



# Tri-Cities Labour Market Scan

## Labour Market Needs and Immigrant Workforce Integration

December 2015

This report was prepared by:

John Kay

Bertine Stelzer

Realize Strategies Co-operative  
1310 – 510 West Hastings Street  
V6B 1L8, Vancouver, BC  
[www.realize.coop](http://www.realize.coop)



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## Executive Summary

The Tri-Cities is one of the fastest growing regions in British Columbia, and a destination of choice for immigrants to the province. While the Tri-Cities is a welcoming community, the integration of newcomers into the local labour market continues to be a challenging process for job seekers, employers and community stakeholders.

This research project intended to develop a better understanding of the role that recent immigrants play in the regional labour market of the Tri-Cities labour. It also aimed at identifying barriers and opportunities for the participation of newcomers in the regional labour market from the perspective of local and regional employers.

The project was conducted in several phases between July and November 2015. It included a literature review and consultations with employers and newcomers to develop recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration of newcomers into the Tr-Cities labour market.

The research questions that guided this project were focused around four key themes: (1) the current and future labour market needs of employers in the Tri-Cities, (2) common recruitment practices, (3) the perceptions and experiences of employers in the Tri Cities with respect to cultural diversity in the workplace, and (4) and the perceptions and experiences of employers with respect to the hiring of recent immigrants. The project also obtained advice and recommendations from employers and newcomers to increase opportunities for newcomers to participate in the labour market while meeting the labour market needs of employers.

In total, 20 employers participated in key informant interviews and 42 employers responded to an online survey questionnaire. Additionally, 75 newcomers responded to a survey which sought information about their perspectives with respect to the challenges and opportunities associated with the labour market in the Tri-Cities.

The results of the literature review and the consultation process with employers and newcomers are documented and analysed in this report in four chapters:

- 1.) Tri-Cities Labour Market Characteristics
- 2.) Tri-Cities Labour Market Needs and Newcomer Supply
- 3.) Tri-Cities Employer Perceptions and Experiences on Cultural Diversity and Hiring Recent Immigrants
- 4.) Tri-Cities Employer and Newcomer Recommendations to Foster Labour Market Integration

Chapter One provides a brief overview of labour market and demographic characteristics of the Tri-Cities region. It concludes that the labour market in the Tri-Cities is continuing to grow and diversify, providing opportunities for employment in a variety of sectors, such as retail, health care, education, scientific and professional services and construction.

This chapter also examines trends affecting the labour market in the Tri-Cities in general and its implications for the integration of newcomers. It notes that, while Canadian-born workers experience lower rates of unemployment and higher wage and income levels compared to newcomers, average educational attainment levels are below those of newcomers. This inverse correlation between

educational attainment, wage and unemployment levels is a significant policy and practical challenge that will need to be addressed in order for the Tri-Cities to be able to attract and retain the workers needed to fill an expected 61,000 job openings over the next 30 years, and an immigrant population that is expected to increase by 65% over the same period (PEERs Inc. 2015).

Chapter Two summarizes key findings of the employer and newcomer consultation process with respect to the needs of the labour market and the approaches used by newcomers to enter and integrate into it. The chapter concludes that succession planning and the growth of technology in the workplace will drive the future labour market needs of local employers. This chapter also concludes that health care, education, retail, professional services, information technology and construction are seen as the fastest growing sectors with the most pressing workforce demands in the region. Finally, it notes that there is real or perceived supply and demand problem caused by an apparent misalignment between the recruitment practices of local employers and the job search practices of newcomer job seekers in the region.

Chapter Three finds that the majority of employers see cultural diversity as an asset to their businesses. Most employers believe that their staff reflect the cultural diversity of the Tri-Cities. Moreover, most employers have informal measures and activities in place to support cultural diversity in the workplace. Some 69% of employers have also hired at least one recent immigrant in the last three years. Employers are open to hiring newcomers provided that they possess relevant, transferable skills and appropriate levels of English language proficiency. However, it should also be noted that the bias toward English language skills as a primary screening tool may contribute to otherwise qualified newcomers being overlooked before their skills and abilities have been fully assessed.

Chapter Four presents the recommendations of employers and newcomers with respect to opportunities to enhance labour market integration. This chapter summarizes the needs expressed by newcomers and employers for greater guidance with respect to opportunities to address barriers and challenges to labour market participation, which include awareness raising, networking, job fairs and job matching initiatives. This chapter highlights the benefits of, and best practices surrounding, cultural diversity in the workplace and its impact on business performance. Employers recognize the need for better tools and practices to evaluate foreign educational credentials, skills and experiences in order to fairly and accurately assess the potential of newcomers to fill labour market needs. At the same time, newcomers recognize, and remain open to, the potential to enter the labour market by taking advantage of volunteer or similar alternative employment opportunities that would enable them to demonstrate their skills and capabilities. Finally, this chapter also notes that employers want to enhance their knowledge and understanding of best practices for creating culturally diverse workplaces in order to create a more welcoming environment for newcomers and a workplace that fully reflects the demographic make-up of their client base.

Based on the findings contained in these four chapters, this study makes three overarching recommendations to enhance the integration of newcomers into the Tri Cities labour market:

1. Raise awareness of opportunities to integrate newcomers through the creation and dissemination of relevant information focused on employer needs;
2. Build strategic partnerships with professional, regulatory and immigrant serving organizations to address systemic barriers and challenges to identifying qualified newcomers;
3. Develop marketing and communications programs to connect employers and newcomers and raise awareness of the barriers to, and opportunities for, enhanced labour market integration.

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## Glossary

TCLIP	Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership
CIC	Citizen and Immigration Canada
ISSofBC	Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
CCDI	Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusivity
NHS	National Household Survey

## Definitions

### **Recent immigrant**

In the context of this research report, recent Immigrants are defined as immigrants that came to Canada between 2006 and 2011, or as immigrants who have been living in Canada for less than five years.

### **Immigrant**

Immigrant refers to a person who is, or has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. This individual has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently. Some immigrants are Canadian citizens, while others are not. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number are born in Canada. The 2011 National Household Survey includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to May 10, 2011 (NHS 2011) .

### **Labour shortage**

A labour shortage occurs when there are too few workers applying for vacant positions in the labour market, Labour market shortages occur at all levels of the labour market, including jobs that would be classified as entry level or unskilled.

### **Skills shortage**

A skills shortage occurs when workers applying for vacant positions lack skills, education or experience required to perform the duties of the job.

## Part I: About the Research

### Introduction

Canada has shifted its immigration policies over the last few years towards a system that favours skilled immigrants (Oreopoulos 2011; Reitz 2005; OECD 2006). The primary objective of economic immigration is to provide skills to a Canadian labour market that has a projected shortage of skilled workers (Oreopoulos 2011). This projected shortage is due to the growth of the local economy, the retirement of the baby boomers and a continuing migration of Canadian-born professionals to labour markets in other countries (British Columbia Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development 2003).

However, despite steady increases in the number of highly skilled economic immigrants to Canada, the 2006 and 2011 Canadian Census and National Household Survey data show that there are growing employment disparities between Canadian-born and foreign professionals. Recent<sup>1</sup> immigrants, in particular have a significantly higher share of unemployment and earn significantly less compared to the total population in Canada (Zietsma 2006; Birrel 2006).

Labour market integration is seen as one of the most successful tools to foster overall integration of recent immigrants into their communities and the country as a whole (Weiner 2008; OECD 2006). Consequently, researchers, policy makers and local stakeholders are increasingly interested in exploring and examining the barriers and gaps surrounding the integration of recent immigrants into the labour market.

In June 2014, a group of local employers and community-based agencies came together to form the Tri-Cities<sup>2</sup> Local Immigration Partnership to address barriers to the integration of recent immigrants into the local labour market. The Partnership strategically aims to foster the development of a more inclusive and welcoming Tri-Cities by addressing immigrant integration barriers and by exploring potential opportunities and partnerships with local employers and newcomer-serving agencies.

In spring 2015, the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership (TCLIP) launched a research project that focused on consultations with one of the most important stakeholder groups in labour market integration – employers (Weiner 2008; Drolet et al. 2014). This project recognized the unique capacity of employers to impact labour market integration and their potential to influence other employers in the region by demonstrating a commitment to diversity in the workforce (Drolet et al. 2014; Birrel 2006). The objective of this research was to conduct a scan of the labour market characteristics of Tri-Cities and consult with a variety of employers about their labour market needs and their experiences with tapping into the skills available in the pool of recent immigrants to the community. The project sought to identify and assess current local labour market barriers for recent immigrants and then collected and developed strategic recommendations for the TCLIP Strategic Plan.

This report compiles and analyses the results of this research project. The following sections summarize the findings of a comprehensive literature review and consultations with employers in the Tri-Cities, which was conducted between July and November of 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent immigrants are immigrants that have been in living in Canada for less than five years (CIC). In this report it refers to immigrants who came to Canada between 2006 and 2011. Only through the Newcomer survey did we gain information that refer to recent immigrants as those who have arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2015.

<sup>2</sup> The Tri-Cities is a region within Metropolitan Vancouver comprised of the cities of Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, Port Moody and the villages of Anmore and Belcarra.

TCLIP contracted Realize Strategies Co-operative to carry out the research for this project. Realize Strategies Co-operative is a Vancouver based management and research consultancy that services the non-profit, co-operative and social enterprise sectors across BC.

## Methodology

The goal of this research project was to better understand the barriers and opportunities for newcomers to participate in the Tri-Cities labour market, specifically from perspectives of local employers. The objective of the research was to identify key opportunities and strategic actions that will enable the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership to better support newcomers' and employers' abilities to satisfy their labour market needs and foster labour market integration.

Participants in this research project included Tri-Cities employers and Tri-Cities newcomer communities. However, particular emphasis was placed on local employers and their feedback was sought on the following key questions:

- What are the current and future labour market demands and skill requirements across different sectors and businesses?
- What are common processes and/or services employers use to find skilled workers that meet their labour market needs?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of Tri-Cities' employers with respect to the hiring of recent immigrants?
- From the perspective of local employers, is it important or necessary to have a culturally diverse workforce?
- How could recent immigrants contribute to meeting future labour market needs and anticipated skill shortages in the Tri-Cities region?
- What can employers, newcomers, and immigrant-serving organizations do to create opportunities for newcomers to participate in the local labour market and for employers to meet the labour market needs?

Newcomer communities in the Tri-Cities were engaged to obtain information about their educational and professional backgrounds. The objective of this research was to develop a better understanding of the typical occupational profiles of newcomers and inform employers of the skills, qualifications and relevant experience of newcomers in the local labour market. Key questions for newcomers included:

- What are the common occupational profiles of recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities?
- What has been the job search experience of newcomers and which tools did they use to support themselves in the search process?
- What are the employment aspirations of recent immigrants and what do they perceive as best to achieve those goals?

Due to the complex nature of the subject, a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Three methodologies were used:

(1) A **literature review** of relevant publications around the labour market integration of newcomers in Canada and the Tri-Cities. This included the review of statistical data for the purpose of understanding

economic and demographic framework conditions of the Tri-Cities and to detect future trends of both labour markets and immigration;

(2) Semi-standardized **key informant interviews** with 20 employers were used to obtain in-depth information about sector-specific labour market needs, recruitment methods and processes as well as experiences recruiting, hiring and working with recent immigrants;

(3) Two separate **online surveys** were developed - one for Tri-Cities employers and one for the Tri-Cities newcomer community to gather further feedback on key questions from the larger community.

Both the employer and the newcomer surveys were designed with support from the TCLIP Research Working Group. The semi-standardized interview questionnaire, as well as the survey questionnaires, are listed in the appendices of this report.

### *Literature review*

The literature review encompassed accessed academic literature, so-called “grey literature” freely available on the internet, and various databases such as Statistics Canada and the National Household Survey. The research team also reviewed publications produced by relevant labour market organizations such as the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce and Work BC. The literature review helped to develop a comprehensive Tri-Cities economic and demographic profile and provided quantitative insights into the impact of recent immigrants on the local labour market.

### *Key informant interviews*

The key informant interviews targeted employers from key sectors represented in the Tri-Cities, including: sales and services, education, information technology, hospitality and restaurants, community services, banks and financial services, construction and public services. The interview questionnaire was semi-standardized to facilitate a conversational atmosphere and to allow for more in-depth feedback. Interview participation was completely voluntary and confidential, and could be ended at any time during the interview. The TCLIP network, the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce, as well as other employer networks, supported the identification and solicitation of interview participants. Interviews were conducted through the months of September and October with 20 interviews completed by November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Due to the cultural diversity of employers in the Tri-Cities, two research assistants were hired for their proficiencies in Mandarin and Korean, the two most common non-official languages in the Tri-Cities (NHS 2011). Interviews were conducted both in-person and over the phone in English and Korean, with all interview records translated into English.

### *Employer survey and newcomer survey*

The employer survey was created as a follow-up to the key informant interviews and a more generic questionnaire template was used to receive additional feedback. The questionnaire was voluntary and designed to keep employers’ identities anonymous, though sector identification was required. Many questions in the survey allowed for multiple answers, and participants were allowed to skip answers that they either could not answer or did not want to answer. The survey was intended to support the findings of the interviews with a broader and higher numeric response rate. The employer survey was made accessible online using SurveyMonkey. To obtain broad feedback, the survey link was shared with all interview participants with the request that, in turn, they share it with their own networks. The research

team also connected with the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce and Tri-Cities Business Improvement Associations requesting that they distribute the survey to their networks in order to reach over 900 businesses in the region. Additionally, a variety of other community networks, including the TCLIP network and Realize Strategies' member network were used to distribute the employer survey link. Further, the research team visited a variety of Tri-Cities Chamber events to connect with the employer community directly. The survey was open from September 21 to November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and generated a total of 42 responses.

The newcomer survey targeted recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities and aimed to receive information about their specific occupational profiles and labour market experiences in the community. The survey questionnaire was developed with the support of the TCLIP Research Working Group and the research assistants. Both research assistants translated the survey into Korean and Mandarin and reached out to their communities to obtain in-person survey results. Further, an online survey link was shared with immigrant-serving organizations in the Tri-Cities for distribution to their members and clients. In total, 75 recent immigrants completed the survey, which was open for participation from September 29<sup>th</sup> until November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

### Constraints and Limitations of the Research

This research report is subject to some constraints. The statistical data presented in this report is almost entirely based on Canadian census data from 2011. Since this report was prepared at the end of a census cycle, it is possible that the available data and trends displayed in this report may change with the collection and release of the 2016 census data.

Although the Tri-Cities consist of five municipalities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore and Belcarra), statistical labour market data was mostly available only for Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody. For consistency, all figures and data referring to the Tri-Cities labour market in this report are limited, therefore, to those three municipalities.

The consultation process was focused mainly on receiving comprehensive qualitative feedback from both employers and newcomers. Thus, the number of survey and interview responses does not present a representative sample of the total Tri-Cities employer and recent immigrant communities. However, employer participants in interviews were targeted according to a representative sample of key sectors and respective businesses to provide for broad feedback.

Newcomers who participated in the newcomer survey were contacted through immigrant serving organizations operating in the Tri-Cities. Consequently, the participation rates of specific ethnicities may be proportionally higher than others, based on the individual contacts and immigrant serving organizations' clients.

Lastly, it should be noted that both surveys were completely voluntary and, thus, may have been subject to response bias (Randall 1991). The topic of the labour market integration of recent immigrants is a sensitive one, for employers and newcomers alike. Difficult questions around employers' concerns with recent immigrants may not be fully representative of the Tri-Cities' employer and newcomer communities. However, an attempt to minimize the risk for response bias was made by using an anonymized, non-identifying consultation approach.

## Part II – Research Results

The following chapters document the key findings of a comprehensive literature review, as well the results of consultations held with Tri-Cities’ employers and newcomers during the period of July to November 2015.

### Employers of the Tri-Cities

In total, 20 employers participated in key informant interviews. Additionally, 42 employers from Tri-Cities responded to an online employer survey. Employers in the consultation process were strategically selected from businesses that represent the diversity of the Tri-Cities labour market. The table below summarizes sector representation of the employer consultation.

Sales and Services	Health Care and Social Assistance	Business and Management
Research and Science	Manufacturing	Restaurants, Hospitality & Entertainment
Community Services	Public Sector	Banks and Financial Services
IT, Programming, Technology	Education	Arts, Culture and Recreation
Trades, Transport and Equipment Operation	Natural Resources	Consulting and Professional Services
Real Estate Development	Communication and Media	Engineering and Automation

Table 1 Sectors represented in 2015 Tri-Cities Employer Consultations.

