



BEST PRACTICES FOR NEWCOMERS
LABOUR MARKET INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES:
A CASE STUDY OF CANADIAN SKILLS TRAINING &
EMPLOYMENT COALITION (CSTEC)

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About Future Ready



The Future Ready program is a \$19 million program funded in part by Employment and Social Development Canada's Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program to support companies in onboarding new and diverse workers to Canadian manufacturing. The initiative will also aid Canadian manufacturers in identifying their critical skills gaps to support the future profitability and growth of their organization through NGen's highly regarded Transformation Leadership Program. Through these approaches, the program aims to provide demand-driven solutions for the manufacturing sector, one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, and a key to the recovery of the Canadian economy.

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Introduction

Based on forecasts in the manufacturing sector done by the FOCAL Initiative¹, there is a shortage of people in the skilled trades and production occupations. Given the demographics of the country, with an aging population and low birthrate, there is a lack of Canadian-born workers with the skills needed or available to fill vacancies. The manufacturing sector is not alone, as the skills shortages in many other industries has also been well documented. Companies have to tap the potential of the local newcomer population to meet the demand. Immigrants provide a ready supply of labour for manufacturing, given the representation of landed immigrants aged 15 years and over in the Canadian labour force (27%), with forty-nine per cent (49%) of landed immigrants in the labour force living in Ontario, of which forty-four per cent (44%) were newcomers (LFS, 2022)².

The Canadian Skills, Training and Employment Coalition (CSTEC) is an NGO that has been involved in labour adjustment projects since the 1990s, assisting displaced workers in manufacturing return to the labour market. Over the last few years, it has successfully implemented active labour market programmes (ALMPs) which are government supported programmes that intervene in the labour market to help the unemployed find work. This paper draws on the particular experience of CSTEC in designing and implementing ALMPs to understand what works, successes and challenges in helping newcomers³ receive training and find employment and helping employers find workers. The purpose of the paper is to offer some best practices for employers and intermediaries to succeed in implementing their own programmes to integrate newcomers into the labour force.

Methodology

The paper uses a case study methodology to study CSTEC practices and develop an effective model for ALMPs. It utilised four methods of data collection. A focus group was conducted with CSTEC staff to collect qualitative data to gain insight on their practices. A survey of CSTEC coordinators was done on their background and approach to doing their work. A review of client placement data to assess the newcomer population served was done. Individual interviews with employers and CSTEC staff were conducted. The key research question was: What are the

¹ See Labour market forecasts at <https://www.futureautolabourforce.ca/labour-market-forecasts/>

² 2022 Labour Force Survey, CSTEC Custom Request, Statistics Canada.

³ In Canada 5 years or less.

factors that contribute to CSTEC's success in labour market programming to support the hire of newcomers in manufacturing?

NGen Future Ready

NGen retained CSTEC for its Future Ready programme⁴ to help support manufacturers to recruit people, including newcomers, into manufacturing jobs. The programme met its targets to find placements and distribute wage subsidies to manufacturing companies. Thirty-five per cent of clients placed with employers were newcomers.

Labour adjustment

Labour adjustment involves transitioning people to a new job, including self-employment, or to retirement. Labour adjustment to transition people to new employment involves mainly government-funded active and passive labour market programmes, which can involve newly displaced workers as well as the long-term unemployed (CSTEC, 2019, p. 8). A passive labour market programme provides income support such as employment insurance, and/or severance payments or pensions payments for workers who have access to those financial supports (CSTEC, 2019).

Active Labour Market Programme (ALMP)

In manufacturing, ALMPs involve the training and placement of people in jobs, along with providing wage incentives to employers in manufacturing to support hiring of apprentices and production workers. An ALMP is proactive in getting people back to work through an employment programme designed to fit their labour market profile and individual needs. For newcomers, labour market transitions involve the change from the labour market from their *country of origin* or *country of emigration* to the labour market in Canada, which must be factored into programme design.

A Role for Intermediaries

ALMPs are usually implemented by intermediaries such as CSTEC and NGen (NGOs in the social services sector, industry associations, and workers' representatives) who conduct two main activities:

⁴ See [Future Ready](#)

- help unemployed and displaced workers to transition to new jobs;
- support employers in finding and training workers.

