Driving Insights Report

FutureWorks Canada Tour

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FutureWorks Canada Tour - Driving Insights Report

![IECC Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada]

About the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada

The National Network of Immigrant Employment Councils (IECC) brings together regional partners across Canada that share a commitment to improving labour market outcomes for immigrants and strengthening local and national economies.

Each council connects employers, educators, community organizations, and policymakers to develop solutions that create more inclusive workplaces and better prepare organizations for future skill demands.

Across the country, IECC members identify system barriers, share best practices, and champion employer-led innovation so Canada can tap into the full potential of the talent newcomers bring.

Funded by:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada   Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

FutureWorks Canada Tour

About the project

The FutureWorks Canada Tour Project is a national knowledge-mobilization initiative designed to share, collect, and synthesize employer feedback to strengthen employer practices and inform how immigration can best serve Canada's future workforce strategy. It brings employers, policymakers, educators, and community partners together to examine how immigration and skills development must evolve alongside industry needs so Canada remains competitive, innovative, and prepared for emerging labour and skills demands.

> *A stronger future starts with listening to the people who build workplaces and create jobs. The FutureWorks Canada Tour created a national table for that conversation.*

By elevating employer perspectives and connecting insights across regions, the project identifies practical, evidence-based solutions that strengthen workforce readiness, improve talent mobility, and support long-term economic growth.

Led by the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) in collaboration with the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) Network, the FutureWorks Canada Tour builds on the Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels (SEFC) framework to establish a structured feedback mechanism centered on employer and job-creator voices, national efforts to convene employers and system partners to identify challenges, share lessons, and co-create solutions that better align immigration pathways with labour -market realities.

Ultimately, the FutureWorks Canada Tour strengthens Canada's ability to anticipate emerging skill needs, recognize and economically integrate talent efficiently, and build a more coordinated, inclusive, and future-ready workforce ecosystem.

Executive Summary

The FutureWorks Canada Tour set out with a clear goal: **to understand how immigration can better support Canada's future workforce.** Across five regional forums and three national convenings, more than 500 employers, policymakers, educators, regulators, and community partners shared their experiences, challenges, and ideas.

Despite geographical and sector differences, a strong and consistent message emerged across the country:

Canada is not short on talent. The challenge is alignment.

Employers described a labour market where skilled people are available, but the systems that connect them to jobs are often slow, fragmented, or difficult to navigate. Newcomers face unclear pathways, delayed credential recognition, and uneven access to training or licensing. Meanwhile, employers struggle with limited HR capacity, especially in small and mid-sized businesses, and inconsistent workforce signals about what skills are needed and where.

These conditions make it harder for Canada to fully leverage the skills newcomers bring and to respond quickly to shifting economic demands.

What the Tour Revealed

Using a Knowledge Mobilization Framework, the project synthesized employer feedback, survey data, facilitator notes, interviews, and insights from advisory partners. This process uncovered deeper system patterns that influence workforce outcomes across Canada.

Key pressures that emerged across all regions include:

- Slow or inconsistent credential recognition processes
- Fragmented systems among immigration, labour, education, and settlement
- Uneven employer readiness and HR capacity, particularly among SMEs
- Growing importance of power skills like communication and adaptability
- Community conditions such as housing, childcare, and transportation that shape retention
- Regional differences in capacity and coordination
- A strong appetite for collaboration but limited shared mechanisms to do so

Despite these pressures, the Tour surfaced many examples of innovation. Regions that bring employers, post-secondary institutions, settlement agencies, and government partners together are moving more quickly, co-designing training solutions, and creating smoother pathways into employment.

What Employers Need

Employers consistently emphasized several needs to navigate the future of work:

- More predictable and skills-informed immigration pathways
- Faster, clearer, and competency-based credential recognition
- Stronger support navigating systems, especially for SMEs
- Better labour -market intelligence to understand evolving skill demands
- Tools to strengthen HR capacity, inclusive hiring, and retention
- Community conditions that support belonging and long-term settlement

The Bigger Picture

When insights from across the country are connected, the central challenge becomes clear:

Canada's workforce systems are not aligned in a way that supports fast, effective movement of skills.

Immigration, education, training, credentialing, and community systems often operate in parallel, making it harder for talent to flow where it is needed.

But the Tour also showed momentum. Employers want to engage. Communities want to collaborate. Educators want to innovate. Policymakers want better insights to inform new policies and programs.

