
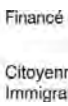




a chance for a better life

Development of the Immigrant Workforce in Smaller Communities and Rural Alberta

BOW VALLEY COLLEGE
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Executive Summary

Current changing demographic and economic patterns are creating skills shortages provincially. A 2010 Bow Valley College study illustrated the urgency of the skills shortage: over half of regional employers surveyed felt their organizations' capacity was limited by difficulty in finding workers with specific skills to fill positions (Gibbins, Sommerfeld, and Marcil, 2010, p. 34). While several factors influence skills shortages, Alberta's aging population and lower post-secondary participation rate exacerbate shortages.

This research project engaged immigrants, employers, and service providers to assess rural immigrants' needs for workforce development services, including language learning, education, and career training. This study focused on Airdrie, Banff, Black Diamond, Canmore, Chestermere, Cochrane, High River,

Alberta to work hard and make a better life for their families. Many of the immigrants involved in this study were highly educated (i.e., most had university degrees) but worked in positions that underutilized their skills. This was due mainly to the relative abundance of low-skilled or unskilled positions in small towns, lack of services to help with recognition of foreign qualifications, and language barriers.

Most employers involved in this study were eager to hire immigrants, who are widely considered as reliable and effective workers. Immigrants who participated in this study were enthusiastic to work in Alberta, even if it meant assuming roles that were incongruent with their levels of skills and experience. They placed a high value on education and training and wanted better access to education and economic opportunities in their communities to improve their conditions, career prospects, and opportunities for their children.

Service organizations support immigrant workforce development by providing services in language training, non-credit education, and employment services. Most service providers lack capacity (e.g., funding or in-house expertise) to assist immigrants with specialized settlement and workforce development issues. However, this study showed that service providers have strong relationships with one another, which optimizes their responsiveness to immigrant needs.

From the early days of this study, a significant number of participants expressed concern about the status of Temporary Foreign Workers' in Alberta workplaces and communities. Employers recruit TFWs to fill

Addressing Alberta's skills shortage will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach. A key component of any solution must include the engagement of those Albertans who are underrepresented in learning and whose skills go underutilized in the workplace, including Alberta's immigrant community.

Okotoks, Strathmore, and Turner Valley. It fills a gap in information regarding immigrant workforce development in smaller urban centres and rural communities in southern Alberta.

Most immigrants come to small communities in

labour shortages; however, they are not eligible for a range of services and training opportunities, even though they pay taxes. Service providers attempt to address TFWs' needs without recognition from funders. Study participants expressed that TFWs play vital roles in local economies, filling labour shortages in key industries that domestic workers are unwilling to fill. Further, the framing of so-called migrant workers as transients may be a misnomer, as many TFWs intend to transition to Permanent Residents.

This research found that while English language learning opportunities exist in small towns, the range of programming falls short of immigrant needs. Further English language ability featured prominently among immigrants' barriers to workplace integration. Other barriers included foreign qualification recognition, weak soft skills, chronic underemployment, lack of Canadian work experience, and weak professional social networks. This study found that workforce development and settlement services are interrelated, as issues such as transportation, affordable housing, and childcare affect immigrant access to workforce development services.

Recommendations

Enhance Access to Education and Training

- Expand the range of local English Language Learning (ELL) opportunities
- Enhance access to post-secondary education offerings
- Encourage employers to facilitate immigrants' access to education and training
- Open access to learning and training for Temporary Foreign Workers

Balance strategic coordination at the municipal and regional level

- Build local capacity through the coordination of services
- Consider strategies to provide inter- and intra-municipal transportation

Strengthen Workforce Development

- Provide tutoring, mentoring, bridging, and job-shadowing opportunities to improve immigrants' soft skills
- Enhance rural immigrants' access to supports with foreign qualification recognition support
- Expand reach of programs that support professional immigrants from Calgary to rural settings
- Promote awareness within the employer community on immigrant supports and services
- Extend provisions for employers to nominate low-skilled and unskilled TFWs for Permanent Residency where prolonged labour shortages exist

Adopt best practices more broadly

- Expand settlement services to those communities currently underserved
- Consider further joint initiatives that foster a welcoming community
- Expand adoption of travelling services delivery
- Continue the use of 'Welcome Wagons'
- Maintain excellent referral networks

Foster public awareness and participation

- Celebrate multiculturalism at community events
- Allow TFWs to access community services
- Ensure immigrants receive information at multiple points

Project Background

Bow Valley College is a public, board-governed college operating as a comprehensive community institution

under the Post-secondary Learning Act of Alberta. The Government of Alberta established Calgary and the surrounding region as the College's primary service region. By working collaboratively with service providers, communities, and governments, the College enhances access to adult education certificates, diplomas, post-diploma credentials, credit and non-credit learning, and focused skills training throughout the service region. With a long history of providing English language training and other specialized supports to immigrants, Bow Valley College is also a Centre of Excellence for Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement.

The College and its partners continue to consult with communities throughout the region to ensure responsiveness to local education and training priorities as well as community aspirations. These initiatives promote the transfer of skills to small communities by encouraging talent retention.

This project developed from a previous research study, "Reaching Out: Access to Adult Education and Training in the Calgary Regional Communities," conducted in 2010 by Bow Valley College and the Canada West Foundation. This study found that employers and residents in rural communities strongly support locally provided adult education opportunities (Gibbins, Sommerfeld, and Marcil, 2010, p. 37). Respondents were also open to online, remote, and blended learning options (p. v). The research identified barriers to education access in smaller communities and suggested solutions, including addressing affordability concerns, enhancing local

delivery through blended online and traditional offerings, and increasing scheduling flexibility (p. 43 and 44).

The project also found that employers and other respondents expressed demands for language training. While online learning can be a solution to providing education and training opportunities in rural areas, some technical barriers to e-learning exist: 4% of respondents in the "Reaching Out" study lacked access to a computer, and 9% lacked access to high-speed Internet (p. 18). Additionally, computer and Internet use can be barriers for some immigrants, mainly those with low English-language skills or those unfamiliar with technology.

The "Reaching Out" study recommended further inquiry into rural immigrants' unmet needs, unique barriers, and demand for training. The "Development of the Immigrant Workforce in Smaller Communities and Rural Alberta" research project investigated the supports and services required to integrate immigrants into the workforce in ways congruent with their skills and potential. The study is timely because of demographic and economic pressures in Alberta. Labour shortfalls in Alberta could become more acute due to an aging workforce (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2009), and Alberta's low post-secondary participation rate (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2011, p. 31). Attracting, developing, and utilizing the skills of immigrants in smaller urban and rural centres are important for future sustainable economic development (Bollman, Beshiri, & Clemenson, 2007, p. 14).



Methodological Brief

Methodological Brief

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As a qualitative study, the project researchers worked closely with the communities involved to collect the data. Qualitative data gave the researchers a deeper understanding of others' experiences through rich descriptions and anecdotal observations. The information provided in this study came directly from people living and working in Airdrie, Banff, Black Diamond, Canmore, Chestermere, Cochrane, High River, Okotoks, Strathmore, and Turner Valley.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the data were collected, a literature review (available at www.bowvalleycollege.ca/thefuture) was compiled, providing background on immigration to small urban centres and rural communities in southern Alberta. The literature review used a variety of sources including academic, government, and community resources. The literature review found that most immigrants to Canada have higher levels of education than the Canadian population at large (Statistics Canada, 2008, p. 6). Alberta is no exception, as most immigrants moving to the province are well educated (Alberta Advanced Education, 2011, p. 7). As a result, many immigrants in Alberta already have the necessary credentials and experience to make gains against skills shortages. However, their talents tend to be underutilized in the economy.

The literature review found that immigrants experience slower earnings growth relative to the overall working population, and the gap has been increasing (Frenette and Morissette, 2003). However, this trend is less apparent in smaller and rural settings,

where immigrants tend to do better economically than their urban counterparts (Bernard, 2008). The literature also found that immigrants face significant barriers in resuming their previously held occupations.

DATA COLLECTION

This project used three different data collection methods: interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group. Copies of the questions are available at www.bowvalleycollege.ca/thefuture. The data collection instruments were designed to engage similar themes by tailoring questions to different participant groups. To attain a comprehensive picture, three participant groups were engaged:

1. Immigrants—refers to all newcomers to Canada¹, including Refugees, Permanent Residents (PRs), Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs), naturalized citizens, and anyone on a working, holiday, or family visa, including employed, self-employed, unemployed, students, and stay-at-home parents;
2. Service Providers, including representatives of not-for-profit agencies, town departments and services, other interested local organizations, and community members; and
3. Employers, including immigrant and non-immigrant employers and industry and business representatives and leaders.

As some individuals identified with more than one participant group (e.g., an immigrant who was also an employer), they were invited to participate in additional data collection methods that would draw from their multiple perspectives. Of the

142 participants, only six people participated in additional data collection opportunities, and each individual was counted as only one participant.

Interviews were conducted with all three participant groups; however, questionnaires were distributed to service providers and employers only. The response rate for the questionnaires was relatively low, due in part to individuals' strong preference for interview participation. The focus group involved participants from all three participant groups and engaged participants from across the region.

Interviews were the primary data collection method. All interviews for this research study were conducted in English; however, knowledge of English was not a prerequisite to participate. Approximately 78% of the data came from interviews, 21% from the questionnaires, and 1% from the focus group. Most interviews were conducted one on one. However, in a few instances, there were multiple participants in one interview; thus, 109 individuals participated in 106 interviews. Most interviews lasted around 45-60 minutes. Audio from the interviews was digitally recorded except in one instance when a participant requested not to be recorded. In every instance, handwritten notes were taken.

DATA ANALYSIS

The information from the interviews, questionnaires, and the focus group was transcribed and summarized by a certified transcriptionist and by the Project Communications Officer. Using the qualitative research software, NVivo, the qualitative data were organized via an open coding method, where preliminary coding categories were generated from the literature review and the researcher's experience with the topic, and subsequent codes emerged from the data. The data were analyzed via an applied research paradigm of pragmatism², whereby the focus was on answering the research questions: identifying the language training, education, and career development needs of immigrants in smaller urban and rural communities and suggesting practical solutions to address those needs.



Participants

109	Interview Participants
29	Questionnaires Participants
4	Unique Focus Group Participants
142	Total Participants

Data Sources

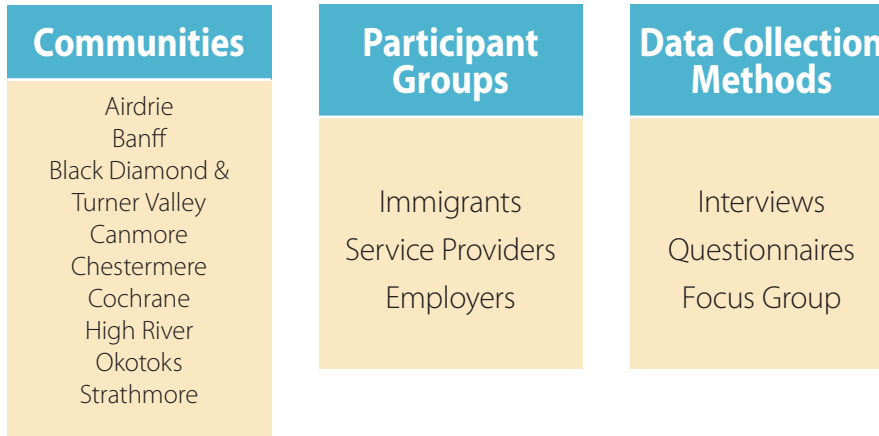
106	Interviews	78%
29	Questionnaires	21%
1	Focus Group	1%
136	Total Data Sources	

Interviews

52	Immigrants
18	Employers
36	Service Providers

Questionnaires

15	Employer
14	Service Provider



Engagement Overview

	Interviews	Questionnaires	Total
Immigrants	52	N/A	52
Service Providers	36	14	50
Employers	18	15	33

	Sources	Interviews	Questionnaires
Airdrie	19	5 Immigrant 8 Service provider 4 Employer	1 Service provider 1 Employer
Banff	15	8 Immigrant 4 Service provider 1 Employer	1 Service provider 1 Employer
Black Diamond and Turner Valley	10	3 Immigrant 2 Service provider 1 Employer	2 Service provider 2 Employer
Canmore	16	7 Immigrant 3 Service provider 2 Employer	1 Service provider 3 Employer
Chestermere	12	6 Immigrant 3 Service provider 1 Employer	1 Service provider 1 Employer
Cochrane	17	8 Immigrant 4 Service provider 2 Employer	2 Service provider 1 Employer
High River	13	3 Immigrant 3 Service provider 2 Employer	3 Service provider 2 Employer
Okotoks	17	6 Immigrant 3 Service provider 2 Employer	2 Service provider 4 Employer
Strathmore	12	5 Immigrant 3 Service provider 3 Employer	1 Service provider



Participants Overview

Immigrants

Attributes of a Typical Immigrant Participant

Age	37.5 years
Gender	Female
Current Immigration Status	Permanent Resident
Arrival in Canada	Within past 5 years
Marital Status	Married
Number of Children	2
Country of Origin	The Philippines
Education Level in home country	Bachelor's Degree
How many languages spoken	At least 2
English proficiency	Intermediate
Current field of employment	Tertiary sector, e.g.: health care, food services

Age Groups of Immigrant Participants

18-24	1	2%
25-30	9	17%
31-34	3	6%
35-40	15	29%
41-45	9	17%
46-50	7	13%
51-55	4	8%
56-60	1	2%
61-65	3	6%

Attributes of Immigrant Participants

Age	24-65
Gender	Female, Male
Current Immigration Status	Permanent Resident, Citizen, Live-in-Caregiver, Temporary Foreign Worker, Tourist Visa, Visitor, Working Holiday Visa, Open Work Permit
Arrival in Canada	Less than one year – over 30 years
Marital Status	Single, Common-law, Married, Widow/er, Divorced, Separated
Number of Children	0–5
Country of Origin	(26 in total) Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Chechnya, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Thailand, former Yugoslavia (now Bosnia & Herzegovina), Vietnam
Education Level in home country	Some High School, High School, some Post-secondary, Vocational School, Certificate, Diploma, Baccalaureate Degree, Masters, PhD
How many languages spoken	1–5
English proficiency	Basic to advanced
Field of employment in home country	Accountants, engineers, teachers, airline operations, banking industry, tradesperson, chefs, college instructor, IT specialist, farmer, human resources, journalist, management, researcher, manager, policy developer, Registered Nurse, stock broker, veterinarian
Current field of employment	Administrative assistant, trades, health care aide, daycare worker, grocery store clerk, fast-food customer service representative, unemployed, student, entrepreneur, library assistant, director, store owner/operator, IT specialist, bottle depot worker, barista, caretaker, cook, dish washer, meat cutter, stay-at-home parent

Employers and Service Providers

The average number of years in operation for both service providers and employers was 6–10 years. The range of years in operation was less than one year to over 60 years. Most service providers and employers involved in the study were small (1–49 employees) or medium-sized (50–499 employees) organizations. A few large organizations (500 or more employees) also participated.

