

Connecting BC's Immigrant Talent:

**A Report on
Research &
Roundtables
with Professional
Immigrant
Networks in BC**

May 2015

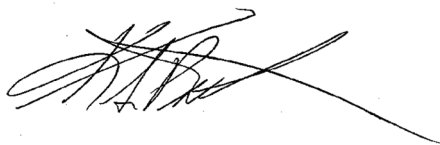
Acknowledgement

On behalf of IEC-BC and its Board, I gratefully acknowledge the involvement of the many contributors to the Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs) research and consultations that form the basis of this report. Numerous individuals and organizations willingly contributed their time and expertise to developing a fuller understanding of PINs and the talent pool that they represent in BC.

In particular, I would like to thank the 29 employer, industry association, provincial and federal government and PINs representatives who participated in the Roundtables and helped explore partnerships and talent strategies to facilitate employment for PINs members and to pursue recommended actions.

I also extend my thanks to Urban Futures and their research team for their work in conducting the pre-Roundtables survey. Your work gave us a greater understanding of who and what PINs are, and provided us with a common baseline of understanding, so that we could engage in a meaningful dialogue.

Lastly, I would like to thank my project team at IEC-BC for their meaningful and capable contributions to the project. Thanks and appreciation are due to Daisy Quon, Sangeeta Subramanian and Meri Ghazaryan for all their work.



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There is no longer any doubt in the minds of employers, government and even immigrants themselves that BC must effectively and efficiently match its resident and incoming skilled immigrants with employment that is consistent with their education, ability and experience. BC's looming labour and skills shortages are well documented and new migrants to BC are expected to fill one third of job openings. Even with full participation of the existing population, BC will still need 306,000 international workers to meet the projected labour demands of the next decade.

In response to these labour and global talent supply issues, Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) hosted the 2014 Mind the Gap Summit bringing together 80 leaders to establish a call to action and a strategy for BC's immigrant talent pool. One of the key recommendations from this Summit was for IEC-BC to:

“Engage Professional Immigration Networks (PINs) who are important networks for governments, employers and service providers to connect with”¹

As a result, IEC-BC has in the past year engaged PINs, undertaken research to understand their capacity and clearly articulate the talent pool they represent, and most recently held two Roundtables with key stakeholders including employers, government, and several PINs representatives. However, IEC-BC's interest and work with PINs began three years earlier with a 2012 Scan of BC PINs that looked to identify existing PINs in BC and gain a better understanding of PINs, their structure, memberships and services.

So what are PINs? They are groups of immigrant professionals who have organized themselves to forge connections between their members, employers and community agencies – all with the goal of advancing immigrant employment.

PINs in BC are:

- Organized by profession, ethnicity or both
- Formal and informal networks
- Volunteer-run and immigrant-led
- Have established membership and leadership, and articulated missions

At the time of the 2012 Scan, IEC-BC identified 46 PINs operating in BC. Most have memberships ranging from 150 – 350 members, and are structured as non-profit societies. PINs services vary but typically include, social and professional networking events and activities, assisting members with occupational/ professional licensing processes, promotion of ethno-cultural groups and affiliations, as well as a variety of labour market attachments supports and activities.

To establish a more complete understanding of PINs and their membership IEC-BC conducted a PINs members' survey in the spring of 2015. The survey received 348 individual responses from 12 participating Professional Immigrant Networks. Among other findings, the responses to the survey indicate that PIN members are typically of working age, recent immigrants with advanced English language skills, highly educated, and a significant proportion (54%) are working in their field. However, despite a very high rate of labour market participation (89%), PIN members have a higher unemployment rate (32%) than BC's immigrant population (5%) and the Canadian born population (5.3%).

Findings from the survey and the scan formed the baseline for two Roundtable dialogues between PINs leaders, employers, government and the IEC-BC. On April 22nd and 23rd 2015, 29 representatives from PINs, business, industry associations, the provincial and federal government gathered not only to review findings and data, but to share information on PINs practices, employers' and industry practices in attraction and recruitment, and BC's employment service system. The collective input was used to better understand effective approaches to connecting PINs and their membership to employers and employment opportunities, but also to bring forward a set of actions and recommendations to address the barriers that were identified in connecting the stakeholders and ensuring greater labour market participation for PINs. Actions from the Roundtables were prioritized into the following short-term and long-term:

Short-term Actions:

1. Conduct further research and a deeper investigations of PINs, the membership they represent and their role in the employment milieu.
2. Create and promote a list of PINs in BC to increase awareness of PINs and their role.
3. Create a PINs BC website.
4. Create organizational and individual social media profiles for PINs and their members.
5. Enhance employment and immigrant service providers' awareness of PINs, their membership and the services they provide.

Long-term Actions:

1. Creation of a formal or informal network or umbrella organization of PIN.
2. Identify opportunities for coordination between PINs and other provincial organizations.
3. Develop strategies to engage with SMEs.
4. Establish a Coordinated Training Plan for PIN members.

In bringing forward these recommended actions, PINs members, employers, and government all acknowledged IEC-BC's important role in initiating and coordinating the research, but also as convener of the stakeholders. Roundtable participants encouraged IEC-BC to continue in this role through the establishment of a working group to review and prioritize the actions, develop an action plan to see them through, and to monitor and evaluate its implementation.

Overview: What are Professional Immigrant Networks?