This report captures that momentum and translates it into practical actions for employers, educators, government partners, and community organizations.

> *The FutureWorks Canada Tour demonstrates that employer voices are both feedback and foresight. Gathered across regions, employer insights reveal deeper patterns shaping Canada's future workforce.*

Project Overview

The FutureWorks Canada Tour created a national platform for employers, educators, policymakers, regulators, and community partners to explore how immigration and skills development can better support Canada's future workforce. By convening diverse regions with different labour realities, the project captured insights that reflect both shared national challenges and local conditions.

Purpose of the Project

The Tour was designed to:

- Mobilize knowledge across regions, sharing what has been learned from employer engagement activities to date and building deeper understanding through new insights gathered on the Tour
- Understand employer experiences with hiring, training, and retaining newcomers
- Identify barriers that limit the movement and recognition of skills
- Reflect regional realities, ensuring solutions consider local context
- Connect insights nationally to reveal deeper system patterns
- Strengthen collaboration among system actors
- Support practical and scalable solutions that lead to stronger workforce outcomes

Engagement Across Canada

The project engaged participants through a combination of:

- Regional FutureWorks Forums
- National employer and ecosystem convenings
- Employer interviews and profiles
- Pre- and post-session surveys
- Facilitator observations
- Advisory input from leaders across sectors

This multilevel approach ensured that insights are grounded in lived experience while also connecting to broader workforce patterns and economic trends.

Why This Work Matters

Canada's labour market is changing. Automation, demographic shifts, and emerging industries are increasing the demand for adaptable, highly skilled workers. At the same time, immigration is becoming even more essential to sustaining economic growth.

To meet these challenges, Canada needs:

- Better aligned systems
- Faster and more transparent processes
- Stronger support for employers
- Clearer pathways for internationally trained workers
- Workforce planning that reflects real community conditions

The FutureWorks Canada Tour provides the evidence base to move toward these goals.

At the heart of this work is a simple question:

How can Canada more effectively recognize and use the skills that already exist in our labour market?
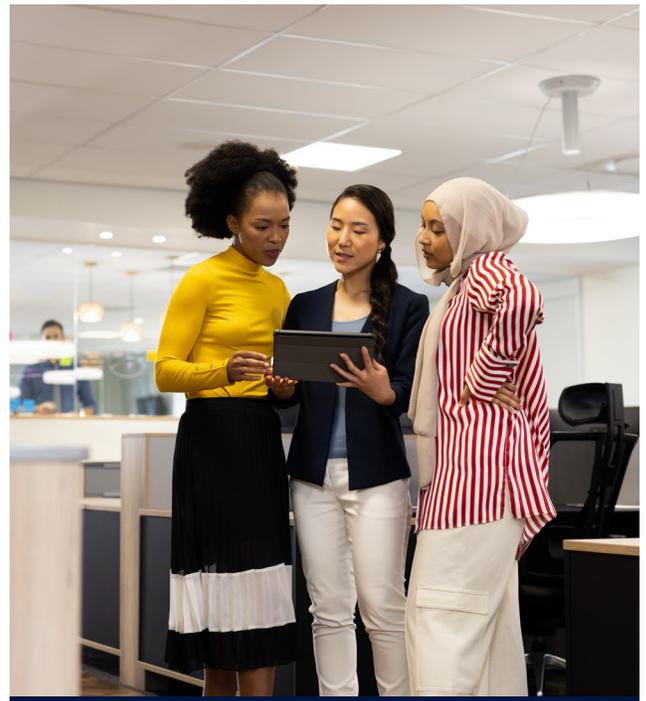
Each region brought its own story, but the challenges echoed across the country. Talent exists everywhere. The pathways to use that talent do not.

Methodology

The FutureWorks Canada Tour used a multi-method, evidence-informed approach that combined employer experiences, regional perspectives, and system-level analysis. The goal was not only to gather feedback, but to understand the deeper patterns shaping Canada's workforce and immigration systems.

To achieve this, the project applied the Knowledge Mobilization Framework:

1 Share ······ **2 Collect** ······ **3 Synthesize**

This provided a structured way to bring together insights from across the country and translate them into meaningful action.