For newcomers, intermediaries could support them in finding their first job in Canada. Some employers, in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operate with such low profit margins that they have understaffed human resources offices to help them with recruitment. Such companies hire through online job boards, head-hunters, and attend job fairs. In the current tight labour market, recruitment in smaller communities is even more challenging than in larger urban areas. As one CSTECH staff noted, “It costs companies nothing to hire someone, and they may even have access to wage subsidies when they work with us.” (Interview, 2023) Staff have to make a conscious effort to ease recruitment challenges.

The majority of CSTECH’s job placements are in apprenticeships and production/assembly jobs, thus helping employers where they need labour the most. Other positions in which they place people include technical jobs and professional jobs, and to a lesser extent, journeypersons, administrative jobs, and coop jobs. Wage subsidies are useful in hiring newcomers.

The value of Social Capital and ALMPs for Newcomers

In the literature, the relevant definition of social capital in the context of labour markets and newcomers is in relation to social networks and leveraging resources. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as ‘the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (p. 119). In other words, an individual has social capital when they have a network of relationships that can be leveraged because of the resources available in the network for achieving a purpose.

The concepts of “bonding” social capital (or “strong” ties) and “bridging” social capital (or “weak” ties) are used to describe different types of social capital and are useful in understanding newcomer labour market integration. Bonding social capital refers to ties between people with similar backgrounds and shared histories, and bridging social capital refers to ties between people with different backgrounds, social statuses, and social environments. Newcomers may

have ‘bonding social capital if they have family and a community where they migrate, which ‘is good for “getting by” while bridging social capital is good for “getting ahead” ’ (Abdolmohammad & Rose, 2019, p. 2). However, newcomers who live in ethnic enclaves, especially low-income areas, are ghettoised and tend to have difficulty building networks outside of their communities. Relying on family or friend connections to find employment impacts their access to the labour market. Newcomers who connect with organisations outside their community are building bridging social capital. The other aspect of social capital is in relation to newcomers who do not have access to broad networks outside of their own community, if there is a community that exists in Canada. Bridging social capital can occur pre-arrival, as well. Abdolmohammad & Rose (2019) found in their research on employment income of immigrants in Canada, that immigrant men ‘who contacted a work-related organisation prior to admission had higher employment incomes than those who did not contact any organisation in Canada...’ (p. 11).

The case study allows us to apply the concept of social capital and understand how it works in ALMPs for newcomers. The staff has a strong network of relationships (social capital) in the college sector and community (which includes former clients), which they can leverage to find candidates and link them with colleges for training and with employers for work placement. They also have an advantage in finding placements through the strong network of relationships with manufacturing firms to determine their labour needs, and where they can place jobseekers. The people already helped by CSTECC also become a recruiting network, as people find out about CSTECC programmes from clients that they successfully placed or assisted. This is the expanding social capital of the CSTECC team at work.

By finding and supporting newcomer clients, CSTECC provides *bridging social capital* for newcomers to the Canadian labour market. While some newcomers can find CSTECC online, a more proactive recruitment approach by staff facilitates the building of bridging capital between CSTECC as an organisation and newcomer communities, to promote better labour market integration.

Components of an ALMP

The components of an ALMP involves outreach and engagement to find clients; offering several services to job seekers; and human resources support to companies looking for workers.

Outreach and engagement

Intermediaries have to conduct outreach to find job seekers and to employers who are looking for workers. Field staff initiate contact with employers in their community where they live and visit them regularly and stay in touch by email and phone with Human Resources staff. The field staff become familiar with the occupations and culture at a facility and the economic status of the employer – whether the company is expanding, stagnant or in decline. Regular meetings are held with other community agencies, colleges, income support providers, etc.

Field staff in an ALMP can recruit newcomer candidates through various channels.

