



Beyond the Boomers:

A Guidebook for Building an Immigrant Workforce in the Nonprofit Sector



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About CCVO

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations gives voice to the nonprofit and voluntary sector. CCVO's insight and leadership generate results for the sector to be able to thrive and contribute to strong, healthy communities.

CCVO was established in 2004 in response to the need for an organization to provide leadership on issues that affect the voluntary sector. The model for CCVO was developed with extensive community input and support from leading organizations in Calgary. This is a new type of organization in Canada and CCVO is the largest and strongest voluntary sector chamber in the country.

Our mission is to promote and strengthen the nonprofit and voluntary sector by developing and sharing resources and knowledge, building connections, leading collaborative work, and giving voice to critical issues affecting the sector.

For more information, visit www.calgarycvo.org.

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Purpose of this Guidebook

Alberta's workforce is aging and its demographics are changing. Despite recent fluctuations in the labour market, as baby boomers retire the projected employee skill shortages will be significant. As the labour market shrinks, nonprofit organizations will require a workforce development strategy in order to remain competitive and continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve. **Workforce Development** refers to all activities and programming undertaken to develop a qualified labour pool. The nonprofit sector has fallen behind government and the for-profit sector in many areas of workforce development, including diversity initiatives.

In recognition of these issues, the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations has developed a diversity project entitled Building Immigrant Participation in the Nonprofit Workforce. The goal of this guidebook is to help nonprofit employers develop an inclusion strategy that will enable them to attract, recruit and retain the best qualified candidates. This guide is a practical tool that is employer-focused and acknowledges the unique challenges and strengths of the nonprofit sector.

This guide aims to:

- Outline a case for, and highlight the benefits of, hiring immigrants.
- Educate employers regarding the barriers around employing immigrants.
- Share best practices for attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled immigrant employees.
- Provide tools for organizations to identify and assess their existing strengths and limitations as they progress through a series of checklists.
- Provide links to additional resources.

Background

The nonprofit sector in Alberta includes more than 19,000 organizations, employs well over 105,000 staff, and posts annual revenues of \$9.6 billion (Roach, 2006). While it is evident that the sector is a vibrant contributor to the Alberta economy, its sustainability depends on its ability to access the people and skills it needs.

In the coming years there will be fierce competition for staff in all industry sectors. In what will increasingly be an employee's market, nonprofits have cause for concern. While the skill shortages that nonprofits experienced in the mid 2000s were cyclical in nature, future shortages will be structural; the labour shortage resulting from the demographic shift promises to be deeper and longer-lasting.

A labour supply shortfall in the nonprofit sector can be partially mitigated by purposefully targeting and hiring from underemployed or unemployed groups. To ensure long-term success, the nonprofit sector must take advantage of the unique opportunity to overcome the looming employee supply challenge by accessing the largely untapped immigrant labour pool.

While there are barriers to attracting, recruiting and retaining immigrants (difficulty connecting with immigrant communities, challenges understanding and transferring credentials and experience, and communication impediments) this guide will help organizations address these unique challenges and foster change to existing organizational systems, practices and attitudes.

A snapshot of Immigrant Participation in the workforce:

- **In a Canada-wide survey of nonprofits, 88.9% of employees were born in Canada (HR Council, 2008).**
- **Immigrants represented 18.5% of Alberta's working-age population in 2009 (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2009).**
- **From 2001 to 2006, immigrant representation in the labour force grew by 41.9% (Calgary Economic Development, 2009).**
- **In 2007, Statistics Canada projected that virtually all net labour force growth will come from immigration by 2011.**

Benefits of Hiring Immigrants

In addition to addressing labour supply shortages, hiring immigrants also provides the following benefits for organizations:

1

Increased Sustainability

Broadening an organization's labour supply pool has a more positive long-term impact on relieving labour shortages than short-term expensive tactics such as escalating compensation and benefit packages.

2

Innovation, Creativity and New Perspectives

A diverse workforce is a more innovative workforce. Immigrants bring with them new ideas and perspectives which can lead to creative solutions.

3

Improved Responsiveness to the Needs of the Community they Serve

Creating a diverse workforce helps ensure that nonprofit organizations reflect the communities they serve. A diverse workforce enables nonprofit organizations to develop services that are culturally desirable and appropriate to their clients.

4

Reduced Recruitment Costs and Turnover Rates

Creating inclusive workplaces leads to greater job satisfaction among staff and lowers turnover rates. Employee turnover costs are considerably higher than the costs associated with recruiting immigrants (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2003 and 2008).

