



A Maytree idea

In partnership with The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

ALLIES: A Network of Support, A Movement for Change

by

Anne Makhoul

October 2011

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1. Introduction

From a purely economic perspective, it just doesn't make sense to encourage educated people with skills to come to a new country, only to deny them access to the personal and professional networks that will enable them to find appropriate employment. Socially, it's a recipe for poverty and resentment.

Until the 1990s, immigrants to Canada could expect that, after 10 years, their incomes would catch up with similarly-qualified Canadians. This is no longer the case. Today's 10-years-after statistics show that immigrant men are earning only 79.8 percent of the average; immigrant women are earning 87.3 percent [Statistics Canada 2007].

As any job seeker in Canada quickly learns, it helps to know people who know people. You soon find out who your friends and allies are in your struggle against unemployment or underemployment. If you make the right connection, you may land that coveted job. But finding well-connected friends in a new country is easier said than done.

Mid-way into its initial mandate, the ALLIES network (Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies) engaged the Caledon Institute of Social Policy to conduct a review of its accomplishments and challenges. Network conveners, Steering Committee members and employer representatives were invited to talk about where they see ALLIES today and where they hope it will go. This report provides a snapshot of their efforts and reflections, gathered in the spring of 2011.

2. New ideas, new structures

The Conference Board of Canada's 2004 report on performance and potential states that our failure to recognize immigrants' education and credentials costs the economy somewhere between \$3.4 and \$5 billion in lost earnings every year. But there are glimmers of hope that the situation is improving.

Although most newcomers settle in or near Vancouver, Toronto or Montréal, a two-day learning exchange in 2007 sponsored by the Maytree Foundation entitled "Disseminating Good Ideas: Skilled Immigrants in the Labour Market" attracted 130 participants from 18 city regions. The event generated lively discussion and deep interest among civic and business leaders, university and college educators, and community organization representatives. Funded also by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the exchange provided ample evidence that supporting skilled immigrant employment is an idea whose time has come.

Maytree, in partnership with the McConnell Foundation, formally launched the ALLIES network in October 2007. Its ultimate goal is to create a national movement of locally-engaged communities capable of providing successful employment solutions for skilled immigrants. ALLIES operates under the direction of Maytree. Strategic oversight is provided by a three-member Steering Committee made up of McConnell Chief Operating Officer Stephen Huddart, Maytree President Ratna Omidvar and Maytree Senior Fellow Naomi Alboim. Project Leader Peter Paul is responsible for operations.

Ten cities in six provinces across the country have been assisted by ALLIES. The organization works predominantly in larger centres, but smaller Ontario municipalities (e.g., Peterborough, Kingston, North Bay) have also received support. A request for help in establishing an Immigrant Employment Council (IEC) was also received from representatives in Charlottetown, PEI.

Maytree had test-driven a model for encouraging immigrant employment by creating the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) in 2002. By the time ALLIES was unveiled, TRIEC staff members had built a collection of program supports including a website (hireimmigrants.ca), a mentorship model and assorted project tools.

By 2005, Maytree and TRIEC had also established relationships with representatives from several other cities similarly involved in immigrant employment issues. Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa had developed their own IECs and were actively sharing information and ideas with TRIEC. Work to improve employment opportunities for skilled immigrants had been quietly moving along in the London area since the 1980s. But it wasn't until 2010 that representatives from London-Middlesex began to formalize their involvement with the ALLIES network.

Throughout 2007-08, Janice Astbury, Senior Project Officer from the Montréal-based McConnell Foundation, hosted discussions about building a body in that city that would coordinate the activities of multiple stakeholders interested in immigrant employment. In that same time period, interest in an immigrant employment council was expressed by groups from Edmonton and Calgary, representatives at the Vancouver Foundation (a nonprofit funding body) and members of the business-focused Greater Halifax Partnership.

As the ALLIES initiative took shape, it offered funding, coaching and a toolkit of best practices, discussion points and implementation models. In 2008, Montréal, Vancouver (representing all of British Columbia), Edmonton and Saskatoon submitted successful applications to ALLIES for start-up grants to further explore IEC possibilities. Though three of the four centres now have functioning councils, discussions in Saskatoon created only initial interest in the IEC concept. Work continues to develop a partnership among representatives from the City, Chamber of Commerce and educational institutions. Also in 2008, a multicultural council in Fredericton with a province-wide mandate established ties with ALLIES. In 2009, ALLIES began working with its newer members to institute mentoring programs in their cities.

3. *ALLIES' goals*

ALLIES was originally envisioned as a network, a vehicle that would take good immigrant employment practices from one city to another. It would encourage local leaders to become champions for the appropriate hiring of skilled immigrants in their communities. It would work on solutions hand-in-hand with local employers.

Funded by the Maytree and J.W. McConnell Family Foundations, ALLIES was conceived as a five-year project. It would be guided by key features of the successful Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), namely: the presence of a local catalyst that organized support around the idea, a local convener capable of incubating the initiative, and the involvement of a well-recognized business leader who could act as a champion and the public face of the initiative.

ALLIES would contribute to the resilience, prosperity and vitality of Canadian communities by creating a nation-wide movement based on successful community initiatives and national partnerships. Shifts in hiring and other relevant systems and behaviours would result from these initiatives. Leading employers would be positioned as agents of change and champions for skilled immigrants.

ALLIES was to be the movement's national dissemination, coordination and learning hub. It would offer grants, advice and coaching. Even at the early stages, there was a clear understanding that local variation and adaptation would be critical to the success of any initiative. ALLIES would create a development space for place-based innovation based on the local context.

ALLIES has made a deliberate effort to incorporate lessons from other cities. These have been captured in its tools and resources, the technical support it has offered to various programs, and in the relationships it has forged with other partners (including government).

4. ALLIES' operational elements

Grants

Between 2008 and 2010, ALLIES offered Phase I and II Start-Up Grants of up to \$30,000. Phase I Grants helped communities develop capacity and identify champions and program ideas in order to promote the appropriate hiring of skilled immigrants. Phase II Grants were available to continue the momentum gained in Phase I. ALLIES provided Phase I Grants to Edmonton, British Columbia, Saskatoon, Montréal and Calgary. Montréal and Calgary applied for Phase II funding. Start-Up Grants were collapsed into a single category in 2011.

Beginning in 2008, Partnership Grants of up to \$90,000 per year over three years were offered to communities that completed all elements of creating a multi-stakeholder effort. ALLIES provided Partnership Grants to Halifax for its Connector Program (see page 18 of this report), Montréal for its pilot mentorship program, and Calgary for the Calgary Mentoring Collaborative. Now termed Resource Grants, these funds can be used by existing Immigrant Employment Councils to build capacity, expand programs, conduct employer outreach or advance policy perspectives.

Innovation Grants of up to \$100,000 allow organizations to test new, innovative and strategic immigrant employment solutions with other stakeholders. The ALLIES Steering Committee approved an Innovation Grant to support the work of Professional Immigrant Networks (PINS). The first portion of the grant will cover the costs of conducting an environmental scan of PINs in four centres (Calgary, Halifax, London-Middlesex and Kitchener-Waterloo) and establishing a dedicated PIN website. The second portion of the Innovation Grant will fund a pilot group mentoring program during which an established Canadian professional will mentor four to six mentees from his or her PIN.

IEC establishment

Once capable leaders were identified and grants awarded for IEC development in Montréal, Calgary, Edmonton and BC, ALLIES provided other key supports and assisted early stage efforts to get IECs fully operational. It shared information about the experiences of TRIEC and Hire Immigrants Ottawa, fostered ALLIES-IEC connections and assisted with publicity. In some instances, ALLIES staff served on planning and steering committees and provided coaching assistance.

By Fall 2008, ALLIES had established connections with large employers (e.g., KPMG LLP and Deloitte), then facilitated introductions among employers and IEC representatives. Two of these introductions resulted in local IEC Board appointments.

In 2008, the Niagara IEC was launched. Loosely modelled after TRIEC, ALLIES' support for this initiative was limited to providing connections to large employers. ALLIES continues to work in smaller Ontario centres to replicate the successes experienced in North Bay and Niagara and to assist setting up an IEC in Charlottetown.

