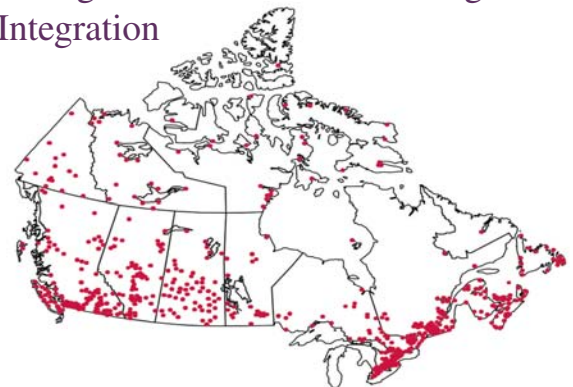




Discussion Paper

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant
Integration: An Expanded Role for
Colleges and Institutes in Immigrant
Integration



Canada

Prepared for the Association of
Canadian Community Colleges
&
Human Resources and Social
Development Canada

April, 2007
Written by

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Centres of Expertise: An Expanded Role for Colleges and Institutes in Immigrant Integration

Executive Summary

Canadian colleges and institutes play a vital role in preparing students to enter the labour market. Internationally educated immigrants comprise a growing element of the student population. This paper proposes two types of centres of expertise in immigrant integration. The first would be expert in the delivery of college/institute programs and services for immigrants. The second would provide support to the college system through policy development, coordination and training. Together they could enhance the capacity of Canadian colleges and institutes to help immigrants on their pathway to employment by addressing the following questions:

- How can colleges respond to the changing needs of diverse immigrants who want to enter the labour market?
- How can progress be achieved in a systematic and integrated way?
- How can new ideas be developed and tested?
- How can learning be shared?
- How can we ensure that promising new initiatives are sustainable?

Background

Canadian colleges and institutes are ideally placed to improve labour market access for immigrants who represent a growing proportion of the post-secondary population. In recent years individual colleges and institutes have made progress on many fronts in serving this diverse client group – introducing innovative measures to respond to their diverse needs. However, there is no systematic and collaborative way to make best use of limited resources and for innovations to be tested, evaluated, sustained and shared among institutions across the country.

In an effort to respond to this situation, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges - in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada - has documented practices, convened forums for discussion, and in March 2004 developed a college/institute Process Model for the integration of immigrants(see page 13). In addition, HRSDC has funded projects to test the delivery of preliminary orientation, assessment and training for immigrants overseas.

At a November 2004 symposium on “Immigrant Settlement - Programs and Services in Canada’s Colleges and Institutes”, guest speaker Naomi Alboim¹ proposed the creation of centres of expertise in meeting the needs of internationally educated immigrants.

With the assistance of HRSDC funding, ACCC retained Ms. Alboim and Karen Cohl to prepare a discussion paper and to facilitate a discussion on the concept of centres of expertise.

Vision

The centres of expertise concept should be examined within an overall vision for Canadian colleges and institutes in helping immigrants to enter the labour market in their occupation.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Services to Immigrants</p> <p>Colleges and institutes in high immigrant-receiving areas will provide one-window access to services and programs for immigrants, whether delivered directly or through referral to external experts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">College and Institute Capacity</p> <p>All colleges and institutes will have access to tools and expertise to provide services and programs for immigrants.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Collaboration</p> <p>Colleges and institutes will collaborate with each other and stakeholders to ensure that immigrants seeking labour market entry are well served.</p> |
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The full range of services and programs would include the components of the ACCC process model. In many cases colleges/institutes could deliver the programs and services directly; in others they could refer people to providers within or outside the college system. Key components include:

- *Information:* Including college information and orientation to Canada and the labour market
- *Assessment:* Including language skills, academic credentials, and competency
- *Advising and Counselling:* Including learning plans, mentorship, and career counselling

¹ Fellow at Queen’s University School of Policy Studies and Associate of the Maytree Foundation

- *Programs*: Including employment-oriented language training, responsive career/technical programs, bridging programs, and work placements

Principles

The following principles are proposed to guide the development of centres of expertise.

Added value

Centres of expertise should be created only where they can provide clear benefits in improving service to immigrants.

Building on Existing Expertise

Centres of expertise should build on existing expertise in Canadian colleges and institutes while also taking advantage of external expertise.

Sharing Expertise

Innovations should be shared across the college system and with other stakeholders across the country.

Voluntary Access

Colleges and institutes should decide, on a voluntary basis, whether they wish to use or adapt a Centre's products or services.

Fair Process

Any college or institute should have an opportunity to become a centre of expertise in immigrant programs and services.

Proposed Approach

The two types of proposed centres of expertise would have the following roles:

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services would ensure that immigrants receive the full range of information services, assessment services, advising/counselling services, and educational programs, whether through direct delivery or referral to other organizations. They would also offer a subset of services (such as competency assessment, learning plans, or work placements) to other immigrants who may not be registered in the college as students. These centres would be expected to design, test and share innovative practices and tools for immigrants and for international students en route to becoming immigrants. The centres could also arrange to deliver programs and services at the request of other interested colleges and institutes.

