

FINAL REPORT FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT HUB IN WINNIPEG



Prepared by: **Elijah Osei-Yeboah**
Research Consultant and Feasibility Study Lead

This report was commissioned by
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and
Immigration Partnership Winnipeg.

LIST OF CONTENTS

List of contents	ii
List of acronyms	iii
Executive summary	iv
Acknowledgement	vi

1.0 Background of the feasibility study **1**

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Vision	2
1.3 Research methodology	2

2.0 Review of employment hub models **4**

2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Hire Immigrants	4
2.2 Magnet	5
2.3 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 92: Youth Employment Initiative	6

3.0 Consultations with businesses and newcomer employment agencies **7**

3.1 Introduction	7
3.2 Background of the newcomer employment agencies and businesses	7
3.2.1 Newcomer employment agencies	7
3.2.2 Businesses	9

3.2.3 Relationship between newcomer employment agencies and businesses	9
3.3 Recruitment and retention of newcomers	10
3.3.1 Hiring trend of newcomers	10
3.3.2 Avenues for hiring newcomers	10
3.3.3 Challenges businesses face in recruiting newcomers	11
3.3.4 Retention of newcomer staff	12
3.3.5 Benefits of hiring newcomers	13

4.0 Newcomer Employment Hub **14**

4.1 Introduction	14
4.2 The model for the Newcomers Employment Hub	14
4.3 Benefits of the Hub	17
4.4 Additional supports for the Hub	17
4.5 Key considerations for the Hub	19
4.6 Next steps	20
4.7 Areas of further research	20
4.8 Conclusion	20

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	MEANING
ECC	Employer Council of Champions
HIO	Hire Immigrant Ottawa
HR	Human Resource
IPW	Immigration Partnership Winnipeg
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
MANSO	Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WPRC	Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The employment of newcomers can be beneficial to potential employers and the Canadian economy at large. Newcomers often demonstrate a strong work ethic, and possess skills and work experience from other countries that are transferable to Canadian workplaces. Additionally, hiring newcomers can spur innovation at the workplace and enable employers to fill employment gaps quickly. Hiring newcomers also contributes to government revenues by adding to the tax base.

Even though newcomer employment can be beneficial, newcomers encounter many obstacles when looking for jobs in Winnipeg. These obstacles include discrimination, non-recognition of international credentials especially in regulated professions, language barriers, and lack of understanding of local expectations for interviews and resumes. While there are many agencies in Winnipeg that offer newcomers valuable pre-employment and post-employment supports, the agencies are unable to meet the needs of all newcomers in the city. The newcomer population in Winnipeg has been increasing whereas funding for the agencies which support them is limited and often unstable. In addition, many employers in the city are unable to find qualified and suitable newcomers. The consequence of the aforementioned factors is that, many qualified newcomers struggle to find meaningful employment. Therefore, there is a good justification for creating a Newcomer Employment Hub to boost newcomer employment in Winnipeg.

In order to elicit the opinions of stakeholders of newcomer employment in Winnipeg on the Hub, this feasibility study was conducted. The first step that was taken in the feasibility study was reviewing literature on relevant employment hub models across Canada. Three of the models were identified — (a) Hire Immigrants, an employment hub for high-skilled newcomers based in Ottawa, (b) Magnet, a web-based employment hub developed in Toronto, and (c) the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council's (WPRC) employment initiative for Indigenous youth. The employment initiatives which were reviewed offered relevant lessons for the Newcomer Employment Hub to be developed in Winnipeg. First, the promotion of employment hubs can help attract more businesses and agencies to partner in employing newcomers. Second, post-employment services for newcomers can help them to succeed in their positions. Third, partnering with different employers will give job applicants options when they are looking for jobs. Fourth, stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of the Hub would be crucial to its success.

Hiring newcomers can spur innovation at the workplace and enable employers to fill employment gaps quickly.

Creating the Newcomer Employment Hub will help newcomers get meaningful jobs faster.

In view of the benefits of stakeholder engagement, primary data was gathered for the Newcomer Employment Hub, beginning with a consultation of newcomer employment agencies in Winnipeg. The researchers sampled 27 newcomer employment agencies for an online survey, but only 15 responded. Since the intention of the survey was not to gather statistically relevant data, the non-response rate was not a big concern. Afterwards, the researchers held separate meetings with seven newcomer employment agencies. The executive directors and some senior staff of the agencies were present at these meetings. Following that, the researchers analyzed the data which had been gathered and presented the findings to Immigration Partnership Winnipeg's (IPW) Employment Sector Table and The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce for additional feedback. Afterwards, an Advisory Council made up of the researchers and representatives from The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, businesses, agencies and IPW was set up to advise the researchers on how to proceed with the business consultations. In the end, the researchers consulted 14 local businesses. Generally, the stakeholders agreed that newcomer employment is vital in Winnipeg and creating the Newcomer Employment Hub will help newcomers get meaningful jobs faster.

The stakeholders proposed that the Hub could be made up of four components: businesses, newcomer employment agencies, Hub staff and an Advisory Committee. The businesses could inform the Hub staff of available job opportunities. The Hub staff would post these job opportunities on an online job portal and inform the agencies of the job openings. Agencies that have newcomer job seekers, who have completed their pre-employment training and are suitable for the posted jobs, would put forward their applications. The businesses would assess the applications to determine the right candidate for the jobs. For unsuccessful job applicants, one way to help them to improve on future job applications would be to have the businesses provide them with feedback on their resumes and interview performances; however, some businesses did not want to do this for fear of being sued. Therefore, each business on the Hub could decide if it wants to provide this feedback and if so, how much detail it would like to share. After hiring the newcomers, the agencies would continue to support the newcomers as needed, to enable them to succeed in their positions.

Other provisions could be made to ensure that the Hub is successful, such as awarding employers who are exceptional in supporting their newcomer staff, organizing job fairs and employer networking events, training employers on the recruitment and retention of newcomers, and marketing the Hub. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce has engaged Protegra, an excellent branding company to promote the Hub before it is rolled out in fall 2021. As the first hub for newcomer employment in Winnipeg, it could be piloted for two years before ascertaining its capacity for expansion. The Advisory Committee could comprise representatives from the stakeholders and could be tasked with monitoring and evaluating the Hub's implementation to ensure that it succeeds. Once the Hub has proven to be successful, it could be replicated in other places in Canada and for other equity deserving groups such as people living with disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A MESSAGE FROM ELIJAH OSEI-YEBOAH, RESEARCH CONSULTANT AND FEASIBILITY LEAD

IPW and The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce deserve a special mention for their immense contributions to the success of this feasibility study. The President of The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Loren Remillard, sits on the board of IPW. At an IPW board meeting in 2019, the employment barriers newcomers in Winnipeg face were discussed. It was also discussed that an effective means of supporting newcomers in the city to secure meaningful jobs is creating a strong connection between local businesses and newcomer employment agencies. IPW already had strong connections with newcomer employment agencies through its Employment Sector Table. The Employment Sector Table mainly comprises newcomer employment agencies and is a platform where members can discuss challenges and solutions to newcomer employment in Winnipeg. Loren thought that the relationship The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce has with local businesses could be leveraged and together with IPW, they could create a partnership between the agencies and businesses with the objective of helping newcomers find meaningful jobs.

Thanks to The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and IPW, this feasibility study has been completed and the findings reinforce the idea discussed at the IPW board meeting. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and IPW funded the research and are leading the development and implementation of the Newcomer Employment Hub. In addition, The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce will fund the development and implementation of the Hub. The researchers are also grateful to the businesses and the newcomer employment agencies for taking time out of their busy schedules to share their opinions and excellent ideas on the Hub. The researchers gained a lot of knowledge about newcomer employment in Winnipeg from the businesses and the agencies. Even though The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and IPW are leading the development and implementation of the Hub, the businesses and agencies would be the primary users of the Hub. Therefore, enormous efforts would be made in to ensure that the Hub meets the needs of the businesses and agencies.