5

Higher Levels of Skills and Education

Immigrants education levels are at an all-time high (Plante, 2010). In 2007, more than half of the Permanent Residents who planned to settle in Calgary were Economic Immigrants who are granted permanent residence status based on their skills and potential contribution to the Canadian economy (Calgary Economic Development, 2009).

Getting Ready

Positive, respectful workplaces lead to increased retention, innovation and productivity.

The implementation of inclusive practices will be most successful if an organization has a solid foundation of existing human resource practices upon which to build. A clear organizational commitment to diversity is pivotal to becoming more inclusive; to ensure broad buy-in, a cross-section of the organization should be involved in the assessment and planning process. Design your inclusion strategy to help your organization better fulfill its mission statement.

Start by assessing your organization's commitment to inclusion and diversity. Use the following assessment tool to discover how inclusive your organization already is and to highlight areas for development.

Our Organization:

Can articulate a business case for hiring immigrants.

Has mission or values statements that reference a commitment to inclusion and diversity.

Has communication materials that depict a multicultural organization.

Has clear policies surrounding diversity that foster respect and discourage discrimination.

Has career development plans and training programs tailored to our new hires.

Has an existing diversity or inclusion strategy.

Is familiar with Alberta's Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act and Human Rights legislation on termination and interviewing.

Provides diversity training to staff and volunteers at all levels of the organization.



Resources

Introduction, [pages 4 to 6](#)

Getting Ready, [page 6](#)
Examples of Values Statements with Commitments to Diversity / Inclusiveness, <http://bit.ly/k9xtvh>

Recruitment, [page 9](#)

Workplace Culture, [page 16](#)

Orientation, [page 14](#)
Performance Evaluations, [page 15](#)

Appendix, [page 18](#)

Alberta Human Rights - Your Rights & Responsibilities as an Employer, <http://bit.ly/miy7QK>

Creating an Inclusive Organization Toolkit, <http://bit.ly/jxl3gZ>

Nonprofit Sector Attractiveness

A potential employee's perception of the nonprofit sector will impact his/her choice of whether or not they want to pursue work in the sector.

The nonprofit sector faces unique challenges related to attractiveness; however, these are offset by distinctive strengths.

Strengths

Cordial Environment

87.8% of nonprofit employees report being “at least satisfied” with their relationships with co-workers (HR Council, 2008).

Work in Line with Values

Working in the nonprofit sector is often characterized as meaningful. The ability to “give back” and see the impacts of one’s work is what attracts many to the sector.

Exposure and Flexibility

Nonprofit organizations offer intrinsic benefits such as opportunity for exposure, job variety, flexibility and access to decision makers.

Challenges

Knowledge of the Sector

Many immigrants arrive with limited knowledge or misconceptions about the nonprofit sector. Religious institutions in many foreign countries provide services similar to those provided by Canada’s nonprofits and some immigrants believe that only unpaid positions exist within the sector. Thus many immigrants don’t consider the nonprofit sector for viable career opportunities.

Salary / Benefits

The nonprofit sector is unable to offer the financial compensation or level of benefits that the for-profit and public sectors provide.

Status

For some immigrant populations, the status that comes with a position is very important. Nonprofits may not be able to satisfy this need, especially when status is equated with earning potential.

Nonprofit Organizational Attractiveness

Creating an organization that is attractive to immigrants is essential, not only for recruitment, but also for retention.

Barriers to Organizational Attractiveness in the Nonprofit Sector

Candidates are interested in more than just the job. They want to understand what it is like to work at that organization and what the organization can offer them. Research suggests that the nonprofit sector is falling behind the for-profit sector in working to create and/or promote attractive workplaces.

While there may be a scarcity of human or financial resources to spend on such activities, small organizations are not precluded from developing their attractiveness. Smaller organizations can join together in order to share resources for joint training or promotional opportunities.

Ideas to Consider

- Develop promotional materials that depict a diverse workforce.
- Participate in collaborative activities with immigrant serving organizations to share knowledge about the nonprofit sector and to promote the sector's attractiveness.
- Invite someone from the immigrant community to provide feedback on how your organization might be perceived by people from within that community.
- Attend job fairs and make presentations at post-secondary institutions.

Our Organization:

Has a branding strategy that accurately identifies what it is like to work for our organization.

Has a branding strategy that specifically attracts immigrants to our organization and clearly communicates what we can offer potential employees from the immigrant community.

Has sought to ensure that our branding strategy is linked to workforce plans to ensure that it is targeting labour pools that meet long-term as well as short-term employment needs.



