



**Poverty Reduction Coalition**

**Addressing  
Labour Market Shortages:  
High-Risk Immigrants and  
Sustainable Employment**

Condensed Report  
June 2007

The Poverty Reduction Coalition is a community collaborative, supported by United Way of Calgary and Area, aimed at reducing poverty in Calgary. We work together in the belief that poverty *can* be reduced in Calgary and that we have the human and capital resources to do it.

In 2004, the Sustained Poverty Reduction Initiative was formed with the hope of instigating thoughtful social innovation in government policies, in the provision of social services, in systems reform and within the business community. Since that time, our name has changed, but not our intention.

The newly-coined Poverty Reduction Coalition works with all orders of government, the business community, social service organizations and community members to address the systemic barriers and policies that prevent low-income individuals and families from moving beyond the cycle of poverty.

We partner and collaborate with others to ensure sustained change.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Background**

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The Poverty Reduction Coalition and Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry have partnered in a research project to examine issues associated with finding sustainable employment for high-risk immigrants. The project was initiated to fill the gap between Alberta's labour shortage and the increasing numbers of immigrants who are at risk of being unemployable. The facts tell us that many immigrants who come to Alberta have experienced barriers to educational access in their home countries. Upon arriving in Alberta, they then face multiple barriers to the workforce as they often compete for jobs with more highly skilled people.

This report discusses the barriers to employment, gaps in services, roles of service agencies, businesses and government and promising practices. The information from the research was used to develop a pilot project to be implemented with Calgary's business community. The purpose of this report is to highlight and summarize the information collected to date and to discuss how this information can inform practice.

### **Key findings**

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- In 2005, 14% of immigrants in Canada over the age of 15 had zero to nine years of education from their home country (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2005)
- Low skilled immigrants are at risk because they face multiple barriers such as low literacy, language ability and poverty; these barriers keep them from reaching their economic potential (Bauder, 2005)
- Employment support services for immigrants follow a continuum that moves people from pre-immigration to immigration to initial settlement to settlement to transition to full participation. This process from arrival to employment can take several years to complete. Alternatives to traditional methods need to be examined (Strum & Bette, 2005)
- Recommendations for solutions need to address both individual and systemic barriers (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005)
- There will soon be a shortage of low-skilled workers for positions in the industrial, service, agriculture and construction sectors. Historically, economic growth and prosperity have been a direct result of the efforts of new immigrants. If we cannot properly support people to find and keep employment, the Alberta boom will soon become a bust (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2006)
- Many barriers exist for immigrants attempting to integrate and settle into a new environment. These include poor language skills, lack of education, lack of Canadian work experience, negative attitudes towards immigrants, personal difficulties stemming from trauma in their home country or family separation, and the high costs of transportation and child care. The lower the skill levels of newcomers the more barriers they experience.

## Promising practices

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Three companies provide ESL and job training on site, combining the expertise of trained ESL instructors, professional industry instructors and incentives and bonuses to employees. (Jones-Vo, 2002).

Local companies are recruiting low skilled workers and immigrants, then providing on-site English language training during work hours.

One company engages in mentorship and long term planning with employees, helping new immigrant staff navigate through workplace training. Workplace diversity training is provided to all employees. Regular incentives and wage increments are offered to retain staff and the buddy system is employed to encourage better communication and adjustment to the workplace culture.

A local business engages potential employers in cultural sensitivity activities. Connections between grassroots cultural groups and employers have been established internationally to enable the education of employers about the benefits of hiring immigrants (personal correspondence).

In an effort to share costs, two independent small businesses partnered to offer on-site skills building and training opportunities for all levels of employees, 24 hours a day, 7 day a week. As a result, they are able to accommodate shift work and the meet the unique needs of each employee.

## Key priorities

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1. On-site training for immigrants, non-immigrant employees and management
2. Mentoring programs
3. Outreach and awareness of economic and social benefits to immigration
4. Supports and subsidies for coaching and training
5. Co-funding initiatives and wage subsidies
6. In-house supports for retention
7. Sustainable funding for on-going research
8. Transportation and child-care strategies
9. Extra funding for small companies
10. On-site training workplace committees

## Recommendations

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The pilot must incorporate on-site language training, as well as soft skills, literacy, diversity and workplace-specific training. In addition, an employer-specific website and print materials are needed to provide information regarding supports available at all three levels of government. It is important to recognize that employment is not the only issue - new immigrants must be able to balance employment with family commitments, education, and other activities or responsibilities.

