

**Employer Playbook**

# **Strategies for Immigrant Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces**

**#ImmigrantsWork Coalition**



## A Message from the #ImmigrantsWork Coalition

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in the worst recession in modern history. Canada went from having one of the tightest job markets to record unemployment in the span of a few months (**Canadian Chamber of Commerce**, 2020). The economic impacts of the pandemic have amplified existing inequities and brought into sharp focus the disproportionate effects on immigrants, and to an even greater extent, racialized immigrants and immigrant women (**Diversity Institute**, 2020). Previous recessions have stalled progress on inclusion and diversity strategies, and it is within this context that the #ImmigrantsWork initiative was **launched in May 2020**.

Eight organizations from across Canada came together to form the national #ImmigrantsWork coalition with the broad goal of leveraging our collective voice to promote inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies that include and make use of immigrant talent. Between the eight organizations, we have decades of experience helping employers to successfully maximize the skills, education, and experiences of the immigrant talent in their workplace. During the pandemic, Canadian companies have invariably been focused on ensuring business continuity. We want to encourage companies to meet this historic moment and support their efforts to build back better and effectually include immigrant talent on their teams. As we strive toward recovery, the key characteristics of diverse and inclusive companies—innovation and resilience—are essential in tomorrow's economy.

Inextricably linked to the goal of the #ImmigrantsWork initiative and its national coalition is the fight against racism and racial prejudice. The murder of George Floyd, combined with the starkly disproportionate effect of the pandemic on the Black community, has brought racial inequities prominently to the forefront. The national coalition stands in solidarity with those in pursuit of racial justice, and as a collective we are committed to doing more to advance racial justice, to dismantle structural racism, and to ensure that Canada is a place where Black people have equitable opportunities to thrive. Significantly, 60 percent of Black people in Canada are immigrants, so throughout the Playbook, strategies encourage the recognition of racial bias and prejudice that can arise throughout the hiring process (**Statistics Canada**, 2016).

This Playbook shares practical strategies to bolster immigrant inclusion at primary stages of the employment cycle: recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and integrating. These strategies are a starting point; if you are an employer or Human Resources professional, you are encouraged to engage with a coalition member in your region to deepen your understanding and develop strategies to ensure an immigrant-inclusive workplace.

# #ImmigrantsWork Coalition

Please contact any of the members to learn more:



**Calgary Region Immigrant  
Employment Council (CRIEC)**



**Edmonton Region Immigrant  
Employment Council (ERIEC)**



**Halifax Partnership**



**Hire Immigrants Ottawa**



**Immigrant Employment Council of  
B.C. (IEC-BC)**



**Niagara Workforce Planning Board**



**Toronto Region Immigrant  
Employment Council (TRIEC)**



**World Education Services (WES)**



Hiring new Canadians has changed how we design our business. We now have specific sections for Brazilian, German and Jamaican food [in our store], all because we hire people that came from around the world, and when you create this connection... it's a real win-win for the business itself.”

Peter Boyd, Your Independent Grocers (Kelowna, BC)

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## Contents

<b>An Introduction to this Playbook</b>	p. 5
Who Is this Playbook For?	p. 7
How to Use this Playbook	p. 8
<b>The Playbook</b>	p. 10
Recruiting: Tap into Immigrant Talent	p. 10
Hiring: Break Down Interview Barriers	p. 19
Onboarding: Welcome Immigrant Employees	p. 25
Integrating: Foster Employee Cohesion	p. 30
<b>Wrap-Up</b>	p. 39
<b>Summary of References</b>	p. 40

## An Introduction to this Playbook

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the Canadian economy, and the full breadth of that impact has yet to be fully realized. During periods of uncertainty, we tend to gravitate to what we know; in workplaces, this tendency can lead to a lower tolerance for risk and a “culture of sameness,” which impacts the inclusion of diverse talent. The #ImmigrantsWork coalition recognizes that many businesses across Canada have gone into “survival mode” and are grappling with several competing priorities. However, we know that stalled progress on the inclusion of immigrant talent will make the road ahead even more challenging.

The inclusion of diverse perspectives is a powerful enabler of business performance. The demographic challenges facing Canada prior to the pandemic are still a grim reality. By 2030, the share of Canadians over the age of 65 is expected to nearly double; the country’s low fertility rate will cause labour force growth to stagnate ([Deloitte, 2020](#)). Immigration is expected to account for 100 percent of Canada’s labour force growth. Investing in building an immigrant-inclusive workplace will help ensure future workforce resilience.

The business benefits of including immigrant talent in your workforce have been well supported by extensive research. Immigrant-inclusive organizations are:

- More innovative and resilient
- Better able to meet the needs of and expand to diverse consumers
- More likely to expand into global markets

The business benefits of diverse, immigrant-inclusive teams are supported by more than a decade of research, and these benefits remain equally important in a crisis ([McKinsey, 2020](#)). Economic recovery relies on the ability of our businesses to be resilient; immigrants to Canada contribute to that resilience. We have an opportunity to transform our labour market into one that better recognizes, leverages, and rewards the skills, experiences, and contributions of immigrants in Canada.

**Immigrants make up a quarter  
of Canada's workforce.**

**Immigration is expected to account for 100%  
of labour force growth in the coming years.**

**Nearly one million immigrants  
arrived in the last three years.**

**Yet, immigrant underemployment remains an issue.**

**In a survey of 6,400+ skilled immigrants to Canada,  
WES research found that less than half (47.2%)  
were working in the same sector as they  
were pre-migration.**

**Canada forgoes an estimated \$50B in GDP  
because of the immigrant wage gap.**

**Sources:** Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. (2020). *2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration*. Government of Canada.; Yssaad, Lahouaria and Fields, Andrew. (2018). *The Immigrant Labour Force Analysis Series: The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market: Recent Trends from 2006 to 2017*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 71-606-X (accessed May 2021); Conference Board of Canada. (2019). *Can't Go it Alone: Immigration Is Key to Canada's Growth Strategy*; WES. (2019). *Who Is Succeeding in the Canadian Labour Market? Predictors of Career Success for Skilled Immigrants*; RBC Economics. (2019). *Untapped Potential: Canada Needs to Close Its Immigrant Wage Gap*.

### **Amplified inequities**

The challenges that diverse groups have historically experienced have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rates of unemployment for Black people and People of Colour are double those of White Canadians. The amplification of racial inequities is dovetailed by gender inequities, with women disproportionately impacted by unemployment, and immigrant women to an even greater extent (**Fallout Report**, 2020; **RBC**, 2020). As you review the strategies herein, we encourage you to adopt an intersectional view of immigrants, a view which seeks to recognize the interplay between social locations, e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, disability/ability, migration status, and religion, that impacts personal biases and functions interdependently to reinforce power structures that exacerbate inequities (**First Policy Response**, 2021).