Additional Information

Breakthrough Nonprofit Branding, <http://bit.ly/mmoZnR>
Systematic Approach to Employee Engagement, <http://bit.ly/mUwsDz>
Brand & Employee Engagement, <http://bit.ly/IVOnNu>

Inclusive Organizations Toolkit, <http://bit.ly/kfxrug>

Workforce Planning, <http://bit.ly/jHgLVR>
Recruitment Strategy, <http://bit.ly/jx1D1M>

Recruitment

46% of new immigrants report that finding an adequate job is the most often cited difficulty once they arrive in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005).

The nonprofit sector's inability to recruit skilled immigrants is partly because the methods and types of advertising used by organizations are incongruent with the job search behaviour of immigrants. Immigrants may lack understanding of "job search mechanics" in Canada. Many immigrants search for jobs using general job banks and newspapers and they are less likely to be aware of specialized sites for nonprofit organizations.

Nonprofit organizations may also fail to create advertisements that appeal to the immigrant population or fail to utilize all channels for advertisements that reach these populations.

Tips from Practitioners

"In your job posting translate what you mean by Canadian work experience into something that people understand and make it concrete. Don't use someone's lack of Canadian work experience as a way to screen candidates out."

Maaïke Ezinga Manager of Human Resources Calgary Family Services

What is meant by "Canadian Work Experience" on job postings? Find out more: <http://bit.ly/lr4WIL>

Our Organization:

Advertises job openings in ethno-cultural media.

Provides clear, plain language job descriptions free of jargon, acronyms or technical language.

Has revised its job posting criteria to level the playing field for attracting diverse talent.

Clearly references inclusive hiring practices in all job postings.



Additional Information

Marketing Your Job, <http://bit.ly/kILWsz>
HR Solutions for a Multicultural Workforce,
<http://bit.ly/iw2pOx>

Articulating a Job Description, <http://bit.ly/lr4WIL>
Inclusive Job Postings, <http://bit.ly/kdAVVJ>

Hiring & Retaining Skilled Immigrants, <http://bit.ly/mBYoZJ>

See Example Below

Example of a Non-Inclusive Job Posting

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Perm. p/t position. Responsible for administrative support for fund-raising activities in a fast-paced/multifaceted nonprofit organization. You have excellent organizational and interpersonal skills and 3 years Canadian experience in an administrative support position.

Only candidates proficient in MS Office Suite will be considered. Please apply by March 3rd to xycharity@xyxy.com

Example of an Inclusive Job Posting

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Permanent part-time position. Responsible for administrative support for fund-raising activities in a busy nonprofit organization. You have excellent organizational and interpersonal skills and 3 years paid or volunteer experience in an administrative support position.

Experience using MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint). We are an equal opportunity employer and welcome all qualified applicants. Please apply by March 3rd to xycharity@xyxy.com. Or call xxx-xxx-xxxx for more information and our mailing address is...

Building Networks

The nonprofit sector is a “networking” sector. In fact, over half of all nonprofit employees heard about their current position through word of mouth (HR Council, 2008), providing evidence that a large number of Calgary jobs are filled via connections.

Without networking contacts, many immigrants find themselves unable to make connections that could lead to an interview.

The nonprofit sector must find a way to connect with the immigrant labour supply pool in a meaningful way. Networks can help promote the sector as a viable – and attractive – place for immigrants to work.

Bridging the Gap

Building networks with the immigrant community is challenging as immigrants are often excluded from networking circles. Organizations delivering services to immigrants need a deeper understanding of the nonprofit sector as a whole to provide their clients with information pertaining to the opportunities that exist within the sector. Bridging the information gap between immigrant networks and nonprofit organizations requires collaboration, not only with immigrant-serving organizations (as only 20% of immigrants access these services), but other community, ethno-cultural and religious organizations.

Ideas to Consider

- Attend networking events hosted by immigrant-serving organizations for employment-ready skilled immigrants.
- Make use of the personal contacts or networks of current employees.
- Create processes to encourage immigrant workers to refer other skilled immigrants to your organization.
- Develop working relationships with immigrant-serving agencies and send job postings as part of a targeted recruitment process.
- Work with other organizations to address systemic barriers to attracting immigrants to the nonprofit sector.
- Attend community or multicultural events and activities.
- Promote your Volunteer Programs.

Our Organization:

Partners with employment programs for skilled immigrants.

Provides mentorships/internships for immigrants.

Has board members who are immigrants.