Partnerships among levels of government, employers and agencies must be strengthened, mentoring is critical, existing expertise from service agencies should be utilized and implementation should be sustainable. Resiliency, such as the ability to sustain changes in the economy, must be built into the strategy to have long term benefit, and the implementation of an evaluation plan is necessary to determine effectiveness as well as policy implications.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Poverty Reduction Coalition and Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII) have partnered in a research project to examine issues associated with finding sustainable employment for high-risk immigrants.

The demand for workers in Alberta has been increasing since the early 1990's and it is estimated that by 2015 there will be a shortage of 109,000 workers if issues associated with sustainable employment are not addressed (AEII, 2007).

To deal with this anticipated shortage, Alberta Employment Immigration and Industry has developed a strategy to address labour market shortages: "Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce." This strategy seeks to *Inform, Attract, Develop and Retain* workers through education, career, workplace, and labour market information. The strategy also includes improving processes, creating community and work attractiveness as well as increasing immigration levels.

While identifying foreign countries as a viable labour source appears to be a good strategy on the surface, the fact remains that many immigrants who come to Alberta have experienced barriers to educational access in their home countries. They then face multiple issues in Alberta's workforce as they often compete for jobs with more highly skilled people. This partnership and project were initiated to fill the gap between the shortage of labour and the increasing numbers of immigrants to Alberta who are at risk of being unemployable.

High-risk immigrants are those individuals who are illiterate, isolated, and/or poor. Certain immigrant groups are at a higher risk than others, such as refugees, immigrants with inadequate English language skills, and women. For the purposes of this study, we are defining high-risk immigrants as those who have little (9 years or less) education in their home country largely because of barriers to educational access. Sustainable employment is defined as \$12 to \$15 per hour, full time, long term with benefits.

This project specifically discusses the barriers to employment, gaps in services, roles of service agencies, businesses and government and promising practices. The information from the research was used to develop a pilot project to be implemented with Calgary's business community. For this project, an extensive research plan was initiated to better inform decision-making for pilot design. Information was collected from a literature review, focus groups, interviews, policy, and document and website scans.

The purpose of this report is to highlight and summarize the information collected to date and to discuss how this information can inform practice.

## **Research process and purpose**

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An extensive literature review of policy documents, secondary documents and relevant websites was conducted; over 70 texts, articles, reports, Statistics Canada documents and websites were scanned. For this project 47 of the most relevant resources were cited, 36 of which are included in this report.

In addition to the literature review, four focus groups were held with two groups of male and female high-risk immigrants, (39 participants), one group of employers (seven participants) and one group of service providers (six participants). Six additional employers and worksite trainers who provide on-site skill training participated in one-on-one interviews.

The research focused on the following questions:

### **Primary question**

What is the most effective model to assist high-risk immigrants in obtaining sufficient workplace literacy to achieve sustainable employment?

### **Secondary questions**

1. What are the barriers to finding and keeping sustainable employment for high-risk immigrants?
2. What promising practices have been identified in supporting these individuals in their efforts to find and keep sustainable employment?
3. What is the role of government, social service agencies and businesses in facilitating sustainable employment opportunities?
4. What changes to public policy would facilitate sustainable employment?

The partners for this project included:

1. A 14-person Advisory Committee that participated on a regular basis in order to create an avenue for collaboration and feedback. A virtual meeting method was chosen to accommodate geographical distance between committee members and the relatively short time-frame of the research phase of this project.
2. Focus group and interview participants provided expertise and personal experience.
3. The Project Manager coordinated the project and reported to all stakeholders.
4. The Director of the Poverty Reduction Coalition oversaw the project and provided direction and guidance to the Project Manager.
5. Representatives from Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry worked collaboratively with the Project Manager and the Director of the Poverty Reduction Coalition to design and implement the project.

This report summarizes the following key findings: statistics and rationale, barriers, stakeholder roles and promising practices as identified by all research methods. An analysis of the key findings helped identify variables that are priorities to informing practice. Practice can be informed in two ways, to develop an effective model to create sustainable employment opportunities for high-risk immigrants that will inform policy and, to develop a plan that will build education and awareness for employers in Calgary's business community, service agencies and all levels of government.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

The following key findings summarize the information collected from the literature review, focus groups, interviews and policy and website scans.