## What's in the Playbook?

Leveraging the expertise and best practices developed by members of the national coalition, this Playbook is intended to provide easy-to-implement strategies that support your efforts to:

- Recruit the best candidates to see your organization through this turbulent time
- Add diverse perspectives that support your company's resilience
- Foster an inclusive workplace in which your existing immigrant employees can contribute their full skills and experience

This Playbook is intended to help you start developing and fostering an immigrant-inclusive workplace. Removing barriers, addressing unconscious bias, and creating a culture of inclusion in the workplace require long-term investment and active engagement. The coalition recognizes that the accelerated changes to the very nature of work post-pandemic may alter the utility of some of the strategies we suggest. This Playbook will be iterative and revised on an ongoing basis to reflect feedback from employers and HR professionals regarding the usability of the strategies herein.

Throughout this Playbook, you will find links to additional resources and to organizations that are ready to support your efforts to achieve immigrant inclusion in your workplace. Members of the national coalition ([page 3](#)) are here to support you in your long-term journey.

## Who Is the Playbook For?

- Canadian employer, HR, and industry- or sector-specific associations
- Canadian employers: private, public, and non-profit
- Immigrant-serving organizations
- Employment agencies
- Workforce development and planning agencies
- Economic developers

## Definitions

**Immigrant:** For the purposes of this Playbook, “immigrant” refers to a broad diversity of job-ready people born outside of Canada, including long-term and recent arrivals from all immigration streams: economic and family class immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and international students.

**Inclusion:** For the purposes of this Playbook, “inclusion” refers to ongoing efforts to ensure that a company values and proactively cultivates difference so that each individual can achieve their full potential. A key piece of inclusion is allowing room for people to be authentically themselves (e.g., expression of religion, sexual orientation, national origin) without fear of negative consequences ([Carleton University](#), 2019).

**Intersectional lens:** Promoted throughout the Playbook is an understanding that individuals are shaped by the interaction of different social locations, e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, disability or ability, migration status, and religion. These interactions occur within connected systems and structures of power and operate together to create privilege or exacerbate inequity.

*Intersectional example: There has been a record drop in workforce participation by women as a result of the pandemic ([RBC](#), 2020). When we add a racial lens to the gendered outlook, there’s a greater disparity of impact: Women of colour face even higher unemployment than White women ([Reuters](#), 2020).*

## How to Use this Playbook

The disruption to the economy means that companies have been affected in different ways and are grappling with different circumstances. While some companies are facing labour shortages, others are trying to retain the talent they have or expand their team based on market demands. This Playbook is designed to provide strategies and tips at each stage of the employment cycle, and to support employers and HR professionals based on their unique current state. This Playbook is not intended to be a resource that you read from beginning to end. You do not need to begin with the first section to find value in the last section.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools and remote working, while also creating conditions for new work environments that prioritize physical distancing to protect employee health. Throughout this Playbook, where applicable, each strategy will present an Online Adaptation to support the navigation of new remote processes and also raise awareness of the challenges in this new working environment.

Learn more about each section here, and click on the section that applies to your specific needs:





# Recruiting: Tap into Immigrant Talent

Whether you are currently recruiting or not, it is good business practice to conduct a systematic review of your internal policies and practices in order to identify any unintentional hiring procedures that impede immigrant success in your organization.

## Job Description: Review and Revise

The job description is a critical recruitment asset. To attract the right talent for a role, the job description must be accurate and developed based on the core competencies required of the person in that position. Job descriptions often include many “requirements” that are not essential for the role. Listing unnecessary requisites can deter qualified candidates who may self-select out of opportunities when they do not meet all the listed requirements.

### Did you know?

When determining whether to apply for a job, men will apply when they meet only 60 percent of the qualifications, whereas women will apply only if they meet 100 percent of the qualifications. Including qualifications that are not essential for a role could be inadvertently screening out suitable candidates.

## STRATEGY: Separating Essential from Non-Essential

Developed by HRMA (2012), this tool<sup>1</sup> can be used to effectively identify the essential and non-essential aspects of a job to create a more accurate job description. Later in the recruitment process, the tool can help you to objectively screen résumés and identify the best possible candidates to invite for an interview. Follow these seven steps:

### Making it work

The following tool is based on an HR professional working with the direct manager for a specified role. If your company does not have HR personnel, the hiring manager can work alongside a current employee in the role, or a similar role, to determine the essential criteria.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from HRMA. (2012). *Hiring and Retaining Skilled Immigrants*. <https://cphrbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/itiguide.pdf>

<b>Step 1</b>	With the direct manager for the role that is being hired, list all the possible duties that are required to perform the role.
<b>Step 2</b>	For each duty, identify the skills/competencies and experience required to fulfill that duty.
<b>Step 3</b>	<p>Working duty by duty, determine which are essential and which are non-essential. <b>Essential duties</b> are those that are core or fundamental to the success of the role and the team. <b>Non-essential</b> are those that are nice to have, but do not directly impact the outcome of the role's effectiveness.</p> <p><i>Example: A Payroll Administrator is required to prepare and verify statements of earnings for employees, indicating gross and net salaries and deductions such as taxes, union dues, garnishments, and insurance and pension plans. <b>These are Essential duties. Compiling statistical and period-end reports, statements, and summaries related to pay and benefits accounts in both official languages are nice skills to have but are Non-essential.</b></i></p>
<b>Step 4</b>	Once you have agreed on the essential and non-essential duties, record them and their associated skills and experience on the chart (see below for a sample scorecard).
<b>Step 5</b>	<p>Under the column "Performance Measure for Skills," write down how you will determine if the candidate being screened has the skills and experiences required to execute the duty.</p> <p>Avoid relying too heavily on "years of experience" as a predictor of skills. Instead, look for evidence that the candidate can learn, interpret, and apply a skill, rather than evidence that the candidate has had the skill for a specified number of years.</p>
<b>Step 6</b>	<p>Score the candidates in the "Ranking" and "Weight" columns.</p> <p>The manager should <b>weight</b> each duty based on its importance and relevance to the role. The <b>ranking</b> should reflect the skills and experiences described or demonstrated in the résumé screening process. An overall score for the duty is calculated by multiplying the ranking by the weighting.</p>
<b>Step 7</b>	All candidates should be scored, and those with the highest scores should be short-listed for an interview. This approach provides a more objective way of determining if a candidate has the skills required to do the job. It also minimizes the potential for bias to influence the decision-making process.