- Outreach to local public and private community colleges to collaborate in supporting client training and certification needs.
- Unemployed people walking off the street.
- Referrals from community members.
- Training partners refer people.
- Community colleges are recruiting grounds since there are many international students looking to stay in Canada and are looking for a job.
- NGOs – sometimes coordinators get calls from NGOs who want to place hard to serve/multi-barriered clients which include immigrants/newcomers. Many job seekers are referred by other agencies.
- Social media marketing posts of coordinators, e.g., Facebook; LinkedIn.
- Employers seeking wage subsidies to hire workers.
- Outreach and connections to former clients who refer new clients.
- Outreach and collaboration with local immigrant-serving agencies.

Local universities aren't a primary avenue for outreach and engagement, as the demand for workers in manufacturing is for people with community college education. Advertisements in local newspapers to find immigrants/newcomers for placement is also not an effective outreach method.

Client Services

Services that should be offered to help jobseekers attach to the labour market and to help employers find workers, including newcomers, include:

1. Client assessment – staff has one-on-one interview with job seekers and assess education, training, skills, and work experience. In addition, they assess attitude, aptitude, and disposition of the individual for working in the sector.
2. Employment search support – staff provides cover letter and resume writing; interviewing skills workshops, etc. There should be an assessment to see if newcomers know how to do a resume or interview properly within the Canadian context. In some countries, the focus is on credentials but in Canada, the focus is on work experience, especially Canadian work experience in some sectors. Employment search support teaches how to write a cover letter and highlight skills relevant to the Canadian context in the letter, resume and interview.
3. Human capital intervention – staff provide funds and advising to the job seeker on career-related training and workplace certifications. They assist in program selection and college selection and provide tuition to the college.

Training funded by ALMPs involves two aspects:

- Clients can be upskilled – teach people new skills within the same job profile to enhance their value to an employer by improving their current skill set, so they can be hired or retained.
 - Re-skilling – teach people new skills to do a different job. The individual can opt to go to a post-secondary institution to earn a diploma or degree or certification in a different technology or field to find employment.
4. Job matching – staff provide co-op placements or sponsor apprenticeships for job seekers, and help employers fill permanent vacancies in all areas. Based on knowledge of both the employer and the job seeker, staff find the right match (based on skills, attitude, disposition) with the right employer to maximize success. Staff are intimately involved in the interview and hiring process, ensuring the candidate presents well, shows

up on time, at the right place and knows how to interview. Any issues that have been identified are resolved in advance. In manufacturing, given labour shortages, employers are happy to employ newcomers who have been assessed and referred by an intermediary.

5. Wage Incentives – The ALMP provides financial incentives (wage subsidies) and recruitment support for employers.
6. Wraparound supports – The ALMP provides wraparound supports such as travel, childcare allowance, and guidance on basic living issues depending on high need clients who may face multiple barriers. These supports are not always funded but intermediaries should try and access funding as a component of their ALMP.
7. Mentoring and client tracking – Staff provide advice and mentorship. They visit and call the employer regularly and stay in touch with the programme participant to resolve or identify any issues in the placement, with the assumption that there will be challenges that need to be resolved. Once the employer receives a wage subsidy (if it is available), the intermediary continues to support the individual with retention and additional opportunities for occupational progression and wage increase, additional training, apprenticeship registration, etc. If a placement fails, the intermediary looks at other ways to help the individual using existing ALMPs in their portfolio. Staff are also open to participants calling/emailing them for advice and concerns.

Most service providers are supposed to provide some or all of these services with emphasis on 1, 2 and 3 for workers. Intermediaries, such as Employment Ontario service providers provide support in interviewing skills, resume and cover letter writing. Some 'Bridging programs' focus on helping newcomers in specific professions (such as engineering, medicine, architecture, etc), by providing training and support in obtaining local credentials and finding placements to build local experience. Based on the case study, there is less of a focus on employment search support by CSTEAC and more focus on training and placement in jobs where manufacturers face labour shortages.

High Touch Client Service versus Low touch

The cornerstone of a good ALMP is high-touch client services which is customised to the employer and jobseeker. Table 1 below highlights the difference between 'high touch and low touch' services. Many intermediaries do the latter, which impacts success. According to CSTECS's FOCAL Initiative website on the way that they work with clients: 'It's a hands-on process, involving plenty of direct personal contact between CSTECS representatives and the manufacturers that they serve in order to find out exactly what their recruitment opportunities are and how best to fill them' (n.d.).