Mentoring

Mentoring is the signature IEC program. It has caught the imagination of employers, community agencies, colleges and universities, and governments in cities across Canada. The funding, coaching, tools and resources, connections to employers and other supports that ALLIES has provided have been instrumental in setting up (or scaling up) mentoring programs in eight regions: Halifax, Montréal, London-Middlesex, Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara, Calgary, Edmonton and British Columbia. ALLIES is now assisting the establishment of mentoring programs in New Brunswick, North Bay, Sudbury, Kingston and Peterborough.

To strengthen and extend mentoring activities, ALLIES provides coaching and technical support, hosts conferences and conference calls, operates employer and community engagement activities, and has managed the development of toolkits, support materials and a preliminary evaluation framework.

In the past few years, ALLIES has engaged in a deliberate effort to confirm national partners and involve them in mentorship work. At the point of writing, these included Deloitte, KPMG LLP, Pitney Bowes, Royal Bank of Canada and TD Bank Group.

Employer supports

ALLIES inherited the hireimmigrants.ca website from TRIEC in June 2009. A tool originally designed to serve as a resource for employers in the Greater Toronto Area, ALLIES has restructured the website, adding new material to make it more relevant to partners across Canada. For example, it recently added 11 new stories about promising practices from employers (nine profiled employers outside Ontario).

ALLIES also inherited the hireimmigrants.ca Roadmap – the site's GPS equivalent and most popular feature. A dashboard of ALLIES' services, the Roadmap allows users in other centres to remain on their local websites while navigating within hireimmigrants.ca. ALLIES decided to syndicate the Roadmap and it is currently embedded into eight other jurisdictional sites. ALLIES brokered the required syndication protocols and sees great value in sharing resources in this way.

Since June 2009, ALLIES has held six webinars which focused on employer-related issues. Quick e-mail notices to hireimmigrants.ca visitors have been used as a means of deepening engagement and understanding of ALLIES operations and programs.

The “Best Employers for New Canadians” competition is managed by the editors of *Canada’s Top 100 Employers* in partnership with ALLIES. The award recognizes the nation’s best employers for newcomers – those which have developed and implemented practices to attract, retain and integrate immigrants into their workforces. With innovative programs such as credential recognition, mentoring and professional upgrading, these employers succeed in assist-ing skilled immigrants in making a smooth transition into the workplace and a new life in Canada. The winning practices and ideas are showcased on hireimmigrants.ca, a special section in the *Globe and Mail* and a plenary session at the Top 100 Employers Conference.

Besides the hireimmigrants.ca website and program newsletter, ALLIES has posted 14 blogs on various topics, including internships, mentoring, policy reports, Best Employers for New Canadians and ALLIES conference presentations. ALLIES uses Twitter to promote its work, share ideas and disseminate news items from the IECs. Postings are made through the Maytree Twitter account which has more than 2,000 followers.

Toolkits

ALLIES has developed seven online toolkits which are based on models of successful programs:

- Establishing an Immigrant Employment Council
- Mentoring Programs
- Employer Recognition Programs
- Bridging Programs
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Internship Programs
- Loan Programs.

Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) project

In consultation with IECs, ALLIES is developing and testing a strategy to connect SMEs with unemployed and underemployed skilled immigrants in cities across Canada. The strategy will be based on existing programs and policies for SMEs, promising new practices and SME consultations. IECs will play an important role in ensuring that the strategy is adapted to meet local labour market needs. To date, ALLIES has developed fact sheets and completed an SME program scan. Next steps will include preparing a discussion document and consulting with SMEs in the five cities most involved with SME initiatives. ALLIES will share its findings with the Conference Board of Canada immigration roundtable in October 2011 and with the ALLIES membership in December 2011.

Government as employer

Governments at all levels are significant employers. In order to encourage change and action on their part, ALLIES has undertaken research to describe the hiring practices of federal, provincial and municipal governments. It examined how these practices affect the hiring of skilled immigrants, documenting promising practices where they exist and arriving at a set of recommendations. This research will be published shortly.

Learning exchanges and business leaders' summit

To date, ALLIES has held three Learning Exchanges (Vancouver, June 2009; Halifax, May 2010; Calgary, May 2011). These events allow ALLIES to raise the level of knowledge of participants on immigrant employment strategies and solutions. They have been used to showcase promising practices and celebrate success, position employers as agents of change and build community among partners. They continue to help grow the movement by attracting new partners to ALLIES.

ALLIES hosted a Business Leaders' Summit in Toronto in September 2009. IEC Executive Directors each brought business leader guests from their communities. The event offered an opportunity to hear from senior business leaders who have been at the forefront of TRIEC's efforts. The summit also helped strengthen relationships among IEC representatives and their local business leaders.

Executive Director sessions

ALLIES has brought Executive Directors (EDs) together on four occasions, providing professional development and team-building opportunities. EDs have identified these as vitally important sessions, contributing to a sense of unity and a clearer understanding of the support available through the larger ALLIES community. A more cohesive ED group has contributed to a strengthened ALLIES network.

5. *The ALLIES network*

The following section reviews the development, areas of activity and contributions of network members to ALLIES' essential mandate: finding work for skilled immigrants and changing employer attitudes. [Note: Though not strictly an accurate representation of the work in all ten parts of the country, 'IEC' is used in the remainder of this paper as a shorthand term for convening agencies now working with ALLIES.]

British Columbia

British Columbia's IEC work had its roots in a late 1990s/early 2000s undertaking called the Looking Ahead Initiative. In 2008, the provincial government approached the Vancouver Foundation – Canada's largest community foundation – with funding and an offer to partner in building an IEC. Since February 2009, IEC-BC's board has provided strategic policy direction and the Vancouver Foundation has held the provincial contract that provides the bulk of the organization's funding. IEC-BC may eventually move from the Vancouver Foundation and operate as an independent entity.

Shortly after its formation, IEC-BC undertook an environmental scan of mentoring models in BC. It concluded that an employer-focused program was optimal and is in discussion with the province about supporting the model. Says Executive Director Kelly Pollack: "Having the right players at the table is key to our work. Rather than spending time just developing programs and tools, we decided to keep our focus on policy and program implementation – systemic change – and we believe we have already been effective. We don't only look at program delivery – we use our abilities as a coordinating body and convener to effect change."

A first mentoring program was launched in January 2011 with the City of Vancouver. That experience, combined with two other soon-to-be-announced municipal mentoring projects, has helped IEC-BC develop a cities model which it hopes will influence the provincial government's BC-wide model, anticipated this year. IEC-BC's website for BC employers tapintotalent.ca was launched in November 2010 in partnership with Skills International, a job-matching database [see London, page 12].

BC's biggest success: tapintotalent.ca and the diversity and cohesion of IEC-BC's board. Members include government representatives and, over the last two years, the group has come together to champion immigrant employment.

BC's biggest challenge: Start-up always takes longer than you would like. Even though you know the issues that have to be addressed, it takes time to do current, local research, develop models, get all the right people on side and then launch.

Faster alone, farther together

Kelly Pollack believes that IEC-BC's new website represents the working group's commitment to due diligence and an evidence-based orientation. While doing a walk-through with the board and focusing on accomplishments, members realized that they had had to "go slow to go fast." Doing the research, establishing the working groups and partnering with Skills International afforded lots of opportunities to get more buy-in. The entire exercise was very much worth the effort.

Edmonton

Preliminary work to establish the Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC) was initiated by Karen Link in her role as Manager of the Edmonton Workforce Connection at the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC). Working later as a consultant and interim planning manager with EEDC, Karen continued to build interest for a multi-stakeholder convening group. Throughout 2007, she met with community stakeholders including immigrant-serving and business organizations and representatives from all three orders of government. Shortly before ERIEC was launched, Karen completed her contract and the ERIEC board hired Doug Piquette as their Executive Director.

Edmonton began its Career Mentorship program in 2009. Employers act as formal mentors, committing to providing 24 hours of input over a four-month period. The program is carefully facilitated and provides a handbook, orientation, intercultural workshops and mentor matching assistance. ERIEC makes sure job requirements are met and pre-interviews the mentees. The mentoring program currently works with 35 mentees a year. From the first pilot cohort, nine of the 10 mentees are now working in their fields. Executive Director Doug Piquette believes that it generally takes people three or four months to find full employment once the mentorship program is completed.

On the mentorship theme, ERIEC has initiated a speed-networking (*à la* speed dating) process. Speed-networking requires only a two- to three-hour commitment from industry and employees. Sessions give job seekers an opportunity to connect with human resources people in a featured sector.