## Sample Scorecard

Essential Duties	Experience	Skills	Performance Measure for Skills	Ranking: 0-5 0=Low Evidence 5=Full Evidence	Weight: 1-3 1=Low Importance 3=High Importance	Total Score: Rank x Weight
Prepare and verify statements of earnings, calculate gross and net salaries and deductions such as taxes, union dues, insurance, and pension plans.	3 – 5 years' experience as a payroll administrator	Ability to maintain records of employee attendance, leave, and overtime to calculate pay and benefits, entitlements, using manual or computerized systems	-Payroll processed accurately as per payroll schedule -Complexity of payroll processed			
<b>Essential Duties Subtotal</b>						
Non-essential Duties	Experience	Skills	Performance Measure for Skills	Ranking: 0-5 0=Low Evidence 5=Full Evidence	Weight: 1-3 1=Low Importance 3=High Importance	Total Score: Rank x Weight
Compiling statistical and period-end reports, statements, and summaries related to pay and benefits accounts in both official languages	Experience compiling reports in English and French	Fluency in English and French	-reports accurately prepared in English and French			
<b>Non-essential Duties Subtotal</b>						
<b>Total Score</b>						

### **Critical Consideration**

The above tool is a great starting point to better understand essential and non-essential duties, and to more objectively screen candidates. When considering immigrant candidates, it's important to remain open to additional skills and experiences they may offer that can augment if not completely align with your identified performance measure. Experience with international markets, proficiency in additional languages, and connections to growing segments of the local market are all value-added qualities to consider. See [evaluating prior experience](#) below.

### **Tips: Writing Inclusive Job Descriptions**

Here are some easy-to-implement suggestions for writing more inclusive job descriptions:

- Avoid using long, complicated words.
- Avoid using technical terminology, jargon, or acronyms.
- Use culturally neutral qualifications. For example, instead of requesting a specific project management credential, ask for the “ability to plan a project and complete it on time.”
- Clearly communicate the essential skills required for the role (see tool above); when including non-essential skills, be sure to state clearly that these skills are **not required** but are considered an additional asset.

Language proficiency and communication skills are often a hiring concern when employers are evaluating immigrant candidates. Consider all key communication skills that are essential to completing the duties required of the role. If you are unsure what language proficiencies are required, consult the [Essential Skills Profiles](#) developed for over 350 occupations. The profiles describe how workers in an occupation use the nine essential skills, including reading, document use, writing, and oral communication.

### Did you know?

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is the national standard setting body for the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Niveaux de Compétence 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. [Click here](#) to access an overview of each CLB level to better understand what level is required for your roles. You can include the CLB level when advertising your job opening or add this information when working with local settlement and employment agencies so they can refer the most appropriate immigrant clients to fill your roles.

## Advertising: New Practices, New Results

Tapping into a more diverse workforce begins with a more diverse candidate pool. While many employers have been able to leverage their existing workforce to secure informal referrals, or post job ads on traditional job search engines like Indeed or the Canada Job Bank, there are additional approaches that can be used to reach immigrant talent.

Consider posting your job ad with the following:

- Immigrant/community media sources and publications
- Associations for internationally trained professionals
- Language or bridge training program websites or affiliated groups on social media
- Local settlement or employment agencies



### Online Adaptation

Many organizations have an online presence. Check organizations' websites and also Facebook and LinkedIn groups to access new audiences in a virtual environment. If the role you are hiring for can be performed remotely, consider broadening your advertising across Canada. Candidates living in other regions of the country can provide unique perspectives and localized support for your customers.

### **Critical Consideration**

Many organizations that have effectively onboarded immigrant candidates encourage these employees to make referrals to apply for job openings. This is a great additional strategy which communicates to staff your commitment to hire immigrant talent.

### **Enhancing Success**

Local settlement and employment agencies support immigrants as they arrive in Canada, helping them develop networks in the community and search for gainful employment. Staff at these agencies have a deep understanding of the international education, experiences, and skills of the immigrant clients they serve, and as a result can be great assets to employers. Agency staff are a conduit between employers and immigrant talent and can offer you an invaluable service by assisting your efforts to reach the right talent for your team.

Developing relationships with these local agencies provides a great opportunity to attract immigrant talent. These agencies help immigrants to be job-ready; many offer sector-specific programs that enable immigrants to prepare for roles in in-demand sectors. Partnering with local agencies helps to ensure that your organization and available positions are shown to immigrant candidates who can meet your specific needs.



### **Online Adaptation**

Job fairs or networking events often provide environments for employers to connect with local agencies and notify the agencies' immigrant clients of job opportunities. Most local immigrant settlement and employment agencies are now virtual and continue to host job fairs and networking events online. Take advantage of these opportunities!

### **Critical Consideration**

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, health and safety in physical workplaces is a top priority for job seekers. When advertising a role, describe in the job posting how your company is safeguarding the health of its employees. Absence of a clear workplace health and safety policy may deter potential applicants.

## Résumés: Screen Immigrant Candidates In

Reviewing your process for résumé screening is an essential step to ensure that you are not inadvertently screening out otherwise eligible immigrant candidates. Summarized here are tips to support your screening in of immigrant candidates:

- **Evaluating prior experience:** Many employers look for Canadian work experience when reviewing résumés, but this preference can create a discriminatory barrier that unnecessarily disqualifies otherwise suitable immigrant candidates. Intentionally review prior experience, including volunteer roles, and assess the skills the individual would have been required to have to successfully fulfill that prior role. If you are not sure what that experience may have looked like, consider asking for examples of the candidate's work, or finding other ways to determine whether the candidate has the required competencies for your position. For example, adding a pre-interview testing component would provide candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their skills. See [adding a skills-based assessment](#) below to learn more.

### Critical Consideration

We often gravitate to what is known or familiar. Carefully consider the factors that inform your decisions to bring candidates forward for an interview. Avoid short-listing candidates merely because of your own familiarity with their prior employer or educational institution.

- **Résumé format and style:** Focus on the content of the résumé, not its format. The style and format of résumés and cover letters varies widely across cultures. In addition, problems with readability, including spelling or grammatical errors, do not necessarily indicate poor oral communication skills. Like any other job requirement, language proficiency should be assessed according to the requirements of the position. A person whose first language is not English may make minor errors in writing but still be able to communicate orally at the level required for the role.



### Did you know?

A recent study in Canada showed that the name on a résumé impacted the candidate's chance of being called for an interview. Despite having identical education and experience, applicants with Asian-sounding names were far less likely to be called for interviews than applicants with Anglo-sounding names. Prior to beginning the résumé review process, consider having an employee who is not involved in recruitment cover candidate names and the location of their previous education and work experience. This is a great way to more objectively review résumés and limit personal bias from impacting decisions about interviews.