In the broad spectrum of BC immigrant community and labour market integration, Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs) have emerged as an important stakeholder. But what are PINs, and how do they serve the labour market and employment interests of their members? PINs are groups of immigrant professionals who have organized themselves to forge connections between their members, employers and community agencies – all with the goal of advancing immigrant employment. PINs in BC are:

- Organized by profession, ethnicity or both
- Formal and informal networks
- Volunteer-run and immigrant-led
- Established membership and leadership
- Articulated mission and objectives

For clarity in understanding PINs and differentiating them from other immigrant, ethnic and cultural affiliations and associations, IEC-BC has defined PINs as, “any formal or informal, volunteer-run, immigrant-led group with established membership, leadership and articulated mission & objectives.”² PINs provide a variety of functions and services for their members. Services among PINs are varied; however, typical services and functions include:

- Assisting members with occupational / professional licensing processes
- Professional development seminars, presentations and lectures
- Forums, conferences and job fairs
- Occupational networking events
- Establishing professional connections and mentorships
- Uniting alumnus
- Promotion of an ethno-cultural group
- Provision of a supportive environments for social networking³

PINs in BC are for the most part ethno-specific and emphasize their intention to work in the interests of particular ethnic communities. Secondly, a majority of PINs are organized on occupational or professional lines, although there are a number of PINs that support multiple professions within their organization. In BC seven professional or occupational categories are supported by the existing PINs: Engineers, Science and Technology, Information Technology, Healthcare, Social Work, Accountants and Legal professionals.⁴

Types of PINs:

In a 2012 Scan of Professional Immigrant Networks in BC, IEC-BC identified six sub-categories of PINs. These include:

Alumni Network - a PIN whose members are graduates from a non-Canadian post-secondary educational institution and which offers some employment assistance activities to its immigrant members.

Business Network - a PIN whose primary activities aim to assist ethnic entrepreneurs and which offers some employment assistance activities to its immigrant members.

Ethno-cultural Network - a PIN which is formed based on ethnicity and offers some employment assistance activities to its immigrant members.

Grass-roots Network - an informal PIN whose members are first generation skilled immigrants. One of its main activities is assisting its immigrant members to find professional employment.

Professional Network - an incorporated PIN whose members are, in most cases, first generation skilled immigrants. One of its main activities is assisting its immigrant members to find professional employment.

Student Network - a PIN whose members are current international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions and which offer some employment assistance to their immigrant membership.

²IEC-BC, *Professional Immigrant Networks in British Columbia, Environmental Scan*, 2012 pg. 13.

³*Ibid*, pg. 20.

⁴*Ibid*, pg. 19.

Professional Immigrant Networks Background & BC Context

In 2012, IEC-BC conducted an environmental scan of PINs in BC. The scan identified 46 PINs, representing over 9,000 members. Of note, the creation of PINs in BC is a fairly recent occurrence with over two thirds of all PINs included in the 2012 scan established less than 10 years ago.⁵ A full list of the identified PINs has been provided as Appendix 1.

1

Membership

In the 2012 scan, the majority of PINs reported to have relatively modest membership i.e. less than 200 members. This was corroborated during the April 2015 Professional Immigrant Networks Roundtables hosted by IEC-BC, where the participating PINs leaders acknowledged that their membership ranged from approximately 150 – 350 members, although some of the larger PINs stated membership of up to a 1,000 members.

3

Location

PINs are highly concentrated within Metro Vancouver. In fact in the 2012 scan, of the 28 PINs contacted in the study, only one was located outside of Metro Vancouver: the Chinese Student & Professionals Association (CSPA) in Prince George. In the same study, several of the PINs suggested that they had members outside of Metro Vancouver area, i.e. Abbotsford, Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Kamloops, Northern BC,⁹ but this was certainly not the norm.

2

Organizational Structure

Most PINs operate as registered non-profit organizations, typically run by volunteers, although the two had paid administrative staff. In the 2012 scan, 22 of the PINs contacted were overseen by a Board of Directors or Executive Committee comprised of active members. These internal committees or boards varied from four to over 40 members and establish the priorities for PINs, liaise with community partners to organize events and distribute information to their members.⁶ These leaders, with very few exceptions, were either working in their profession and/or became self-employed in the same industries and/or occupations they were employed in within their home countries. These PINs leaders are committed to their roles and many were involved in initial stages of forming PINs in BC.⁷

Very few PINs had designated office space and often use donated external spaces for events and activities or provide space for meetings in their residencies and or place of work.⁸

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Period of Immigration

Unlike most of Metro Vancouver's immigrants who are Canadian Citizens (71%, 2011 NHS) PINs memberships are composed of predominantly of permanent residents and more specifically recent immigrants. Both the 2012 scan and the 2015 membership survey identified the largest proportion of PINs members as recent immigrants. While most of the immigrants living in Greater Vancouver in 2011 moved to Canada before 2001 (68%), these more established immigrants only represent 11% of the PINs' survey respondents.¹⁰

⁵IEC-BC, Immigrant Employment Roundtables Background Document, 2015 pg. 3.

⁶IEC-BC, Professional Immigrant Networks in British Columbia, Environmental Scan, 2012 pg. 21

⁷Ibid, pg. 21.

⁸Ibid, pg. 22.

⁹Ibid, pg. 21.

¹⁰Urban Futures, Survey of Members of Professional Immigrant Networks, Final Results, 2015 Q-5.

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Education

Both the 2012 Scan and the 2015 Survey found that PIN members are highly educated with over 80% having attained a degree Bachelor's degree or higher in their home country. These findings are consistent with the Canadian Immigration system's emphasis on attracting highly qualified and skilled immigrants to Canada. Of note however, 40% of respondents contacted within the 2012 scan and almost half (48%) of the 2015 survey respondents had enrolled in further post-secondary education from a Canadian institution. Furthermore, the 2015 survey points out that that one of the distinguishing characteristics of currently employed vs. unemployed PINs members) is that a greater share of those currently employed also have some post-secondary education.¹¹ As illustrated in the chart below PINs members with some Canadian Education all experience a greater rate of employment.