Industry of Employer Participants

Employer Industry	Number of Businesses
Agriculture	6
Construction	1
Financial services	2
Health Care	2
Hospitality (Food Services)	9
Hospitality (Hotel Services)	2
Manufacturing	3
Mining	1
Other	1
Public education	1
Public sector	1
Retail	1
Staffing	1
Tourism	2

Service Provider Specialization

Service Provider Speciality	Number of Providers
Adult Education	8
Business Association	1
Business and Community Development and Support	2
Child and Parenting Supports	4
Community Housing	1
Community Services	2
Education	1
Employment Services	3
Family and Youth Supports	7
Immigrant Professional Services	2
Language Assessment Services	1
Language Instruction	3
Library and Community Archives	6
Municipal Services	2
Other	1
Religious Services	2
Settlement Services	3
Victim Services	1

Findings



Findings | Cross-Regional Overview

HOW AND WHY DO IMMIGRANTS ARRIVE IN SMALL TOWNS IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA?

Most immigrants who participated in this study came to Canada for the chance of a better life. They identified safety, good government, freedom, and stability in Canada as most attractive. Immigrants perceived substantial economic and educational opportunities within Canadian society and felt that hard work actually pays off financially in Canadian

**Most are not coming just to work and then go.
Most are here trying to become permanent
because it's a better way of life.**

workplaces. Given these attributes, most newcomers believed that immigrating to Canada enabled them to create a better future for themselves and their families, especially their children. Immigrants also cited Canada's natural beauty, open space, and low population density as appealing.

Immigrants are willing to make sacrifices over the long term because they stake the future of a better life on immigration. For instance, one participant said, "Most are not coming just to work and then go. Most are here trying to become permanent because it's a better way of life." After arriving in Canada, immigrants often reported that their skills and experiences went underutilized in jobs available to them, yet employers expressed that immigrant employees are reliable, hard working, and highly motivated. For many immigrants, starting a new life in Canada meant diminished career prospects and forfeited lifetime earnings potential because immigrants often chose to first support their

families and maximize opportunities for their children.

Overwhelmingly, immigrants choose to settle in large urban centres. Alberta Finance and Enterprise (2010) noted that between 2000 and 2009, Calgary accounted for 59% of net immigration to Alberta, and Edmonton accounted for 29%. Immigrant participants in our study reported hearing information from their friends, family, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada that promoted Western Canada and the Prairie Provinces as advantageous for settlement because of expanding economies and employment opportunities. One immigrant said:

The [Canadian Immigration Integration Program] conducted information drives in the Philippines, on which part of Canada you should be going to. First, they encouraged us to go to provinces that are still growing, like Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Then they explained to us that you should go not to the cities, but outside the cities. 'Cause they were telling us that opportunities for new immigrants outside the cities were more advantageous to us, rather than to go to the city where there is more competition.

When asked why they chose to live and work in a small urban centre or rural community, immigrant participants often said some variation of, "I did not choose this town; it chose me." By this they meant that available job opportunities brought them to small towns. These jobs often grew out of service industry labour shortages in small towns, though occasionally, high-level professional or skilled positions remained unfilled because of a lack of professionals in rural Alberta.

Research suggests there are some economic advantages for immigrants who work in small centres. Bernard (2008) found that immigrants who settled in smaller centres were more likely to earn greater incomes than their counterparts in larger urban centres³. Bernard also found the median income gap between immigrants and Canadian-born workers was considerably smaller⁴ in small towns and rural areas, at 20%, than in large urban areas, at 67% (p. 8).

Job opportunities were only one factor immigrants considered when deciding where to live. Established support networks were also important. Participants frequently cited that they came to smaller communities because family members or friends were already living there and could help them settle. Additionally, immigrants said they were drawn to small towns because they are good places to raise families, offer a sense of security, and have a slower pace of life. Very few immigrants strategically choose to settle in a small town without first having a job opportunity there.

The amount of preparations made and information obtained before immigration varied widely among immigrant participants. Almost all of the immigrants interviewed said that they had virtually no information about the small urban centre or rural community in which they settled, save for their community's proximity to Calgary. By contrast, a few immigrants (mostly Permanent Residents) extensively researched their future community and how different systems operate here. All three participant groups emphasized that immigrants need more detailed pre-arrival information, especially on occupations, foreign qualification recognition, job prospects without Canadian work experience, language training, and settlement issues, including how school, banking, and political systems function.

Some immigrants indicated that they had received incomplete pre-arrival information, which inadequately explained that small centres do not necessarily afford the same range of services available in large cities. Recounting his experience from an immigration fair in the Philippines, one participant said, "They encourage you to go outside the city, but then the services are here in the city." Immigration tradeshows emphasized that Canada needed highly skilled and educated immigrants, yet when they came, many immigrants said they were unable to find work in their own skilled occupations.

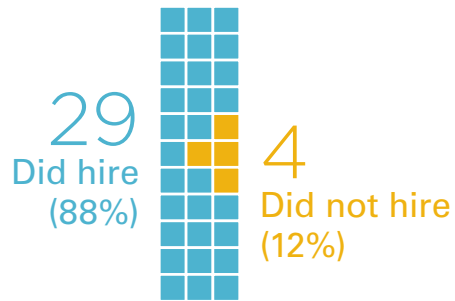
Many Permanent Residents indicated backgrounds as trained accountants, nurse practitioners, business analysts, and researchers, but ended up working as gas station attendants, library assistants, or live-in caregivers. Although many educational and occupational opportunities drew high-skilled immigrants to small urban centres and rural communities, oftentimes, these newcomers were discouraged, working in jobs much below their skills and education levels.

Education Level of Immigrant Participants

Education Level	Number of Immigrants	Percentage
Some high school	1	2%
High school diploma	5	10%
Some post-secondary	1	2%
Certificate	6	12%
Diploma	8	15%
Degree	22	42%
Masters	8	15%
PhD	1	2%

86% of immigrants interviewed have completed post-secondary education

Employers Who Hired Immigrants



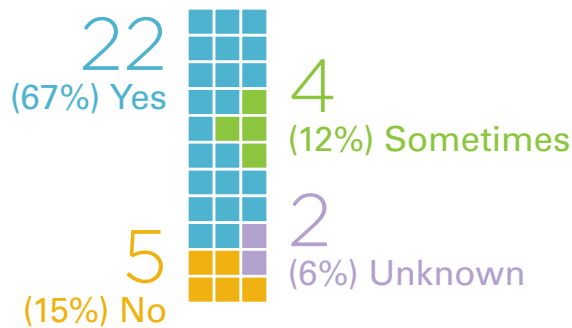
WHY ARE EMPLOYERS HIRING IMMIGRANTS?

Most employers involved in this study were eager to hire immigrants, as exemplified in this quotation from an employer participant: “I think our business is alive and successful in large part due to the immigrant employees we have, whether they’re temporary or permanent. It’s definitely been a big part of our story.” Often, employers emphasized that immigrant employees possess excellent work ethics and are very reliable.

For instance, one business owner said, “We have 11 foreign workers; none have missed time or arrived late in five years. All work smart and fast every day.” Some employers indicated that they value work ethic more than English proficiency. To some employers, English language ability was seen as a skill that could be more easily attained through training or time on the job, whereas good attitudes cannot be taught.

I think our business is alive and successful in large part due to the immigrant employees we have, whether they’re temporary or permanent. It’s definitely been a big part of our story.

Employers Who Experienced Difficulty Finding Labourers



Southern Albertan employers in service industries and manufacturing often have a hard time retaining the unskilled or low-skilled labour they require. Employers emphasized that competition is fierce in Alberta for workers, and the oil and gas sector causes upward pressure on wages.

For example, a supervisor stated, “But nowadays, it’s so hard to hire. Before we had a lot of workers, but they go elsewhere because others pay more.” Several employers indicated they recruit Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) because they are unable to fill key labour positions. Both large and small-to-medium sized employers stated that without TFWs, they would be unable to sustain their businesses. One business owner shared that, “The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is great. We need the employees because the economy is busy. We simply cannot run a business without employees.”

Many employers were more concerned with employee retention than attracting or finding labour. This applies to employers who need unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled labourers. For very remote businesses, finding skilled labour was a bigger concern, but for towns closer to Calgary, retaining unskilled labour was a more prominent issue.

WHAT SERVICES DO IMMIGRANTS HAVE ACCESS TO?

Service providers in the region deliver a range of services, such as formal and informal adult education, community services, employment services, family and youth supports, faith-based supports, and business services. As only Banff, Canmore, High River, and Okotoks had dedicated immigrant settlement services, most communities lacked an agency with a specific mandate to address immigrant needs. One service provider indicated, “I think there are other community groups out there, but they’re like us. They’re just serving the community in general. I actually am not aware of any specific group that works with immigrants.”

Small urban centres and rural communities sometimes lacked capacity and resources to provide particular services for immigrants. A local organization said, “It’s taken us a long time to get funding in, yet we have a huge, huge need. Even with the three staff we have, we’re going to be just chipping away. We could have a team of 10 people, and we’d still have plenty of work to do.” When asked which programs or services were not available for immigrant clients, another service provider responded, “One is about their ability to apply for whatever status they’re working towards. We direct them, but it’s hard to communicate with them and understand their struggles when we don’t know the process. And each one of them seems to have a different process.”

A TFW weighed in on her side of this issue, reporting that most services in small towns are tailored for settlement, which is not as helpful for TFWs, who are more likely to require assistance with work permit applications. She said, “I think that when communities look at their immigration plans, they have to take into account these different classes of immigrants, in the terms of what their visa type is. What a TFW needs and what a Permanent Resident needs and what a Refugee needs is different.” This way, communities can be more responsive to all types of newcomers.

The service providers involved in this study deliberately attempted to identify where immigrant needs go unmet, and creatively mobilized to address those needs, developing strong collaborative cultures. Collaborations ranged from referrals to other agencies to informal associations, which build capacity. A service provider stated, “We don’t do it by ourselves. We don’t have all the answers. We have to do it as a partnership. And we are grateful to those that we can ask for support.” Networks and strong relationships enable service providers to address clients’ needs holistically. For instance, a local provider specified, “Our job is easier to do in High River because we have established those face-to-face relationships. I don’t know if I would feel this successful on my clients’ behalf in Calgary because it’s really hard to pick up the phone and say, ‘This is what I’m dealing with; how can you help?’” Service provider networks operated mainly inside each community’s boundaries.

Service providers are not the only community members assisting newcomers to Canada. Immigrant employers, usually entrepreneurs who started their own businesses, often reported helping other immigrants. One such business owner said, “From time to time, we have a lot of immigrants coming from Central Asia, from Afghanistan. In the past I’ve hired quite a few of them, just to give them experience and get started.” Another immigrant employer stated, “Whoever’s come, I help them out. Nobody gives them a job, so I said, ‘You come, work for me; you have to learn a new language and everything.’ Because I know, I passed hard times, so I don’t want too many other people doing the same thing.”

Local community members emphasized that Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are part of Albertan communities; however, their status prevents them from accessing the same range of services that other community members routinely access. A service provider explained, “Temporary Foreign Workers are probably the people who struggle the most because they just don’t have that same access to resources. They rely on the kindness of the community to help support them through their tough times.” Another service provider demonstrated this saying, “If a TFW lived here, I’d still give them a free library card if they couldn’t afford one.” In order to effectively assist TFWs, some service providers are forced to take liberties in how they provide services; for instance, one local organization said:

Our funding prohibits us from serving TFWs. But that’s not to say that we haven’t. We’re just not allowed to report on them, and it’s at our own expense if we do provide service. But, often, out of the immigrant population, they’re the ones that need our help the most. So, we try our best. I’ve provided tutor service to them, and I have slipped them into classes. So sue me. And because I have done that, they have gotten their citizenship, and they’re now preparing to take their GED. So that’s our mission; that’s our mandate.

Immigrants can be isolated from services and supports due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with Canadian systems, and lack of informal networks; some community members described these immigrants as a hidden population. Service providers coordinate with others organizations to assist immigrant communities, but such efforts are resource intensive, as one service provider elucidated:

How do you reach a group of peoples of multiple languages about services that they may need, but don’t really understand that the services are for them and that they’re free? How did I advertise? I went to the Welcome Wagon. I went to the inter-agencies. I went to the school division. Calgary has foreign language radio stations that we can connect with. Calgary Catholic Immigration Society has volunteer translation, I believe. It was very, very time consuming, just trying to get the word out there.

Service providers stated that they depend upon word-of-mouth and referrals in order to make new and successful connections with clients, as many immigrants rely on word-of-mouth information. The risk, however, with word-of-mouth communication is the transmission of inaccurate information. One participant told us, “We had friends who told us we wouldn’t be able to land in the job we’re doing right now. With the program I was able to go through, I think that’s not true. We tell our friends that you can find jobs that would be related to your profession.”

Work schedules were also seen as impeding immigrants’ access to services. Immigrants working multiple survival shift-work jobs were reluctant to sign-up for and attend workshops or other scheduled services for fear it may interfere with their work schedules. A service provider described this common situation, saying, “People always want to be available for work, so to commit to something in case they’re called into work is not ideal.” To provide more flexible service options, many organizations in the region indicated they meet clients wherever convenient for them.

Additionally, cultural constructs can prevent prospective clients from connecting with needed services. Service providers said some immigrants were reluctant to access their buildings when they were located near police stations, courthouses, and other government offices. The local organizations attributed this to some immigrants' fear that being seen in proximity to police stations or courthouses would cause others to associate them with misconduct. Further, immigrants can be hesitant to access services because accepting help may be associated with character deficiency.

IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND IMMIGRANT RETENTION?

The concept of lifelong learning was very strong with the immigrants interviewed for this project, as they made direct relationships between education, career advancement, and personal development.

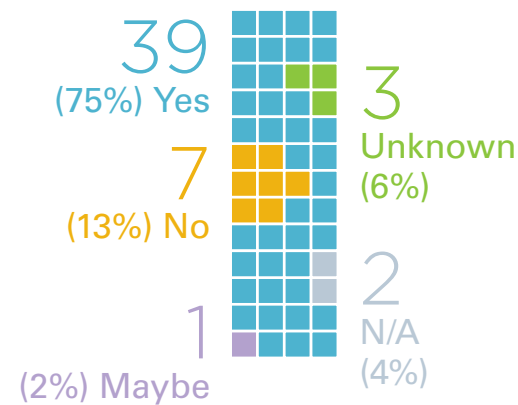
Immigrant participants expressed a want for better access to a range of education and economic opportunities in their communities. Many felt that smaller communities lacked attractive education and job opportunities for their children. One immigrant said, "If it's only me and my wife, maybe we can stay here. But I've got five kids. If they start to look for jobs, Black Diamond has less opportunity."