- **Leverage existing diversity:** Have a diverse panel screen applicants and support the hiring process. Consider your current workforce and identify individuals who can offer a perspective that is different from yours in the résumé review process. The selection process can benefit from the input of a staff member who has a different perspective and role in the organization. If your current workforce lacks cultural diversity, consider including other forms of diversity, like gender or age, in your process. A perspective different from your own helps to keep personal biases in check.
- **Evaluate international credentials:** A credential evaluation helps employers to understand the academic qualifications of candidates educated abroad. **World Education Services** (WES) authenticates and evaluates international degrees and diplomas to determine their Canadian equivalencies. WES credential evaluation services mitigate risk and simplify and streamline the hiring process.

### Did you know?

World Education Services has a free degree equivalency tool which allows candidates to assess their degree in Canadian terms. If there is an international credential you're curious about, use this tool to get a preview of its Canadian equivalent.

**Click here** to get started today!

### **Critical Consideration**

The immigration process and all that is involved in settling into a new country have obvious consequences for a person's career trajectory. These consequences are often apparent on a résumé (e.g., periods of unemployment or frequent job changes). Frequent changes in positions immediately before and after candidates immigrated should not be considered indicators of their inability to achieve long-term success. Instead, focus on the international education and experience they obtained abroad; these are better indicators of candidates' potential and prior skills acquisition.

### **Looking for more?**

- Check out TRIEC Learning: Visit [\*\*Finding Talent\*\*](#) for a great free course that covers many of the topics in this section.
- Check out the Hire Immigrants Ottawa website for the [\*\*Employer's Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace.\*\*](#)
- Check out the Immigrant Employment Council of BC website for the [\*\*Find Immigrant Talent\*\*](#) resources.

# Hiring: Break Down Interview Barriers

The interview is a critical stage of the hiring process. It is at this stage that employers assess skills, education, and previous work experience that have prepared a candidate for a specified role. This section is intended to provide HR professionals and hiring managers with strategies and tips for moving beyond cultural differences and unintended bias to fully appreciate the potential of immigrant candidates.

## Interviewer: Address Blind Spots

Recognizing our own personal biases is a necessary and important step to ensuring a fair hiring decision. Countering personal bias is challenging, and ultimately it relies on the motivation of the hiring personnel to take the time to recognize and mitigate those biases prior to the interview. Raising awareness about bias and taking steps to be better informed will help ensure a more equitable outcome to the hiring process.

Personal bias is an individual's belief about a specific group of people; it can be positive or negative and can impact the hiring decision accordingly. Our biases are largely subconscious and can cause us to make incorrect assumptions about others based on our expectations about behaviour, rather than the actual behaviour itself. Biases form out of your life experiences, such as favouring a candidate who attended the same university as you; or they derive from your expectations based on the cultural norms you subscribe to.

Consider non-verbal communication as an example. In Canada, direct eye contact is associated with a high level of engagement and respect for the other individual in the conversation. A lack of eye contact can be misinterpreted as a lack of interest or confidence, when in fact for some individuals averting one's eyes is a way of showing respect. No one can be aware of every personal bias. In an interview, it is important to be open-minded, to focus on the content of the interview, and to remain aware of personal biases that may be affecting your perceptions about the candidate's suitability for the role.

To help you mitigate some of your own biases, consider the following:

- The qualities you think demonstrate "professionalism" in an interview, (e.g., appearance, tone of voice, and body language). Take note of how you react to each of these aspects and be aware when a candidate does not meet your expectations. Reflect on whether your positive or negative perception of one or more of these qualities changes your view of a candidate's abilities.
- Your perception of animated individuals and more reserved individuals: Do you think that more animated or outgoing candidates are less professional? Or perhaps you think they are

more engaged and more eager for the role? For more reserved candidates, do you think they are less interested? Or more professional and polite?

- Your initial reaction to a pronounced “foreign” or regional accent: Do you associate accents with a person’s English language proficiency? Do you feel more comfortable talking to people who sound like you? Do you find yourself making assumptions about a candidate’s skills and experience based on the way the candidate speaks?
- Your initial reaction to a different racial or ethnic background from your own: Do you associate this racial or ethnic group with a negative interaction you or others have had? Do you feel more comfortable working with individuals who share a racial or ethnic background that’s similar to yours? Are you concerned about a person’s fit in the organization if their race or ethnicity is different from that of the majority?

As an interviewer, you must recognize how your own experiences impact your perception of a candidate. Slow down your decision-making, and ask yourself these important questions about your perceptions: Are you considering this candidate as an individual, or are preconceived notions about this individual’s race, ethnicity, gender, or religion impacting your assessment? Awareness is a necessary first step to address blind spots and ensure that personal bias is not clouding your judgements about a candidate’s abilities and the skills required for the job.

### **Did you know?**

The diversity of the pool of candidates invited to the interview stage greatly impacts whether you will hire a candidate of colour or a woman. Several studies have demonstrated that if there is only one visible minority or woman candidate in the pool, there is statistically no chance that this person will be hired. Standing alone, as the only woman candidate or candidate of colour, makes the person stand out as different and activates unconscious bias that disadvantages the person. If you add more than one visible minority or woman candidate to the interview pool, the chances of hiring a visible minority or woman drastically increase. This is known as the “two in the pool” effect and is a meaningful step that can be taken to overcome unconscious bias and support racial and gender equity in your workforce.

## **Interview Questions: Review and Revise**

In preparing for the interview stage of recruitment, it’s essential to structure the interview so that it elicits the information required to assess if the candidate possesses the skills that are essential to perform the role. When interviewing immigrant candidates, there are some best practices to take into

consideration to ensure that the interview questions are not inadvertently setting the candidate up to fail. Consider adopting these best practices when revising your interview questions:

- **Connect questions to essential skills:** Revisit the job posting and carefully consider the responsibilities of the role; list the essential skills required to complete each responsibility. Create questions and expected response(s) that would satisfy your assessment of the skill. Test these questions on a colleague, preferably one in a similar role to the one you're seeking to fill; if your questions did not elicit the expected response, it's a good indication that the question may need to be revised.

See the strategy in the **Recruiting** section to revise job descriptions so that they clearly articulate essential skills.

- **Be intentional and specific:** Open-ended questions that rely on an understanding of Canadian cultural standards are more difficult for immigrant candidates to respond to, since they are not as familiar with Canadian cultural standards of interviewing. Questions that may seem straightforward to a Canadian interviewer, like "Tell me about yourself," can lead a candidate to provide an answer that does not meet the interviewer's expectations. Being specific means revising "Tell me about yourself" to "Tell me about your education and previous experience that relate to this role." This revision more clearly states what you would like the candidate to speak about. By revising and clarifying the statement, you set the candidate up for success. Review other questions in your interview process; consider if their phrasing will produce the type of response you are seeking.

For other questions to consider revising or rephrasing, see this resource from **Hire Immigrants Ottawa**.