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Ethnicity

As mentioned above, the significant majority (87%) of BC PINs are ethno-specific in nature. In the 2012 scan, one third of all BC PINs were Filipino, followed by Chinese (15%) and thirdly, non-ethnic and South Asian groups. In contrast, the 2015 survey's highest respondent groups were Iranian (27%), Mexican (18%), Filipino (13%), and Brazilian (7%); however, it must be recognized that these rates are a reflection of the survey respondent organizations (See Appendix 2), and not necessarily characteristic of the whole BC PINs population.

7

Age

PIN members are young – that is, they are noticeably younger than the adult working age profile for Metro Vancouver. However, not only are they younger than Metro Vancouver's working population, two thirds of the respondents to the membership survey indicated that they are of prime working age (30 – 49 years old). Furthermore, the high share of respondents in these age groups contrasts with the regional population, where those aged 30 to 49 accounted for only 30% of all GVRD residents in 2011.¹¹

Membership Profile: Key Findings from IEC-BC PINs Membership Survey

Conducted March 2015, 10 PINs represented, 348 responses, 252 completed Surveys

- The majority of PINs members are prime working age: 64% of respondents are of prime working age (30-49 years old) compared to 30% of all residents in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) in 2011.
- Recent immigrants: 39% immigrated between 2006-2011; 76% in Canada for less than 10 years. Proficient in English: 63% reported having advanced English language skills.
- The longer respondents have been in Canada the greater the prevalence of advanced language skills.
- Highly educated: 88% have a bachelor's degree or higher prior to immigration; 48% have completed some form of post-secondary education in Canada

¹¹Urban Futures, Survey of Members of Professional Immigrant Networks, Final Results, 2015 Q-7.

¹²Ibid, Q-3.

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Partnerships

In their efforts to support their memberships' access to employment, professional upgrading and in many cases professional or occupational accreditation PINs frequently seek partnerships with employers, industry associations, regulatory bodies and education institutions. Partnerships tend to be individualized to the various PINs. During the Roundtables, examples were cited of agreements with professional or regulatory associations, consulates, and industry or sectoral organizations. Although the PINs noted the absence of a coordinating body for the PINs in BC, some members identified existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between PINs and with related stakeholders and a willingness to work together.

Partnerships with post-secondary institutions, professional associations and immigrant serving agencies are common. Some PINs have partnered with private companies to facilitate professional development and foster employment opportunities for their members.¹³

More recently, IEC-BC conducted a membership survey of PINs to develop a more robust profile of PINs members and a better understanding of their labour market attachment experience and needs. The following sections provide a summary of the information collected in both research projects in order to provide a clearer picture of BC PINs, their membership, and their ability / readiness to attach to the labour market. Who Are PINs' Members?

In understanding PINs it is not sufficient to understand the organization. Rather, it is important to understand the make-up and characteristics of their memberships. By defining who PIN members are we get a clearer picture of the organizations, but also a sharper image of the talent pool that they represent.

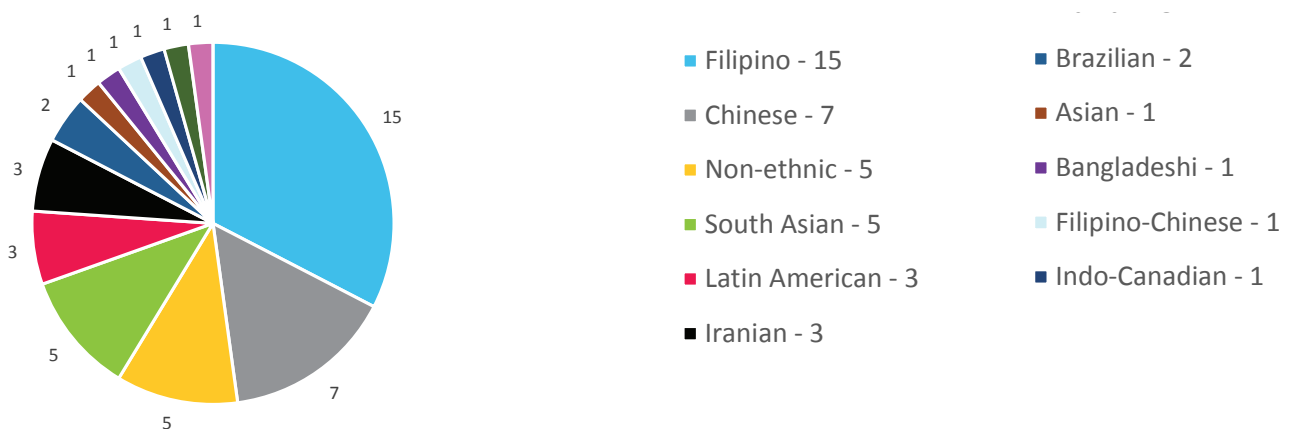
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Language Ability

PINs members report a very strong proficiency in English language with 63% of the 2015 PINs survey respondents reporting advanced English language abilities, 35% intermediate, and only 2% basic English. However, caution in overstating these results should be applied, as responses were entirely self-reported with no mechanisms to assess the language ability of the respondents.

PINs by Ethnicity

Professional Immigrant Networks in British Columbia, Environmental Scan, 2012.



¹³IEC-BC, Professional Immigrant Networks in British Columbia, Environmental Scan, 2012 pg. 22-23

Scan of PINs Members Employment

As PINs are established and organized in a large part to assist their membership to access employment, and in many cases specific occupations it is important to know not only which occupations they represent, but also the scope of the talent pool they represent, the employment rates of their membership and the factors that impact the employability of their memberships.

