

Community Focus Bulletin: ***Creating Community Conversations***



Prepared by Merriam & Associates

No. 2– 2018

Building Capacity in Employment Services for Newcomers to Peterborough

For the full report go to:

<http://flemingcrew.ca/images/employmentservicesfornewcomersfeb2018.pdf>

Following trends throughout Canada, the workforce in Peterborough Ontario is aging rapidly with more people retiring or leaving work than those entering the workforce. Peterborough recognizes the role that newcomers can play in filling these employment gaps and ensuring economic growth. In 2014 the Peterborough Partnership Council on Immigration Integration (PPCII) produced a report that identified that the ability of newcomers to be successful is contingent on having a local workplace that is open to investing in newcomers, being tolerant of different cultures and learning styles, and providing training programs that help build English skills and educate on Canadian culture.

Over the past two years, Peterborough, like other communities, has welcomed many new refugees due to the Syrian crisis and the community is being encouraged to accept more. In 2016 the Peterborough Immigration Partnership (PIP), a renaming of the PPCII, began working with local businesses and community groups to help them achieve the goals articulated in its Community Immigrant Integration Plan 2016-2021 to ensure that newcomers have a meaningful social and economic integration. Enhanced employment services are part of these goals. All three Employment Service Providers (ES SPs) in Peterborough funded by Employment Ontario (the Community Employment Resource Partnership (CERP), the New Canadian Centre (NCC) and Fleming College) are engaged with PIP.

In May 2017 with funding from OCWI, Fleming CREW Employment Services developed a research plan to identify how ES SPs can best help newcomers secure and retain jobs to allow them to successfully integrate into our community.

The research was designed to answer the following questions:

- How can employment and training services in Peterborough help newcomers, particularly refugees, get and keep jobs?
- Are there gaps or new strategies in our local service delivery system to address the needs of newcomers and employers?
- What programs, services, interventions and supports best meet the needs of these job seekers and local employers hiring newcomers?

The following methods were used to answer the questions:

- Conducting an environmental scan including interviewing stakeholders in 1-1 interviews and focus groups;
- Identifying the barriers that challenge or prevent newcomers from securing and retaining employment;
- Exploring the skills, competencies and characteristics that employers seek in the employees they hire;
- Identifying gaps in our service delivery system;
- Making recommendations about how to:
 - build capacity in the employment and training sector;
 - educate and inform employers about the contributions newcomers make;
 - match newcomers to jobs;
 - best prepare newcomers for their job search in Canada;
 - help newcomers access training and education opportunities;
 - help newcomers navigate and access employment and training services;
 - develop and deliver a service model for small-mid-size communities;
- Pilot, test and evaluate 2-3 of the recommendations.

Those participating:

Interviews were conducted among the participant groups that are engaged with PIP. As well, interviews were conducted with local employers and ES SPs outside Peterborough who have established services supporting newcomers. A mix of 1-1 interviews and focus groups ranging from 1 – 12 participants were arranged. The stakeholder groups included: newcomers, employers and employment service providers (ES SPs) and others who support newcomers (such as sponsor groups).

The Results:

Phase 1 of the research identifies the key themes that combine reflections from:

- the review of local literature reviews on newcomer integration in Peterborough,
- what was heard in the interviews with all participants, and
- what was learned from Best Practices shared by employment service providers outside Peterborough who have a long history of working with newcomers

These were the key themes that were derived from the research and consultation. A series of recommended directions were developed based on these themes:

1. There is a need to assist newcomers to improve their English language skills in order for them to find and retain employment.

2. Newcomers need education and information about the workplace culture in Canada.
3. Like many job searchers, newcomers need assistance to hone their job searching skills.
4. Employers would benefit from learning of the values and qualities of newcomers, specifically that they are motivated, dependable and reliable (MDR).
5. Newcomers and those supporting them, must be made more aware of employment services and what they can provide to assist them to obtain and retain employment.

Pilots developed, tested and evaluated in Phase Two:

After reviewing the themes and recommendations in section (Phase 1), two strategies were piloted for the next phase of the research: a workshop on workplace culture in Canada and a resource tool on employment law in Canada.

The complete report documents the workshop's goals, agenda and evaluation from participants.

Other lessons learned include the need for:

- diversity training for a changing workplace,
- mental health supports for newcomers,
- access to support services in order for newcomers to be able to be successful in the workplace.

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