- **Avoid using metaphors in your question:** Common idioms, colloquialisms, and metaphors used in interview questions, such as "Tell me about a time you had to think outside the box," or "What do you bring to the table?" are not necessarily common across all cultures. These questions can cause unnecessary confusion and lead to a misinterpretation of what is being asked. Revise these questions to be clearer and more focused on the skill you are trying to assess. In the first example, "Tell me about a time you had to think outside the box," are you assessing the candidate's ability to solve complex problems? Or are you assessing creative thinking skills? If the former, ask the question more directly: "Tell me about a time you were faced with a complex problem—what did you do to solve it? What did you learn from that experience?" If the latter, consider rephrasing the question to speak more directly to creative thinking: "Tell me about a time you had to create a new way of doing a task within your role or team."

- **Add a skills-based assessment:** Administering an on-the-job type of assessment or test for specific skills or competencies is a great complement to a standard interview. A performance-based assessment allows immigrant candidates to demonstrate their ability to perform a specific skill and for you as the interviewer to assess the skill “in action.” Skills-based tests can be provided in advance or during the interview, and they should be tied to a skill that is essential to the role.

### Looking for more?

Review this resource from TRIEC on [Developing Cross-Cultural Behaviour Based Interview Questions](#).

### Interviewing: Tips for Success

There are several simple tips you can follow to ensure an effective cross-cultural interview experience with an immigrant candidate. Consider the following:

- **Be consistent.** The interview process, questions, and format should be the same for each candidate.
- **Ask one question at a time.** Including several questions at once can be challenging for a candidate. Pose one question at a time, clearly and concisely; avoid jargon or humour, as it may be difficult for the applicant to interpret.
- **Focus on content.** Cultural differences may impact a candidate’s “style,” and in turn, can affect how you, the interviewer, view the candidate’s suitability. Prioritize the content of what the candidate is saying and challenge your assessment if it is overemphasizing style.
- **Be prepared to rephrase your questions.** If a candidate’s answer seems short or inappropriate, rephrase the question, since it may have been misinterpreted. In other cases, if there is a word or phrase that is unclear to you, ask for clarification. Some technical terms or phrases commonly used in other countries are not used in Canada.
- **Interpreting silence.** While preparing their response to a question, candidates from certain cultures will often not attempt to fill the silence with the typical, “That’s a good question. Let me think about it.” In other cases, candidates may need to mentally translate back and forth between English and their first language. In both instances, it’s important to reassure candidates that they can take their time, and for you as the interviewer to be prepared to embrace silences during the interview process.
- **Be mindful of non-verbal cues.** There are cultural differences in body language and self-expression. When reviewing your notes from the interview, identify where you may be critical because of the candidate’s non-verbal behaviours, rather than the content of the candidate’s response.

### Critical Consideration

Using a panel of interviewers instead of one person to conduct a one-to-one interview is a best practice to ensure that you draw on multiple perspectives when assessing a candidate's suitability. Carefully consider your own identity (i.e., your race, gender, immigration status, socioeconomic status, etc.) and the various identities reflected within your team. Consider colleagues who often bring a perspective different from yours to a challenge or work situation, or a colleague with whom you at times disagree. Being intentional about having the interview panel made up of colleagues who have perspectives different from your own can help to counter personal bias and challenge misinterpretations.



### Online Adaptation

Virtual interviewing has become more and more common because of physical distancing restrictions and the rise of remote work. Virtual interviews are new to many recruiters and candidates alike; consider implementing these tips to support cross-cultural interviewing in a virtual environment:

- **Plan for disruption, and clearly communicate your plan to the candidate.** Being interviewed at home lends itself to distractions in the surrounding environment. When you send an invitation for a virtual interview, provide instructions for what a candidate should do if the interview is interrupted by technical difficulties, and explicitly acknowledge the possibility of home-based interviews being disrupted by partners, children, or pets. Encourage candidates to find a private location for the interview, but you as the interviewer must recognize that complete, inviolable privacy may not be possible.
- **Navigate lags in video communication.** During virtual meetings, individuals can talk over each other because of time lags on digital platforms, creating an awkward and extremely distracting situation. Practice waiting a few seconds before responding, to avoid accidentally talking over or interrupting the candidate.
- **Offer technical tips for a smooth interview.**<sup>2</sup> Provide these tips to the candidate and adopt them yourself to ensure a smooth interview:
  - Fully charge your computer beforehand, or, if possible, leave the computer plugged in during the interview.
  - Switch off or mute all alerts and notifications on your mobile devices and computer.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from CMIs, V. (2020, November 24). "How to Hire Remotely" Guide. Recruiting Brief. <https://www.recruitingbrief.com/frs/14943735/-how-to-hire-remotely-guide/email>

- To limit ambient noise, choose a quiet, indoor location.
- Pay attention to the camera framing to ensure that there is a clear view of yourself. To achieve this, centre yourself in the frame, raise your computer so the camera is at eye level, and avoid any bright light (from nearby windows, for example) directly behind you that will cause silhouetting.
- Take notes with pen and paper, as the noise of the keystrokes as you type can be distracting.

### **Critical Consideration**

Virtual interviews may expose a candidate's home to you. As noted earlier, there may be unplanned interruptions from children or pets. Technical glitches will happen and are to be expected. Avoid unconscious bias by taking extra time to listen and focus on the candidate's skills and experiences.

Be flexible when scheduling an interview. Recognize that digital devices (i.e., a laptop) may be shared across numerous people in the household, and that childcare needs may limit a candidate's availability.



# Onboarding: Welcome Immigrant Employees

After the process of recruiting and hiring any candidate, it's critical to have processes in place which ensure that the new candidate feels welcome and effectively onboarded into your workforce. This is especially true for immigrants, who may need more guidance to familiarize themselves with the work systems and culture of your organization. Successful retention of new employees begins at the onboarding phase. It can be challenging for anyone to learn the written and unwritten rules of a new community. Onboarding should be a process that engages all staff in efforts to create a welcoming environment for new hires.

## Orientation: Review and Revise

A thorough orientation to a new workplace is key to bolstering retention and making a new employee feel welcome and included. The orientation should be designed to set expectations and clarify workplace policies and procedures. For new immigrant employees, it's critical to include workplace culture, values, expectations, and behaviours that are not easily known, written down, or conveyed and which can be overlooked when the workforce is largely made up of individuals who share a cultural background. These expectations could include an overview of the etiquette of using shared spaces, such as refilling the coffee canister when it's empty, taking breaks on the honour system, what "open-door policy" means, or how best to contribute ideas to a broader team.

