

Hiring International Workers in Atlantic Canada: An Employer's Guide



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About the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) is an independent think-tank dedicated to economic progress in Atlantic Canada. Founded in 1954 as a partnership between the provincial governments and the private sector, its objective is to promote the economic development of the Atlantic region of Canada. It accomplishes this through analysing current and emerging economic trends and policies; by communicating the results of its analysis and consulting with a wide audience; and by advocating the appropriate public and private sector response.

Mail: 5121 Sackville Street
Suite 500
Halifax, NS B3J 1K1

Telephone: (902) 422-6516

Fax: (902) 429-6803

E-mail: info@appec-econ.ca

Homepage: www.appec-econ.ca

Disclaimer

While APEC has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this guide at the time of writing (September 2009), please consult the appropriate government departments for the most up to date requirements, regulations, fees and processing times.

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Table of Contents

Glossary

iv

Hiring International Workers: An Overview	1
1. The Role of International Workers in Meeting Your Labour Force Requirements	3
Atlantic Canada's Demographic and Labour Force Trends	3
The Role of International Workers in Meeting Human Resource Challenges	3
Atlantic Companies Are Already Hiring International Workers	4
Hiring International Workers: Benefits and Issues to Consider	5
2. Sources of International Workers	7
Hiring Immigrants Already Living in Atlantic Canada	8
Hiring International Students	8
Hiring International Workers	9
3. Recruiting and Selecting International Workers	11
Defining Job Requirements	11
Finding International Workers	11
Assessing a Candidate's Qualifications	13
Making a Job Offer	16
4. Getting Authorization to Work in Canada	17
Overview of Work Authorization Options	17
The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)	20
The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)	22
The Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW)	26
The Canadian Experience Class (CEC)	28
Immigration Options for International Students	29
5. Helping International Workers Integrate into the Workplace and Atlantic Canada	31
Preparing Your Workplace for Diversity	32
Workplace Integration	32
Helping International Workers Settle in Atlantic Canada	34
Helping a Worker's Family	35
Following Up With Employees	35
Appendix: Helpful Resources	37
Provincial Government	37
Federal Government	37
Settlement Organizations	38
Other Guides	38
Resources for Newcomers	38

Glossary

Commonly Used Terms

For the purposes of this guide the following terms are used to refer to the various classes of workers born outside of Canada that could be recruited to work for your firm.

International Worker: An individual born outside of Canada who has relocated or is willing to relocate to Canada to work. International workers include:

Temporary Foreign Worker: An individual born outside of Canada working in Canada on a temporary work permit.

International Student: An individual born outside of Canada who is either a student at a Canadian university or college, or a recent graduate with a Post-Graduation Work Permit.

Immigrant: An individual born outside of Canada who is now a permanent resident of Canada or a Canadian citizen.

Acronyms

CEC – Canadian Experience Class

CIC – Citizenship and Immigration Canada

FSW – Federal Skilled Worker

LMO – Labour Market Opinion

NOC – National Occupational Classification

PNP – Provincial Nominee Program

TFWP – Temporary Foreign Worker Program

HIRING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS: AN OVERVIEW

Bringing international workers into your company can be an effective way to address labour shortages, while also increasing diversity and building connections to international markets. Hiring international workers will usually require some adjustment to your existing hiring and retention strategies so this guide is designed to help you through the process, from recruitment and selection to integrating a new international worker into your workforce. To make the international hiring process easy to follow we have broken it into five steps which are explained in depth in subsequent sections of this guide.

KEYS STEPS IN THE INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Key Steps	Section	Topics Covered
The Role of International Workers in Meeting Your Labour Force Requirements	Section 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Atlantic Canada's demographic and labour supply outlook ● The role of international workers in your HR strategy ● The benefits of hiring international workers
Sources of International Workers	Section 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hiring immigrants already in the local labour market ● Hiring international students studying in Atlantic Canada ● Hiring international workers from abroad
Recruitment and Selection of International Workers	Section 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to advertise and find international candidates ● The role of third-party recruiters ● Assessing and selecting international candidates
Getting Authorization to Work in Canada	Section 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The different options for bringing workers to Canada ● The process of obtaining authorization to work in Canada ● The role of employers
Integration and Retention	Section 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ways to foster cultural awareness in the workplace ● Helping international workers integrate into the workforce and community ● Supporting the family of international workers
Resources Available	Appendix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contact information for governments and settlement agencies ● Links to key websites and support services ● Other relevant guides for employers and employees



1 THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS IN MEETING YOUR LABOUR FORCE REQUIREMENTS

Recruiting international workers is one way you can meet your labour requirements in an environment where demographic trends point to increasing pressures in finding an adequate number of workers. This guide will help you with the process of hiring international workers.

Atlantic Canada's Demographic and Labour Force Trends

The task of finding an adequate number of appropriately skilled workers will be one of the dominant challenges facing businesses in Atlantic Canada during the next decade. In recent years, numerous companies in the region have reported difficulties filling management, professional and technical positions, whether for information technology, financial, marketing or sales departments. Companies in sectors that need relatively unskilled or seasonal workers such as tourism, forestry and seafood processing are facing similar challenges.

The dominant factor behind these trends is the demographic profile of the region. With relatively low birth rates and prolonged outmigration of young people, the number of young people entering the labour market is declining dramatically and will continue to do so, for the next fifteen years at least. Meanwhile, the number of workers leaving the workforce will increase as a growing number of baby boomers reach retirement age.

Demographic projections point to an overall decline in the size of the labour force in all four Atlantic provinces over the next two decades. This means that existing businesses will find it increasingly hard to find the workers they need.

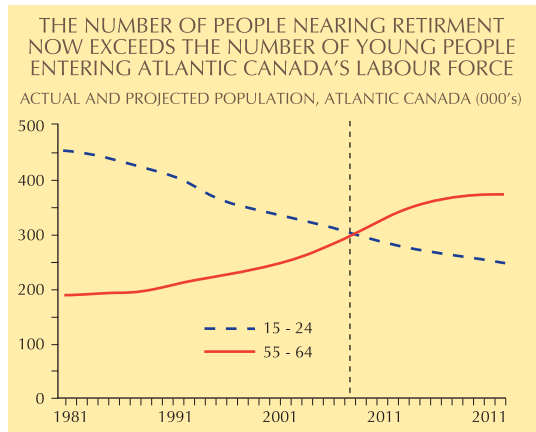
The Role of International Workers in Meeting Human Resource Challenges

You need to develop your own human resource strategy to respond to these labour force challenges. Many Atlantic companies have increased wages and other benefits to attract and retain workers. Tailoring compensation packages and work arrangements to better meet the needs of different groups of workers will become increasingly common.

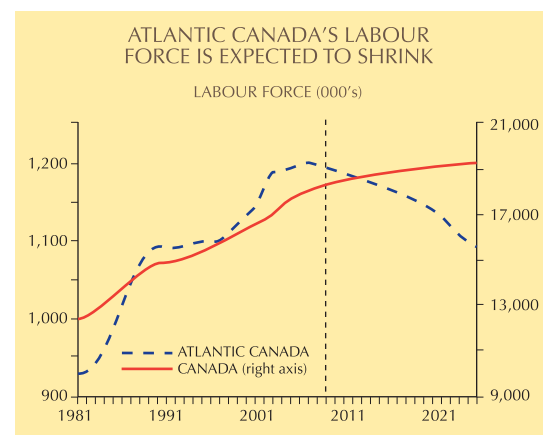
"The task of finding an adequate number of appropriately skilled workers will be one of the dominant challenges facing businesses in Atlantic Canada during the next decade."

ASSESSING THE AGE PROFILE OF YOUR WORKFORCE

You may find it useful to assess the age profile of your current workforce to estimate your need to replace retiring workers over the next decade, above and beyond any expansion needs. Examining the demographic and skill profile of your employees will also point to potential gaps or weaknesses that need to be addressed.



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA

A number of Atlantic companies are reaching out to attract younger workers, by offering sponsorships and work experience to students. You may need to take special steps to encourage employment of other demographic groups that have not been part of your typical workforce, such as older workers, women, the disabled, Aboriginals and visible minorities. Hiring international workers is an additional way to tap into a larger labour pool.