Employers also expressed concern that fewer education opportunities in smaller centres contribute to immigrant families leaving for larger centres. One employer suggested that immigrant families tend to prioritize university education over other forms of education, stating, "The first immigrants that came to Canada were determined that their kids would have a university education, so much so that we don't have tradesmen. And trades people make a ton of money! But it's the old tradition of the immigrant: 'My child has to go to university; that guarantees their future.'"

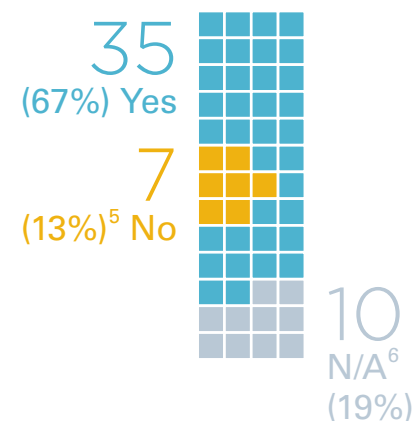
That same employer argued that locally offered post-secondary certificates and diplomas might promote immigrant retention: "The one thing that would keep immigrants in smaller areas is if there were some provisions for the development of their children, whether it be technical training, college, university, or something like that, even if it was to provide courses in distance education." Such locally provided programming will be more successful if it aligns with local labour market needs.

Online, or a blend of online and traditional delivery, may be a promising solution to enhance education access for immigrants residing in smaller settings; however, some immigrants lack access to high-speed Internet or have difficulties using computers. One service provider explained that sometimes technology can be a barrier: "If you don't have computer skills, learning to navigate on the computer

Immigrant expressions of want or need of language, education, and workforce development



Immigrants who received workforce training



is a stress in itself. So if you're coming from another country with another language or two and not English, that's compounding the stress."

WHAT GAPS EXIST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING TRAINING?

English language limitations can challenge immigrant workers' integration into Albertan workplaces and communities. Most immigrant participants demonstrated a strong interest in pursuing more language training. Many saw mastering English as their first step towards employment suited to their education and experience. Even fluent English speakers expressed concerns over their accents and the potential for slang to impede their communication with others, especially in the workplace. One highly educated professional, fully fluent in English, reported that other people treated her as less intelligent, which she attributed to her accent.

In all communities studied, some form of English language training is provided, including informal conversation cafés, Community Adult Learning Councils (CALC) classes, Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy (VTAL) programs, and Language Instruction for Newcomer to Canada (LINC) courses. Some programs are also provided to outlying communities. Banff and Canmore were among the first communities in Alberta to offer face-to-face LINC training; they are also the only communities involved in the study that offered it. LINC is available to Permanent Residents at no cost through learning providers and funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Study participants from the Bow Valley saw LINC training as valuable because of its formal structure, which is based on Canadian Language Benchmarks, and its wide recognition among educational institutions and employers.

Sometimes the limited range of English Language Learning (ELL) options offered in smaller communities was short of meeting the scope of immigrants' language training needs. For instance, the immigrants involved in this study arrived with varying English proficiencies and expressed need for language training ranging from basic literacy to enhanced language training to accent reduction. However, due to small numbers of immigrants in local communities, it remains difficult for service providers to tailor instructional content to meet everyone's needs efficiently. Some immigrants expressed frustration about offerings that did not fully address their language needs. Nonetheless, those who participated in ELL classes appreciated the opportunity to practice and enhance their language skills in their own community.

Service providers raised concern around how to access immigrant clients who need language training when English advertising may not reach them. Further, advertising material would need to be translated into a variety of languages that immigrants speak locally, which is costly. Service providers also struggle with scheduling language classes, as timetables conflict with clients who work shifts, balance multiple jobs, or carry significant family responsibilities. For example, one immigrant had to quit taking language classes when she got a job: "I know I have to study English, but for financial problems, I go to work. So I couldn't finish my education."

Organizations attempt to address these pressures by providing flexible services, such as the LINC Home Study program, which is online to accommodate immigrants' busy schedules. To participate in LINC Home Study programs, participants must have a Canadian Language Benchmark⁷ (CLB) greater than 2 and less than 7 to participate. Another prerequisite

for Permanent Residents to participate is to have their CLB levels assessed by Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment – Referral Centre (ILVARC), part of Immigrant Services Calgary. While based in Calgary, ILVARC delivers some services regionally.

In addition to online programs, ELL videoconferencing is another flexible solution. Bow Valley College recently piloted ELL videoconferencing projects and determined five recommendations for future projects: establish dedicated space for the videoconferencing, with compatible high-quality equipment; provide mixed delivery of material, using supporting technologies such as Skype; ensure quality instruction; enable participants’ comfort using technology; and allocate the necessary resources of time and capacity to the project. If these requirements are in place, future ELL videoconferencing projects have potential to increase rural-based immigrants’ access to English training, especially when delivering specialized language classes (Taleb Imai, 2011, p. 4).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS TO IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION?

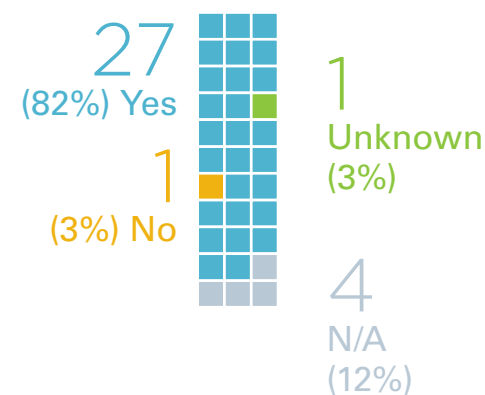
Most immigrants indicated a strong interest in becoming more skilled and efficient workers. Employers also placed a high value on investing in workforce development and often connected training to a range of benefits. For example, one business owner said, “Investing in someone else’s education or training is going to benefit the company in terms of service, attitude, and increased sales. I’ve had young staff who were insecure and worked with their shoulders slumped. Within a year, it’s a complete metamorphosis. They’re walking around smiling, and they’re sure of themselves.”

Employers see investing in their immigrant employees, in particular, as valuable; as one employer explained that immigrants have “excellent skills, but are in need of mentorship or coaching in interviewing and communication skills.”

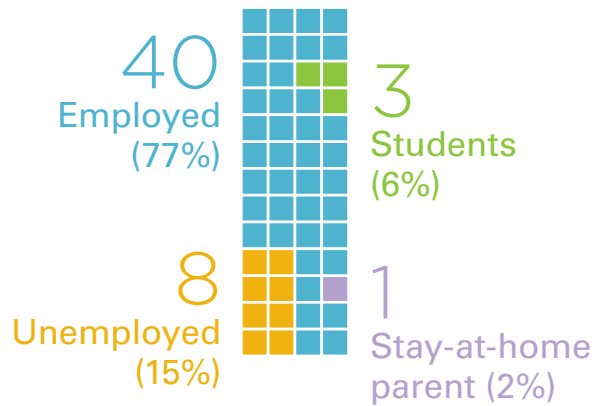
Service providers, including Community Adult Learning Councils and career resource centres, provide general skills training and career planning. However, some of these organizations expressed they are insufficiently resourced to help immigrants with renewing work visas, getting Labour Market Opinions,⁸ extending Temporary Foreign Worker permits, or getting their foreign qualifications recognized. One local service provider representative reported, “That’s a hard one for us as career coaches; it’s always a challenge to really determine what their education level is compared to what our standards are.” These organizations wished to have such specialized services available in their communities, but they

Investing in someone else’s education or training is going to benefit the company in terms of service, attitude, and increased sales

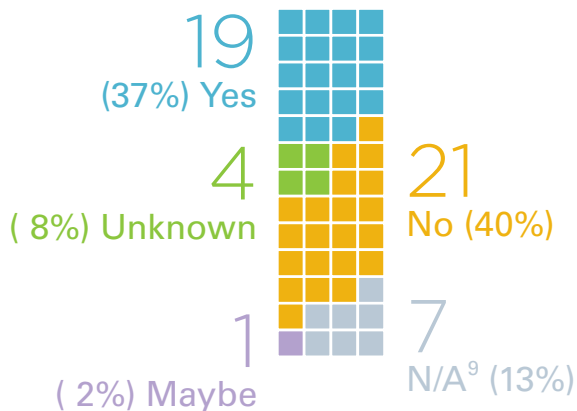
Employers Who Provided Training to Immigrant Employees



Employment status of immigrant participants



Immigrants utilizing previous education and experience in current position



still customize their services as best they can to facilitate immigrants' integration into the Alberta labour market. In Banff and Canmore, where demand is generally greater, the career resource centre does provide some specialized services related to immigrants. For instance, they support employers in acquiring Labour Market Opinions.

Many immigrants were underemployed relative to previous education and experience. One participant said, "We find that a lot of immigrants have really high education and lots of experience, and they're applying for KFC-type positions or at Lube City. It's kind of sad to see because they've got all this education and training and experience, and they're not working in their field." Stories such as this were common; however, a few immigrants affirmed that their positions specifically used their previous skills and education.

Barriers that prevent immigrants from optimizing their participation in the Alberta workforce included a lack of Canadian work experience, Canadian cultural competence, soft skills, career-specific language, professional social networks, and foreign qualification recognition. Immigrants were very keen to talk about their employment experiences in Canada, and some cited that they expected to be able to work in their field soon after their arrival.

One immigrant explained that although she was the primary applicant for permanent residency, she was unable to find a job in her field while her husband, a skilled tradesman, was employed and supporting their family. Because she faced barriers in re-entering her field, this immigrant applied for lower-level positions, thinking she could work her way up, but she was then told by prospective employers that she was too highly qualified.

Immigrants who were nurse practitioners and/or registered nurses in their home countries, but working as health care aides here in Alberta reflected on their underemployment with irritation. For example, one immigrant said, "If I were being cynical, I could say that [my employer is] probably getting a good deal out of me." In these instances, skilled immigrants were frustrated by having much occupational knowledge, informed by extensive years of experience, go wasted. Immigrants are aware that they are paid at a much lower level than what they could be making if their foreign qualifications and experience were fully recognized. Other immigrants found their lack of Canadian work experience to be a barrier to employment. One participant indicated that many employers turned her away but she expressed frustration at this saying, "If you're not gonna hire me and give me an opportunity, how will I get Canadian experience?" A range of obstacles prevents immigrants from fully utilizing their skills in Alberta: chronic underemployment, language gaps, weak soft skills, lack of Canadian work experience, and foreign qualification recognition.

A caveat to underemployment exists. Even though some immigrants were working in positions that did not use their degrees or experience, some actively pursued this for lifestyle reasons or to change career paths. For instance, one immigrant, who was previously an IT professional, worked in the Bow Valley tourism industry: “[Information technology] took up a lot of my time, and I can be outdoors more here and see the mountains every day. If I wanted, I could move to downtown Calgary and use my qualifications, but I like living in Banff” Working in an industry focused on leisure was a lifestyle choice for him, unavailable to those outside of the Bow Valley.

WHAT’S THE DEAL WITH FOREIGN QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION?

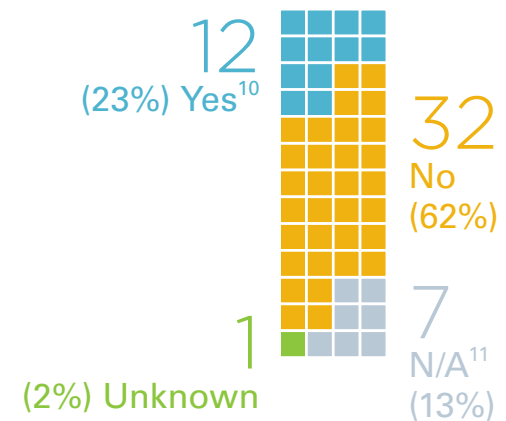
According to Alberta Human Services, “Foreign qualification recognition is the process of verifying that the education, skills and experience obtained in another country meet the standards established for Canadian workers. It is a complex issue involving various stakeholder groups” (Alberta Human Services, 2012). Foreign qualification recognition (FQR) is important because it enables immigrants to resume careers in Alberta that correspond with their previous education and experience.

Yet many immigrants involved in this study saw the process of FQR as a barrier, and, as previously stated, numerous service providers in small towns struggled to assist immigrants with FQR processes. Immigrants expressed that while their qualifications were recognized for Canada’s permanent residency point system, they were not recognized in regulated occupations, such as those in health care, trades, and engineering. One immigrant lamented, “When you’re applying in your home country, they say they recognize all these qualifications and then you get here and they don’t.”

Foreign qualification recognition was a source of great frustration for immigrants, as this participant pointed out, “People coming here with credentials not recognized, they can’t make ends meet. They have to start from scratch, start going back to school, before they can become who they want to be here, which is really heartbreaking.” Those from the United Kingdom especially were disappointed that their qualifications were not more easily recognized, given the similarities between the two countries:

One of the requirements is for me to document how many hours I worked for each employer since I took my training 22 years ago. I’d like to know how many people could actually do that. What’s frustrating is that Canada has been so closely related to the UK for such a long time and that there isn’t a better way of transitioning over. I’m not averse to sitting a Canadian exam, but our training is not that different.

Immigrant use of foreign qualification recognition (FQR) services



Immigrants also expressed frustration at constraints on labour mobility even within Canada in regulated professions. For instance, one immigrant had a health care aide certificate from Quebec that was not recognized in Alberta. Those who navigated FQR processes more easily prepared before they left, received assistance from an agency, or had their credentials recognized through a loophole. For example, one participant shared that she had her European Masters recognized in Canada by first having it recognized in the United States. Some immigrants did not use FQR services because they were too expensive or ineffective; for instance, one immigrant stated, "It's a hugely lengthy process, very, very stressful. And it's costly just to have them do an assessment."

In India, getting things done from universities or government offices is not as easy as it is here. It's full of red tape and corruption.

Immigrants noted challenges in obtaining necessary transcripts and training records from home countries for the FQR process. Some immigrants from the United Kingdom cited that when their schools no longer existed, they were prevented from obtaining their original transcripts easily. One participant said, "I trained at Guy's Hospital in London, but they have since amalgamated with two of the schools of nursing, so to even track who may now hold those records is quite difficult." Similarly, immigrants from the Philippines and India mentioned that corruption in bureaucracies and public institutions is so widespread that obtaining transcripts is a costly and lengthy process: "In India, getting things done from universities or government offices is not as easy as it is here. It's full of red tape and corruption."