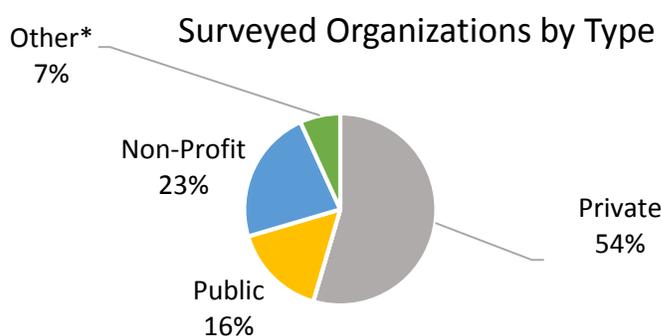


Figure 1 Surveyed organizations by type. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015

Interview participants represented organizations of different sizes and business structures. The largest organizations consulted employ over 1000 people, whereas the smallest organizations were businesses with only one employee. Some employers consulted currently have only one employee but expect to hire additional staff in the future.

Respondents to the employer survey also showed broad representation across a range of industries. Out of a total of 42 responses, 56 % represented private organizations, 21 % non-profit organizations, and 18 % of respondents were from public institutions.

## Newcomers of the Tri-Cities

The research team engaged the Tri-Cities' newcomer community through a survey. The survey received 75 responses of which 81% were female and 19% were male. The majority of respondents (73%) were 31 to 50 years old, 17% were 51 to 65 years old and 8% indicated their age to be between 18 and 30 years. Respondents to the survey reflected the cultural diversity of the Tri-Cities. More than 50% of respondents indicated their original country of birth to be China. South Korea and Iran made up another 25% of respondents' origins. Other origins indicated included USA (2%), Philippines (2%), Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Iraq, Turkey, El Salvador, Bulgaria, France, Indonesia and Croatia.

Surveyed Recent Immigrants by Origin

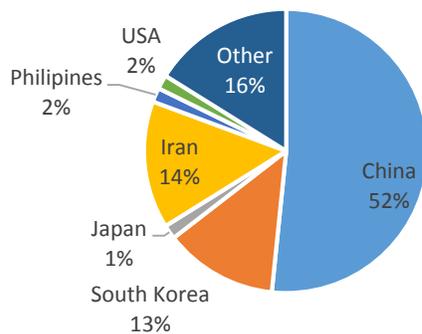


Figure 2 Surveyed immigrants by origin. Source: TCLIP Newcomer Survey, October 2015

Survey participants were asked how long they have been living in Canada and in the Tri-Cities. About 88% of respondents have been permanently living in Canada for less than five years, which indicates that the majority of survey respondents were recent immigrants. More than 90% of respondents indicated that they have been living in the Tri-Cities for less than 5 years. This suggests that some immigrants responding to the survey have lived in other parts of Canada or BC before moving to the Tri-Cities.

The majority of respondents (84%) have permanent residency status in Canada, while 9% of participants hold a temporary working visa, and 2% have an international study permit. A small percentage of respondents (5%) self-identified as Canadian citizens.

The majority of respondents (84%) have permanent residency status in Canada,

## Newcomers' Length of Residence in Canada and the Tri-Cities

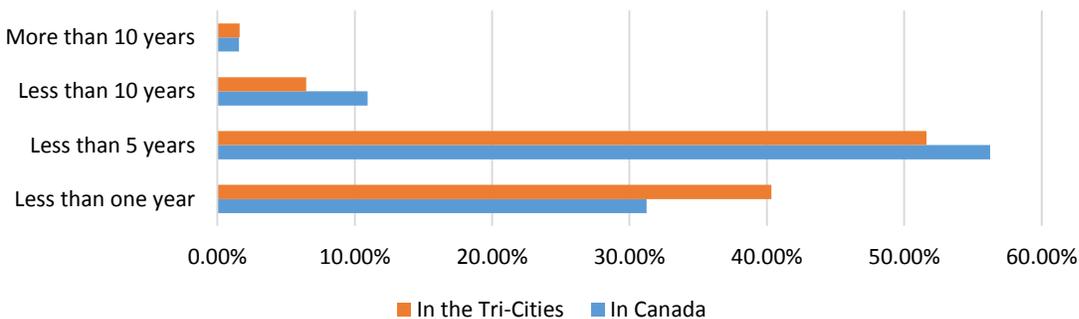


Figure 3 Length of newcomer residence in Canada and the Tri-Cities. Source: TCLIP Newcomer Survey, October 2015

## Preface – Labour Market Integration Research in Canada

The integration of skilled immigrants into the labour market has been a popular subject of research in Canada over the past 15 years. There are numerous publications available, such as Paul 2015; Oreopoulos 2011; Weiner 2008; OECD 2006; Zietsma 2006; Reitz 2005; Rai 2013; Walker 2006 and others in which researchers from across the country address the challenges, barriers, opportunities and best practices connecting immigrants to employment. This section aims to summarize some of the most common challenges, barriers and opportunities identified for the Canadian labour market.

Researchers such as Reitz (2001, 2005) and Weiner (2008), have long been observing economic immigration statistics in Canada and their impact on the labour market. Despite Canada's successful track record of selecting immigrants on the basis of their human capital, both authors come to the conclusion that there is an overall trend of declining integration into the labour market over the last few years (Reitz 2011, Weiner 2008). More precisely, based on Statistics Canada census data, it is evident to them that the educational levels of immigrants coming into Canada are rising but trends show that they are subject to declining levels of labour market integration and declining income levels (Reitz 2005). From an overall policy perspective, Reitz and Weiner argue that the unsuccessful integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market can have complex negative impacts on the society. "Immigrants' integration into the Canadian labour force is critical to both individual immigrants' well-being and the general economy." (Weiner, 2008) For example, there are rising poverty levels expected among immigrants in Canada and increasing levels of social segregation through settlement barriers caused by low income levels (Reitz 2001). Also, the labour market itself will be affected with shortages as demographic projections show that workforce growth for most of Canada will continue to stem from immigration (Zietsma 2006; Reitz 2005).

As Oreopoulos (2011) argues, the "usual suspects" for labour market barriers for recent immigrants are cultural and language differences, a lack of understanding of cultural norms and the decreasing value of foreign education over Canadian education on the employers' side. Weiner (2008) notes similar barriers, referring to a lack of recognition for foreign credentials and experience, shortcomings in language, communication and employers' requirements for Canadian experience, and discrimination toward newcomers. Reiz (2001) subsumes those barriers under the terms of immigrant skills underutilization and discrimination. The underutilization of skills, according to Reitz (2001), refers to the non-recognition of foreign professional or trade credentials, regardless of whether they have been recognized by a Canadian licensing body. It also includes the discounting of foreign-acquired skills, non-recognition of foreign education, and the discounting of general foreign experience by Canadian employers. Discrimination, in Reitz's opinion, can be part of the underutilization of skills and refers to a situation when status, birth place or the origin of a candidate play a role in an employer's decision-making process. Discrimination is a sensitive topic to employers but it continues to be a problem within the Canadian market. A study by Oreopoulos in 2011 used more than a thousand manipulated resumes to test the perceptions of Ontario employers concerning the origin, skills and experience of potential candidates. The study found that there was substantial discrimination across a variety of occupations towards applicants with foreign names and foreign experiences. Additional assets tested, such as language certificates, work experience in institutions with international reputation, or extra-curricular activities had no diminishing effect on the results.

The consequences of underutilization and discrimination of recent immigrants' skills is an estimated loss of \$1.6 billion of annual productive value to the Canadian economy (Reitz, 2006). Thus, understanding the

causes of barriers and challenges of labour market integration becomes an increasingly pressing public and economic policy issue.

Weiner (2008), Birrel (2006), and Reitz (2001, 2005) see the causes associated with newcomers' barriers to the Canadian labour market in an economy and in organizational structures undergoing rapid change across the entire country. The shift from a more labour-intensive, primary and secondary sector economy to a stronger knowledge-based economy<sup>3</sup> has given rise to a larger demand for skills that are not always directly related to education. This leaves employers with a complex process to assess and evaluate the skills, quality of education, experience and training presented to them by immigrant job seekers. It becomes evident, therefore, that the real problem may not be the actual skill level of a recent immigrant, but the capacity of employers to accept, validate and effectively use those skill-sets in the workplace (Reitz 2005). For example, as Birrel (2006) notes, language and communication skills are increasingly important assets for employment in the services and knowledge-based sectors of the economy. It is precisely those skills that many studies identify as one of the strongest barriers for immigrants to access employment, and they pertain to the jobs that many immigrants are hoping to access.

From an organizational change perspective, Reitz (2005) sees some significant shifts in the way organizations make decisions, how they recruit and what their points of orientation are for the assessment of human capacity and capability. According to Reitz, over time, organizations have established more participatory decision-making and have generally granted more autonomy to highly skilled workers. There is a greater use of personal networks in recruitment, and employers, universities, governments and regulatory organizations are creating more closely knit networks. For recent immigrants who are completely new to the country, those networks are not accessible immediately. Consequently, the notion of Canadian experience becomes a question of knowledge about the Canadian labour market, its institutions, stakeholders, and its ways of networking, referencing and doing business (Weiner, 2008). However, actual knowledge and experience needed to work in a job remains important, as does the acculturation to a workplace.

Lastly, administrative systems in Canada are seen as cause of labour market barriers, particularly for regulated occupations, such as teaching, health care occupations, engineering, or legal occupations. After all, there is a complexity to the stakeholders involved in the acknowledgement and hiring of recent immigrants, including employers, occupational regulatory and licensing bodies, credential assessment offices, non-governmental organizations, organizations representing immigrants and the different levels of government and immigrant service funding agencies (Reitz 2005; Birrel 2006). For example, the recognition of qualifications in Canada is particularly challenging because each province and territory has its own jurisdictional responsibilities for the regulation for professions and skilled trades. According to Birrel (2006), there are over 400 bodies across Canada that are responsible for accreditation and regulation of approximately 20 % of the Canadian workforce.

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<sup>3</sup> Knowledge industries, as defined by Statistics Canada, are sectors in which investment in research and development is greatest. They include the high-tech industries such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, instruments, electronics, and machinery and equipment industries, but also management and business development occupations (Reitz, 2005). Knowledge industries employ a high proportion of knowledge workers with a university education, most typically in the science, engineering, health and education professions or management.

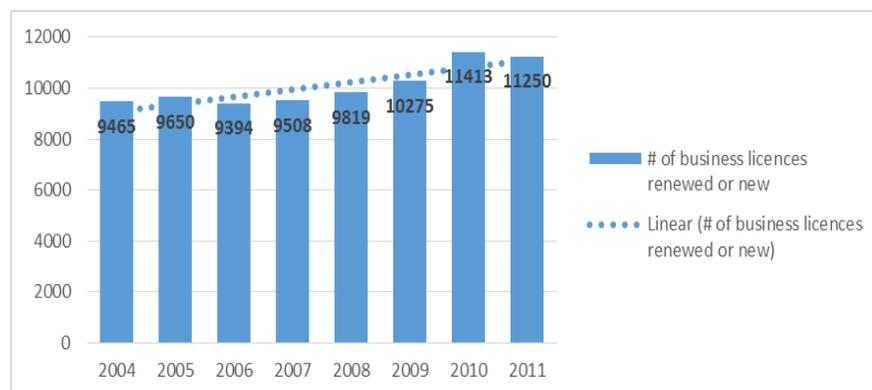
## 1.) Tri-Cities Labour Market Characteristics

This section summarizes some key statistics of the general labour market situation in the Tri Cities region, based on census and National Household Survey (NHS) data in 2011. It includes an overview of key sectors of the Tri-Cities, as well as the region's labour market demographics and growth projections. Labour market-related data includes both Canadian-born as well as the recent immigrant workforce.

### 1.1 Economic Profile

#### Key Sectors

In 2011, the Tri-Cities were home to over 11,250 businesses (Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce 2014).



Despite year to year fluctuations, a linear growth of business licences issued between 2004 and 2011 show evidence of a steadily growing number of businesses establishing in the Tri-Cities. Numbers displayed in figure 4 include both new and renewed business licences issued.

Figure 4 Tri-Cities number of business licences issued between 2004 and 2011. Source: Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce 2014

Coquitlam's, Port Coquitlam's and Port Moody's annual and economic profile reports of 2014 and 2015 suggest that the number of businesses has grown between 2011 and 2014 to over 12,411 businesses across the Tri-Cities (see table 2).

City	Number of Businesses in 2014*
Coquitlam	>6,250
Port Coquitlam	3,261
Port Moody	2,382
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>&gt;12,411</b>

Table 2 Number of business licenses issued in 2014 in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody. Sources: City of Port Moody 2015; Coquitlam 2014

The Tri-Cities region has undergone rapid development and expansion of its economic activities over the past decades. With a growing population and consequential land development and investment into new sectors, the secondary sectors (manufacturing and construction) and tertiary sectors (services) have gained more importance in the Tri-Cities.

For Port Moody, the majority of businesses are located in the professional, scientific and technical service sectors (21%), construction (14%) and real estate and rental and leasing sectors (13%) (City of Port Moody 2015). The top

three business sectors in Port Coquitlam, based on 2014 business licenses issued, are manufacturing (236 licences), professional, scientific and technical services (193 licences) and retail (171 licences) (Coquitlam 2014). For Coquitlam, no breakdown of business sectors is available.

### Labour Market

Based on 2011 NHS data, the total labour force available in the Tri-Cities was 121,350 workers. With an average employment rate of 64% in the Tri-Cities, a total of 77,664 workers were employed. Of those workers employed, 11% identified as self-employed in the 2011 NHS, whereas 89% reported themselves to be an employee (figure 5).

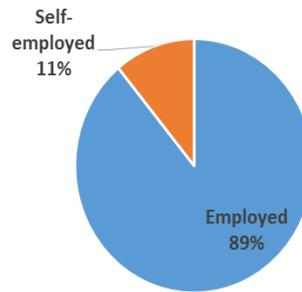


Figure 5 Employment versus Self-Employment in 2011. Source: NHS 2011

Figure 6 below illustrates the employed workforce distribution in 2011 among the key sectors represented in the Tri-Cities. The three largest sectors by share of total occupation are retail trade (12%), health care and social assistance (10%), and professional, scientific and technical services (9%). The construction and education sectors hold 8% of the share of total occupation each, closely followed by manufacturing (7%), public administration (6%) and accommodation and food services (6%). The share of occupations among the key sectors in the Tri-Cities highlights again the importance of the secondary and tertiary sectors for the local economy.