Some firms will need to re-examine their business models to reduce their in-house labour force needs through investment in new technology or outsourcing some of their business processes. You may have to increase your investment in training to boost the skills of existing employees and to raise the proficiency of under-qualified candidates.

Hiring international workers, whether from the local labour market or from abroad, can play an important role in meeting your labour needs, both for highly skilled and relatively unskilled workers. Although there may be additional costs involved in hiring workers from overseas, all Atlantic employers will have to devote increased resources to recruiting and retaining workers in a more competitive labour market. With their diverse experience, international workers can also bring other benefits to your company.

Atlantic Companies Are Already Hiring International Workers

At the time of the 2006 Census, there were more than 43,000 immigrants working in Atlantic Canada, representing 4.1% of the region's workforce. The majority of these immigrants came to Canada ten or more years ago and have successfully adjusted to life in the region and are actively contributing to the economy and their communities.

RESPONSES TO RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

- Re-examine wages and benefits to ensure they are competitive
- Provide more family-friendly work arrangements
- Increase training to raise skills of under-qualified workers
- Reach out to under-represented demographic groups
- Attract younger workers by sponsoring students or offering work placements
- Recruit workers from overseas
- Invest in new technology or outsource work to other companies
- Improve retention of workers by providing opportunities to progress and by increasing employee engagement

“Hiring workers from overseas is an additional way to tap into a larger labour pool.”

“Companies that have hired international workers in Atlantic Canada are generally very pleased with the outcome, even after taking account of any additional time and resources required.”

NUMBER OF TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS AND IMMIGRANTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA, 2008			
	Total Number of Immigrants Arriving in the Province	Of which, the Number of Provincial Nominees in the Skilled Worker Stream*	Total Number of Temporary Foreign Workers in the Province (as of 1 December)
Nova Scotia	2,651	125	2,539
New Brunswick	1,859	135	2,031
Newfoundland and Labrador	627	50	1,065
Prince Edward Island	1,456	40	459
TOTAL	6,593	350	6,049

*Principal applicants only. Includes principal applicants in the International Graduate Class in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Provincial Governments.

In recent years, with Atlantic employers facing increased difficulties in finding workers in the region, several businesses have become proactive in recruiting workers from overseas. At the same time, the introduction of a Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in each province has provided new options for recruiting international workers. As a consequence, the total number of new immigrants coming to the Atlantic provinces each year has risen considerably, from 2,600 in 2003 to about 6,600 in 2008.

Many of the Atlantic companies hiring workers from overseas have initially brought in workers for a fixed term under the federal government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). In 2008, there were over 6,000 temporary foreign workers in the Atlantic region. If they have a permanent job offer, these workers can apply for permanent residence, for example, through the skilled worker stream of a PNP. In 2008, about 350 skilled workers immigrated to the Atlantic provinces through these PNP skilled worker streams.

Hiring International Workers: Benefits and Issues to Consider

The prime motivation for hiring international workers is usually to fill positions that cannot be filled by recruiting from within Canada. However, with their different training, skills and experience, international workers can bring other benefits to your company.

Companies that are new to hiring international workers need to be aware that there may be additional costs, time and other issues that need to be addressed in the process of recruiting and integrating international workers. This guide is designed to help you through this process, provide practical help in addressing these issues, and to point you to additional resources that will help you succeed. Companies that have hired international workers in Atlantic Canada are generally very pleased with the outcome, even after taking account of any additional time and resources required.

"Since we export to 70 countries, we have a great need for employees with different languages and cultural backgrounds to assist us in entering overseas markets in an effective manner."

*Linda Therlault,
Acadian Seaplants, Dartmouth, NS*

BENEFITS OF HIRING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

Atlantic Canadian companies have reported the following benefits:

- Filling job vacancies that cannot be filled within Canada
- Reduced turnover
- Improved customer service when dealing with international customers
- Helping expand into new markets through their foreign language skills, business contacts and knowledge of international markets
- Transfer of knowledge and experience from international workers to other members of the workforce
- Improved workplace culture resulting from increased diversity

ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN HIRING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS*

Issue	Response
There are a number of different ways to bring international workers to Canada, on either a temporary or permanent basis. At first glance, the process might seem overly complex.	You do need to invest time to understand the options for getting authorization to work in Canada.
Recruiting international workers can take more time than hiring in the local job market because of the time needed to obtain work permits and for workers to make the move to Canada.	Governments have made a number of changes in recent years to expedite the process.
Identifying and interviewing applicants that are currently living outside of Canada can be more challenging and costly than recruiting in Canada.	There are a number of resources, technologies, and agencies that can help you find and assess the workers you need.
You may be unsure how to assess a candidate's international credentials, skills and experience.	Settlement organizations, the federal government's Foreign Credential Referral Office and other resources are available to assist with candidate assessment.
You will need to assess a candidates' proficiency in English or French to ensure they can effectively fulfill the responsibilities of the position.	There are several ways to assess language competency and programs to help bridge specific language issues.
While all workers take time to settle into a new position, international workers face a bigger adjustment.	International workers typically do very well in Atlantic Canada once they have adjusted.

*These issues and how to respond to them are addressed in more detail throughout this guide.

2

SOURCES OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

The focus of this guide is to help you recruit international workers who are not currently living in Canada. However, there are also a number of international workers already in Atlantic Canada. These include immigrants who are living and working in Atlantic Canada and international students studying at universities and colleges in the region.



Hiring Immigrants Already Living in Atlantic Canada

Immigrants in Atlantic Canada are more likely to be employed (i.e. have a lower unemployment rate) than Canadian-born residents. However, some of these immigrants are not able to fully utilize their foreign training and experience in their current job. Recent immigrants in particular can struggle to find work in their field. They may lack the Canadian experience or training that employers often look for and they typically don't have well established connections in the business community to benefit from referrals and information on job vacancies that are not posted publicly.

The best source of assistance in hiring existing immigrants are settlement organizations. These organizations deal directly with immigrants and often provide services that will assist them on the job. Many settlement agencies offer internship programs that allow you to bring an immigrant into your workplace on a trial basis, and have employment counsellors on staff who are experienced in matching immigrants with employment opportunities.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: ASSOCIATION FOR NEW CANADIANS AXIS CAREER SERVICES

The AXIS Career Services division of the **Association for New Canadians** in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, offers a variety of Bridge-to-Work programs that connect new immigrants with employers. *Mentoring Link* services match experienced employers with new immigrants, offering career advice, expertise and networking opportunities. The *STEP Career Placement* program connects businesses with job ready, international workers in a five-week voluntary placement. The *Internship Placement Program* is a twelve-week sponsored placement matching skilled workers and businesses with no obligation to hire. An on-line *Employer/Employee Skills Matching Database* is available where immigrants can post resumes, search job openings and access current labour market information.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- Recognise the value of education, training and work experience that took place in another country
- Avoid making assumptions regarding an applicant's background and abilities based on their name and accent
- Understand that resumes can look very different in various parts of the world, and be aware that people from various backgrounds tend to express their qualifications in different ways
- When interviewing applicants, be aware of cultural differences such as willingness to make eye contact, which is avoided in some cultures
- Seek advice from settlement services and other experts to enhance the inclusiveness of your hiring practices

Hiring International Students

The number of international students studying in Atlantic Canada has increased considerably over the last decade. In 2008/09, there were about 7,600 international students studying at universities in the Atlantic provinces. These students can be an excellent source of international workers as they have been trained locally, have already adjusted to life in Atlantic Canada and have developed knowledge of the region.

International students can obtain a Post-Graduation Work Permit for up to three years based on their length of study in Canada. They then have the option of applying for a permit extension or permanent residence. International students with a job offer can apply to stay in the region through the Provincial Nominee Program, the Federal Skilled Worker Class or the Canadian Experience Class.

Hiring International Workers

Hiring international workers allows your firm to expand its potential labour pool and find workers with the skills that are not readily available in the Atlantic region. However, effective recruitment and integration of international workers into your workforce will take time and effort.

It is important that you understand the different options for bringing workers into Canada, which includes a temporary foreign worker program and several permanent residence (immigration) programs administered by federal and provincial governments. To determine which option is best for your situation you should look at the process and requirements associated with each. In general, it will be easier for higher-skilled workers to obtain permanent residence, particularly through the federal immigration programs.