Engagement and Data Collection

To ensure depth and diversity of insight, the project gathered data through:

- National and regional forums that brought employers, system partners, and community actors together in structured discussions.
- Sector-specific interviews and employer profiles that explored skill needs, hiring practices, and workforce challenges.
- Pre- and post-session surveys and facilitator notes capturing demographic data, learning outcomes, and actionable insights.
- Ongoing input from Advisory Group members representing employers, educators, policymakers, regulators, and settlement organizations.

This approach allowed the project to connect real-world employer experiences with broader labour -market evidence and sectoral shifts.

Synthesis and Analysis

The analytical process drew on methods used in systems thinking and qualitative synthesis:

Sensemaking and Pattern Identification

Employer feedback, survey responses, and interview findings were organized into a comprehensive synthesis map. This process highlighted recurring patterns across regions and surfaced outliers that signaled emerging challenges or opportunities.

System Tensions Mapping

Analysis identified the most significant pressures influencing the workforce ecosystem, including funding fragmentation, inconsistent readiness, uneven community capacity, siloed policy environments, and differing expectations of immigration's role in workforce development.

Actants Analysis

Perspectives from key system actors were examined, including employers, educators, newcomers, policymakers, municipalities, and immigrant-serving organizations. This helped clarify how values, motivations, and constraints interact across the system.

Possibility Mapping

Insights were translated into "How might we" questions and "What if" explorations to surface potential areas for alignment, innovation, and system-level improvement.

Scenario Development

Two critical uncertainties emerged:
- how aligned systems are
- how ready employers and communities are

These formed the basis of the Scenario Matrix, which outlines four possible futures for Canada's workforce ecosystem.

Using multiple methods allowed the team to go beyond surface issues and uncover the deeper forces shaping workforce readiness and talent alignment in Canada.

Impact

The FutureWorks Canada Tour brought employers, educators, policymakers, and community partners together in a way that rarely happens at a national scale. These conversations created shared understanding, sparked collaboration, and generated insights that are now influencing how organizations and regions plan for the future.

Participants left the sessions with clearer ideas, stronger connections, and renewed motivation to take action on immigrant hiring and workforce development. The Tour also strengthened the national network of organizations working to improve labour market inclusion.

Across all regions, the impact was consistent and meaningful.

What Participants Gained

Stronger insights into current and future skill needs

Employers described the sessions as grounding and clarifying. Many pointed to clearer understanding of the real barriers newcomers face, the gaps in existing systems, and the opportunities that come from better alignment.

Better understanding of system pressures

Participants gained a new appreciation for how credential recognition, immigration processes, employer capacity, education pathways, and community conditions connect — and where they break down.

New partnerships and collaborations

The Tour created space for relationships that did not previously exist. Local employers connected with training institutions. Settlement organizations connected with regional chambers. Policymakers connected with employers to hear directly about emerging needs.

Increased readiness to act

Survey results demonstrate that participants left the sessions motivated to apply what they learned and to explore new approaches to hiring, onboarding, and skills development.

Survey Results

Participants provided strong ratings across all key measures:

- 94% rated sessions as good or excellent
- 97% found the content relevant
- 86% learned something new
- 93% intended to apply what they learned
- 88% gained clarity on system or policy gaps
- 91% made new connections or partnerships

These results show that the Tour raised awareness, built momentum, and confidence for action.

> "
>
> *"Real progress depends on stronger cross-sector connections, responsive policy, and actionable data. I am leaving with practical ideas and a renewed commitment to improving inclusion in our workforce."*
>
> Employer participant, Manitoba

National Engagement Snapshot

Employers were the largest stakeholder group across the Tour, representing approximately 42 percent of all participants. Their experiences and priorities shaped the core themes of the discussions and grounded the national synthesis.

Participants came from:

- Large, medium, and small employers
- Immigrant-serving organizations
- Post-secondary institutions
- Sector councils and labour organizations
- Regional economic development bodies
- Local and provincial governments

The diversity of perspectives contributed to a more holistic understanding of workforce challenges and opportunities across the country.

Lasting Value of the Tour

By bringing together voices that do not often meet in the same room, the FutureWorks Canada Tour helped shift the national conversation. It moved the focus from "more immigration" to "better alignment," and from isolated program delivery to coordinated system design.

The Tour strengthened relationships, created shared language, and built the foundation for the next phase of work.

