

The Dynamics of Employer Participation in Immigrant Economic Inclusion across Cities, Regions, and Sectors

Pathways to Prosperity Workshop Series

October 15th 2024

**The Conference
Board of Canada**

Overview

- Conference Board of Canada- [‘Small Business, Big Impact’](#)
- Durham Workforce Authority – ‘Leading by Insight and Example’
- Discussion and Q&A





Small Business, Big Impact: Immigrant Hiring and Integration in Five Canadian Cities

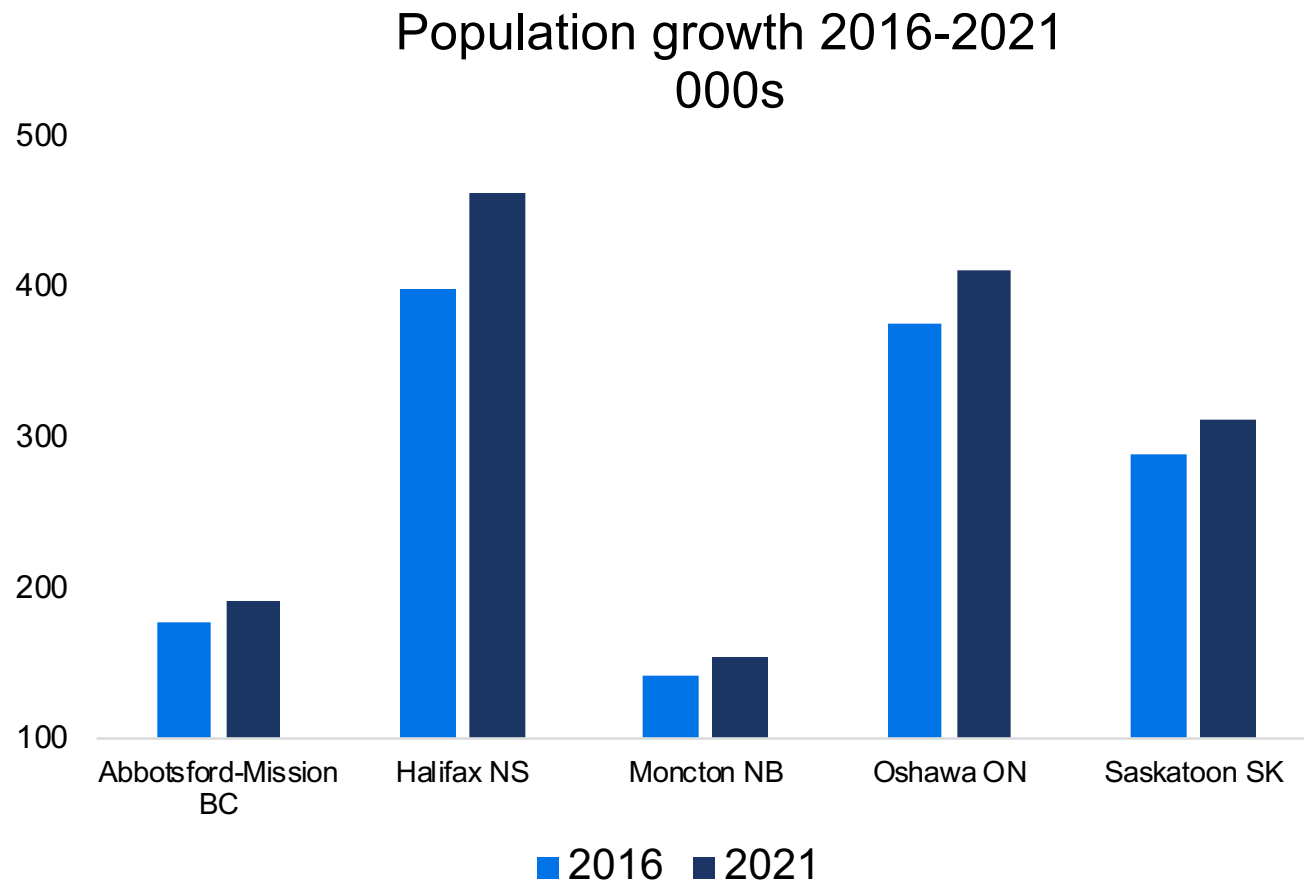
Alice Craft, Research Associate, Immigration



Why this, why now?

- Persistent issues in economic integration of newcomers
- Employer engagement with immigration programs
- Cross-sectoral collaboration on systemic issues

Small and mid-sized cities experiencing population and demographic change



Immigrant Population Change (%)	
Moncton NB	+35.69
Oshawa ON	+29.71
Saskatoon SK	+10.33
Halifax NS	+7.44
Abbotsford-Mission BC	+6.25

Source: Statistics Canada; The Conference Board of Canada

Labour gaps, skill gaps, or both?