Some such centres would be *all-purpose centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would encompass immigrants in all occupations for which the institution offers educational programs.

Other such centres would be *sector-or occupation-specific centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would focus on one or more specific occupations or sectors, especially those where large numbers of immigrants have previous training and where existing or projected skills shortages exist.

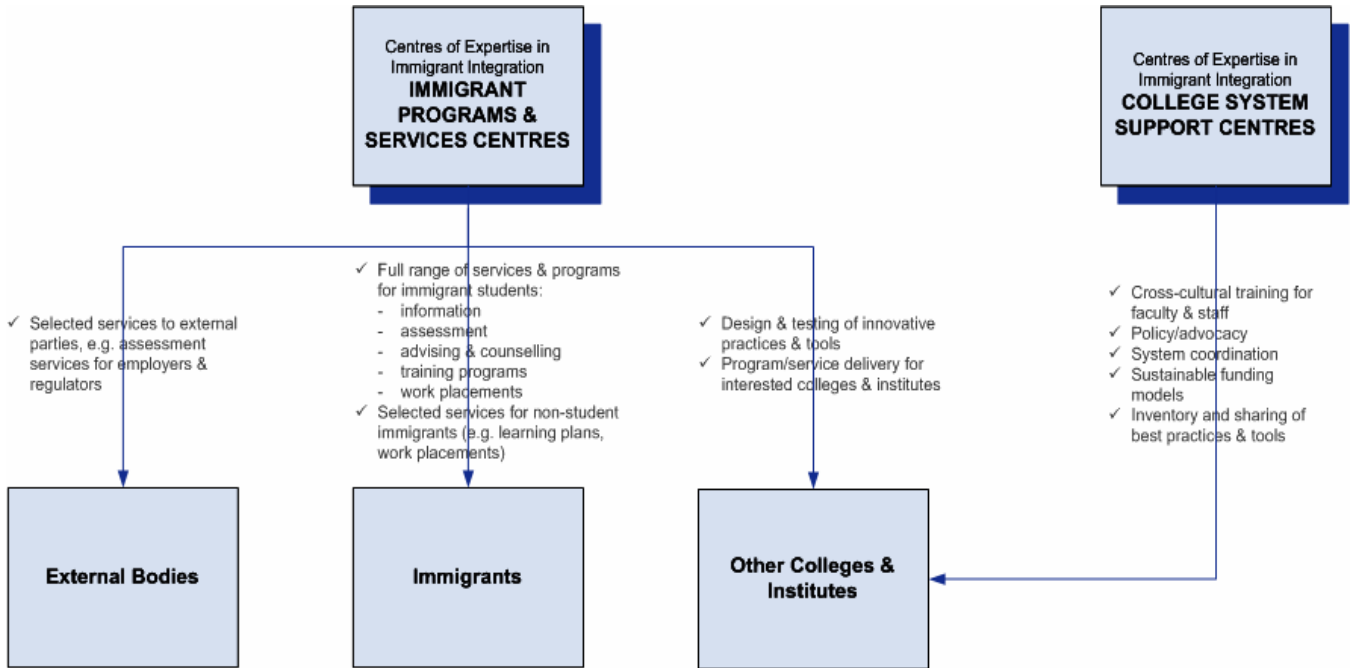
Centres of Expertise in College System Support

Colleges and institutes including those that are centres of expertise in immigrant services may need access to more generic expertise. Individual colleges, for example, could benefit from intercultural training for faculty and staff, or from an inventory of best practices and tools (e.g. how to adapt mainstream education programs into modular programs). In addition, the college system as a whole would benefit from strategic and concentrated policy and advocacy activities (e.g. for sustainable funding models) or from coordination (e.g. for information portals). Therefore, *Centres of Expertise in College System Support* could be created to provide support and the sharing of promising practices to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes across the system. This would include policy development, coordination, sharing of best practices and training.

