



**Metropolis Conference
March 22, 2009**

Skilled Immigrant Integration: The Final Frontier

Organized by CIITE

**Panelists from:
CIITE, Algonquin College, York
University, CAPE and SISO**





Panelists present
for 10-12 minutes

Floor open for
questions

Skilled Immigrants: The Final Frontier?

Multiple Lenses

- ❑ Employer View: If Canada is on its way to a skills shortage – despite a recession – how are employers tapping into the immigrant pool? What kind of supports are required for them to take advantage of this population?
- ❑ Immigrant View: What kinds of employment supports are required to ensure that skilled immigrants can transition into commensurate employment quickly?
- ❑ Institutional View: What are the institutional – policy, process and programming – changes that need to be made to ensure the final frontier is crossed? How can we take advantage of our existing highly skilled immigrant population so that Canada moves towards higher productivity and innovation?

Panelists

- ❖ Nikhat Rasheed, CIITE Project
- ❖ Denyce Diakun, Algonquin College
- ❖ Dr. Gurmeet Bambrah, Council for Access to the Profession of Engineering (CAPE)
- ❖ Aurelia Tocaki, Settlement and Immigrant Services Organization (SISO)
- ❖ Dr. Tony Fang, York University



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Enhancing Employment Supports for Internationally Trained Immigrants at Ontario Colleges

CIITE is a Project of CON*NECT Strategic Alliances and funded by the Government of Ontario.

CIITE
Colleges Integrating
Immigrants to Employment



CIITE is a project of Ontario's 24 colleges and incorporates 10 different activities aimed at building the capacity of the Ontario college system to better serve ITIs.

CIITE Employment Support Activity

Purpose: Audit 15 colleges on their provision of employment supports to ITIs and make recommendations for improvement including both Francophone colleges.

Process: Iterative, flexible and consultative.

- ❑ 430 ITIs participated in a bilingual online survey that benchmarked ITI employment needs and service experiences.
- ❑ 126 community agency participants completed a bilingual online survey on college-community linkages.
- ❑ Consultations with colleges, Employment Ontario, TRIEC, CAPE and others provided valuable information.
- ❑ Over 100 college staff participated in a bilingual audit.

Output: 2 research papers and 27 audit recommendations outlined to enhance employment supports to ITIs at Ontario colleges by combining knowledge obtained from surveys and audit tool. Audit observations and recommendations report provides useful knowledge for all organizations providing employment supports to ITIs.



n=430 (380
English-speaking
ITIs + 50
French-speaking
ITIs)

40% college
participants;
60% non-college

60% post-
secondary
education, 19%
Masters Degrees

Understanding ITI Employment Needs, Preferences and Experiences

Select Findings

- ❑ Deskilling and downward mobility are constant. ITIs are slipping from NOC-A occupations to NOC-D occupations.
- ❑ Active interventionist activities such as interview preparation, resume/cover letter writing workshops, work placements/co-op opportunities and individualized career coaching/job development are preferred activities though these are **not** universally endorsed as ITIs have had poor service experiences.
- ❑ Most ITIs identify certain aspects of poor service including staff lack of knowledge of their education, skills, experience and occupational backgrounds, lack of commensurate employment opportunities and a perception that immigrants' skills are not quite as good as Canadian skills. Participants report being repeatedly offered low paid survival jobs.
- ❑ ITIs show some agreement that they may benefit from additional training in occupation-specific communications, language, Canadian workplace culture and technical skills though there is no universal agreement. Most of all ITIs want to demonstrate their skills to an employer.