“Trying to find the right employees with the right expertise... is not industry focused anymore. It's everywhere.”

SME-serving organization,
Moncton



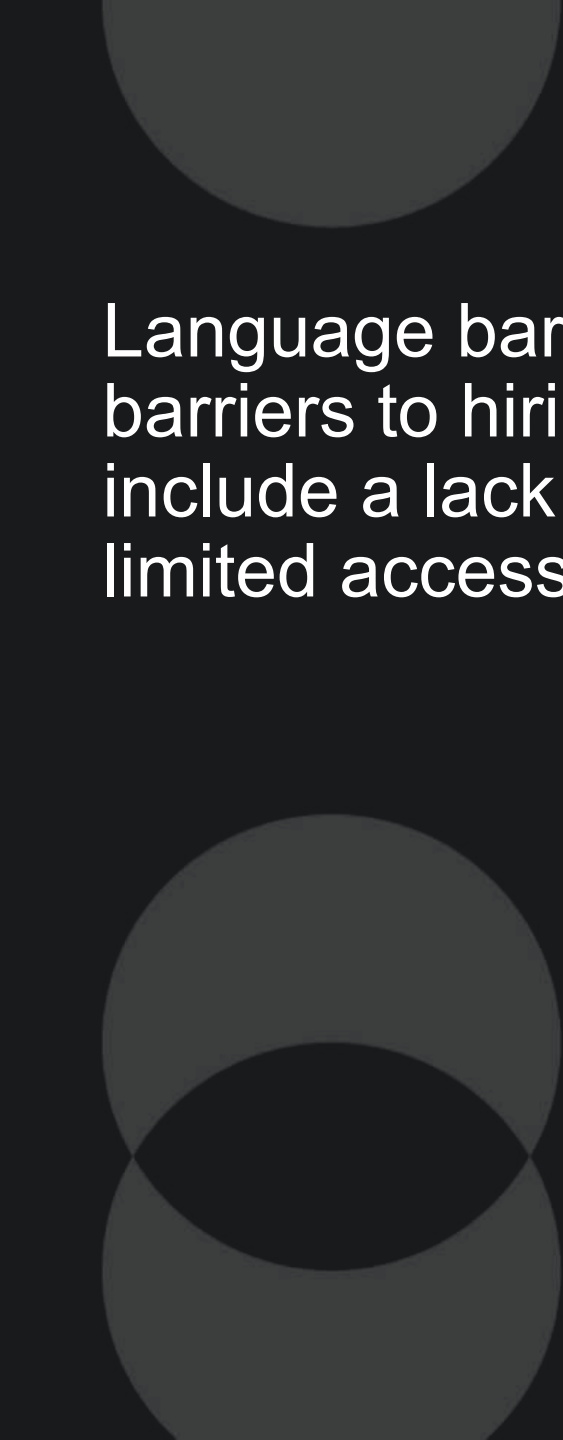
“I will post a job and I'll have 100 applicants...the volume's not lacking, it's the skill set that's lacking”

Human Resources professional
working in manufacturing,
Abbotsford-Mission



“The [SES] are the main kind of differentiator, assuming that the person has the required technical background”

SME owner-operator in
professional and scientific
services, Saskatoon

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Language barriers and additional training costs are barriers to hiring immigrant candidates. Specific barriers include a lack of industry-specific language skills and limited access to language classes

SMEs are using inclusive strategies to evaluate newcomers, but they are rarely intentional in employee outreach and onboarding



“I think it's fantastic to be able to give someone an assignment and then evaluate them based on that and I was able to remove any personal data for the hiring team and then give them just the work, and it changed their opinion...”

Human resources professional in the professional and scientific services sector, Moncton



“It's nice to be like, ‘OK, can we actually see that you can do this?’ So, you can give them some tools, put them kind of in a lab setting so they can actually show the skill sets that they are saying that they do possess.”