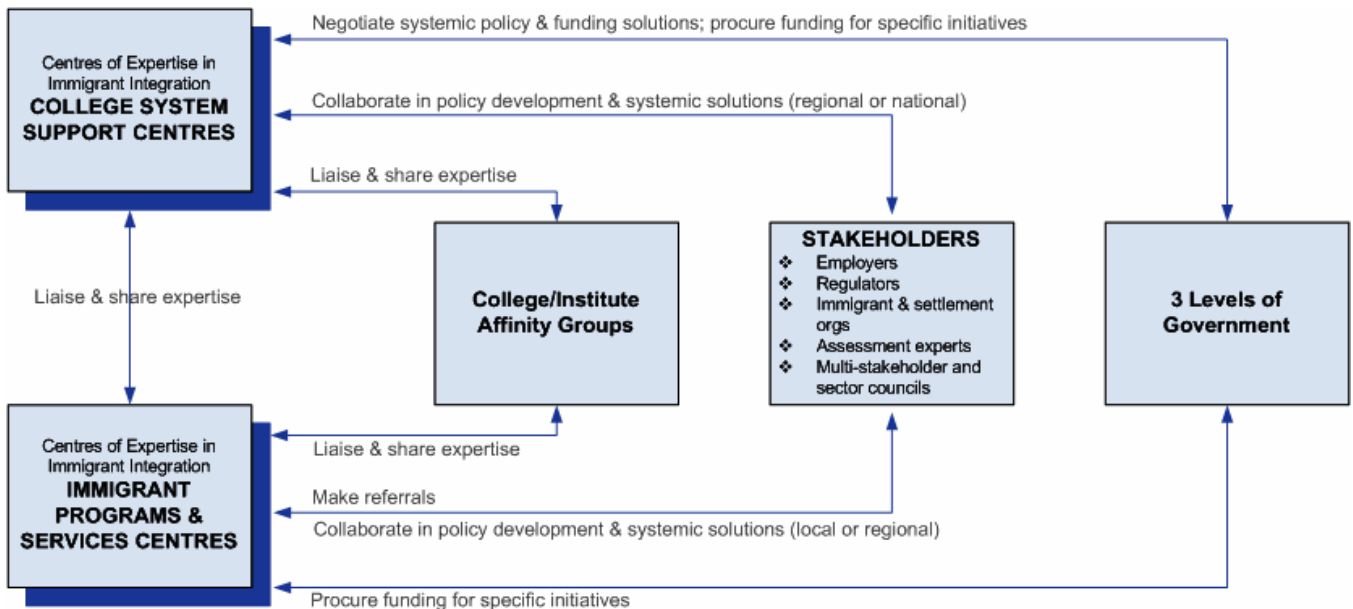
Next steps

The paper has proposed centres of expertise to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes to help immigrants on their pathway to employment. Implementation issues will require thoughtful deliberation to ensure the development of a collaborative and system-wide approach that builds on the successes to date.

CENTRES OF EXPERTISE – SERVICES



CENTRES OF EXPERTISE – LIAISON, COLLABORATION & REFERRAL



CENTRES OF EXPERTISE IN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION:
AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES IN IMMIGRANT
INTEGRATION

DISCUSSION PAPER

April, 2007

Introduction

Canadian colleges and institutes have long been in the business of preparing students for labour market entry. Many have also seen dramatic changes in the composition of their student body, including an increase in internationally educated immigrants seeking access to their occupation in Canada. Individual colleges and institutes have introduced innovative measures to respond to the needs of this growing population. Collaboration across the system is needed however, to make the best use of limited resources and to ensure sustainability. This paper describes the concept of Centres of Expertise to meet this pressing need.

THE NEED FOR ACTION

Context

Changing student population

The population of community colleges and institutes is changing, particularly in major urban centres. Students are increasingly older and more diverse. In almost all Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), recent immigrants aged 18-24 are more likely to attend school than their Canadian counterparts. According to a Statistics Canada study of 2001 census data, in Victoria, this difference was 23 percentage points.²

The same study found that over 25% of full time and part time students in Vancouver and Toronto aged 18-24 immigrated to Canada less than 10 years earlier, and this figure was 10-13% of the student populations in seven other CMAs. The study also shows that recent immigrants aged 25-54 were at least twice as likely as Canadian born persons in this age group to be enrolled in post secondary education.

² Schellenberg, Grant, *Trends and Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas – Immigrants in Canada's Census Metropolitan Areas*, Statistics Canada, 2004

The study further found that recent immigrants who had already obtained a post secondary credential were more likely than those with high school or less to attend post secondary education in Canada. This group accounts for a significant share of adult students in many CMA's: 25% in Toronto and Vancouver, 10-14% in several others.

Immigrants who could benefit from college programs are a diverse group with differing needs and varying levels of skills and experience. They include recent arrivals and people who have been in Canada for a significant period of time. They also include international students who may, ultimately, apply to stay in Canada as immigrants. Colleges and Institutes need new and innovative programs to support this diverse and growing element of the student population.

Under-Utilization of Immigrant Skills

It is well documented that the education, skills and experience immigrants bring to Canada are often not fully utilized here. A recent paper³ describes the significant discounting of education and work experience obtained abroad (discounted by 30% and 70% respectively). The paper posits several reasons why this may be the case.

“It was suggested at the outset that such discounting could stem from a number of reasons: language problems, employer uncertainty regarding the value of foreign-obtained credentials and experience, foreign-acquired skills that are of a lower quality or of types less well-suited to the Canadian labour market, difficulties in receiving Canadian accreditation for professional standing gained in another country, or pure racial (or cultural) discrimination.”

However, the same paper also shows evidence that this discounting can be recouped quite readily with some top-up of Canadian education and work experience.

Retention of International Students

The Federal government and many provinces are interested in retaining international students as immigrants to Canada and in most locations, these students have been authorized to work off-campus during their course of study and for two years beyond graduation (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are excluded). To-date, colleges/institutes have focused more on integrating international students into campus life and on-campus jobs, rather than into the broader Canadian labour market.