For example, one Human Resources manager at a manufacturing company in Guelph noted that CSTECS contacted them and asked them to interview candidates for their plant. The plant manager agreed to interview clients and they also asked her to attend an information session in Cambridge. The employer needed skills in automation, robotics, and pneumatics. Their millwrights were aging out. CSTECS was able to help them recruit people and helped them out with paperwork, which is appreciated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who do not have large human resources departments (Interview, 2023). Another company in Sault Ste. Marie noted that 90% of their production workers hired in 2023 were newcomers. They also hired newcomers in supervisory, and facilities/maintenance positions. The majority of all their new hires were immigrants. CSTECS contacted the company and helped them hire with the FutureReady wage subsidy programme (Interview, 2023). SMEs find the wage subsidy programme extremely helpful in hiring newcomers as there is a period of skills assessment, training, even language learning before the workers can become fully productive.

Table 1. High Touch versus Low Touch Approach to Client Service (Job placement and supports)

Component	High Touch	Low Touch
Employer Outreach and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular site visits to employers. ● Regular calls to HR Staff. ● Intimate familiarity with occupations and culture at facility and the economic status of the employer (growing or stagnant). ● The provider is in the same community as the employer. ● Onus is on the provider to initiate contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website with promotional material. ● Correspondence is done via email or CRM software. ● Onus is on the employer to initiate contact.
Participant Outreach and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most participants are referred by other agencies. ● Regular meetings are held with other community agencies, institutions, income support providers, etc. ● One-on-one interview with participant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website with promotional material. ● Correspondence is done via email or CRM software. ● The onus is on the participant to initiate contact. ● Participant completes/registers via online form.
Job Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on knowledge of both employer and participant, staff person finds the right match (skills, attitude, disposition) with the right employer to maximize success. ● Is intimately involved in the interview and hiring process. ● Resolve or identify any issues in advance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job matching done by AI or 'first come first serve' approach. ● Arrangement between staff, employer and participant is largely transactional. ● 'Yes' or 'no' response on whether participant was selected by employer for a placement after interview.
Mentoring and Client Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular on-site visits and calls to employer and participant. Resolve or identify any issues in the placement. The default assumption is that there could be challenges. ● Placement completion. Employer receives wage subsidy (if available). Agency looks for additional opportunities for the participant (occupational progression, additional training, apprenticeship registration, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reactionary approach. Check-in is done only if the employer or participant reaches out. The default assumption is that "it is working out". ● Placement completion. Employer receives wage subsidy (if available), and file is closed.

Source: CSTEC

The high touch, customised approach applies to candidates recruited for training, apprenticeship, and job placements. Job candidates are assessed and supported with training and workplace certifications, and job placement services. They address any issues that could arise based on the client profile before the interview. Staff stay in touch with employers and workers to promote retention and address any issues that may arise. Based on CSTEC's practices, an intermediary should leverage different ALMPs over time to support an employer or worker client, depending on their needs. Building long-term relationships with clients (employer and worker) is a central part of this ALMP model. See Figure 1 below. Programmes that offer wage subsidies as the primary service focuses on the employer but ALMPs that address both employer and job-seeker needs are more comprehensive and successful, but also require more staff resources and funding.

Figure 1: An Immigrant training and placement story

'Vishnu, originally from India, came to Canada in 2018. He had a Bachelor of Electrical Technology Degree from India. He was recruited through a posting on my website/social media accounts. He was recruited into a training program and then placed into a production position, and later transitioned into an apprenticeship. When I first talked to Vishnu, his goal was to become a Red Seal Journeyman, but he wasn't sure in which trade. Under the YESS program, he was put into training at a local college in the CNC training Program in 2021, where CSTEC paid the tuition and provided wrap around supports. This was the key to getting him started on his journey of finding work in manufacturing. He got a good job as a CNC Operator/Machinist in 2022 with an SME in Brampton that has 400 employees. The company was willing to give him a chance. He worked 14 months at the company. In 2023, the employer registered him as an apprentice when he decided to become a Tool & Diemaker. The employer received a wage incentive to support his transition to apprenticeship status. He's very happy with the job and the company is extremely happy with Vishnu. This is a win-win all around. It shows how all of our programs can come into play to help and support both candidates and companies.'