Occupations

The 2012 scan found that over one third (38%) of the PINs' respondents were from Professional, Scientific & Technical occupations, with a significant proportion (14%) in Health & Social Assistance and Construction (8.7%). The report also noted that the identified PINs represented seven distinct occupational categories:

Engineers	Healthcare
Science and Technology	Social Work
Information Technology	Accountants
Legal professionals	

Although it is clear from the PINs occupational/professional focus (See Appendix 1), the 2015 Survey identified a broader list of occupational categories when examining occupations from an individual members perspectives. In the Survey the following occupational categories were identified:

Natural & applied sciences	Health
Management	Trades, transport & related
Sales & service	Arts, culture, recreation & sport
Business, finance & administration	Education, law, social & government services

The survey also identified the Natural Resource and Manufacturing and Utilities sectors, but no respondents identified working in those sectors.

Of the 2015 survey respondents, almost half (47%) of those who are currently employed are working in Natural and Applied Sciences or Management occupations; this is significantly higher than the 20% for all immigrants in BC and 17% for Canadian-born BC residents.¹³

Labour Market Participation: Key Findings from IEC-BC PINs Membership Survey

Conducted March 2015, 10 PINs represented, 348 responses, 252 completed Surveys

- Higher labour force participation: 89% are in the labour force compared to 67% of Canadian-born and 65% of all immigrants.
- Higher unemployment rate: 32% unemployment rate compared to 5% for all immigrants and 5.3% for Canadian-born in GVRD; the younger age profile and more recent immigration status contribute to this.
- Credential and qualifications: 49% of those employed are in jobs that require credentials; of these, 51% stated that they have not experienced barriers to employment and/or barriers to recognition of their qualifications
- Employment in their field: 54% have worked or are working in their field in Canada

Employment

Both the 2012 scan and the 2015 survey corroborate that PINs members have a significant employment rate at approximately 60% and a much greater labour market participation rate AT 89% (people who are either employed or are actively looking for work) than the overall BC immigrant population (64.5%).

Nevertheless, the 2015 survey also shows that PINs at 32.1% also have a much higher unemployment rate than the BC immigrant population (7.8%) and the GVRD's Canadian born population (5.3%). This is likely a reflection of a number of factors including, their members' recent immigration status, the high proportion of young members (under 40 – 53%), and the entry barriers to professional and regulated occupations. Of note, the vast majority (92%) of unemployed respondents reported that they have been out of work for less than five years.

Of the PIN members who are employed, just over half (54%) of the representatives reported working in a similar field to the occupation they held in their home country and 46% reported working in a different field, with no Canadian work experience in their field. Also of those who are employed, 49% reported that they are working in occupations that require credentials whereas 51% reported credentials were not required. However, further research is required to determine if PINs members are working in commensurate occupations to their pre-arrival experience and whether the required credentials are associated with regulatory or professional standards or simply entry requirements for more general occupations.

Labour Market Attachment: Key Findings from IEC-BC PINs Membership Survey

Conducted March 2015, 10 PINs represented, 348 responses, 252 completed Surveys

- Length of time in Canada: unemployment rate for those immigrating to Canada prior to 2005 was 6% compared to 53% for those arriving between 2012-2105
- Language proficiency: 68% of those employed had advance English language ability compared to 57% of unemployed
- Canadian education: 74% of employed have pursued additional education in Canada
- 63% of unemployed would relocate: opportunities in their field (84%) and a higher salary (86%) were the two main factors for relocation
- Family obligations: the most significant factor against relocating both among those that are currently employed as well as those that currently unemployed

Factors Influencing Employment

Through analysis and cross-tabulation of the survey data a number of factors that appear to influence the employment status of PINs members emerged. Again caution should be applied in interpreting these results because of the survey's limited sample size and its representation of a limited number of PINs. Nevertheless, it is valuable to understand those elements of PINs membership that contribute or inhibit employment, and better understand the attitudes and willingness of PINs members who are looking for work in their field or alternative careers.

Period of immigration

53% of unemployed respondents immigrated to Canada over the past three years (2012 - 2015), potentially demonstrating less readiness for the labour market or less receptive labour market conditions for new immigrants.

Advanced English language ability

68% of the respondents who are currently employed have advanced English language ability, proportionately higher than those who are unemployed (57%) and those not in the labour force (50%). Only 2% of those currently employed reported a basic language ability.

Alternative careers

Among those whose current occupation is different from their occupational field before immigrating, 59% (41 out of 69) have considered an alternative career. One third of respondents have not considered a change of field.

Steps to employment

Among respondents with no work experience in their field in Canada, upgrading their education level, applying for credential assessment, and applying for licensing/certification were the top three steps taken to secure employment in one's field in Canada. Upgrading one's education level was also the number one step taken among respondents with Canadian Work experience in their fields.

Relocation for work

47% of PINs survey respondents said they were willing to relocate for work. However, 67% of unemployed respondents said they would relocate for work in comparison to 43% of those who are employed.

Connecting Stakeholders to the PINs Talent Pool

The specific objectives for the Roundtables were to:

1. Increase the profile of PINs as a viable source of talent for BC employers
2. Identify and disseminate employer “best practices” in hiring and retaining immigrants and creating inclusive workplace
1. Increase multi stakeholder understanding of PINs membership in BC
2. Identify barriers faced by PINs members in accessing skills appropriate employment

In order to further understand PINs and the talent pool they represent IEC-BC organized and conducted two Roundtable dialogues with key stakeholders including employers, government, and several PINs representatives. On April 22 and 23, 2015, 29 representatives gathered to participate in the two Roundtables. The full list of the Roundtable participants is provided as Appendix 3.

Employers, industry associations, PINs, and government worked together with IEC-BC to explore the value of the relationships between PINs and key stakeholders (employers, business and industry and government), better understand the immigrant talent pool that PINs represent, and identify better approaches to connect the stakeholders.