In January 2011, Edmonton held a mentorship symposium that focused on the banking sector. It used mentorship as an overall model for the event, but also applied the speed-networking process. Sixty people attended, 15 of whom were employers. It was a good first effort that responded quickly to a request for qualified employees from some local financial institution partners.

Edmonton's biggest success: Getting the organization 'on the map' within the Edmonton region within two years of its inception.

Edmonton's biggest challenge: Deepening employer engagement in immigrant employment issues. This requires employers to look at their immediate and long-term

goals in order to better respond to changing employee demographics. Innovative hiring practices then allow employers to lead by example.

Calgary

Calgary Region's IEC (CRIEC) owes its creation to the determination of a group of representatives from a number of organizations that provide credentialing and employment services to skilled immigrants. Initially convened by the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women in 2007, the group turned aside early criticism that the time was not right to establish an immigrant-focused employment council.

In 2009, the Network Board of Directors, led by Dianne Fehr of the Immigrant Access Fund, identified mentoring as a tool that could help the community's employers access the skilled and highly educated employees they needed, while also helping the many skilled immigrants in the community better access those jobs.

The board hired Marie-France Varin in March 2010 as the Project Manager for CRIEC's Mentorship Collaborative. As CRIEC's sole employee, she took TRIEC's mentoring model and adapted it to the Calgary market, implementing tools and processes to get the project started. She also recruited and engaged employer partners as sources of mentors and support.

In September 2010, Marie-France was joined in the work by Bruce Randall, Executive Director. He established CRIEC as a legal entity and the initiative's six founding members (including Dianne Fehr) now serve on the Board of Directors.

With its mentorship program in place and more than 110 matches foreseen in 2011, Bruce and Marie-France are seeking new ways to make CRIEC's work more relevant to both employers and skilled immigrants. They are currently piloting a mentor-mentee match at the executive level. Says Marie-France: "This newer initiative has to be adaptable for both mentor and mentee, while maintaining the integrity of the mentoring program. Since mentors at this level often do not have time to attend a 2.5 hour orientation session, we work with them one-on-one. The benefit is that the mentor-mentee relationship at this level usually emphasizes significant networking and connection opportunities."

Calgary's biggest success: Number of mentees that have found employment in their field of expertise (50, as of the publication of this report).

Calgary's biggest challenge: 1) Ensuring we have an appropriate balance between engaged mentors and mentees. We need to work with our community partners to find solutions where possible for their clients who might not meet the criteria¹ to participate in the program as mentees. 2) Ensuring we can effectively and efficiently assist our community partners in building their internal capacity where feasible.

Creative mentoring

A planner/scheduler from Asia attended a group mentoring orientation at SNC-Lavalin in Calgary in mid-January 2011. Her mentor took it to heart that he should take a creative approach to his role. After clearing it with his manager, he invited his mentee to attend an internal training session which the mentor himself was delivering. Being treated like a professional, finding herself among colleagues and getting the insider view of a corporate session boosted her confidence enormously. Her mentor then set up an information interview at his organization, which was soon changed to a formal interview. In the space of five weeks, the mentee's career path had changed dramatically. She later secured employment that was commensurate with her education and experience.

London

The London-Middlesex Region had independently developed its own network of community supports, resources and projects to connect skilled immigrants with appropriate employment opportunities. A careful building of employer-side and employee-focused partnerships and task forces eventually resulted in the creation of the London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Task Force in January 2007 (it was renamed a Council – LMIEC – in late 2008). Its primary message was the importance of business-to-business engagement and action.

A pool of 14 engaged employers in 2008 grew to 65 in 2009 and now includes more than 160 Employer Leaders. They are actively involved in driving systemic change in their companies, through their business networks, across their industry sectors and the client base of small-to medium-sized enterprises. These 160 Employer Leaders reached more than 600 business contacts in a two-year period, which resulted in more than 120 employment opportunities tracked through LMIEC activities alone.

One of the unique programs developed in London is Skills International – an online Ontario-wide database which allows businesses to review the files of pre-screened candidates and contact them directly for interviews. The initiative is currently partnering with other provinces to expand [see British Columbia, page 9].

LMIEC is also involved in the successful delivery of London's mentorship programs. They continue to deliver 1:1 mentoring and peer-to-peer mentoring in 2011-12.

London stakeholders identify small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as companies with 100 or few employees; SME engagement remains a priority. LMIEC has already experienced significant success with engaging employers in the 200-300 employee range through its Employer Leadership Strategy.

London's biggest success: Continued growth of the Employer Leaders group.

London's biggest challenge: LMIEC has had success reaching SMEs in the 100- to 300-employee size range, but reaching employers of between 20 and 100 employees remains a challenge.

Gaining traction

Says LMIEC Project Manager Jennifer Hollis: "London has increased its efforts incrementally and this has paid off. Regional stakeholders have seen both the Council and the excitement around the work grow each year. The pool of actively engaged Employer Leaders continues to expand and the community has seen significant successes with SMEs."

One successfully engaged SME company is "rtraction," an information technology enterprise with fewer than 20 employees. It is actively championing employment opportunities for internationally-trained individuals. rtraction has participated in LMIEC events and activities, hosted Canadian work experience placements for internationally trained professionals, recruited mentors as Corporate Champions of the Mentorship for Newcomer Success program and hired skilled immigrants into employment positions as graphic designers and web programmers.

Kitchener-Waterloo

Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) has worked since 2005 to live up to its original network mandate: encouraging – but not delivering – the development of mentorship, internship and immigrant loan programs. Instead, select community partners act as delivery agents. Says Executive Director Peter McFadden: "The organization was formed in 2005 and formally launched in 2006 with a three-year mandate. Money was invested in programming rather than structures. By 2009, all agreed that WRIEN's mandate needed to be extended."

Since 2009, local partner Conestoga College has operated an internship program in which employers provide job postings and state an interest in internship. The College pre-screens three appropriate candidates, the match is made and employers pay the intern an entry-level salary over a four- to 12-month internship period. On average, participants are hired at the \$45,000 salary level; 85 percent are retained as full-time employees by the host company. The program started in 2009; some 50 internships have been completed to date and 12 are currently under way.

WRIEN has helped bring an immigrant portal program and the federal and provincial governments' local immigration partnership (LIP) initiative to the community.² The website portal puts all immigrant services in one place. It also enables people in other countries who are interested in moving to the region to access accurate information. The site includes a description of local employer expectations, allowing prospective immigrants to make the necessary preparations that ensure their employment plans are realized. WRIEN helps market the portal, and it is part of a provincial/federal network.

WRIEN works to make sure that service provider partners have good data about employer expectations and needs. It established a database around its employer visitation program and conducts focus group meetings with recent immigrant hires and employers. Lessons to employers are shared through an Employer Advisory Team. WRIEN has developed a comprehensive resource guide for immigrant employment; an abridged, employer-friendly version is available on WRIEN's website.

A key factor in WRIEN's success is its Ambassadors Team. Members act as champions, spreading the word about the network, providing advice to potential employers and helping to reframe immigrant employment as an economic, as opposed to a social service, function. WRIEN's host is the Chamber of Commerce.

Kitchener-Waterloo's biggest success: Building the cross-sectoral collaborative team that focuses on the goal of helping connect immigrant talent with employers in the region that need their skills – and to make it happen in a timely fashion.

Kitchener-Waterloo's biggest challenge: Demand for talent in the region far exceeds the available supply. Case in point: the tech sector currently needs some 2,500 tech-savvy workers.

Note: As of August 1, 2011, WRIEN has been amalgamated with the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership.

Toronto

TRIEC's success is unmatched. It is the oldest member of the ALLIES family, and continues to lead the way in mentorship matches, network connections, employer leadership initiatives and the development of a powerful group of business champions. TRIEC developed the hireimmigrants.ca website in 2005, passing it over to ALLIES in 2009. Providing immediate profile to the rest of the network, the website was the logical choice for housing ALLIES tools, marketing information and connections points. TRIEC has developed exemplary resources including the hireimmigrants.ca Roadmap and *Finding Talent*, a fictionalized interview video that presents the business case for hiring skilled immigrants.

TRIEC is still exploring new employment solutions. Many immigrant professionals do not look for immigrant settlement services in their first year in Canada, so may not be connected to programs and services that might help them. There is currently no direct interface by which to link with this group, so with support from the federal government and sponsors, TRIEC has begun working with professional immigrant networks (PINs). These organizations represent an estimated 30,000 people that TRIEC hopes to connect with its employer partners through its PIN initiative.