³ Naomi Alboim, Ross Finnie and Ronald Meng, *The Discounting of Immigrants' Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations*, IRPP Choices, Vol 11, no. 2, February 2005

The Role of Colleges

Colleges and institutes can and do play a role in helping immigrants move to employment in their field by recognizing educational equivalencies, providing opportunities to fill gaps in skills and experience (whether in 'mainstream' or 'bridging' programs), and preparing for the workplace. Colleges/institutes can also help in meeting settlement and labour market integration needs of international students on their way to becoming immigrants

Canadian colleges and institutes are ideally placed to improve labour market access for immigrants in a variety of areas. Colleges and institutes:

- are in the assessment, training and labour market preparation business; applied learning is their *raison d'être*;
- are in the forefront in implementing prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR);
- have been offering English and French as second language programs (ESL/FSL) for years;
- have connections and working relationships with employers and regulatory bodies;
- have collaborated with community based organizations on bridging programs that help immigrants fill gaps in skills, credentials or work experience;
- have the expert staff, infrastructure and credibility in their communities to design tools and programs that could be of real benefit to the immigrant client group; and
- have a national association and a good record of cross-Canada collaboration.

As stated by Dale Dorn, President Vancouver Community College and Chair of the ACCC Symposium on *Immigrant Settlement - Programs and Services in Canada's Colleges and Institutes* (Nov 2004):

“Federal, provincial and municipal governments, educational institutions and employers all have a moral imperative to address these issues, juxtaposed with individual needs. It is the role of colleges to help individuals realize their dreams, not just to serve the economy. It is essential that the perspectives of immigrants be recognized in order to hear and understand their solutions to these challenges. There is also a need for colleges and institutes to examine our learning systems in order to assess how we, as institutions, accommodate diversity.”

Recent Developments

Public Awareness & Engagement

Public awareness and stakeholder engagement in improving labour market access for immigrants have increased dramatically in recent years. This is reflected in government policies, priorities and funding, and in stakeholder innovations and partnerships involving community organizations, sector councils, employer associations, regulatory bodies and post-secondary institutions.

Initiatives in Canada

Many colleges and institutes have introduced new ways to serve internationally educated immigrants. This was documented in a diagnostic survey and report by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)⁴ as well as subsequent ACCC symposia and roundtables. The diagnostic survey provided a snapshot of how colleges and institutes are meeting the needs of immigrants within their communities, including initiatives that facilitate foreign credential recognition. The report identified barriers colleges and institutes faced in delivering services, barriers immigrants faced in trying to access them, and lessons learned.

Working in partnership with employers, unions, settlement agencies, community centres, and/or regional development agencies, colleges and institutes have the following initiatives in place or underway:

- Mentorship, buddy and peer helper programs;
- Bursaries for immigrants;
- Career training and worksite experience with tailored language instruction;
- Multicultural counsellors and diversity offices;
- Employment resource centre for immigrant professionals;
- Competency-based assessment of skills for particular occupations;
- Occupation-specific language training;
- Occupational bridging and 'fast track' programs for immigrants in specified professions and trades;
- Training on workplace culture and communications combined with work placements;

⁴ ACCC / HRSDC Report on "Responding to the needs of Immigrants: Results of the Diagnostic Survey of College and Institute Programs and Services for Immigrants and Conclusions of the College and institute Immigration Roundtable" (March 2004)

- Customized, modular programs leading to employment and licensing in specified professions;
- Exam preparation courses to write provincial licensing exams in regulated professions; and
- A Pilot project on immigrant attraction and retention to meet the unique needs of small and rural communities

Overseas Initiatives

More and more colleges/institutes are providing training overseas in source countries of immigrants to Canada. HRSDC has recently funded pilot projects to provide information, orientation, and referral to assessment, language training, and potentially other skills training to immigrants overseas while they are awaiting final approval to immigrate to Canada.

All these initiatives represent important progress. We do not know, however, the extent to which they have been documented or evaluated, nor is there a mechanism for assessing whether they are sustainable or transferable. There is also a real danger that institutions are duplicating efforts and resources to 'reinvent the wheel'.

Emergence of Frameworks

There is a growing recognition of the need for a unifying vision and systemic approach to serve as a framework for action to assist immigrants from the time they begin seeking information on labour market access until they enter the workplace in their desired occupation.

In *Fulfilling the Promise*⁵, Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation advocated the following framework for integrating immigrant skills:

- Incentives and supports for stakeholders to provide services and for immigrants to access them;
- Access for immigrants to:
 - Information and expert advice to support immigration decisions and labour market entry
 - Assessment of education and experience acquired overseas
 - Educational and work experience programs to fill identified gaps between an individuals' technical assets and the Canadian requirement to enter the occupation;

⁵ Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation, *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills Into the Canadian Economy*, Caledon Institute, 2002