Additional Information

**Connect with Local Agencies, <http://bit.ly/mD1t4p>
Employment Programs for Immigrants, <http://bit.ly/m9LiTP>**

Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council, <http://bit.ly/iwueeu>

Building a Diverse Board, <http://bit.ly/jlhqcP>

Inclusive Screening Techniques

Many traditional recruitment practices have been designed to “screen out” applicants that do not match exact skills and qualifications. It is important for organizations to consider “screening in” applicants that have talent and transferable skills. In a tight labour market, recruitment processes that screen out transferable skills will cause organizations to miss out on valuable talent.

Inclusion is more than just “equal opportunity.” By focusing on ethnic differences, and capitalizing on the unique skills and experiences immigrants bring, organizations can become more effective. In order to create a more inclusive screening system, both immigrants and recruiters must understand how international qualifications can be transferred to the nonprofit sector in the Canadian workplace.

The following chart highlights the primary employment barriers faced by immigrants and offers inclusive screening techniques to address them.

Barriers

Credentials

Employers have limited understanding of immigrant applicants’ foreign education, skills and experience.

Communication

Immigrants may feel less comfortable speaking and writing in English.

Lack of Canadian Experience

Potential Solutions

- Ask for work samples or certification papers.
 - Consult a web-based ranking system for educational institutions.
 - Use a Credential Evaluation Service.
 - Utilize the expertise of employment counsellors at many of the immigrant serving agencies.
 - Get assistance with international education credentials.
<http://bit.ly/mg3n3W>
 - Give someone who appears to be overqualified a chance.
 - Clearly articulate accreditation requirements and what individuals need to have.
-
- Consider languages other than English or French as an asset.
 - Remember, language difficulties do not reflect intelligence level.
 - Focus on the content of the resumé rather than the format or style.
-
- Carefully consider how international experience can be transferable to Canada.
 - Focus on the skills and competencies required for the position.
 - Consider the potential contributions of immigrants’ international skills and knowledge.
-

Inclusive Interviewing

Conducting cross-cultural interviews is an intimidating process for employees. It is in the employer's best interest to ensure the process enables potential candidates to express their qualifications to the best of their abilities and in an acceptable way to Canadian interviewers. Establishing the best possible interview atmosphere is critical to success.

Cross-cultural interviewing can pose a challenge to employers and employees, largely due to how differences in culture or language can factor into an interview. Organizations want to hire the best person for the position. However, when cross cultural misunderstandings occur during an interview this can hinder the recruitment process. Work through this online module on Cross-Cultural Interviewing. See <http://bit.ly/lmpbAA>