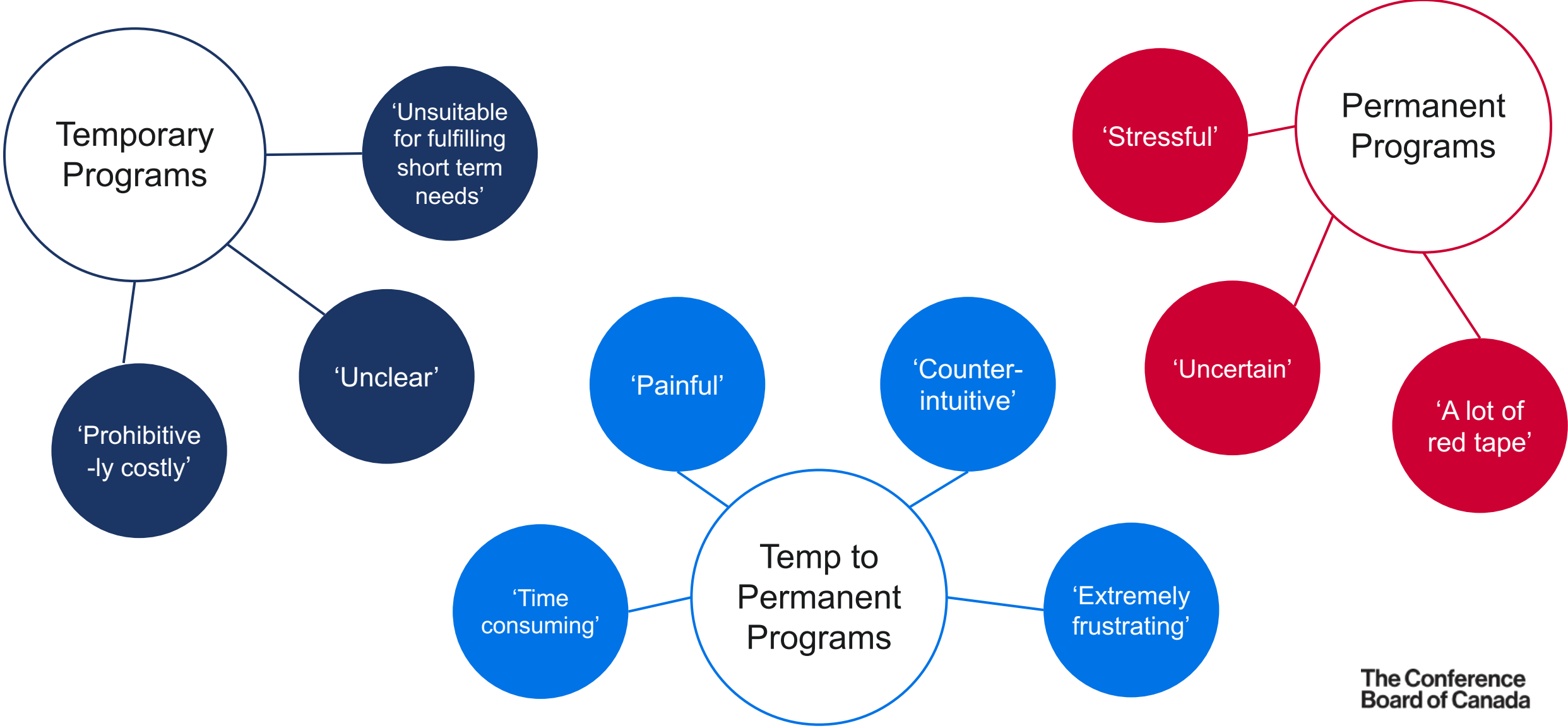
SME owner-operator in the information and cultural industries sector, Saskatoon