### **Statistics and rationale**

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- In 2005, the number of immigrants in Canada over the age of 15 with 0 to 9 years of education from their home country was 28,874, or 14% of all immigrants. The 28,874 are further broken down into the following groups:
  - Family class – 11,414
  - Economic (principle immigrant) – 732
  - Economic (spouse or dependent immigrants) – 8,196
  - Refugees – 7,501
  - Other immigrants – 1,031 (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2005)
- Immigrants with 0 to 9 years of education in their home country are more likely to collect welfare subsidies than any other group of immigrants (Statistics Canada, 1998).
- Low skilled immigrants are at risk because they face multiple barriers such as low literacy, language ability and poverty; these barriers keep them from reaching their economic potential (Bauder, 2005).
- 70% of immigrants looking for work report having experienced barriers (Statistics Canada, 2001).
- Immigrants admitted to Canada for humanitarian or family reunification are more disadvantaged in the labour market than educated and skilled immigrants (Bauder, 2005).
- Employers are generally unaware of the economic and social benefits to supporting immigration policies (Aizmer, 2005).
- Employers are generally positive about immigration but experience challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce (Lopes, 2004).
- Traditional employment support services for immigrants follow a continuum that moves people from pre-immigration to immigration to initial settlement to settlement to transition to full participation. This process from arrival to employment can take several years to complete (Strum & Bette, 2005). Alternatives to traditional methods need to be examined.
- When looking at creating workplace supports, there is a need to pay particular attention to small to medium sized businesses as they do not have the same resources as large businesses (Lopes, 2004).
- Recommendations for solutions need to address both individual and systemic barriers (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005).

## **Rationale specific to Alberta and Calgary**

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- There will be a shortage of low-skilled workers for various positions in the industrial, service, agriculture and construction sectors. Historically, economic growth and prosperity have been a direct result of the efforts of new immigrants, particularly during boom times. If we cannot properly support people to find and keep employment, the Alberta boom will soon become a bust (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2006).
- Due to increases in immigration numbers, the percentage of immigrants to Calgary in 2005 with no high school education in their home country increased by 21% (City of Calgary, 2006).

The above information clearly highlights the need for a pilot project that looks to create sustainable employment for high-risk immigrants. The numbers of immigrants coming to Alberta is increasing while at the same time there exists a shortage of labourers. A project to reduce the gap between these two factors is critical and timely.

## **Existing policies and programs**

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There are many programs currently available that work to bridge the gap between Alberta's labour shortage and immigrants looking for work.

- The Calgary Employment & Training Services Directory available on the AEII website lists many programs including ESL and Immigrant Training and Employment programs. The directory can be found at:  
<http://www.hre.gov.ab.ca/cps/rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/2433.html>
- In 2006, Julia Melnyk conducted a comprehensive review of employment programs for immigrants in Calgary. The report can be found at:  
[http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/RRM/RRM-CG\\_immigrants\\_calgary.pdf](http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/RRM/RRM-CG_immigrants_calgary.pdf)

There was an acknowledgement by all stakeholders involved in this project that supporting skill development in underemployed populations such as high-risk immigrants is an important step towards addressing social and as labour issues. The two sources above are a very small sample of some of the creative and innovative initiatives that currently exist.

## **Barriers to sustainable employment**

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Several barriers exist for immigrants attempting to integrate and settle into a new environment. The lower the skill levels of newcomers the more barriers they experience. The following is a list of barriers specific to high-risk populations:

- Weak English language skills (IDELE, n.d; Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2004; Bhandari, Horvath & To, 2006; Canadian Council for Refugees 1998; personal correspondence).
- Lack of education and literacy in their home country (IDELE, n.d.; personal correspondence).
- Poverty, cultural exclusion and underemployment (Cornfield, 2004; personal correspondence).
- Lack of access to and coordination of information, assessments, available training options, application and enrolment processes and long wait lists (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2004; Bhandari, Horvath & To, 2006; personal correspondence).