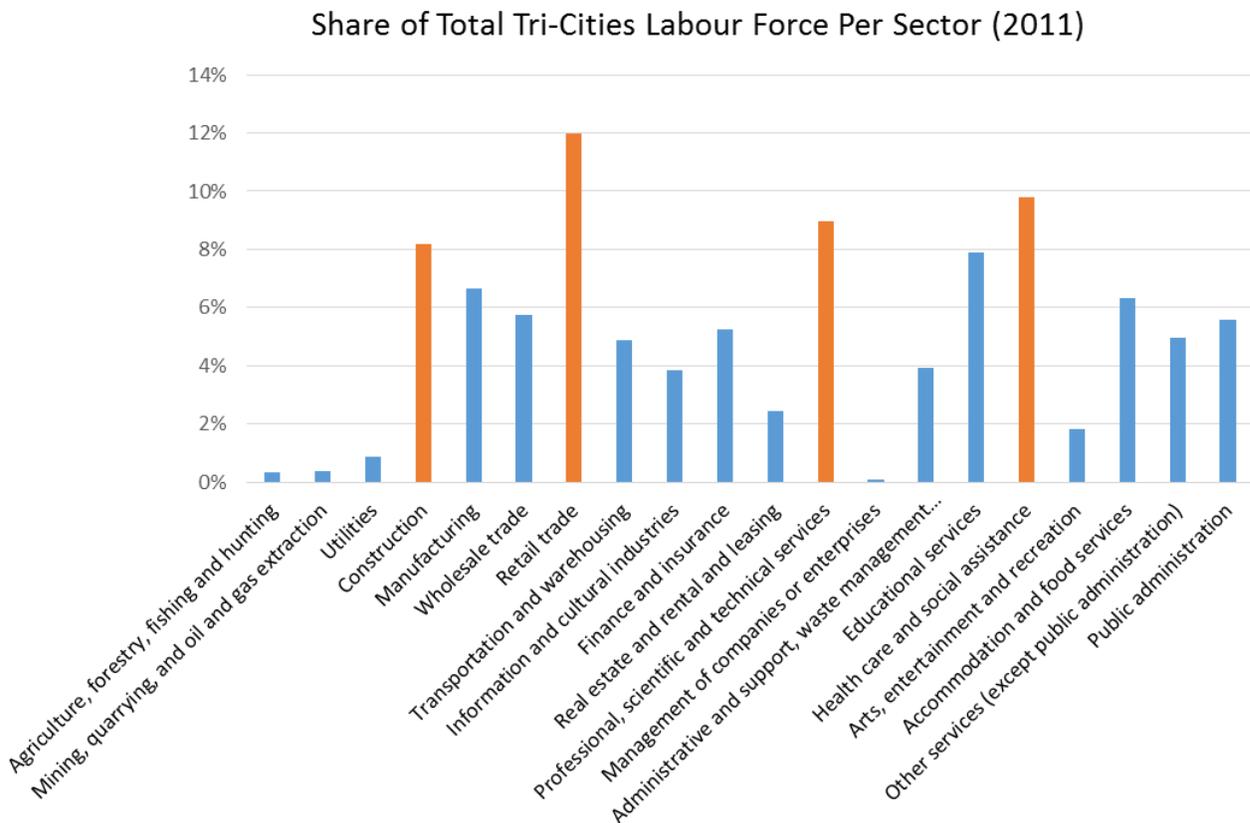


Figure 6 Share of total Tri-Cities labour force per sector. Source: NHS 2001

#### 4 Largest Employers in the Tri-Cities

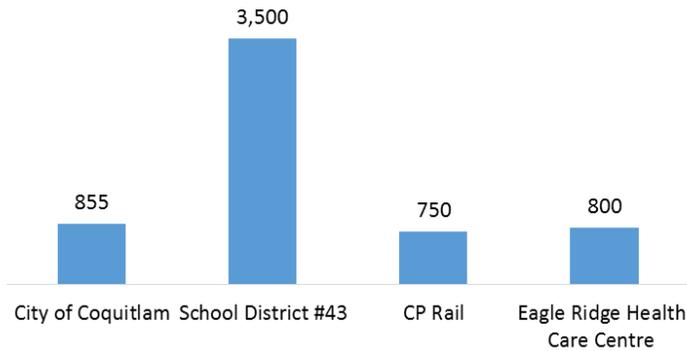


Figure 7 Tri-Cities five largest employers. Source: Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce (2014).

The three largest employers in the Tri-Cities are School District #43 with approximately 3,500 employees, the City of Coquitlam with approximately 800-855 employees and Eagle Ridge Health Care Centre with approximately 800 employees (Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce 2014). According to the *Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce Economic Profile 2014* report there are a minimum of 75 businesses across the Tri-Cities that employ more than 100 workers. Large employers make up a significant share of jobs in some sectors in the Tri-Cities. For

example, 61% of jobs in the manufacturing sector are supplied by large employers. Consequently, sudden changes or closures of these large businesses would have a significant impact on the Tri-Cities occupational distribution by sector.

#### Large Employer Share on Total Sector Employment

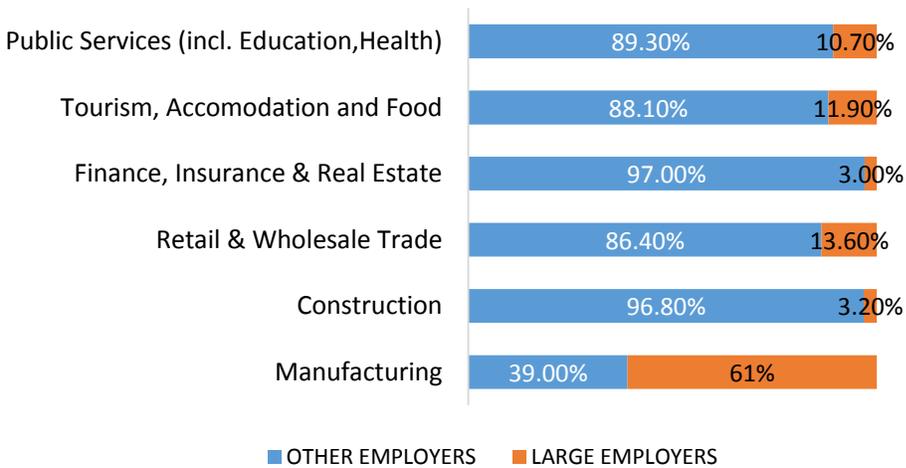


Figure 8 Large employer share on total sector employment. Based on data from Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce (2014)

#### Trends

With the continued growth of key sectors in the Tri-Cities, there is an expectation that employment will grow over the next 25 years. Metro Vancouver’s regional planning projections show that the number of jobs will increase most dramatically in Coquitlam (Metro Vancouver Regional Planning 2015). Coquitlam will more than double its 46,800 jobs in 2011 to 94,000 by 2041. In Port Coquitlam, the creation of 11,400 more jobs is expected by 2014.

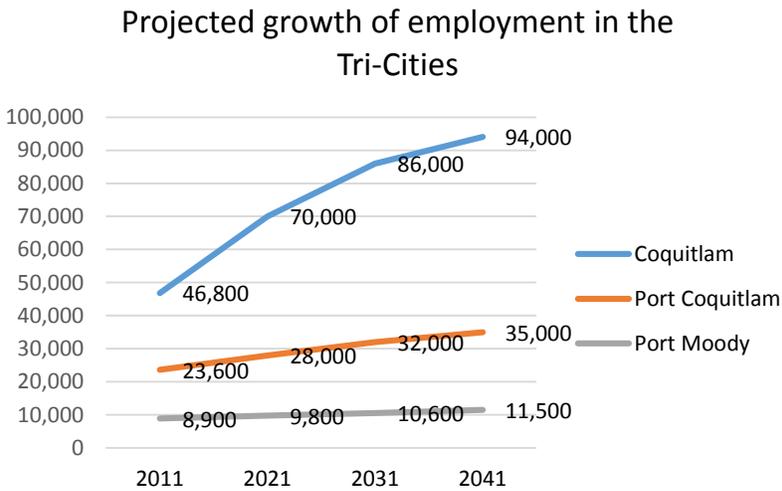


Figure 9 Projected growth of employment in the Tri-Cities. Data based on Metro Vancouver Regional Planning 2015, PEERs Inc. 2015

In its *2014-2024 Labour Market Outlook*, the Government of British Columbia (BC) notes that it is expecting 935,000 job openings for the entire Province by 2024 (WorkBC n.d.). Drivers for these openings are identified to be an aging population, a growing knowledge and innovation economy and increased global connections of businesses and sectors in BC (British Columbia Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development 2003). Some 68% of new job openings in British Columbia are expected to

be replacement positions, whereas 32% of job openings are expected to be triggered by economic growth in the Province. BC expects both labour market demand and supply, on average, to grow evenly. For the southwest mainland area, including the Tri-Cities region, a slower rate of demand is projected at 1.1%.

The southwest mainland region (including Metro Vancouver and the Tri-Cities) is expected to account for 61% of the total job openings in the province. The strongest growth is expected in technical and coordinating occupations, specifically in the motion picture, broadcasting and performing arts sectors at 4.4% province wide. Universities are expected to account for 3.3% of industry growth, and computer design and related services for 2.9% province-wide, respectively. For the southwest mainland region, the largest providers of employment are expected to remain the same, including: professional, scientific and technical services sector, as well as retail, wholesale trade, health care and social assistance sectors (British Columbia Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development 2003).

## 1.2 Immigrant Demographics of the Tri-Cities Labour Market

### Demographics

According to NHS 2011 data, immigrants made up nearly 40 % of the total population in the Tri-Cities in 2011. Out of 215,773 total population in the Tri-Cities there were 78,850 immigrants in the region, 12,795 of them were recent immigrants who arrived to Canada between 2006 and 2011. Compared to 2006 levels of immigrants in the Tri-Cities, the increase in immigrant population equaled a growth rate of 16.7%, compared to a total population growth rate of 10.8% from 2006 to 2011.

The top three countries of origin for recent immigrants who came to the Tri-Cities between 2006 and 2011 were South Korea (17.3%), China (11.9%) and the Philippines (10.3%). Figure 10 shows the eight most common countries of origin of immigrants and recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities in 2011.

### Top 8 Birth Countries of Recent and Non-Recent Immigrants in the Tri-Cities

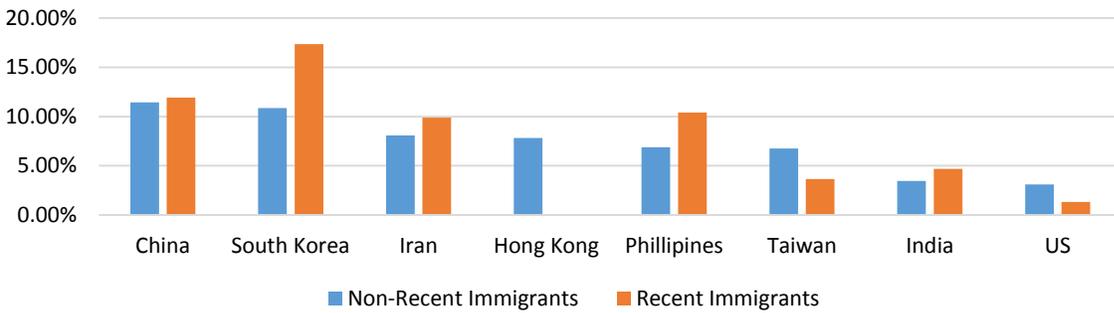


Figure 10 Top 8 birth countries of recent and non-recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities. Based on data from NHS 2011; NewToBC 2014 (a,b,c)

#### Education

Immigrants in the Tri-Cities and recent immigrants generally showed higher levels of educational attainment than the Canadian-born population. While the majority of the Canadian-born population, on average, possessed more credentials from high school to college degrees, a higher share of recent immigrants and immigrants on average had university certificates, a bachelor degree or a post graduate degree (see figure 11).

### Tri-Cities Highest Level of Education in 2011

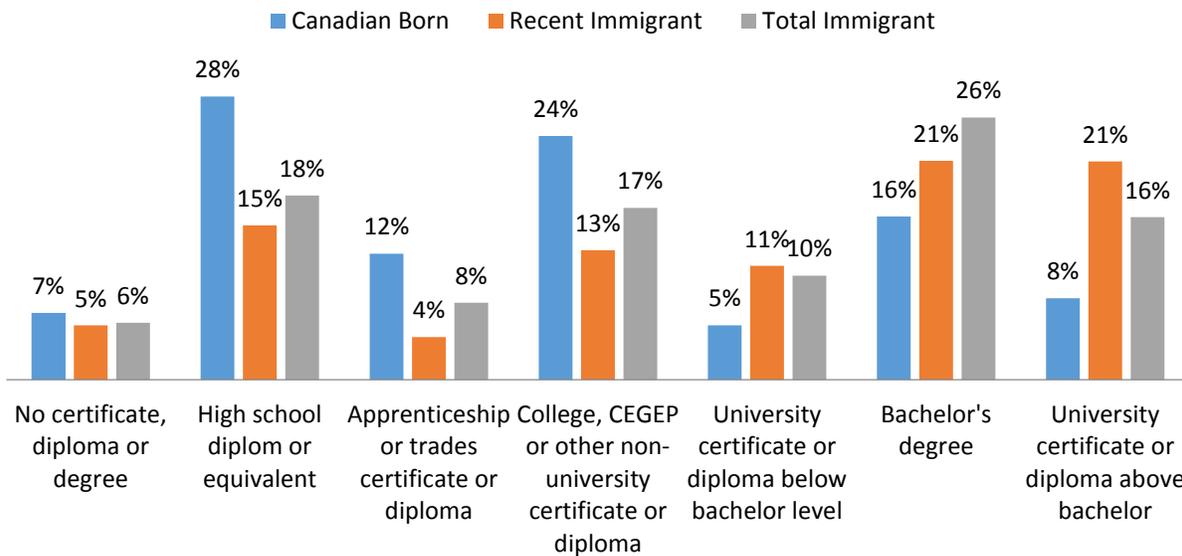


Figure 11 Highest level of education of Canadian born and immigrants in the Tri-Cities in 2011. Based on data from NHS 2011; NewToBC 2014 (a,b,c)

#### Labour Market Participation

In 2011, labour market participation of immigrants in the Tri-Cities was at 26%, of which recent immigrants made up 3%.

2011 NHS data shows that recent immigrants, and immigrants in total, make up the majority of employment in the retail trades sector across Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody. The highest share of recent immigrant labour in retail trade is in Port Coquitlam at 17.6%. Immigrants, including recent immigrants also see significant employment in the health care and social assistance sectors with an average of 10% employment share in the Tri-Cities as compared to approximately 8.5% for Canadian-born workers. Other sectors with a comparatively high share of immigrant employment are the professional, scientific and technical services, educational services, manufacturing, construction, and accommodation and food services, (see figure 12).

### Top 8 Employment Sectors & 2011 Distribution of Occupations

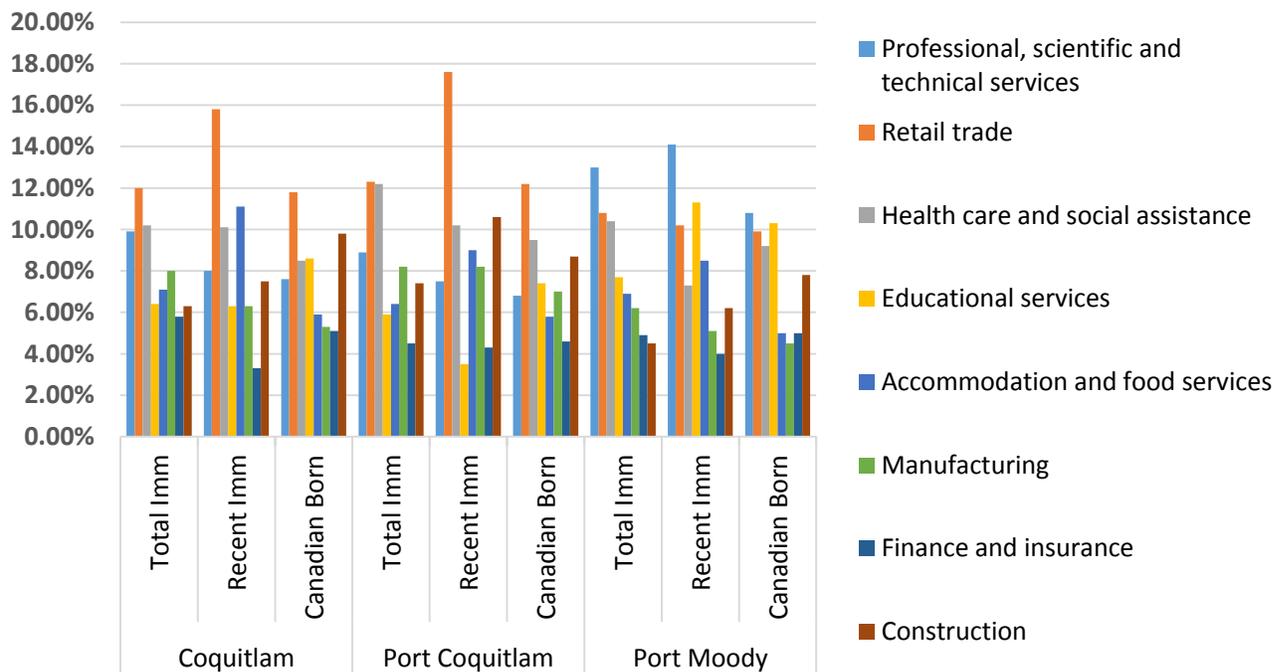


Figure 12 Tri-Cities top employment sectors and 2011 distribution of occupations. Based on data from NHS 2011; NewToBC 2014 (a,b,c)

When comparing unemployment rates of Canadian-born workers versus total immigrants and recent immigrants in 2011, it becomes evident that immigrants are subject to much higher unemployment rates than the Canadian-born workforce (figure 13). 14% or more recent immigrants in Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam were unemployed, whereas the figure sat at 6.3% for Canadian-born workers.