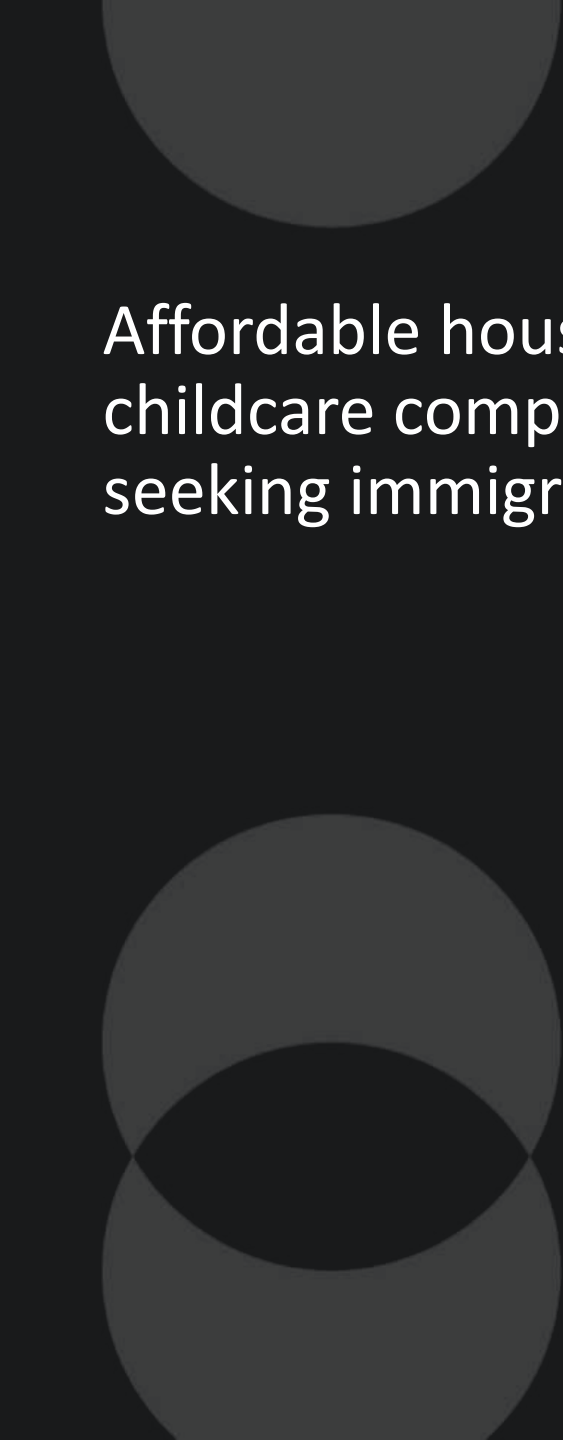


“Because we're helping to facilitate that [work] placement, the employers often...provid[e] us some feedback as to, you know, whether they're too slow, too fast... And we're able to provide that feedback kind of in real time to the people”

Immigrant-serving organization, Halifax

Negative experiences and limited hinder SME engagement with the immigration system



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Affordable housing, access to public transit, and accessible childcare compound labour market challenges for both job-seeking immigrants and SMEs looking to hire and retain talent

Key Recommendations: SMEs

- **Invest in workplace language training** to help improve industry-specific language skills.
- **Build relationships with immigrant-serving agencies** to improve immigrant recruitment and retention.
- **Adapt workplace policies**, such as working hours, to accommodate diverse employee needs.



Key Recommendations: SME serving organizations

- **Build comprehensive knowledge-sharing networks** between:
 - SMEs
 - immigrant-serving agencies
 - SME-serving organizationsto foster efficient connections between SMEs and talented local immigrants.
- **Share innovative newcomer hiring strategies and their results** in SME networks.





The mission and vision of the Durham Workforce Authority (DWA) are to be the leading source of labour market intelligence for the Durham Region and champion the development and maintenance of a sustainable and dynamic workforce.

DWA Skill Shed Surveys

Half of Canadian small firms say labour shortages are hurting the growth of their business

SMEs may also benefit from investments in workplace training to support new immigrant employees and enhance their skills.

The goal of the DWA Employer Survey was to explore the skills, education and support systems used by employers in the Durham Region.

This was achieved by employer's responding to survey questions about their business regarding these key areas:

- Demographic Information
- Hiring
- Separations
- Recruiting
- Training
- Retention & Expansion
- Doing business in Durham Region



Important Skills

Skills applicants are missing:

- interpersonal skills 23%
- soft skills 19.5%
- experience specific to position applying for and/or for industry they are applying, 19.5%.