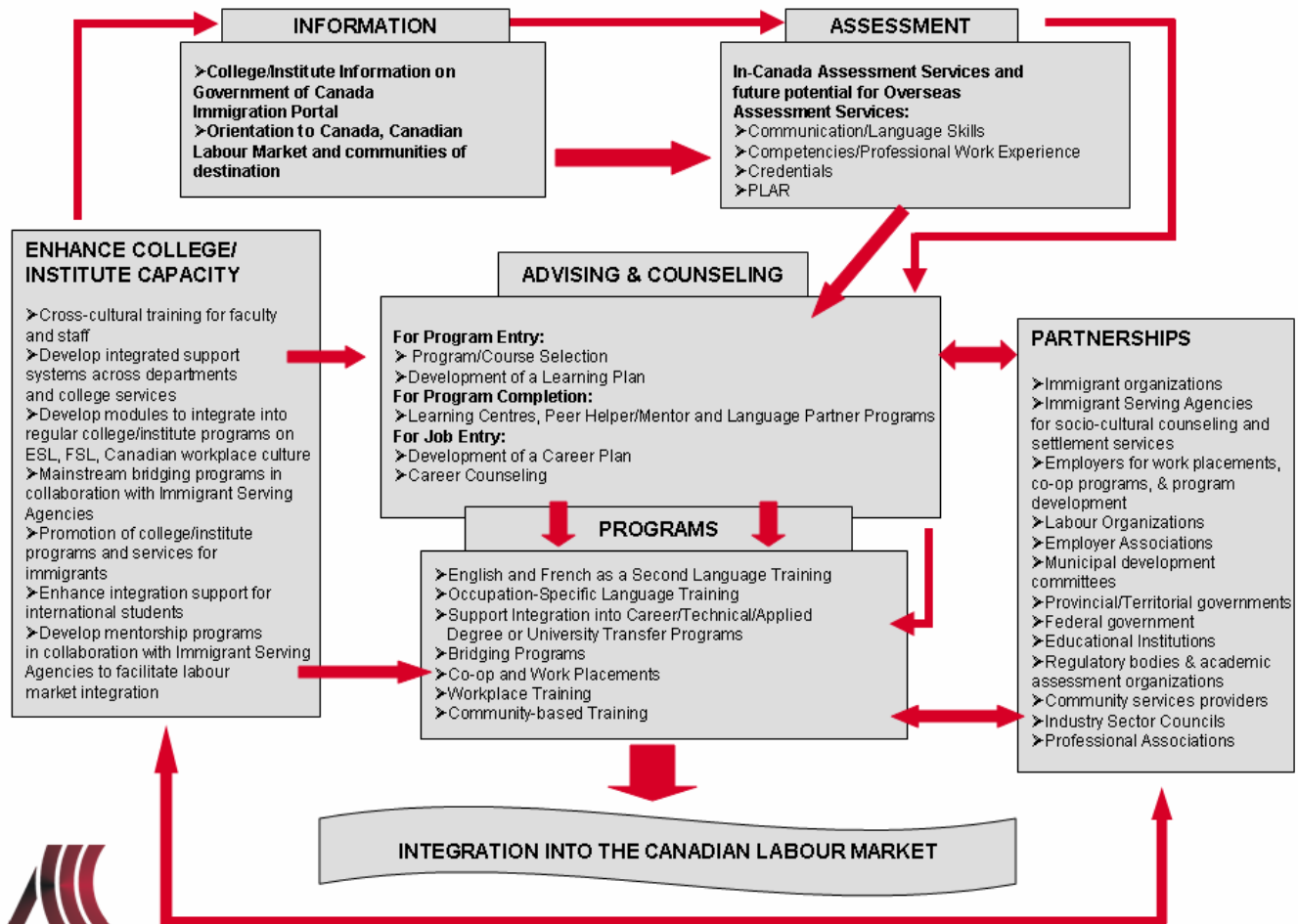
- A leadership council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicate results.

Building on *Fulfilling the Promise*, ACCC developed a Process Model published in the “diagnostic” report referred to above.⁶ The Process Model contains the following main components:

- **Information** for immigrants on colleges and orientation to Canada and the labour market through the Immigration Portal and Overseas and In-Canada Orientation Sessions
- **Assessment** services that can begin overseas and continue in Canada: language skills, PLAR, academic credentials and professional work experience
- **Advising and counselling** services to facilitate program entry and completion and entry into the labour market: learning plans, mentorship, and career counselling
- **Education and training programs** that range from English and French as a second language, occupation-specific language training, support for entry into career/technical, applied degree and university transfer programs, bridging programs, co-op and work placement programs, workplace training and community-based training
- **Enhanced college/institute capacity** in systems and structures to increase the capacity for the provision of services and programs to meet the needs of immigrants: cross-cultural training for faculty and staff, improved funding structures, and integrated support systems
- **Partnerships** in the development and delivery of services and programs for immigrants.

⁶ In Ontario, the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (“CIITE”) project also took a framework approach. The CIITE framework focused on four components: information and advisement, assessment, program delivery, and employment preparation. See Phase 1 Final Report, December 2004.

COLLEGE/INSTITUTE PROCESS MODEL FOR THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS



The diagram above depicts the components of the ACCC process model.

Decision to Explore Centres of Expertise

Despite promising developments in the post-secondary and other sectors, many challenges remain. How can progress be achieved in a systematic and integrated way? How can learning and capacity be shared across the college system? How can new ideas be tested without “reinventing the wheel”? How can sustainability be ensured for promising new initiatives? How can colleges respond to the changing needs of immigrants from different world locations and with different educational and occupational backgrounds? How can colleges be encouraged to collaborate when they compete for prospective students and funding?