Some interview participants noted the International Qualifications Assessment Service's (IQAS) information was not keeping pace with accreditation changes in their home countries. An immigrant recounted his experience: "I spoke to a guy over there (at IQAS) who went to his computer and he said, 'I'll just pull up the childcare requirements.' I said, 'if you say to me NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board), I'm gonna scream down the phone at you.' And then he said, 'That's what I've got in front of me.' So I explained to him, 'Go on this website from England, and in 1994 you'll see it was replaced; it doesn't exist anymore, in any college, not at all.'" These complications create barriers for skilled immigrants re-entering the workforce.

Private businesses in fields without regulatory requirements were more likely to give immigrants with foreign qualifications and experience an opportunity to put their skills to use. Employers who hired immigrants specified that they enjoyed having a diverse workforce, as it created a more international culture, benefiting Canadian-born employees as well.

This diversity was in terms of cultural understanding and workplace knowledge. Employers stated that immigrant employees bring new ideas and different processes to the workplace, which positively affects their businesses: "I'm always interested in learning from other people. They can be teachers too."

In order to optimize foreign employees' skills in their workforces, employers stressed the need for more efficient FQR processes. One human resources manager said, "I think it's about being a bit more flexible, recognizing other countries' qualifications as being on par with Canada's." Another employer emphasized the need for a clearer and more simplified path toward recognizing foreign credentials. Employers who wanted to better support their employees with foreign qualification recognition

processes faced the reality that such services are rare in small towns. One employer said it was hard for them to access “Information of what their (immigrant employees’) training was, and to how to get it recognized in Canada. It’s all over the place; there’s no one-stop shop.” In order for immigrants to better contribute to the Albertan economy, FQR processes must be streamlined.

One organization helping immigrants with FQR is the Immigrant Access Fund (IAF). The IAF is a not-for-profit organization based in Calgary and Edmonton that provides microloans to newcomers to Canada. IAF loans help immigrants struggling to pay for the costs of Canadian accreditation, upgrading, and training, which assist them in finding work in their pre-immigration fields. Microloans are available to both skilled workers and professionals (Immigrant Access Fund, 2012). The IAF contributes to the utilization of immigrant skills’ and experiences in local economies. Emery and Ferrer conducted a study on the IAF, reporting, “The repayment rate is 98% (only seven loans have been written off), which is extremely high for a micro loan program” (Emery and Ferrer, 2010, p. 4).

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS CONTRIBUTE TO OUR ECONOMY; WHAT DO WE DO FOR THEM?

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) come to Canada to fill immediate labour and skills shortages. Participants and community members argued the vast majority of TFWs hope to make Canada their permanent home, stating in one form or another that “Almost every other TFW that I’ve ever met is here to stay. Yes, we’ll leave if we have to, but we’re gonna do everything we can to stay.” Regardless of their status, almost all newcomers interviewed indicated that Canada was already their permanent home or that they intended to make Canada home. Participants

continually emphasized that TFWs are diligent, reliable, and hard-working individuals.

Many participants indicated that policies around the TFW Program created barriers. Participants strongly vocalized their frustration at TFWs not being allowed to access accredited language, education, or skills training, stating, “I would like to take more education, yes, but for now my document does not support that. Immigration does not support that.” Workplaces, technology, and processes change quickly and employers wished to keep their staff up to date, but could not formally train TFWs due to policy constraints. A participant emphasized, “In any industry you want the best people. You want people who’ve got the most up-to-date training.”

Likewise, TFWs were discouraged by laws that impeded them from taking upgrading, training, or education. Particularly for skilled workers, participants wanted formal training and upgrading to stay current in their occupations and to be more productive workers:

It’s listed on my work permit that I can’t attend educational institutions. Anything that gives me any type of accreditation or qualification, I can’t touch it. But I just think it stunts workforce development. If you’ve got TFWs in, it means you’ve got a labour shortage. And now I can’t go and improve my skills to do this job better, even on my own time, because the government won’t allow me.

Participants were also disappointed that TFWs are ineligible for government-funded English Language Learning classes, unlike Permanent Residents. When a skilled worker arrived on a work permit, he found that his spouse could neither work nor study. She wanted to be productive and contribute to society, but could not: “When I came, I arrive with work permit, but my wife couldn’t work. It’s tough. So my wife is not work, no school, nothing for her. For three years.”

Hiring TFWs is a key component of the solution to labour shortages. One employer said, “The main reason we staff them is that Canadian workers are

not willing and wages are always a huge issue. We can't afford to pay the wages that an oil company will pay just a truck driver." However, employers who hired unskilled TFWs are unable to nominate them to be Permanent Residents (PRs) through the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP). These employers were discouraged by the policy because they met labour shortages with qualified, unskilled workers, yet could not keep them permanently. A local business owner said, "There's a few other guys I'd like to bring [through the AINP] as well, but they're not eligible because they have a Grade Three or Grade Four education."

Participants noted that government requirements around TFW training are unaligned with industries experiencing skilled labour shortages. Employers value employees with current certifications, as one employer stated, "I have a Temporary Foreign Worker who already has a degree in international language studies. So she's great for my ESL, but she cannot take further training because she's a foreign worker. The government won't let her do that, so I may not be able to continue employing her." Further, when employers bring over TFWs for certain positions, the worker is then tied to that position. This prevents flexibility in the workplace. One employer hired TFWs as industrial butchers, but even though they were better suited for the maintenance department, the employer could not transfer them, as their work permits would not allow it.

Employers stated that they want to apply for TFW work permits for longer periods of time, as the current timelines are not long enough. An employer in the agricultural industry who hired TFWs explained that he could only deduct a maximum of \$30 per week from his TFWs' earnings for housing, which prevented him from recouping the full costs associated with providing housing: "You have to provide accommodation for these workers, and you're only

allowed to charge them \$30 a week. Now where do you get accommodation for \$30 a week?"

Some employers wished there were no limits on the number of TFWs they could nominate for the AINP. One employer said that he wished to keep his foreign workers permanently: "Those that prove themselves to be good workers and do well, we will nominate, but we would nominate all of them, because we want to keep them as long as we can. Eight of our 13 farms are managed by foreign workers who have become Permanent Residents, who started at the bottom. So we're doing something right."

Because the long-term goal of many TFWs is to become Permanent Residents, participants explained that some TFWs endure stressful and unfair working conditions in order to keep their jobs and to transition to permanent residency. Inadvertent power dynamics disproportionately favour employers, as TFWs may fear that if they displease their bosses, they will have to leave Canada. One TFW, working in a professional role, explained that she felt pressure to continually surpass her boss' expectations, but she started to burn out, so the organization brought in a mediator:

My manager would ask me, 'Can you just do this?' And I would say, 'Yes, yes, yes.' I ran up 130 hours of overtime in four months. I was at burnout stage, and I felt couldn't do any more. My manager was surprised. And in the mediation session, my manager said, 'Yeah, but you should have just said no.' And even the consultant turned around and said, 'Her entire status in this country is tied to you being happy with her.'

Cultural differences can also increase the likelihood that abuses may occur. One participant said, "Because the way it is in their country, they're basically supposed to back down when their employer says something and follow everything that they say. They don't stand up for themselves, even though they know it's the law."

One employer explained she did not use the Temporary Foreign Worker Program because she did not agree with the rules: “I looked into the program, and I thought it had too much room for exploitation. If you paid them a fair wage, they wouldn’t need to work six days a week, but wages are crappy. Sure, they’re making more than when they work in Mexico, but they’re not in Mexico. And we wouldn’t ask Canadians to do what we’re asking them to do.”

One employer who used the Temporary Foreign Worker Program emphasized the importance of helping his TFWs settle and shared his approach: “We’re bringing Temporary Foreign Workers in from many thousands of miles away. We can’t just expect them to show up for work one day. We felt it was important to pick them up from the airport and make sure they have a place to live. That’s employer accountability, making sure that they’re settled.”

TFWs actively fill ongoing labour shortages, pay taxes, and contribute to the economy. However, they are not eligible for a range of services. TFWs are a vital part of small town communities and require more support, as many want to live and work permanently in Alberta.

WHAT SETTLEMENT ISSUES AFFECT IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT?

Addressing settlement issues is important because they directly affect immigrants’ access to language training, education, career development services, and employment. The most common settlement issue participants referred to in all communities was a lack of access to public transportation, both within and between communities. Small towns lack the full range of services that is available in Calgary, so individuals need to travel outside their local community; however, intra- and inter-municipality transportation options, including automobiles, taxis, and private buses are expensive and limited.

Financial insecurity was another major barrier for immigrants. Many families that were middle-class in their

home countries experienced financial strain because, as Permanent Residents, they had to put down many deposits. Immigrants have no credit history here, so they tend to experience many barriers to securing loans and mortgages. One immigrant described her family’s situation: “Because we have no credit history, we put down more money. We weren’t able to get a credit card without us putting money down for it.” This credit and resource challenge is compounded in instances when immigrants are underemployed, as many are, and cannot save much money.

The most common settlement issue participants referred to in all communities was a lack of access to public transportation.

Lack of affordable housing was mentioned as a significant issue in almost all communities. While communities had affordable housing options, demand surpassed supply. Availability of childcare was another issue faced by some communities, particularly, in Chestermere, Airdrie, and Banff. However, childcare was less prominent an issue than either transportation or affordable housing.

Another settlement barrier was immigrants’ unfamiliarity with how systems operate in Canada, including banking, political, school, and tax procedures¹². These settlement issues all affect workforce development because if immigrants do not have access to transportation, affordable housing, and childcare, their abilities to pursue education, training, and upgrading are seriously hampered. Any extra income is put towards covering costs, and lack of transit and childcare impedes mobility. Additionally, many participants pointed out that immigrants have similar wants as any Canadian family would have: good schools, living wages, vibrant communities, and opportunities to give back.

CROSS-REGIONAL FINDINGS DISCUSSION

Context

As the first wave of baby boomers is already surpassing traditional retirement age, the labour force participation rate is expected to decline. Demand for labour will increasingly outstrip supply in Alberta. Among other strategies, immigration to Alberta will help alleviate present and future skills shortages as immigrants comprise one of only a few growing subpopulations. Alberta Human Services noted that Alberta attracted 11.6% of Canada's new immigrants in 2010, an increase of 5.3% since 2000 (Alberta Human Services, 2011).

Governments emphasize attracting skilled and professional immigrants to Canada and Alberta to fill labour needs; however, in this study, immigrants with higher than average educational attainment still faced barriers to securing jobs that matched their backgrounds. Addressing these barriers is a prerequisite for regional communities to better integrate immigrants into their local economies. This section discusses some key regional findings and their intersections.

Education and Training

Immigrant participants placed a high value on education and training. English Language Learning (ELL) was identified as a prominent need among participants. Immigrants regarded ELL training as a critical step toward better employment opportunities and community integration. Many participants cited that Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) is highly desirable for its perceived rigour and quality.

After ELL, immigrants indicated strong interest in pursuing further education, reaffirming the value of life-long learning on career advancement. Immigrants were interested in a range of specific educational and

training opportunities, with numerous immigrants expressing a desire for pursuing business and health care programming. Immigrants conveyed that a range of local education opportunities should be available to promote retention in smaller communities.

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) also expressed interest in language and skills training, but their status prevented them from enrolling in courses and programs. As TFWs transition to permanent residency, delays and interruptions in their training may have an enduring impact on economic productivity, workplace safety (when deficiencies of literacy and language exist), and lifetime earning potential. For employers dependent on TFWs filling ongoing labour shortages in both skilled and unskilled posts, restrictions on training and education impede productivity gains and the development of a more integrated and seasoned workforce.

Work Congruent to Skills and Potential

Study participants emphasized the importance of helping immigrants secure roles in the economy that are congruent with their skills and potential. Many immigrants expressed frustration about the divide between survival jobs and appropriate careers that would draw more fully on their range of skills and experiences. Professional and skilled immigrants recognized that foreign qualification recognition (FQR) can bridge the divide, but FQR has its own challenges.

Employers know the value of having their immigrant employees' foreign qualifications recognized but were often unsure about how to facilitate this process. Employers in unregulated industries were more easily able to recognize foreign qualifications and experience and give immigrants a chance to demonstrate their competencies.

Labour markets in small centres and rural communities generally offer fewer professional and skilled job opportunities relative to low-skill and unskilled positions. As a result, immigrants with advanced educations may experience more difficulty securing suitable employment. Temporary Foreign Workers are potentially more suited to filling common labour shortages in small towns. However, employers experiencing such labour shortages expressed frustration at being prevented from keeping TFWs permanently because they continually fail to attract domestic workers.

Addressing Emerging Needs

This study found that most communities lack a municipal strategy to attract and retain immigrants and integrate them into the local workforce. However, service providers demonstrated an affinity for filling this gap. They actively cooperate with one another, usually within municipal boundaries, to meet immigrant needs. Service providers maintain distinct mandates from one another, efficiently using resources. Most service providers were familiar with others' scope of activities, enabling effective referral networks. Service provider relationships tended to be strongest in those communities situated farthest from Calgary.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Study participants provided unsolicited and passionate input regarding Temporary Foreign Workers. Concern was expressed that TFWs' constituted a second-tier of community members. Participants recognized an imbalance between TFWs' contributions to communities (in the form economic activity and taxes) and the community's capacity to integrate them, which is greatly affected by policy defining TFWs' status.

Many service providers pointed out that although Temporary Foreign Workers' status in Alberta prevents them from accessing most services, they are among those most in need of help and at risk of isolation. Service providers endeavor to meet TFWs' needs; however, their support to TFWs is often outside of their mandates and goes unrecognized by funders. Consequently, service providers do not record incidents of service provision to TFWs, so there is an absence of data from which to assess the level of demand.

Some participants indicated that because TFWs are tied to a transient status, other community members may see them neither as immigrants nor part of the community. TFWs may be dismissed as merely sending earnings back home and 'stealing jobs.' This perspective diminishes the role TFWs play in the economic vitality of the community and ignores that many TFWs want to, and do, leverage their status into permanent residency.

Settlement Issues and Immigrant Workforce Development

Settlement issues and immigrant workforce development activities are intertwined and affect one another dynamically. This study found that lack of public transportation, affordable housing, and childcare in many regional communities severely impedes immigrants' mobility and financial capacity to entertain notions of learning and skills development.