## Employment / Unemployment Rates in 2011 For Immigrants vs Canadian Born

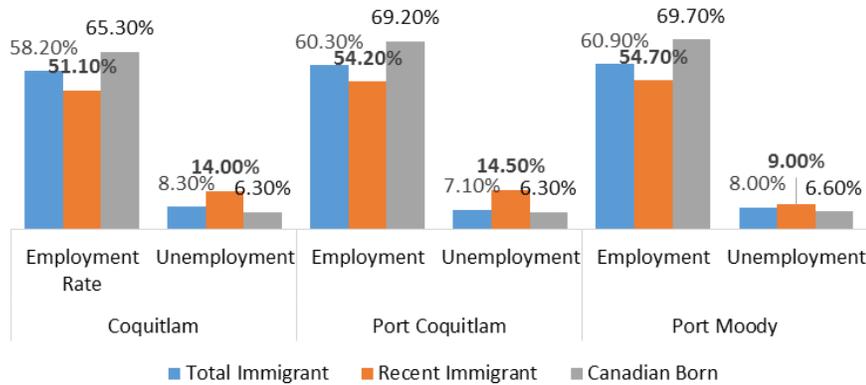


Figure 13 Employment versus unemployment rates in 2011 for immigrants versus Canadian born. Based on data from NHS 2011; NewToBC 2014 (a,b,c)

### Income Levels

Also, for median and average income levels, there is an evident inequality when comparing the average incomes of Canadian-born workers with those of recent immigrants. Figure 14 below shows the large variation in 2011 median and average income levels of total immigrants, recent immigrants and Canadian-born workers. A recent immigrant in Port Coquitlam on average earned \$24,562 in 2011, whereas the average income of the total population in the city was \$39,946. On average, recent immigrant workers in the Tri-Cities made 31 % less income compared to the local average. The disparity is also true when looking at total immigrants, which include recent immigrants and established immigrants. The average income was 13% below the average income of the total population.

## 2011 Median and Average Income of Total Population Versus Immigrants

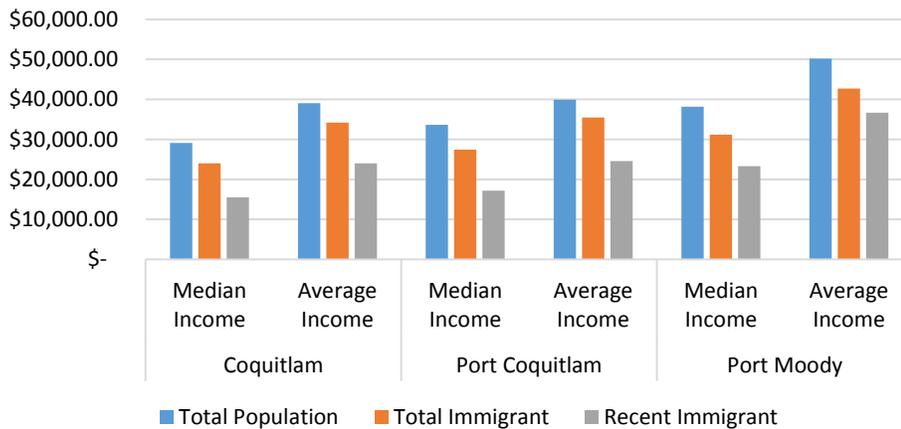


Figure 14 2011 Median and average income of total population versus immigrants. Based on data from NHS 2011; NewToBC 2014 (a,b,c)

### 1.3 Summary and Key Findings of Literature and Data Review

The Tri-Cities labour market includes a variety of businesses and sectors which are expected to further diversify with increasing population growth and economic development. The strongest sectors in terms of number of businesses and employment are the

- Retail trades sector;
- Health care and social assistance sectors; and
- Professional, scientific and technical services sectors.

Immigrants are fairly well distributed in the Tri-Cities' key occupational sectors. However, recent immigrants in particular tend to work more in the retail trades, construction, accommodation and food sectors.

Average income statistics show significant inequality for immigrants and recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities labour market. Compared to the total population, immigrants made 13% less income, and recent immigrants made 31% less than the total population on average. This may be due to occupational characteristics of recent immigrants with a majority being employed in lower paying retail trades or accommodation and food sectors. However, there is also a significant share of immigrants and recent immigrants working in higher-paying health care and professional, science and technical occupations.

The characteristics of the Tri-Cities labour market and the roles played by recent immigrants are generally consistent with the results of the literature review. For example, the significantly lower employment and income rates apparent in the Tri-Cities follow the Canadian trend of lower immigrant employment in knowledge-based industries and the consequently lower income averages of immigrant workers. The employer consultations sought to understand the specific barriers and causes of these statistics in the Tri-Cities area. The following chapter summarizes the consultation results.

## 2.) Tri-Cities Labour Market Needs and Newcomer Supply

### 2.1 Overview

The research project sought feedback from employers about perceived shortages in the labour market, in order to understand their current and future labour market needs and their general perspective on labour market trends in the Tri-Cities.

Similarly, the newcomer community in the Tri-Cities was surveyed on their educational and professional backgrounds. The objective was to develop professional profiles and draw conclusions about the extent to which the skills and qualifications of newcomers match the needs of local employers.

### 2.2 Key Findings

#### *Labour and Skills Shortages*

The majority of the employers in the Tri-Cities are of the opinion that there is no real labour shortage in the region. Shortages are perceived to exist for positions in specific sectors, such as the manufacturing and equipment-operating sectors. Those employers are seeing a general decline of interest in labour intensive jobs and, thus, have a harder time recruiting for those positions. In their opinion, these position do not attract young, educated people who instead seem to prefer working in a “clean office environment with a more regulated work environment”. As one employer described, “with the labour positions, it’s just a matter of people willing to do it.” When asking about skill shortages, employers’ answers were strongly mixed. While roughly half of the Tri-Cities employers also don’t see any skills shortages in the Tri-Cities (“We usually get the candidates that we are looking for”), some interviewees mentioned that they experience temporary skills shortages.

In some employers’ opinions, temporary skill shortages occur when there is a high demand for a specific profession at a certain moment in time. For example, around the year 2000 there was a lack of IT professionals on the Tri-Cities market, due to the assumed complexity of changing computer systems over to the new millennium. Today, some local employers face shortages in recruiting building professionals and specialists as a result of increasing development activities in the Tri-Cities.

**“If we have skill shortages, they seem to last for very short time frames”**

This competition for professionals in the Tri-Cities is further intensified by different salary levels that organizations are able to offer to skilled candidates. As some employers mentioned: “Sometimes we run into the challenge of our salary scales don't match those of other like-agencies that

#### Is there a labour and/or skill shortage in the Tri-Cities?

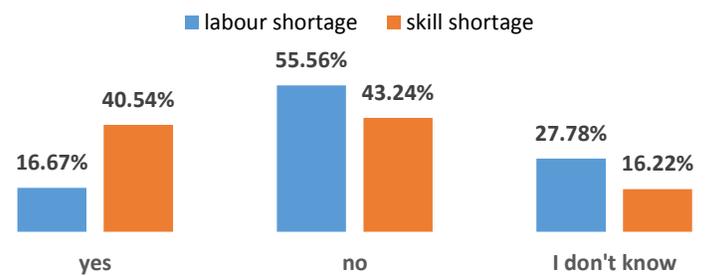


Figure 15 Perceived shortage of labour and skills in the Tri-Cities. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

**“There are only a few jobs that periodically we have trouble filling.”**

are recruiting for the similar positions or similar background of a person applying for a job”. Consequently, movement of skilled labour in those sectors, e.g. IT, is very high.

“[Applicants] look really good in terms of education but (...) they don’t have any of the experience along the way to back up the schooling with the soft skills that you would learn in the work force.”

Interviewed employers find that there is a lack of demonstrated work experience of applicants, as well as challenges with finding the “right fit” for some organizations’ specific cultural and business needs. Some employers find that applicants demonstrate a high level of educational training but little to no relevant or demonstrated work experience to support their educational background.

Specific skill shortages were identified by some interviewees from the community services and health sectors. They stated that there is a real gap of health care professionals in the Tri-Cities, especially multi-lingual, specialized counselors, therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists. Interviewees from the health care, community services and public sectors have challenges finding professionals who are proficient in English and in one of the top three non-official languages: Korean, Farsi and Mandarin.

### In-Demand Skills

When asking employers what skills they are currently missing in applicants, they most commonly mentioned relevant work experience, demonstrated soft skills and demonstrated leadership skills.

Figure 16 below shows a list of skills employer are missing today.

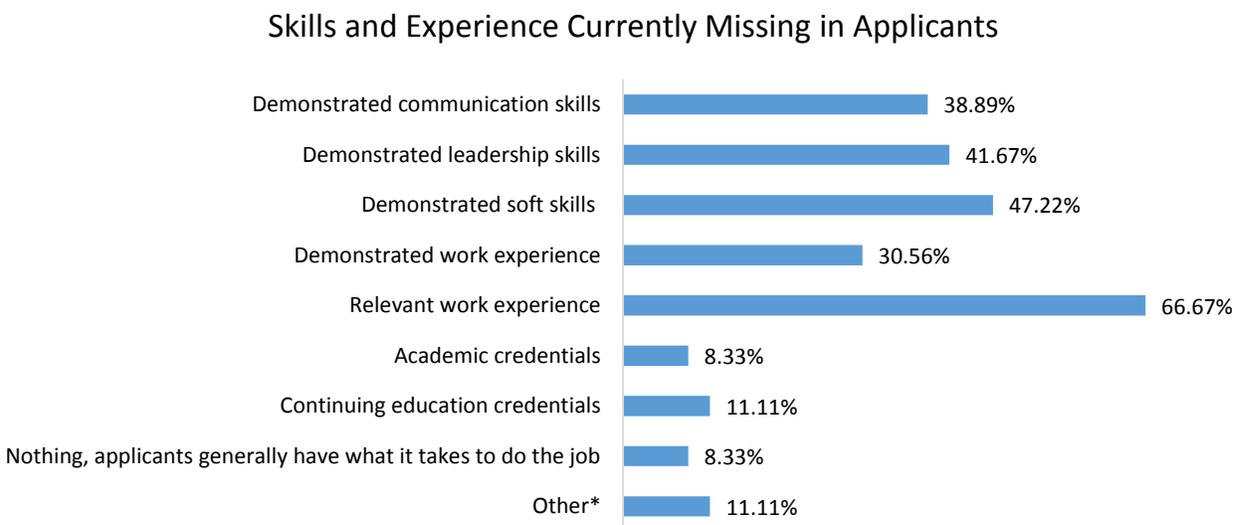


Figure 16 Skills and experience missing in applicants today. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

Current labour market needs do not differ very much from what employers will be looking for in the next three to five years. Employers highlighted a need for succession planning as a key driver for their labour market needs. The need for leadership skills and soft skills, in their opinion, will further increase over the

next three to five years. Many employers are interested in finding candidates that they can safely invest in and train with the intention of grooming into more responsible positions within this three to five year time frame.

**“Leadership qualities (...) is something that we will definitely, definitely look at. Are people willing to take on (...) more leadership skills, becoming managers, becoming supervisors?”**

Other employers referred more broadly to specific occupations and skills needed within their organizations. Many predicted that computer skills and the ability to deal with computer applications and software will become key skills as employers expect their workplaces to use more computer based applications in the future.

**“We’re looking for up-to-date skills. (...) There’s no end in sight into how much technology is coming into [our work], and how much more refined everything is getting.”**

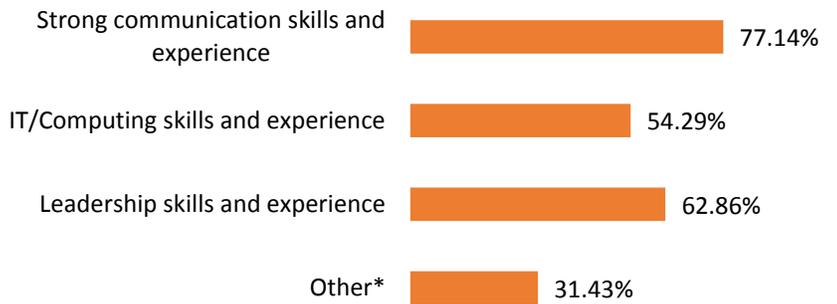
three to five years. Also, value alignment is of continuous importance to employers in order to be able to cater to the Tri-Cities’ specific customer base and their specific needs. As one employer mentioned: “[We will try to be] even more values-aligned than we ever have been”.

*Tri-Cities Labour Market Needs*

For the Tri-Cities as a whole, employers see an increasing demand for professionals in health care, information technology, software and infrastructure development. With a growing population made up of many families and immigrants, employers acknowledge that there is need for more multi-lingual, specialized health professionals in all areas, as well as teachers, public servants and community services with more culturally

**“[We will be] facing a shortage in the healthcare sector of nurses and also GPs.” “[We need] Psychiatrist who speak foreign languages, and counsellors.”**

**Which skills do you anticipate to look for in the next 3 to 5 years?**



*Figure 17 Tri-Cities skills needs in the next 3-5 years. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.*

Generally, employers said they will be looking for unique candidates that combine several skills at the same time. Highly specialized technical skills in combination with multi-lingual proficiency is a particularly desirable feature that many employers said they would be looking for in the next

**“A lot of needs will be around candidates who are well rounded in people skills but at the same time very good technical persons. Right now those two skills fit in two positions (in our company).”**

Employers see the Tri-Cities’ already strong retail sector maintaining an important role in the economic make-up of the region, while they see more rapid growth of the information technology sector. Software development, coding and application development, in their opinion, will especially dominate the IT sector and

employers see those occupations increasing in the Tri-Cities over the next three to five years. In their opinion, the Tri-Cities should focus on keeping highly educated students and graduates of information technology programs in the region.

Employers also expect the need for plumbers, electricians, and construction professionals to grow over the next three to five years. “[We will need] simple labour.” “(...) more the plumbers, the electricians, I think there is demand for that right now.” Employers see the most pressing labour market demands to be in the retail and business sectors, such as legal or financial services, as well as construction and IT.

### *Education versus Experience*

Educational attainment and the credentials of applicants are important to employers; however, their impact on a specific employment decision varies depending on the position that is being filled. According to the majority of employers interviewed, entry-level positions across different sectors require, at a minimum, a high school degree and some technical training through apprentice programs or college courses, up to and including certification and diploma levels. Some highly technical occupations require specific technical training for those positions, often offered as certificates, diplomas or undergraduate degrees at various educational facilities across the Lower Mainland. Many employers mentioned Douglas College and BCIT as trusted educational institutions where certificates can be obtained that are relevant to their business or organization. Management level positions in most of the sectors represented in the interviews require a minimum of an undergraduate degree. Research institutions interviewed require graduate degrees or higher so as to demonstrate the same standard that their students are aiming for.

“A one year diploma and five years of experience would actually be a better candidate for us than the one with a degree and zero experience.”

For employers interviewed by the research team, an applicant’s work experience is much more important than specific university degrees. About half of the employers interviewed very much value any kind of exposure to a professional work environment.

However, employers hiring for administrative, coordinative, managerial or related positions look for relevant work experience, ideally in other office environments, where candidates have exposure to office systems and clerical tasks. Apart from technical experience with computer software systems, employers particularly look for experience that demonstrates that candidates are able to interact efficiently and appropriately with other staff and clients. An applicant’s ability to ease into a certain work place culture and move within it confidently, as well as candidates’ ability to show and apply soft skills, is of core importance to the majority of employers.

“The soft skills sometimes can be the most important thing the person brings to the job. Their ability to listen, their ability to reflect, their ability to make the person feel comfortable, their ability to engage and to connect with the person...”

Lastly, membership in professional and industry associations is important to some employers who offer regulated or highly technical positions. Industry and professional association membership helps employers verify the level of professionalism and ensures a specific quality of knowledge and experience.

### Sourcing Tri-Cities' Workforce – Common Recruitment Practices

The majority of employers in the Tri-Cities find their candidates from either hiring within the organization (67%) or by searching for candidates using online recruitment tools (58%).

#### Where do you look for candidates?



Figure 18 Common sources for Tri-Cities employers to look for candidates. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

**“The initial step is to look internally.”  
“People who are in a part-time position (...) they can move-up if they have the right combination of experience and skills.”**

The preference for internal recruitment comes from the acknowledgement that existing staff already know the vision, operational processes and work culture of their organization. While some training may still be required, employers have more confidence in recruiting people from within the organization if they have the right skill set and level of experience. Some employers also assert that internal recruitment is used as an employee retention strategy and

to support professional development. Personal referrals also remain important to employers. Their experience in recruiting people through word of mouth is mostly positive, as they feel that candidates that come in with referrals or personal connections are those that “really want to do the job”.