Key Findings

Across every region and sector engaged through the FutureWorks Canada Tour, a clear pattern emerged: **Canada is not short on talent. The system that surrounds that talent is not yet aligned.**

Employers, educators, settlement partners, and community organizations all described similar pressures that limit how skills move through Canada's workforce. Despite strong employer readiness and growing recognition of international experience, system gaps continue to slow hiring, delay credential recognition, and weaken retention.

The following key findings capture the most consistent and significant insights from the Tour.

01 The challenge is alignment, not talent supply

Employers repeatedly emphasized that skilled people are available. The issue is that immigration, education, credentialing, labour, and community systems do not work together in a coordinated way.

This misalignment creates:

- slow or unclear pathways
- duplicated processes
- inconsistent expectations
- difficulty predicting skill needs
- frustration for both employers and newcomers

When systems move in different directions, talent gets stuck.

02 Persistent structural tensions shape system behaviour

Across all regions, participants identified tensions that repeatedly limit alignment and readiness:

- fragmented planning across government and sectors
- inconsistent or slow credential recognition
- limited HR capacity among SMEs
- region-by-region differences in resources and support
- unclear role expectations across institutions
- program cycles that are too short to scale promising solutions

These tensions reinforce one another. No single actor—not employers, not governments, not educators—can resolve them alone.

> ! *Canada's workforce problem is not a skills shortage.*
> *It is the friction between systems meant to connect those skills to jobs.*

	META LEVEL SYSTEM LEARNING & PURPOSE	MACRO LEVEL POLICY, FUNDING & GOVERNANCE	MESO LEVEL COORDNATION & CAPACITY	MICRO LEVEL PRACTICE & LIVED EXPERIENCE
LEADING TENSION	Pilot Fatigue vs. System Learning	National consistency vs. Regional Flexibility	Collaboration vs. Competition	Recognition vs. Re-Assessment
WHY IT MATTERS	Canada's workforce ecosystem is rich in pilots but poor in consolidation. Each initiative generates insights, yet lessons stay local, unlinked, and unrepeated. This undermines cumulative progress and causes actors to continuously "reinvent" rather than evole.	Federal and provincial systems strive for comparable measures and equity across Canada, but workforce and immigration realities are highly regional. The rigidity of national frameworks can stifle innovation, while too much flexibility fragments results.	Organizations, especially SPOs, PSIs, and workforce boards, are expected to collaborate but compete for limited, project-based funding. This erodes trusts, causes duplication, and prevents shared infrastructure or scaling of success.	Newcomers repeatedly prove what they already know. Employers, recruiters, and regulators lack confidence in existing credential systems, creating cycles of redundancy and frustration that waste talent and delay contribution.
LEAVERAGE FOR CHANGE	Create a national learning architecture (shared metrics, data commons, evaluation loops) that turns pilot insights into institutional memory and ongoing system adaptation.	Design modular policy frameworks with a shared national core (outcomes, indicators) and adaptable regional layers to preserve both coherence and context.	Establish regional learning hubs and shared employer engagement platforms with joint funding, enabling cooperative delivery and shared credit for outcomes.	Implement Pathways Passports and interoperable digital credentials that document verified skills once, recognized consistently across provinces, employers, and sectors.
	LEARNING Evidence from local pilots feeds directly into policy adatapion cycles.	**ALIGNMENT** Funding design rewards collaboration, not competition, sustaining locall coordination.	**COLLABORATION** Employer, SPO, and worker data integrate, making the job-training and recognition pathway transparent.	**RECOGNITION** Lived experience becomes data for system learning, closing the loop between user reality and policy design.

03 Credential recognition remains one of the most significant barriers to participation

Delays, unclear requirements, inconsistent assessment practices, and limited portability across provinces continue to keep internationally trained professionals out of roles aligned with their skills.

This challenge is most acute in:

- healthcare
- skilled trades
- education
- engineering
- regulated professions generally

These are not isolated issues; they reflect system-wide misalignment between regulatory bodies, training institutions, labour -market needs, and immigration processes.

04 Employer willingness is high, but HR capacity is uneven

The Tour revealed a surprisingly high level of employer motivation to hire and retain skilled newcomers. Many employers already include:

- inclusive hiring practices
- mentorship programs
- cultural competency training
- skills-based screening
- structured onboarding

However, SMEs lack the HR infrastructure to navigate immigration pathways, credentialing requirements, and retention strategies. Without support, employers who want to hire internationally trained talent simply cannot manage the complexity.