ABOUT THE WINNIPEG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce uses its position as a community leader, a member business supporter and a public policy influencer to build a city where industry prosperity and community wellness grow.

ABOUT IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP WINNIPEG:

Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW) is the Local Immigration Partnership in Winnipeg hosted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. We are governed by a Council of community leaders from a diversity of sectors. By engaging stakeholders, identifying needs and priorities, and bringing collaborative action we work to create a more inclusive and welcoming community for all newcomers, immigrants and refugees.

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The newcomer¹ population in Winnipeg has been increasing in absolute and relative terms. According to Statistics Canada (2017), the newcomer population increased from 109,365 in 2001, representing 16.5 percent of the city's population, to 181,960 in 2016, representing 23.9 percent of Winnipeg's population. Newcomers in Winnipeg constitute 26% of the city's workforce (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2019). Newcomers have a diverse range of skills, international work experience, knowledge, sometimes access to international markets and innovative ideas that can be leveraged by businesses in the city. In addition, the Canadian economy benefits significantly from employed newcomers as they pay taxes and buy goods and services. Newcomers often face multiple barriers in job acquisition including official language skills; non-recognition of credentials; discrimination; and inadequate knowledge of Canadian workplace culture, interview and job application expectations. However, Canada loses \$13.4 to \$17 billion every year when the human capital of newcomers is not leveraged (Hire Immigrants, n.d., a²) and Winnipeg is not immune to this loss of human capital.

There are many newcomer employment service agencies in Winnipeg that work diligently with newcomers to provide them with the needed formal supports to surmount the aforementioned challenges. These employment service agencies work tirelessly and put in an enormous effort to support newcomers to secure meaningful employment. However, the increasing newcomer population coupled with funding challenges, among other factors, limit the agencies' ability to meet the increasing needs of all newcomer job seekers in the city. IRCC (2017), one of the major funders of newcomer employment services, evaluated the need for settlement services and concluded that there is an increasing need for newcomer services in Canada. Many competent newcomer job seekers continue to be unemployed or underemployed.

While there are barriers to newcomers securing meaningful employment, Winnipeg businesses also experience workforce difficulties. There are many businesses, particularly small and medium sized businesses, that have not utilized the newcomer job seeker market to find the most suitable employee, whether it is due to their human resource capacity, awareness of the benefits of hiring newcomers, or another reason. These businesses typically post their employment opportunities on their websites and/or job boards, and miss out on hiring talented and qualified newcomer applicants.

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and IPW, together with many newcomer employment service agencies and businesses in Winnipeg, have undertaken this feasibility study to find ways to address these challenges to help newcomers secure meaningful jobs faster and support Winnipeg businesses to strengthen their workforce. Initial discussions between IPW stakeholders and The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, prior to the feasibility study, led to the concept of a Newcomer Employment Hub³. However, further research was required to understand needs of newcomer job seekers and Winnipeg businesses; and the structure, format, services and delivery of the Hub. The need for this research led to the development of this feasibility study on the Hub in Winnipeg. The feasibility study was guided by IPW and The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and led by the research consultant for the project.

¹ The term "newcomer" is used throughout this report as an all-encompassing term for immigrants, refugees, naturalized citizens, and temporary residents.

² The letter "a" after the "n.d." or reference with no date is meant to distinguish that reference from other references to the same author.

³ The name "Newcomer Employment Hub" is a placeholder name, it might be changed to help market the Hub better.

This report presents findings from stakeholder consultations including meetings with newcomer employment service agencies, IPW, businesses and The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. The report begins with a vision of the Hub and the research methodology. The second section reviews literature on existing employment hub models. The third section analyzes the findings from the consultations with the stakeholders, and the last section focuses on the design of the Hub.

1.2 VISION

The Hub is envisioned to be an online job portal that will connect newcomer employment service agencies with businesses to match newcomer job seekers with available employment opportunities. The employment services agencies and participating businesses will have exclusive access to the job portal to streamline the job acquisition process. The businesses will receive applications sent by employment service agencies on behalf of newcomer job seekers that are both qualified for their job openings and have received pre-employment services. The newcomer services agencies already provide a range of pre-employment and post-employment services that can be leveraged by the Hub. The pre-employment services prepare newcomer job seekers to a point where they are ready to work and they include interview, resume, and cover letter preparations; Canadian workplace culture training; credential recognition support; and internships. The post-employment services focus on checking on newly hired clients to ensure that they transition into their new positions smoothly. If challenges are identified, the newcomer employment service agencies will stand shoulder to shoulder with such clients and their employers to overcome them. Utilizing the services delivered by the newcomer employment agencies will avoid duplication of efforts and the agencies will have an additional resource for connecting with newcomers.

It is envisioned that The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce will host the Hub. There was consensus among the stakeholders that the Hub should be piloted with selected employers and agencies for up to two years before ascertaining its capacity for expansion. The incremental approach will help to identify and address teething problems early. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce envisions that the Hub will be scaled up, in terms of geography and scope of beneficiaries, based on the outcome of the pilot. It might be feasible to replicate a successful hub elsewhere in Canada and even beyond or create additional hubs for other economically disadvantaged communities, such as people with disabilities. The subsequent hubs should not be designed with a cookie-cutter approach but informed by the needs of the intended users.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The feasibility study was guided by two principles — great value for stakeholders' opinions and triangulation. The former helped to meet the needs of the stakeholders, particularly the businesses and settlement agencies, whereas the latter helped to get a comprehensive understanding of newcomer employment in Winnipeg. Both primary and secondary data were gathered. The secondary data focused on employment hub initiatives being implemented in

[The Hub] is envisioned to be an online job portal that will connect newcomer employment service agencies with businesses to match newcomer job seekers with available employment opportunities.



Canada and the lessons to be learnt. The primary data was gathered through separate meetings with The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, 14 local businesses, seven newcomer employment service agencies, the IPW Employment Sector Table, and an online survey (see Table 1). Twenty-seven (27) newcomer employment agencies were sampled for the online survey; however, only 15 responded. The non-response rate is not worrisome as the focus of the survey was on gathering relevant feedback for designing the Hub, not statistical significance.

TABLE 1:

Primary data collection approaches and research participants

APPROACH	RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
ONLINE SURVEY	15 settlement agencies
MEETINGS	<p>a. One-on-one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7 settlement agencies ■ 2 small sized enterprises <p>b. Group meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ IPW Employment Sector Table ■ Newcomer Employment Hub Advisory Council ■ Twelve businesses (medium and large sized enterprises) ■ The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

Source: Field research, 2020

Two (2) non-probability sampling methods were adopted — purposive and snowball sampling. The Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO) maintains a list of newcomer serving agencies on its website. This website served as the initial sampling frame; however, the list was not exhaustive. Therefore, additional survey participants were selected through the researchers' personal contacts and recommendations by research participants who were recruited initially. Using multiple contact points might have reduced potential biases. The IPW Employment Sector Table helped to resolve issues the newcomer services agencies disagreed on.

An Advisory Council with representation from the key stakeholders was created to advise on how to consult the businesses. Two group meetings were held with the businesses. The first group comprised of businesses that had worked with newcomer employment serving agencies before and the second group was made up of businesses with no experience working with newcomer employment agencies. The newcomer employment agencies which had been engaged already recommended the businesses which participated in the first group meeting whereas The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce recommended the participants for the second group meeting. After the two group meetings, one-on-one meetings were organized with two more businesses mainly to seek answers to questions that had not been addressed at the group meetings due to lack of time.