Says Executive Director Elizabeth McIsaac: "We are beginning to make progress on an on-line connecting hub and are including the other ALLIES cities in the work. Cross-connections among the network members will allow a more coordinated access for soon-to-arrive and recently-arrived immigrant professionals." This new effort opens up wider possibilities for immigrants to network with each other to build their own social capital. ALLIES is providing funding to help groups build their own capacity to self-organize.

To streamline access to small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), TRIEC is convening stakeholders to begin the work to develop an Employer Gateway. The hope is that it will act as a

single-entry point for employers who complain that Toronto's hundreds of immigrant service providers are continually knocking at their doors. TRIEC plans to simplify the route to employment and to enable access to community programs.

Toronto's biggest success: The Mentorship Partnership.

Toronto's biggest challenge: Reaching small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Ottawa

Housed at United Way Ottawa, Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) is an outgrowth of the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership. ITWP itself emerged from multi-partner consultations in the early 2000s that examined the challenges associated with the economic integration of skilled immigrants. Consultations and research led to a fuller understanding of local labour market issues and employer needs, the result of which was the launch of the HIO project in 2006.

Actively supporting employers in their efforts to recruit, hire and integrate skilled immigrants into the local workforce, HIO's goal is to help employers tap into the local pool of skilled immigrants. It uses a multi-pronged approach which includes an Employer Council of Champions (ECC), sector-specific Working Groups and an extensive awareness campaign that continues to promote greater understanding of the social and economic value that immigrants bring to the city.

Launched in 2007, HIO's Employer Council of Champions consists of senior executives, business associations and labour groups. Its 33 members seek to create cross-sectoral collaboration, encourage strategic investment and partnership, and initiate action. It achieves these objectives primarily through HIO's five sector-specific Working Groups – health care, information technology, finance, the public sector and biotechnology.

Working Group members comprise HR professionals from local employers, immigrant agencies, labour groups, government, educational institutions and professional associations. Each group meets monthly to review common issues and challenges, and to share information about promising practices and useful tools and resources. Networking and coaching events are held regularly. Coaching sessions provide an opportunity for immigrants and employers to meet informally. Employers offer career guidance and job search tips as well as information about their organizations and respective sectors. Networking sessions are also structured as informal opportunities for immigrants to build their contacts and become more comfortable meeting with potential employers.

Ottawa's biggest success: The level of sustained engagement HIO has achieved with employers is creating opportunities and bringing about systemic change. More than 1,000 immigrants have found skills-appropriate employment since HIO's Employer

Council of Champions was launched in May 2007. In addition, Ottawa has spearheaded the federal government's internship program, a model that can be exported across other jurisdictions.

Ottawa's biggest challenge: Engaging Ottawa's many SMEs is a continuing challenge. Size and capacity issues may not allow SMEs to follow the issue of immigrant employment. Their membership in business organizations or industry associations does not guarantee their awareness of how changing demographics will affect their operations, nor if they are aware of the tools, resources and support available to them through HIO.

Greater-than-anticipated outcomes

Building on the successful implementation of two pilot internship programs for skilled immigrants, the Federal Internship for Newcomers program (FIN) was launched in October 2010. Providing immigrants with up to nine months of paid work experience in the federal government, FIN's 2010 intake expanded the number of departments involved from two to eight; the numbers of interns rose from 29 to 70. The program is coordinated by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which continues to receive expressions of interest from additional departments and agencies (22 at last count). FIN is also being rolled out across the country.

Says HIO Executive Director Henry Akanko: "We are very pleased with how quickly the federal government has taken on the internship program. The speed at which it moved from a two-department pilot project to its current size is impressive."

Montréal

Since being hired in January 2009 as the Project Leader for *Alliés Montréal*, an initiative hosted by the *Conférence régionale des élus de Montréal* (CRÉ), Anne-Marie Marcot has been firmly business-centric in her approach. Says Anne-Marie: "Most Montréal employers see diversity as an advantage and they want the tools to manage the talents. The larger concern focuses on hiring and retaining immigrants, as well as post-hiring management. All of *Alliés Montréal's* first year was spent trying to understand and communicate that idea to other partners. This is the larger priority that business wants."

Between 2008 and 2009, CRÉ's original institutional table provided strategic direction, but a more recent goal was to put in place a strategic business council. It would be composed of small, medium and large firms from various industries and sectors and with different experiences of immigration. It was felt that business leaders would trust other business leaders to respond quickly to practical solutions as they were developed, and to arrive at longer-term strategic positions on specific issues.

Council members want this newer structure to reflect greater diversity, include SME representation and expand into more business sectors. Their exchanges are dynamic. In the first year, members met monthly, but they now come together every second month for a 90-minute

breakfast meeting. Acting on business' expectation of concrete, practical solutions, *Alliés Montréal* operates learning exchange tables six times a year where business partners learn from one another about successful and unsuccessful hiring practices and tools.

Anne-Marie worked with immigrant-serving agencies to build the tools and process for the pilot phase of a mentoring project. A new project leader was recently hired by CRÉ to manage and expand the *Mentorat Montréal* program.

Anne-Marie is pleased that newer members of the *Alliés Montréal* institutional table are now on board and acting as a support to the organization. They want to share what others are doing, learn more about business and participate in common projects. Anne-Marie herself plans to carry out more research to better understand business needs and find better solutions. Her role is to use that understanding to build pilot programs and think about durable activities and services that others can use. Where services already exist, she plays a connector role.

Montréal's biggest success: *Alliés Montréal* has built credibility with the employers now involved in its strategic business council. They act as ambassadors to other business leaders and spread the word that immigrant talents are an asset that support business growth and innovation.

Montréal's biggest challenge: To convince other employers – who do not yet see diversified talents as an opportunity and a solid business strategy – to join in *Alliés Montréal's* activities and hire new immigrants into their work forces.

New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) is an umbrella for the province's immigrant-serving organizations. The complexities of addressing Francophone cultural imperatives and the cost of providing services and materials in two languages are part of NBMC's operational reality. An added wrinkle has been the perception of duplication around employee-focused mentorship programming, with a branch of the provincial government originally suggesting that it partner with NBMC but later moving ahead with its own mentorship initiative.

NBMC will launch its pilot MentorLink program in Fall 2011. The program will operate at two NBMC member organizations in Saint John. NBMC will coordinate mentor recruitment and coaching, program design and administration, and will oversee mentor-mentee matches. BMC also coordinates the NB Employment Language Training program, a job-specific language training program, and is developing a bilingual prior learning assessment program for the province.

NBMC Managing Director Deborah Wybou continues to meet regularly with provincial government officials and the business community to build a better understanding of the organization's role and objectives. NBMC also operates an annual provincial conference for

settlement agencies that deals with management and service provider issues. Workshops are developed to meet the needs of both groups.

New Brunswick's biggest success: The increased awareness and acknowledgment of the importance of mentorship as a vital link to labour market integration by both public and private agencies.

New Brunswick's biggest challenge: Addressing the complex demographic and geographic challenges with a dual language imperative.

Halifax

The Greater Halifax Partnership (GHP) was launched in 1996. A municipally-focused public-private partnership, half of its funding comes from government, the other from business. It considers itself business-centric in philosophy, membership and approach, and works to maintain an independent, nimble and innovative character. Its work on immigration issues began in 2007.

Before joining GHP in 2003 as its Executive Vice President and Chief Economist, Fred Morley had written an economic strategy for the province and helped create Nova Scotia Business Inc. Fred specializes in putting ideas into action. He took a short leave in 2005 to write an economic growth strategy for Halifax, which he helped to set in motion at GHP. One of the strategy's five goals was the attraction and retention of people to enable the city to grow its labour force. Focusing more on business hiring needs and less on individuals' employment needs, GHP's objective was to engage business and get immigrants in front of managers. Two challenges became quickly evident: business attitudes about hiring and the ability of immigrants to connect with employers.

To address the second issue, GHP followed three streams: i) it shifted attitudes by logging 20 million media 'impressions' (TV and newspaper spots, billboards, bus stop signage, magazines); ii) made soft presentations to employers, asking how they could help overcome recruitment challenges and, as appropriate, acquaint them with the how-to's of hiring and retaining internationally-trained workers; and iii) with an innovation grant from ALLIES, developed the Connector Program.