Prior to the Roundtables, participants were provided with a PINs backgrounder prepared by IEC-BC as well as guiding questions to assist the dialogue. Each session was kick started with a brief presentation by Urban Futures on the PINs membership survey, and facilitated to encourage full participation from all representatives. The input, key points and findings of the Roundtables compliment the earlier work conducted by IEC-BC and provide direction to where further work is needed but also clear insights on how PINs can effectively connect with employers and other stakeholders. The following section provides a summary of the content, themes and findings of the two Roundtables.

How do PINs connect with Employers?

Establishing connections with employers is not a new practice for PINs. In fact, for all PINs at the Roundtables it is part of their reason to be. PINs identified several practices and approaches to connect their membership with employers, professional upgrading and employment opportunities. The approaches varied among PINs, but collectively the following were seen as the most pervasive practices:

1

Networking and professional upgrading events:

- Networking events
- Conferences
- Workshops, presentations and seminars
- Internal networks, particularly with employed members who can share up to date knowledge / perspective and identify job opportunities
- Direct consultation(s) with employers or industry associations

3

Agreements and collaborative arrangements:

- MOUs with other organizations and occupational stakeholders, i.e. regulatory bodies, large employers, educational institutions
- Special projects, e.g. work experience initiative and internships with industry associations

2

Communications and awareness raising:

- PINs websites
- LinkedIn / Social Media profiles
- PINs Newsletters

One PIN identified that they host an Annual Career Fair targeted to their profession that has been a very successful mechanism for involving employers. Other organizations are looking to partner and or replicate the model.

Mentorship programs were also identified as a mechanism of growing importance for the PINs. In describing their approaches to mentorship, both formal and informal mentoring, were acknowledged. However, it was also noted that attracting employers from outside the PIN to participate is onerous. One PIN offered an informal mentorship program, where new members are matched with long-time members who are able to provide career and employment advice as well as occupational connections. Another PIN identified that they

Challenges Connecting with Employers

Despite the professional and employment related focus PINs have and the number of activities they undertake to enhance employment opportunities for their members, many still expressed difficulties in adequately connecting with employers. Without exception all PINs representatives noted that connections and involvement with employers were difficult to establish, required considerable relationship building and often founded on individual relationships within the membership, e.g. an employed member raising the awareness of the PIN with their employer. Again reasons were varied, however, the list below provides a guide to the most commonly held challenges:

1

Lack of capacity

The majority of PINs are volunteer organizations, with very few or no paid staff, therefore they lack the capacity to consistently attract and sustain ongoing employer involvement.

2

Building connections and partnerships with employers takes time

As volunteer organizations, PINs frequently lack the resources, but also the time availability of their membership who are often either working or job seeking immigrants without the ability to commit the sustained time commitments to establish employer relationships.

3

Employers' lack of availability to attend events

PINs clearly stated that their activities and events were more valuable to their members when attended by employers, however, very few employers can or have the resources / personnel to commit to ongoing involvement.

4

Difficulty in accessing volunteer opportunities, practicums and work experience placements

Volunteer or work placement opportunities were recognized as an effective mechanism for gaining Canadian or local experience and often an opportunity to demonstrate an individual's experience and value to an employer. However, PINs noted that it is increasingly difficult to establish these opportunities and that many employers do not offer volunteer or practicum experiences.

5

Limited / no access to financial support

PINs as volunteer not for profit organizations have little or no capacity to gain additional financial support for their events, upgrading initiatives and their ongoing ability to establish relationships with employers. Many noted a desire to gain access to funding through grant or proposal writing, but admitted both a lack of awareness of appropriate funding mechanisms and lack of capacity and expertise in proposal development.

Challenges Connecting with Professional Immigrant Networks

Connecting Employers
to Immigrant Talent

Employers, industry associations and government representatives at the Roundtables clearly recognized and acknowledged that PINs represent a talent pool that is yet to be fully utilized in BC. However, they also clearly stated that they face some distinct challenges and very real limitations in connecting, not only with PINs, but with the numerous and diverse stakeholders vying for their time, expertise and commitments in employment related initiatives. The challenges and limitations that they identified included:

1

Lack of coordination between PINs and other employment and Service Provider Organizations

There are numerous PINs as well as other community, employment and immigrant service providers it is frequently a challenge for employers to choose with whom to engage. Employer representatives further emphasized that it is too onerous to connect with PINs individually and that they receive numerous requests for participation from many organizations (e.g. Employment Service Centres, immigrant serving organizations, PINs, other organizations) and that it is not possible to work with all employment stakeholders one by one.

2

Currently there is a lack of coordinated structures/ systems amongst PINs

Employers and industry stated a definite preference to work with other organizations or networks that already have coordinated or “umbrella” structures and systems in place with a wider reach. For many, working with a broad range of individual PINs was neither practical nor likely.

3

Limited scope of PINs membership

PINs’ focus on a single ethnic origin can be problematic for employers, especially large and public organizations, who have obligations, and in many cases mandates, to work with all ethnicities. Employers also identified the need to tap into all available talent pools, and that for many companies, several of the PINs occupational focus represent a limited spectrum of employment prospects and therefore may be construed as less attractive than an organization that represents a broader cross-section of occupations.

4

Geographic limitations

The PINs concentration in Metro Vancouver often contrasts with employers’ needs or mandates to hire regional or local talent (e.g. working with First Nations and local communities in Northern BC, as well as recruiters who specialize in this area). With the vast majority of PINs members living in Metro Vancouver they lack a regional presence in other parts of BC, and as a result may be of limited interest to employers outside the Lower Mainland.