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively; however, there was a challenge during the data collection. There was a misconception that the Hub intended to take over the employment services delivered by employment agencies. It is worth noting that this was of grave concern to the agencies. Initially, some newcomer employment service agencies were skeptical about the Hub concept but they rescinded their decision after it was made unequivocally clear that the Hub would not supersede their work but rather augment it. The concern expressed by the agencies is understandable as they have invested enormous resources and a great deal of time into building strong relationships with the employers they work with and do not want anything to undermine those relationships.

2.0 REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT HUB MODELS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Employment agencies, regardless of their clientele base, connect with employers in many ways. For the purpose of this report, three employment hub models – Hire Immigrants, Magnet, and the WPRC’s Youth Employment Initiative – were reviewed and analyzed with a focus on their concepts and applicable lessons for the Newcomer Employment Hub.⁴

2.2 HIRE IMMIGRANTS

Hire Immigrants (n.d., b)⁵ was introduced in 2006 to help newcomer employment services stakeholders such as businesses and employment agencies connect better to expedite the hiring of high-skilled newcomers in Ottawa. It was based on the realization that high-skilled newcomer job seekers face many challenges in getting and maintaining meaningful jobs. Hire Immigrants works through the following three interrelated means.

(i) Establishing stakeholder groups

Assembling and fostering cooperation between business owners and other stakeholders mainly through the two approaches below:

- An Employer Council of Champions (ECC)

Members are mainly top officials from top employers and labour unions/groups committed to and/or advocating for the hiring of high-skilled newcomers in the city (ibid). Getting the buy-in of these officials is critical as they are key influencers in job recruitment. As of the writing of this report, the ECC had 33 members including the City of Ottawa, Ottawa University, Hydro Ottawa, Royal Bank of Canada, and Scotiabank (ibid). The high number of employers will give newcomers a lot of flexibility in choosing from available jobs.

- Sector-specific Working Groups

These are working groups that focus on overcoming sector-specific challenges employers encounter in hiring and retaining skilled newcomers (ibid). There are five sectors: “Information technology, health, finance, biotech, and public sectors” (ibid). Dividing the working groups into sectors will likely make them very effective as each group will have a limited scope of work. At their monthly meetings, members analyze problems they face in hiring newcomers including culture and credential recognition, implement solutions to the identified problems and connect competent job seekers with jobs available in Ottawa (ibid). The working groups comprise HR staff of partner agencies and institutions including the ECC organizations, employment service organizations, labour unions, schools and professional bodies (ibid).

⁴ For additional employment hubs models, see the following:

(i) Winnipeg Connector Partnership - <http://wpgconnector.ca/> or <https://connectorprogram.ca/connector-communities/winnipeg-manitoba/>
(ii) Winnipeg Talent Hub - <https://www.economicdevelopmentwinnipeg.com/newsroom/read.post/855/yes-winnipeg-to-launch-the-winnipeg-talent-hub>
(iii) Ottawa Employment Hub - <https://ottawaeemploymenthub.ca/>
(iv) New Brunswick Employment Initiative - <https://www.wearealnb.ca/>

⁵ The researchers could hardly find critically reviewed secondary data on the three employment hubs which were analyzed; therefore, we mostly relied on data from the organizations’ websites.

- (ii) Improving the capacity of businesses to employ and retain high-skilled workers through the measures below “Cross cultural competency workshops, coaching and networking events, employer tools and resources, labour market information, annual employer summit, and employer excellence awards” (ibid). The aforementioned measures are meant to help employers understand newcomers better and consequently, increase employers’ readiness to work with newcomers and job retention rates.
- (iii) Publicizing the hub
Hire Immigrant educates businesses on the benefits of hiring newcomers and the available support services they can access to accomplish this objective (ibid). This will increase public awareness, encouraging additional businesses and job seekers to come on board.

One key difference between the Hire Immigrant model and the proposed Newcomer Employment Hub is that the former serves only skilled newcomers, whereas the latter will serve both high-skilled and low-skilled newcomers. However, the Hire Immigrant model offers several lessons including working with many businesses to provide job seekers with many employment options, offering employers post-employment support services to promote the retention of newcomer employees and working with employment service agencies. In addition, Hire Immigrant’s annual employer summit and employer excellence awards are beneficial and tools that could be incorporated into the Hub. The summit can promote mutual learning and the excellence awards can incentivize employers to support new recruits to transition smoothly.

2.2 MAGNET

Magnet is an online platform created out of a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Ryerson University in 2014 to accelerate economic growth (Magnet, n.d., a). Creating jobs is considered one of the three means to this end — economic growth (ibid). While Hire Immigrants serves only skilled newcomers, Magnet serves all skilled workers regardless of their residency status (ibid). Job seekers can visit their website to create a free online account and provide a detailed resume that shows their key skills and experience (Magnet, n.d., b). Job seekers’ profiles are kept anonymous from employers to avoid prejudice until the job seekers decide to divulge that information (ibid). The job seekers add their preferred jobs and are notified when a matching job is found (ibid). The upsides of the online job-matching are that it is user-friendly, at least for job seekers that have computer literacy; convenient and fast. Next, the job seekers apply for matched jobs and employers review their applications in order to hire the most appropriate applicants (ibid). Magnet’s approach facilitates appropriate job-matching as employers can target job seekers with the needed skill sets, whereas job seekers can also target jobs that meet their interest.

For employers who join Magnet, they are required to create an online account and provide a business profile designed primarily for prospective employees (ibid). Employers are charged a service fee (Technation, n.d.). As of April 2020, Magnet had numerous members and partners that comprised 300 community-level organizations; 500,000 employers; 1,000,100 candidates; and 60 professional associations (Magnet, n.d., a). Magnet intends to



One key difference between the Hire Immigrant model and the proposed Newcomer Employment Hub is that the former serves only skilled newcomers whereas the latter will serve both high-skilled and low-skilled newcomers.

increase its membership by getting additional local, out-of-province and international employers to join (Technation, n.d.). The advantage is that it can increase the job options available to job seekers on the platform. The proposed Newcomer Employment Hub should endeavour to attract many businesses especially if it is scaled up.

Although the Magnet model offers many lessons for the proposed Hub, it varies significantly from the Hub model to be implemented in Winnipeg in several ways. First, the online nature of the job-matching means that job seekers who are not computer literates would be excluded from use of the Hub. There are many newcomer employment agencies in Winnipeg that work with low-skilled newcomers; therefore, conscious efforts should be made to ensure that they can access the Hub's supports. Second, the proposed Hub model will serve only newcomers in its pilot stage while Magnet is open to the general public. Last but not the least, job seekers will access the Hub through employment service agencies to ensure that they receive additional supports before and after their employment; however, Magnet gives job seekers direct access.

2.3 TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (TRC) 92: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

This is an action plan designed by the WPRC in 2016 in response to the TRC Call to Action 92 that advocates for employment equity in Canada by urging businesses to support Indigenous peoples to acquire and retain jobs (WPRC, 2019). The first stage in designing this employment initiative was canvassing for the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders including HR officials, businesses, community-based organizations, government, Indigenous and youth leaders, universities and colleges, on the barriers to Indigenous youth employment (WPRC, 2016; 2019). The upside of the stakeholders consultation is that it makes it possible to incorporate the views of stakeholders right from the onset, making it easy to get their buy-in and support during implementation. WPRC's (2016) findings from the consultations were as follows:

- (i) Indigenous youth employment agencies needed help in supporting Indigenous graduates to acquire good jobs;
- (ii) Business owners recognized the need to provide jobs for Indigenous youth because of the challenges they face coupled with the increasing Indigenous population;
- (iii) The right workplace environment should be created to help Indigenous youth workers succeed; and
- (iv) The youth would need post-employment support services.