UNIVERSITY JOB FAIRS

Most universities offer job fairs that Atlantic employers can attend. Contact your university career office for more information on hiring international students and recent graduates in general.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: SERVICEMASTER CLEAN

ServiceMaster Clean, a janitorial and commercial cleaning company located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, has found it increasingly difficult to fill positions from the local labour market. Based on the experiences of similar operations in Ontario, ServiceMaster developed an international recruitment strategy that has proven to be an effective way to find reliable workers for job vacancies that would otherwise have remained unfilled.



3

RECRUITING AND SELECTING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

Successful international recruitment, just like recruiting in Canada, depends upon making sure desirable candidates are aware of your job posting, and then choosing the candidates that are the best fit for your organization. International recruiting requires some different approaches to this process in order to be successful.

Defining Job Requirements

The first step in recruiting international workers is to develop a job description that is clear and concise. Focus on the core aspects of the job and be clear about any regulatory and certification requirements for the job as well as the level of language proficiency that will be required. Review the job description to ensure you are not including unnecessary barriers that will screen out potential applicants from overseas (such as requiring work experience to be obtained in Canada).

Finding International Workers

There are many ways to find international workers and several resources to help you.

Use Your Own Network

Atlantic Canadian companies have found potential applicants through a wide variety of sources, including other companies that have hired international workers; industry associations, private recruitment agencies, and settlement agencies. Referrals from existing international workers with your company can be particularly effective.

Using Third-Party Recruiters

You can also choose to use a third-party recruiter to take care of some or most of the recruitment process for you. Though these services can be expensive depending on the type of candidate you are looking for (with some Atlantic firms paying fees ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 per recruit hired), their experience, knowledge and networks can make the process easier for you. You can find international recruiters in the yellow pages under 'employment agencies' or through an internet search.

RESOURCES TO HELP FIND AND RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

- International workers in your company or your international offices can help you make connections with potential applicants
- Talk to other businesses that have recruited internationally
- Approach your industry association or sector council for advice
- Local settlement organizations and chambers of commerce are a great source of local contacts
- Provincial immigration offices can offer certain services such as attending international recruitment fairs

TYPICAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY A RECRUITMENT AGENCY

- Overseas recruitment and screening of potential employees
- Arrangements for interviews via webcam or similar services
- Assistance with all steps of the immigration process
- Assistance with credential recognition and professional certification
- Travel and moving arrangements for selected candidates
- Settlement services, including transportation, accommodation and attainment of key documents
- Follow-up with international workers

Take time to decide if a third-party recruiter is right for you and evaluate them carefully. While many Atlantic firms have been satisfied with the services provided by third-party recruiters, there have also been cases nationally where a recruiter fails to live up to the terms of their contract or engages in other unscrupulous practices. In particular, both federal and provincial governments expect that the employer, not the employee, will pay the costs of a recruiting agent.

Advertising Your Position

For many Atlantic companies, internet advertising is the most important tool for finding international workers. You can post your vacancies on industry specific, national and regional job sites.

Though the internet has become a major recruiting tool, advertising in newspapers remains common in many countries. If you are not using a full-service third-party recruiter, there are also agencies that will provide limited in-country services for you. These agencies can help advertise your job postings in local markets and can help set up interviews. Ask other companies that have recruited in the same regions as you if they can recommend these services.

Another effective way to advertise your job openings internationally is to have a presence at international recruitment fairs. These fairs take place around the world, and provide individuals considering emigrating an opportunity to network with potential employers. Federal and provincial governments often send delegates to international recruitment fairs. Provincial immigration officers may be willing to promote specific companies or positions. Industry-specific conferences are also common, and offer a way to meet with potential candidates who are looking for work in your sector.

SELECTING A THIRD-PARTY RECRUITER

- Shop around. Meet with several agencies and find out the services they offer and the prices they charge. Give preference to agencies with success recruiting for the occupation you are trying to fill.
- Ask for references.
- Ask the recruiter if they are a member of any professional bodies such as the Association of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services and if they have received any professional certifications such as the CPC (Certified Professional Consultant).
- Check to see if the company has any complaints filed with the Better Business Bureau.
- Only purchase the services your company needs. If you are willing to take care of settlement issues, don't bother purchasing this service.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: OTHER OCEAN

Other Ocean is a video game developer based in Prince Edward Island. The company draws from a specialized pool of talent that is located all over the world, and has brought in workers from several different countries. An effective advertising tool for Other Ocean has been posting job openings on websites dedicated to video game design and gaming culture. This allows them to effectively tap into a specialized labour pool that is spread out around the globe.

Assessing a Candidate's Qualifications

Interviews remain a critical means of assessing a candidate. When interviewing international workers it is important to understand and take into account differences in culture or communication style, such as accents or the use of different vocabulary.

Interviewing Applicants

Traveling abroad to interview applicants can be expensive but it remains a viable option especially if you will be interviewing a large pool of applicants in the same location.

If you need to interview candidates from a distance, many Atlantic firms have found that new technologies offer benefits over traditional telephone interviews. Webcams, computer mediated communication tools (such as VoIP and Skype), and videophones allow you to visually interact with recruits without actually being there. Local recruitment agencies or third-party recruiters may be able to assist with setting up these technologies.

Assessing Language Proficiency

Accurately assessing language proficiency is crucial. Hiring an employee with inadequate language skills can result in substantial training costs and lost productivity. However, suitably qualified international workers may benefit from tailored training to strengthen their language proficiency, such as work-specific vocabulary or assistance with accents.

Make sure that the language qualifications you require match the abilities that will be required on the job. For example, a position working with clients or the public may necessitate a higher language proficiency than a position that only involves interaction with a small number of colleagues.

USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AT A DISTANCE

Internet-based phone and webcam services, sometimes called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), allow users to communicate with each other via chat, voice and video. Skype is one brand of VoIP commonly used by Atlantic Canadian companies to interview international applicants. It has become a popular choice because Skype-to-Skype calls are free and it allows for easy two-way video conferencing. These technologies allow employers to watch and listen to a candidate, helping them to assess a candidate's language abilities, skills, preparedness and enthusiasm for the job.

In-person or video-based interviews can be extremely useful in assessing oral language capacity. There are a variety of assessment tools available for language skills and some sector councils in Canada have also developed language tests specific to their industry. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) are both internationally recognized tests for evaluating English comprehension. Another option is the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks which is a common assessment for language skills and is often used by Canadian settlement organizations (though is not recognized internationally). When using any language assessment test it is crucial that the test be administered and evaluated by qualified and trained assessment officers.

More information about the TOEFL and IELTS, including test locations, can be found at:

TOEFL: <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

IELTS: <http://www.ielts.org>

Assessing Skills, Experience and Credentials

It is important to understand how to evaluate education, training and experience that was acquired outside of Canada.

Many Atlantic employers express difficulty evaluating experience that was obtained in different parts of the world. Your main goal as an employer should be to accurately measure the value of international experience. This should include having an accurate picture of the occupational standards that the candidate was working under. There may also be tests available (or that you can design) that measure competences specific to the occupation you are hiring for. Behavioural interviews, which involve focusing on how the applicant responds to actual workplace situations and measures their problem solving abilities can be an effective way to evaluate candidates; however, you should be aware that behavioural based questions can sometimes be culturally biased (for example, asking a question regarding a workplace conflict to an international candidate from a culture where workplace conflicts are avoided).

An appropriate evaluation of qualifications requires some understanding of the education system where the applicant was trained. The International Association of Universities (part of UNESCO) provides overviews of the education system in many jurisdictions and can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/index.html>

As there are cases of forged documents, it may be useful to contact the institution that granted any diploma or certificate to confirm its validity.

If the occupation you are hiring for is regulated in Canada, then foreign credentials may have to be vetted by the regulatory body before the person can work in Canada. This process can also include the employee having to take exams or undertake an apprenticeship or probationary period. This process varies by province and occupation. Contact the regulatory body for the occupations you need before beginning the hiring process to make sure there will be no delays in having an international worker certified to work in Canada. Settlement organizations also often offer assistance with credential recognition. For example the Association for Newcomers to Canada in Charlottetown offers the Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals program which specializes in assisting international workers in the health care sector get their credentials recognized.