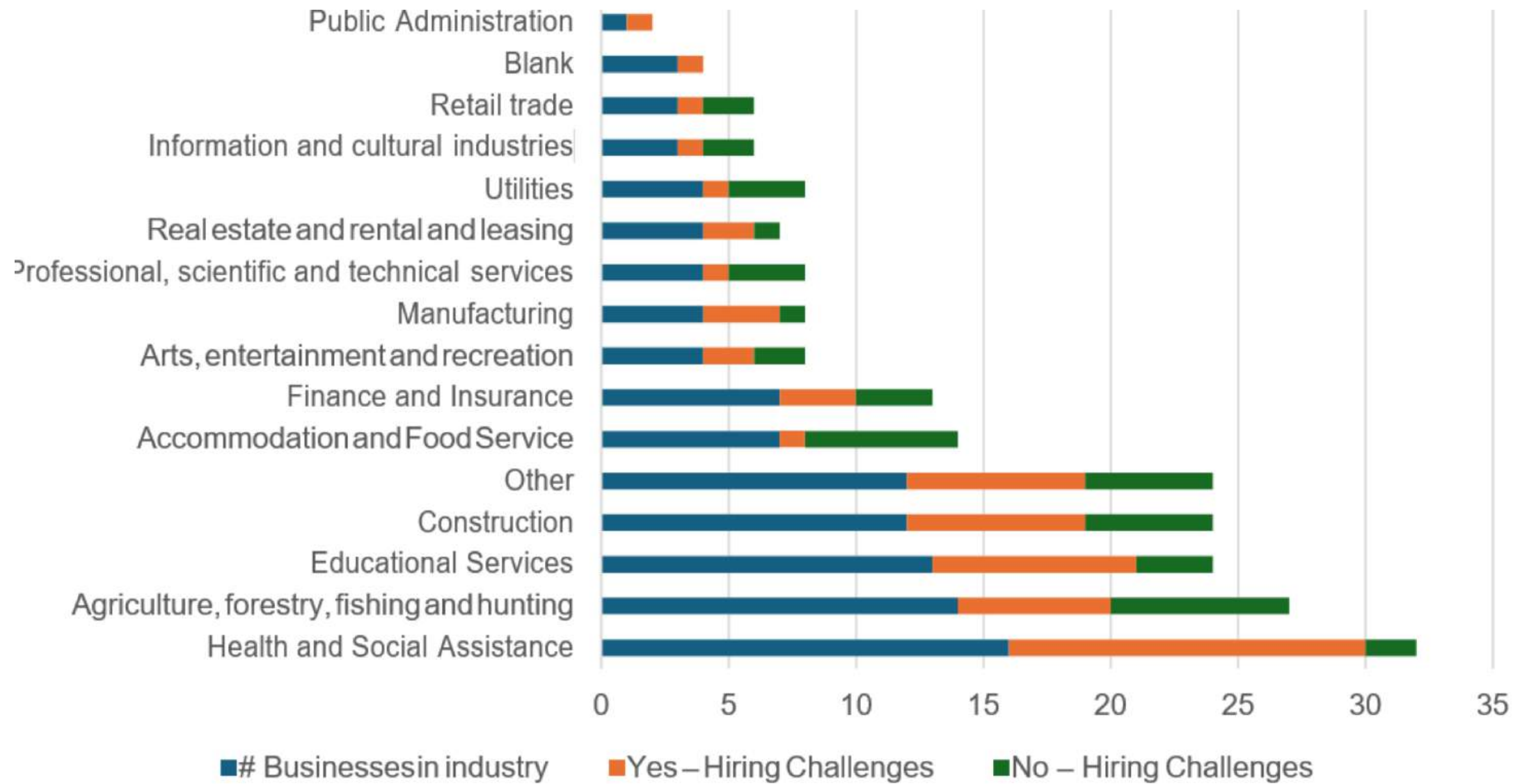
Recruiting Challenges

Additional hiring challenges: applicant compensation expectations, lack of willingness to be flexible in work arrangements and lack of commitment and reliability from applicants.

The industries with the greatest challenges in hiring were