Though Halifax residents consider themselves friendly and well meaning, it is in fact hard for people from outside the city to gain a social or professional foothold. GHP asked for 'connector' volunteers from the business community – mainly small business – to step forward and meet immigrants one-on-one for a dialogue and then refer them to three additional colleagues. Says Fred: "The immigrant's job was to meet all three and ask each of them for a further three contacts, building their social network from 1 to 9 to... Having coffee and developing a relationship is how people break in."

Since the Connector Program began in June 2009, nearly 100 connectees have found employment in their field of expertise. Business volunteers initially overwhelmed the system. Originally 50 were hoped for, but GHP has seen that number grow to 350.

Part of GHP's operations includes breaking silos and avoiding service duplication. Immigrant Settlement Integration Services (ISIS) group was already operating a basic mentorship program in Halifax. The GHP Connector and ISIS mentoring programs now feed one another.

The Greater Halifax Partnership also works to integrate business and immigration programming. GHP's business development and outreach program – "SmartBusiness" – has 300 face-to-face business meetings each year. The conversation includes a discussion of employers' readiness to hire immigrants. If they say yes, the GHP immigrant team goes into action. If immigrant hiring is not possible at this time, the employer is invited to be a Connector.

Halifax's biggest success: Engaging and involving the business community in our efforts to connect recent immigrants to our community.

Halifax's biggest challenge: The smaller-than-hoped-for number of immigrants coming to Halifax. In other words, we would love to see more people choosing Halifax. We're ready to connect them.

Note: On April 29, 2011 the Nova Scotia government announced that it aims to double the number of new immigrants that arrive in the province each year – to 7,200 by 2020 – a small step in the right direction.

Important Lessons from Halifax

- 1. New ways of meeting people are vital. Traditional networking approaches, dinners, luncheons and other static events are somewhat impersonal; at best, an immigrant might have two dinner companions interested in helping. Going for a quiet cup of coffee one-on-one and then tapping into the network of a true business connector is a far more meaningful way to meet and help a newcomer.*
- 2. Some people are better suited to create their own employment. GHP is giving the entrepreneurship route a lot of thought and will perhaps gear the Connector Program in this direction (e.g., micro-loans, training and support networks). Often people don't need program help; they need someone to tell them who's a good realtor, who's a good lawyer or law firm – the inside scoop.*

6. *The role of ALLIES*

Clearly, ALLIES members are as varied and unique as the cities from which they emerge. All Immigrant Employment Councils share the objectives of finding suitable employment for skilled immigrants, engaging business and encouraging community leadership to play a central role. ALLIES may originally have communicated the idea that participating cities should be inspired by the key factors that made TRIEC successful, but later chose a sustainable, encouraging approach.

Says Ratna Omidvar: “What’s most exciting to me is the variety and array of convening organizations that have stepped up, and the slow but gradual spread of mentoring across the country. In hindsight, we might have saved some time if we had taken a less prescriptive approach to IEC development from the outset. On the other hand, setting a high bar got people moving and thinking. Having no bar or a low bar might not have worked any better than the route we took.”

Local IEC development – IEC recommendation: Five respondents expressed the opinion that ALLIES still has more to do to further develop its understanding that IECs structure their work around local realities. Where IEC bodies exist, ALLIES should focus on building their capacities, rather than encouraging the adoption of an ALLIES-set agenda.

ALLIES has called itself both a movement and a network. Whether it continues to define itself as one or both is a challenge that echoes throughout the organization. Networks exist to serve their members. Movements are about creating social change. Getting skilled immigrants appropriately employed and changing employer attitudes require both network and movement competencies. ALLIES’ national and local leaders ideally will continue to demonstrate both administrative excellence and an unquenchable passion for the issue.

ALLIES’ work to build its membership included creating interest in action-ready communities and then fueling that action with financial and other supports. Ratna Omidvar, Naomi Alboim and TRIEC Executive Director Elizabeth McIsaac have continued to meet and speak with individuals and groups in other parts of Canada and abroad that are interested in specific aspects of ALLIES work. Lessons and ideas take shape according to local interests and capacities. All of these efforts continue to build a movement for social change regarding hiring skilled immigrants.

Keeping track of where ALLIES, TRIEC and Maytree all begin and end is an evolving process. TRIEC was created by the Maytree Foundation and provided the energy and ideas from which many IECs took inspiration. TRIEC is housed at Maytree and the synergy between the two organizations continues to fuel new initiatives. ALLIES is also a Maytree organization, thus firmly establishing Toronto as ALLIES’ centre of gravity. However, the inclusion of the Montréal-based McConnell as a partner and the hiring of Peter Paul as its Project Leader in early 2008 have helped to create a clearer identity for ALLIES itself. The launch of an ALLIES

website in 2010 and the rebalancing of the hireimmigrants.ca website to reflect the work's pan-Canadian character are helping to further define the organization's presence and operations.

Says Peter Paul: "Our intent in creating a new ALLIES website is for it to serve as a repository of information on immigrant employment. It is to be a space for our partners from cities across Canada to share ideas, success stories and strategies that can help further their work. For employers, hireimmigrants.ca is a single point of entry to a wealth of information on successfully hiring and retaining skilled immigrants. Our belief is that a good idea from an employer in Vancouver can be replicated in Edmonton or Halifax – employers learn best when they learn from each other."

ALLIES role definition – IEC recommendations:

- *One IEC recommended that ALLIES consider applying for charitable status, which would allow it to accept funds from Maytree or other foundations, and direct those funds to IECs for their programs (the delivery of which would be part of ALLIES' charitable mandate). A more formal relationship among ALLIES and IECs might bring greater bargaining power to discussions with potential national corporate sponsors.*
- *A second suggested that ALLIES could assist in spreading the word about the good work Canada is doing in the area of immigrant employment. ALLIES should further define the touchstones that make the organization unique and continue to track innovative and creative approaches undertaken elsewhere.*

IECs expressed delight in being able to tie into ALLIES' and Maytree's networks. Says one: "ALLIES gives national credibility to the work; the exposure and marketing are attractive to local employers. High-profile business leaders like [President and CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada] Gord Nixon create interest and help build local leadership capacity."

McConnell's Stephen Huddart believes that creative tensions are a necessary part of ALLIES' growth. Says Stephen: "When you build a national partnership in Canada among various levels, it's like rebuilding the railroad. I'm proud of the multisectoral nature of the local partnerships. ALLIES has also been a good example of two philanthropic organizations – Maytree and McConnell – working together. There are occasional tensions, but overall everyone keeps the end in mind. The level of literacy and understanding among partners has increased significantly. Anecdotal evidence says that the objectives are being achieved – immigrants are finding suitable employment."

7. *Employer input*

Besides building and managing relationships internally and with a growing number of participating IECs, ALLIES continues to develop ever-stronger links with private- and public-sector employers. Input for this report was gathered from two federal government representatives, one provincial government spokesperson, one municipal employee and individuals from four large (more than 500 employees) businesses. All but one were directly involved with establishing mentoring initiatives within their organizations. All were enthusiastically supportive of ALLIES' past efforts and achievements, particularly members' grasp of the larger business picture and the emphasis on immigrant employment.

Says one employer: "ALLIES is doing what makes sense from a business perspective, while also doing something that serves the greater good. Large businesses have been thinking about creating better entries for qualified immigrants for a long time. We want to do right thing, but it has to make sense, business-wise. ALLIES completely understands this viewpoint."

In the words of a federal government representative: "Immigrant employment is not a new issue, but ALLIES' approach validates the thinking that successful interventions are the fruit of complex partnerships. Its members have focused on one element of immigrant integration – labour market attachment – instead of trying to address all the issues that arise from the immigrant employee experience. This focus is what distinguishes ALLIES from other such initiatives."

Another point of praise from employers is ALLIES' and local IECs' work to provide a 'one-stop shop' for immigrant employment. Prior to ALLIES' arrival, local employers had to sort through a plethora of services that offered help with immigrant employment. The quality of these relationships varied widely – from volunteers to sophisticates – and required more time than companies could give. ALLIES operates within a non-competitive environment, which helps smooth the relationships among local business networks and immigrant organizations.

As its employer network grows alongside its operational network, ALLIES must consider how best to acknowledge the financial support of its funders and national partners.