Findings | Community-Specific Findings

Airdrie

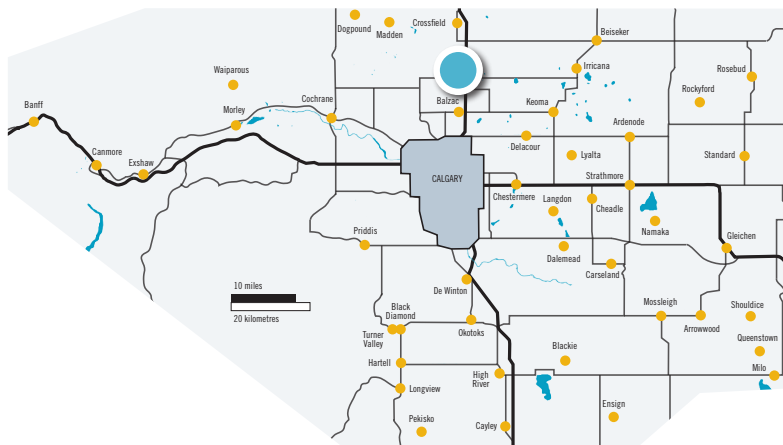
The City of Airdrie is a fast-growing community 31 kilometres north of Calgary. Airdrie ranked eighth in the top ten municipalities with the

highest population growth rates between 2006 and 2011, at 47.1% (Statistics Canada, 2012a, *The Canadian Population in 2011: Population Counts and Growth, "Censuses of Population, 2006 and 2011"*). In 2012, its population was 45,711 (City of Airdrie, 2012). The business community is primarily made up of manufacturing, professional service firms, transportation and logistics operations, and a growing service sector.

Observations by research participants indicated that immigrants in Airdrie represent a broad range of origin countries¹³, including the Philippines, Mexico, Thailand, Spain, England, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, Lebanon,

Tunisia, Sudan, Iran, Nigeria, Republic of China (Taiwan), the People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of Korea (South Korea), and El Salvador. Participants said the diversity of Airdrie is increasing, with more representation of South American and African immigrants and a significant community of Filipina nannies.

Airdrie is home to the Rocky View Schools Community Learning CALC. Airdrie Housing Limited provides an Affordable Housing Program as well as RentPlus Supplement program (see www.nrvcl.ab.ca/ for more information). Videoconferencing capabilities are available, provided by the HALOS and RISE networks. Most organizations in Airdrie do not have mandates that focus exclusively on serving immigrants, yet service providers identify and, with some ingenuity, address emerging community needs. The Welcome Airdrie¹⁴ initiative is a broad coalition of community and business organizations who are working together to create a more inclusive community for all newcomers to Airdrie. Welcome Airdrie is currently conducting a survey to assess and better understand newcomer needs, which will inform collective capacity-building action.



Available Services

- Adult education, including community adult learning and leisure programs, language training, academic upgrading, and credit career programming;
- Employment services, including career counselling, job placement assistance, and internet access; and
- Social development services, including counselling, parent link, family support, and community outreach services and workshops.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Generic services rarely address the full scope of immigrants' needs, and when their needs are not fully met, they were discouraged. One immigrant described his situation:

During that time there was barely a bus system in Airdrie. There was one, but it was infrequent. And the immigrant serving offices were in Calgary. There wasn't much in Airdrie. I tried going to the Bow Valley College satellite office and I asked there, but there wasn't really much. It was more focused on services for students. Then I went to the labour office and they didn't have any idea of how to serve me. Airdrie doesn't have the services I need, so I have to go to Calgary.

This immigrant was unable to find sufficient services to meet his transportation and employment needs in Airdrie and ended up moving to Calgary, primarily for more job opportunities.

Service provider representatives from Airdrie reported immigrants need access to "English language training and basic needs, including food, paying utilities and rent, and clothing." They also reported that immigrants want to socialize with the community more and have "[o]pportunities to get to know each other." Other barriers that emerged from the research included limited access to information and awareness of available help and services, translation services, and support services for manoeuvring through the immigration process.

Gaps in services

Participants noted that public transportation is a prominent barrier for immigrants and suggested it may affect immigrant attraction and retention. Airdrie provides an inter-city express route to and from Calgary on weekdays, three local routes throughout Airdrie, and ACCESS service for passengers with disabilities (City of Airdrie website, "Airdrie Transit – Getting You There," accessed July 22, 2012). One

community member said that while public transit is available in Airdrie, it is limited. She also said the town recognizes transit as an issue and is considering increasing service. Other persistent settlement issues included affordable housing and childcare. People noted housing prices are very high in Airdrie, and one service provider said, "The lack of childcare is a big thing, and what there is, is quite costly, so I imagine for an immigrant family, that's a barrier."

Labour force needs

Employers and service providers specified that Airdrie experiences labour shortages around power engineers, welders, teaching assistants, caretaking staff, and building operators. Employers expressed a need for workers with the following soft and hard skills: people management, sales and services, customer service, and manual labour skills.

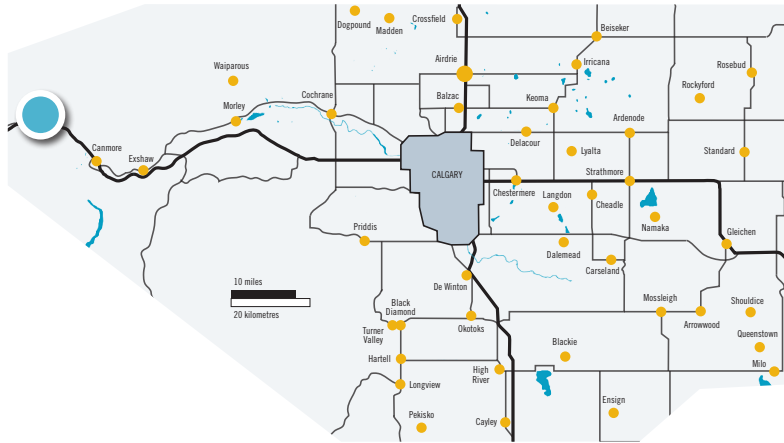
Attraction, retention, and integration

When asked about the key components of a strategy to engage immigrants, participants stated that the city has to first identify needs, which is being done through the Welcome Airdrie initiative. Then, participants said, the community must facilitate immigrant access to settlement and workforce training services. Integrating immigrants through social engagements was also mentioned as a way to encourage community connectedness: "We must engage people into the community and help them to feel connected to other people." Regarding immigrant attraction and retention, participants indicated that immigrants need transportation, reasonably priced housing, and viable employment opportunities.

Banff

The Town of Banff is located in the heart of the Rocky Mountains in Banff National Park, 126 kilometres west of Calgary. In 2011, Banff's

population was 8,244 (Pivotal Research, 2011, p. i). Research participants noted that immigrants in Banff come from these countries¹⁵: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Mexico, India, United Kingdom (UK), France, Czech Republic, and Germany. Banff has long been considered an international and cosmopolitan destination, with a diverse population. In the mid 80s, many Japanese tourists visited Canada and immigrated to Banff, buying retail space and opening up boutiques, restaurants, and hotels. Japanese immigrants still form a large community today in Banff.



Available Services

- Adult education, including arts programs, English language instruction, business courses, part-time certificates, and online learning;
- Employment services, including training and professional development, leadership development, job searches, career planning, and resume and cover letter writing;
- Social development services, including family supports, capacity building, community grants, internet access, and free library cards for Banff residents; and
- Settlement services for immigrants, including workshops, consultations, assistance with forms, information and referral, and support to organizations, agencies, and employers.

For many years, young people on working holiday visas from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand have come to Banff to work and vacation. Since about 2000, dominant origin countries of immigrants in Banff have been shifting. While many youth from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand still visit and work in Banff, many hospitality positions in Banff are filled by TFWs from the Philippines, Mexico, and India. The Bow Valley is also seeing more immigrants from South and Central America. One service provider commented that much like there was a large influx of Japanese in the mid 80s, Filipinos now comprise a large proportion of Bow Valley inhabitants. Additionally, the recession had a larger

impact on the Bow Valley, more so than in other places because of Banff's significant tourism industry, which declined when the economy faltered.

Banff receives services from the Bow Valley Learning Council, which provides bursaries to support individuals pursuing education or other courses. The Bow Valley Literacy VTAL Program also provides services in Banff. The YWCA provides affordable housing options in Banff. Videoconferencing capabilities are available, provided by the HALOS network.

Immigrant needs and barriers

In Banff, immigrants with a range of education levels, from high school to Masters-level, all said their English language skills were a barrier to integrating into the workforce. LINC classes, available in the Bow Valley, help immigrants gain proficiency in English. One participant said, “Having LINC language labs are an asset.” Yet only Permanent Residents are eligible for LINC funding, excluding TFWs who often need more language support. Another barrier mentioned was a lack of diverse ethnic and cultural associations for non-Filipino immigrants. While Filipinos in Banff comprise a large group, immigrants from other countries lack such social networks.

Gaps in services

Banff provides public transportation and a low-income transit pass.¹⁶ Further, Banff is a small enough community that people can get around on foot, as some immigrants indicated they did. However, participants emphasized that transportation between Canmore and Banff and into Calgary was still an issue for Bow Valley residents. This is especially so in winter, when not having a car is more isolating. Regional transportation between Banff and Canmore is scheduled to begin in fall 2012. Accommodation prices in Banff are very expensive, and the Bow Valley lacks sufficient affordable housing, although many employers offer rental staff accommodation. Participants also commented that affordable childcare is difficult to access.

One service provider said, “As far as Temporary Foreign Workers go, in terms of needing programs and services, the majority of them are coming to access support with moving towards permanent residency because that is what their sole focus is on.” He explained that when his organization provided information on TFWs’ Rights and Responsibilities and recreational activities in Banff, most TFWs were not very interested in Canadian labour laws, let alone free ski lift passes.

Service providers mentioned that since TFWs are so focused on working hard to become PRs, the level of customer service in Banff has improved:

TFWs are a very stable group of workers; the majority are extremely well educated, and they are creating this sense of a more permanent population within the communities of Canmore and Banff, which has traditionally been quite transient. The sense of stability has led employers to focus more on business development than continually training employees with turnover, so it’s changed the face of service that you receive in the communities.

Another service provider echoed this, saying, “The newer workforce we’re seeing are here to work hard, put their head down, keep their job, and hopefully get sponsored to stay. They are bringing the level of service up for the rest of the staff as well and having a very good impact.”

Labour force needs

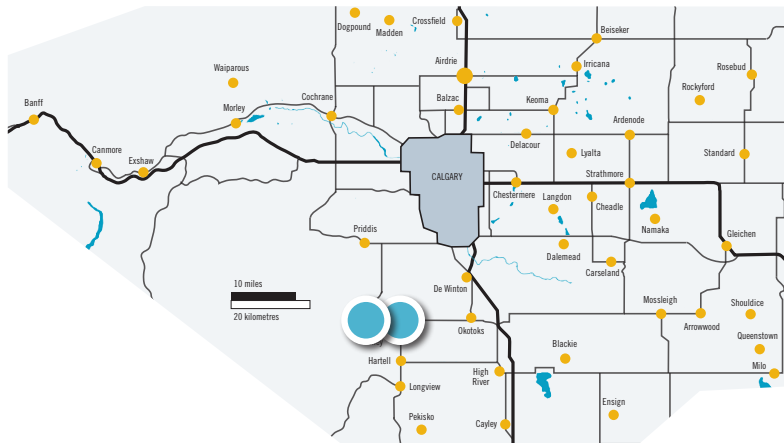
Participants identified labour shortages in entry-level positions¹⁷ in the hospitality sector, including hotel room housekeepers, servers, dishwashers, food counter attendants, cooks, front-desk staff, and supervisors. Employers stated they were looking for these skills in future employees: sales and services, leadership, problem-solving, customer service, and communication.

Attraction, retention, and integration

When asked what was needed to better integrate immigrants into the economy, one participant emphasized that in many cases, immigrants are already very well integrated: “In Banff and Canmore, most of our foreign workers and immigrants are working, so they’re not on any social assistance. I don’t know that they could be more engaged in the economy. Our unemployment rate is very low here, lower than the national average.” However, immigrants’ skills often remain unaligned with the labour force needs in the Bow Valley. Another way participants recommended integrating immigrants into the community was through organizing community hikes and social events.

When asked what is needed to retain immigrants, one immigrant said, “The cost of living here is very high, so the conditions of people who live here are not that good, so that has to be improved.” More financial support may help very recent immigrants to Banff who require assistance in getting their feet under themselves.

Black Diamond and Turner Valley



Turner Valley and Black Diamond are located in the foothills, four kilometres apart, and approximately 69 kilometres south of Calgary. In 2011, Black Diamond's population was 2373 and Turner Valley's population was 2167 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile, 2011 Census). Participants stated that immigrants in Black Diamond and Turner Valley represent these countries¹⁸: Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Philippines. Several immigrants in Turner Valley and Black Diamond are entrepreneurs who own their own businesses, particularly restaurants.

Available Services

- Adult education, including continuing education, upgrading, adult and family literacy, recreation programs, General Equivalence Diploma (GED), and English Language Learning;
- Employment services, including travelling, career planning services, Internet access, and community economic development; and
- Social development services, including family and youth programs, funding and program support for local non-profit organizations, and personal development courses.

The Foothills Continuing Education Council CALC provides services to Turner Valley and Black Diamond. The Foothills Foundation provides affordable housing options in Black Diamond (www.foothillsfdtn.org/index.php/affordable-black-diamond) and is "currently in the development process of obtaining affordable housing units in the Town of Turner Valley" (Foothills Foundation, accessed July 25, 2012, "Town of Turner Valley," www.foothillsfdtn.org/index.php/affordable-turner-valley). Videoconferencing capabilities are available, provided by the RISE network.

Immigrant needs and barriers

One immigrant stated a barrier in Black Diamond and Turner Valley is that "[t]his place is really good, but it's not going to develop into a big town, so there are less opportunities for work." He was concerned that when his grown children immigrate to Black Diamond, there will not be enough job opportunities for them here and that the family will have to move to Okotoks or Calgary for better prospects. Another immigrant stated three concerns, including that it was more expensive to wire money back to his family in the Philippines from Black Diamond and Turner Valley than it is from Calgary, that there is no place to buy Filipino foods, and that there is no public transportation.

Gaps in services

Participants indicated that a lack of public transit in Turner Valley and Black Diamond was a large issue for immigrants. Neither affordable housing nor childcare appeared as a serious issue in these communities. English language learning and business development support and investment services were considered lacking by participants. Employers and service providers noted a lack of careers-advising services; however, McBride Career Group travels to Turner Valley and Black Diamond to offer services.