- Health and Social Assistance 87.5%
- Manufacturing 75%,
- Educational Services 61.5%
- Construction 58%.





Applicants do not have the necessary credentials

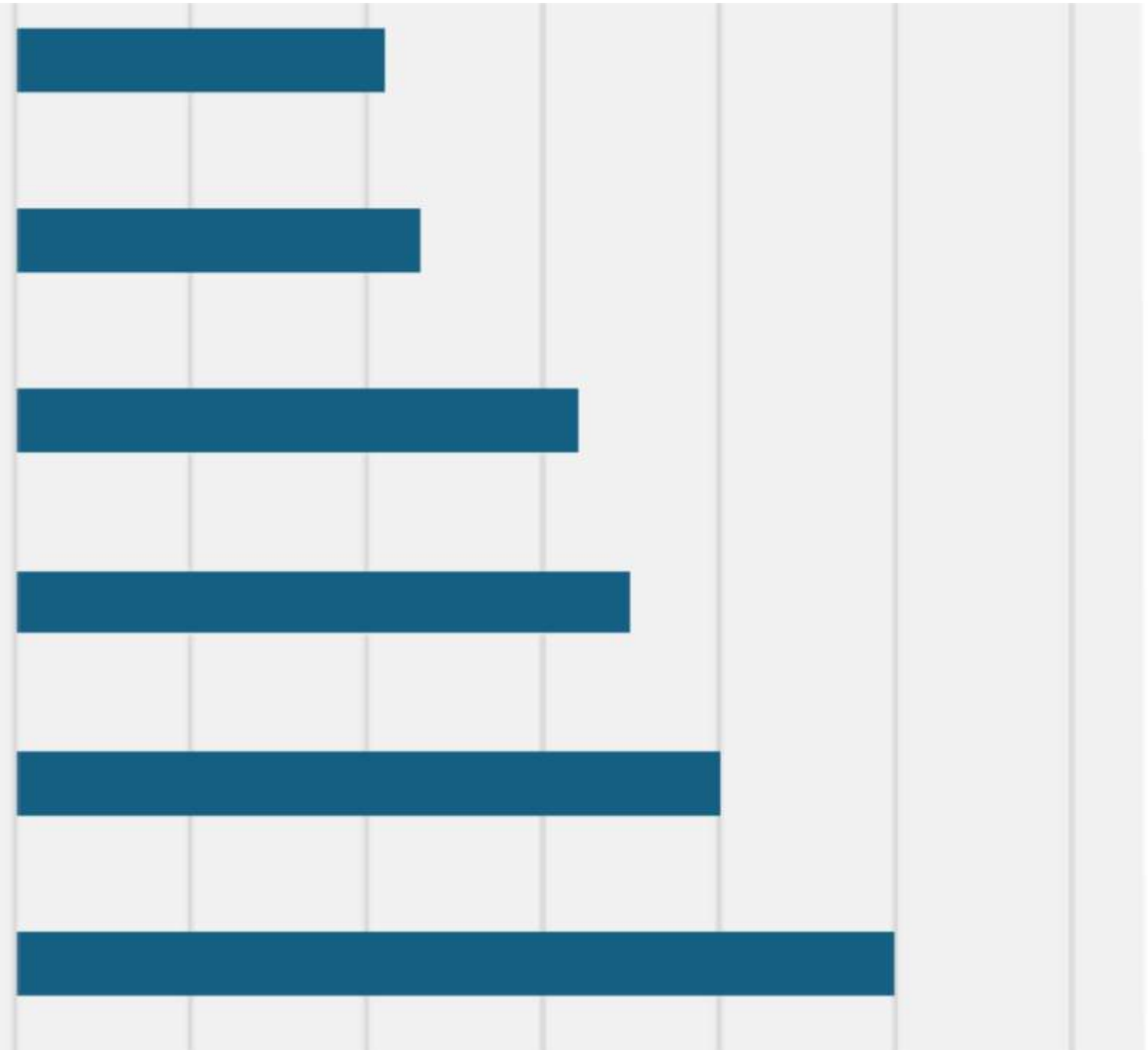
Desired applicant(s) turn down job offer