This uneven capacity is one of the biggest barriers to turning good policy into good outcomes.

05 Power skills are essential to workforce success

Across regions and sectors, employers emphasized the importance of:

- communication
- teamwork
- adaptability
- problem solving
- cross-cultural skills

These competencies influence how individuals collaborate, integrate, and grow within organizations. As workplaces become more digital, these power skills become even more important.

National Skills Heatmap reveals shared priorities

The Tour revealed strong consistency in the skills employers need most.

Top national priorities:

COMMUNICATION

ADAPTABILITY

DIGITAL LITERACY

These cross-sector skills shape readiness for future roles and support human–digital collaboration.

🟥 **High /Urgent need** 🟧 **Morderate need** 🟦 **Emerging / Lower intensity**

Skills	Type	Sector(s)	BC	AB	MB	ON	NB
Digital Literacy & Emerging Tech Use	Technical	Trades, Tech, Healthcare, Manufacturing	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Data Literacy & Analytics	Technical	Tech, Education, Manufacturing	Moderate	Emerging	Moderate	Moderate	Emerging
AI & Automation Application	Technical	Tech, Manufacturing	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Cyber Security Awareness	Technical	Tech, Education	Moderate	Emerging	Emerging	Moderate	Emerging
Project Management & Coordination	Technical	Construction, Trades	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate
Green Construction & Energy Systems	Technical	Construction, Green Economy	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Emerging
Environmental Compliance & ESG Reporting	Technical	Green Economy, Manufacturing	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Emerging
Apprenticeship Training & Mentorship	Power	Trades, Education	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Supervisory & Leadership Capacity	Power	Trades, Healthcare, Manufacturing	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Complex Care Coordination	Power	Healthcare	Moderate	Emerging	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Cultural Competence & Communication	Power	All Sectors	High	High	High	High	High
Adaptive Leadership	Power	All Sectors	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Systems Thinking & Collaboration	Power	Policy, Education, Workforce Dev.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking	Power	All Sectors	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	High
Communication & Teamwork	Power	All Sectors	High	High	High	High	Moderate
Change Management for Green Transition	Power	Green Economy, Construction	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Emerging
Community Engagement & Integration	Power	Rural Dev., Education	Moderate	Emerging	High	Moderate	High
Safety & Compliance Training	Technical	Trades, Manufacturing, Healthcare	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Resilience & Well-Being Literacy	Power	Workforce Sustainability	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

07   Retention is shaped by belonging, mentorship, and community conditions

Employers and community partners were clear: retention is not just a workplace issue. It is a community issue. Newcomers stay when they can build a life, not just secure a job.

Key factors affecting long-term retention include:

- housing affordability
- childcare availability
- transportation access
- community connections and belonging
- mentorship and managerial support

Regions that invest in belonging retain talent. Regions that do not, lose it.

08   Regional innovation thrives when partners co-design solutions

Regions with strong collaboration across employers, educators, settlement organizations, and local governments are successfully piloting:

- responsive training models
- competency-based assessments
- navigator roles
- integrated skills pathways
- industry-aligned onboarding programs

These regions show that when partners break out of silos, skill mobility improves dramatically.

09   Employer capacity is becoming a national workforce priority

Demographic pressures, shifting skill needs, and technological change place employers — especially SMEs — at the centre of workforce transformation.

Employers need:

- help navigating immigration and credentialing
- support with HR systems and onboarding
- tools for inclusive and skills-based hiring
- guidance for building belonging and retention strategies

Without strengthening employer capacity, even strong immigration and training systems will fall short.

10   The synthesis shows Canada sits between two futures

When all insights are mapped onto the Scenario Matrix, Canada lands between:

- a technocratic future, where systems are administratively strong but real-world impact is limited
- a reactive future, where employers and communities innovate locally but without consistent system support

This means:

- policies are strong, but implementation is uneven
- employer readiness exists, but guidance is inconsistent
- promising practices are emerging, but not scaled
- system fragmentation still slows down hiring and credentialing

To move toward a future-ready position, both alignment and readiness must increase, together.

> *Canada has the talent and the motivation.*
> *What we need now is the coordination to bring it all together.*

Four Possible Futures for Canada's Workforce System

Canada's workforce system is shaped by many moving parts: immigration, education, credentialing, labour, and community supports. During the Tour, it became clear that the future health of Canada's labour market depends on how well these systems work together and how ready employers and communities are to respond to change.