Assessing Adaptability

When evaluating international applicants it is important to not only look for candidates that will be good workers, but also those that will successfully integrate into your workforce in Atlantic Canada.

Potential employees need to understand what their job will be like in Atlantic Canada. A number of Atlantic companies provide 'job previews' to candidates as part of the interview process. Some Atlantic companies require international workers (and their families) to visit their new workplace and community as part of the interview process to ensure candidates fully understand what their new workplace and community will be like. Other companies have found that conducting interviews in the candidate's country of origin provides an opportunity to better understand the culture of their new workers.

Potential employees need to know what life is like in Atlantic Canada. You can provide candidates with basic information about the cost of living in Atlantic Canada, including housing costs, heating costs and tax rates. There are a number of resources prepared by governments and settlement agencies that provide useful pre-arrival information for international workers.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ASSESS CREDENTIALS

- The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (www.cicic.ca) is an excellent resource for more detailed information.
- The Alliance of Sector Councils has a useful publication providing an overview of "Who Does What in Foreign Credential Recognition" http://www.councils.org/uploadedFiles/Resources_and_Publications/Publications/TASC-FCR-Who-English.pdf?n=6221
- The Federal Foreign Credentials Referral Office website (www.credentials.gc.ca) has some useful resources, answers to frequently asked questions, and contact information for specific enquiries.
- Many settlement organizations also have experience navigating the credentialing process and you should contact your local settlement organizations to see what support they can provide.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: MIDLAND TRANSPORT

Midland Transport uses international recruitment to fill permanent truck driving positions. The company pays special attention to making sure an international recruit is the right fit for the company. This includes completing a 'realistic job preview' where the potential employee is offered a clear and accurate picture of the nature of the job they would be undertaking; the organization's culture and values; and the expectations that will be placed on the employee. Taking these steps upfront has helped Midland maintain high retention rates for its international recruits.

Be sure to probe candidates regarding how serious they are about relocating to Atlantic Canada, and pay attention to applicants who have taken the initiative in learning about your company, life in Atlantic Canada and the process for getting visas and work permits. Atlantic Canadian companies have found that family/spouse issues are the most important factor affecting retention, so make sure that the candidate has the support of his or her family and ensure that they are aware that spouses may also need to apply for a visa or work permit if they are planning to relocate. If you feel that a candidate is not fully committed to relocating, is unaware of the personal and financial costs involved, or is uneasy about being separated from family and friends, then relocation may not be in the best interest of either party.

Making a Job Offer

Once you have selected the candidate(s) that you would like to hire, it is important for you to provide them with a written offer of employment. The letter will allow you to clearly outline the obligations of both parties in the relocation process, and a copy of the offer of employment may be required by the international worker to obtain authorization to work in Canada.

When determining the terms of the job offer, one issue to consider is the amount of time it will realistically take for an employee to relocate. The time it takes to obtain a work permit is only one part of this, as employees will often have to deal with the issues of selling their home, arranging shipping of their possessions to Atlantic Canada, and making arrangements for their children's education. For an employee who is relocating to Atlantic Canada permanently, these steps can take up to six months.

DETAILS TO INCLUDE IN A WRITTEN EMPLOYMENT OFFER

- A timeframe for when the employee will begin work that is flexible enough to accommodate the expected processing time for a work permit or visa
- A clear and detailed job description
- General employment conditions such as wage, length of contract and title
- Any expectations of the employee for obtaining permanent residence
- Any permits, certifications, or training that the employee will be required to undertake, including language training
- Any assistance that the employer will provide for relocation, such as transportation, temporary accommodation, and support for family members coming from overseas
- Any consequences of ending an employment contract before the set date

4

GETTING AUTHORIZATION TO WORK IN CANADA

There are several different ways that international workers can obtain authorization to work in Canada. The occupation and skill level of the position, how soon you need someone and for how long will influence which option works best for you as an employer. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) oversees all of these programs. Aside from specific program requirements, CIC conducts security, criminal background and health checks for all applicants and ensures that applicants have the financial assets to provide for themselves and their family in Canada. Applicants must also pay application fees and, if applicable, Right of Permanent Residence fees (information on these fees is available at: <https://services3.cic.gc.ca/efee/efee.do?lang=en>). If the applicant is applying through a Provincial Nominee Program, additional application fees may be assessed.

Overview of Work Authorization Options

If you only need a worker for a limited time, the **Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)** is best suited to your needs. For someone you need permanently, the **Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)**, is designed to be relatively fast, flexible, and tailored to the needs of employers in each Atlantic province. There is also a **Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW)**. Under new regulations for this immigration class, the process for bringing in workers is relatively fast, although actual processing times depend upon which visa office is dealing with the application.

Many Atlantic companies have initially brought in workers under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. If both the employer and employee want to continue this relationship, the employee can use a permanent job offer from the employer to apply for permanent residence through the Provincial Nominee Program, the Federal Skilled Worker Class or the **Canadian Experience Class (CEC)**. International students can also apply for permanent residence through these programs.

Full details of each option are provided in the remainder of this section with a brief overview in the following chart.

DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES TO OBTAIN WORK AUTHORIZATION IN CANADA

Option	Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)	Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)	Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW)	Canadian Experience Class (CEC)
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A temporary work permit program administered by the federal government ● Permits typically range from 3 months to 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A permanent immigration program administered by the provinces in cooperation with the federal government. ● All four Atlantic provinces have a skilled worker PNP stream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A permanent immigration program administered by the federal government ● Only for higher skill occupations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A permanent immigration program administered by the federal government ● Designed to make it easier for Temporary Foreign Workers or international students to apply for permanent residence
Application Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The employer applies for a Labour Market Opinion from Service Canada, then makes a job offer to the employee ● The employee then applies to CIC for a work permit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The employer makes a job offer and completes a PNP form verifying the job offer ● The international worker includes this as part of their application to the provincial immigration office ● Once nominated by the province, the international worker applies to CIC for permanent residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The employer makes a job offer and completes an Arranged Employment Application ● The employee includes this as part of their application to CIC for permanent residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Temporary Foreign Worker or international student applies to CIC for permanent residence
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The temporary foreign worker can apply for an extension of their work permit or apply for permanent residence through the PNP, CEC or FSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Once an international worker has been nominated, they can apply for a work permit so they can start work in Canada sooner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A
Key Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labour Market Opinion that employment of the temporary foreign worker will not adversely affect the Canadian labour market. ● Employers must demonstrate that they have advertised in Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job offer is required and employers must demonstrate that they have advertised in Canada ● Applicants are evaluated on a points system or minimum requirement model, based on factors such as age, education, work experience, language skills and adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must have 12 months work experience in specified higher skill occupations ● Job offer required (unless in a designated occupation or meet Canadian residency requirements) ● Applicants are evaluated on a points system, based on factors such as age, education, work experience, language skills and adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Must have Canadian work experience (24 months for a temporary foreign worker, 12 months for an international student) in specified higher skill occupations ● Need to prove language proficiency

DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES TO OBTAIN WORK AUTHORIZATION IN CANADA (cont'd)				
Option	Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)	Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)	Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW)	Canadian Experience Class (CEC)
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fastest way to bring workers to Canada ● Time-limited commitment for both the employer and employee ● International workers can be hired on a trial basis prior to an application for permanent residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provincial immigration officers can be easily contacted ● Employer-driven program tailored to the needs of each province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fewer steps than the PNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Streamlined process for applicants already working in Canada
Issues to Consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Additional steps required to obtain permanent residence ● Family members may have to apply for visas to live and/or work in Canada ● Limits to the settlement services that temporary foreign workers can access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workers must apply to both provincial and federal governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to selected occupations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited to selected occupations ● Applicant must apply during or within 12 months of completing their Canadian work experience
Application Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker must pay a \$150 application fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker must pay a \$550 application fee plus a \$490 Right of Permanent Resident Fee (plus fees for each dependent) ● Worker must pay applicable provincial application fees (\$250 in Prince Edward Island; \$150 in Newfoundland & Labrador) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker must pay a \$550 application fee plus a \$490 Right of Permanent Resident Fee (plus fees for each dependent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worker must pay a \$550 application fee plus a \$490 Right of Permanent Resident Fee (plus fees for each dependent)
Estimated Time from Application to Entry*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally three to four months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About 12 months for entire process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About 12 months for entire process (but can be longer depending upon visa office and occupation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About 8-12 months

*Processing times can vary considerably by visa office and incomplete applications will delay the process.