Based on the aforementioned findings, the action plan targets three main areas:

- (i) Educate employers on the history of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous youth employment challenges (WPRC, 2019). "Conversation circles" are organized for employers to meet with Indigenous youth and learn from them first-hand the challenges they face and the youth can also get to know employers' expectations (ibid). Other avenues for businesses to learn about Indigenous issues are meetings with employment service agencies, participation in blanket exercises and learning sessions with knowledge keepers (WPRC, 2017; 2018).
- (ii) Educate people about Indigenous history and promote cultural diversity at the workplace (WPRC, 2019). The HR staff and executive directors, the targets here, are expected to share their knowledge with other staff members (WPRC, 2018; 2019).
- (iii) Create connections for Indigenous youth employment (WPRC, 2019). Aside from the conversation circles, job seekers are given the opportunity to tour the facilities of employers to get a good understanding of the workplace before they are hired (ibid). There are eight Indigenous employment service agencies and twelve businesses partnering with WPRC to help the youth get jobs (WPRC, 2016; 2019). As of the writing of this report, the initiative was being piloted with the intention of scaling it up later (WPRC, 2019). The businesses collaborating with the WPRC are led by Dave Angus who is the ex-President of The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, co-chair of the WPRC and President of the Johnston Group (WPRC, 2017). Periodic meetings are organized for the participating businesses to promote mutual learning (WPRC, 2018; 2019).

The TRC 92: Youth Employment initiative offers lessons for the Hub, even though the initiatives focus on two different equity groups that have different employment needs and barriers. First, educating employers about the people they work with will motivate the employers to be more welcoming of newcomers and create a supportive environment for new employees to succeed at work. Second, the stakeholder consultation was vital in ensuring that the initiative was sensitive to the needs of all those involved.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS WITH BUSINESSES AND NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section primarily presents findings from the consultation of the businesses and the newcomer employment agencies. The section has a strong focus on background information about the businesses and agencies, and the recruitment and retention of newcomers.

3.2 BACKGROUND OF THE NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND BUSINESSES

3.2.1 Newcomer employment agencies

A. Types of services delivered

Newcomer employment agencies provide pre-employment and post-employment services. The former includes but is not limited to application and interview preparation, Canadian workplace information, skills training and certification, work placements (such as internships, co-ops and direct work placements), mentorship and career advice, credential recognition, networking, employer testing, English language training, financial literacy training, and employment referrals. The post-employment services typically include checking in with employers to identify challenges newcomer staff might be facing and working collaboratively with the newcomers and the employers – at their request – to overcome the challenges.

B. Clients served

Table 2 shows the types of newcomers that the 15 employment agencies which were engaged often serve. The newcomer employment agencies typically serve more than one targeted newcomer group.

TABLE 2: Client base of newcomer settlement agencies

TARGETED CLIENT GROUPS	FREQUENCY
YOUTH	8
LOW-SKILLED	13
HIGH-SKILLED	7
OTHERS (INCLUDING REFUGEES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS)	8



It is not rare to find job-searching newcomers in Winnipeg unaware of the existence of and the services provided by newcomer employment agencies.

C. Challenges newcomer employment agencies encounter

The problems newcomer serving agencies face are summarized below:

- (i) Many employers in Winnipeg are not aware of newcomer employment serving agencies and the support they provide with preparing newcomer job seekers for the workforce and supporting businesses to retain qualified newcomer employees. Therefore, many employers have preconceived notions of newcomer job seekers and view them as possible burdens to their workplace (such as low English proficiency), and lack the flexibility to adapt their workplace to enable newcomers to overcome some of the barriers they might be facing. As a result, some employers lose out on accessing the pool of qualified candidates.
- (ii) Agencies lack adequate and stable funding. The agencies rely heavily on government funding; however, this funding is limited and commonly unstable. As a consequence, the staffing capacity of agencies is stretched thin trying to meet the high demands of assisting newcomer job seekers in securing meaningful employment.
- (iii) While many agencies have built connections with employers, the number of employers and the types of employers the agencies are connected to, are not great enough to meet the demands of their clientele. Consequently, not all newcomer job seekers are able to secure meaningful employment. For example, only a few agencies have employer liaison staff, who are able to focus on building those strong employer relations. Some agencies lost all of their IRCC funding in 2019, forcing them to find innovative ways to serve the community.
- (iv) While the agencies work together on some macro-level initiatives (such as sitting on IPW's Employment Sector Table or MANSO's Employment Committee), the nature of government funding creates a situation where the agencies must compete for funding and clients, making it difficult to partner on initiatives.

D. Barriers newcomers encounter in accessing employment services

The newcomer employment agencies shared challenges newcomers face in utilizing their services:

- (i) Some newcomers are unaware of the services delivered by agencies. In the research consultant's experience, it is not rare to find job-searching newcomers in Winnipeg unaware of the existence of and the services provided by newcomer employment agencies. A research by IRCC (2017) found that 61% of newcomers in Canada do not use services of IRCC funded newcomer serving agencies, even though the supports they offer are relevant and free.
- (ii) Family responsibilities: (a) Some newcomers who have child care duties find it very onerous to balance child care duties with full-time English language training classes or job searching. (b) Some youth are not able to commit to long-term structured employment training programs such as internships or work placement opportunities because of factors such as driving and interpreting for family members.
- (iii) Newcomers who do not drive and live in areas with poor bus access can find it difficult to commute to participate in long-term in-person employment training programs.
- (iv) Full-time students might not be able to participate in employment training programs which need a lot of time due to their commitments to school.

3.2.2 Businesses

Among the 14 businesses who were consulted, seven (7) said newcomers constitute 25-50% of their staff and the remaining seven (7) said newcomers constitute less than a quarter of their staff. In terms of job security, the businesses did not report any significant difference between their newcomer staff and other staff. Twelve (12) businesses reported that their newcomer staff generally hold non-management to lower management positions whereas only two businesses said that their newcomer staff hold middle management positions. This research finding is consistent with research findings from other parts of Canada. A survey of employers in the Greater Toronto Area in 2018 showed that only 12% of newcomers hold any type of managerial position (Peel Halton Local Employment Planning Council, 2019). The businesses who were engaged attributed the situation to the following reasons:

- (i) Gaps in education or business knowledge as top executives should have in-depth understanding of laws and regulations pertaining to their sector in the province.
- (ii) Transfer of credentials can be difficult, particularly in regulated professions.
- (iii) Recruitment and onboarding of top executives tend to be more expensive; therefore, some businesses are reluctant to take the risk to select newcomers for such positions if they think the cost will outweigh the benefit, for instance, due to gaps in education.
- (iv) Some upper management positions require several years of training. Therefore, newcomers who typically start from entry-level positions need time to rise to such positions.
- (v) Some businesses admitted that without adequate diversity, inclusion and cultural humility training, some entry level staff may be reluctant to work for a manager who is a newcomer. This might jeopardize the chance of newcomers becoming senior executives.

Some businesses admitted that without adequate diversity, inclusion and cultural humility training, some entry level staff may be reluctant to work for a manager who is a newcomer.