To make sense of these dynamics, the project used a scenario approach, which helps map how different levels of alignment and readiness create different kinds of futures. Scenarios are not predictions. They are tools to help identify what needs to shift to move toward a preferred future.

Two factors shape the scenario matrix:

- **System alignment**
  How well immigration, training, credentialing, labour, and community systems work together.
  Axis: fragmented alignment to strong alignment.

- **Employer and community readiness**
  How prepared employers, municipalities, and communities are to attract, hire, develop, and retain diverse talent.
  Axis: limited readiness to strong readiness.

When these dimensions intersect, they create four possible futures for Canada's workforce ecosystem.

HIGHER ALIGNMENT

Adaptitve Future

(High alignment, uneven readiness)

Policy coordination and system alignment begin to improve.

Some regions move quickly, while others lag behind due to uneven employer readiness, community infrastructure gaps, or sector-specific pressures. Innovation emerges, but progress is inconsistent.

Future-ready Canada

(High alighment, high readiness)

Immigration, labour, education, and community systems reinforce one another.

Employers have strong HR capacity, communities are prepared to welcome and retain newcomers, and systems share accountability through real-time labour market insights and fexible, skills-based pathways..

LOWER READINESS   HIGH READINESS

Technocratic Future

(Low alighment, low readiness)

Systems are efficient in structure but disconnected from employer and newcomer realities.

Processes work on paper, but employers struggle with capacity, and communities cannot fully support talent integration.

Reactive Future

(Low alighment, high readiness)

Employers and communities try to adapt but do so without coordinated support.

Local efforts are genuine but fragmented. Pilots thrive temporarily but fail to scale, and outcomes depend on individual champions rather than system design.

LOW ALIGNMENT

THE FOUR FUTURES

01
Technocratic Future

Low Alignment
Low Readiness

A technocratic future with limited real-world impact

In this future, systems operate in silos and employers, especially SMEs, lack the structures and capacity to navigate complex processes. Skilled newcomers remain underemployed, credential recognition remains slow, and solutions are mostly short-term or crisis-driven.

What this future looks like:

- employers struggling to fill roles despite available talent
- overreliance on temporary fixes
- inconsistent hiring outcomes
- stalled innovation
- growing regional disparities

02
Reactive Future

High Alignment
Low Readiness

A fragmented and reactive future

In this future, systems are well organized and policies are strong on paper, but employers and communities are not ready or supported enough to use them effectively. The system looks coordinated, but results do not improve at the pace needed.

What this future looks like:

- well-designed programs that are underutilized
- strong policy intent but low employer uptake
- complex tools without supporting capacity
- program delivery outpacing employer readiness

03
Adaptive Future

Low Alignment
Strong Readiness

A reactive but innovative future driven by local actors

Here, employers, educators, and community partners are eager and capable, but they must work around system gaps. Innovation happens at the local level, but progress is inconsistent and often unsupported by system design.

What this future looks like:

- strong regional pilots and local partnerships
- creative employer solutions that are difficult to replicate
- inconsistent access to tools and supports
- uneven outcomes across regions

04
Future-Ready System

Strong alignment
Strong readiness

A future-ready and adaptive system

This is the preferred future. Immigration, education, credentialing, labour, and community systems work in step with employers and local partners. Skills (and skilled people) move quickly to where they are needed. Pathways are clear. Credential recognition is fast and fair. Employers have strong tools and capacity. Communities support retention and belonging.

What this future looks like:

- predictable, skills-informed pathways
- strong HR and employer readiness
- real-time labour market intelligence
- coordinated regional and national workforce planning
- smooth movement of talent across provinces and sectors
- better retention outcomes for newcomers

Where Canada Is Today

Insights from the FutureWorks Canada Tour place Canada between the technocratic and reactive futures.

- Systems are administratively strong but fragmented in practice.
- Employers, educators, and communities are demonstrating readiness and innovation, but often despite system barriers.
- Promising approaches, such as navigation service models, sector partnerships, and regional collaborations, remain project-based and not yet scaled.
- Credential recognition remains slow and inconsistent.
- Community conditions continue to shape retention outcomes.

Canada is not far from an adaptive, future-ready ecosystem, but progress requires improving both alignment and readiness at the same time.