**n=126 (44%
agency staff;
33%
management;
21% executive)**

**80% GTA;
8% Ottawa**

**33% served over
1000 immigrants
annually**

Understanding Ontario Colleges-Community Linkages

Select Findings

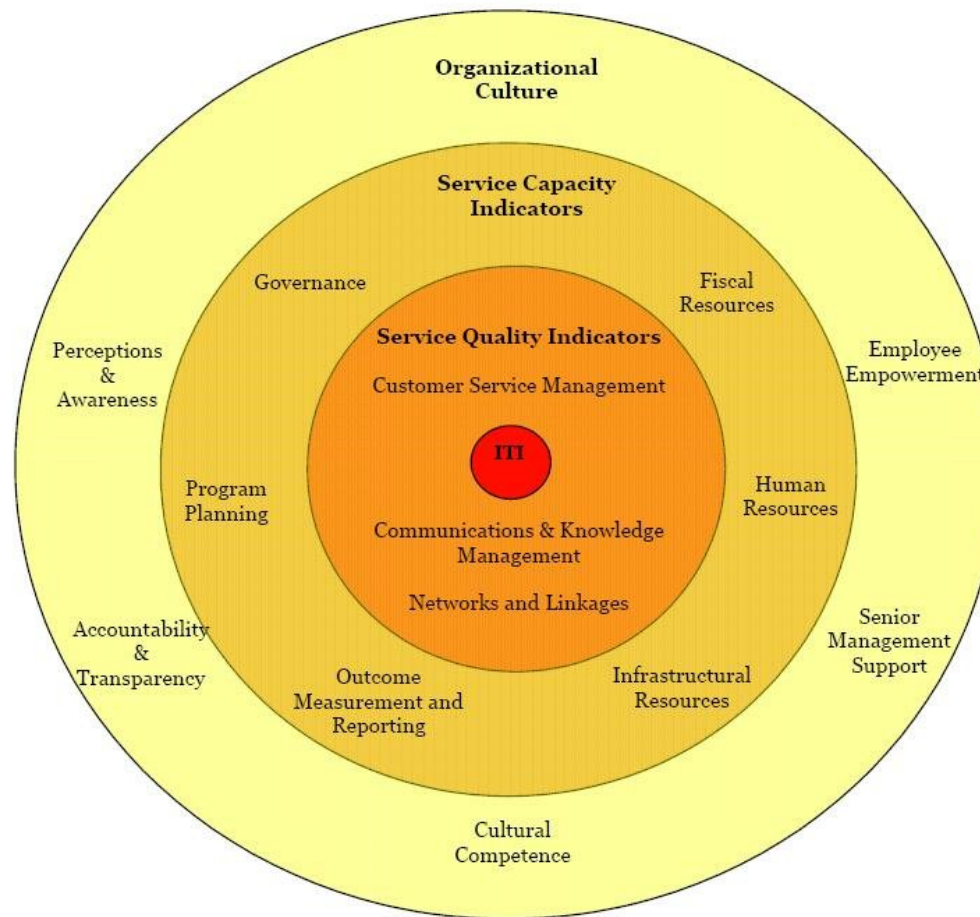
- ❑ Collaborations between colleges and community agencies as well as other key stakeholders such as employers, universities, funding agencies and immigrants themselves are critical to the development of meaningful solutions to the integration of immigrants into commensurate employment in Ontario.
- ❑ Research demonstrates that while such collaborations are on-going between colleges and community agencies, the strength of such collaborations is often undermined by the lack of formal partnership agreements, clarity of roles in the provision of services to internationally trained immigrants and underlying issues of territoriality.
- ❑ If a continuum of services is to be provided to internationally trained immigrants, colleges and community agencies will have to strengthen their relationships, clarify their roles in providing services and foster and sustain open dialogue.



Employment Support Services Audit

CIITE Employment Support Services Audit Model
Developed by Nikhat Rasheed (2008)

The audit identified Service Quality Indicators and Service Capacity Indicators that impact the provision of services. Organizational culture was also studied to add context as service delivery does not occur in isolation.





These are only 6 of 27 total recommendations made by the auditor and college representatives.

Enhancing Employment Supports

Select Recommendations Impacting All Organizations:

- Embed ITI employment into strategic plans and multi-year agreements to ensure prioritization.
- Ensure all ITI programs provide a suite of meaningful, outcome based, occupation-specific services such as interview preparation, work placements, individualized career coaching, communication/language supports and mentoring.
- Ensure effective consultation of clients in new program development to validate the need for programming.
- Develop and deliver module-based cultural competence training initiatives to build capacity to serve ITIs. ITIs report some dissatisfaction with service experiences across the board.
- Review existing service delivery and explore possibilities of integrating ITI programming within traditional frameworks to ensure sustainability and quality of service.
- Systemic collaboration initiatives between college system, employers, community agencies, ITI professional associations and ITIs necessary to develop effective solutions.

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Setting the Context

Musings

- ❑ \$130 million is spent annually on settlement programming for immigrants; \$43-60 million spent on bridging programs from 2003-2006 (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2006). How much is being spent on employer education and engagement? How can we get employers on board? What are employers thinking?
- ❑ There is a range of skills within the immigrant population – from highly education, experienced and work ready individuals, to those who can benefit from additional training. How can we make sure the work ready transition quickly into commensurate employment? Why is the discourse still centered on the assumption of deficiency?
- ❑ Why only focus on ITIs finding pre-existing employment? Why not encourage entrepreneurship within this highly skilled population?