Average processing times by visa office can be found at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/index.asp>

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) allows individuals to obtain a temporary permit to work in Canada, and may be valid for a few months or for a few years. Several Atlantic employers have hired foreign workers on a two year temporary work permit. The permit usually only allows the holder to work in the job initially offered to them and for the same employer that hired them, although it is possible that an employee may leave and apply for a work permit with a different employer. Employers hiring temporary foreign workers must provide them with full-time hours and pay a wage that is on par with what local workers in that occupation earn. When hiring a worker for a “lower skill” occupation (defined as C or D in the NOC classification) the employer will be required to cover the costs of round-trip transportation to Canada and provide medical coverage until the employee qualifies for provincial health insurance.

Temporary foreign workers can apply to become permanent residents of Canada. In fact, due to the considerably shorter timeframe for getting workers into the country, many Atlantic employers have chosen to use the TFWP regardless of the length of time they anticipate the employee will be with the company. The TFWP also allows the employer to fully evaluate the skills and fit of the employee, and for the employee to better evaluate whether they want to live in Canada permanently.

The key steps in the process are outlined below. For a detailed guide see: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/apply-how.asp>

Step 1: Determine whether you need a Labour Market Opinion (LMO)

The first step in hiring a temporary foreign worker is to determine whether you need a Labour Market Opinion (LMO). The majority of occupations in Canada require an LMO but there are certain exceptions where an LMO is not required. A general guide to these exemptions is available on the CIC website (www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/apply-who-permit.asp) but to check that your occupation is exempt you should contact the CIC Temporary Foreign Worker Unit based in Moncton or your local Service Canada office. Note that the spouse of a temporary worker in a skilled occupation will not require an LMO to obtain a work permit. If an LMO is not needed, there may still be additional forms to fill out, and Service Canada can provide more information on this.

THE NATIONAL OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION (NOC)

At some point during the immigration process it is likely that you or your employee will be asked to provide a National Occupational Classification (NOC) code for their job. The NOC categorizes and indexes virtually all occupations.

You will need to know the NOC code if you apply for a Labour Market Opinion. A potential employee will need a NOC code when submitting applications through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the Federal Skilled Worker Class, and the Canadian Experience Class.

Determining the NOC code for the position you are recruiting for should not be too difficult. A searchable index of all NOC codes is available at: <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/> A list of occupation codes by skill level is available at: <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Matrix.aspx>

A representative from Service Canada can also help you decide on the NOC code when applying for an LMO.

LABOUR MARKET OPINION (LMO)

The purpose of an LMO is to assess the impact of hiring a foreign worker on the labour market in Canada, to ensure that Canadians have first access to available jobs and to ensure that an employer will pay and treat a foreign worker fairly.

Service Canada formulates the LMO and requires the employer to prove that they have made a reasonable effort to fill the position locally. Service Canada will expect the employer to have posted the job for at least 14 days on the national Job Bank website, have used recruitment practices common for the occupation over the last three months, and made an effort to recruit from communities that face barriers to employment.

Step 2: Apply for a Labour Market Opinion (LMO)

If an LMO is needed, the employer must fill out an LMO application form with details about the job and send it to the appropriate Service Canada office. It typically takes about 2-4 weeks for Service Canada to complete their assessment if the application has met all the requirements. If the LMO is positive or neutral (i.e., it does not negatively affect Canadian jobs), Service Canada will then send the employer a letter of confirmation.

The LMO application form can be found at:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/fwp_forms.shtml

The appropriate Service Canada office to send the LMO application to can be found at:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/listhrcc.shtml

Step 3: Send the letter of confirmation to the temporary foreign worker

The employer sends the letter of confirmation to the prospective employee along with a signed job offer and employment contract.

Step 4: The temporary foreign worker applies for a work permit

The employee must then send these documents, along with a completed application package and application fee of \$150, to the nearest visa office where the application is processed. The application can usually be processed in less than a month but missing information or other issues can significantly delay the process. A medical exam is required for certain occupations such as health care, food services or child care.

The application package can be found online at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/work.asp>

The nearest visa office can be found online at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/apply-where.asp>

Step 5: The temporary foreign worker can enter Canada once their application has been approved

Once the application has been processed and approved, the applicant can enter the country. The worker will be given a temporary work permit at the port of entry. It should be noted that the issuance of this permit is at the discretion of the border services officer, who could decline to issue the permit for security or other reasons.

Extending a Temporary Work Permit

If you would like to keep a temporary worker beyond their initial permit, the temporary foreign worker can apply for an extension. Applying for an extension may be appropriate if the employee does not want to become a permanent resident or if more time is needed to complete the process for a permanent residence application. Canadian law allows a person who has applied to extend their status to continue working for the same employer and in the same job as long as they have submitted their application before the expiry date of their current work permit.

The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)

Under a Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), the provincial government determines their own selection criteria with the federal government retaining responsibility for health, criminal and security checks. All four Atlantic provinces have a PNP with a number of different streams or classes but all four have a skilled worker stream which is most relevant for employers. The skilled worker streams are employer-driven and designed to meet the needs of employers in each province.

Foreign workers must have a bona fide job offer from an employer in the region before they can apply as a skilled worker provincial nominee. If the position you need is not a high skill or priority occupation nationally, the PNP may be the only way an international worker can obtain permanent residence. You can also use the PNP if you already have an international worker employed at your company under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Another advantage of the PNP is that provincial processing times are quite fast and the federal government gives priority to processing PNP applications. The whole process from application to landing can take about 12 months.

EXTENDING A TEMPORARY WORK PERMIT

- The employee must fill out an application form and pay a \$150 processing fee
- The application form (IMM 1249) may be found at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/kits/forms/IMM1249E.PDF>
- A complete instruction guide to the renewing process and a list of requirements may be found at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/kits/guides/5553E.PDF>
- The completed application form, payment, and all supporting documents must be sent to the Case Processing Centre (CPC) in Vegreville, Alberta.
- It is highly recommended that the completed application be sent at least three months prior to the expiry of their existing work permit

OVERVIEW OF SKILLED WORKER PNP STREAMS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Required Job Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All four skilled worker streams require a permanent full-time job offer. ● The employer must provide evidence they advertised locally and nationally and still have difficulty filling the position.
Evaluation Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador use a points system to evaluate whether or not a candidate will be nominated. Nova Scotia uses minimum requirement criteria to evaluate its potential nominees. ● When considering a nominee all provinces look at age, education, experience, adaptability and language ability. Some provinces also consider financial resources. ● All applications are reviewed by a nominee officer and the officer is entitled to review each application on a case by case basis.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Candidates who are between 22 and 45 years old typically receive the most points.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The higher the level of education the more likely the candidate will be nominated with candidates generally needing some post-secondary education. ● In all cases the candidate's education must meet the educational requirements of the job being offered.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language is a criterion that is closely looked at when reviewing a candidate's application; applicants receive additional points for languages skills in both English and French.
Work Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The more relevant work experience a candidate has the more points they receive, with most provinces giving preference for those with at least 2-5 years relevant experience. ● Nova Scotia's minimum experience requirement is two years in a position related to the job offer.
Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adaptability criteria are designed to ensure that provincial nominees will be able to integrate into their province of choice and remain there. ● Provinces look for connections the candidate has to the province (e.g., family already in province, time spent visiting, studying or working in the province), ability of spouse to find employment, and ability of the candidate to find work in other fields.
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Newfoundland and Labrador awards points based on financial assets to be transferred to Canada while Nova Scotia requires proof of sufficient funds to immigrate. ● CIC recommends that candidates have \$10,000 in disposable funds for the immigration process plus an additional \$2,000 for every dependent.
Application Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The application fee is \$150 in Newfoundland and Labrador and \$250 in Prince Edward Island. There is no fee in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. ● The applicant may have to pay additional fees to third-parties to produce the required documents. ● Once a candidate is approved by the province they will be responsible to pay Citizenship and Immigration Canada processing fees. The applicant may have to pay additional fees for medical and criminal record checks.
Processing Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Processing times vary by province but typically take 2-8 weeks. Incomplete application forms will delay the process. ● Federal processing times take longer. It usually takes around nine months for CIC to issue permanent residence to a provincial nominee, though this is dependant on the application being submitted complete and without error.