The goal is not simply to improve individual programs. The goal is to build a system where skills move easily and employers feel equipped to use them.

What the synthesis shows about Canada's current position

When insights from employers, educators, regulators, and community partners across all regions are analyzed together, the picture is very consistent. Canada has the talent it needs. Employers want to hire. Communities want to retain. Educators want to innovate. Policymakers want systems that work.

Despite all of these strengths, the full potential of talent is held back by fragmented systems and uneven readiness.

The synthesis places Canada in a position that falls between two futures described in the Scenario Matrix:

- a technocratic future, where systems are well structured and policy driven but do not translate into widespread results, and
- a reactive but innovative future, where employers and communities create pockets of progress while navigating significant system barriers.

Below is what the synthesis reveals in more detail.

1. The system is administratively strong but operationally fragmented

Canada has solid immigration and workforce policies, but the implementation of those policies is slowed by:

- inconsistent credential recognition
- unclear or overlapping pathways
- variation from one province to another
- disconnected planning across immigration, labour, and education
- short term funding cycles that prevent long term solutions

These issues create friction for both employers and newcomers.

2. Employers, educators, and community partners are demonstrating readiness

Across the Tour, participants shared examples of:

- inclusive hiring
- mentorship programs
- navigator roles
- sector partnerships
- responsive training pathways
- community led belonging and retention strategies

These examples show that readiness exists and expertise is available, but it is not yet fully supported by the broader system.

3. Promising practices remain project based and unscaled

Approaches that work well, including competency-based assessments, navigator supports, training pathways, and onboarding innovations, are often tied to individual grants or limited funding cycles.

As a result:

- strong solutions rarely reach wider scale
- promising models stay isolated
- lessons learned are not consistently shared across regions
- momentum is lost when funding periods end

Progress requires stronger coordination and multi-year commitments.

Canada's workforce challenge is a lack of alignment among the systems that shape how talent moves.

4. Community conditions play a major role in retention

Housing, childcare, transportation, and access to social networks repeatedly emerged as critical factors for long term retention. Employers emphasized that even strong workplace practices are not enough when community infrastructure does not support newcomers and their families.

This confirms that workforce planning and community planning must be connected.

5. Canada is positioned for progress if alignment improves

Canada already has:

- strong talent
- high employer readiness
- regional innovation
- strong postsecondary systems
- deep settlement expertise
- responsive policy intentions

What is missing is the coordination and infrastructure needed to bring these strengths together.

Moving toward a future ready workforce system will require:

- shared planning tools
- faster and more transparent credential recognition
- support for employer HR capacity
- integrated skills intelligence
- Multi-year regional strategies
- stronger alignment across immigration, training, labour, and community systems

Actions and Recommendations

The Tour showed that Canada has the talent and the motivation to build a stronger workforce system, but better alignment and stronger employer and community readiness are needed. The following actions reflect what participants across all regions identified as the most practical and high value steps that can be taken now.

Strengthening System Alignment and Capacity

1. Improve coordination across systems

Participants emphasized the need for stronger connections between immigration, education, credentialing, labour, and community planning. Coordinated planning tables and shared data standards would help ensure that programs respond to real workforce needs.

2. Modernize credential recognition

Employers and newcomers need faster, clearer, and more consistent processes. Competency-based assessment, portability across provinces, and stronger bridging and micro credential programs can reduce delays and improve access to the labour market.

3. Build real time skills intelligence

A national skills intelligence system would help partners anticipate emerging skill needs and plan training more effectively. Better data sharing among provinces, employers, and educators is essential for future readiness.

4. Connect workforce planning to community conditions

Retaining skilled immigrants in companies, and in Canada, depends on more than employment. Housing, childcare, transportation, and social infrastructure shape whether newcomers stay. Workforce strategies should consider these realities and support partnerships that build belonging and integration.

5. Strengthen regional capacity

Short term projects cannot solve long term challenges. Participants called for multi-year strategies, more support for rural and smaller communities, and investments in regional convening bodies that help partners work together and share insights.

Building Employer Capacity

1. Strengthen HR and people management

Employers need practical tools for inclusive hiring, onboarding, mentorship, cultural competency, and retention. Competency-based hiring and clear career pathways can improve outcomes quickly.

2. Use navigator and intermediary supports

Navigators help employers understand systems and connect to the right partners. They are not a one-stop shop. They are trusted guides who reduce complexity and support better hiring, onboarding, and retention, especially for SMEs.