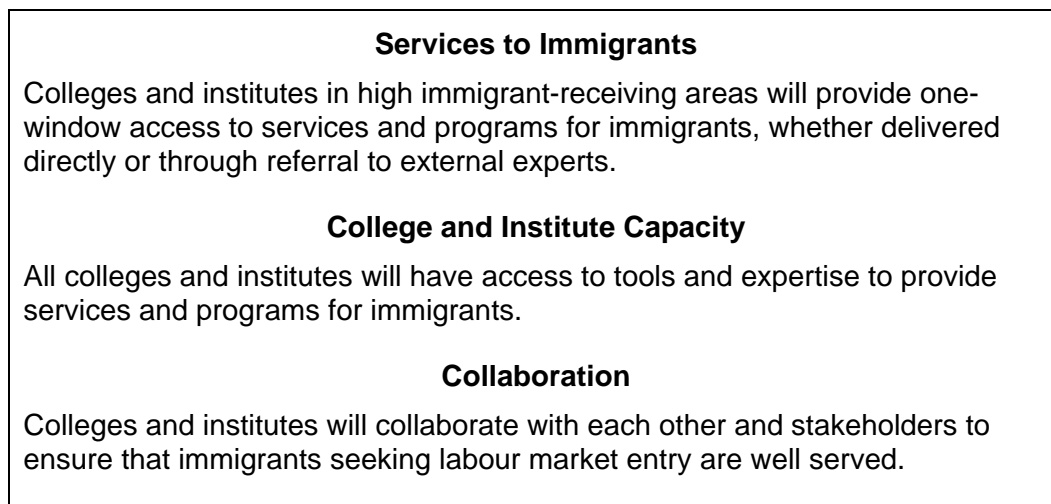
At the November 2005 ACCC symposium, Naomi Alboim, an associate of the Maytree Foundation, challenged participants to consider the development of a series of “Centres of Excellence for Immigrant Integration” across the country in order to address these challenges.

Subsequently, ACCC obtained funding from HRSDC to flesh out the centres of expertise concept and to engage in discussions on potential models. Accordingly, the ACCC retained Ms. Alboim and Karen Cohl who helped to develop the “centres of expertise” concept which is set out below.

Centres of Expertise Concept

Vision

The centres of expertise concept flows from the following vision, and is built on the ACCC process model above:



Under this vision, immigrants would have access to the following services and programs:

- **Information:** college information and orientation to Canada and the labour market
- **Assessment:** language skills, academic credentials, and occupational competency
- **Advising and Counselling:** learning plans, mentorship, and career counselling
- **Programs:** employment-oriented language training, gap-filling career/technical courses, bridging programs, and work placements

In addition, the capacity of colleges and institutes to provide these services would be enhanced through: coordinated policy development, cross cultural training; improved funding models; and the sharing of promising programs, services and tools.

Further, colleges and institutes would collaborate to design and deliver programs with settlement organizations, employers, other educational institutions, regulatory bodies, governments and local leadership councils.

Colleges and institutes without large immigrant populations would not be expected to have all components in place, but should nonetheless have some capacity to meet the needs of immigrants, for example through cross-cultural training of faculty and staff and referral of immigrants to external services or colleges/institutes with specialized expertise.

Principles

The challenge is to create centres of expertise that would help to achieve the vision through sustainable innovations, sharing of expertise, and community partnerships. The following principles are proposed to guide the development of centres of expertise.

Added Value

Centres of expertise should be created only where they can provide clear benefits in improving labour market access for immigrants.

The creation of centres of expertise will be resource and time intensive. Before establishing a centre, it is essential to show in concrete terms how immigrants will benefit in preparing for the labour market.

The benefits would be enhanced if centres offer to provide certain services to external parties in keeping with the community development mandate of colleges/institutions. For example, their PLAR service could be offered to regulatory bodies, employers and non-student immigrants on a fee for service basis.⁷ Similarly, career counselling, mentoring, and work experience opportunities could be offered to immigrants who do not require additional education or credentials.

Building on Existing Expertise

Centres of expertise should build on existing expertise in Canadian colleges and institutes while also taking advantage of external expertise.

Certain colleges and institutes already have extensive expertise in service to immigrants. In developing the centres of expertise model, it is essential to learn from and build upon this expertise.

Considerable expertise also exists externally. While centres of expertise ideally will provide one-window access, they should not be expected to develop or directly deliver all services to immigrants. In some cases they could refer students to, or contract with, outside experts

⁷ Fees might not be necessary if Centres of Expertise receive ongoing funding to provide such services.

For example, the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is expert in the development of language benchmarks and assessment tools, including tools for assessing occupation-specific language skills. Moreover, there are several recognized organizations expert in international academic credential assessment across Canada. In addition, many community agencies provide settlement counselling.

Rather than trying to duplicate expertise, colleges and institutes could make arrangements with selected external bodies to obtain the support required. Similarly, other colleges/institutes could arrange for a centre of expertise to provide programs and services for their immigrant student population.