3.2.3 Relationship between newcomer employment agencies and businesses

Prior to the pandemic, newcomer employment agencies often attended events with employers to get the chance to create new connections. Since the pandemic started, cold calling and contacting employers by email have been more effective. In terms of support for the businesses, newcomer employment agencies support them before and after recruitment. The pre-employment support includes offering office space for employers to hold interviews, pre-screening qualified candidates and job referrals. The post-employment supports include helping newcomers to transition into new workplaces and evaluating work placements to identify areas of improvement.

The agencies placed a high value on the connections they have with employers; however, they shared some concerns about working with employers:

- (i) High HR staff turnover: It is very difficult for agencies to work with businesses with high HR staff attrition rates as employer liaisons need time to build new relationships with new staff.
- (ii) Some employers find it difficult to manage relationships with multiple agencies as it is time consuming and demands a significant HR capacity.
- (iii) A relationship with an existing employer might break down if a newcomer does not perform well in an interview or after being hired.
- (iv) Limited opportunities to connect with employers especially in the midst of the pandemic where some businesses are shutting down due to the restrictions.
- (v) Some employers lack the cultural humility training needed to support newcomer staff. For example, when it comes to addressing performance issues or providing constructive feedback for newcomer youth to be successful, many employers were not able to provide this. While many employers are open to this type of training/feedback, most agencies can only provide the businesses with limited training as their primary focus is on their client and they lack the funds needed to hire adequate staff to train the businesses.
- (vi) Sometimes, the agencies struggle to match newcomer job seekers with employment opportunities, as job descriptions do not always aptly describe the tasks necessary for the job and this could make it difficult to find suitable candidates for available jobs.
- (vii) Hiring practices are not always welcoming and inclusive. Employers often prioritize local certifications over international ones and undervalue the potential of newcomers.

- (viii) Some newly arrived newcomers, such as refugees, who are searching for jobs might not be able to afford the cost of acquiring pre-employment documents such as adult and child abuse registry checks and a driver's license.

More than half (8) of the businesses which were engaged had worked with newcomer employment agencies before. Despite the great value the businesses place on their relationship with the agencies, they also shared some areas which could be improved. First, businesses, which often work with short timelines, wanted to know the schedules and availability of the agency staff in order to save time when they need to contact the agencies about hosting employment events or training on short notices. Second, businesses stated that it would be very beneficial for all parties - the businesses, agencies and job applicants - if the agencies only send them job applicants who have completed their pre-employment training and are ready to work. Job ready newcomers are more likely to hit the ground running as their training equips them with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed at the workplace. Employers typically spend less time and money training them and their success at the workplace could spur the newcomers to stay with their employer, leading to lower attrition rates. The concerns shared by both the agencies and businesses above reinforce the need for the Hub.

3.3 Recruitment and retention of newcomers

3.3.1 Hiring trend of newcomers

Generally, the number of newcomer staff of the businesses was increasing prior to the pandemic. They attributed the change to myriad of reasons:

- (i) the efforts of the agencies in creating partnerships with employers were paying off;
- (ii) businesses, which are growing, needed additional staff;
- (iii) Canada needs more workers due to its aging population;
- (iv) businesses are paying more attention to inclusion and diversity; and
- (v) the increased availability of newcomer job seekers due to their increasing population in Winnipeg.

The businesses acknowledged that newcomer employment slowed down especially in March 2020 when very tough restrictions were imposed by the province to control the pandemic; however, they expect newcomer employment to increase significantly again once the pandemic is over and all restrictions are lifted. According to Statistics Canada (2020), Winnipeg's overall unemployment rate fell by 3 percentage points to 8.1% from July 2020 to November 2020.

3.3.2 Avenues for hiring newcomers

The businesses we consulted stated that they recruit newcomers through the following means:

- (i) In-person job/career fairs: This was very popular and useful before Covid-19.
- (ii) Online/digital advertisements: This includes online job/career fairs, job boards (such as Indeed), websites of recruiting companies and partner companies, and social media platforms. The businesses pointed out that online advertisements are the most popular and effective now due to the pandemic.
- (iii) Word of mouth and walk-ins.
- (iv) Employee referral programs: Many companies offer incentives for referrals as many people enjoy working with those they already know. The value of the incentive often depends on how difficult hiring for that sector is. For instance, the dollar value for the referral of information technology professionals is typically high.
- (v) Newcomer settlement and language agencies: French language agencies often refer newcomer job seekers to businesses that offer bilingual positions.
- (vi) IRCC has partnered with some businesses to refer to them job seekers who might be a good fit based on their visa applications.

Newcomer employment slowed down especially in March 2020 when very tough restrictions were imposed by the province to control the pandemic.

3.3.3 Challenges businesses face in recruiting newcomers

Despite the benefits businesses reap from hiring newcomers, the businesses that were consulted highlighted the challenges they face when recruiting newcomer job seekers:

(i) Language proficiency

The biggest obstacle they identified is low proficiency skills in the official languages, especially English. This is not surprising as most newcomers are non-native English speakers and some learn how to communicate in English only after arriving in Canada. Businesses recognized the value of effective communication at the workplace; therefore, some of them offer their newcomer staff different supports to improve their communication skills. The supports include: (a) using non-verbal communication signs while their staff take English language classes; (b) asking staff who speak the language of the newcomers to translate instructions; and (c) paying for English language training programs and resources for their staff such as The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce's Toastmaster's Club, Grammarly and English language courses offered by post-secondary schools in Winnipeg. A caveat is that not all businesses are able and/or willing to pay for the cost of English language training for their staff.

(ii) Safety concerns

Some businesses highlighted safety concerns as a challenge they face in recruiting newcomers. Due to language barriers, some businesses worried about newcomers' acquisition of safety training and their understanding of other workplace instructions. For example, in the health care and construction fields, the consequence of not fully understanding safety protocols can have extremely dangerous outcomes for newcomer staff. Also, due to different safety standards and protocols in other countries, a newcomer may need time to unlearn and relearn safety practices.

(iii) Financial concerns

Another obstacle identified by the businesses is the inability of newcomers to get the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as safety boots, vests, mittens and gloves needed for work. Some businesses cover these expenses and deduct them from their staff's pay, while some not-for-profits donate these items to newcomers. However, the donations are inadequate and some employers do not provide the payback option. This is a very cyclical challenge as some newcomers do not have the funds to purchase the PPE because they do not have income.



Licensure processes for internationally educated professionals are very onerous, can take many years and be very expensive.

are affected by the work restrictions for international students. For example, the Government of Canada allows international students to work as much as they want during school breaks but a maximum of 20 hours per week when school is in session. Employers and students could be penalized for infractions. This can be difficult for HR staff working with newcomers for the first time as they have to always track their hours to ensure there are no violations.

(vii) Documentation

Some newcomers lack the legal documents required to work in Canada such as Social Insurance Number, a bank account or a driver's license. More often than not, newcomers who lack the needed documentation are the ones who do not participate in newcomer employment training programs. Many newcomer serving agencies support newcomers to acquire the documents needed for work. This may include having staff drive them to their bank appointments.

3.3.4 Retention of newcomer staff

The businesses reported that the attrition rates for newcomers and non-newcomer staff were not significantly different. The businesses shared their thoughts on the factors that contributed to newcomer staff attrition within their workplaces:

(i) Pursuit of full-time education

Both newcomers and other Canadians resign from their positions due to school. While many businesses can accommodate part-time education, the ones offering full-time positions are often not able to accommodate full-time studies.

(ii) Transportation

For the businesses which post staff to different work locations within the city on a daily basis, long bus rides or poor access to buses can be a challenge for some of their staff.

(iii) Compensation

Businesses which pay low wages, particularly around the minimum wage for entry-level positions, have trouble retaining staff. Therefore, when newcomers are able to secure employment at higher incomes, they leave the workplace.