- Inadequate workplace-specific language training programs (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; personal correspondence).
- Lack of Canadian work experience or knowledge of the Canadian way of doing things (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; IDELE, n.d; Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Bhandari, Horvath & To, 2006; personal correspondence).
- Lack of policy coherence among levels of government and complex systems (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; personal correspondence).
- Negative attitudes and practices towards immigrants (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; IDELE, n.d; Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; personal correspondence).
- Personal difficulties stemming from trauma in their home country and family separation (IDELE, n.d.' personal correspondence).
- Shortage of long-term sustainable funding for programming and funding subsidies for training (IDELE, n.d; Association of Canadian Community Colleges 2004; personal correspondence).
- Child care is expensive, hard to find and it is difficult to communicate with the staff. Many parents identified the additional barrier of finding child care for shift work, which is often a requirement of low paying jobs (personal correspondence).
- Transportation is expensive, often inaccessible, complicated to navigate and time consuming when a direct bus route is not available (personal correspondence).
- Barriers for employers include the rising costs associated with benefits and training and a lack of information about available supports and services (personal correspondence). "It costs our company \$3,000 to train one person for the job. We provide free child care while people are in training. Job turnover rates are high and this is a big expense for us" (personal correspondence). "It is very difficult to find information about what the government offers to employers. I have tried accessing information on their websites and have had no luck at all. If they could provide a portal or even something in print that employers could get at, it would support us in hiring more immigrants" (personal correspondence).

## **Stakeholder roles**

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There was a general consensus that all parties including, employers, governments, service agencies and immigrants have a role in creating sustainable employment (Melnyk, 2006; Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004; Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; Conference board of Canada, 2004; Goldenberg, 2006; personal correspondence).

### **Employers**

- Recognize the value in hiring skilled immigrants and create and sustain inclusive, culturally sensitive workplaces (Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Melnyk, 2006; personal correspondence). "If a company would give us a chance they would see that we are very hard working and will do a good job" (personal correspondence).
- Become directly involved with service providers in programming and on the job training that includes soft skills (Melnyk, 2006; Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Murray, 2006; personal correspondence).

- Link with educational and training institutions (Johnson & Troppe, 1992; personal correspondence).
- Ensure supportive managers and supervisors at all levels (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).
- Offer diversity training for all employees (Conference Board of Canada, 2004; personal correspondence).
- Apply pressure to all levels of government to work together (Murray, 2006; personal correspondence).
- Provide adequate pay and incentives for retention (Berg & Frost, 2005; personal correspondence).
- Provide space and money for child care and transportation to work (personal correspondence).
- Offer flexible hours to accommodate family needs (personal correspondence).

### **Governments**

- Expand supports that are relevant to the unique needs of high-risk immigrants (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; personal correspondence).
- Offer more funding subsidies to employers (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005).
- Use awareness and outreach tactics to bridge the gap between services that are available and employers (Center for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; personal correspondence).
- Pressure the municipal and federal government to partner in addressing issues (Murray, 2006).
- Increase minimum wage, provide tax relief for the working poor, and offer wage supplements and adequate financial support to people who are looking for work (Saunders, 2003; personal correspondence).
- Governments should provide support that is relevant to today's costs. "It is very expensive to live here. It costs a lot to pay rent and to find a place to live. Both of us, (husband and wife) have to work to pay for everything and it is very hard to find care for our children" (personal correspondence).
- Adapt policies to today's needs, such as shortening timelines and streamlining the process to training, services and a good job. "All three levels of government need to be more coordinated. Services for immigrants used to be handled by the federal government; in recent years some of the responsibility has been handed down to the province. The system is very confusing and hard to deal with" (Personal correspondence).

### **Service agencies**

- Create partnerships with employers for resource and information sharing (Melnyk, 2006).
- Employ outreach and awareness tactics to share lessons learned and promising practices (Melnyk, 2006). NGOs are most involved in service delivery and tend to be the most flexible. "We have the most direct experience with immigrants and can offer the most options for programs" (personal correspondence).
- Provide trained personnel for on-site English as a Second Language and workplace literacy (Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; Melnyk, 2006).

- Identify one person to guide immigrants and employers through all processes (personal correspondence).
- Provide job-specific language training. More English, more often, more variety. "My English is good for reading and talking to people but it is not good enough to use at work. There needs to be more training for using English at my job" (personal correspondence).

### **Immigrants**

- Participate in as many networking opportunities as are presented (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).
- Market knowledge of other languages (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).
- Seek out a mentor to provide support and guidance throughout the job hunt (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).