Sharing Expertise

Innovations should be shared

While there is great value in centres of expertise serving their own immigrant student population, the model is more attractive if the expertise can be shared more broadly. Where a centre uses public funds to develop, test, deliver, and evaluate new tools, services or programs, they should make them available for adoption or adaptation by other interested colleges and institutes.

Voluntary Access

Colleges and institutes should decide, on a voluntary basis, whether they wish to use or adapt a Centre's products or services.

While centres of expertise should be willing to share expertise with and offer services to other colleges and institutes, it should be entirely up to the individual institutions to decide whether and the extent to which they may wish to utilize the centre's expertise and services.

Fair Process

Any college or institute should have an opportunity to become a centre of expertise in immigrant programs and services.

Every Canadian college and institute need not become a centre of expertise in immigrant integration. However, in order to maximize college capacity, all that are interested should have the opportunity to develop into such centres. If funding or incentives become available to develop centres of expertise, a fair process should be developed to determine college/institute access and eligibility.

Proposed Approach

We propose two types of centres of expertise. The first would be expert in the delivery of programs and services for immigrants. The second would provide support to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes across the system to respond to immigrant needs.

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services

Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services would ensure that immigrants receive the full range of information services, assessment services, advising and counselling services, and educational programs, whether through direct delivery or referral to other organizations.

Such centres would be expected to design, test and share innovative practices and tools for immigrants and for international students en route to becoming immigrants. The centres could also arrange to deliver programs and services at the request of other interested colleges and institutes.

The centres would also be ideally placed to provide gap-filling services and programs for those immigrants who have received preliminary assessment and training overseas. This would help to achieve a seamless continuum in the receipt of services beginning overseas and continuing in Canada.

The centres could also offer selected services to immigrants who are not registered as students and who do not require formal education programs. Such immigrants could benefit, for example, from a competency assessment, Canadian work place opportunity or employment counselling.

Some such centres would be *all-purpose centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would encompass immigrants in all occupations for which the institution offers educational programs.

Other centres could be *sector or occupation-specific centres of expertise*. That is, their expertise would focus on one or more specific occupations (e.g. nursing) or sectors (e.g. health), or functions in an occupation or sector (e.g. PLAR for nurses). Ideally, expertise would be geared to occupations or sectors in which a large number of immigrants have had training or experience before immigrating to Canada, and those that have existing or projected skills shortages.

A major benefit of the sectoral approach is the focused use of resources and hence not reinventing the wheel. For example, one good virtual simulation to assess and demonstrate competency (PLAR) or language skills in a particular occupation should be sufficient, rather than having multiple institutions devoting time and resources to produce duplicate models.

Centres of Expertise in College System Support

Colleges and institutes including those that are centres of expertise in immigrant services may need access to more generic expertise. Individual colleges, for example, may need access to intercultural training for faculty and staff, or to an inventory of best practices and tools (e.g. how to adapt mainstream education programs into modular programs). In addition, the college system as a whole would benefit from strategic and concentrated policy and advocacy activities (e.g. for sustainable funding models) or for coordination (e.g. information portals).

Therefore, *Centres of Expertise in College System Support* would be created to provide support and the sharing of promising practices to enhance the capacity of colleges and

institutes across the system. This would include policy development, coordination, sharing of best practices and training.

Impact on Process Model

This section looks briefly at the ACCC process model components to see examples of how they could be implemented in the centres of expertise model.

INFORMATION

Immigrants require clear and comprehensive information – beginning overseas – so they can make sound decisions about whether to immigrate to Canada, where to settle, and what steps to pursue in order to practise their occupation. This requires labour market information and data on how post-secondary institutions can help. The ‘portal’ initiatives underway will help to provide an access point to the information.

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| <p>Centres of Expertise: Immigrant Programs & Services Develop and deliver models for information provision/referral on college programs and services.</p> | <p>Centres of Expertise: College System Support Provide system-wide coordination for portals & overseas information. Document and share best practices in information provision and referral for immigrants.</p> |
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ASSESSMENT

The ACCC process model calls for three types of assessment: language skills, academic credentials, and competency (PLAR). Such assessments are essential for colleges/institutes when making entry and advanced standing decisions and when identifying language training needs. Colleges/institutes may also provide such assessments for regulators (to use when making registration decisions in regulated professions), for employers (to use in hiring decisions), or as a service to immigrants not registered as students.

The process model envisions that assessment will begin overseas where possible.

Language Assessment

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has considerable expertise in developing language benchmarks and language assessment tools, including occupation-specific tools. CCLB does not, however, administer language assessments on behalf of organizations. Rather than developing such tools on their own, colleges and institutes could arrange for CCLB to develop generic and occupation-specific assessment tools and to provide training to interested colleges in how to conduct effective language assessments using the tools.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver models for using and adapting CCLB language assessment tools.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Develop relationship with CCLB for providing expertise to college system on language benchmarks & assessment tools

Document and share best practices in adapting and implementing language assessment tools.

Competency Based Assessment

Competency-based assessment (PLAR) requires individuals to *demonstrate* what they know rather than relying on paper credentials. PLAR often involves testing in a simulated or real environment or production of a portfolio. It is resource-intensive to develop, maintain and deliver. PLAR makes most sense in an occupation-specific context.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver models for occupation-specific PLAR.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Develop funding strategies, e.g. for sustainable PLAR in priority occupations

Document and share best practices in competency-based assessment (PLAR).