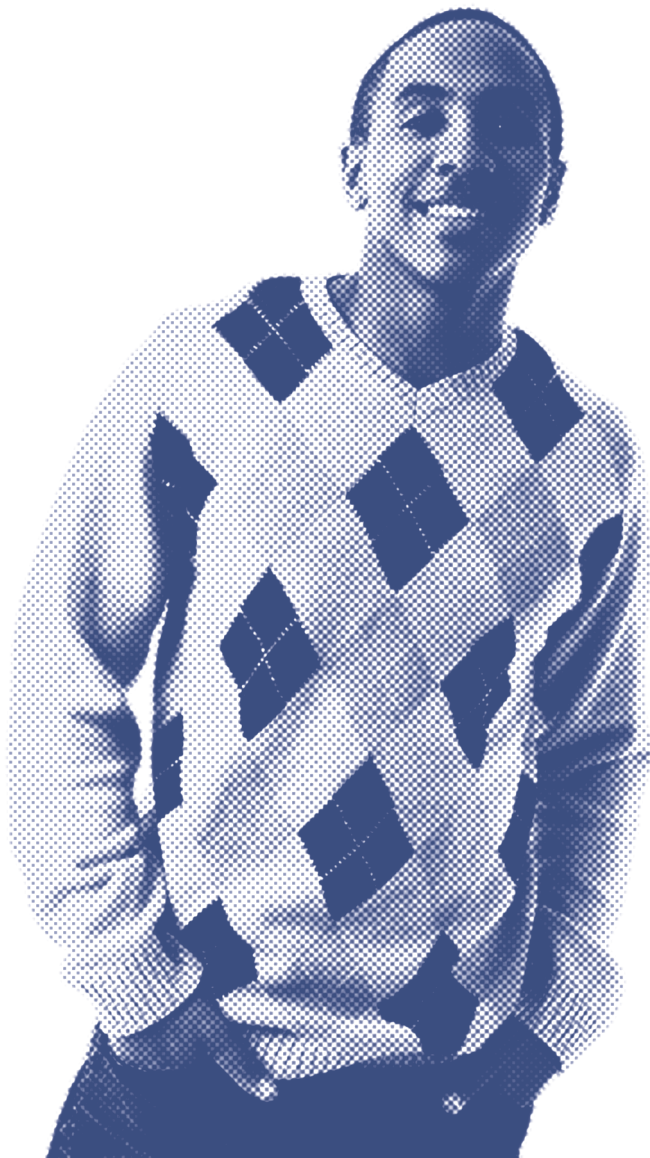
Tips from Practitioners

"Don't make assumptions, ask questions for clarification."

Catherine Watson HR Advisor Aspen Family & Community Network Society

"Interview strategies are a very western style. Ensure the language of the interview is clear and concise and that the interview panel is trained in culturally responsive selection and hiring techniques."

Carol Rix Canadian Employment Skills Program YWCA



Different norms for body language

Barriers

Differences in nonverbal communication including:

- Eye contact
- Arm and head movements
- Facial expressions

Potential Solutions

- Try to mirror non-verbal communication styles of the candidate.
- Research what the communication norms are in the candidate's culture.

Different norms surrounding interpersonal interactions

Barriers

- Acceptability of self-promotion and lack of explaining professional experience.
- Perceived difference in power and/or status.

Potential Solutions

- Make the selection team as diverse as possible.
- Try and arrange the interview room in the least intimidating manner.
- Ask specific questions about accomplishments and professional experience.

Difficulty or different ways of expressing oneself in English

Barriers

- Intonation
- Directness/elaboration
- Vocabulary

Potential Solutions

- Be an active and patient listener.
- Repeat a candidate's response in different words to ensure understanding.

Difficulty understanding English

Barriers

- Acronyms, metaphors, proverbs, colloquialisms
- Idioms
- Speaking too quickly

Potential Solutions

- Use simple sentence structure and keep sentences short.
- Avoid using technical language, acronyms and jargon.
- Use a conversational tone.
- Present a written list of critical information for potential candidates.

Additional information on how to overcome barriers during cross-culture interviews is provided here: <http://bit.ly/ihpRle>

Orientation

There is a significant reduction in job satisfaction and work productivity if an employee does not feel welcome in the first three weeks of their employment.

On-boarding and orientation programs are very important and should be appropriate for culturally diverse employees. This may mean introducing activities to assist internationally trained employees in learning about your workplace culture. Organizations need to be able to clearly articulate their workplace culture to all new employees.

Extra care should be taken during the orientation process to explain things that may normally be excluded such as dress code, protocols for taking sick days, organizational structure and how co-workers communicate, etc.

Our Organization:

Has a formal on-boarding support system in place for employees (e.g., buddy system).

Has a formal orientation program for all new employees.

Has a formalized process to check-in with new employees to find out how they are fitting in.



Additional Information

On-boarding Immigrant Workers, <http://bit.ly/kEPjnC>

HR Council Toolkit - Orientation, <http://bit.ly/iZVELr>

See the Above Links

Tips from Practitioners

“Have a mentor/buddy system where new hires are matched with a colleague so they can ask questions that might arise around everything from... do we get Remembrance Day as a holiday? to ... where do we keep the paper clips? to ... what behavior is expected of me in the various meetings? etc.”

Laurel Madro Team Lead Corporate Readiness Training Program Bow Valley College

“Ensure that organizational culture and practices are explained (for example: personal space, reading other people’s materials, meeting etiquette, work hours, body language, personal hygiene, language in the workplace, types of conversations that are appropriate, face-to-face meetings, quantity of talk, speed of speech, conflict resolution, etc.)”

Carol Rix Canadian Employment Skills Program YWCA

Performance Evaluations

Performance evaluations align employee efforts to the organizational goals – allowing them to see their contributions to the organization’s mission.

Professional development plans and goals should be agreed upon when an employee is hired and evaluations should assess their performance based on these goals. Conducting evaluations in this fashion will prevent perceived bias or confusion, especially for immigrants who may be unaccustomed to formal performance evaluations.

Currently, nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of nonprofit employees indicate having a formal performance evaluation (HR Council, 2008).

Good performance should be rewarded. Nonprofits can overcome resource issues by recognizing achievement and good performance in nonmaterial ways. For example, certificates, development programs, assignment to a special project, or an invitation to attend an event are all nonmaterial ways of recognizing excellent job performance.