Here are some strategies to support your review and revision of your onboarding and orientation process:

1. **Consider the Three Ps.**<sup>3</sup> Start with organizing your orientation by people, performance, and paperwork.
  - Who are the key **people** whom any new employee must meet, what will those meetings look like, and when should they occur? Examples include informal social events, group onboarding activities, assigning a buddy, meetings with senior leaders, team building and getting to know each other, mentoring, and other key meetings.
  - What is required to support any new employee in the **performance** of their role? Examples include job shadowing, setting expectations and providing feedback, HR check-ins, coaching, and other training.
  - Lastly, what **paperwork** and processes must be reviewed, completed, and explained? Examples include company orientation, handbook or policies, resources,

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IEC-BC). (2018). *Onboarding Newcomers: A Toolkit for BC Employers*. <https://www.iecbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IECBC-Onboarding2018-webV2.pdf>

and forms.

2. **Consider accommodation needs.** People from some cultures participate in religious practices from time to time during the workday. Ideally you will be able to designate an appropriate location in the workplace for these practices and inform all employees of this location.



#### Online Adaptation

If your team is working remotely, offering flexible break times or no-meeting times within teams is a great opportunity for an employee to be off-line for religious reasons.

3. **Consider timeliness.** Make your expectations clear as they relate to working hours, submitting reports on time, and meeting explicit deadlines.



#### Online Adaptation

If your team is working remotely, clear communication about hours and expectations is critical. Consider your company's ability to accommodate flexible hours for new staff who may be balancing childcare needs or the needs of other remote workers in the home.

4. **Consider workplace lingo and norms.** Many organizations frequently use sector-specific terminology and jargon as well as slang, idioms, and colloquial language. To support new employees, the best practice is to spell out acronyms in meetings, rather than wait for a new employee to ask what they mean. Consider keeping a list or cheat sheet of commonly used acronyms and abbreviations specific to your industry or workplace so that new employees can more easily begin to familiarize themselves.
5. **Safeguarding the health of employees.** If the new employee will be in a physical workplace, make sure that safety processes and protocols are explicitly reviewed during orientation. Employee health should be a top priority, and you will want to demonstrate the protocols in place and familiarize the new employee with them. It's crucial to communicate clearly about such measures—such as altering work hours through shifts and daily rotations, or implementing new hygiene and safety measures like physical distancing and mask-wearing. You want to instill confidence in your new staff that your organization is doing everything necessary to keep them safe.



## Online Adaptation

Onboarding new employees remotely poses significant challenges to fostering interpersonal relationships and mutual trust. Communication is even more important to a remote workforce, so be sure to include a thorough overview of the ways your team communicates and the style of each type of communication. For example, some organizations reserve email for more formal requests, whereas instant messaging platforms are used for more informal, discussion-based communication. Other ways to foster greater relationship-building remotely for new hires include providing the following:

- Contact information for their hiring manager, IT support, and HR
- A company directory and organizational chart—include photos, employee information, and fun facts to personalize it
- Schedule informal “watercooler” chats with other members of the team on platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Slack, and encourage staff to share non-work-related content and updates (e.g., creative recipes prepared during lockdown, recommendations for books, movies, TV series, etc.).

## Beyond the First Week

Onboarding a new employee goes beyond the first week, or even the traditional three-month probation period. New employees should receive regular check-ins; bi-weekly check-ins are a great way to foster a positive working relationship with a new employee, and for immigrant hires, it’s important that check-ins include cultural integration questions. Consider including questions like these:

- What has surprised you about the way things work here?
- What have you liked? What has frustrated you?
- What information would have been helpful to have on your first day?

This type of ongoing engagement provides the opportunity to clarify any early misconceptions and avoid future misunderstandings, and to improve the orientation process overall for future immigrant hires.

### Critical Consideration

To garner better feedback, replace yes/no questions with open-ended questions.

Yes/No Questions	Open-Ended Questions
Do you understand?	What other information can I give you?
Does that make sense?	What do you think?
Is that clear?	How do you think we should start?
Do you have any questions?	What other questions do you have?

### Peer Buddy Program

A great way to enhance a new employee transition is with a buddy system. While a structured orientation program goes a long way toward supporting a new employee's understanding of the organization, an informal buddy helps to ensure a successful integration into the workplace culture. A buddy can show a new hire around the physical or virtual workplace and answer questions that immigrant hires might hesitate to ask an immediate supervisor.

Here are some common aspects of a successful buddy system:

- **The basics:** A buddy is someone who partners with a new employee during the employee's first two to three months of employment. This buddy becomes a known and reliable resource for things that may seem trivial to continually ask one's supervisor, but which are critical to feeling comfortable and being productive.
- **Buddy responsibilities:** Typically a buddy will offer advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects of work, as well as provide encouragement and knowledge resources. A buddy represents a reliable, motivated, single point of contact for a new employee's basic questions.
- **The making of a good buddy:** A selected buddy should have most of these key characteristics:

- Open communicator: The buddy should be able to provide relevant information and encourage a process of continued, self-directed learning.
- Role model: The buddy should be a model employee exemplifying company values.
- Motivated worker: The buddy should have a positive outlook on his or her own work and use that perspective to help engender self-confidence and loyalty in the new employee. In short, the buddy leads by example.
- Knowledgeable professional: The buddy is equipped to help guide the new employee in many situations based on the buddy's own experience and knowledge obtained in the work environment.
- Other key considerations: A buddy should be a proficient and experienced worker, able to devote time to new employees and proud to be part of your organization. It's important to select individuals who are culturally sensitive, and if possible, who speak the same first language. A buddy should not work in a supervisory capacity to the new employee.

### **Critical Consideration**

For smaller companies, it may not be feasible to assign a formal buddy. Instead, consider the key characteristics listed above, and identify an employee that possesses these qualities. Empower that person to have regular, informal check-ins with an immigrant hire. This staff member could be an office manager or receptionist who interacts with employees across the organization.

### **Looking for more?**

Check out the TRIEC Learning: [Onboarding](#) for resources to explore further.

## Integrating: Foster Employee Cohesion

Including immigrant talent in your workforce goes beyond recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding; inclusion is as much about helping your existing staff grow with new talent as it is about helping the new employee adjust to the team and the new environment. The goal is for your organization to benefit from fresh new perspectives that complement the strengths of your current team.

Inclusion is more than a numbers game. It extends beyond merely counting immigrant hires to meaningfully preparing the workplace to include and incorporate this talent. Employers understand that a culture of inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging; a culture of inclusivity provides an opportunity for all employees to be themselves and to reach their potential. Integration is a two-way street: It's important to balance the need to support immigrant talent with the need to enable existing staff to adapt to and be inclusive of new employees.