(iv) Childcare

It takes time to get reliable child care. As a result, parents with no reliable child care can often leave their positions. Some of the businesses were considering providing child care services at their premises to relieve their staff of this burden.

(iv) Adjusting to workplace culture

Businesses highlighted that for some newcomers, understanding and adjusting to workplace culture can be difficult especially for those who do not receive pre-employment training. For example, some newcomers coming from patriarchal societies can struggle to work for a female manager.

(v) Credential recognition

Another challenge businesses face in recruiting newcomers is credential recognition. Particularly in regulated professions, licensure processes for internationally educated professionals are very onerous, can take many years and be very expensive. Without correct licensure, newcomers are not able to work in their respective fields, limiting the ability of businesses to hire them.

(vi) Immigration restrictions

Businesses that rely heavily on international students to fill entry-level positions, such as call centres,

(v) Out-of-province migration

Another cause of newcomer staff attrition is relocation to other provinces. Many newcomers move to other provinces for many reasons: (a) some believe there are better economic opportunities in other provinces, (b) some hate the cold, (c) some want to reunite with their families in other provinces, (d) some have the intention of moving to another province from the onset, possibly due to the selection criteria of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (a path to permanent residency) and low tuition rates for international students; and (e) for some internally educated professionals, their only chance for licensure is in other provinces due to the availability of bridging programs.

(vi) Terms not extended

Newcomer staff can leave if their term positions are not extended.

(vii) Other opportunities

An opportunity to grow elsewhere can spur any employee to take another position.

3.3.5 Benefits of hiring newcomers

There was consensus among the businesses who were consulted that the recruitment of newcomers is valuable. A large scale enterprise remarked, “Our business is dependent on newcomers so we really value them. I mean, our perspective is to be very positive and if there is any other way we can work with you to reach more newcomers or help them to work with us, we will be very excited about (it).” The businesses shared the benefits of hiring newcomers:

(i) Work ethic

Many newcomers have amazing work ethics and some can work up to 80 hours per week. The need to provide for themselves and their families is a primary driver.

(ii) Diversity

Diversity can increase the performance of a business. Having newcomer staff can increase clientele as customers are very comfortable and happy to trade with people who look like them and they can easily relate to. Workplace diversity projects the business as a welcoming one. It is also right and ethical because it is a true reflection of the diversity in Winnipeg now.

(iii) Filling positions others cannot

Newcomer employees help to fill entry-level positions. Employers cannot fill all positions easily due to Canada’s ageing population. In addition, many Canadians do not value low-paying entry-level positions.

(iv) Valuable experience and innovation

Newcomers often come with a lot of experience which is not recognized in Canada, and this experience can drive innovation. Coming from different contexts and places across the world, newcomers can introduce new ways of doing things and collaborate for progress. Longstanding staff might be used as one way of working, which might not necessarily be the best.

(v) Impacts on society

Other benefits include tax generation, welfare expenditure savings and an increase in aggregate demand for goods and services as newcomers become employed.

**Coming from
different contexts
and places
across the world,
newcomers can
introduce new ways
of doing things and
collaborate
for progress.**

4.0 NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT HUB

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous section provided background information about the stakeholders who were engaged and analyzed the hiring and recruitment of newcomers. This section concludes the report. The issues discussed here include the model for the Newcomer Employment Hub, benefits of the Hub, additional supports needed for the Hub to be successful, key considerations for the Hub, next steps, and areas of future research on newcomer employment that could be explored further.

4.2 THE MODEL FOR THE NEWCOMERS EMPLOYMENT HUB

The consulted agencies offered very useful suggestions for developing a Newcomer Employment Hub. A model emerged early on in the meetings with the agencies, it has four interconnected key components — the Hub office, businesses, agencies, and the Advisory Committee (see Figure 1). The subsequent sections provide a detailed explanation of the model.

A. The Hub office

The agencies gave several suggestions regarding the Hub office. First, the majority of the Hub's activities should be done on the online job portal. There should be only one or two staff responsible for the day-to-day running of the Hub. The Hub will not provide direct pre/post-employment services. The staff should be neutral and unbiased towards agencies. Impartiality will be crucial to the Hub's success since government funders (who are the major funders of newcomer employment agencies) primarily base their funding contributions on the number of newcomers agencies serve. This condition for funding creates unnecessary competition among agencies and the Hub should neither reinforce nor exacerbate the unnecessary competition. The specific duties of the Hub staff will include:

- (i) Establishing business and agency partnerships; training partners on the use of the Hub; answering partners' questions and troubleshooting any issues.
- (ii) Posting the profiles of partner agencies and businesses on the Hub. The businesses and agencies might have their own websites but the business profiles will provide the agencies with the information they would want to have about the businesses while the agency profiles will match the expectations of the businesses. Both profiles will be accessible by the businesses and agencies.
- (iii) Vetting proposed job postings to ensure they include the information agencies will need including required language and technical skills, work experience, educational attainment, etc. before posting the jobs on the online job portal.
- (iv) Sending email alerts to inform agencies of new job postings.

B. The businesses

The business partners of the Hub will be members of The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. During the pilot stage, businesses will be approached to partner on the Hub based on their interest in the initiative and key sectors identified by the agencies. The businesses will perform the following functions:

- (i) Agree to the Hub's terms and conditions and sign an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

- (ii) Prepare and update their company profiles. The business profiles will cover the information the agencies should have about them including the types of goods and/or services they deliver, location, workplace environment, contact information, and categories of employment they typically offer.
- (iii) Prepare job postings that include detailed job requirements and a checklist of essential job requirements such as English Language proficiency skill. Since language barrier is the biggest obstacle businesses encounter in hiring newcomers, it will be crucial for businesses to know the English Language proficiency skills of newcomers before hiring.
- (iv) Acknowledge receipts of applications.
- (v) Provide feedback to agencies whose clients are unsuccessful at getting a posted job. Some employers were happy to provide detailed feedback whereas others did not want to go into detail for fear of being sued. Ultimately, the employers will decide on how detailed they want the feedback to be.
- (vi) Work with the agencies if they need post-employment services.
- (vii) Provide overall feedback and evaluation on the Hub.

Input from stakeholders and monitoring and evaluation will all be essential to the success of the Hub.

C. The newcomer employment services agencies

Newcomer employment service agencies will be invited to partner on the Hub. As a Hub partner, the agencies will play the following essential and inter-related roles to ensure the Hub succeeds:

- (i) Agree to the Hub's terms and conditions and sign an MOU.
- (ii) Prepare and update their profiles on the online portal. The profiles should cover the information the businesses should have about them, including their contact information, the type(s) of newcomers they support, and the range of employment services they provide.
- (iii) Provide pre-employment and post-employment services for the newcomer job seekers.
- (iv) Provide feedback and evaluation on the Hub.