Sponsorship – Employer recommendation: As locally-developed programs are picked up by IECs across the country, the contribution commitment may grow and it is important that credit be given where it is due.

Employers – particularly those with branches across the country – are thrilled with the expansion of ALLIES. They caution that new IECs need financial and other support in order to prove sustainable.

Growth – Employer recommendations:

- *Consider the level of demand – the location has to be hungry for this type of initiative. If you don't have the right people or champions from key respected employers or the willingness of the local government and NGO sector (especially immigrant serving organizations) – don't go there.*
- *Consider looking at a network of smaller municipalities. Provide a couple of workshops where basic information and tools are shared, including discussions of the skills for recruitment. Many centres want to acquire the knowledge, but don't have the funds.*

8. The value of ALLIES to its IECs

Prior to ALLIES' formation, Maytree and McConnell hosted a first Learning Exchange in Toronto in 2007. This was followed by exchanges in Vancouver in 2009, Halifax in 2010 and Calgary in spring 2011. Attended by more than 150 multisectoral participants from cities across the country, they received high marks from IECs for the opportunities they provided for discussion, networking and learning. The ALLIES 2009 Business Leaders summit was also singled out as an event that helped stimulate new ideas for including such leaders more deeply in the work of local IECs.

IECs are unanimous in their approval and appreciation of ALLIES' work to create opportunities for learning and sharing experiences among its Executive Director (ED) group. Connecting with like-minded people and organizations dispels the sense of isolation that individual IECs sometimes face. The contacts made and information shared are extremely beneficial. Members feel that EDs have been gently shaped into a mutually-supportive group of colleagues and that ALLIES is growing into a stronger network as a result.

All IECs consider face-to-face meetings as the core activity that has been the most helpful in building relationships and trust. One representative felt that these meetings could be held once a year or less. The other nine would like a minimum of two such events.

Learning Exchange – IEC recommendations:

- *Face-to-face ED meetings frequency should be reviewed; more, not fewer, are the majority wish.*
- *Keeping the agenda focused on a small number of issues is far more helpful than a jam-packed agenda. ALLIES has done this well.*
- *ALLIES should consider holding regional meetings, in particular, to encourage employer participation. Long cross-country trips and days away from the office are hard sells to this group.*
- *Telephone exchanges do not allow sufficient time for everyone to speak. ALLIES might consider inviting people to participate in regional- or issue-specific calls to increase interest and participation.*
- *Similarly, hosting local idea exchanges can be a great boost, particularly if local conveners can schedule an event or announcement around ALLIES visits.*
- *Encourage cross-linkages at the ED level – pairing new IECs with mature ones.*

Says Ratna: “We have invested in increasing the opportunities for EDs to work together on issues identification, strategies and approaches. Special sessions on communications, providing technical assistance, speaking about immigration in difficult economic and political times – these issues provide opportunities for us to learn together as an organization. Increasing our capacity to advance policy and advocacy work is another critically important area for development.”

As the ED work and resources help create cohesion, purpose and excitement, work must also be done to make the work continually interesting to outside partners, particularly business. After the initial enthusiasm and momentum, keeping information and ideas fresh requires its own set of best engagement practices. “Making new friends, but keeping the old” becomes the motto of IEC employer relations. Immigrant employment is a long-term goal which may not ideally suited to the interests or needs of employers looking to renew or refresh partnerships after a two- or three-year commitment.

Partner engagement – IEC recommendations:

- *Establish a suite of engagement ideas for IECs to use – e.g., annual celebration of efforts, recognition options.**
- *Suggest ways to create opportunities for new leaders to come forward.*

(* Employer representatives are appreciative of ALLIES’ work to support the *Best Employers of New Canadians* category in the “Canada’s Top 100 Employers” competition.)

ALLIES’ suite of financial supports – for start-up, partnership development and innovation activities – were identified by Calgary, Toronto and Halifax as extremely beneficial. To date, six sites have received some form of grant. One recipient praised ALLIES for sticking to its funding principles, awarding funds only for action-oriented projects.

Funding – IEC recommendations:

- *Investigate whether ALLIES could play a national fundraising role.*
- *Develop a stronger national identity to help better coordinate funding.*
- *Create a network of informed funders.*

The quality and quantity of support materials developed and shared by ALLIES members received special mention from five IECs. One, in particular, noted the ease with which materials could be adapted for local use.

Support materials – IEC recommendations:

- *ALLIES should initiate a conversation with IECs to determine the kinds of labour market demographic information they require as well as the sources of information they currently use. If Statistics Canada data is found to be a preferred source, it might be beneficial for ALLIES to purchase raw data sets from Statistics Canada and perform analyses for cities with IECs – these are very expensive for individual organizations to commission on their own. ALLIES might also be able to gain access and input into Statistics Canada’s monthly survey process in order to secure real time answers to IEC questions.*

- *Develop a ‘how-to’ reference guide for start-ups (including terms of reference, board structures).*

ALLIES provides coaching and mentoring. This support has been most often accessed during the convener start-up phase and got high marks from the two IECs that mentioned the resource. Though Naomi Alboim has received much positive feedback about information sessions she has run on the subject of intergovernmental relations, IECs have not been proactive about seeking coaching on this issue. The news for Naomi: Six IECs expressed a desire for ALLIES to advance a policy agenda, though no clear route forward was suggested.

Policy work in Québec will differ significantly from other jurisdictions where advocacy happens at the provincial level. Advocating with one level of government, however, makes it more likely that good policy innovations could be taken up.

Policy – IEC recommendations:

- *ALLIES should operate as a policy influencer at the federal level.*
- *ALLIES should become more involved in briefing provincial government representatives regarding IEC work and the benefits overall of operating ALLIES as a national organization.*
- *ALLIES should host a policy conference to advance SME issues.*
- *Because immigration is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial/territorial governments, there is a definite role for ALLIES to play at the federal level. Playing an advocacy role nationally includes carrying the message about skilled immigrants and the business case.*

(See page 32 for further discussion of policy directions suggested by employer interviewees.)

ALLIES has investigated the possibility of establishing a national communications/media campaign and IECs have made several recommendations regarding this initiative. As with the policy work, Anne-Marie Marcotte reported that Québec would be unable to join a national effort.

Communications – IEC recommendations:

- *Help get attention for ALLIES’ exemplary work and its good news stories.*
- *Devise a campaign around equitable employment.*
- *Find ways the strategy can be leveraged for small- to medium-sized communities.*
- *Use ALLIES partnerships to link its websites with others.*
- *ALLIES might consider providing more support for capturing and writing success stories (in very brief formats – social media tools would be helpful here).*

9. The value of IECs to ALLIES

To this point, ALLIES' Steering Committee has not explored a shared leadership arrangement with IEC members; it remains essentially a top-down organization. Committee members hope that continued requests for input on policy work, communications planning, funding requests and knowledge transfer will continue to be met in the prompt and thorough fashion which has become the initiative norm. They would also like to encourage more fulsome two-way information exchanges in which IECs share new ideas or trends in anticipation of their emerging as national issues. Exemplary practices that should continue include sharing new areas of work and direction from which other IECs may benefit, and making recommendations for tools that can be centrally developed.

Says Ratna Omidvar: "Despite what we all perceive as a highly successful effort, the work is still in a preliminary, fragile stage. We have much more to do to build national awareness of the issue and as we work in our various capacities, I anticipate each of the IECs demonstrating greater strength and confidence. I am extremely proud of their accomplishments so far."

Those accomplishments include Halifax's leadership in designing and sharing its Connector Program, the government-as-employer work seeded by Hire Immigrants Ottawa and London's efforts to engage small- to medium-sized enterprises. IEC-BC's systemic approach to working with its provincial government and Kitchener-Waterloo's efforts to develop an internship program with its local community college are two more initiatives that increase opportunities for involving institutions in ALLIES' work. London's Skills International website and TRIEC's hireimmigrants.ca and accompanying Roadmap make great use of technology. All of these initiatives demonstrate the vitality, strengths and leadership capacity of member IECs.

As IECs gather strength and confidence, they may decide that the ALLIES-IEC relationship itself needs rebalancing. At some future point, it may be more appropriate for IECs to formulate the support agenda they would like ALLIES to fulfill, rather than respond to an ALLIES-provided menu of options. At this time, IEC representatives are working to multiple deadlines and responding to local pressures; they may not have the time or space to reflect on the areas in which ALLIES might be of help. ALLIES should continue its practice of encouraging Executive Directors to identify local ideas and challenges as they occur.