### Mentorship: Development Opportunities

Formal and informal mentoring programs are effective measures that support the integration of immigrant hires and promote cross-cultural understanding among existing staff. For immigrant employees, an on-the-job mentor is a knowledgeable, experienced employee in the organization who agrees to coach them. Mentoring allows new employees to learn the intangibles that are needed to succeed in the workplace. For new immigrants, a mentoring relationship provides both the opportunity to learn more about your specific company and about Canadian workplace norms. For the mentors, who are your existing staff members, mentoring provides an important development opportunity and increases their intercultural understanding. The demonstrated two-way benefit to both mentee and mentor is a worthwhile and cost-effective measure to support integration and encourage an inclusive workplace.

#### Critical Consideration

Mentors can play a pivotal role in safeguarding retention and fostering organizational commitment, particularly in times of crisis. **Research** shows that when mentors are actively engaged with mentees, the mentees form stronger emotional bonds to the organization, report higher job satisfaction, and perceive greater support from the organization broadly.

Here's how to start setting up an internal mentoring program.<sup>4</sup>

1. **Define your goals.** If your goal is to foster inclusion and pave a path to leadership for immigrant employees, your mentorship program will be structured differently than if your goal is to welcome new hires or have them develop a more technical skill set. For the purposes of this example, let's assume your goal is to welcome new immigrant hires and support their integration.
2. **Share your goals with your team—and make clear that the goals are a business priority.** This stage is especially important in times of austerity or stress. Employees may be concerned about taking time in their workday to be a staff mentor, given competing business priorities. Importantly, remind staff that your organization is committed to welcoming and integrating immigrant hires, and that mentors will have the full support of your leadership to invest time and resources into the program.
3. **Choose your mentors.** Staff mentors should reflect the goal of the mentorship program. For our goal in this example, appropriate mentors would be staff who are knowledgeable about the company and its culture, who are amiable yet professional in their manner, and who have the interpersonal skills to effectually develop a trusting relationship with a peer.
4. **Choose your mentees.** For the purposes of our goal of driving inclusion and integration, you would need to identify new immigrant staff as prospective mentees. Consider who would benefit most from having a mentor, such as someone who is in their first job in Canada, whose language skills may require additional practice; or someone who works independently and may not have daily contact with other colleagues. Importantly, once potential mentees are identified, you'll need to gauge their interest in being mentored. Ideally, mentorship would be available to everyone in an organization, but when starting a new program, you are encouraged to start with a small, specific group and expand as you learn what works.
5. **Pair mentors and mentees.** You can do this in a myriad of ways, depending on your organizational structure as well as the identified mentors and mentees. Perhaps your staff are organized by several different departments and you want to foster integration across those departments; in this case, you would want to pair mentors with mentees that are not from their department. Alternatively, if you want new immigrant hires to be better integrated within their own department or team, you will want to pair mentors and mentees from within the same team. Importantly, the mentee should not be set up with a direct supervisor. The goal of fostering integration and inclusion can be thwarted if a mentee does not feel comfortable asking questions or sharing concerns—a situation that can occur in the power dynamic between staff and supervisor. Interpersonal dynamics are important. Be sure to

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Haun, L. (2020, June 18). *The COVID-19 Crisis is a Mentorship Opportunity: Here's How to Take Advantage of It*. TLNT. <https://www.tlnt.com/the-covid-19-crisis-is-a-mentorship-opportunity-heres-how-to-take-advantage-of-it/>

provide mentees the opportunity to reflect on their mentor and provide feedback, as the pairing may not be a good fit.

6. **Set expectations and get in sync on a format.** It is your responsibility to empower your mentor-mentee pairs with clear direction on formatting the relationship within the company mentorship program. Setting standard expectations for meetings, such as a biweekly meeting schedule, and prompts for fostering meaningful discussion between mentor and mentee are essential.
7. **Evaluate performance over time.** After your mentorship program has been running for three months, collect data—both objective, like an employee satisfaction survey; and subjective, like feelings of inclusion and company confidence—and go over it with your team to make adjustments.



Iversoft is committed to hiring immigrant talent. Diversity brings new perspectives and enables teams to find creative solutions to the problems our clients trust us to solve. If you only hire people who think like you, you limit your potential impact. Broad perspectives equals a better bottom line.”

Steph Barlow, Director of People & Culture, Iversoft (Ottawa, ON)

### **External Mentorship Programs**

If the timing isn't right for your organization to develop a new mentorship program, or if you are a smaller company, you may not have the resources to support the kind of program outlined above. Fortunately, the #ImmigrantsWork coalition members have mentorship programs that can help your current staff develop intercultural understanding and experience professional development opportunities. Your organization can demonstrate support for these programs by joining and encouraging your staff to join as mentors.

Joining an established mentorship program in the community offers numerous benefits to mentors and mentees, including the following:

- Eases the transition for new employees



- Provides learning opportunities for both mentors and mentees
- Offers insight into the local culture, better preparing immigrants (mentees) for job opportunities
- Helps you identify and develop potential new leaders, addressing issues of talent shortages and reducing costs of recruiting and training
- Contributes to a culture of learning, professional development, and information sharing—a culture which can improve job satisfaction for all your employees
- Better prepares immigrants for the workplace, helping them to adapt more quickly to their new jobs
- Offers a proven way to help immigrants transition to Canadian workplace culture

### Did you know?

The COVID-19 pandemic does not need to disrupt mentorship relationships. There is good **evidence** that mentoring via real-time videoconferencing yields outcomes equivalent to in-person mentoring. Alternatively, methods such as email, chats, and text messaging allow flexibility in keeping the lines of communication open.

To learn more about any of our coalition members' programs, click on the links below:

- **Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. (IEC-BC)**  
The MentorConnect program brings together skilled immigrants and established professionals (from our employer partners) in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. Skilled immigrants entering the program already possess the education, experience, and language skills they need to succeed in the Canadian labour market. The program provides up to 12 hours of mentoring over a two-month period. Mentors (from our employer partners) also introduce mentees to two or more professionals within their networks for informational interviews. To learn more about becoming an employer partner, **visit our website or email us.**
- **Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC)**  
CRIEC develops and delivers occupation-specific mentoring programs and employer-engaged experiential learning strategies that enable immigrant professionals to secure career paths that align with their professional goals. We connect these professionals with mentors who are volunteer professionals from across a wide range of corporate, non-profit, research, and academic sectors in sessions and events that encourage authentic two-way

learning. This exchange of knowledge and experience builds bridges as immigrants learn about workplace culture, start developing their personal and professional networks, consider career choices, and better appreciate employer expectations. Mentoring has been shown to enhance the ability of immigrant professionals to navigate their way in the labour market. In turn, mentors and employers gain a greater understanding of both the talents and the challenges many immigrants face on their career journey. All in all, a win-win for the regional economy. To learn more about becoming an employer partner, [visit our website](#).

