

By Employers, for Employers

Tips for Recruiting International Talent



What strategies can small and medium-sized employers use to hire and retain immigrants?

Canadian employers are suffering from labour and skill shortages. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) feel these shortages acutely, as they make up 98 per cent of employer businesses in Canada.¹ Many are turning to immigration as a solution, but much of the international talent needed is already in Canada.

The 2023 Canadian Immigration Summit gathered 200 employers and immigration experts. We tasked these specialists to co-create solutions to the challenges facing SMEs. Employers can use these recommendations to hire and retain international talent.

Common barriers to recruiting immigrants

- **SMEs lack the HR capacity to address labour shortages.**
Often, SMEs lack access to human resource (HR) professionals or alternative methods to assess international qualifications and experience.
- **Racial bias and discrimination contribute to immigrant underemployment.**
The most common barriers facing immigrants are at the hiring stage. They face racial bias, discrimination, and a need for Canadian work experience.²
- **Creating inclusive workplaces is key to avoiding “unsuccessful” hires.**
SMEs want to avoid expending resources to recruit and train a new employee who leaves the job after a short time. Equally, immigrants seek a stable work environment that can support their long-term settlement.

Employers we surveyed suggested the following strategies to recruit and retain international talent.

Employer-led solutions

	<p>Use competency-based hiring practices. Identify necessary skills or capabilities that a role requires and use these as the basis of a job posting. Limit postings to include only necessary competencies and reasonable language capabilities. This will reduce barriers for immigrant applicants. Assess candidates by testing the essential skills needed for the role, as opposed to traditional interview methods.</p>
Short term	<p>Include a "willing to train" clause in job openings. Don't look for unicorn candidates who fulfill all nice-to-have qualities for vacant positions. Be willing to train prospective employees in useful social and emotional skills. This will encourage international talent to apply to openings.</p>
	<p>Conduct diversity bias training. Conduct unconscious bias training to identify employment practices that create barriers to an inclusive working culture. Conduct equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training to educate managers and employees about how to make a work environment safe, comfortable, and enjoyable for people of all backgrounds, including immigrants and racialized people.</p>

(continued ...)

1 Statistics Canada, "Survey on Financing and Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises, 2020," The Daily, March 2, 2022.

2 Yılmaz Ergun Dinç, *The "Canadian Experience" Disconnect: Immigrant Selection, Economic Settlement, and Hiring* (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2022).

Employer-led solutions (cont'd)

Medium term	Connect with external partners to increase HR capacity. Create links with local immigrant service organizations. These organizations can support employers looking to hire immigrant talent. Some examples of this support include arranging job fairs, skill matching candidates to job postings, pre-screening applications, and providing job-specific language training.
Long term	Upskill existing employees. Provide opportunities for employees to further develop their existing skills, or gain new ones. The Canadian labour market is going through substantial changes related to automation and increased use of digital technology. Ensuring current employees' skills are up to date is essential to weathering these systemic changes and retaining immigrant talent.
	Recognize the opportunities of immigrant experiences. View newcomer hiring as a necessary step toward business success. Immigrants bring a diversity of experiences and perspectives to their workplaces. With diverse perspectives come innovation and creativity. Moving attitudes on hiring newcomers from burden to benefit creates a positive culture for all employees and generates new opportunities for businesses.

Sources: The Conference Board of Canada; employers surveyed at the 2023 Canadian Immigration Summit.

In need of more resources?

Credential recognition services for employers

- [Comparative Education Services \(CES\)](#) at University of Toronto
- [World Education Services \(WES\)](#)

Diversity and inclusion training organisations

- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [The Canadian Diversity Initiative](#)

Immigrant employment councils

- [Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council \(CRIEC\)](#)
- [Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council \(ERIEC\)](#)
- [Halifax Partnership](#)
- [Hire Immigrants Ottawa \(HIO\)](#)
- [Immigrant Employment Council of BC \(IECBC\)](#)
- [New Brunswick Multicultural Council](#)
- [Rural Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council \(RMIEC\)](#)
- [Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council \(TRIEC\)](#)
- [WILL Employment Solutions, Ontario](#)
- [Workforce Collective, Ontario](#)

An index of immigrant-serving organizations across Canada is available on the [IRCC website](#).

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