It may be also necessary to review the work done by ALLIES and Maytree to impact immigrant hiring practices with head office partners against the local-level autonomy and capacity issues that surface as a result of those discussions. Head office decisions may create tensions at the local level where human resources capacities are more thinly stretched.

Such issues reflect the ongoing struggle to balance the duties and responsibilities of operating a network and the importance of effecting the large-scale change inherent in a movement.

10. ALLIES' impact on movement building

In terms of the overall impact on building a pan-Canadian movement around immigrant employment, IEC representatives are appreciative of the leadership ALLIES and Maytree have demonstrated. TRIEC staff have also been helpful in sharing the lessons of their work, allowing other IECs to profit by TRIEC's example and experience.

Tasked with advancing the issue of skilled immigrant employment, ALLIES and Maytree have created a national space in which the conversation can occur and, by so doing, have legitimized and validated local IEC efforts to build awareness. Most not-for-profit convening agencies do not have the capacity or mandate to investigate similar work in other parts of the country or globe, nor to push the conversation to a higher level. ALLIES can bring resources and experts to the table that members cannot access individually. Its goal of building a more prosperous, inclusive Canada provides a rallying point behind which individual personalities and agendas can line up.

A more difficult question to answer is whether ALLIES has had an impact on the overall landscape of immigrant employment in the various participating cities. The short answer would be: Not yet. IECs appreciate ALLIES' work to date in the areas of framing the issues, offering professional development, researching and documenting promising practices, and working to arrive at a set of measures for evaluating overall results and outcomes. By creating the backdrop against which hiring immigrants is seen as valuable to the Canadian economic and social landscapes, ALLIES frees IECs to build awareness of local issues.

Similarly, ALLIES could play an important role in helping move federal and provincial conversations around strategic funding. Local conveners must continuously secure local program funds, but to build a nation-wide movement for change, federal and provincial dollars must be clearly allocated and the work properly financed. As recession fears ebb, skills shortages become an employment driver. The time is right to position IECs as efficient gateways to skilled workers.

In summary, ALLIES should continue to use its convening expertise and resources to tackle large program elements which IECs have in common, giving local conveners more time to address local issues.

11. Mentoring: The employer perspective

Mentorship was unanimously endorsed by the employers contacted in the preparation of this report as an extremely effective tool for helping immigrants gain a foothold in Canadian workplaces. There is also widespread appreciation that mentoring is a two-way relationship that changes both parties, and that the principle of mentorship can be applied broadly across an organization.

Employers that have developed their own mentoring programs understand that their hiring managers must be encouraged to become self-aware and learn to question from where they draw their own cultural understanding. They are seeing the value of looking for ways to help hiring managers to be more open; some have made diversity one of their organizational core values.

Employers differ in which employee groups they involve in mentorship initiatives. Some prefer the junior and middle management echelons, believing that more recently-hired individuals will relate more naturally and empathize more closely with people struggling to get into the workplace. Others tend to encourage mentorship among middle and upper managers and executives because they can provide access to people and networks and have the necessary coaching experience.

While this input indicates an increasing appreciation for diversity and mentorship among large employers (defined as those with more than 500 employees), it is important to note that the majority of private sector Canadian employers are small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Identified as tough mentorship nuts to crack by IECs, the challenges associated with engaging SMEs is discussed further in the next section of this report.

Best practice vignette: Refreshing leadership review practices

To encourage continued career exploration, Pitney Bowes Canada offers its employees the chance to complete their own on-line Talent Profile. They self-assess on several competencies and share background and experiences from their past life, including the languages they speak and the countries in which they have worked. Profiles help identify individuals for key positions that arise in the company.

The Talent Profile is part of the company's Leadership Review Process (LRP) which enables succession management planning. The LRP allows the organization to objectively assess its leadership talent base, assess bench strength in critical positions, identify talent and diversity gaps and drive leadership development planning. The LRP helps ensure Pitney Bowes has the diverse leaders they need – today and tomorrow – to meet business growth strategies.

Pitney Bowes also maintains a replacement forecast for key positions within the organization. People who are considered to have high potential for advancement are encouraged and assisted to prepare personal development plans.

Both of these practices help ensure that a person's career trajectory does not depend on an individual manager and they allow the company to maintain its focus on developing diverse talent.

What employers are saying about mentoring

self-awareness

“Mentoring opens people’s eyes in an extraordinary way. It doesn’t require new systems to be developed and instituted – it’s really self-awareness training. Mentoring comes down to understanding where you got your cultural knowledge from – your organization, society, family and ethnic background – that is, culture in a broad sense. You need to know where you got your views, whether you have negative perceptions of new ideas and people, and that these perceptions can come into play without you knowing it. You need to continually examine the reasons you make decisions as well as your gut instincts.”

Deanna Matzanke, Director, Global Employment Strategies, Scotia Bank

leadership

“New Canadians will be a significant part of the future talent pool. Organizations need to be ready to embrace this diverse and international group of potential employees for economic advantage. Companies that are demonstrating leadership in this area and have created a culture that attracts and develops a diverse work force will have a competitive edge.”

Guilherme Dias, Director of Strategic Talent Management, Pitney Bowes Inc.

a gift that keeps on giving

“Our mentors tell us that they gain a lot from the experience of mentoring. They go on to apply what they learn in their mentoring relationships to their work within the organization – as they make hiring decisions, build effective teams, collaborate with and coach others. As an organization, mentoring increases our cross-cultural competence.”

Amy Hanen, AVP Diversity, HR Research and Employee Experience Metrics, TD Bank Financial Group

mentorship results: employment equity or social justice?

“The main message of this work is that we’re all human; we’re all in the business of solving problems. If you want to do that well and look for many solutions instead of just one, you need diversity as the basis of your creativity. Otherwise, you end up with group think, and you all get stuck. Having people from different backgrounds in the mix gives you the opportunity – if your processes are good – for people to speak up and not get stuck. Ultimately, this approach achieves social justice.”

Deanna Matzanke, Director, Global Employment Strategies, Scotia Bank

12. Future directions for ALLIES

Evaluation

ALLIES' Steering Committee spent some time contemplating the merits and implications of developmental evaluation, only recently to have agreed on the role and value of appropriate metrics. Says Stephen Huddart: "We needed to think through evaluation processes and we now see clearly that metrics around the number of people hired and the shifts in employer attitudes are the basis upon which the program rests."

Naomi Alboim agrees. "Getting a representation of how the stakeholders are working, what real differences the councils are making on the ground, the degree of labour market integration being achieved by skilled immigrants – evaluating these elements might help to quantify ALLIES' contribution to local success. The overarching question is whether local developments would have happened – or happened as successfully – without ALLIES. Getting a sense of the commonalities across the IECs and developing a collective view of the challenges and opportunities – these things have not transpired yet."

Meanwhile, one employer congratulates ALLIES for creating what he termed 'soft accountability' through the *Best Employers of New Canadians* category of the "Canada's Top 100 Employers" competition. In his words: "This program is a great way to recognize good work at a national level and stimulate interest among employers. Naming exemplary organizations has helped establish a standard of excellence, and sharing stories gets people inspired to undertake similar work."

Arriving at a standard set of reporting devices on results, outcomes and impacts will provide greater clarity for local conveners and funders. Evaluating common elements and building in ways of capturing unique circumstances will allow comparisons across ALLIES as a whole and across regions, as appropriate.

Metrics will also help set and move markers on such nebulous issues as multisectoral trust, collaboration and relationships. ALLIES will need to develop a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures as part of its evaluation effort. Whenever the data collection templates are established, IECs will help ALLIES track the numbers and gather local stories to populate the larger narrative with case studies. Senior McConnell Project Office Dana Vocisano will assist in guiding the ALLIES evaluation process.

Industry and provincial and federal government representatives all expressed that data collection is absolutely vital to ALLIES. Says one: "ALLIES needs the numbers that show its direct impacts on hires. Breaking down these numbers by employer size is also an important consideration."

A clear message from a federal government spokesperson emphasizes the value of metrics: "Data collection will be crucial for securing future federal government funding. Those

sources are drying up. ALLIES will continue to have to compete with more organizations for fewer dollars. Unless they have the data, they won't be successful.”