- **Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC)**

The Career Mentorship Program is a collaborative effort between the Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC), immigrant service providers, and corporate partners that brings together immigrant professionals (mentees) and established Canadian professionals (mentors) in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. The Career Mentorship Program provides an opportunity for immigrant professionals to develop an understanding of Canadian workplace culture, establish professional networks, and acquire knowledge about how to better integrate into the local labour market. Increasing access to mentoring improves employment opportunities for immigrant professionals, which in turn addresses labour market issues and results in greater value-added benefits to employers and the regional economy. To learn more about becoming an employer partner, [visit our website](#).

- **Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)**

TRIEC Mentoring Partnership matches immigrants with a mentor in their professional field, with the mentor sharing insights into how their industry operates in Canada, as well as advice for breaking into the local job market. Employer partners can invest in high-potential team members by offering them the chance to become mentors and hone their leadership skills. In the process, they hire more capable, more diverse teams, find diverse sources of talent, and help change the lives of hundreds of new immigrants every year. To learn more, visit the [Mentoring Partnership webpage](#).

- **Niagara Workforce Planning Board**

Niagara Workforce Planning Board is Niagara's trusted community partner, providing data and insight in support of a diverse and talented workforce. Our Immigrant Mentorship program works to ensure that Niagara employers benefit from the untapped potential of immigrants and comprehend the advantages of inclusive hiring, and help immigrants understand and integrate into Niagara's labour market. To learn more about our program, [visit our website](#).

- **Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO)**

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) has a network of immigrant-serving organization partners that deliver a variety of mentoring and connector programs—**contact HIO** for assistance in

navigating these programs. HIO also holds Employer Coaching Events which operate as speed networking sessions. Employers provide brief career search advice to immigrant job seekers who are in a similar sector or occupation. To learn more about our employer programs, [visit our website](#).

- **Halifax Partnership**

Halifax Partnership works with an extensive network of public, private, and post-secondary investors and partners to accelerate business and economic growth in Halifax. Our signature programs, such as the SmartBusiness (business retention and expansion) Program, Connector Program, National Connector Program, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, and, most recently, the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan, seek to identify and respond to immediate and long-term business and labour market needs and establish a more diverse and inclusive business community and economy. The **National Connector Program**—based in Halifax, Nova Scotia—provides communities and employers with a turnkey solution that increases immigrant talent retention through intentional networking. The Connector Program is a simple yet highly effective networking model that matches and connects immigrants with local business people, civil servants, and community leaders. Currently based in more than 30 communities across Canada and growing, the National Connector Program is a successful model to help retain immigrant talent and create more welcoming, inclusive communities. To learn more about how we can help your business, [visit our website](#).

## **Invest in Inclusive Leadership**

Leadership is key to transforming an organization into a truly welcoming and inclusive work environment. Both current leaders' actions and the investment in developing diverse talent encourage employees to support and practice cross-cultural inclusion.

For diverse teams to have effective leadership, your organization will need to adjust its approach and leadership style. Consider how you can support your leadership as it transitions from a homogeneous model to a diversity model.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Hire Immigrants Ottawa. (2011). *Employer's Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace*. [http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/EmployersGuide-English/EmpGuide\\_EN\\_2011.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/EmployersGuide-English/EmpGuide_EN_2011.pdf)

Aspects 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 is on helping people fit into the existing culture.	Facilitator and Catalyst: Flexibility and knowledge of other cultural norms shape an evolving workplace culture.
Communication Mode	Communication is direct and "to the point."	Communication can be less directive; attention is paid to individual preferences.

For leadership to be effective in fostering inclusion, communication is essential. Encourage all members of the leadership team to work toward awareness and articulation of their own cultural attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Encourage them to:

- Identify their own learned generalizations, stereotypes, and filters
- Clarify their understanding of cultural norms
- Listen, observe, and describe rather than evaluate and judge
- Recognize that initial perceptions are often inaccurate, and allow for additional interpretations to arise
- Work toward developing empathy—try to see a situation from their own and their team members' cultural perspectives
- Check assumptions—don't assume another culture is either similar to or different from yours

## Critical Consideration

The **TRIEC Inclusive Workplace Competencies framework** is a resource that articulates the skills, knowledge, and behaviour needed to support an inclusive workplace. You can use the competencies as a standalone resource or to enhance your own existing framework.

Often cultural differences in management and leadership styles can create barriers that disqualify immigrant talent and prevent them from reaching management level positions. It can be challenging for immigrants to identify the subtle qualities that are nevertheless expected in the Canadian workplace, so it is essential that organizations acknowledge and value inclusion as a critical characteristic in their leaders (TRIEC, 2019). Immigrant talent is a source of future leaders, and the potential to challenge and improve promotion norms means intentionally defining what soft skills and workplace culture really mean in practice, so that they do not become a means of exclusion. There are cultural differences across management and leadership styles. Organizations have a responsibility to foster leadership and management potential by being transparent about company culture and expectations, as well as to be open to expanding these definitions to allow for new perspectives from global talent. Importantly, it is not only the responsibility of the immigrant employees to navigate these cultural differences; employers, too, need to acknowledge and value diverse approaches and perspectives—in the interests of inclusion, increasing productivity, and creating opportunities for innovation (TRIEC, 2019).

### Did you know?

TRIEC has a new **Career Advancement for Immigrant Professionals (CAIP)** program to support employers with their internal talent mobility strategy. The program helps employers to retain and advance their existing immigrant talent, while also providing immigrant professionals with the opportunity to realize their full potential.

### Looking for more?

- Check out TRIEC Learning: **Leadership** for resources to explore and learn from.
- Check out the free virtual **Cross-Cultural Training** workshop offered by Hire Immigrants Ottawa. Enhance effective communication and interaction of people across cultures, be they colleagues, customers, clients, or suppliers.
- For leaders who want to learn more about making meaningful change in their organizations, consider TRIEC's **Certificate in Inclusive Leadership** (fee for service).

## Wrap-Up

The #ImmigrantsWork coalition recognizes that for Canadian workplaces much uncertainty lies ahead. But we are inspired to plan for the future we wish to see. This Playbook is a starting point for that effort. In 2021, this coalition will continue to promote the inclusion of immigrant talent and inclusion practices at each stage of the employment cycle. In consultation with employers and HR professionals, we will seek to better understand the current realities and challenges facing organizations so we can move beyond this first iteration toward more proactive solutions to these pervasive challenges. Together, we can build a Canada where everyone can thrive.

### Connect with the coalition:



Highly skilled immigrants bring a great diversity in their education, training, skills, and life experience. These employees bring fresh perspectives and diverse points of view, allowing our business to better connect with customers.”

Sharon Hinds, Manager, Quality Assurance, Rogers (Toronto, ON)

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