3. Co design training and career pathways

Employers, educators, and community partners can work together to design training that reflects real skill needs. Work-integrated learning, micro credentials, and bridging programs help newcomers enter the workforce faster and more smoothly.

4. Prioritize power skills and digital fluency

Communication, adaptability, teamwork, and problem solving remain top priorities for employers across regions. As workplaces become even more digital, human digital collaboration skills will be essential.

> *We do not need to start from scratch. Many solutions already exist. The opportunity now is to strengthen coordination so these solutions can reach more employers, more communities, and more newcomers.*

Conclusion

The FutureWorks Canada Tour showed that Canada has the talent and the commitment needed to build a stronger and more inclusive workforce. Employers across the country are ready to hire internationally trained workers. Educators and community partners are innovating. Policymakers are working to improve pathways.

Yet the full potential of this talent is not being realized because the systems that shape the movement and recognition of skills are not fully aligned. Fragmented processes, uneven employer capacity, and gaps between community conditions and workforce needs continue to slow progress.

At the same time, the Tour revealed real momentum. Regions that collaborate across sectors are already seeing stronger results. Employers who receive support through navigators, mentorship, and competency-based tools are creating clearer pathways. Communities that prioritize belonging and integration are seeing higher retention.

The insights and actions outlined in this report offer a practical path forward. What employers, educators, community organizations, and governments all told us is both achievable and urgently needed. By improving alignment across systems and strengthening employer and community readiness, Canada can create an ecosystem where skills move more easily, employers feel supported, and newcomers can build long term futures.

The next phase of this work, including the continued collaborative work across the IECC Network, will build on this momentum and help turn shared insight into shared progress.

> *A future-ready Canada is one where talent moves easily, employers feel supported, and communities thrive. We are closer to that future than we think, if we choose alignment.*

Acknowledgements

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- Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), Toronto, Ontario
- Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IEC-BC), British Columbia
- Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), Calgary, Alberta
- Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC), Edmonton, Alberta
- Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council (MIEC), Manitoba
- Rural Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council (RMIEC), Rural Manitoba
- Saskatoon Open Door Society (SODS), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
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Advisory Committee, Speakers, and Subject-Matter Experts

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Advisory Committee members, panel speakers, moderators, and subject-matter experts whose guidance and contributions informed the design, delivery, and interpretation of the FutureWorks Canada Tour. Their expertise reflects the shared commitment across Canada's workforce ecosystem to build a more inclusive, skills-driven future.

Advisory Committee Members

- Niloofer (Niloo) Balsara, Director, Talent & Organizational Effectiveness, WorkSafeBC
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National Online Series & Subject-Matter Experts

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Edmonton, Alberta

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Rural Manitoba

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- Chuck Davidson, President & CEO, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
- Cathy Dowd, Executive Director, Portage Learning & Literacy Centre; Chair, MANSO
- Jeff Fawcett, Mayor of Brandon
- Tilda Fortier, Business Manager, Greenstone Building Products
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- Samuel Solomon, Immigration & Workforce Development Specialist, City of Brandon / RNIP
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Participants Across All Regions

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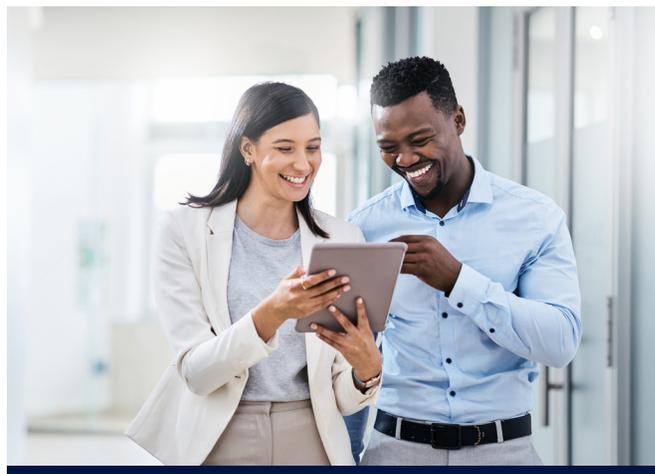
This report belongs to the hundreds of people who shared their experiences, wisdom, and hopes for a stronger workforce system.

Thank you for building the future with us.

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