5

Lack of HR and recruiting capacity

Typically, small and medium employers (SMEs) often lack HR departments or designated HR staff who would be the likely point of contact for PINs. However, even though large employers have HR departments / staff, their capacity to liaise and interact with PINs is highly limited and time constrained (e.g. one employer noted that they had 2-3 recruiters and currently 170 job openings to fill)

6

Little or no knowledge and awareness of PINs

While employers, industry and government participants at the Roundtables were aware of PINs, they consented that it is highly likely that many employers are not aware of the role and work of PINs and or other immigrant service organizations.

Other Impediments to Employment

While the Roundtables identified a number of challenges and limitations in connecting PINs and employers at an organizational level, it was also recognized that there are numerous other barriers to immigrant workforce attachment that may impact PINs and their relationships with employers and other stakeholders. In reviewing the challenges and limitations in connecting PINs and Employers, the PINs identified a number of the factors that they perceive to impede the labour market attachments of their membership. These included:

1. The perceived requirement for and difficulty in obtaining Canadian work experience
2. A lack of understanding and receptivity to diverse resumes and application packages, and a requirement for HR practitioners and recruiters to better understand and interpret international resumes
3. Difficulty in recruiting and engaging mentors to participate in mentorship programs, particularly occupationally specific matches
4. The perceived “one size fits all” BC employment services model does not work for many PIN members or address the variety of needs (immigrant and professional) they present
5. New immigrants often feel overwhelmed by the combined settlement and workforce integration processes and may not be aware of opportunities or requirements in their occupation / industry

Of interest, within the Roundtable discussions it was universally acknowledged that professional associations and regulatory bodies were a key stakeholder in the labour market attachment of PINs members. However, given the purpose of the Roundtables and the emphasis on creating connections between PINs and employers, it was also acknowledged that regulatory and accreditation processes were beyond the scope of the dialogues.

Creating Connections for PINs - Understanding Employers

In response to the employment and connectivity challenges raised within the Roundtables, employers and government representatives candidly shared many of their requirements, expectations and realities for effective connection and communication with PINs and their members. Commentary focussed on three areas:

1. Understanding employers' recruitment practices
2. Improving PIN members' job search / application
3. BC's Employment Service System

Key points included:

Understanding employers' recruitment practices:

1. Canadian work experience is not the barrier it is believed to be

Employers emphatically stated that the perceived requirement for Canadian experience is not a priority for large, and many other, employers. Roundtable employers stated their willingness to bringing new and diverse talent into their organization and the value of recruiting diversity of all kinds. Rather than Canadian experience, employers are more concerned with ability to do job and an applicants' "fit" within the organization

2. LinkedIn and other social media are essential tools both for organizational and individual profiles

HR and recruiting staff use social media to track potential employees. As representatives of their membership all PINs should have an online profile that promotes their organization and the value / capabilities of their membership.

3. PINs need to build relationships with recruiters / HR practitioners

Efforts in connecting with employers need to be on focussed establishing relationships with the HR Recruiting staff. By nature of their work, recruiters are interested in the individuals represented by PINs, and they are often focused on filling specific positions. However, for a mutually beneficial relationship PINs need to consider what value they can provide to the recruiting staff, e.g. pre-screening applications for credentials and/or skills.

4. Direct referrals remain a significant (if not the best) talent pool for employers

PINs must recognize that employers appreciate direct referrals from employees within their organization. Existing employers are usually able identify candidates who have the necessary skill set and are the right fit for the organization. Within PINs, employed members are likely one of the most valuable employment referral sources for unemployed members.

5. Volunteer work experience is difficult to provide

It is becoming increasingly more difficult for employers to provide work experience to new immigrants because of the perception of exploiting free labour, as well as liability and safety issues. Frequently, unionized work environments and unions themselves do not support volunteer internships or other similar programs. In addition, some organizations have a mandate to pay all workers.

6. Membership in professional associations is a valuable source of employer referrals

Employers look at candidates' memberships in professional associations. PINs' job seeking members should start the membership and accreditation process as soon as possible.

Improving PIN members’ job search / application:

7. LinkedIn profiles are an essential job search tool

Just as PINs should create organizational profiles on LinkedIn, their members should be developing well-constructed profiles. Employers point out that many HR practitioners and hiring managers are no longer interested in applicants that do not have an online profile. In addition, some employers no longer attend job fairs or participate in networking events - Everything is done online.

8. Immigrants’ applications and resumes are often poorly presented

Employers emphasized and cited several examples of poorly presented resumes and application packages. Frequently immigrants’ resumes are not well written and are too long or use inappropriate formats. As a result, many potential candidates miss out on opportunities that they are otherwise qualified for.

- Resumes should be two – four pages maximum depending on the occupation
- Applications and resumes need to be tailored to the specific job / industry and reflect the expectations and requirements particular to that business or sector
- Employers are interested in facts and figures – previous roles and responsibilities, number of workers supervised and budget
- Presentation is important – Employers noted that they spend an average of 10 seconds to review each application / resume

9. Applicants need to get to know the organizations they’re applying to

Employers emphasized that they look beyond job readiness and skills in potential employees. It is important to know the values and culture of the organization. Spending time getting to know the needs of different employers will be appreciated and lead to an honest and genuine conversations with prospective employers.

10. Unsuccessful job applicants need to respect employers’ limitations

Immigrant job applicants need to accept that they may not be successful. Follow-up from unsuccessful applicants can be overly intense – employers recommend a maximum of one follow-up call.

**BC’s Employment Service System:
11. BC has an established employment services delivery network**

BC Employment Services Centres and the Skills Connect Program are funded to provide specialized employment services for all BC residents and skilled immigrants respectively. In considering the PINs role in supporting its members to employment, these services need to be adequately communicated to PINs members. Furthermore, PINs should not be expected to duplicate existing employment services, but rather should focus should be on building connections with the variety of employment service stakeholders and streamlining referrals where possible.