D. Advisory Committee

Input from stakeholders and monitoring and evaluation will all be essential to the success of the Hub. Generally, the stakeholders were excited about the Hub; however, there were concerns about the ability to sustain the Hub as previous newcomer employment initiatives involving multiple stakeholders had not been sustained. It was explained that mobilizing stakeholders for such a cause and sustaining it can be an uphill task. In order to forestall a recurrence, it was strongly recommended that an Advisory Committee should be formed and tasked with effective monitoring and evaluation of the Hub. The Advisory Committee would be made up of the key stakeholders representatives from The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, IPW, businesses and agencies (including front-line staff). In order to ensure fairness, the representatives of the newcomer employment agencies can take turns in sitting on the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee could meet quarterly to identify any challenges the Hub might be experiencing and propose feasible solutions. Since the Hub is being piloted, the evaluation should be a formative one that will focus on how the Hub can be adjusted in response to identified problems. Also, the evaluation should be holistic in that it should be done from multiple perspectives: businesses, agencies, and job seekers/employees. For instance, low job retention can be attributed to many factors including harassment by an employer or an employer not offering commensurate remuneration and perquisites. Some monitoring and evaluation indicators worth considering include job retention rates, hiring rates and usefulness of the Hub to businesses and agencies.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- (i) Responsible for monitoring and evaluation
- (ii) Comprises representatives from all stakeholders
- (iii) Conducts periodic meetings
- (iv) Undertakes a holistic evaluation that assesses outcomes from diverse stakeholder perspectives
- (v) Focuses on formative evaluation



THE HUB OFFICE (ONLINE PORTAL)

- (i) Small staff
- (ii) Offers no direct employment service
- (iii) Establishes business and agency partnerships; trains partners on the use of the Hub; answers partners' questions; and troubleshoots any issues
- (iv) Posts available positions and ensures that agencies have the essential information they would need to prepare clients
- (v) Sends email alerts to inform agencies of new job postings
- (vi) Posts agency and company profiles and updates them accordingly



NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

- (i) Agree to the Hub's terms and conditions and sign an MOU
- (ii) Prepare and update their profiles for the businesses
- (iii) Provide pre-employment and post-employment services for the newcomer job seekers
- (iv) Provide feedback and evaluation on the Hub



BUSINESSES

- (i) Agree to the Hub's terms and conditions and sign an MOU
- (ii) Prepare company profiles for the agencies
- (iii) Prepare job advertisements to be posted on the Hub
- (iv) Acknowledge receipt of applications
- (v) Provide agencies with feedback on application assessment — status updates and why clients were not successful
- (vi) Work with agencies if they need post-employment services
- (vii) Provide overall feedback about the Hub

Source: Field research, 2020

4.3 Benefits of the Hub

The Hub would be beneficial in many ways.

(i) Connections with employers

While all the agencies had connections with some employers, there was general consensus that the Hub will augment their existing connections. Even the large agencies, including those working with at least a hundred active employers, shared this view. The Hub could help agencies connect better with employers in a couple of key ways. First, some agencies felt that it was difficult connecting with new employers, especially getting face time with them in order to market their clients; therefore, the Hub could act as an avenue to build new connections. Other agencies felt that the Hub would help employers find competent workers easily. Second, the Hub could help sustain relationships agencies have with employers. Existing agency-employer relationships could be fragile. A long-standing relationship with an employer could break down easily – irrespective of the cause, whether it is mental health, settlement-related or any other tangible reason – provided that a client underperforms at an interview or on the job.

(ii) Job matching

The main goal of the Hub would be to help newcomer job seekers secure employment and help businesses fill job vacancies with qualified employees. Hence, the Hub would assist with successful job matching. Agencies reported that businesses' expectations and skill set requirements for job postings can sometimes be unclear; therefore, the Hub would help businesses provide the exact job details agencies need to refer qualified newcomer job seekers who are likely to succeed in the position.

Additionally, the agencies already provide pre-employment training for newcomer job-seekers and by having a clear understanding of the available employment opportunities and employers' expectation, agencies can tailor their pre-employment services to suit the needs of the businesses and the job seekers.

(iii) Collaboration

The Hub could spur mutual learning, easy referrals, and collaboration among agencies. Some agencies felt that the Hub could give them access to a larger pool of partner agencies with similar services; making it easy to refer clients to other agencies providing needed services they do not offer, learn from agencies that have been very successful in providing certain services, and avoid duplication of efforts. A few agencies affirmed their readiness to refer newcomer job seekers to other agencies if needed and/or share the design and implementation strategies for their successful programs with other agencies. Also, this will be the first time that businesses and newcomer serving agencies in Winnipeg will be collaborating on such a scale to achieve a common objective. Lessons from the Hub can guide newcomer serving agencies and businesses on future collaborations.

4.4 Additional supports for the Hub

Below are the additional supports that could contribute significantly to the success of the Hub. They were derived from stakeholders consultation and literature.

(i) Networking and relationship building

The participating employers and agencies should meet from the onset for familiarization and networking. This could enable them to build a strong relationship early.

This will be the first time that businesses and newcomer serving agencies in Winnipeg will be collaborating on such a scale to achieve a common objective.

(ii) Employer hiring events

Employer hiring events would be organized periodically with the businesses and agencies. This would be an exception to the decision that the Hub would not provide direct newcomer services as it was apparent from the consultations that both the newcomer agencies and the businesses want job fairs to be organized. Representatives from the businesses and the agencies would be selected to lead the planning and organization of the job fairs. It was suggested that it should be organized at least twice a year and the format could vary — physical or virtual. Virtual job fairs might be more appropriate if the pandemic and its associated restrictions last longer than expected. Businesses that are part of the New Brunswick skilled worker employment program referenced earlier (see page 4), conduct virtual interviews, particularly during international recruitments. In addition, a non-traditional approach to physical candidate assessment was suggested. For job seekers with little to no education and work experience, there should be an option for them to demonstrate their skills to employers as interviews and resumes alone might not be enough to determine their competence.

Also, it was recommended that employer hiring events should be well organized and fruitful. An example was given of a hiring event that invited five large employers. Interested job seekers registered ahead of time, had a fortnight to be trained by agencies, and could pick a maximum of two employers for interviews. Employers then offered on-the-spot jobs. Another example is a recruitment event organized by the University of Winnipeg and many federal government departments in February 2020 for recent alumni and final year students. Students were required to apply ahead of time for federal government jobs posted exclusively for them. There was no cap on the number of jobs they could apply for. The candidates were interviewed and the majority of the departments offered conditional or unconditional job offers several hours afterwards.

(iii) Training for businesses

While agencies orient their clients on Canadian workplace culture, employers should also be aware of newcomers' culture so they can create the right working environment for newcomers to thrive. It would be beneficial for employers to learn about the employment barriers newcomers face so they can understand the needs of their newcomer staff and be able to support them to succeed at work. Appropriate measures can include referring employers to existing online and hard copy resources on newcomers and cultural humility training workshops, organized by the newcomer service agencies in the city. Unfortunately, some employers lack this knowledge and could benefit from this training to enable them understand and retain their newcomer employees. The direct delivery of newcomer services by the Hub might be misconstrued as undermining the work of the newcomer services agencies; therefore, the Hub will not deliver the cultural humility training directly but rather promote and partner with newcomer employment service providers to deliver the training.

In addition to the cultural humility training, the HR staff should be offered training on newcomer hiring and retention, accessing funds that could support them in having newcomer employers, and navigating employment protocols for temporary residents (such as international students).



Employers should also be aware of newcomers' culture so they can create the right working environment for newcomers to thrive.

(iv) The Employer Excellence Awards and Employer Summits

The Employer Excellence Awards and Employer Summits discussed previously in the literature review section can contribute significantly to the Hub's success. The former can motivate employers to be very supportive of newcomers whereas the latter can promote mutual learning and collaboration.

(v) Publicizing the Hub

Another applicable lesson from literature is publicizing the Hub, an important input to scaling it up. Publicity will be key to getting additional employment agencies, employers especially the large scale ones and partners to join the Hub. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce has an agreement with a branding company to brand the Hub once it is fully developed. Additional ways of promoting the Hub are leveraging social media and featuring the businesses and agencies in The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce's monthly newsletter.

4.5 Key considerations for the Hub

The agencies shared some critical issues to be considered in the design and development stage of the Hub:

(i) Purpose of the Hub

It is worth reiterating that agencies stated firmly that the Hub should neither duplicate their efforts nor attempt to replace the newcomer services they offer. The agencies were reluctant to tolerate any action that will be inimical to the existing relationships they have with businesses. In order to resolve this concern, the Hub should have it laid out clearly in its terms of reference that it will not become a direct service provider.