Assessment of International Academic Credentials

Colleges vary in their approach to determine the equivalence of international academic credentials. Some may rely heavily on external experts, while others prefer to conduct much of the work internally. Since reputable external assessment organizations exist with considerable expertise and data bases, it would make sense for colleges/institutes to use external expertise to the desired extent.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver models for conducting international academic credential assessments using a combination of internal and external expertise.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Develop relationship with Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada.

Document and share best practices in assessing international academic credentials.

ADVISING & COUNSELLING

Colleges/institutes could benefit from expertise in advising and counselling for immigrants (and for international students on route to immigrant status). This could include expertise on how to:

- Work with clients to develop and implement learning plans to fill identified gaps through education programs, language training, work experience, etc.
- Create mentorship or “buddy” programs using senior students and alumni
- Provide financial counselling and access to loans to immigrants enrolled in or potential clients of college/institute programs and services
- Establish on-site settlement counselling in collaboration with settlement agencies

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver services for immigrant advising and counselling in collaboration with other community providers

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Document and share best practices in immigrant advising and counselling

Develop relationships with the national body of settlement agencies

Develop sustainable funding models

GAP-FILLING PROGRAMS

Once an individual’s qualifications have been assessed, and gaps (if any) identified, the next step is to benefit from programs to fill the gaps to bridge to employment or licensure.

Occupation-Specific Bridging Programs

Many colleges have been actively involved in occupation-specific bridge training programs for internationally educated immigrants. The problem is that such programs are not available or accessible to most immigrants, and many programs are funded on a project basis and therefore unsustainable in the long run on that basis.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver occupation-specific bridging programs in collaboration with stakeholders.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Document and share best practices in occupation-specific bridging.

Develop and advocate for alternate funding mechanisms.

Career and Technical Programs

Occupation-specific bridging programs cannot be available in every occupation at every college or institute. It is therefore essential that “mainstream” programs accommodate the needs of internationally educated immigrants, supplemented by language or other supports as needed. Accommodation would also be needed so that internationally

trained immigrants do not need to start from scratch and retake and complete a full degree or diploma program.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and implement models to adapt education programs to accommodate immigrant needs (e.g. modular approach).

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Document and share best practices on how to adapt education programs to accommodate immigrant needs (e.g. modular approach).

Language Training & Communications Programs

Language is a major factor in the successful integration of immigrants. Once English/French language needs are assessed, students need employment-focused communication programs that will help ease their transition to the workplace.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver employment-focused language programs, including sector- and occupation-specific communication skills.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Document & share best practices on employment-focused communication programs.

Workplace Preparation & Experience Programs

Ideally any career/technical or bridging program would have a component in which students can obtain Canadian workplace experience that employers desire and immigrants often lack. In addition, counselling programs should include employment preparation and job search geared to the special needs of internationally educated immigrants (and for international students on route to immigrant status).

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and deliver workplace preparation and experience programs.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Document & share best practices on workplace preparation and experience programs.

PARTNERSHIPS

There are limits to what colleges/institutes can do on their own for immigrants without working collaboratively with other key players on these complex issues. Key stakeholders include all levels of government, educational institutions, employers, unions, regulatory bodies, academic credential assessment services and immigrant settlement agencies, as well as immigrants themselves and their associations.

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Work collaboratively with key local stakeholders in program design & evaluation.

Offer assessment or other services to external bodies such as employers and regulators.

Develop reciprocal referral arrangements with assessment bodies, community organizations, and regulatory bodies.

Liaise and share expertise with college/institute affinity groups.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Collaborate with regional, national and umbrella stakeholders in policy development and systemic solutions.

Facilitate liaison among the various centres of expertise.

COLLEGE CAPACITY

The ACCC process model includes a component on enhancing college/institute systems. This is essential to build the capacity of institutions to deliver effective programs and services for immigrants. *Centres of Expertise in Immigrant Programs and Services* would help to increase college capacity by developing and sharing promising practices. Further, *Centres of Expertise on Colleges System Support* could increase capacity in the following ways (in addition to the roles described in the charts above):

- Developing and delivering cross-cultural training for faculty and staff
- Developing funding options and recommendations to enable sustainable programs
- Liaison with other centres of expertise
- Promotion of colleges/institutes as employers of immigrants

**Centres of Expertise:
Immigrant Programs & Services**
Develop and share expertise with interested colleges/institutes.

**Centres of Expertise:
College System Support**
Provide system-wide policy development, coordination, advocacy and training.

Document and share best practices with interested college/institutes.

Conclusion

Canadian colleges and institutes play a critically important role in producing a well trained labour supply for our ever changing labour market. Internationally educated immigrants comprise a growing population who are turning to the community college system in their pathway to employment. Centres of expertise are a way to enhance the capacity of colleges and institutes to help integrate immigrant skills into the Canadian labour market; a goal that will benefit the immigrants themselves, colleges and institutes across the country and our Canadian economy.