Labour force needs

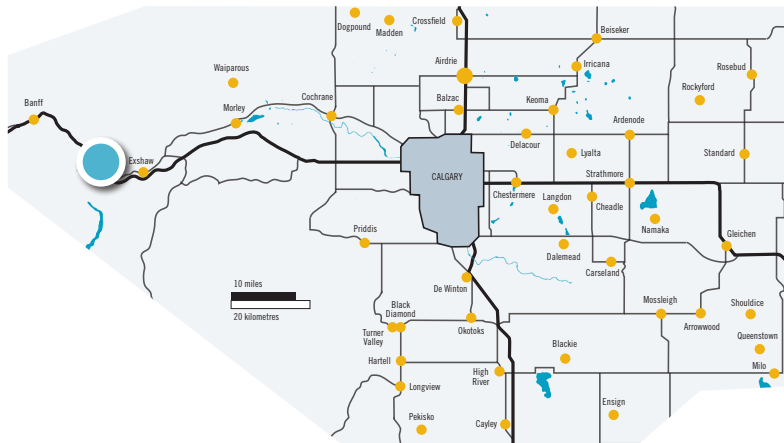
Participants referenced three different types of labour force shortages in Black Diamond and Turner Valley: unskilled service industry positions, construction workers, and professionals. Employers said they were looking for the following skills in future employees: customer service, professional, leadership, sales and services, relationship building, information technology, communication, and computer skills.

Attraction, retention, and integration

One participant explained more career fairs and continuing education programs would increase immigrants' economic integration in Turner Valley and Black Diamond. Another participant suggested the towns could celebrate holidays of different cultures to help the wider community appreciate immigrants' backgrounds. Increased awareness for supporting and integrating immigrants in Black Diamond and Turner Valley was also cited as a strategy to engage newcomers efficiently. One service provider stressed the importance of "[n]ot duplicating existing services, but creating an effective and seamless program network," to better serve immigrants, as well as other clients.



Canmore



The Town of Canmore is a popular tourism and vacation destination located 102 kilometres west of Calgary. In 2011, Canmore's population was 12,317 (Town of Canmore, 2011). Research participants indicated immigrants in Canmore come from these countries¹⁹: the Philippines, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, Columbia, Japan, Germany, New Zealand, Spain, France, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of Korea (South Korea), Ethiopia, Somalia, Israel, Russia, Belgium, Cuba, and Vietnam. Participants mentioned an increase in immigrants coming from South and Central America.

Available Services

- Adult education, including literacy, English language instruction, post-secondary learning opportunities, part-time certificates, and online learning;
- Social development services, including youth and family services, capacity building, community grants, and Internet access;
- Employment services, including training and professional development, leadership development, job searches, career planning, and resume and cover letter writing; and
- Settlement services for immigrants, including workshops, consultations, assistance with forms, information and referral, support to organizations, agencies, and employers.

Canmore receives services from the Bow Valley Learning Council CALC, which provides bursaries to support individuals pursuing education or other courses. The Bow Valley Literacy VTAL Program also provides services in Canmore. The Canmore Community Housing Corporation provides affordable housing options (www.canmorehousing.ca/). Videoconferencing capabilities are available, provided by the RISE network.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Immigrants and service providers in the Bow Valley indicated that transportation was a barrier for newcomers to Canada. Getting around Canmore, back and forth into Banff, and to Calgary were all issues. Canmore's larger size makes having a car more necessary than in Banff.

One participant commented, "Having LINC language labs are an asset" in Banff and Canmore. However, for immigrants with advanced English language skills, but who still wished to improve their English, even the high-level language training offered was insufficient. One immigrant said, "I took two courses here at the Banff Education Centre (in Canmore) and another one at Bow Valley College.

But the problem is that the last course at the BVC was intermediate/advanced, but the advanced was not so advanced.” There is a need for more rigorous, advanced language training in Canmore.

Some employers commented that immigrants look for assistance in the wrong places. For instance, immigrants will go to staffing agencies for help with extending work permits or finding companies to sponsor them when that is not a service staffing agencies provide. However, the Job Resource Centre in Canmore provides these services. Increased awareness and information about where to go for different assistance would be beneficial for immigrants, as many needed support services are available in town. One barrier often repeated by immigrants, service providers, and employers was the high cost of living in the Bow Valley. For immigrants this is an added challenge because they are also setting up new households in Canada and may experience additional costs.

Gaps in services

While settlement services are available in Canmore, there are no services for foreign qualification recognition, especially for tradespeople. One immigrant emphasized the need for these services, as in order to qualify for the Blue Seal certification, he would have to go to Edmonton to receive the training. Regional transportation between Banff and Canmore is scheduled to begin in fall 2012, which partially addresses transportation concerns. Lack of affordable housing facilities was occasionally noted as an issue in Canmore.

Labour force needs

In Canmore, participants identified labour and skill shortages in these areas: supervisors, millwrights, welders, tradespeople, nursing assistants, registered nurses, and mechanical and chemical engineers. Employers stated they were looking

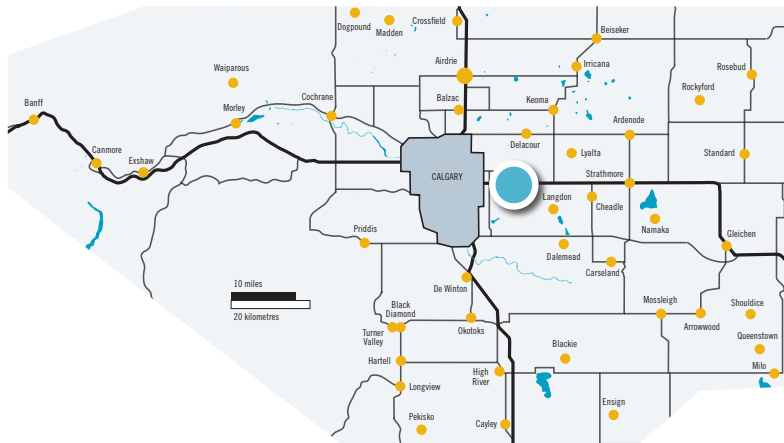
for the following skills in future employees: sales and services, leadership, problem-solving, people management, relationship building, customer service, communication, professional, public relations, human resources, and computer skills.

Attraction, retention, and integration

While Canmore does not have an official strategy to integrate and retain immigrants, there is strong support for immigrants. Service providers and employers collaborate in supporting immigrants – providing employee housing, information, and referrals as needed. Canmore supports immigrants, including TFWs, through the provision of bursaries from the Bow Valley Learning Council (BVLC) for continuing education and training programs. Although the majority of BVLC’s funding comes from the government, which makes TFWs ineligible for it, some funding is from other community sources that BVLC puts towards supporting TFWs. A service provider stressed that ongoing personal support and follow-up are necessary to help integrate immigrants into the Canmore economy and community. One employer said that to really engage immigrants in the community, all services need to be locally available, including foreign qualification recognition support.

In order to better integrate immigrants, one participant recommended community potlucks to bring people together to socialize outside of one’s own ethnic group. When participants were asked about the components of a strategy to engage immigrants, one said she would like to see more inclusion of immigrants: “I would like to see immigrants involved in the creation of the strategy, for any kind of major decision from the municipal level to be informed by the people themselves.” Active involvement of immigrants in relevant decision-making will allow for more informed strategies.

Chestermere



Originally a summer village, the Town of Chestermere is a fast-growing community located just 23 kilometres east of Calgary. In 2011, Chestermere's population was 14,824 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile). Chestermere ranked fifth in the top ten municipalities with the highest population growth rates between 2006 and 2011, at 49.4% (Statistics Canada, 2012a, The Canadian Population in 2011: Population Counts and Growth). Much of this growth is due to immigrant families moving to Chestermere.

Available Services

- Adult education, including literacy, English language learning opportunities, skill development, and non-credit, part-time learning opportunities;
- Employment and business services, including resources and assistance for local entrepreneurs and residents, videoconferencing services (RISE network), and Internet access; and
- Social development services, including youth and family supports, financial supports, parenting courses, community development programs, information, and referrals.

Research participants described immigrants in Chestermere as coming from the following countries²⁰: the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Pakistan, Japan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Some participants commented on the variety of languages spoken by community members in Chestermere, including Hindi, Punjabi, French, Spanish, and Urdu. Many participants reported that Chestermere is very racially and ethnically diverse. Additionally, participants mentioned that Chestermere has a high proportion of stay-at-home mothers and children. Some participants said this occurred because not many job opportunities exist in Chestermere and that one-income families, where one parent commutes to Calgary for work, are very common.

Chestermere's Community Services Department is aware of its population's diversity and contracted the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) to conduct the Chestermere Inclusion Project, which concluded in March 2012. The focus of this project was to engage ethnically diverse community members and other stakeholders to increase inclusion. The results of this study are not public and will be used internally by the town for further development of inclusion.

Chestermere's recent growth was very rapid; however, service provision and infrastructure did not accelerate at the same pace as housing development.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Language was seen as a prominent barrier for immigrants in Chestermere. Prairie Waters Elementary School, part of the Rocky View School District, reports that “approximately 35% of [its] students are learners of English as an Additional Language” (Prairie Waters School, 2012). Of significance is the fact that the majority of these students are Canadian citizens, not immigrants. This makes these learners ineligible for LINC training. English is not the dominant language for many Chestermere residents, and many immigrants require information about town and school services in languages other than English, but it is often unavailable.

Cost is another barrier for newcomers in Chestermere. One immigrant participant stated: “I can’t afford to live in Chestermere, basically. There’s two big problems. We wanted to move here; that was the goal, but the rentals were way too high compared to Calgary and the lack of transportation to get to work.” Lack of affordable housing and rental accommodations forced her and her family to settle elsewhere.

Another barrier immigrants experienced in Chestermere was limited educational opportunities. One participant said, “Through my cousins, I get to know Chestermere and was able to compare it with Calgary. But downside of that is Calgary has lots of opportunities, like education, for continuing studies or upgrading. That’s lacking here.” Similarly, participants emphasized the lack of job opportunities in Chestermere, but expected that will change: “There’s nothing here. Not yet. There will be in the next five or ten years. We’ll have some businesses here, but just not yet.”

Gaps in services

The most commonly cited barrier in Chestermere was the lack of transportation. Transit to and from Calgary, as well as within Chestermere, was a concern for many immigrant families. One immigrant said she was fortunate because both of her part-time jobs in Chestermere were close enough to their home, so she could walk. Conversely, one employer saw not having public transit as good for retaining employees because it forced people to look in Chestermere for work.

Limited affordable housing options exist in Chestermere. However, one participant noted that larger house sizes in Chestermere, which contribute to their larger price tag, are better suited to multigenerational living, which some immigrant families find desirable. Childcare services are also scarce and very expensive. As a result, immigrants will often get other family members to watch their children. Participants said other services currently lacking in Chestermere include shopping, health care services, school seats, recreation opportunities, and public meeting spaces.

Labour force needs

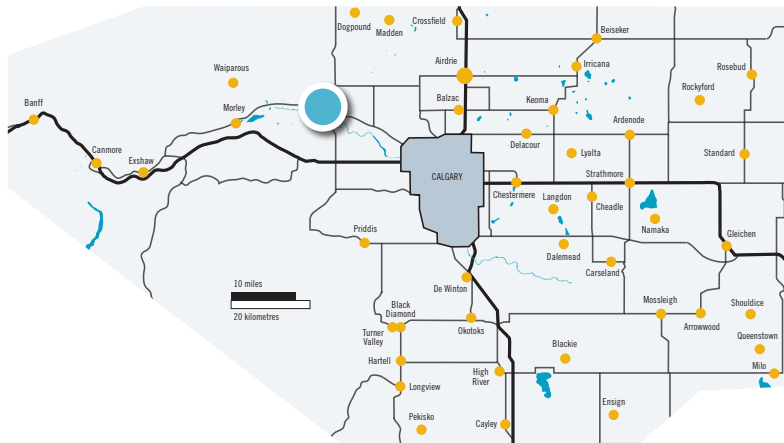
Some employers anticipated that they would be short-staffed in the near future, particularly around entry-level positions; however, other employers felt comfortable that their workforce would remain stable. Employers noted they were looking for employees with the following skills: problem solving, sales and services, customer service, and skilled trades.

Attraction, retention, and integration

One participant said, “Sometimes the proximity to Calgary is a blessing and a curse,” meaning Chestermere’s commercial development may have been inhibited because of its closeness. “We need infrastructure. They need to make more opportunities for businesses to come because there’s not enough work in this town. Everybody commutes out.” To better integrate immigrants into Chestermere’s economy and community, more opportunities for work and socializing must be created.

Service providers noted that integration is difficult because the increase in diversity happened so suddenly. They said, previously, Chestermere was very homogenous, and now its challenge is learning how to accommodate and incorporate diverse cultural groups, which will take time and trust. Suggestions to integrate immigrants included increasing diverse representation on town council and parent-councils. Through the Inclusion Project, the Town of Chestermere is cognizant of its community’s needs and is working towards meeting them.

Cochrane



The Town of Cochrane is located 36 kilometres west of Calgary, in the valley of the Bow River. In 2011, Cochrane’s population was 17,580 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile). Participants indicated that immigrants came from the following countries²¹: the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC), India, Scotland, Poland, Vietnam, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Cambodia. Participants commented that the diversity of Cochrane was changing: “There used to be a stronger Mexican community, but because of the recession, there

were some companies who used to bring in people from Mexico as Temporary Foreign Workers and don’t anymore.” Another participant stated, “The Filipino community is very strong. There are many women that come in on the nanny, live-in caregiver and are then transitioning over into the healthcare field.”

The Cochrane Society for Housing Options provides some affordable housing options. Videoconferencing services are provided by the RISE and HALOS networks. Cochrane has a large volunteer base, which aids in service provision for immigrants. After newcomers are involved with volunteer programs, participants said, they want to volunteer themselves. Immigrant participants commented that they had “been quite well supported” in Cochrane. Just two examples immigrants gave were the Welcome Wagon visiting their home and ample resources in the local library.

Available Services

- Adult education, including community adult learning and leisure programs, English language training, academic upgrading, and credit career programming;
- Employment services, including job search preparation, Internet access, career advising, interview skills training, and business development resources; and
- Social development services, including family support services and community and personal development support and courses.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Service providers commented that some immigrants are unable to access their services because of inflexible hours of operations, which are limited by funding constraints. For immigrants that work shifts, they cannot access available services because they cannot get time off work. Service providers also stated that the main need immigrants have is for “information on how to be a part of the community.” Immigrants’ questions focused around basic settlement concerns, such as “Where are the schools?” and “How do I get a bank account?”

Immigrants who lived in rural areas outside of Cochrane had variable high-speed Internet access because no towers could reach them due to the geography. These immigrants reported using rocket sticks, which were unreliable and very expensive. Not having Internet access was very limiting and isolating for them.

Gaps in services

Transportation is a significant issue in Cochrane, and participants reported that debates surrounding public transit have been heated. A live-in caregiver in Cochrane did not have a vehicle, which made transportation difficult: “There is no bus from here to Calgary. I was just so lucky that my boss would bring me to Crowfoot Station and then I can go anywhere through the train. And then when I come back, they will come and pick me up.” Some service providers also pointed to the risk of immigrants using bicycles unsafely in winter months. One participant suspected that if Cochrane had internal and regional public transit, more immigrants would choose to settle there. Affordable housing was another concern; however, it was cited less frequently than transportation.