(ii) Conduct of agencies

An important suggestion was that an MOU defining unequivocally the conduct and roles of the agencies should be signed to forestall a situation where an agency will join the Hub in order to connect with a business to just move their partnership off the Hub to work that business.

(iii) Job seekers' access to the Hub

It was suggested that newcomer job seekers should not have direct access to the Hub. The agencies justified the restricted access on two grounds. First, businesses can be saved from being bothered unnecessarily by individual job seekers. Small and medium scale businesses, might lack the capacity to deal with numerous job seekers at a time. Therefore, it will be easier for job seekers to work with the businesses through the agencies. Second, agencies through their pre-employment services can prepare job seekers until they are job-ready before sending them to the employers. Individual newcomer job seekers who do not receive any pre-employment service might underperform.

(iv) Fairness to low-skilled newcomer job seekers

The Hub should not discriminate against low-skilled people. Many of the agencies working with low-skilled newcomers were concerned their clients might fall to the bottom of the application pool. A solution to this problem could be ensuring that there is a good mix of businesses that offer low-skilled and high-skilled jobs.

(v) Diverse business sectors

If possible, the Hub should work with businesses in different fields/sectors so job seekers can have a lot of flexibility in choosing which jobs to apply for. Magnet offers this flexibility for job seekers.

(vi) Anonymity of agencies

There was no consensus on whether the identities of agencies should be hidden from the businesses when their clients' applications are being submitted. One school of thought was that revealing the identities might lead to biases whereas another opinion was that keeping agencies anonymous during application submission will prevent employers from asking

**Publicity
will be key
to getting
additional
employment
agencies,
employers and
partners to
join the Hub.**

for repeat services from an agency. This issue was resolved by the Employment Sector Table; the majority of its members agreed to the latter. Some employers might ask for repeat services from an agency if they are very impressed with the agency's services. An extreme situation will be if an employer decides to leave the Hub and work with only that agency. Measures would be put in place to deal with such incidents. A good response would be to find a replacement for that employer.

(vii) Clients accessing multiple agencies

Another scenario worth considering is, if multiple agencies support a job seeker to acquire a job and that client requires post-employment support. Which agency should offer that support? The newcomer staff and/or the business will choose which agency will provide the post-employment support. The agencies gave instances where an agency supported a client to get a job but the client or business chose to get post-employment support from another agency.

4.6 Next steps

The findings from this feasibility study have proven that there is a need for the Hub. Many of the stakeholders agreed that the Hub should be created to boost newcomer employment in Winnipeg. The research team will present the findings to the Newcomer Advisory Council for their feedback in winter 2021. The Advisory Council will use the research findings as a basis for the development and implementation of the Hub. The tentative date for rolling out the Hub is fall 2021.

4.7 Areas of further research

There are some important newcomer employment issues that were beyond the scope of this research. Further research could explore the following topics:

- A quantitative research to analyze the proportion of newcomers employed by the different sectors of Winnipeg's economy and the trend over time. The trend could be determined by a longitudinal study.
- Potential differences between earnings of newcomers and other Canadians holding the same position.
- Other avenues of revenue generation that newcomer employment agencies could explore to enable them to reduce their over-reliance on government funding.

4.8 Conclusion

The stakeholders consulted during this feasibility study (including the businesses) acknowledged that there are many benefits in hiring newcomers. Newcomers can transfer international work experience to their workplaces, drive innovation, pay direct and indirect taxes to the government, demonstrate impressive work ethics, and enable employers to fill employment gaps quickly. Despite the benefits above, newcomers in Winnipeg face many employment challenges such as lack of credential recognition, language barrier, discrimination, and lack of understanding of Canadian workplace culture and job application expectations. Newcomer employment agencies have put their shoulder to the wheel to provide newcomers with supports before, during and after their hiring. However, the agencies are unable to meet the needs of all newcomers as they do not have adequate and reliable funding. Aside from the demand for employment services by newcomers, businesses also need supports to be able to hire and retain newcomers. The primary goal of the Hub is to create stronger connections between newcomer employment agencies and businesses in Winnipeg to enable newcomers to secure decent jobs faster.

The primary goal of the Newcomer Employment Hub is to create stronger connections between newcomer employment agencies and businesses in Winnipeg to enable newcomers to secure decent jobs faster.

After conceiving the Hub idea, the next logical step was to elicit the opinions of key stakeholders of newcomer employment in Winnipeg to ascertain if they really need the Hub and if so, how they want it to be developed. The stakeholders corroborated the need for the Hub and envisioned how it could operate. They want the Hub to be simple and user-friendly for both the employers and the agencies. The businesses will post job openings on the job portal through the Hub staff and the agencies will put forward applications for their newcomer clients who are job-ready and suitable for the positions. The businesses will vet the applications, conduct interviews, and chose the right candidate for them. As the new staff start work, the newcomer employment agencies will work with newcomers and the employers who might need additional supports to succeed in the job. Aside from the online job portal, there will be additional supports for the Hub to ensure its success, including training for businesses through partnerships with agencies, awards for outstanding employers, recruitment fairs and publication of the Hub.

The plan is to roll out the Hub successfully in Winnipeg and pilot it for two years. There will be quarterly monitoring and evaluation meetings to identify problems that might emerge and solve them. If the Hub is piloted successfully, it will be scaled up and replicated for other equity deserving groups. The key stakeholders of the Hub hope that numerous newcomers who struggle to find meaningful jobs in Winnipeg will receive the support they need through the Hub.



REFERENCES

- Hire Immigrants. (n.d., a). The HIO Initiative. Retrieved from:
<http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/about-us/initiative/>
- Hire Immigrants. (n.d., b). Think global, act local – Harnessing immigrant talent can help Ottawa businesses address biggest challenges. Retrieved from:
<http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/about-us/initiative/>
- IRCC. (2017). Evaluation of the Settlement Program. Retrieved from:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/settlement-program.html>
- IRCC. (2019). Economic Profile Series: Winnipeg, Manitoba. Immigration Matters. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/immigration-matters/economicprofile-winnipeg-manitoba-en-final.pdf>
- Magnet. (n.d., a). About - Magnet. Retrieved from: <https://magnet.today/job-seeker/>
- Magnet. (n.d., b). Opportunities -Magnet. Retrieved from:
<https://magnet.today/opportunities/>
- Peel Halton Local Employment Planning Council. (2019). 2018 Greater Toronto Area employer survey: Employment and retention of newcomers.
Retrieved from: <https://www.peelhaltonlepc.com/reports>
- Statistics Canada. (2017). Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario: Data products, 2016 Census.
- Statistics Canada. (2020) Table 14-10-0294-01: Labour force characteristics by census metropolitan area, three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, last 5 months. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410029401-eng>
- Technation. (n.d.). Magnet. Retrieved from: <https://itac.ca/magnet/>
- WPRC. (2016). WPRC Update to the Community – May 2016. Retrieved from:
<https://wprc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/WPRC-Community-Update-May-2016.pdf>
- WPRC. (2017). WPRC Update to the Community – September 2017. Retrieved from:
<https://wprc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Community-update-September-2017.pdf>
- WPRC. (2018). WPRC Update to the Community – April 2018. Retrieved from:
<https://wprc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Update-to-the-Community-April-18.pdf>
- WPRC. (2019). WPRC Update to the Community – April 2019. Retrieved from:
<https://wprc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Update-to-the-Community-Apr-2019.pdf>