Public sector organizations and technical organizations tend to use industry and professional association websites to reach out to specialized occupational groups (52%). For entry-level jobs, temporary contracts, short-term recruitment needs, and general labour, employers use large-scale online platforms such as Craigslist, indeed.ca, Workopolis, or kijiji. Social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, also play an important role for employers to tap into the experienced and skilled pools of candidates within specific sectors. Community services, non-profit and mission-based businesses tend to use sector-specific platforms such as Charity Village or Greenwork.ca.

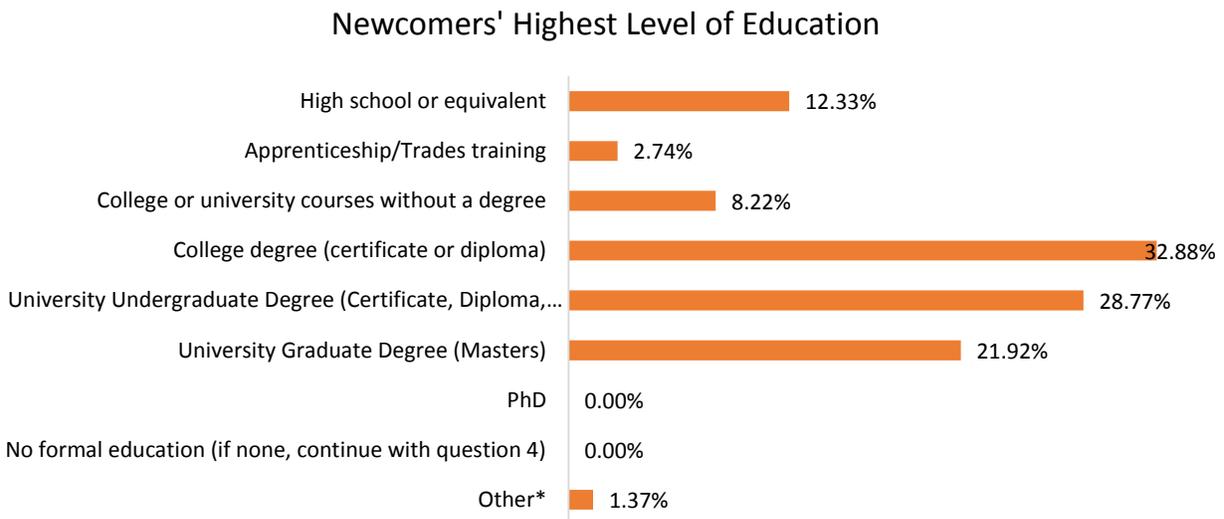
Some interviewed employers use local employment supporting organizations, such as Avia Employment, Express Pros, Back in Motion and other WorkBC programs. Hiring agencies are most commonly used to hire executive positions. Only a few employers (22%) use organizations that are specialized in immigrant employment services and that have job banks in place. There is little awareness of immigrant community serving job platforms such as the one hosted by the Immigrant Services Society (ISS) of BC.

Very few employers collaborate directly with educational institutions, such as Douglas College, to recruit for positions. Employers who collaborate with post-secondary institutions tend to be those who

are seeking to fill highly specialized, highly technical occupations in sectors such as the health care sector. In addition, consulted employers in the Tri-Cities now rarely use traditional print media as a vehicle to advertise vacant positions.

### *Newcomer Occupational Profiles*

Immigrants and recent immigrants from the Tri-Cities who were consulted through the newcomer survey show very high levels of education. Close to 84% of respondents have a minimum of a community college degree, but over 50% of them indicated to have university undergraduate or graduate degrees. Most of respondents completed their education outside of Canada, while only 7% of respondents reported having credentials from a Canadian institution.



*Figure 19 Newcomers' highest level of education. Source: TCLIP Newcomer Survey, October 2015.*

Also, occupational backgrounds and training varies and the highest levels of educational attainment are found primarily in knowledge-based sectors such as business, management, finance, education or health care.

The most common occupations amongst newcomer respondents were business, management and finance (23%), teaching or education (16%), as well as health care (12%) and public administration (12%). All of these occupations are part of the knowledge sector. Sales and services, a typical sector for high immigrant employment in the Tri-Cities was only a trained occupation for around 8% of respondents as figure 20 below shows.

## Newcomers' Original Occupations

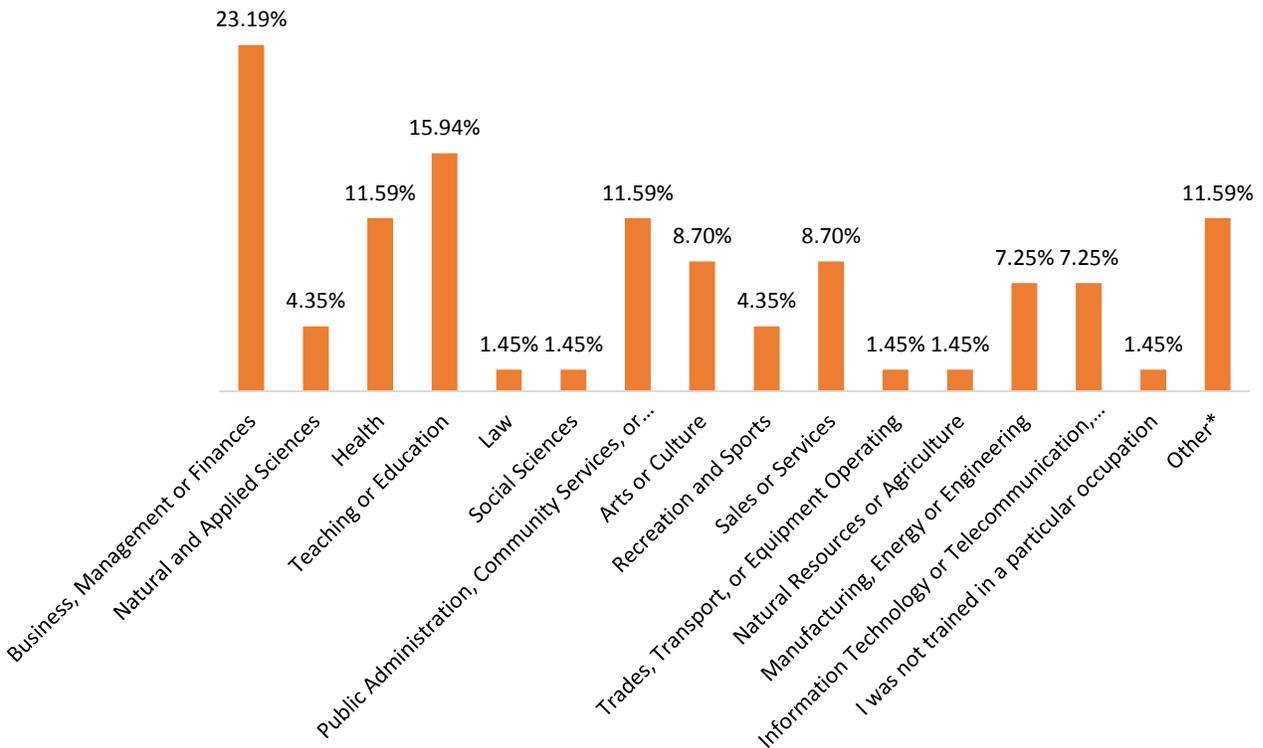


Figure 20 Newcomers' original occupations. Source: Newcomer Survey, October 2015.

The total number of years of work experience reported by newcomers was highly significant to the research findings. Approximately 61% of respondents have more than 10 years of professional work experience in their country of origin or internationally. Another 25% indicated 5 or more years of work experience. Based on that data, the research team was interested in learning whether newcomers have been able to find employment in Canada and if so, whether their Canadian job experience has been in their original occupational field. Only 34% of respondents reported that they have found work or continue to be employed. Out of those who found employment, only 34% respondents said that their job was in their occupational field. The majority of respondents (65%) have worked or currently work in a different field or, alternatively, could not answer the questions.

### Newcomer Job Search Experience

To indicate interest in a job, respondents typically prepare and submit a resume (48%). However, 30% use their networks either to make a contact with an employer or to receive a referral. Some 37% of respondents said that they would try to get a volunteer position with their employer of choice, while 22% and 20% respectively would stay rather passive and wait for a job posting to open before submitting an application or simply do not know what they would do



when they find an organization that matches their skills, qualifications, career aspirations and interests.

The research team was also interested in the experience of newcomers using employment programs offered by immigrant-supporting organizations in the Tri-Cities. Fully 67% of respondents indicated that they have not used these services, whereas 34% had done so.

There is a multitude of reasons why newcomers have not made use of the services offered by immigrant-serving organizations (see figure 21). Amongst the strongest reasons are a lack of understanding of the services offered by these organizations (35%), and a lack of time to attend any programs because of respondents' responsibilities at home or at work (27%). However, over 50% of respondents feel uncomfortable participating in immigrant-supporting programs because they perceive that their level of English is too low.

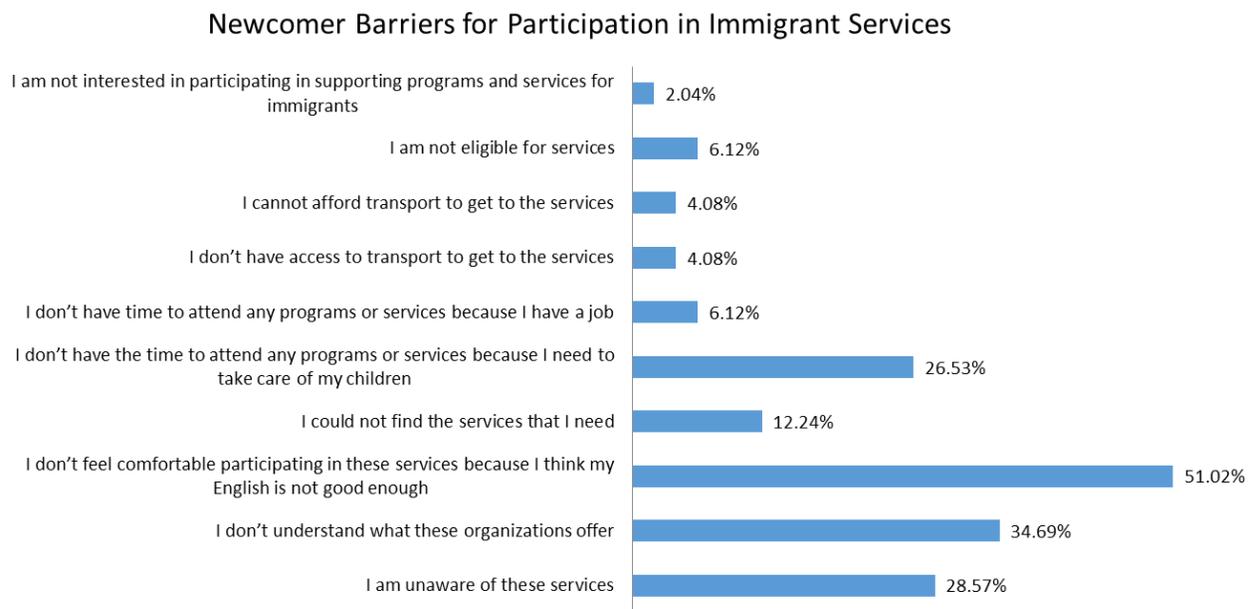


Figure 21 Barriers for participation in immigrant services. Source: TCLIP Newcomer Survey, October 2015.

### 2.3 Analysis

The labour market needs of employers in the Tri-Cities are diverse. However, there is evidence that labour market needs in the Tri-Cities are driven by two prioritized organizational developments: succession planning and the increasing importance and growth of technology and computer applications in the workplace. Much of the current and expected future skills shortages are driven by the perceived lack of candidates with appropriate soft skills, notably those in the areas of leadership and communications. These findings align with projections made by WorkBC and the provincial government which forecast that a high share of job openings in the near-term will be driven by the upcoming retirement of the baby boomers and the creation of new jobs in the tech and knowledge sectors (WorkBC n.d.; British Columbia Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development 2003).

Nevertheless, the need for professional and trades occupations remains high in the Tri-Cities. Retail, business services (such as financial and legal services), construction and IT are among sectors in which employers see the most pressing workforce demands in the region. These findings are also supported by

the rising population, the expansion of public infrastructure and transportation (City of Coquitlam 2009), and the region's focus on attracting businesses in the tech and IT sectors. In addition, local employers also believe that there will be increased growth in, and demand for skilled workers over the next three to five years in the health care, social assistance, education, retail trades, and the professional, scientific and technical services sectors.

Based on the labour market needs of the region, it is no surprise that employers search for qualified candidates either online or within their existing workforce. Employers feel more comfortable considering a candidate that has already been working in the organization or occupational field and is familiar with the culture and norms of the industry and the workplace. At the same time, the use of online search tools indicates that employers with specific needs compete for talent at the provincial and national level where the costs to reach a pool of skilled applicants are low and the number of potentially qualified applicants is considerably larger.

This has significant implications for newcomer job seekers. The majority of newcomers that were surveyed follow a classic approach to employment, namely submitting applications and resumes for vacant positions. Only 30% of newcomers recognize the importance of connecting with employers on a direct networking basis, through either volunteer positions or through referrals from friends or family. The majority of open positions, however, are unlikely to be advertised publicly due to the preference of employers to hire internally. For example, in the US, human resource professionals argue that the rate of unpublished job openings is at 70%-80% due to the fact that recruitment happens through internal hiring or networks (McIntosh 2012). These results show that there is a gap between employers' approaches to finding the right candidate and the ability of newcomers ability to get access, and respond in the right way, to those openings.

This seems to be a missed opportunity on the employer side as both the Tri-Cities labour market demographics and the newcomer survey results show that recent immigrants bring in a high level of education, experience and diverse occupational training compared to Canadian-born workers. In fact, newcomers are expected to drive employment in the Tri-Cities due to their higher levels of educational attainment and experience. This includes employment in the health care, manufacturing, construction, retail, education and information technology sectors. Opportunities for employers and newcomers to better access and support their respective labour market needs could be partially addressed through more awareness-raising and networking to build bridges and reduce perceived barriers and challenges to greater levels of labour market integration (Rai 2013).

### 3.) Tri-Cities Employer Perceptions and Experiences on Cultural Diversity and Hiring Recent Immigrants

#### 3.1 Overview

This section summarizes a variety of questions to employers that were related to their perception of the value of cultural diversity and their experience in hiring recent immigrants. Specifically, the research team was interested in the concerns of employers with respect to newcomer applicants. The questions further tried to identify what would make employers more comfortable and confident hiring someone with foreign skills and credentials.

#### 3.2 Key Findings

##### *Perceived Value of Cultural Diversity*

In general, employers in the Tri-Cities see diversity as beneficial and valuable for their business success. This is true primarily for organizations that already serve a diverse client base. For these employers, their ongoing exposure to a multi-cultural client base helps them understand how to tailor their business strategy and operation processes to meet the specific needs of their clients. In addition, employers believe that a diverse workforce is both desirable and the most effective way to access new markets and a broader client base.

#### How Does Cultural Diversity Impact Your Business Goals?

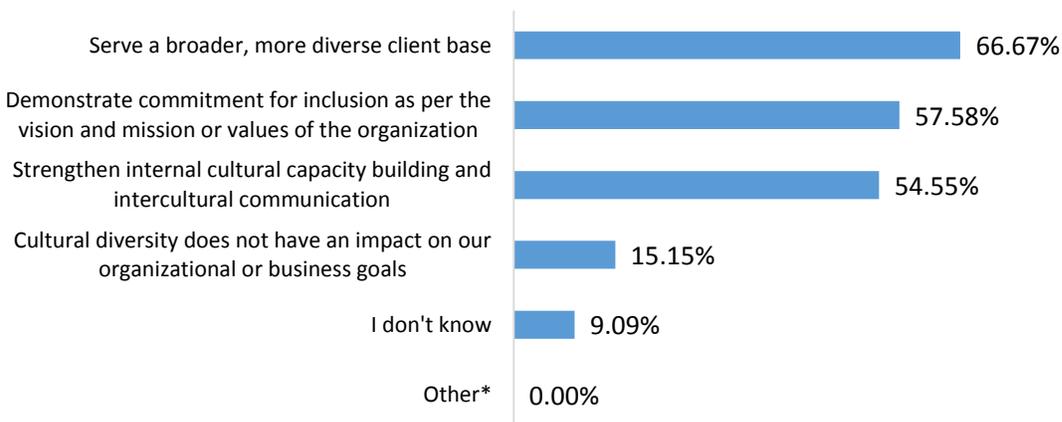


Figure 22 Cultural diversity impact on business goals. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

**“[Cultural diversity] is absolutely essential. It provides creativity. It provides variety of markets and a wider range of customer interaction.”**

However, other businesses also value diverse staff. Some argued that diversity provides opportunities for innovation and development, as staff with international backgrounds can enrich conversations and solution finding by bringing different perspectives and experiences to the workplace.