Some gaps in services in Cochrane include settlement services and education programs. One participant commented, “I think it’s important that some sort of

educational institution come into this community and start offering some very open, very flexible programming in both English language learning and also in computer skills.”

Labour force needs

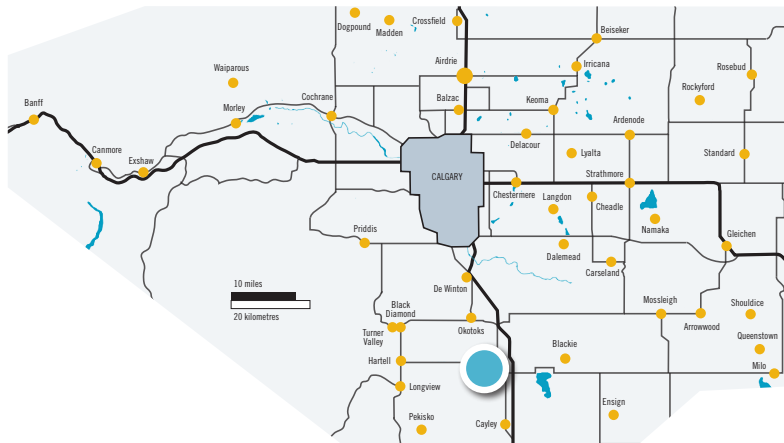
Participants noted labour shortages in entry-level positions in the service industry, especially in restaurants, hotels, and small businesses. Employers indicated they were looking for these soft and hard skills in new employees: customer service, sales and services, leadership, people management, manual labour, computer skills, English language skills, skilled trades, problem solving, project management, financial management, and communications.

Attraction, retention, and integration

A large community of immigrants from the United Kingdom reside in Cochrane, which facilitates the settlement of more newcomers from England. However, some participants noted this large British community can impede their integration into wider Canadian society: “It is very much like a small British town, and there are a lot of ex-pats here, which I think is something that has its good and bad points because it’s sometimes difficult to break away and make Canadian friends and be Canadian.”

A few participants mentioned that some prejudiced attitudes still exist in Cochrane: “Unfortunately, we get a lot of people that come in here and complain about immigrants stealing their jobs and how easy it is for individuals to come over here and get jobs. You try to explain to them that it’s not easy at all, it’s not a cakewalk, and they’re not taking your jobs at all. But those attitudes are still out there, and we hear it a lot.” At the same time, other participants emphasized that Cochrane is growing in diversity, and along with it, attitudes toward multiculturalism are altering over time.

High River



The Town of High River is the centre of a farming and ranching region, located 65 kilometres south of Calgary. In 2011, High River's population was 12,920 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile). Participants indicated that immigrants came from the following countries²²: Mexico, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Haiti, Sudan, India, Thailand, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Belgium, France, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Vietnam, Columbia, Sri Lanka, Australia, and New Zealand.

Available Services

- Adult education, including volunteer tutor language training, family and adult literacy, non-credit continuing education programs, English Language Learning classes, High School Equivalency (GED), and distance education programs;
- Employment and business services, including career training, Internet access, economic development resources, networking opportunities, employment preparation programs, business planning services, and business loans;
- Settlement services, including information, referral, orientation, help with applications, interpretation, translation, legal aid advocacy, and recreation and social opportunities; and
- Social development services including youth and family supports and personal development courses.

The Foothills Continuing Education Council CALC provides services to High River. The Literacy for Life VTAL also services High River. In High River, the Town of High River's Family and Community Support Services office provides affordable housing options, for which there is high demand. Videoconferencing services are provided by the RISE networks.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Participants said one barrier immigrants encountered was limited access to language training. Some service providers facilitated basic language training through volunteers and online programs. However, one service provider said their online program "wasn't user-friendly in English, never mind if you were trying to do it in another language and weren't comfortable with a computer, which some of them weren't."

As online access itself may be a barrier to accessing learning, a need for basic computer training and essential skills exists. Participants mentioned that many immigrants have good computer skills and that they use online social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to keep in touch with friends and family in their origin countries. Service providers stressed that they would like to have locally available Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) training for immigrants in High River because travelling to Calgary to access LINC training is too costly.

As many TFWs are in Alberta solely to work, some tend not to be interested in recreation opportunities. Yet service providers mentioned that TFWs could be better integrated into small town communities through social and recreational activities. Service providers mentioned that some TFWs who send remittances back to their families are reluctant to take part in any fun activities because they know their family members are struggling. Therefore, they saw engaging all newcomers, in social and recreational activities as even more important for their wellbeing and integration into the community.

Gaps in services

Lack of internal and regional transportation in High River was seen as an impediment by participants: “Public transportation is a huge issue because if somebody needs to get into Calgary and the Greyhound bus schedule doesn’t work, they’re paying \$200 for a taxi.” Public transit is a high need for High River residents, as the town is not sufficiently walkable. To increase immigrant retention, one participant said that more affordable housing is needed. Service providers noted that sometimes simply lack of capacity inhibited them from meeting immigrant client demand.

Labour force needs

Participants noted shortages around the following labour types in High River: unskilled and manual labourers, entry-level service sector positions, and skilled tradespeople. Employers reported looking for the following skills in future employees: leadership, project management, financial management, problem solving, people management, sales and services, relationship building, communication, customer service, professional, public relations, and computer skills.

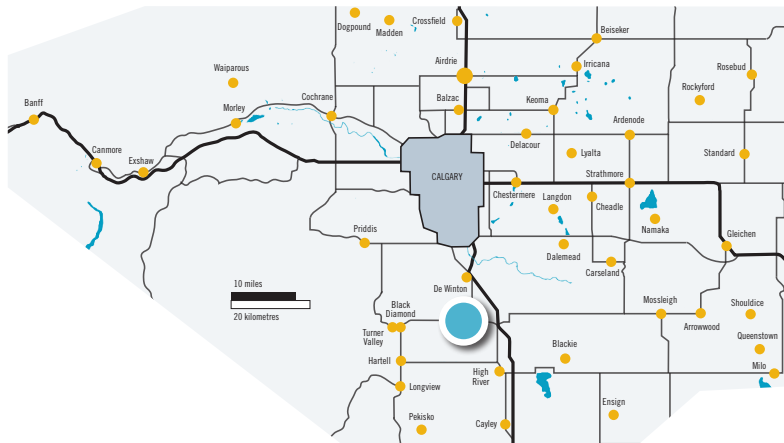
Attraction, retention, and integration

Participants mentioned the need for employers to become more involved in integrating immigrants: “There needs to be cultural diversity awareness. Like, when an immigrant walks into a business and they feel that they’re welcome there and it’s not an irritation because they have an accent.” One employer said that to truly retain and integrate immigrants in High River’s economy, all immigrants, including unskilled TFWs, should be able to apply for permanent residency. Other participants mentioned that community events should be promoted in multiple languages, thereby better reaching immigrant populations.

Additionally, one service provider thought that having more diversity in foods available in grocery stores would contribute to immigrant integration: “It would be great if there were a few more opportunities for ethnic food here because clients send one person with a large list and a handful of money into markets in Calgary to bring food back.” Simple accommodations can help create more welcoming communities for newcomers to Canada.



Okotoks



The Town of Okotoks is located in the Sheep River Valley, 47 kilometres south of Calgary. In 2011, the population of Okotoks was 24,511 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile). Okotoks ranked tenth in the top ten municipalities with the highest population growth rates between 2006 and 2011, at 42.9% (Statistics Canada, 2012a, The Canadian Population in 2011: Population Counts and Growth). Participants reported that immigrants in Okotoks are from the following countries²³: the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Mexico, Haiti, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, India, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Available Services

- Adult education services, including continuing education, General Equivalence Diploma (GED), English Language Learning, recreation programs, and family and adult literacy;
- Employment services, including career counselling, job search assistance, resume writing, and employment workshops;
- Settlement services, including information, referrals, orientation assistance with forms, interpretation, translation, legal aid advocacy, and recreation and social opportunities; and
- Social development services, including subsidised transportation, youth and family supports, and personal development courses.

Croatia, Romania, Belgium, France, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Okotoks is home to the Foothills Continuing Education Council CALC. Literacy for Life, a Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy VTAL, also provides services in Okotoks. The Foothills Foundation provides affordable housing options in Okotoks. Videoconferencing services are provided by the RISE and HALOS networks.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Even though there is some locally available language training, one immigrant participant expressed that the wide diversity in English language capabilities of students in the class impeded her learning: “I prefer the Calgary course. Here it’s good, but it’s not the same because I think we have too much difference. Some people speak well. I don’t speak well, and some people don’t speak at all. I think it’s very difficult.” However, she was grateful for the opportunity to learn English in her own community.

Another barrier a service provider pointed out was the misconception held by some community members that if immigrants came from the United Kingdom, they are low needs and do not require settlement assistance. For example, this service provider explained, “They’ll assume that it is all about accessing language training. It’s not. You can’t find a job. It doesn’t matter where you’re from, that is stressful and difficult and you need some help. It has to do with adjusting to a completely new way of life. The barriers, things that we find difficult, you can magnify that.”

Gaps in services

All participants emphasized the great need for internal and regional transit in Okotoks. One participant said, “Transportation is a barrier for many newcomers, especially live-in caregivers.” Participants also mentioned gaps in services relating to housing: “Okotoks is one of the more expensive places to live. I think it’s that much closer to Calgary, so housing isn’t as affordable. Hopefully, that’s something that’s going to come in down the road, more affordable housing opportunities.”

Another participant said, “I think the current challenges for immigrants here in Okotoks are finding career-path jobs. There are many beginner opportunities here whereby one can start their journey in their new country. So continuing education and training opportunities are very important too, as not everyone is able to find work in their previously chosen field.”

Other participants noted gaps in services in Okotoks around language training: “The LINC Language training is probably the number one thing lacking.” However, one service provider explained that because many immigrants in Okotoks are from the UK and already speak English, the need is “[s]poradic; it’s not like it’s needed constantly, but when it is needed, it’s needed desperately.” The need for language training relates to a lack of transportation services in Okotoks, as many immigrants cannot easily access services offered in Calgary.

Labour force needs

Participants cited labour shortages in Okotoks around mechanics, childcare providers, and entry-level service industry positions. Employers noted they were looking for the following skills in employees: communication, customer service, leadership, problem solving, professional, people management, sales and services, relationship building, product knowledge, project management, financial management, media relations, desktop publishing, human resources, and computer skills. One employer noted that he was not looking for particular skills, but rather work ethic, as he could train the appropriate worker to have the needed skills. When asked about skills or labour shortages in Okotoks, some participants said there were not labour shortages in Okotoks, but job shortages.

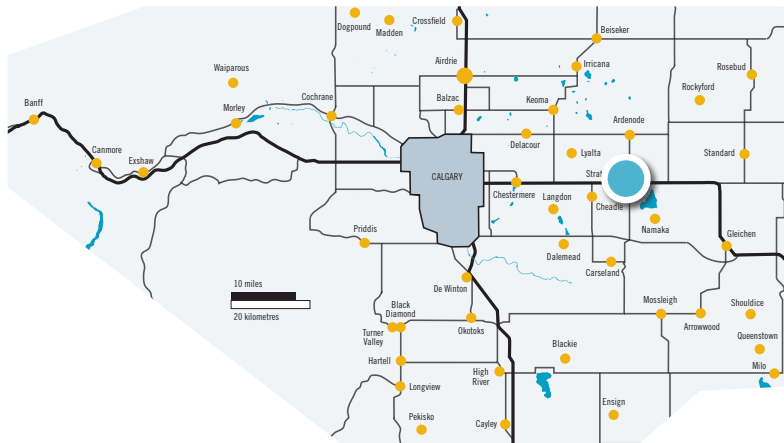
Attraction, retention, and integration

Participants viewed the Foothills Community Immigrant Services as filling a need in helping integrate immigrants into the community. Strong referral networks between organizations also ensure that if an immigrant makes contact with one service provider, they are more likely to know about the rest, as one organization described, “I think once they connect with one of us, whether it be any of us service providers, I think we’re all very good at making sure they know what else is available to them, just as long as they can find one of us.”

Some participants linked housing to immigrant retention: “One way to increase retention would be to increase affordable housing and accommodation because the cost of housing here is quite expensive, even to rent.” Participants also emphasized the need to provide information in multiple languages: “It’s things like simply looking at your website. Can it change into different languages? We have a long way to go still. But I think that it’s been recognized that it’s something to look at.”

Other participants said awareness is vital to integrating immigrants: “Awareness—and having ample opportunities for training and development, promoting immigrant service groups, marketing through career and jobs fairs, partnering among all relevant community groups, creating active support for immigrants.” Collaboration between organizations will make immigrants feel welcome and encourage them to stay in Okotoks.

Strathmore



The Town of Strathmore is located 50 kilometres east of Calgary. In 2011, the population of Strathmore was 12,216 (Statistics Canada, 2012b, Census Profile). Participants reported immigrants as coming from the following countries²⁴: the Philippines, Mexico, India, Egypt, Ukraine, Nigeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, and Fiji. Many participants at service organizations stated that they did not record statistics on the origin country of their clients; however, they noted the number of Filipinos in Strathmore has grown significantly in recent years.

Available Services

- Adult education, including non-credit further education opportunities and recreational programs;
- Employment and business services, including resources and assistance to local entrepreneurs, Internet access; and
- Social development services, including youth and family supports, supports for new mothers, and information and referrals.

Strathmore is home to the Wheatland Further Education Society CALC. A partnership among the Government of Alberta, the Town of Strathmore, and Classic Construction Limited (CCL) provides affordable housing options in Strathmore. Cardinal Coach Lines provides commuter service that travels from Strathmore to Calgary during weekdays. Videoconferencing services are provided by the RISE network.

Immigrant needs and barriers

Service providers indicated that transportation was a barrier, as most new immigrants in Strathmore do not have vehicles. One local provider said, “They have no transportation; they can’t get to Calgary to the federal building.” One immigrant who spoke English well expressed that she would like more English training if she had the time “to work on accent because I don’t want to be different.” However, the classes available in Strathmore were not suited to her needs because “the ones that are here are lower level, for people that just came. There isn’t anything for language for more advanced.”

Gaps in services

Participants noted that there is a lack of resources around settlement services for immigrants in Strathmore. For instance, not all organizations have specific information on the immigration process that some newcomers need. One service provider explained:

One service that immigrants express demand for that isn't available is about their ability to apply for whatever status they're working towards. I said that we almost need a course on it. We direct them, but it's hard to communicate with them and understand their struggles when we don't know the process. And each one of them seems to have a different process, so there are a lot of factors in how that's determined.