Step 1: Provide the international worker with a completed PNP form verifying your job offer

As an employer you must complete a form verifying that you have offered the applicant a job and outlining the nature of the position. The job offer must be for a permanent full-time position and you must be able to demonstrate that you have advertised locally and nationally and been unable to fill the position. During the application process, the provincial government may contact you to confirm the details of the job offer and your capacity to integrate the international worker.

These PNP forms can be found on the provincial immigration websites:

Newfoundland and Labrador - <http://www.nlppn.ca>

Nova Scotia - <http://www.novascotiaimmigration.com>

New Brunswick - <http://www.gnb.ca/immigration>

Prince Edward Island - <http://www.gov.pe.ca/immigration>

Step 2: The international worker submits an application under the PNP

The international worker completes an application under the PNP and submits it with the employer's job offer to the provincial government. The application forms are available on the provincial government immigration websites. Assuming all the information is provided as required, the provinces can usually process these applications within 2-8 weeks. If approved, the province will issue a nomination certificate which is generally valid for 180 days.

Each province sets their own criteria for provincial nominees, with three provinces using a points system as a guide. Aside from a job offer, the main criteria relate to age, education, experience, language, adaptability and financial resources. You should review the evaluation criteria in your province prior to recruiting an international worker through the PNP. If you have any concerns about whether a worker is likely to be accepted for the position you need, you should discuss this in advance with a provincial immigration officer.

Step 3: The international worker applies to CIC for permanent residence

Once an applicant has received their provincial nomination certificate, they must then make an application for permanent residence to CIC. They will conduct security, background, and medical checks. Applicants must be careful to follow all the instructions and to complete the application in full, including the processing fee. CIC will conduct security, background, and medical checks.

Applications forms and information for provincial nominees is available at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/provincial/apply-application.asp>

CIC processing times vary by visa office but typically take nine months. Incomplete forms or missing information will delay the process. If you need the worker much sooner, the worker can apply for a temporary work permit. Provincial governments can provide applicants with a letter of support stating that the worker is urgently required before permanent residence can be granted and this may eliminate the need for a labour market opinion (LMO). You can contact the provincial immigration office for more information on this process.

Step 4: The international worker can enter the country once their CIC application has been approved

Once the CIC application has been processed and approved, the applicant can enter the country. The worker must then receive final approval from a border services officer (who could decline to issue the permit for security or other reasons). If the worker is already in Atlantic Canada as a temporary foreign worker the applicant will meet with an immigration officer at their local CIC office to complete the process.

FINDING A VISA OFFICE

With the exception of the Federal Skilled Worker Class, all immigration applications must be processed through the appropriate CIC visa office.

A list of where to apply by country of origin can be found at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/apply-where.asp>

If the applicant has lived in Canada for at least a year (for example, as an existing Temporary Foreign Worker), then their application will should be sent to the Canadian visa office in Buffalo, New York.

Federal Skilled Worker applicants must apply through the Centralized Intake Office located in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Average processing times for each visa office can be found at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/index.asp>

The Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW)

The Federal Skilled Worker Class (FSW) is administered by the federal government and is designed for permanent immigration for skilled workers. There are strict limitations on which occupations can qualify. All applicants must have at least one year full-time (or equivalent) paid work experience within the last ten years in an occupation in Skill Type 0 (managerial) or Skill Level A (professional) or B (Technical) on the Canadian National Occupation Classification (NOC).

A searchable index of all NOC codes is available at:

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/>

A list of occupation codes by skill level is available at:

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Matrix.aspx>

There are three categories under the Federal Skilled Worker Class:

Category 1: For persons in an occupation which corresponds to a list of occupations that CIC deems important to the labour market and have evidence of one year of continuous full-time (or full-time equivalent) experience in that occupation (for a list of these designated occupations see:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who-instructions.asp>);

Category 2: For persons who have arranged employment offer with a Canadian employer; or

Category 3: For students or workers who are legally residing in Canada, and have done so for at least 12 months immediately before submitting their application.

Applicants are scored on a point system that considers six criteria; education, language proficiency, work experience, age, arranged employment and adaptability. If applicants are unable to score enough points to reach the pass mark they will not be approved as a permanent resident. A self-assessment test for determining if an applicant will reach the pass mark can be found at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/assess/index.asp>

For further information on the Federal Skilled Worker Class visit:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/skilled.asp>

The process for workers with a job offer (Category 2) is as follows:

Step 1: The employer must apply for an Arranged Employment Opinion and provide it to the international worker

The employer must complete an application for an Arranged Employment Opinion through Service Canada (equivalent to an LMO for a permanent position). This will include a detailed overview of the job offer. The employer must also provide a written letter stating that they will be providing the applicant with permanent work.

The arranged employment application is available at:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/forms/emp5275e.pdf

Step 2: The international worker applies to CIC for permanent residence

The foreign worker submits a completed immigration package (including the Arranged Employment Opinion from the employer) to the Centralized Intake Office located in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Processing times for the Federal Skilled Worker Class vary depending on the visa office and occupation but generally this stream has a processing time of about twelve months.

The application form is available at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/skilled.asp>

Step 3: The international worker can enter the country once their application has been approved

Once the application has been processed and approved, the applicant can enter the country. The worker must then receive final approval from a border services officer (who could decline to issue the permit for security or other reasons).

The Canadian Experience Class (CEC)

The Canadian Experience Class (CEC) is an immigration stream targeting temporary foreign workers or foreign students already in Canada who want to become permanent residents.

All applicants must have Canadian work experience in an occupation in Skill Type 0 (managerial) or Skill Level A (professional) or B (Technical) on the Canadian National Occupation Classification (NOC). A searchable index of all NOC codes is available at: <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/>

A list of occupation codes by skill level is available at:

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Matrix.aspx>

To qualify under the CEC, the applicant must have either been a temporary foreign worker or a graduate of a Canadian post-secondary institution and meet the following criteria: International graduates must have 12 months of legal work experience in Canada within a 24-month period prior to the CEC application, obtained a Canadian credential by studying in Canada full-time for at least two academic years, and meet language benchmarks for their occupation skill level. Temporary foreign workers must have 24 months of legal work experience in Canada within a 36-month period prior to the CEC application and meet language benchmarks for their occupation skill level.

Applicants must apply while working in Canada or within one year of leaving their job in Canada and must prove proficiency in one of the two official languages. Language proficiency can be proven by taking a designated language test (The International English Language Testing System or Test of French) or by providing other written evidence of language ability. It is recommended that the applicant complete a standardized language test to show conclusive proof of their language abilities.

Workers must submit a complete application package and all other required documents (including letters of reference from current and past employers) to the appropriate visa office. For applications within Canada, the forms should be sent to the Canadian visa office in Buffalo, New York.

Full application details and forms are available at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/cec/apply-how.asp>

Immigration Options for International Students

After graduating from a Canadian post-secondary institution, international students can apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit. This permit can not be for longer than the length of time the applicant studied in Canada, up to a maximum of three years. Applications must be submitted within 90 days of when final marks are distributed or the student receives a formal notice of graduation, whichever comes first. The complete application package can be found at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/work-students.asp>

Certain paths for permanent residence have been tailored to streamline the process for graduates of Canadian post-secondary institutions. The CEC requires just one year of appropriate Canadian work experience for graduates of a Canadian institution. The Atlantic provinces also encourage international students to apply through the Provincial Nominee Program skilled worker stream; in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador there is a PNP stream specifically for international students.



5

HELPING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS INTEGRATE INTO THE WORKPLACE AND ATLANTIC CANADA

Moving to Atlantic Canada and starting a new job in a foreign country requires a huge adjustment on the part of your new employee. Having invested time and energy to recruit international workers, it is important that you take some extra steps to help them settle into the local community and integrate into your workplace. Most international workers will face some frustrations and challenging times as they settle but if major issues are left unresolved, some international workers may choose to leave the region.