12. Employment Services Centres Contractual Obligations

Establishing partnerships and or formal agreements between PINs and the BC Employment Services Centres, or other employment service contractors, may be challenging as contractors are required to sign legal business agreements with sub-contractors, often in advance of the contract award. As a result, they may be reluctant to enter into formal agreements with PINs

Moving to Action - Recommendations for Next Steps

The third and closing element of both Round table sessions was a facilitated discussion on what could be done to move from discussion to action. From the input and insights of the 29 participating business, government, industry association and PINs leaders a number of actions and recommendations emerged from the Roundtables. The actions here represent the ideas and collective of thinking of the session participants, but also builds from the research and consultation with PINs conducted by IEC-BC. The actions will certainly require further investigation, effort, and planning to realize, but also ongoing input and effort from all stakeholders. Nevertheless, the recommendations here represent a well-considered and consensual first step to solidifying the connections between employers, PINs and other stakeholders and fully utilizing the talent pool that PINs represent.

Recommended actions have been categorized into short-term and longer term priorities:

Short-term Actions

1. Conduct further research and a deeper investigations of PINs, the membership they represent and their role in the employment milieu. Suggested research topics include:

- Further examination of PINs occupational and employment readiness measured against industry and professional qualifications, language, experience, etc.
- PIN Member Survey – What employment services have they accessed / not accessed? Are there barriers to accessing existing employment services?
- How do PINs align with the BC labour market projections and gaps?

2. Create and promote a list of PINs in BC to increase awareness of PINs and their role:

- Share the list with employers, recruiters, employment service providers, government and other key stakeholders
- Create a LinkedIn group that employers can access

3. Create a PINs BC website:

- To be used for collaboration between PINs and with employers and recruiters and serve as a one-stop shop for employers and other stakeholders to gather information about PINs and their membership
- Could serve as a platform to profile PINs job seekers by occupation / industry / skill sets, etc.

4. Create organizational and individual social media profiles for PINs and their members

5. Enhance employment and immigrant service providers' awareness of PINs, their membership and the services they provide:

- Establish networking events between PINs and employment service providers
- Establish opportunities to present at the BC Skills Connect Advisory
- Survey BC employment and Skills Connect providers on their awareness and interaction with PINs

Initial Roles for Moving Forward

Long-term Actions

6. Creation of a formal or informal network or umbrella organization of PINs:

- Should be supported by both government and the private sector – both would benefit from supporting this network
- Would increase the capacity to organize events and other activities together
- Could serve to streamline the contacts and information sharing for employers and other stakeholders

7. Identify opportunities for coordination between PINs and other provincial organizations:

- E.g. Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), Chambers of Commerce, other provincial organizations, and related government ministries

8. Develop strategies to engage with SMEs:

- Few SMEs are connected to associations, professional networks, etc. and many do not have HR departments or assigned recruiting staff, so there is a need to develop targeted strategies to reach this extensive BC employment pool

9. Establish a Coordinated Training Plan for PIN members - Identified topics for training include:

- How to create effective Social Media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn)
- Occupation-specific seminars focussed on job search strategies and approaches, resume writing / applications, following up with employers, etc.
- Establish best practices for creating resumes for different occupations / industries (e.g. lawyers, trades) with input from employers

While the Roundtables identified a multiplicity of stakeholders in realizing the 2014 Mind the Gap Summit's goal of engaging Professional Immigrant Networks to enhance employment outcomes of BC's skilled immigrants, it is clear that coordination and steerage is required to further the research and engagement of the appropriate stakeholders. Participants of the Roundtables acknowledged that there are roles to play in the above actions for business, employers, government and certainly the PINs themselves. However, there was also recognition and agreement that IEC-BC, as the initiator of these early steps and processes, should continue to work with the range of stakeholders to:

1. Establish a committee or working group to review the feasibility and prioritize the recommended actions;
2. Create an action plan; and
3. Continue to monitor and evaluate progress at regular intervals.

Appendix 1 - PINs Surveyed

Name	Acronym	Profession	Ethnicity	Website	
1	Association of Filipino Canadian Accountants - BC Chapter	AFCA-BC	Accountants	Filipino	http://www.afca-bc.org/
2	Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Vancouver Chapter	PICPA	Accountants	Filipino	http://www.picpa.com.ph/
3	South Asian Business Association	SABA	Multi-professional	South Asian	http://www.sababc.ca/
4	Bangladeshi Engineers and Applied Scientists in BC	BEASBC	Engineers	Bangladeshi	https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BDEngineersinBC/info
5	Filipino Canadian Construction Society of BC	FCCSBC	Engineers	Filipino	http://fccsbc.wix.com/org
6	SITE BC - Society of Internationally Trained Engineers BC	SITE BC	Engineers	Multi-ethnic	http://www.sitebc.ca/
7	Iranian Engineers of British Columbia Association	IEBCA	Engineers	Iranian	http://www.iebca.ca/drupal15/
8	Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists of BC	SPEATBC	Engineers	South Asian	http://www.speatbc.org/
9	Indian Institute of Technology Alumni, Vancouver	IIT Alumni	Engineers	South Asian	http://www.iitalumnicanada.com/
10	Brazilian Community Association -Brazilian Professionals Group in Vancouver	BCA	Multi-professional	Brazilian	https://medium.com/@bcavancouver
11	"Brazos Abiertos Settlemente and Integration Community Christian Services Society	BASICCSS	Multi-professional	Brazilian	
12	Association of Chinese Canadian Professionals (BC)	ACCP-BC	Multi-professional	Chinese	http://www.chineseprofessionals.ca/