Service providers do not have the capacity to efficiently help immigrants with applying toward permanent residency or getting work permits or visas extended. Further, immigrants often lack the means of transportation to access these services in Calgary.

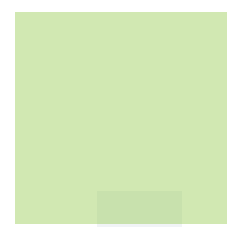
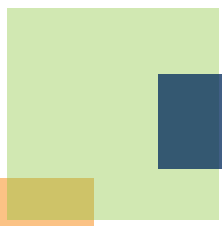
Additionally, one service provider said that the recession negatively affected her ability to provide services to their clients because of lack of funding: "It impacted our services; it was a direct link to our service level." Ironically, it is during a recession when clients are mostly likely to need services.

Labour force needs

Employers said they previously had difficulty finding the staff they needed, but TFWs and other immigrants filled labour shortages: "Because of immigration, it has helped. We still have some difficulty finding qualified people, but we had a lot more difficulty for a few years there. Then we brought some foreign workers and put them in some key places, positions hard for us to find." Other abilities and credentials employers said they were looking for included some post-secondary education and language skills.

Attraction, retention, and integration

Some participants thought that in order to better integrate immigrants they should have more information upon arrival: "It would be nice if when people came, they knew where to go to get the resources. How would they know where to go when they first come to Strathmore? There's lots going on." Another participant suggested that even if immigrants are not working in their trained field, they could still engage in it somehow: "A big picture idea would be that they could still use their talents in some way, whether it's through volunteerism." That way, newcomers to Canada can still be involved in their pre-immigration field and continually develop their skills. In order to improve immigrant attraction and retention, one participant said that Strathmore needs to develop "more jobs, more industrial businesses."





Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

Immigrants come to Canada for a chance at a better life. This is true for those newcomers who settle in small urban centres and rural communities in southern Alberta. Immigrants often experience delays in resuming their previous careers, as when many first arrive, they are more concerned with providing for their families' immediate needs, than in recertifying to work in their previous field. Many immigrants made career sacrifices to improve their children's chances at success, by ensuring they receive a good education in Canada. However, when skilled and professional immigrants do not work in their trained fields, their capabilities are not fully utilized.

Study participants supported immigrants' skills development, workforce training, and education. Immigrants saw further education and training as necessary to engage in meaningful work. English language learning ranked highly in many immigrants' plans for future training. Other programs of interest to immigrants included business, administration, and health care. Employers demonstrated high levels of support for immigrant workforce training and skills development, including employer-provided or -supported workforce development.

In spite of high levels of support, barriers diminish immigrants' ability to use their skills in the economy and community. These included a lack of Canadian

workforce experience, foreign qualification recognition issues, and language proficiency. Many immigrants involved in this study were underemployed, balancing multiple part-time jobs unrelated to their previous fields. Lack of time (due to multiple jobs) and lack of available finances prevented some immigrants from pursuing further education and training opportunities. Additionally, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are prevented from participating in education and skills training, frustrating both employers and TFWs alike.

Labour and skills shortages affect important industries in small communities, and forecasts anticipate shortages will become more acute in coming decades. Participants in this study strongly supported the development of immigrants' workplace skills, but barriers prevent immigrants from fully contributing to small town workforces.

Fortunately, strong practices and cooperative cultures between community agencies and industries already exist in the majority of communities studied. These collaborations expand capacity and the range of services accessible to immigrants. However, gaps persist, mainly in specialized services for immigrants, such as advanced English language training, foreign qualification recognition support, and applying for permanent residency and extending work visas.

Recommendations

ENHANCE ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- **Expand the range of local English Language Learning (ELL) opportunities:** Study participants noted that immigrants arrive in communities with a range of ELL skills and want to pursue further literacy and language training. Education providers may consider how they can coordinate content delivery between several communities so that ELL learners of similar abilities can benefit from more targeted content. Promising practices in this area include Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) Home Study, which is an online program, videoconferencing, and a blend of traditional and face-to-face teaching and learning.

Regarding using videoconferencing services, two types of videoconferencing networks are in the regional communities: the HALOS VC network, which is available in Airdrie, Banff, Cochrane, and Okotoks (www.iccan.ca); and the RISE network, which is a project of the Chinook Arch, Marigold and Shortgrass Library Systems (www.risenetwork.ca). Although each town studied has videoconferencing capacity, the two networks are not perfectly compatible. Improving videoconferencing network compatibility will facilitate interactive content and service delivery to remote learners and clients.

- **Enhance access to post-secondary education offerings:** Participants argued that local education opportunities could promote attraction and retention of young people (including immigrant children) and top labour force talent. Governments, communities, and education providers should coordinate resources and assets to expand the presence of locally delivered education and training opportunities that are responsive to local economic and learner demand. Additionally, advancements in technology mean that face-to-face

interactions can be prominent features of the distance learner experience. Therefore, enhancing access could also include online, videoconference, and blended program delivery.

- **Encourage employers to facilitate immigrants' access to education and training:** Employers involved in this project strongly supported immigrant workforce training and development. Employers can sponsor workforce training in many ways, including providing internal training, flex time, paid or unpaid leave, transportation to and from the learning site, and tuition support.
 - Employers can partner with local education providers to offer ELL or literacy classes on the worksite before, during, or after work. This arrangement may increase participation among workers as it is more efficient (Carter, Morrish, & Amoyaw, 2008, p. 179).
 - To strengthen immigrants' professional social networks, community organizations, employers and educational institutions should collaborate to hold business networking events. Employer-based networking events will enhance professional immigrants' career prospects.
 - Employers can partner with local education providers to offer occupation-specific language training to immigrant employees. This could also be done through mentoring and tutoring relationships.
 - Employers who provide scholarships to unskilled immigrant labourers to upgrade their skills may address a labour need as well as encourage retention.

- **Open access to learning and training for Temporary Foreign Workers:** Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are recruited to Alberta to fill labour shortages, but they are ineligible for training and education. Such restrictions prevent TFWs from developing their skills. As many TFWs transition to permanent residency, these lost years can have detrimental economic and social impacts, for both affected immigrants and communities.

- **Consider strategies to provide inter- and intra-municipal transportation:** If affordable inter- and intra-municipal transportation is available, service providers could better balance service coordination at both municipal and regional levels, since clients would gain greater mobility to access different and more specialized immigrant services in adjacent communities. Solutions could include a form of regional public transit or entrepreneurial solutions, including car share initiatives. Promising approaches in this area include the Kootenay car share initiative (www.carsharecoop.ca).

BALANCE STRATEGIC COORDINATION AT THE MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

- **Build local capacity through the coordination of services:** Service providers are already well networked and coordinate service delivery at the municipal level. More specialized immigrant services, such as support with foreign qualification recognition, work permit extensions, and transitions to permanent residency are challenging for most communities to provide. Local community providers that share mandates with similar organizations in different communities could join to strategically develop different in-house competencies and then share their expertises. In such arrangements, not every similar organization in adjacent communities would need to have the same competencies, but through close collaboration, all organizations could retain access to a broader range of expertise.
 - A promising model in the area of regional collaboration is the relationship between Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs) and the comprehensive community colleges, which share regional service boundaries. Both entities collaborate to enhance learning opportunities and services to immigrants and simultaneously build local capacity.

STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Provide tutoring, mentoring, bridging, and job-shadowing opportunities to improve immigrants' soft skills:** Mentoring and other similar activities introduce immigrants to the culture of Canadian workplaces and can improve communication skills. Programs such as these could be piloted in businesses or other organizations in small towns through blended learning models, including in-class and online components.
- **Enhance rural immigrants' access to foreign qualification recognition (FQR) support:** Financial constraints due to underemployment or unemployment and other pressures (e.g., childcare) were frequently cited as a barrier to immigrant workforce development. Local communities could consider creating microloan programs through public/private/not-for-profit partnerships to support immigrants with attaining FQR and skills training. The Immigrant Access Fund (www.iafcanda.org) provides an excellent model of microloan provision to support FQR.

- **Expand reach of programs that support professional immigrants from Calgary to rural settings:** The Corporate Readiness Training Program and Directions for Immigrants are two successful programs that help internationally educated professionals develop Canadian workplace competencies, gain Canadian work experience, secure professional employment, attain foreign qualification recognition, and resume professional, skilled, or trades careers.
- **Promote awareness within the employer community on immigrant supports and services:** Employers are keen to help their foreign-trained employees reach their potential, but many employers expressed uncertainty about how employees could access a range of specialized services, including extending work permits and accessing FQR support. Workplaces play an important role in sharing information with immigrant employees about the workplace and community. Increased employer awareness of immigrant services and how to access them will strengthen the effectiveness of informal support networks around immigrants.
- **Extend provisions for employers to nominate low-skilled and unskilled TFWs for Permanent Residency where prolonged labour shortages exist:** Employers wish to retain hard-working TFWs in unskilled and low-skilled occupations, as it will allow them to develop a more productive and experienced workforce and better address ongoing labour need.

ADOPT BEST PRACTICES MORE BROADLY

- **Expand settlement services to those communities currently underserved:** Banff, Canmore, High River and Okotoks are the only communities that locally provide a range of settlement services to newcomers to Canada. The Foothills Community Immigrant Services offices and the Settlement Services in the Bow Valley are both seen as highly beneficial in integrating immigrants into their new communities, both in and out of the workplace.
- **Consider further joint initiatives that foster a welcoming community:** The Welcome Airdrie initiative provides a model for collaboration whereby community stakeholders can identify service gaps and work jointly to close them.
- **Expand adoption of travelling services delivery:** McBride Career Group's Okotoks office regularly travels to Black Diamond and Turner Valley to increase the accessibility of employment and career services in the region. Other agencies could consider adopting a similar model to expand regional coverage.
- **Continue the use of 'Welcome Wagons':** Welcome Wagons are community organized efforts to reach out to and welcome newcomers into the community. Many participants valued the work Welcome Wagons perform in acquainting new residents with the communities' services and businesses.
- **Maintain excellent referral networks:** Strong service provider relationships between local organizations in small towns are a key component to helping immigrants settle and integrate. Maintenance of these networks is key; expanding the networks from a municipal to a regional level may also enhance clients' access to a larger variety of services.

FOSTER PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

- **Celebrate multiculturalism at community events:** Celebrate ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity at new or existing community events.
- **Allow TFWs to access community services:** Policy change that permits TFWs to access basic services, such as women's shelters, food banks, and libraries would alleviate pressure on local service providers, who have developed a practice that treats service provision to TFWs as an unfunded mandate. This policy change would also encourage better record keeping on TFW service demand.
 - Consider reclassifying the designation of TFW to foster more inclusive communities. This and other studies have shown that TFWs are not necessarily temporary. Many intend to extend their work permits and leverage their position into permanent residency. The term 'temporary' diminishes the contribution these immigrants make to local economies and communities.
- **Ensure immigrants receive information at multiple points:** Governments, communities, and service providers should coordinate to ensure that information on the full range of services and education options is reaching immigrants directly and at multiple points before and after immigrating.



Endnotes

- 1 In September 2011, we held a consultation workshop with community stakeholders to determine the parameters of this research project. Community members strongly encouraged the adoption of an inclusive definition of the term 'immigrant,' as they saw all newcomers to Canada as part of their communities.
- 2 See Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* – 3rd Ed. 2002. USA: Sage, p. 145: "Pragmatic and utilitarian frameworks can guide qualitative inquiry on their practical and applied underpinnings without having to be attached to or derived from a theoretical tradition."
- 3 Bernard found "incomes of immigrants were lowest in very large urban areas (median \$16,800) and highest in small urban areas (median \$19,500), a difference of 16%. Incomes of immigrants in small towns and rural areas (median \$18,800) were also significantly greater (by 12%) than those of immigrants in very large urban areas," (Bernard, 2008, p. 7).
- 4 This was true regardless of the immigrants' education upon arrival, prior ability in an official language, admission class, and country of origin (Bernard, 2008, p. 8, 14).
- 5 This column does not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- 6 NA refers to immigrants who were unemployed; however, some unemployed immigrants indicated whether or not they had received training in the past.
- 7 See http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=206 for more information.
- 8 A Labour Market Opinion "assesses the impact the foreign worker would have on Canada's labour market or, in other words, how the offer of employment would likely affect Canadian jobs. An employer needs a positive Labour Market Opinion to hire a temporary foreign worker." Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "Labour Market Opinion," accessed July 21, 2012. http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/ei_tfw/lmi_tfw.shtml
- 9 NA refers to immigrants who had never been employed before in Canada and were currently unemployed.
- 10 Includes immigrants who used foreign qualification recognition services in another country.
- 11 NA refers to immigrants who had no higher education degrees to get recognized.
- 12 Permanent residents are ineligible to vote in federal and provincial elections.
- 13 This information is reported by relative frequency of occurrence. When asked about prominent countries of origin of immigrants, research participants often responded with ethnic groups or continents, including South and Central American/Hispanic/Latino, Arabic, East Indian, and African.
- 14 Groups involved in the Welcome Airdrie initiative include the Airdrie Chamber, Airdrie Employment Services, Airdrie Lioness Club, Bow Valley College – Airdrie, City of Airdrie, Community Links, Healthy Families, Meals on Wheels, Public Library, and Rocky View Schools Community Learning.
- 15 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence.
- 16 See Town of Banff website, "Public Transit," accessed July 22, 2012, <http://www.banff.ca/locals-residents/public-transit-buses.htm>
- 17 One service provider noted that many of the temporary foreign workers employed in entry-level hospitality positions are actually "senior skilled workers, like plumbers, electricians."
- 18 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence.
- 19 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence.
- 20 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence.
- 21 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence. When asked about main origin countries of immigrants, research participants often responded by citing ethnicity, religious groups, language, or continents, including southeastern Asia, Eastern Europe, Muslims, and Spanish-speakers.
- 22 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence. When asked about main origin countries of immigrants, study participants often responded by citing continents and geographic regions, including Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia.
- 23 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence. When asked about main origin countries of immigrants, study participants often responded by citing geographical regions and continents, including Asia, South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe.
- 24 This information is anecdotal and reported by relative frequency of occurrence. When asked about main origin countries of immigrants, study participants often responded with continents, including South America and Europe.

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bowvalleycollege.ca/thefuture

A chance for a better life: Development of the Immigrant Workforce in Smaller Communities and Rural Alberta is also available for download, along with the following appendices:

Detailed Methodology

Research Tools

- Interview questions for immigrants
- Interview questions for service providers
- Interview questions for employers
- Employer questionnaire
- Service provider questionnaire
- Focus group questions



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Share your story
Shape the future