Other employers noted that they are committed to a diverse staff makeup in order to help fulfill the vision and mission of their organization. Some employers mentioned that diverse staff enrich their workplace culture, often through cultural celebrations and increased understanding of cultural habits, holidays and activities. In the opinion of these employers, cultural diversity creates a stronger work place where understanding, communication and empathy contribute to a sense of respect and belonging. Employers note that this understanding and empathy for different cultures also occurs outside of the workplace and helps create more inclusive communities and a stronger embrace of cultural diversity. Only 16% of employers answered that diversity has no impact on their business success.

“Diversity is really important, [we] need to be able to reflect the diversity of people we are serving and understand their challenges.”

### Diversity Measures

Employers who see value in cultural diversity tend to have measures and activities in place to support diversity at the workplace. The most common methods used by employers to acknowledge cultural diversity is through participation in community events and through the facilitation of culturally inspired events at the workplace. This includes celebrations during cultural holidays, such as Diwali or Chinese New Year. Most employers mentioned that cultural exchange in their workplaces happens through food-oriented events, such as potlucks. However, those initiatives are often not driven by the employers themselves, but by their staff.

### Organization Measures to Improve Cultural Diversity

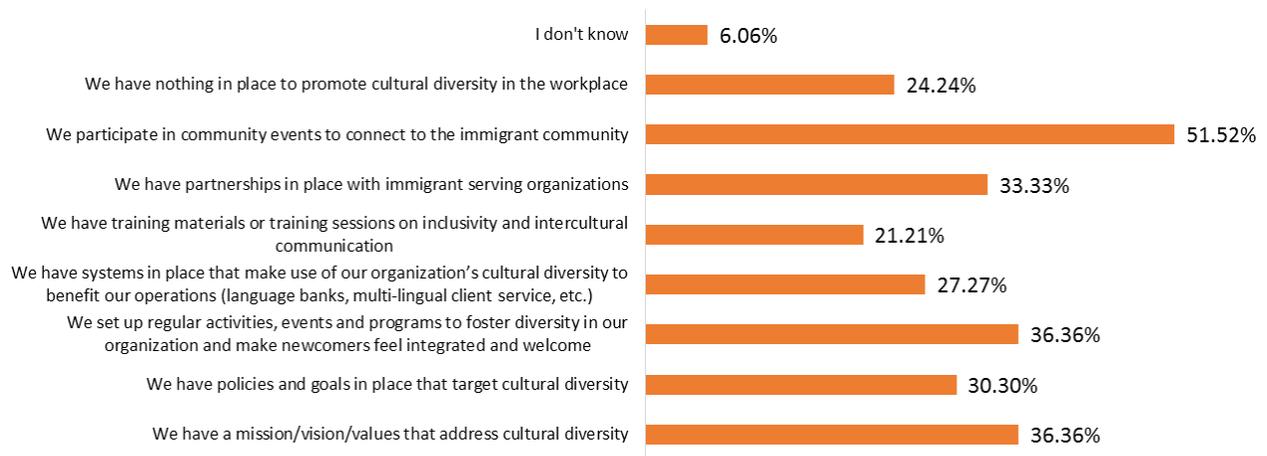


Figure 23 Diversity programs in place in Tri-Cities organizations. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

"We developed our language banks. We do have staff we can call upon, even if they're not in that department, we'll call them up and they'll come from another department to come down, and help with the communication."

Employers report different methods for engaging their staff on issues related to cultural diversity. Some employers engage their staff through internal and external communications tools, with newsletters, blogs and websites being the most commonly used methods for information-sharing and awareness-raising.

The research also found that language banks are a commonly used tool in many different organizations. Language banks contain a list of languages available in an organization. They

serve to inform all employees of the languages available to them and their clients and help organizations to meet the language needs of culturally diverse customers.

Only 50% of organizations surveyed had either specific diversity training programs or a staff position dedicated to diversity. Often, employers see their capacity to cultural diversity materials and programs limited due to small staff numbers or the lack of financial resources. Thus, some employers provide access to materials and events through subscriptions to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusivity (CCDI). Others have implemented voluntary diversity committees or seek to have a culturally diverse board of directors. Employers with sufficient capacity most often have a diversity position on staff to facilitate training and capacity building in the workplace through workshops, conferences and other internal events and materials.

"We, as an employer, partner with CCDI, the Center for Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity. It gives our employees access to free webinars and resources and conferences."

### Recent Immigrant Hiring

When it comes to staff composition, the majority of employers see their organizations to be reflective of the cultural diversity of the Tri-Cities. Many employers reported that they have staff from all over the world - specifically from China, South Korea, the Philippines, Iran and Europe.

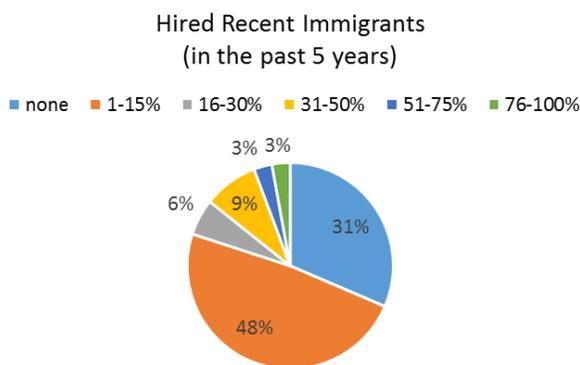


Figure 24 Hired recent immigrants. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

However, while employers recognize a high number of recent immigrant applicants, there have not been many recent immigrant hires at organizations that we consulted for this study. While almost 50% of employers said that they have hired a recent immigrant in the last five years, those same employers reported that only 1 to 15% of their staff is comprised of recent immigrants. Other organizations showed a much higher percentage share of recent immigrants on their staff, with a few organizations reporting that up to 100% of their staff is comprised of recent immigrants.

Some employers were not able to identify whether the immigrants that they employ are recent immigrants. This is mostly due to the fact that relevant data is neither gathered or asked nor requested during the recruitment process, in order to protect the identity of those candidates.

“[I am] unable to specify exact number of workers with recent immigration background, because related data is not gathered during recruitment processes. I perceive that requesting such data would be a human rights violation.”

Recent immigrants are usually hired into positions that cover the spectrum from contracting work to part-time and full-time employment, with no tendency towards a particular work relationship. When asking employers about their attrition rates related to immigrants, the majority said that their attrition rates generally are very low or that there is no difference between the attrition of immigrant staff versus Canadian staff. More commonly, according to employers, whether or not someone stays in a job is a self-driven decision and usually happens because of a better opportunity somewhere else or through self-recognition that the job is not the right fit.

“[Lots of] employees go through a self-filtering process as they face (...) barriers. It is up to them on how long they can thrive at their job, since they will personally face these barriers that might influence their experience being employed at my company.”

About one quarter of the employers interviewed mentioned that they themselves have a first generation immigrant background. The cultural make-up of their staff, however, depends more strongly on the specific business they are representing, the clients they serve and their preference for international staff. However, employers with an immigration background generally showed openness to recent immigrant hiring and value international experience of applicants.

Some of the employers with an immigration background said they would only hire people with the same cultural background due to the nature of the clients they serve. This is true specifically for the Korean and Chinese-operated retail and service sectors, where employers would focus their hiring on people who speak fluent Korean or Chinese. Even if Canadian-born clients use their services, these employers do not see the need to hire more diverse staff as they focus their services entirely on their own cultural communities. One Chinese business interviewed, however, was highly interested in interacting with the Canadian market and consequently hired a Canadian-born business partner to build access.

### Concerns

The expressed value for cultural diversity in the workplace, but the rather low number of recent immigrant hires, triggers the question as to why employers may not consider recent immigrant applicants. Previous studies on the labour market integration of recent immigrants, as well as conversations with employers in the Tri-Cities, showed that there are substantial concerns about the profile of recent immigrant applicants. Figure 25 below summarizes key concerns of employers in the Tri-Cities regarding hiring recent immigrants.

## Concerns About Recent Immigrant Applicants

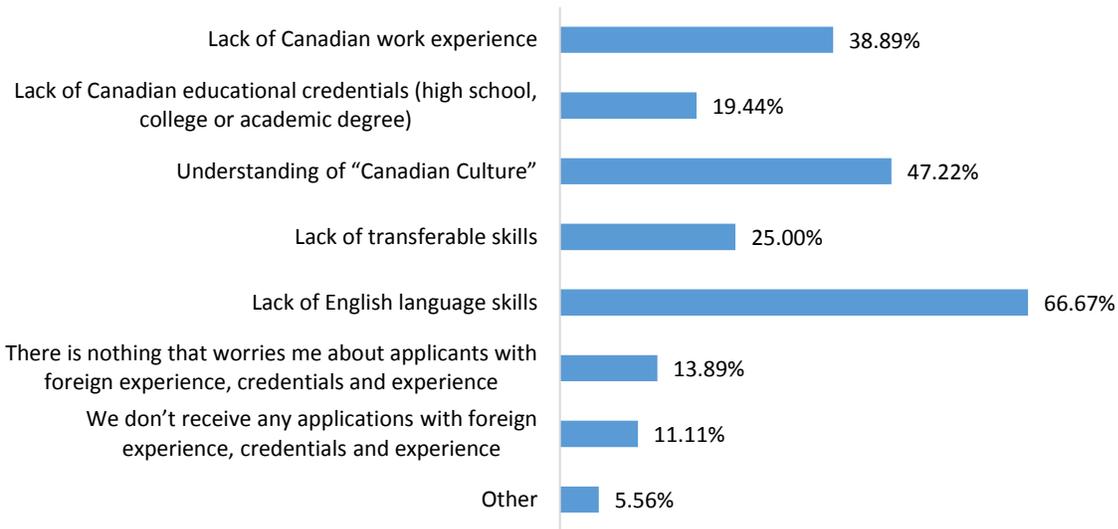


Figure 25 Employers' concerns over recent immigrant applications. Source TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

Employers believe that recent immigrants lack sufficient English language skills (67%), an understanding of "Canadian Culture" (47%) and appropriate amounts of Canadian work experience (39%). Employers from organizations that have a direct client interface are most cautious about English language proficiency at a professional level. Employers said that they cannot hire someone into a customer service position who is not able to professionally and clearly communicate in English, even when those candidates speak languages that meet other organizational needs. Some employers argued that professional English skills are important for the candidates themselves to be able to succeed in their roles, and feel acknowledged and protected from conflict in the workplace.

An understanding of workplace norms and culture is important to employers in the Tri-Cities because it can impact both the work environment and the organization's clients. Misinterpretation of cultural habits or misunderstanding of cultural behaviour can have negative impacts on the workplace environment. One employer anecdotally noted:

[We] hired someone with multi-language capacities and with high hopes. We had to let go of the person (...). There was a lack of understanding of Canadian workplace culture. We try to be mindful and provide opportunities. But sometimes they are business essential. (...) The core value of that person was self-protection – everything was everybody else's fault. To a large extent this was cultural. It was hard to make critical statements. Normally, you talk about it and then move on. It does not create a healthy workplace if it is reflected back to everyone else.

Lastly, employers mentioned that they experienced difficulties in understanding presented credentials and felt uncomfortable making a decision as to their validity. Employers representing regulated occupations said that they can only accept officially recognized Canadian credentials.

“It can be a struggle if you don't understand other country's training programs.”

### Comforts

Evidently, employers expressed a high level of comfort with considering recent immigrant applicants if credentials, soft skills and experiences were clear, transferable and relevant.

## Important Factors in Hiring Recent Immigrants

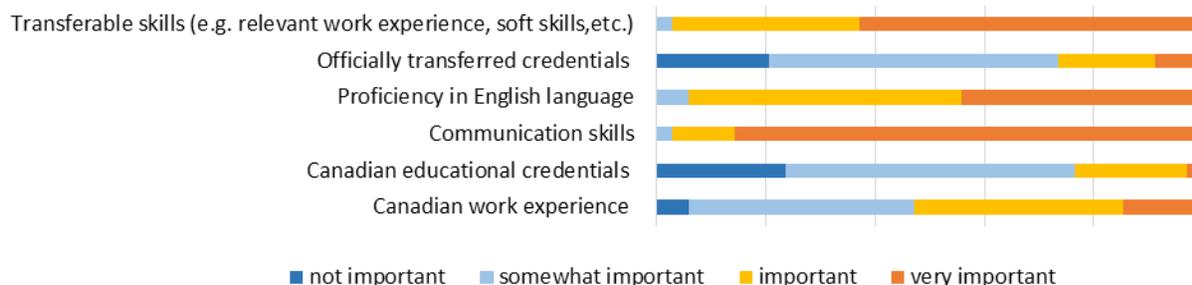


Figure 26 Important factors in hiring recent immigrants. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

Familiarity with educational institutions and work experience makes employers more likely to consider an applicant with foreign education, skills and credentials. However, the level of assessment of those skills differs from employer to employer. While some employers stated that they feel comfortable about someone’s credentials when they can validate information through online research, others mentioned they preferred officially transferred records from a recognized Canadian educational institution.

A little over 12% of employers noted that they do not have any concerns with respect to hiring a recent immigrant with foreign experience, skills and credentials.

### 3.3 Analysis

The results of this chapter show that employers in the Tri-Cities generally value cultural diversity in the workplace for its capacity-building characteristics and positive impact on business performance. Also, support for workplace measures on cultural diversity are diverse but not always strategic or driven at the management level. Instead, many cultural diversity measures are staff-driven and informal. The ability to dedicate financial resources to diversity materials, a diversity committee or a staff person for diversity tends to be limited to larger organizations due to capacity reasons (Reitz 2005). Smaller and medium-sized organizations are usually left with either informal measures or no diversity measures at all. However, it is the small and medium employers who are the most open to internationally acquired skills and tend to employ more immigrants (Rai 2013; Weiner 2008). For them, cultural capacity building may become crucial to accessing the skilled recent immigrant workforce and retaining them in their organizations. The use of third party material, such as through CCDI or the election of a board member with an immigrant background, are low cost measures for organizations to increase cultural capacity in the workplace.

Ultimately, cultural diversity training can have significant impact on the utilization of recent immigrants' skills in the workplace (Reiz, 2005). As described in the literature review, the underutilization of recent immigrants' skills can occur when employers are not able to assess newcomers' skill-sets or when cultural behaviour in the workplace is misinterpreted.

This issue becomes evident when looking at employers' responses to the concerns of newcomers. While employers find comfort in communication skills and transferable skills, there is a barrier to assessing those skills if employers thought the candidate's level of English language proficiency is insufficient to meet organizational needs. Even if newcomers can demonstrate those skills, it depends on the capacity and willingness of the employer to understand or investigate the credentials presented.

Information and training on intercultural communication alone has the potential to disperse early conclusions and perceptions concerning English language proficiency levels and may help overcome prejudice towards cultural backgrounds – on both the employer and the newcomer side (Weiner 2008). Also, information material for diversity has been found to result in a greater degree of positive commitment of the employer towards immigrant hires (Reiz, 2005).

**“We provide workshops for inter-cultural communication.” “They educate our work force and educating our work force includes educating our leadership who are making hiring decisions. It’s about breaking social barriers and social stigmas.”**

## 4.) Tri-Cities Employer and Newcomer Recommendations to Foster Labour Market Integration

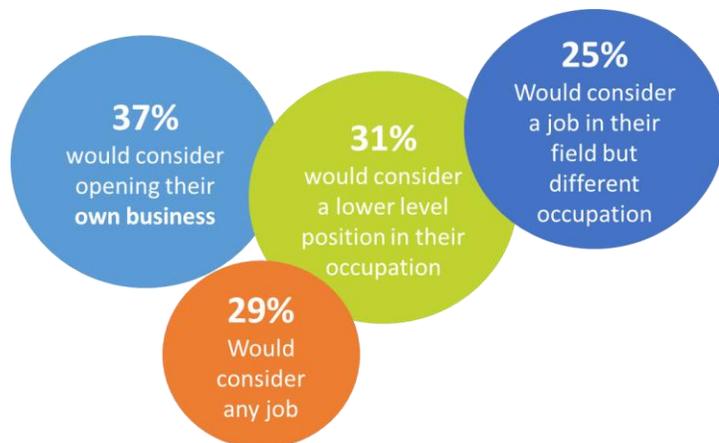
### 4.1 Overview

With the current labour market integration of recent immigrants and an increasing immigrant population in the Tri-Cities, the research team was interested in learning what employers and newcomers would consider to be successful strategies to foster stronger labour market integration. For newcomers, it was asked what employment options they would consider in order to achieve labour market integration. Employers were asked what they would recommend to facilitate networking and the integration of recent immigrants into the local labour market.