13	Chinese Student & Professionals Association	CSPA	Multi-professional	Chinese	http://www.cpac-canada.ca/ http://www.crepa.ca/
14	University of the Philippines Alumni Association - British Columbia	UPAA BC	Multi-professional	Filipino	http://www.upaabc.org/
15	Filipino-Chinese Association of BC - Immigrants Sub-Committee Multi-professional	FILCHIBC	Multi-professional	Filipino-Chinese	http://www.filchibc.ca/ https://www.facebook.com/PhilippineCanadianInquirer/posts/468940966496379
16	Canadian Professional Immigrants Association Multi-professional	CPIA	Multi-professional	Multi-ethnic	http://www.capic.ca/en/index.php?lang=1
17	Society of Iranian Canadian Professionals in British Columbia	SICAP	Multi-professional	Iranian	http://www.sicap.ca/
18	Latincover		Multi-professional	Latin American	http://www.latincover.ca/
19	Association of South Asian Professionals of British Columbia	ASAP	Multi-professional	South Asian	http://asapbc.com/articles
20	Association of International Medical Doctors of BC	AIMD	Healthcare	Multi-ethnic	http://www.aimdbc.org/
21	Foreign Veterinary Graduates Association (BC Vets for Justice)		Healthcare	Indo-Canadian	http://www.bcvetsforjustice.ca/
22	Chinese Canadian Information Technology Association, Vancouver Chapter	CCITA	Information Technology	Chinese	https://sites.google.com/site/citavan/
23	South Asian Bar Association of BC	SABABC	Legal	South Asian	http://www.sababc.com/
24	Canada-China Society of Science and Technology	CCSST	Science & Technology	Chinese	http://www.ccsst.org/

25	Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology - Immigrant Women in Science and Technology Committee	IWIS	Science & Technology	Multi-ethnic	http://www.scwist.ca/
26	The Filipino Social Workers Association of British Columbia	FSWABC	Social Work	Filipino	http://www.fswabc.org/
27	Latin American Professional Mental Health Workers Network (Agrupacion de Profesionales Latino Americanos en la Salud Mental)	APLASM	Social Work	Latin American	
28	Vietnamese Community Workers Support Network	Viet-Net	Social Work	Vietnamese	http://www.vcn.bc.ca/vietnet/new/index.html
29	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, Vancouver Chapter	CIMA	Accountants	Multi-ethnic	http://www.cimacanada.org/main.jsp
30	Filipino Canadian Dental Medical Society		Healthcare	Filipino	
31	Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers Association	VFCCA	Healthcare	Filipino	http://www.bayanihan.ca/vfcca/index.html
32	Filipino IT Group Victoria		Information Technology	Filipino	
33	Chinese Software Developers		Information Technology	Chinese	
34	Vancouver Chinese IT Professionals		Information Technology	Chinese	
35	Chinese Young Professionals Association		Multi-professional	Chinese	http://www.amilia.com/pages/en/ycpa
36	Filipino Business Association of Vancouver		Multi-professional	Filipino	
37	Assumption Alumni Association of BC	AAABC	Multi-professional	Filipino	http://www.upaabc.org/
38	Ateneo Alumni Association of British Columbia	AAABC	Multi-professional	Filipino	http://www.ateneoalumniassociation.org/

39	De La Salle Alumni Association of BC		Multi-professional	Filipino	http://www.dlsaa.com/dlsaa/
40	Sta. Rosa Laguna Association of BC Canada		Multi-professional	Filipino	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sta-Rosa-Laguna-Association-of-BC-Canada/104642006243941
41	Victoria Filipino Canadian Association	VFCA	Multi-professional	Filipino	http://www.bayanihan.ca/vfca/index.html
42	Fraser Valley Filipino Association		Multi-professional	Filipino	
43	The National Association of Asian American Professionals	NAAP	Multi-professional	Asian	http://www.naaap.org/
44	EXATEC Vancouver (Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey)	EXATEC	Multi-professional	Latin American	
45	Sharif University of Technology Association Vancouver Chapter	SUTA	Science and Technology	Iranian	http://www.suta.org/
46	Association of Korean Scientists and Engineers	AKSCE	Science and Technology	Korean	http://www.ksea.org/home/

Appendix 2: 2015 PIN Member Survey – Participating PINs

- Association of Filipino Canadian Accountants
- Bangladeshi Engineers and Applied Scientists
- Filipino Canadian Construction Society
- Iranian Engineers of British Columbia Association
- Latincover
- Meetup Vancouver Iranians
- Philippine Institute of CPAs
- Society of Canadian Women in Science – Immigrating Women in Science Program
- Society of Iranian Canadian Professionals
- Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists
- The Society of Internationally Trained Engineers of British Columbia
- University of Philippines Alumni Association

Appendix 3: Roundtables Attendees

Connecting Employers
to Immigrant Talent

April 22, 2015 Employers & PINs Roundtable

Employers:

- Accenture
- PCL Construction
- HSBC
- BDC
- BCHydro
- Seaspan
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters British Columbia
- BCCA STEP Program
- CIBC
- Human Capital Strategies

PINs:

- Filipino Canadian Construction Society
- Iranian Engineers of British Columbia Association
- Latincover
- Society of Canadian Women in Science - Immigrant Women in Science Program
- Society of Iranian Canadian Professionals
- University of Philippines Alumni Association in BC

April 23, 2015 Government & PINs Roundtable

Government:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada - Integration Branch
- Government of BC: Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- Government of BC: Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation

PINs:

- Iranian Engineers of British Columbia Association
- Latincover
- Society of Canadian Women in Science - Immigrant Women in Science Program
- Society of Iranian Canadian Professionals
- University of Philippines Alumni Association in BC