Because of the expertise, experience and resources that they offer, connecting your new employee with a settlement organization should be one of the first things you do once the worker arrives in Atlantic Canada. Settlement organizations receive funding from governments and charities to provide support services, mainly to new immigrants, such as helping newcomers familiarize themselves with the community, mentorship programs, language training, family and social support, and counselling.

Each major city in the Atlantic provinces is home to a settlement organization. If your company is not located in a major urban centre, it will be more difficult to take advantage of settlement services. However, some resources are available online and most communities will at least have language tutors available, and possibly multicultural associations or community groups that can provide settlement support.

If you have hired someone under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program or an international student, they will likely not be eligible for most settlement services (although there are exceptions). Contact your local settlement organization to find out what services they can provide.

Though all companies should take an active role in assisting international workers with settlement and integration, businesses in rural areas or those hiring temporary foreign workers will need to take a larger responsibility in this area.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: WINS

The Work in Nova Scotia (WINS) program, offered jointly by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC), offers centralized access to services aimed at helping immigrants succeed in the labour market. Programs include practice interviews and mentorships, work placements, English in the workplace, workplace culture training, and an employer engager who works directly with employers interested in exploring ways to tap into the talent of international workers.

Preparing Your Workplace for Diversity

Introducing employees into your workforce that come from other countries may be a new experience for your workforce. Your employees may not have experience with diversity, and might have concerns that need to be addressed. This is why building cultural awareness into your workplace even before your new employees arrive is crucial to their successful integration. Offering diversity training early on will teach your workforce about the positive aspects of a diverse workforce and show them what steps they can take to help make the workplace more inclusive. Many settlement organizations offer cultural awareness training, often free of charge.

An interesting result that Atlantic employers have found from introducing international workers into their labour force is the positive impact it can have on their workplace culture and morale. Activities to make new workers feel welcomed often bring workers closer together, improving team performance. Examples of this include hosting a barbeque or picnic for employees and their families, and asking current employees to mentor and assist their new colleagues.

Workplace Integration

The first step in integrating an international worker into your workplace is the orientation session. Orientation involves showing the worker around the office or plant, teaching them about the company's history, culture and procedures, and introducing them to their coworkers. Since workers who have just arrived in Atlantic Canada are likely to be nervous during the first days on the job, be sure to develop a thorough orientation program and make an effort to get them involved in the social aspects of the workplace. This includes everything from casual conversations in the workplace to after-work drinks.

Almost all workers require on-the-job training when they start a new job, but this is especially true for international workers. Be sure to include training for any components of the job that people from other parts of the world may not be familiar with. Having a workplace mentor is a good strategy for ensuring that international workers have access to all the training that they need. A mentor can guide the new worker through their job and be available to answer any questions that the worker may have.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: SHANNEX

Before hiring internationally trained nurses, Shannex used a combination of in-house and outside trainers to help build cultural awareness and sensitivity in the workforce. MISA, the local settlement organization in Halifax, provided a cultural awareness training program which is supplemented by ongoing support from the company's human resource training and development team.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Many Atlantic employers who hire international workers have created a buddy system, where new employees are matched with experienced ones. Buddies are often international workers who have already integrated into the workplace. The international worker's buddy can help the new employee learn their way around the workplace, introduce them to co-workers, and teach them about the company's culture and procedures. Some companies have also expanded the buddy system outside the workplace, with buddies assisting international workers in finding housing, setting up bank accounts and finding social activities.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES COMMONLY AVAILABLE IN ATLANTIC CANADA	
General Settlement and Adaptation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All settlement organizations can assist with general support and adaptation services that assist newcomers with their short-term and long-term needs upon arrival. ● Some services commonly offered include translations, referrals, orientation to the community, counselling, assistance navigating the permanent residence process and other programs to help them integrate.
Mentorship and Buddy Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mentorships pair newcomers with an established professional in their field. Through informal meetings the newcomer learns about job opportunities, is able to network and develop a better understanding of issues in their field. ● In buddy programs a newcomer is paired with a local volunteer who helps them integrate into the community.
Bridge-to-Work Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employers can take advantage of bridge-to-work programs to make connections with immigrants already in Atlantic Canada. ● Many settlement organizations have employment counsellors that assess the skills and talents of newcomers and communicate with employers about the talent available to them. ● Unpaid internships help immigrants obtain relevant Canadian work experience. ● Paid internships provide employers with a chance to 'try-out' an employee with no expectation that it will result in a permanent job, though many interns end up with employment offers by the end of the placement.
Language Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most settlement organizations provide a variety of language training programs ranging from basic beginner levels up to complex conversational skills. Sometimes this can be provided in the workplace. ● Settlement organizations offer courses aimed specifically at improving communication in the workplace. Occupation-specific language training is sometimes available with classes tailored to the specific field of work.
Credential Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Settlement organizations work with newcomers to help them get their credentials recognized by partnering with professional organizations and by offering them materials on the steps they need to follow to obtain their Canadian certifications.
Culture Sensitivity Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many settlement organizations offer cultural sensitivity training aimed at improving inclusiveness in the workplace. These programs highlight the importance of diversity in the workplace and help breakdown cultural barriers that might arise when working with a newcomer.
Family and Social Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These programs involve going into the schools and working with the children of newcomers. ● For spouses, settlement organizations offer help with finding jobs and volunteer opportunities. ● Settlement organizations are also a great way to access social networks and can help employees and their families make connections in the community.

Note: Check with the settlement organization in your area to see what specific services are available.

The most significant barrier to successful labour integration of international workers is language. Citizenship and Immigration Canada funds language training in English and French for permanent residents of Canada at a range of skill levels. To find out how to access these programs contact your local settlement organization. In situations where it is necessary for a temporary foreign worker to upgrade their language skills, some Atlantic firms have covered the cost of this training.

The issue of language goes beyond simply understanding how to read and write, as international workers are often impeded by accents or lack of understanding of certain dialects. This has been described as the difference between ‘language’ skills and ‘communication’ skills. It is often not enough for international workers to learn English or French, they may also require training in business communication. This will teach employees norms for customer service, writing business correspondence, and understanding common business jargon. One example of these types of programs is the New Brunswick Enhanced Language Training Program, which provides language in the workplace training and employment counselling, as well as developing computer skills, assertiveness and labour market language skills.

Helping International Workers Settle in Atlantic Canada

Upon arriving in Atlantic Canada, there are some basic necessities that all international workers will need such as transportation from the airport and a place to stay while they search for a permanent residence. Many Atlantic employers will provide a hotel or a short-term (e.g. one month) rental unit for employees to stay at. Having a fellow employee pick the international worker up from the airport is another good idea.

International workers will quickly need to obtain certain documents, such as their Social Insurance Number (SIN) card, provincial health card and driver’s license. Settlement organizations all provide assistance in obtaining these crucial documents and you can also appoint a ‘buddy’ or a committee to help your new worker with their immediate settlement needs.

Setting up bank accounts can sometimes be a challenge. Providing a letter of recommendation to employees which includes their annual earnings will assist them with this process. It can also be hard for international workers to establish credit, so some Atlantic companies offer payroll deductible loans.

You should be aware of the time and financial commitments that settlement can have on a new international workers, as well as the emotional impact of these activities. It is not your job as an employer to be involved in all aspects of your employee’s settlement process, but there are steps you can take. Consider offering flex-time so that your employee can find time to look for a house or apartment. Most importantly, make sure that your new employee has someone they can go to with any problems they have and make sure they are in touch with local settlement organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: EMERA UTILITY SERVICES

In order to address a shortage of skilled lines workers, Emera Utility Services has been hiring international workers for the past two years in Nova Scotia. The company believes in taking an active role in assisting these workers with settling in the community and has set up a five-person committee to help with settlement issues. Members of the committee arrange to pick new international workers up at the airport, take them to get health cards, social insurance (SIN) cards, and bank accounts, and assist with finding a place to stay after initially paying for two weeks in a hotel. The committee has arranged language training for workers who require it and direct workers and their families to the local settlement organization for additional support services. Committee members are also always available to address any concerns that international workers have.