## **HOW THE RESEARCH CAN INFORM PRACTICE**

### **Examples of promising practice**

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Three companies highlighted in ESL magazine provided ESL and job training on site. They combined the expertise of trained ESL instructors, professional industry instructors and incentives and bonuses to employees who voluntarily participated. Participation rates were high, schedules were flexible and attendance was excellent in all three projects. The projects were a collaborative effort between employers, employees, and service providers. All three companies were large businesses and because of their commitment to hiring and supporting high-risk immigrants and refugees they were able to expand their businesses and develop and maintain a loyal and satisfied workforce (Jones-Vo, 2002).

There are local companies who are recruiting low skilled workers and immigrants, and providing English language training during work time, on site. They are building their workforce at the ground level then supporting entry-level people as they work their way up into management positions. Companies engaged in these kinds of recruitment and retention strategies were identified as Safeway, CP Hotels, Hudson's Bay Company, Wal-Mart, and Canadian Tire (personal correspondence).

One company that was interviewed engages in strategies that include mentorship and long term planning with employees. There is one person per location who works directly with new staff and immigrants to help them navigate through workplace training. This company also provides workplace diversity training to all employees. They provide incentives and wage increments regularly to encourage staff to stay long-term. They often pair up people with similar backgrounds to encourage better communication and adjustment to the workplace culture (personal correspondence).

Another Canadian company provides a four day work week and offers employees on-site training on their days off, designed for their specific needs. The employer pays for half the time that a staff member participates in training on their days off. For instance, if an employee participates in four hours of training the employer pays them for two hours. One trainer works full time for the company and provides specific training in ESL, literacy, GED and college preparation. Employees have access to computers and print training materials. This program has recently been expanded to allow family members to participate free of charge (personal correspondence).

An individual in Calgary identified a gap in supports for newcomers who are integrating into the workforce. She created a business through which she engages employers in cultural sensitivity and awareness activities. She has established connections between grassroots cultural groups and employers internationally that enables her to educate employers about the benefits of hiring and supporting immigrants (personal correspondence).

Stedfast Inc. is a small business who did not have the resources necessary to provide on-site training and skill building to its employees (employs less than 100 people). They recognized that for recruitment and retention purposes, it was necessary to develop such a program. In an effort to share costs, Stedfast partnered with the Textiles Human Resources Council to create on-site training for all levels of employees, available 24 hours a day, 7 day a week. As a result, Stedfast is able to accommodate shift work and the unique needs of each employee. "This commitment to empower employees through skills development and training has gone a long way towards developing a learning culture at Stedfast, and contributes to finding innovative ways to maintain a competitive advantage" (Conference Board of Canada, 2007).

Technocell Canada is a medium sized manufacturing business (150 employees). A full analysis of the expertise and training needs of all employees determined the company's priorities for training. An individualized training program was then developed with employees. Outcomes included a supportive corporate culture and work environment. More specifically, staff experienced improved literacy and numeric skills; managers and supervisors were found to have an increased awareness of the importance of workplace training; there was an overall improvement in staff attitudes and behaviour; and a stronger sense of community within the workplace.

The Conference Board of Canada highlights large, medium and small businesses each year that win awards for on-site literacy and workplace training programs. More information and further examples can be obtained from the following link: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/awards.htm>.

## **Themes from promising practices**

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Promising practice models are argued to be useful for reducing gaps between policy and practice (UNESCO, 2004). Many promising practices were highlighted in the research. Much of the information gathered expresses the need for a comprehensive approach that engages all stakeholders in the process. Existing promising practices gathered from the research presented above informed the development of the following key priorities:

- 1. On-site training** for immigrants, non-immigrant employees and management that includes ESL, English and native language literacy, workplace specific skill building, soft skills and diversity training (Melnyk, 2006; Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; Lopes, 2004; Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, 2005; Sahay & Glover, 2005; Center for Impact Research, 2002; Liu, 2006; National Visible Minority Council on Labor Force Development, 2005; Goldenberg, 2006; Johnson & Troppe, 1992; Lopes, 2004; IDELE, n.d.; Enchautegui, 1998; Sahay & Glover, 2005; personal correspondence).
- 2. Mentoring programs** (Melnyk, 2006; Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005; Conference board of Canada, 2004; Bhandari, Horvath & To, 2006; TRIEC, 2006; Lee, Lim & Barnard, 2004; Employment Services Program for Newcomer Women, as reported in Sahay & Glover,

