b>Orientation</b> . . . . .	14, 20
Centre for Canadian		<b>P</b>	
Language Benchmarks . . . . .	5, 17, 24	<b>Policies and Practices</b> . . . . .	15, 16
CLB assessment . . . . .	5, 6, 7	<b>R</b>	
Communication Style . . . . .	12, 13, 19	<b>Retention</b> . . . . .	12, 20, 22
cultural informant . . . . .	12, 20	<b>S</b>	
<b>F</b>		security clearance . . . . .	9
<b>FUD Factor</b> . . . . .	16	<b>W</b>	
<b>I</b>		work experience . . . . .	8, 16, 18, 24
Internship . . . . .	18, 25		
<b>Interviewing Immigrants</b> . . . . .	19		
<b>J</b>			
Job Match Network . . . . .	12, 18, 20, 23		



HIRE IMMIGRANTS OTTAWA  
United Way/Centraide Ottawa  
363 Coventry Road  
Ottawa ON K1K 2C5  
T: (613) 228-6700  
F: (613) 228-6730

[info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](mailto:info@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)



---

Funding for this guide was provided by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce with support from the Government of Ontario.

