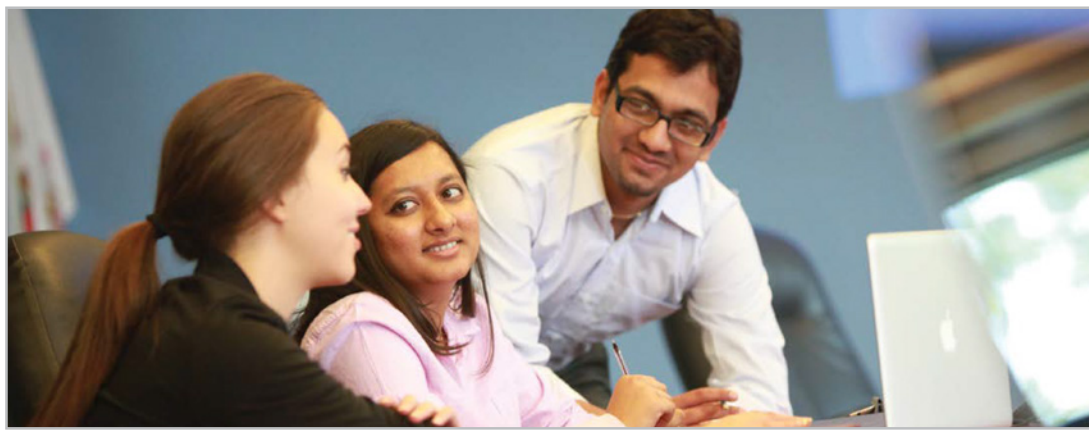


Building Capacity in Employment Services for Newcomers

By: Dawn Berry Merriam, Hon. B.A., M.A. Planning & Research Associate, Merriam and Associates and Debby Keating, Manager, Employment Programs & Academic Upgrading Fleming College

Following trends throughout Canada, the workforce in Peterborough, Ontario is aging rapidly with more people retiring or leaving work than those entering the workforce. Peterborough recognizes the role that newcomers can play in filling these employment gaps and ensuring economic growth. In 2014 the Peterborough Partnership Council on Immigration Integration (PPCII) produced a report that identified that the ability of newcomers to be successful is contingent on having a local workplace that is open to investing in newcomers, being tolerant of different cultures and learning styles, and providing training programs that help build English skills and educate on Canadian culture.

Over the past two years, Peterborough, like other communities, has welcomed many new refugees due to the Syrian crisis and the community is being encouraged to accept more. In 2016 the Peterborough Immigration Partnership (PIP), a renaming of the PPCII, began working with local businesses and community groups to help them achieve the goals articulated in its Community Immigrant Integration Plan 2016-2021 to ensure that newcomers have a meaningful social and economic integration. Enhanced employment services are part of these goals.



Fleming CREW Employment Services recently completed research to identify how employment services can best help newcomers secure and retain jobs to allow them to successfully integrate into our community.

The research was designed to answer the following questions:

- How can employment and training services in Peterborough help newcomers, particularly refugees, get and keep jobs?
- Are there gaps or new strategies in our local service delivery system to address the needs of newcomers and employers?
- What programs, services, interventions and supports best meet the needs of these job seekers and local employers hiring newcomers?

The research involved conducting an environmental scan by interviewing stakeholders: newcomers, local employers, local employment services and others who support newcomers such as sponsor groups. Input was sought from employment services outside Peterborough who have established services supporting newcomers.

Newcomer Voice: "I have trouble with people understanding me!"

The report that was prepared identified the barriers that challenge or prevent newcomers from securing and retaining employment. It documents the skills, competencies and characteristics that employers seek in the employees they hire. The analysis goes on to identify gaps in our service delivery system. A series

of recommendations addresses how to build capacity in the employment and training sector.

Newcomer voice: "My greatest asset is giving 100% of my heart."

In essence there is a need to educate and inform employers about the contributions newcomers make and develop an ability to match newcomers to jobs. The report identifies the importance of preparing newcomers for their job search in Canada and providing assistance to newcomers in accessing training and education opportunities. One of the strongest messages was that newcomers need help in navigating and accessing employment and training services – there is a need to develop and deliver a service model for small-mid-size communities that helps address these employment needs.

Others that Support Newcomers Voice: "Newcomers think they will have very good English within a year, however, they are facing a reality check that it takes much longer."

These were five key themes that were derived from the research and consultation. A series of recommended directions were developed based on these themes:

1. There is a need to assist newcomers to improve their English language skills in order for them to find and retain employment.
2. Newcomers require education and information about the workplace culture in Canada.
3. Like many job searchers, newcomers need assistance to hone their job searching skills.

4. Employers would benefit from learning of the values and qualities of newcomers, specifically that they are motivated, dependable and reliable.

5. Newcomers and those supporting them, must be made more aware of employment services and what they can provide to assist them to obtain and retain employment.

Employer voice: "I much prefer to hire someone who I can depend on to show up for work and be focussed on doing their job. If they can do this, I am happy to train them on the hard skills."

Other lessons learned include the need for:

- diversity training for a changing workplace,
- mental health supports for newcomers,
- access to support services in order for newcomers to be able to be successful in the workplace.

Newcomer voice: "I feel very much alone and don't know who or where to turn for help."

As well, two employment service strategies were piloted: a workshop on workplace culture in Canada and a resource tool on employment law in Canada. The workshop and resource tool have been made available to local employment service providers and made available to others across the province at www.flemingcrew.ca/.

Read more and find the full report on the Chamber blog: peterboroughchamber.ca/blog

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Event Calendar

LUNCHBOX LEARNING
WEDNESDAY
April 18th, 2018
(Chamber & WBN Members only)

Financial Planning for Business Owners: Not Your Traditional Financial Plan!

Chamber Boardroom
175 George Street North
12:00pm - 1:00pm

Speaker: Charlina Westbye, Investors Group

Details: You've built a business or are starting one.

You work for yourself and can't rely on an employer to help fund your retirement.

So, you can't rely on traditional financial planning, can you?

The discussion will centre around how your personal financial plan is dependent on your business plan.

Cost: Free (Bring your lunch)

Note: Pre-registration required

LEADERS LUNCH SERIES
TUESDAY,
April 24th, 2017

Harnessing the Power of Local Ambassadors in Tourism

Peterborough Golf & Country Club

11:15am - 1:30pm

Details: Our keynote speaker Michele Harris, CEO of Headwaters Tourism will speak about the value of the tourism industry in Ontario. There will also be an interactive panel discussion with local experts from the Silver Bean Cafe, and Elmhirst's Resort.

Register online: peterboroughchamber.ca/events

PETERBOROUGH CHAMBER
THURSDAY
April 26th, 2018

Experience China Information Session

Chamber Boardroom
175 George Street N

6:00pm

Details: Learn more about the trip to China in October 2018.

Note: Pre-register with Merit Travel at (705) 743-1635.

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