- 2005; Rexdale Women's Center as reported in Sahay & Glover, 2005; Youth in Motion, 2007: personal correspondence).
3. **Outreach and awareness**, coordination among stakeholders and information sharing regarding economic and social benefits to immigration. Bridging programs and partnerships and one-stop service for employers (Melnyk, 2006; Goldenberg, 2006; Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, 2004; Lee, Lim & Barnard, 2004; Liu, 2006; Employment Services Program for Newcomer Women, as reported in Sahay & Glover, 2005; Aizmer, 2005; personal correspondence).
  4. **Supports and subsidies for coaching and training** from the employer and government (Melnyk, 2006; Goldenberg, 2006; personal correspondence).
  5. **Co-funding initiatives** and wage subsidies, (Goldenberg, 2006; Melnyk, 2006; Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2005)
  6. **In-house supports for retention**, incentives for employees, recognition systems and evaluation (Goldenberg, 2006; personal correspondence).
  7. **Sustainable funding** for on-going research (Melnyk, 2006: IDELE, n.d; Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, 2004; Simich, Mawani, Wu & Noor, 2004; personal correspondence).
  8. **Transportation and family strategies** such as child care (Cornfield, 2004; Sahay & Glover, 2005; personal correspondence).
  9. **Extra funding for small companies** and vulnerable populations (Goldenberg, 2006; personal correspondence)
  10. **On-site training workplace committees** whose primary responsibility is to oversee the development and maintenance of on-site training programs (Conference board of Canada, 2007).

Appendix A highlights the variables deemed most important from all the research gathered and ranks them according to how many participants thought them to be a priority. The variables were presented to the advisory committee for further feedback and for pilot design discussion. Following is a summary of the research and the feedback from the advisory committee with recommendations for the pilot.

## SUMMARY

- Current supports and services for high-risk immigrants are not sufficient to meet today's needs.
- High-risk immigrants face many barriers to finding sustainable employment.
- Employers and agencies experience barriers in providing enough supports and employment opportunities to high-risk immigrants.
- All stakeholders, government, employers, service agencies and high-risk immigrants have a role to play in creating solutions.
- Collaboration, commitment and coordination on an on-going basis among the various levels of government, employers, agencies and men and women at high risk is critical to finding long term solutions
- There are currently some creative and effective programs and services being offered that can provide 'lessons learned' and examples of promising practice that can inform pilot design.
- There are issues with existing policies that could be addressed, including a lack of available subsidies, training funds and tax credits for employers who hire high-risk immigrants, long wait lists and limited variety in the available language training.

## PILOT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. On-site training programs that include ESL, literacy, soft skills, diversity and job specific training offered in conjunction with a liaison person or mentor were recommended by all information sources. The literature, employers, service providers, male and female high-risk immigrants and the advisory committee identified these as key priorities
2. There is a need for an employer-specific website and print materials that provide information regarding what supports are available at all three levels of government.
3. Sustainability is the key to success. There must be a clear vision with a commitment to follow through. It is important to recognize that employment is not the only issue - the plan needs to be holistic, enabling people to balance employment with family commitments, education, and other activities or responsibilities.
4. Resiliency must be built into the strategy to have long term benefit such as the ability to sustain changes in the economy.
5. An evaluation plan must be implemented to determine effectiveness as well as policy implications.

To conclude, language training should be incorporated on site in conjunction with soft skills, literacy, diversity and workplace-specific training. Partnerships among levels of government, employers and agencies must be strengthened, mentoring is critical, existing expertise from service agencies should be utilized and implementation should be sustainable and transferable.

## APPENDIX A

**Table 1**

Variables for pilot design and who identified them

	<b>Employers</b>	<b>Service Providers</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Literature</b>	<b>Advisory committee</b>
English skills / job specific skills / diversity training	x	x	x	x	x
Literacy training	x	x	x	x	x
Soft skills	x	x	x	x	x
On-site training	x	x	x	x	x
Mentoring	x	x	x	x	x
Partnerships between government, employers and service agencies	x	x	x	x	x
Child care		x	x	x	x
Transportation		x	x	x	x
Opportunities for advancement / flexible scheduling / transferability / fair wages	x	x	x		x
Informal networks and connections		x	x	x	
Awareness of government programs	x		x	x	
Support for work-life balance		x	x	x	
Housing		x	x		
Community based			x	x	

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