

# SURREY INDUSTRY DIALOGUES OVERVIEW

In March 2017, Surrey Board of Trade and Surrey LIP brought together employers and the immigrant workforce to discuss labour market challenges and brainstorm solutions in four sector-specific dialogues.



***“What are the gaps between immigrants and employers? Immigrants said, ‘Technical skills and leadership qualities.’ Employers said, ‘Communication skills and fitting in with the work environment.’”***

—Technology sector dialogue

### INDUSTRY SECTORS

- Construction
- Health Care
- Manufacturing
- Technology

### KEY ORGANIZING PARTNERS

Surrey Board of Trade and Surrey LIP

### KEY PROMOTION PARTNERS

- Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC)
- BC Construction Association
- Douglas College
- WorkBC
- ISSofBC
- Association of International Medical Doctors of BC (AIMD BC)
- Iranian Engineers of BC Associations
- DiverseCity Community Resources Society
- Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC)
- PICS
- Library Champions

### PARTICIPANTS AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED

**89%**

Session helped me to become more aware about immigrant challenges specific to this sector

**88%**

I would like to be involved in the future innovative bridging initiatives for this sector

**75%**

Session helped me become more aware about immigrant challenges specific to this sector

**55%**

Session helped me gain valuable insights into industry best practices



# PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

## ADVOCACY & PUBLIC AWARENESS

### Employer Champions

Encouraging employers to bring issues to the attention of industry associations and government.

**Did you know...?**

*Industry Training Authority (ITA) BC has 11 Industry Advisory Groups composed of employers aiming to better understand, communicate, and respond to each industry's needs in B.C.*

### Who Needs Canadian Experience?

Conducting a myth busting campaign about what "Canadian experience" actually means.

**Did you know...?**

*In 2013, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) introduced a policy questioning "Canadian experience" requirements as the OHRC believes that asking for it can result in discrimination.*

***"We need to create a place where immigrants can directly connect to employers. There needs to be help with the overwhelming nature of the job search."***

*—Anita Huberman, CEO, Surrey Board of Trade and Surrey LIP Co-Chair*

### More Bridging Programs

Engaging post-secondary institutions in addressing skill shortages and labour market challenges.

**Did you know...?**

*In Ontario, there are over 100 bridging programs for internationally-trained professionals, while in B.C. we have very few of these programs.*

### Connected Service Delivery

Working with service providers and other stakeholders to improve inter-services referrals and ease immigrant job seekers' pathways to employment.

**Did you know...?**

*There are a number of WorkBC Centres in Surrey providing employment support to job seekers. Additionally, many Surrey-based settlement agencies run employment-support services to employers and newcomers.*

## ACCESSING TALENT

### Sector-specific Job Fairs

Organizing job fairs to support employers with skills shortages.

**Did you know...?**

*Construction sector is a major employer in the City. Thousands of construction-related companies are located in Surrey while the retirement rate over 21%.*

### Networking

Improving opportunities for employers to meet immigrant job seekers.

**Did you know...?**

*IEC-BC's Connector program helps new immigrants build professional networks and connect with local job opportunities.*

### Online Supports

Improving access to information for employers and immigrant job seekers in Surrey.

**Did you know...?**

*SurreyLIP.ca has a Service Map with over 260 services to support immigrants, while the Surrey LIP Go2Resource webpage provides Surrey-specific information to employers.*

## KEY FINDINGS

### CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY EMPLOYERS

##### Finding Labour

There is a disconnect between what immigrants offer and what employers need. It is hard to find labour in Surrey and apprenticeship programs are weak in B.C.

*“Immigration system encourages highly educated individuals. This is not necessarily what is needed. There is a high need for basic labour skills but there are misconceptions around what a high paying job is.”*

##### Expectations vs. Retention

Immigrants should be ready to lower their expectations. Employers are willing to train people but need to know if a new hire will stay in the job afterwards. Many employers in this sector do not care about certifications but need to see that a new hire wants to work for them.

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY IMMIGRANTS

##### Understanding the System

Immigrants do not understand the options available to them, for instance what to do, where to go, and who can help.

##### Showcasing My Skills

Immigrants do not mind starting from the bottom but just want to be given a chance.

*“I am an architect in my country but got local certification in basic drafting here... got a call for an interview for a drafter job... did not get a job because I did not have local experience. It has to change.”*

### HEALTH CARE SECTOR

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY EMPLOYERS

##### Regulations

As an employer, there are very limited things you can do, as everything is highly regulated.

##### Lack of Industry Champions

The sector needs champions who will advocate to the government about equivalency ranking.

*“This is a tough and long road... but we need enlightened employers.”*

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY IMMIGRANTS

##### Systemic Flaw

There is no difference between a fresh grad and an immigrant with 20+ years of experience. Everybody is competing for limited MD placements.

##### Lack of Innovation

The U.S. and Australia allow highly educated post-docs to enter into fellowships. Canada does not.

## KEY FINDINGS

### MANUFACTURING SECTOR

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY EMPLOYERS

##### Essential Skills & Safety

Reading and understanding technical data is critical. Safety is paramount for employers.

##### English Language

Immigrants should be ready to lower their expectations. Employers are willing to train people but need to know if a new hire will stay in the job afterwards. Many employers in this sector do not care about certifications but need to see that a new hire wants to work for them.

##### Apprenticeship

Exposure to the Canadian working environment is vital.

*"I do not mind training for our special niche, [but] there needs to be a base."*

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY IMMIGRANTS

##### Meet Employers In-person

Immigrants are having a hard time connecting with employers in-person.

##### Disconnect in Services

Services seemed to be scattered and disconnected. There is a need for a centralized database that immediately informs immigrants and connects them to employers.

*"Each organization has their own unique client base and they do not seem to be connecting with each other."*

### TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY EMPLOYERS

##### Canadian Experience

Employers believe that Canadian experience is needed if it is for a management position. It is an important indicator about how well a person might integrate into a company's culture.

##### High Industry Competition

Immigrants have high expectations but competition is vicious amongst everyone in this sector, including Canadian-born employees.

##### Retention

Some employers are forced to sell their businesses because many employees would rather work for a big company.

*"Huge training cost and then we lose the employee... "*

#### KEY CHALLENGES BY IMMIGRANTS

##### Myth of Canadian Experience

There is a need for a clearer definition of "Canadian experience," as...

*"coding is the same from Timbuktu to Taiwan."*

##### Credential Verification

For many immigrants there is a huge disconnect between credentials in their home country and Canada.

*"It is very hard to get our credential verified. There is no... embassy, consulates, association."*