CSTEC Coordinator

Hiring the right field staff

Hiring the right staff to implement the ALMP in the field working with clients – job seekers and companies – is key to success.

Education and experience

At the heart of the CSTECH model are the coordinators who conduct outreach to find employers and jobseekers and carry out all the field activities of an ALMP. These individuals must have a lot to offer clients (employers and jobseekers) in terms of their **education, knowledge, and experience**. The coordinators have long tenure with CSTECH, with three working more than 10 years with them, so that they understand the history and shifts in government funding for labour adjustment and ALMPs in manufacturing. Coordinators' success could be attributed to their unique background and skillset. Thus, recruiters in intermediaries looking for field staff should look for the following:

- Experience in working in manufacturing (or relevant sector) or familiarity with the sector's operations, and an understanding of human resources needs, and the operations of plants and workflow. This knowledge provides them with credibility in dealing with companies.
- Experience in educational services (post-secondary education and community colleges, in particular).
- More than 10 years' work experience in the relevant sector.

Some possible hires include former human resources managers and former union representatives that have experience working, training, and recruiting workers in the manufacturing sector.

Qualities and Skills

In addition to education and work experience, in reviewing the backgrounds and activities of the coordinators, several elements stand out as to the type of individual that will succeed in doing labour adjustment. The research suggests that certain **qualities and skills** lead to success in serving clients in training and employment services including:

- effective communication skills;
- authenticity;
- inclusive attitude and behaviour;

- empathy for clients;
- an orientation for service – helping people;
- credibility with employers;
- collaborative with colleagues and others;
- provides high touch, hands-on support to employers and job candidates; and,
- possesses or able to build social capital (social networks that they can leverage) in their community to find jobseekers and employers and support them.

'Employment career centres provide basic employment supports but have difficulties placing newcomers. Other agencies spend on flashy promotion ads. and marketing strategies. We get to it. Helping the client.' *CSTEC Coordinator*

Regional focus

Focus on serving clients where they live (workers) or operate (employers) in the geographical catchment area of the coordinators. Field Coordinators focus on specific geographic regions where they live and work for their recruitment and work with employers, with two each assigned to each region including:

- Hamilton area
- Toronto
- Windsor-Essex
- Sault St Marie - Algoma Region
- Kitchener-Waterloo
- London Region
- Peel-Halton
- Eastern Ontario
- Niagara
- Sarnia-Lambton.

'What matters is not my identity. If I was looking to settle and find a home or job in a new country, I want someone from there to help me. The value of the team is industry knowledge and Canadian knowledge on how to navigate the labour market system and set clients up for success'.

CSTEC Coordinator

As the work of expands, so will the geographic areas which may include other provinces.

Techniques and Tools for recruiting newcomers

There are various tools and techniques to conduct outreach and engage with various stakeholders – NGOs, government, colleges, employer clients, and job seekers. Techniques for engagement and outreach preferred were *in-person meetings*, *telephone calls* and *emails* to find and support jobseekers and employers. Reliance on face-to-face interactions with employers and more traditional methods of engaging people seems to work best as part of a customised approach to service provision. Sometimes online meetings, social media or a personal website are used as tools for recruitment of job seekers.

Diversity and Inclusion and applying an Equity Lens

In the case study, recruitment efforts to place people in manufacturing include people from equity-deserving groups (EDGs) - immigrants/newcomers, women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, people from LGBTQS+ communities, and other people who face challenges in the workforce such as older workers, and people in rural communities. Staff apply an equity lens from planning to programme implementation to provide equitable outcomes for all job seekers, which means understanding the specific challenges a person may face. An equity lens allows one to see different perspectives in order to treat everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and systemic barriers that they may face. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has equitable access to services that results in equal results and benefits. The programme also collects disaggregated demographic data on clients to evaluate equity impacts to inform programme improvement and to serve clients better.