Applicants who do not show up for job interview

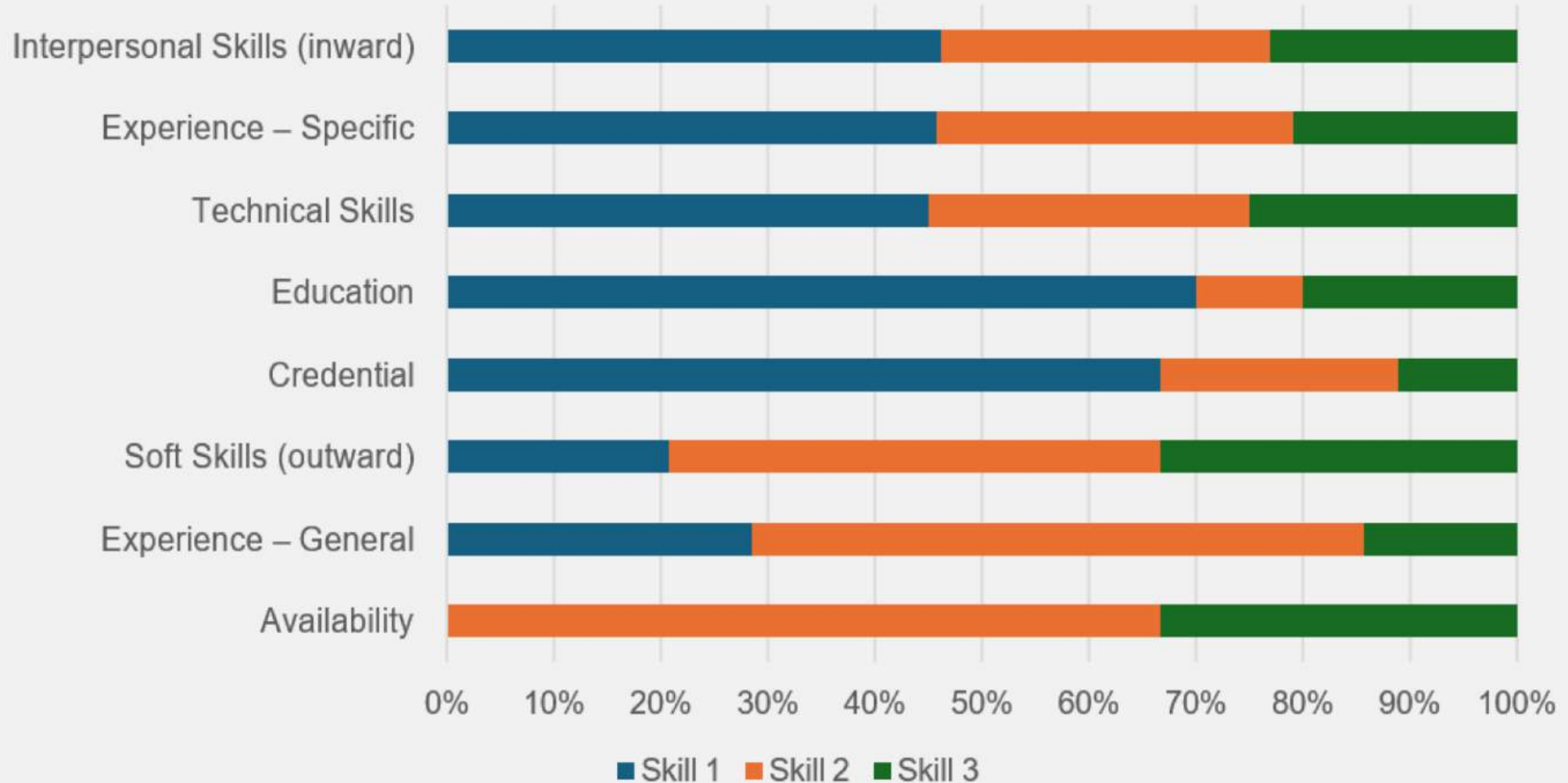
Not enough applicants

Applicants do not have the necessary experience

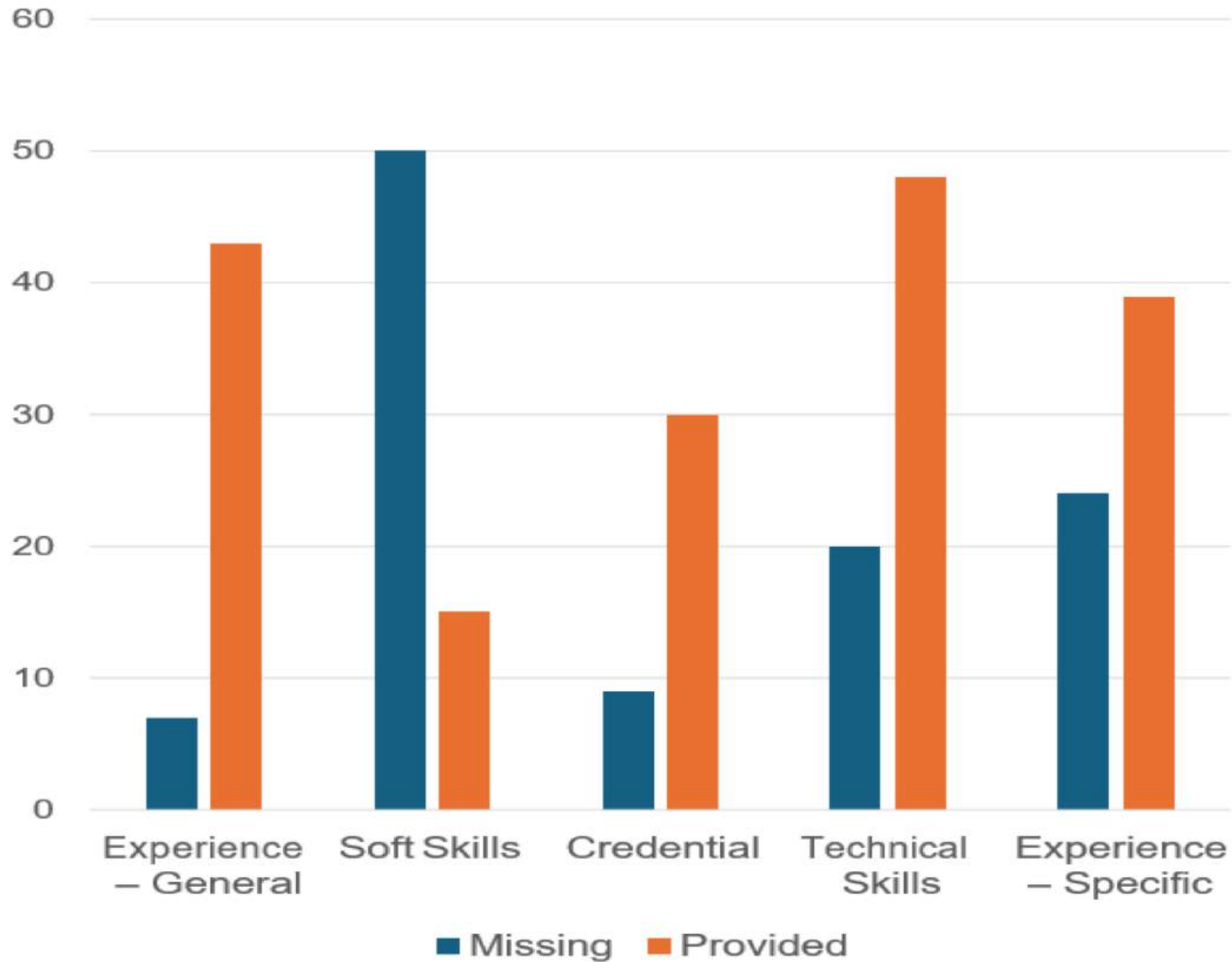
Applicants do not have the correct skills



Categorization of top 3 missing skills in applications



Skills Missing from Applicants vs Training Provided by Employers



What programs/support services would you like to be available?