### 4.2 Key Findings

#### *Newcomer Perspectives on Labour Market Integration*

Newcomers in the Tri-Cities labour market evidently show a strong willingness to access employment and would consider different options to do so. Some 37% of newcomers would consider becoming entrepreneurs and opening their own businesses. Further comments on this option showed that recent immigrants see entrepreneurship as the fastest and most lucrative option to access the local labour market. Additionally, 31% of newcomers would consider a lower level position in their trained occupation in order to integrate into specific work cultures or go through a re-credentialing process. Around 25% of newcomers would consider a job in their field but in a different occupation. An equally high amount of recent immigrants (29%) would consider any job due to strong economic pressures.



#### *Employer Recommendations*

The research team asked employers directly for their recommendations to better connect recent immigrant communities with the labour markets in the Tri-Cities. The table below summarizes and groups responses given according to three emerging themes that employers identified: Communication and information sharing, networking and relationship building, as well as programming and training.

Employer recommendations for improved labour market integration		
Employers are interested in stronger <b>communication and information sharing</b> to access	Employers recognize the <b>value</b> of <b>networking</b> and making <b>connections</b> for recent immigrants in the job search	Employers see value in <b>programming and training</b> to grow both immigrants' and their own capacity to build more inclusive work places.

recent immigrant work force, including:	process. Specifically, they recommended:	Suggestions to achieve this include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Recent) Immigrant skills and job bank</li> <li>▪ Work permits and skills-based immigration programs</li> <li>▪ Best practices in implementing diversity programs (formal and informal)</li> <li>▪ Testimonial-sharing on how diversity has supported business success</li> <li>▪ Services or information around official recognition of foreign credentials</li> <li>▪ Services and information to immigrants before their arrival to Canada</li> <li>▪ Use of alternative communication and advertisement channels such as radio or television</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Newcomer targeted events such as job fairs or forums</li> <li>▪ Mentorship programs</li> <li>▪ Partnerships with organizations that already offer networking events</li> </ul> <p>Also strategic partnerships between TCLIP and other stakeholders are seen as important, such as with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Registration and licensing organizations, unions and other occupational associations</li> <li>▪ WorkBC and the BC Provincial Government</li> <li>▪ Employment service providers and postsecondary education institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hiring support for employers to better understand recent immigrant credentials and assets</li> <li>▪ Mentorship programs or job shadowing opportunities that connect newcomers with employers</li> <li>▪ Volunteer and internship programs for newcomers</li> <li>▪ Workplace diversity training</li> <li>▪ High level professional English learning programs that train for strong communication skills and cultural knowledge</li> </ul>

Table 3 Employer recommendations for improved labour market integration. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

Employers, on an individual level, are interested in learning more about cultural diversity benefits and best practices for diversity, and look to information-sharing between organization as a means of developing greater knowledge and understanding. On a higher level, employers see a need for industry and professional associations to work more closely with local stakeholder groups such as TCLIP to provide them with better support and understanding of foreign credentials and processes for credential transfers. Also, employers see a stronger role for the Provincial government and municipalities to more effectively and more broadly market and streamline both supports and employment programs for recent immigrants. Lastly, employers suggested different programs for building more professional English language capacities and connecting newcomers with employers more directly through volunteering positions, mentorship programs or networking events such as job fairs. They also see a strong role for employment service providers and postsecondary institutions to play in providing workplace and cultural diversity training to both their Canadian-born clients and recent immigrant clients.

With the employer survey, the project team aimed to rank the different recommendations based on what employers see as the most impactful measures to contribute to better labour market integration of recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities. Figure 27 below illustrates the results. Employers ranked services to support foreign credential recognition and volunteering as most impactful. Also, job shadowing or mentoring programs, from the employers' perspective have a high degree of impact in supporting recent immigrants to connect with the labour market. Recruitment support, through online job posting websites targeting the newcomer population and hiring support for employers to understand work permit and immigration path specifics of newcomers, is seen as somewhat impactful.

### Most Impactful Measures For Integrating Newcomers into the Tri-Cities Labour Markets

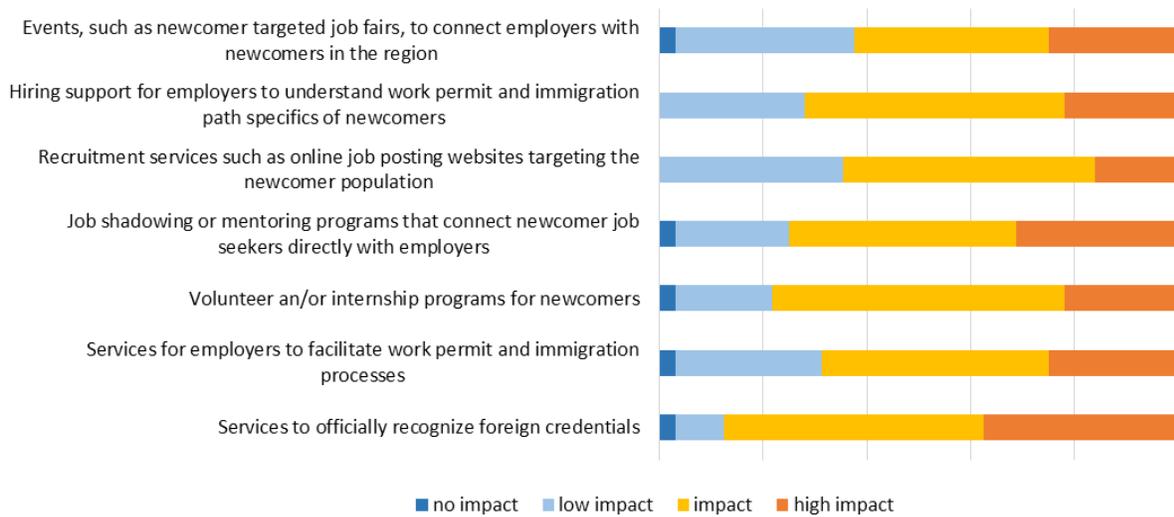


Figure 27 Important measures for newcomer integration. Source: TCLIP Employer Survey, October 2015.

#### 4.3 Analysis

Newcomer recommendations show the need for more guidance and direction in accessing the Tri-Cities labour market. This includes not only access to specific jobs but also support in understanding where support can be found and which steps need to be taken in order to facilitate access to employers and employment. The willingness of recent immigrants to enter positions at a lower level or within a different occupation in their field shows the need for employers to provide access to entry-level positions or career laddering opportunities. The recognition that recent

A local mentor (...) will be a good start to make immigrants feel (...) more connected to the community.

Source: Civic Engagement of Immigrants in the Tri-Cities, 2015

immigrants may lack knowledge of Canadian cultural

norm and workplace experience but could be eased into the culture by providing a laddering opportunity would prevent

The more residents (and employers) know about new immigrants' (...) struggles and successes the better they can understand how to be inclusive.

(...). Source: Civic Engagement of Immigrants in the Tri-Cities, 2015

skilled immigrants from taking low-level and low-paying jobs outside of their actual training.

Recent immigrants see the need for stronger awareness-building amongst employers and the community at large with respect to their labour market barriers and challenges. In the opinion of recent immigrants, information and awareness will foster a greater understanding as to how employers can be more inclusive. Lastly, recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities voiced their desire for more local mentorship. Ultimately, a mentorship program to them would be a good start to find their ways and get connected to employers.

Employer recommendations illustrate that there is a need for more information on labour market demographics of recent immigrants and orientation for employers to connect with and better assess skilled recent immigrant candidates. However, there is not much responsibility that employers assign to themselves in terms of facilitating this process. While diversity training and capacity training is acknowledged as a way to increase acceptance of skilled recent immigrant applicants, provided recommendations leave it open what role employers are willing to play themselves to contribute to suggested bridging programs.

## Part III – Strategic Recommendations

TCLIP’s vision is that “All residents live, work and belong in a welcoming and inclusive community.” Their mission is to set priorities and coordinate services for immigrants and refugees and to create a community where everyone can be welcomed and belong (TCLIP 2015).

Specifically, the mandate of the TCLIP is to foster a more welcoming and inclusive community while improving the integration and civic engagement of newcomers through:

- Enhancing collaboration, coordination and planning at the community level in order to foster a more welcoming and inclusive community and improve settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers and the community at large; and,
- Work to enhance civic engagement of newcomers.

With this vision and mission statement, it becomes clear that TCLIP cannot play a direct role in many of the recommendations made by employers and newcomers, especially with respect to those that indicate the need for direct service provision to immigrants. However, within their defined role as coordinator and collaborator, there are many opportunities for TCLIP to raise awareness, build capacity and facilitate change processes within local labour markets towards better integration of newcomers in the Tri-Cities.

Based on the research results, there are three strategic areas and roles that can be recommended for TCLIP to better facilitate integration of recent immigrants into the Tri-Cities labour market.

- 1.) Awareness raising through information development, management and implementation
- 2.) Building Strategic Partnerships
- 3.) Marketing and Communication

### Strategic Recommendation 1 – Awareness Raising through Information Development, Management and Implementation

As Reitz (2005) and Weiner (2008) state, information is key to overcoming complexities, staying informed and, evidently, to creating a greater positive attitude towards commitments by employers and other stakeholders to contribute to a welcoming community (Reitz 2005). In this study, employers themselves acknowledged that they need to tap into recent immigrant communities to find skills that they will be in need of or that they already need. Employers see the strongest support for themselves in better understanding recent immigrant credentials through training and better reference systems for foreign credentials. Thus, the involvement of employer association and professional and trades accreditation bodies becomes key for collaborating and harmonizing of information.

Based on the research results of this study, there is no clear consensus on what it means for a Tri-City employer to have or offer an inclusive workplace. The results suggest that it would be supportive for employers to showcase the different informal and formal approaches for diversity at the workplace and create a greater awareness of statistics and best practices in the Tri-Cities. This includes in-house training approaches and off-shelf resources that address challenges of employers in assessing recent immigrant credentials and transferability of skills. There should be room to allow employers to play an active role in

designing information to make sure that policies and measures meet employers' demands and ensure that they are easily replicable by other local employers (Birrel 2006).

Lastly, information sharing should not be limited to a particular stakeholder group but support public education efforts to develop a better societal understanding about the benefits and opportunities skilled immigrants bring to the community (Owen 2008).

Therefore, the following strategic imperatives are recommended to raise awareness for labour market integration of recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities:

1. Develop and update easy to access, easy to implement materials about human resources best practices and diversity programs and policies, such as in form of a handbook or a different product that TCLIP can offer for the Tri-Cities employer community. This may include:
  - Generic diversity policies, a simple matrix of informal and formal diversity best practices as an off-the-shelf handout to employers, diversity case studies that showcase positive impact on business performance and other materials as felt relevant to the employer community.
2. Develop and maintain an online resource library that is accessible to employers and other stakeholders alike and that includes information such as:
  - Materials about best practices and diversity programs and policies;
  - Information about employer association and professional and trades accreditation bodies in BC and simplified information for employers and immigrants about specific occupational requirements, timelines, fees and transferability of best practices of non-regulated skills;
  - Cross-posting of training programs, events, workshops, information sessions and other resources offered from employment and immigrant serving organization on TCLIP's website;
  - Regularly updated statistical information about labour market developments and immigrant demographics in the Tri-Cities labour markets;
  - Other materials deemed to be useful by employers to be relevant.
3. Identify the feasibility of a TCLIP hosted skills and job bank.
4. Work with TCLIP members to identify and implement pilot diversity programs and policies to show leadership and develop champions in the community. Target those members for implementation who are serving large networks themselves to accelerate implementation among the larger business community (e.g. Chamber, City, Colleges, etc.).

## Strategic Recommendation 2 - Building Strategic Partnerships

As noted under the previous recommendation, there needs to be active partnership building amongst employer associations, professional bodies, and post-secondary institutions to develop and distribute information that is useful and relevant to employers (Weiner 2008; Birrel 2006). Partnerships, however,

can play other key roles in accelerating changes in thinking and acting towards newcomer labour market integration. A strong alliance between different sector representatives and organizations like TCLIP demonstrates the value that employers see for recent immigrants and a diverse staff. The more prominent and knowledge-providing such a network appears to be, the more other organizations will be attracted to join or use their services. Strong partnerships that foster peer-exchange and learning have the potential to activate members' willingness to champion ideas and information across their networks. This can create a sense of leadership within their respective sectors and, in the ideal case, animate other businesses and organizations to follow the example. Attracting key employers, such as large retail organizations like IKEA or Home Depot, or other public authorities such as Fraser Health as members to TCLIP can help encourage other businesses in those sectors to take action.

The objective of partnership building could be to get more employers and professional organizations as well as post-secondary institutions involved in volunteering, internship, bridging and mentorship programs offered across the Tri-Cities (Weiner 2008). Mentorship programs have shown success to support labour market integration – studies on existing programs showed that 66% to 85% of participants find work after participating in those programs (Weiner 2008). While TCLIP itself may not run or implement such programs, it can support existing mentorship programs, such as the one at the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce, with information and capacity building to expand existing mentorship programs to those that involve or support recent immigrants. Ultimately, partnerships should be built strategically to get engagement of the larger employer and ethnic employer communities. Getting their involvement and maintaining it, can be hard work and the success of their engagement depends on TCLIP's ability to manage these relationships and to create value for engagement (Birrel 2006).

Therefore, the following strategic imperatives are recommended to building strategic partnerships:

1. Proactively engage with TCLIP members, business associations, professional and trades associations, the municipalities in the Tri-Cities and community serving organizations.
2. Develop and update a map of partnerships, networks and services available in the Tri-Cities with the objective to navigate different stakeholders to the right resources. This may include links to other local immigrant partnerships in the Lower Mainland.
3. Initiate and strengthen communication and collaboration with ethnic business associations in the Tri-Cities to walk-the-talk and demonstrate cultural diversity in TCLIP membership.
4. Use partnerships to recruit champions in the community that support cultural diversity through:
  - Implementing diversity tools developed by TCLIP;
  - Involving themselves in volunteer, internship, mentorship, bridging and/or training programs operated by other community organizations in the Tri-Cities, such as SUCCESS, ISS, Douglass College or WorkBC programs;
  - Championing best practices and inspiring other business to become more inclusive employers;
  - Introducing or extending existing mentorship programs through programming support by TCLIP.

## Strategic Recommendation 3 - Marketing and Communication

Relatively low awareness levels on both the employer and the newcomer side make marketing and communication a low-hanging fruit opportunity to raise awareness about existing programs, resources and services for immigrant employment in the Tri-Cities. A carefully targeted and regularly executed marketing and communication strategy would help distribute relevant information and bring attention to existing services, champions and networks working towards better labour market integration of immigrants. It can also raise the profile of TCLIP and attract more members to join the partnership and engage in labour market discussions. Different stakeholders, however, may need different communication approaches (Weiner 2008). For example, employers need encouragement and very concrete information to respond to the practical problems of newcomer labour market integration (Birrel 2006). TCLIP can provide useful information through regular updates of local labour market statistics, by implementing a stakeholder map or by providing hands-on information on credential assessments and skills transferability for employers. Such communication and information provision alone is estimated to be a very low-cost way to dramatically improve the labour market situation of recent immigrants (Reitz 2001). In partnership with the municipal governments of the Tri-Cities for example, TCLIP can help developing marketing messages to set the tone and climate for integration of newcomers. This may also mean to publish the difficult statistics of newcomer labour market integration in the Tri-Cities to raise public awareness about inequalities between recent immigrants, immigrants and Canadian born residents.