Data collection involves using a Customer Relationship Management software to collect and store data, and also respect for privacy of the individual based on privacy laws.

Settlement agencies

Generally, the reliance on settlement agencies is minimal because, traditionally, they have a different mandate for helping newcomers. These agencies are funded to help people get acclimatised to the community and provide assistance to find housing, apply for government documents, access healthcare, and access language training. They do not provide people with employment support or referrals to employment programmes. In smaller, more isolated

communities, there may be more collaboration and contact among diverse types of organisations, but not so much in larger urban areas like the GTA.

Towards a model for successful ALMPs for newcomers

The approach to ALMPs by CSTECC suggests a model for executing successful programmes to find, train, and support jobseekers; and to find and support employers who need workers in any sector.

1. Services:

- (i) High touch client services – Provide hands-on, customised support to employers and job seekers.
- (ii) Assessment – Assess education, training, skills, attitude, aptitude, and work experience and provide advice on career pathways within the context of the labour market programme or refer to them to other programmes within the organisation. Use external programmes to support the client, where needed.
- (iii) Funding – Provide funding to job seeker for upskilling/re-skilling and workplace certifications to facilitate job placement.
- (iv) Training – Support the jobseeker with finding an appropriate training programme at an accredited, reputable training institution to provide skills which are in high demand.
- (v) Wage incentives – Provide financial incentives to employers to incentivise hiring and training of newcomers.
- (vi) Supports – Provide wraparound supports for high needs clients.
- (vii) Employment search support – Assess if job search skills are lacking and provide support or refer clients to government offices that are funded for these services.

2. Staffing:

- i. **Work experience** – Recruit people who have worked in the specific sector being targeted and who have work experience in the colleges or university sector, depending on type of occupations being filled.

- ii. **Skills** – Staff should have the ability and tools to provide an initial assessment of education, skills, client attitudes/aptitudes, and identify an employment and training pathway (including re-skilling or upskilling needs).
 - iii. **People orientation** – Staff should be authentic and empathetic and have the communication and interpersonal skills to work with clients.
 - iv. **Equity and Inclusion** – Staff should apply an equity lens⁵ to their work to support clients of diverse backgrounds. For newcomers, they should be able to support them in an inclusive and culturally sensitive way, especially in relations to the challenges that they may face depending on country of origin, culture, gender, etc.
 - v. **LMI on shortages** – Staff should understand the labour force shortages facing employers in the specific industrial sector or subsector, so they can find the right people to fill the jobs.
3. **Focus on local and regional needs** – Provide support to employers and job seekers on a local and regional basis and hire staff from the region who have knowledge of the community.
 4. **Outreach and recruitment approach** – Utilise *in-person meetings, texts, telephone calls* and *emails* to find and support employers and jobseekers, but also use social media and online postings to find job seekers who may be in a pre-arrival position or searching online for support.
 5. **Leverage social networks** – Staff recruiting clients in the labour market programme should have a network of relationships (social capital) in the employer sector to leverage to connect employers and job seekers. They should build and continue to expand their social networks to reach newcomers (building bridging social capital) by staying engaged in their local community with NGOs, community centres, colleges, universities, settlement agencies, clients, and former clients.
 6. **Target SMEs** – Focus on SMEs who will not have human resources department to support them and who will appreciate the support that intermediaries can provide to help them recruit newcomers.

Conclusion

The key to success with helping newcomers attach to the market through an ALMP, and in particular, find work in manufacturing, is recruiting the right staff to leverage their social capital with employers, their community, and the network of clients that they have built up – both employer and job candidates – to successfully place people in training and jobs. The social capital of the staff counteract the lack of social capital of newcomers in the labour market. One key finding was that settlement agencies could play a more proactive role as part of their services, in simply referring people to employment support agencies in the community, especially intermediaries like CSTECH, who have the networks and funding to expediate labour market integration for newcomers. In addition, provide high touch services to achieve successful outcomes for clients - employers and job-seekers.

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