Helping a Worker's Family

Many Atlantic companies have identified challenges relating to an international worker's spouse and family as the most common retention issues they face. Family members sometimes do not have access to social networks such as those that exist in the workplace. Settlement organizations provide a range of services to help support newcomers and their families, but in communities in communities where multicultural networks and support groups do not exist, spouses can find their new life to be very isolated. Some Atlantic employers take steps to address this concern by hosting gatherings for employees and their families, such as a barbeque. It could also be a good idea to set employees up with a buddy who has a similar family situation and encouraging the buddy to reach out to the new employee's entire family. You may also be able to help your employee's spouse find work.

In some cases, international workers may have to separate from their families for an extended period of time. This can have a major emotional impact on the employee. The most important thing you can do as an employer is to be aware of these issues and try to provide some support without infringing on their personal life. Some Atlantic companies have helped cover the costs for the international worker's family to come and visit.

Following Up With Employees

You will want to follow-up with your new employees on a regular basis until you are confident that they have settled into their new job and life. This does not have to be a formal process and does not have to be overly in depth. What is important is that you keep an eye out for certain warning signs that the employees may be unhappy with their job or their life in Atlantic Canada. If the employee has a family, be sure to ask about how well the other members of the family are doing.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE: THE PRINCE GEORGE HOTEL

The Prince George Hotel in Halifax hires temporary foreign workers to deal with a shortage of housekeeping staff. The company recognizes how challenging it can be for their workers to be separated from their families, and has helped its employees deal with these challenges. In one instance management assisted with arranging a trip home for a worker to visit a sick relative. The proactive approach The Prince George has taken to family issues has contributed to the high morale and retention rates it has among its international workers.

COMMON CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Challenge	Recommendation
Though an international worker seems to be fitting in well in the workplace, their family is having issues making friends and integrating into the community. This has caused the employee to consider returning to their home country.	There are a variety of steps you can take to help a new employee's family settle into the community. Host social events such as picnics and BBQs. Make sure family members have been in touch with settlement organizations.
Co-workers have been making light-hearted jokes about an international worker's culture or background, and although the comments seem harmless, they are making the employee uncomfortable.	Providing cultural sensitivity training is an important step toward developing an accommodating workplace and this training should be on going. Contact your local settlement organization to see if they can provide this training.
An international worker is having some difficulty figuring out certain aspects of their job, but is afraid to ask for clarification due to a fear of being reprimanded.	Clearly explain to new employees that you value open communication and that there is no such thing as a 'stupid question.' Ensure that the employee knows that in your workplace, asking for clarification of a task is not cause for reprimand. If language is an ongoing concern, discuss options for language training.
A group of employees all from the same country tend to only associate with each other.	Though people have a tendency to associate with people of similar backgrounds and interests, try and broaden social circles by hosting social events. If appropriate, vary shifts or assignments so workers have the opportunity to associate with different people.
An international worker expresses that their job and career path are not meeting the expectations they originally had.	During the interview stage be sure to provide a realistic picture of what their job will entail and the opportunities for advancement. As you would with any employee, be sure to have consistent performance reviews with international workers.
The company is accommodating the religious or cultural practices of an international worker, which other employees have interpreted as giving them special treatment.	Develop a clear policy for accommodating religious and cultural practices and communicate it to all employees. Reassure affected employees that your company respects their religious and cultural practices and will not tolerate harassment of its employees.
An international worker's productivity level is lagging behind that of other workers	Be aware that workers from different cultures may be used to a different pace of work and allow time for them to adjust. Determine if there are any underlying factors behind the performance issues such as language, low morale, or unclear expectations and take action to address these.
Despite everyone's best efforts it has been decided that there is a need to terminate the employment contract of an international worker.	Be sure to follow progressive discipline and proper protocol if you have to let an employee go. Review any obligations of the employee or employer contained in the original offer of employment dealing with the termination of the employee.

APPENDIX HELPFUL RESOURCES

Provincial Government

Provincial governments administer their Provincial Nominee Programs, fund certain settlement services, and send delegates to international recruitment fairs.

Newfoundland and Labrador Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism

Telephone: 1-709-729-6607

Email: immigration@gov.nl.ca

<http://www.nlimmigration.ca/>

<http://www.nlpnp.ca/>

Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

Telephone: 1-877-292-9597

Email: immigration@gov.ns.ca

<http://www.novascotiainmigration.com/>

New Brunswick Population Growth Secretariat

Telephone: 1-506-453-3981

Email: immigration@gnb.ca

<http://www.gnb.ca/population>

<http://www.gnb.ca/immigration>

Prince Edward Island Immigration Services

Telephone: 1-902-620-3628

Email: peinominee@gov.pe.ca

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/immigration/>

Federal Government

Several federal government departments have a role to play in the immigration process. Citizenship and Immigration Canada funds settlement services and administers the federal government's immigration programs and the health and security provisions for the PNP. Service Canada is responsible for issuing Labour Market Opinions required for obtaining a temporary work permit.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Telephone: 1-888-242-2100

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/employers>

Find a CIC Office:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/index.asp>

CIC Temporary Foreign Worker Unit – Moncton

Telephone: 1-506-851-2664

Email: TFWU-Atlantic-UTET@cic.gc.ca

Service Canada

Telephone: 1-800-622-6232

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/index.shtml

Find an Office Processing Foreign Workers:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/listhrcc.shtml

Settlement Organizations

Settlement organizations offer a variety of services to international workers who have recently arrived in Atlantic Canada and provide assistance to employers looking to hire immigrants. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where there is more than one settlement organization, additional settlement organizations can be found by contacting the provincial government or consulting the yellow pages.

Newfoundland and Labrador Association for New Canadians

Telephone: 1-709-722-9680

Email: axis@nfld.net

<http://www.anc-nf.ca/>

Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) (Halifax)

Telephone: 1-902- 423-3607

Email: info@misa.ns.ca

<http://www.misa.ns.ca>

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC)

Telephone: 1-902- 443-2937

Email: info@hilc.ns.ca

<http://www.hilc.ns.ca>

Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area

Telephone: 1-506-858-9659

Email: info@magma-amgm.org

<http://www.magma-amgm.org>

Multicultural Association of Fredericton

Telephone: 1-506-454-8292

Email: mcaf@mcaf.nb.ca

<http://www.mcaf.nb.ca>

Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre

Telephone: 1-506-642-4242

Email: info@sjmnr.ca

<http://www.sjmnr.ca/>

Saint John YMCA Settlement Services

Telephone: 1-506-646-2389

Email: employment@saintjohny.com

PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada

Telephone: 1-902-628-6009

Email: info@peianc.com

<http://www.peianc.com>

Other Guides

Other organizations and governments have also published documents on hiring international workers:

The Employer's Roadmap to Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers

<http://www.credentials.gc.ca/employers/roadmap/roadmap.pdf>

Employer's Guide to Integrating Immigrants into the Workplace

http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/EmployersGuide-English/Employe%27s%20Guide_EN.pdf

Hiring Immigrants, Opening Doors to New Opportunities

<http://www.cme-mec.ca/pdf/cme-booklet.pdf>

Employers Guide to Hiring Immigrants and International Students in Newfoundland and Labrador

<http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/income-support/immigration/pdf/EmployersGuidetoHiringImmigrants.pdf>

PEI Employment Guide for Hiring Foreign Workers

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/ISFWBENG.pdf>

Resources for Newcomers

Federal and provincial governments have websites that provide useful information to newcomers (and your local settlement organization can also provide pre-arrival information and support):

Going to Canada

<http://www.goingtocanada.gc.ca>

A Newcomers Introduction to Canada

<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/Ci63-19-2002E.pdf>

Immigrate to Newfoundland and Labrador: Living Here

<http://www.nlimmigration.ca/living-here.aspx>

Living in Nova Scotia

<http://novascotiainmigration.com/living-in-nova-scotia>

New Brunswick: Be Where Opportunities Await

http://www.gnb.ca/immigration/PDF/Brochure_English.pdf

PEI Guide for Newcomers

<http://www.opportunitiesPEI.ca>

Notes