Therefore, the following strategic imperatives are recommended towards building a marketing and communication strategy:

1. Use TCLIP internet platform and other accessible channels to increase TCLIPs presence in the Tri-Cities and build a TCLIP brand, promoting information and materials such as:
  - Diversity tools developed by TCLIP;
  - Collected best practices and testimonials from employers who have implemented such programs;
  - Marketing campaigning around regularly updated Tri-Cities labour market statistics and demographics, such as through other employer Forums or electronically distributed information. This could be in partnership with already existing channels (e.g. Tri-Cities Chamber newsletter);
  - Clear communication of relevant information for employers and newcomers around credential assessments and accreditation;
  - Marketing of immigrant services offered by other community partners through the TCLIP website. This includes an event calendar with relevant events, also crosslinking events, workshops, training sessions and other resources.
2. Organize, facilitate or participate in community events to connect with employers and the newcomer communities.
3. Be present at employer networking meetings, such as those of the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce, to connect with employers in the Tri-Cities, promote TCLIP's tools and raise awareness for TCLIP's cause and mission.

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## Appendices

### Employer Interview Questionnaire – TCLIP “Tri-Cities Labour Market Scan”

#### Introduction

- 1.) Can you tell us a little bit about your organization/company?
  - a. How long has your organization been operating in the Tri-Cities?
  - b. How many employees do you have?
  - c. What kind of work/positions do you offer as an employer?

#### Qualifications and Skills

- 2.) From your organization’s/company’s perspective – do you think there is a labour or skill shortage in the Tri-City region?
  - *A **skills shortage** is when there is a lack of workers with the required education, experience or skills applying for vacant positions in your business.*
  - *A **labour shortage** is when there are too few workers applying for vacant positions in your business, including entry level or unskilled workers.*
- 3.) Are you finding that you get many applicants from a particular profession?
- 4.) What skills, qualifications and/or experience are you missing right now within your organization and with applicants?
- 5.) Do you have challenges in finding workers for your organization/company?
- 6.) **IF YES:** What are these challenges?
- 7.) What type of qualifications are you looking for when hiring a new employee? (if any?)
- 8.) Which skills, qualifications and experiences do you expect your organization to be looking for in three to five years?
- 9.) What are the general trends you see for the Tri-Cities region or your sector in terms of labour market demands? Which professions will be needed?

#### Recruitment and tools

- 10.) When you have a position to fill, where do you look for candidates? How do you find workers or what methods of recruitment do you use?
- 11.) Do you partner with or use any agencies/organizations to support your recruitment efforts?

### **Perception and experience related to recruiting and hiring recent immigrants**

- 12.) Does your organization reflect the diversity of the Tri-Cities?
- 13.) If yes, what cultural/ethnic groups are represented by your employees / If not, why not?
- 14.) How would cultural diversity help your organization/company to achieve your organizational or business goals?
- 15.) How many recent immigrants (defined as through arriving within the last 5 years) has your organization/company hired in the last 5 years?
- 16.) **IF ANY:** Was it into full-time permanent employment? If not, what have the opportunities been to achieve that?
- 17.) Do you think the cultural diversity of your organization will grow in the next 5 years? (What makes you think you will need more cultural diversity or less?)
- 18.) Is there anything that worries you about hiring someone with education, skills and/or experience from a different country?
- 19.) Is there anything that would support your decision to hire someone with education, skills and/or experience from a different country?

### **Optional:**

- 20.) Do you have any diversity programs in place and if yes, how do these programs influence the make-up of your workforce?
- 21.) What would you say are the attrition rates for immigrants employed in your organization? What supports are in place to ensure their experiences are positive and employment long-term?
- 22.) Do you have any recommendations to share for the provincial/federal government or local service organizations that would help you with finding and recruiting skilled recent immigrants?

### **Interview Closure**

- 23.) Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that we have not talked about?

## Tri-Cities Employer Survey

Realize Strategies on behalf of the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership (TCLIP) is conducting a labour market scan and key employer consultation in the Tri-Cities region. The objectives of this survey are to (1) better understand current and future labour market needs for your organization and for the Tri-Cities as a whole, (2) gather perceptions and experiences around immigrant hiring and/or your opinion on the role immigrants could play to address skill or labour shortages in the Tri-Cities region and (3) what can be done to support employers to tap into the available pool of skilled workers.

**You are receiving this survey invitation because you represent a key employer or key sector in the Tri-Cities region.** The results of this research will be used to inform the TCLIP Strategic Plan and will be presented at the TCLIP Forum on November 5, 2015.

This survey aims to **benefit employers and businesses** with the following information:

- Understanding what skills and experiences will be needed in different sectors represented in the Tri-Cities;
- Providing support for employers to connect and tap into the best skilled candidates in the Tri-Cities to overcome staffing challenges.

This survey will take approximately 10-12 minutes to fill in. The information you provide is anonymous and confidential. Results of this survey will feed into a summary report that all participants access (see instructions at the end of the survey). This survey is voluntary and you may stop the survey at any time or skip answers that you cannot or do not want to answer.

For questions about this project or the survey specifically, please contact Bertine Stelzer at: [bertine@realize.coop](mailto:bertine@realize.coop).

### Part 1 - Organizational Background

1. Which of the following best describes your organizational structure?
  - Private organization/company
  - Co-operative
  - Public organization/government-owned
  - Non-profit organization
  - Other, please specify
2. Which of the following sectors does your organization belong to? (Please check all that apply)
  - Business and Financial sector
  - Natural and Applied Science sector
  - Academic and Research sector
  - Health sector

- Public sector (education, law, social, community and government services)
  - Arts, Culture, Recreation and Sports sector
  - Sales and Services sector
  - Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operating sector
  - Natural Resources and Agricultural sector
  - Manufacturing sector
  - Energy Utility sector
  - Information Technology and Telecommunication sector
  - Consulting sector
  - Other, please specify
3. How many people are working in your organization?
- <10
  - <50
  - <250
  - 250+
  - Unsure
4. Does your organization operate or have an office within the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore or Belcarra)?
- Yes
  - No
5. Which types of positions are offered in your organization? Please check all those that apply.
- Senior level executive
  - Upper-level manager
  - Mid-level manager
  - Coordinator/Officer
  - Professional
  - Admin/Clerical
  - Entry level
  - Intern
  - Volunteer
  - Contractor
  - Other, please specify

## Part II - Skills and Labour Demand

6. Do you feel there is a labour shortage in the Tri-Cities?

***A labour shortage*** is when there are too few workers applying for vacant positions in your business, including entry level or unskilled workers.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

7. Do you feel there is a skills shortage in the Tri-Cities?

*A **skills shortage** is when there is a lack of workers with the required education, experience or skills applying for vacant positions in your business.*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

8. What skills, qualifications and/or experience are missing in applications (generally) that you currently receive? Please check all that apply.

- Demonstrated communication skills
- Demonstrated leadership skills
- Demonstrated soft skills (people skills, team work, public speaking, networking, etc.)
- Demonstrated work experience
- Relevant work experience
- Academic credentials
- Continuing education credentials
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Nothing, applicants generally have what it takes to do the job.

9. What skills, qualifications and experience do you anticipate you will be looking for in the next 5 years?

- Strong communication Skills and experience
- IT skills and IT experience
- Leadership skills and experience
- Other, please specify

10. Where do you think the most pressing work force demands will be in the Tri-Cities in the next 5 years?

### **Part III Recruitment and Hiring**

11. When you have a position to fill, where do you look for candidates? Please check all that apply:

- Online services, such as Workopolis, indeed.ca, Charity Village, etc.
- Social or professional networks, such as facebook, linkedIn, etc.
- Internal promotion and/or recruitment
- Referrals from colleagues/employees/friends

- External recruitment organizations or agencies
- Consideration of people who approached the organization directly
- Immigrant serving agencies
- Other, please specify

**Part IV Immigrant Hiring – perception and experiences**

12. To your best estimate, what percentage of staff in your organization has a recent immigrant background? Recent Immigrants are those who settled in Canada less than five years ago.

- None (if none, proceed to question 14)
- 1-15%
- 16-30%
- 31-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

13. When hiring recent immigrants, which type of positions are they typically hired into? You may check more than one answer.

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Both full-time and part-time
- Contractor
- Other, please specify

14. When receiving applications from candidates with foreign education, skills, and experiences, what worries you the most about those candidates? Please check all that apply

- Lack of Canadian work experience
- Lack of Canadian educational credentials (high school, college or academic degree)
- Understanding of “Canadian Culture”
- Lack of transferable skills
- Lack of English language skills
- Other, please specify:
- There is nothing that worries me about applicants with foreign experience, credentials and experience.
- We don’t receive any applications with foreign experience, credentials and experience.

15. On a scale of 1-4, **how important** would the following attributes be for you to consider an applicant who has foreign credentials, skills and experiences?

	not important	somewhat important	important	very important
Canadian work experience (volunteering, internships, other)				

Canadian educational credentials (high school, college, academia, other)				
Communication skills				
Proficiency in English language				
Officially transferred credentials from a Canadian institution				
Transferable skills (e.g. demonstrated experience in teamwork, leadership, personal motivation, organization & time management, etc.)				
Other, please specify:				

16. In your opinion, how would cultural diversity help your organization achieve its organizational or business goals? Please check all that apply:

- Serve a broader, more diverse client base
- Demonstrate commitment for inclusion as per the vision and mission or values of the organization
- Strengthen internal cultural capacity building and intercultural communication
- Other, please specify:
- Cultural diversity does not have an impact on our organizational or business goals
- I don't know

17. Do you think the cultural diversity of your organization is going to grow over the next 5 years?

- Yes, it is my **expectation** that there will be more and more immigrant applicants
- Yes, it is my expectation that we **want** to increase our cultural diversity
- Yes, it is my expectation that we **need** to increase our cultural diversity
- No
- I don't know

18. What does your organization have or what is your organization doing to improve cultural diversity in the workplace? Please check all that apply.

- We have a mission/vision/values that address cultural diversity
- We have policies and goals in place that target cultural diversity
- We set up regular activities, events and programs to foster diversity in our organization and make newcomers feel integrated and welcome
- We have systems in place that make use of our organization's cultural diversity to benefit our operations (language banks, multi-lingual client service, etc.)

- We have training materials or training sessions on inclusivity and intercultural communication
- We have partnerships in place with immigrant serving organizations
- We participate in community events to connect to the immigrant community
- We have nothing in place to promote cultural diversity in the workplace
- I don't know

19. What, in your opinion, would have the **most impact** on successfully integrating newcomers into the Tri-Cities labour markets? Please evaluate the given options to your best judgement.

	no impact	low impact	impact	high impact
Services to officially recognize foreign credentials				
Services for employers to facilitate work permit and immigration processes				
Volunteer and/or internship programs for newcomers				
Services, such as online posting websites targeted at the Newcomer population				
Job Shadowing or mentoring programs that connect immigrant job seekers directly with employers				
Recruitment support of recent immigrants by immigrant serving organizations				
Events, such as immigrant targeted job fairs, to connect employers with immigrants and newcomers in the region				
Other, please specify.....				

20. Do you have any other comments or thoughts on this survey or would you like to share something that we haven't asked you about?

21. If you have any diversity programs or activities in place in your workplace, please share one best practice you would like to highlight.

Thank you for your participation.

## **Welcome to the Tri-Cities Newcomers' survey!**

This survey aims to seek feedback from immigrants in the Tri-Cities region about their educational and professional profile and their Canadian labour market experiences. Your responses will feed into strategic recommendations for the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership to support labour market integration of recent immigrants in the Tri-Cities.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to fill in. The information you will provide is completely anonymous and confidential, you will not be identified in this survey. This survey is voluntary. Should you not want to answer any questions or exit the survey, you can do so at any time.

For questions about this research project or the survey specifically, please contact Bertine Stelzer at: [bertine@realize.coop](mailto:bertine@realize.coop).

### **Part 1 - Newcomer Profile**

**The first part of the survey is to understand your educational background and professional experience.**

#### **1. What is your highest level of education?**

- High school or equivalent
- Apprenticeship/Trades training
- College or university courses without a degree
- College degree (certificate or diploma)
- University Undergraduate Degree (Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor)
- University Graduate Degree (Masters)
- PhD
- Other, please specify
- No formal education (if none, continue with question 4)

#### **2. Do you have any credentials from a Canadian Institution?**

- Yes
- No

#### **3. If your answer was yes, please specify.**

#### **4. How many years of work experience do you have in your country of origin or elsewhere outside of Canada?**

- None
- Up to 2 years
- Up to 5 years
- Up to 10 years
- More than 10 years

**5. What is your trained occupation? Please specify.**

- Business, Management or Finances
- Natural and Applied Sciences
- Health
- Teaching or Education
- Law
- Social Sciences
- Public Administration, Community Services, or related
- Arts or Culture
- Recreation and Sports
- Sales or Services
- Trades, Transport, or Equipment Operating
- Natural Resources or Agriculture
- Manufacturing, Energy or Engineering
- Information Technology or Telecommunication, Software Development
- I was not trained in a particular occupation
- Other, please specify

**6. Have you or are you currently working in Canada?**

- Yes
- No (if no, proceed to question 7)

**7. Was or is your job in your field?**

- Yes
- No
- I cannot answer that question.

**8. Do you have any other transferable skills or talents that you can bring into a position in addition to your expertise/professional background? (this may be within or outside your area of occupation) Please select and specify where possible.**

- I have strong soft skills (Please specify)
- I have unique technical skills that I acquired (please specify)
- In addition to English, I am proficient in other languages (please specify)
- I have specialized training and / or certifications in: (please specify)
- I have a strong network in place with professionals or communities (please specify)
- I have received awards or prizes or recognitions for my achievements (please specify)
- I don't know
- Other, please specify

**9. If you are not currently working in your occupation, what alternate choices of employment would you consider? Please check all that apply**

- I would consider a job in my occupation that is at a different experience level (e.g. entry level/junior instead of senior level)
- I would consider a job that is in my field but not my original designation (e.g. family worker instead of therapist, clerk instead of manager, retail sales person instead of procurement manger, etc.)
- I would consider becoming self-employed and opening up my own business
- I would consider doing any job, regardless of my background
- I don't know
- Other

**Part II – Perception and Experience of the Canadian employment process**

**In this section we are interested in your feedback and experiences with Canadian employers, both good experiences and challenging experiences. This information will help us to give recommendations to TCLIP how to better support immigrant job seekers in the Tri-Cities.**

**10. What has been your job search experience in Canada?**

- Very easy
- Easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult

**11. Please describe why your job search has been easy or difficult**

**12. Where are you looking for jobs?**

- Only in the Tri-Cities
- Throughout Metro-Vancouver
- Throughout BC
- Anywhere in Canada
- Other

**13. When you find an organization that you would like to work for, what do you do? Please check all that apply**

- I prepare and submit a resume and cover letter
- I connect with the employer to find out more about the organization and positions they offer

- I use my networks to make contact or get a referral
- I try to get a volunteer position to get to know the organization
- I try to get an internship position to get to know the organization
- I watch for and respond to job postings for open positions
- I don't know

**14. Have you used any services offered by immigrant supporting organizations in the Tri-Cities?**

- Yes (please proceed to question 14)
- No

**15. Why have you not used such services?**

- I am unaware of these services
- I don't understand what these organizations offer
- I don't feel comfortable participating in these services because I think my English is not good enough
- I could not find the services that I need
- I don't have the time to attend any programs or services because I need to take care of my children
- I don't have time to attend any programs or services because I have a job
- I don't have access to transport to get to the services
- I cannot afford transport to get to the services
- I am not eligible for services
- I am not interested in supporting programs and services for immigrants
- Other, please specify

**Part III - Demographic background**

**This last section is to learn a bit more about your background and time you have spent in Canada.**

**16. How long have you been permanently living in Canada?**

- <1 year
- <5 years
- <10 years
- 10+ years

**17. How long have you been living in the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore or Belcarra)?**

- <1 year
- <5 years
- <10 years
- 10+ years

**18. What is your current immigration status?**

- Canadian Citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Temporary Worker
- International Student
- Refugee
- Other, please specify

**19. What is your country of origin?**

- China
- South Korea
- Japan
- Great Britain
- Iran
- India
- Philippines
- USA
- Pakistan
- Lebanon
- Other, please specify

**20. Are you:**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

**21. What is your age?**

- Under 18 years
- 18 – 30
- 31 – 50
- 51 – 65
- Older than 65

**22. Is there anything else you would like to share about your professional profile or experience in connecting with the Canadian labour market?**

Thank you for your participation. For any questions, please contact Bertine Stelzer at [bertine@realize.coop](mailto:bertine@realize.coop)