Lead by Example

- business owners and operators do not see immigration as a solution to labour market challenges
- Employers' negative perceptions and experiences, but also because they lack clear information on the processes and outcomes.

We need to do more in a planned and coordinated way to support employers, to find newcomers to attach to the labour market ... to bring in somebody at that hyperlocal level that says, 'Here's the deal: This is what happened to me when I brought somebody in.' ... And whether that is in their own sector or not could really make it for an employer so that they feel that they could take that risk to hire somebody."



Spark Centre Efforts

SME-serving organizations can help SMEs build their immigration systems and navigate administrative hurdles by developing an employer outreach strategy that showcases hyperlocal success stories and guides employers to local immigrant-serving agencies that can provide SMEs with support to navigate immigration processes.

Start-Up Visa attracts foreign entrepreneurs to establish new, high-growth businesses in Canada.

Landing-Pad Accelerator: Newcomer and Female Entrepreneurs, an initiative to support 80 newcomer start-ups established in eastern Ontario.

The program aims to create 160 jobs, support the development of 80 IP assets, attract 200 skilled individuals to address crucial labour shortages in Ontario, and deliver millions in direct investment to eastern Ontario

DEI Report & Representation

Failing to tailor recruitment efforts toward newcomers may result in persistent difficulties in meeting labour market needs. Using intentional strategies to reach out to new Canadians can help SMEs more successfully attract immigrant applicants. We found that employers rarely adapted their recruitment strategies to actively reach out to newcomers and very few had worked with immigrant-serving agencies.

- **Workforce trends**

- using Inclusive language; replacing non-gender-neutral greetings such as 'Hey, Guys' with gender-neutral greetings such as 'Hello, everyone',
- adding pronoun fields to employee profiles and directories where employees can self-identify their preferred pronouns
- Make a conscious effort to use inclusive language regarding different holidays

1. An evolving remote workforce	6. Diversity, equity, and inclusion
2. Enabling diverse gender identity and gender expression	7. Hiring diversity professionals
3. Multigenerational workforce	8. Increased transparency in goals
4. Eliminating unconscious bias in the workplace	9. Supporting employees' mental health
5. Gearing up for systemic change	10. Looking beyond tokenism



Community Planning

Workforce development system lacks an effective, coordinated employer engagement practice that uses a deliberate participatory process to identify employer needs and then uses industry to inform policy development, programs, training needs, and solutions.

A more precise alignment between government policy, services and employer priorities would facilitate more employer engagement.

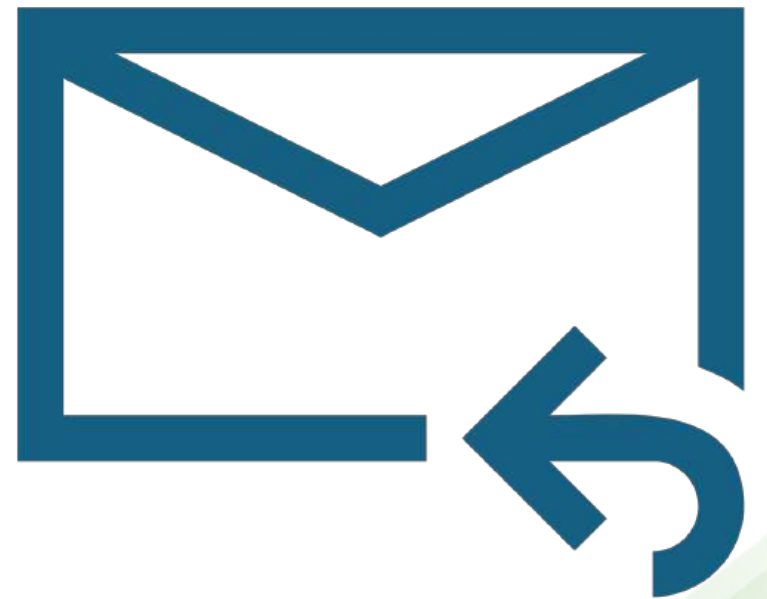
Workforce intermediaries who can bring together in a planned and coordinated approach to:

- improve the employer experience
- understand the dual focus of employer service coordination
- See employer as a customer
- job seeker as the constituent to move all actors in the labour force sphere toward strategic deep employer engagement.

Thank you

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Discussion

Or ask me later at
craft@conferenceboard.ca

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What do you think?

- Are these findings in-line with your knowledge and experience? If not, what differs?
- What else do we need to know to foster greater collaboration with employers?
- Is there anything to learn from this research that will adapt or inform your work? Why and how?