Ideas to Consider

- Performance evaluations are based on professional development plans established when a new employee begins working.
- Evaluations are directed at behavior and tasks, not at personal characteristics.
- Provide both written and verbal evaluations to ensure understanding.
- Conduct follow-ups to evaluations and offer rewards to employees when goals are met or exceeded.

Our Organization:

Conducts standardized performance evaluations on a regular schedule.

Establishes career goals and regularly adapts professional development plans.



Additional Information

HR Council Toolkit - Performance Management, <http://bit.ly/imTic5>

Career Goals, <http://bit.ly/jl0ZUJ>

Tips from Practitioners

“If there are skills gaps such as language, writing (emails/reports/proposals), presentation skills, staff meeting expectations and procedures or communication skills, then targeted training is often beneficial. We have found that straight ESL or pronunciation classes are not as effective because they are not directly tied to the tasks of the workplace. An effective training program integrates all the 9 Essential Skills as defined by HRSDC. <http://bit.ly/14oRab>”

HRSDC has done a huge amount of research into this area, not just in Canada but in over 23 different countries around the world. Having training tied directly to workplace performance makes it more targeted and more effective. We have developed training materials at Bow Valley College that can be used to target some of these skills gaps.”

Laurel Madro Team Lead Corporate Readiness Training Program
Bow Valley College

Workplace Culture

Positive workplace culture can help with retention in the workplace.

While having a positive, healthy workplace culture is important for attracting employees, it can also lead to increased innovation, productivity and retention. Moreover, it can help you tap into the immigrant labour pool as immigrants who have a positive experience at work will get the word out to others that their organization is an employer of choice.

Creating a respectful and inclusive workplace culture does not require significant resources and can include things such as:

- Sessions where employees share information about their cultural norms, what it's like to work in their home country, acceptable dress and major holiday celebrations, etc.
- Staff potlucks where employees bring traditional dishes.
- Team-building activities.
- Being flexible with schedules in order to accommodate employee needs.
- Programs to enhance work-life balance.
- An employee suggestion box.
- Conversational English groups.

Ideas to Consider

- Provide cross-cultural awareness and communication training to all staff on a regular basis.
- Create a workplace environment where employees feel comfortable asking questions about different cultural practices.
- Have a clear understanding of your workplace culture and articulate this to all employees.



Our Organization:

Has supervisors who have the time, training and capacity to effectively manage and develop diverse talent.

Provides or supports skill enhancement opportunities for immigrants.

Has a training and development program for employees at every level.

Incorporates a diversity of food, culture and traditions into its celebrations.



Additional Information

Culturocity Articles, <http://bit.ly/izfztt>

Skill Enhancement Opportunities, <http://bit.ly/ISrT8P>

HR Toolkit - Training & Development Programs, <http://bit.ly/lx7NeT>

Interfaith Calendar, <http://bit.ly/kOB6YU>

Tips from Practitioners

“Everyone has a story. Sharing about culture and personal experiences increases understanding of where people are from. Include staff sharing as part of diversity training. Check out Living Library <http://bit.ly/jqap3F> at the Calgary Public Library.”

Catherine Watson HR Advisor Aspen Family & Community Network Society

“Training for supervisors and colleagues on the differences in communication between cultures has proven to be beneficial and very fun. When you bring together the new immigrant employee and their supervisor and talk about expectations of employees in communicating in staff meetings, making presentations, asking questions, clarifying information ... and all the cultural ramifications of these activities ... the discussion is interesting, interactive and in a workshop environment ... safe. In one of our sessions we talked a lot about the use of ‘thank you’ in different cultures.”

Laurel Madro Team Lead Corporate Readiness Training Program Bow Valley College

Appendix

Our Strategy: Building Capacity to Attract and Retain Immigrant Employees

Strategy Checklist	✓	Action Required	Person Responsible	By When
Has our senior leadership made a commitment to inclusion and written it into our organization's strategic plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Has our board made a formal commitment to inclusion?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Who in our organization is responsible for the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we have someone who is prepared to lead the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we know who will help us promote the strategy internally?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we have commitment from employees at all levels of the organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we need to change our current inclusion or diversity strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we have an existing strategy or do we need to write a new inclusion or diversity strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Have we allocated the necessary resources to ensure successful delivery of this strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we know how we will communicate our strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Have we developed networks with other organizations to share resources, challenges and best practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we know how we will communicate our successes as well as our challenges and learnings?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we know how we will monitor the progress of our strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do we know how we will evaluate the success of our strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>			

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