Policy

The following reflections from employers provide points to consider and options for action for ALLIES as it seeks to advance policy initiatives in support of immigrant employment.

The current federal government

This government is employer-friendly and employer-focused. There is room for ALLIES to promote and expand the good work it is doing, ideally using employers to send those messages to political leaders. ALLIES should capitalize on its industry connections and speak in the government's language. Getting messages to the federal government through employer champions will be an effective part of any policy strategy.

Resist biting the hand

It is easy to be critical of the federal government. Try to work positively and proactively with leaders (Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers) in key departments.

The role of an intermediary

On the other hand, employers may be leery of working with government – they assume that there will be an ‘ask’ involved. This is where an independent body with a mandate can be really helpful. IEC-BC, for example, has created a shift around how the province thinks about engagement and how to go about doing it. Since the BC government has worked closely with IEC-BC and is now actively involved in mentorship initiatives, ALLIES might consider using the province's messaging to effect such shifts in thinking in other jurisdictions.

In Alberta, the provincial and federal governments have expressed a sincere desire to work with industry, but they sometimes fail to recognize the local rules of engagement. For example, the federal government recently set up a consultation on immigration, but only one employer came to the table – the all-day workshop format wasn't suitable for business. ALLIES can further use its employer connections to ensure that employers attend when governments come to consult.

Gap analysis, coordination

IEC-BC already is doing the employment/immigration engagement piece very well. It collaborates in earnest with government, looking at gaps and opportunities for added value and improved coordination. How can ALLIES apply that learning across Canada?

Dialogue approaches: creating linkages

Members of TRIEC have established an inter-governmental roundtable in Toronto that explores issues at the municipal, provincial and federal level. Two other IECS have undertaken similar initiatives and experienced positive results. Newer ALLIES members are beginning to

establish connections with policy-focused departments and roundtables. ALLIES should continue to offer guidance in this area, as appropriate.

Outcome focus

All levels of government must be included in policy considerations; a key aspect is the need for ALLIES to develop a really good evidence base. ALLIES can document the issues, identify what is and is not working, highlight best practices and use the data to make the case for change if change is needed.

Preparing immigrants for their arrival in Canada

Pre-arrival messaging must be improved. To properly manage personal and professional expectations, people need accurate industry/sector information before they consider coming to Canada. For example, Occupational Therapists trained in India need to know they require a Masters level to practise in Alberta. Interpersonal communication (soft skills) and language skills training should also be undertaken prior to coming to Canada.

An employer from the information technology sector said that many immigrants are misinformed before and after they arrive, particularly about language skills. They are told that Level 5 English competency will suffice to secure them a job, but IT functions at Level 8 or 9. In her words: “The three main barriers to good immigrant ‘fit’ are language skills, accreditation and soft skills. High tech lives on the edge of technology – hiring bright people with skills *is* the industry’s competitive edge. Immigrants need clear guidance and accurate industry information to be successful.”

Citizenship and Immigration Canada maintains offices in China, India, the Philippines and London, and provides people chosen for immigration with a free, two-day, occupationally-based information session. More discussion among employers, ALLIES and governments will help identify and overcome the skills and linguistic barriers that are currently impeding new arrivals’ entry into the Canadian labour market. The overall message: Take a package approach to immigration preparation – it’s about thinking comprehensively, not looking for single, ‘magic bullet’ solutions.

Messaging upon arrival

Many newcomers bypass immigrant service providers when they first come to Canada, which may lengthen the time between their arrival and when they access employment-related supports. ALLIES can work to influence CIC to indicate in its arrival packages where immigrants can look for employment assistance upon arrival. It may be possible to develop employment resource centres – places where skilled immigrants can be linked to key supports that help move them quickly into jobs in their areas of expertise. Information *is* available if you have time to look for it, but if you’re new and busy, you need *easy* access to information.

The money question

One industry representative posed several questions that ALLIES could help address:

- Where does the immigration-related funding from all levels of government come from and where does it go? There appears to be no mechanism for tracking the funding flow.
- ALLIES should create more opportunities across the country to chat with a few key people who can speak for government. Ideally, they would come from all levels and work together in one room (as occurs at TRIEC's inter-governmental roundtable), prepared to act and answer the question: What can we do to make this situation better?

Retention and career development

A theme introduced by IECs – Montréal in particular – and echoed by employers is employee retention and the related issue of career development. Once immigrants have secured that first or second job, strengthening their workplace attachment and helping them on a path to greater success are the next logical steps of a mentoring experience. A representative of the BC government believes that retention and career development should be viewed as part of the immigrant hiring package, but this is not a common practice among ALLIES employers at this time. IEC-BC provides mentorship, language and career training as immigrant employee supports. Organizers in BC believe there is still plenty of room to further explore and improve the employment mentorship relationship.

Another important consideration is the conveyance of soft skills – nuanced language, working with others and registering dissent effectively. These abilities are culturally-laden and rarely taught explicitly, yet are the basis of success in the workplace. While the mentoring experience is based implicitly on the immigrant's ability to recognize and absorb these skills, workplaces can work harder to understand the subtle dynamics of what is occurring. As a federal government employer pointed out, the larger costs of acquiring soft skills are disproportionately borne by the newcomer.

Whether ALLIES' ultimate goal of achieving workplace attachment for skilled immigrants (done mainly through mentoring) can also include retention and career development elements is now up for consideration. As IEC-BC points out, there are many structures that need to be interlinked and many questions that need to be answered for this type of combined approach to succeed. For example, the question of what career retention and advancement supports are offered pre- and post-hire raises the issue of who will assume responsibility for delivering and paying for them.

Retention and career development – Employer recommendations:

- ALLIES should consider this a 'next step' area for development.
- Explore options for providing explicit soft skills instruction to newcomers and consider making these part of the mentoring experience.

Multisectoral partners

ALLIES itself is maturing in its understanding of the role and makeup of the multisectoral collaborations it has encouraged. TRIEC's work to include the immigrant association voice and inviting representation at national meetings will be a critical part of making sure that this group's messages are conveyed. Their participation will help validate some of the IECs' and ALLIES' efforts to date. Says Stephen Huddart: "ALLIES owes it to such groups and other program partners to make sure there's a place for them at the table."

Sharing successes

Capturing ALLIES' leadership success will be part of a new McConnell/Waterloo University diploma program in social innovation. Aspects of the immigrant settlement and employment issue will be examined from a social innovation perspective, including consideration of ALLIES' multisectoral approach and an understanding of the organization's complexity and scale. Notes Stephen: "ALLIES needs to do a better job of telling the story about our work – to ourselves, the voluntary sector and the Canadian public. By doing so, we would create better conditions for strengthening the program and moving some issues ahead."

Regulated professions

Stephen would also like to see ALLIES get more deeply involved in the issue of professional accreditation. The low-hanging fruit is being picked; regulated professions were intentionally left aside while ALLIES built program expertise, knowledge and partnerships. Says Stephen: "Attracting professionals to Canada, then failing to employ them appropriately is unacceptable. Perhaps ALLIES can begin investigating the accounting or nursing professions as a start to this area of work."

A last word on mentoring

Ratna believes that more work must be done to secure the growth of mentoring. She would like to see it embedded into the formal funding framework of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and to have at least 25 employers as part of ALLIES' national leadership strategy (there are currently five). Says Ratna: "It would be a real achievement to have built a healthy movement of HR practitioners across the country who are using and thinking of new strategies because immigrant employment is a demographic they have come to value."

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

ALLIES has identified SMEs as an employer group that requires further investigation and support. Stephen reflects: “ALLIES is very good at dealing with head offices of major banks, but that’s just scratching the surface. SMEs require different strategies, perhaps at the associational level at the various IEC sites.” Network members also see entrepreneurship, self-employment and small business establishment as areas for development. ALLIES’ recently-unveiled SME Project is undertaking the research and consultation tasks that will result in city-specific immigrant-hiring strategies.

The ALLIES website reports that SMEs employ 64 percent of Canada’s private sector workers (6.7 million jobs) and account for 45 percent of the national GDP (<http://alliescanada.ca/how-we-can-help/sme-projects/>).

London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council (LMIEC) and IEC-BC both have grappled with how best to approach and involve SMEs, given the large proportion of such employers in their jurisdictions (estimated at 98 and 95 percent, respectively). IEC-BC representatives agree that a slow, steady person-to-person relationship building process is the most appropriate for this employer group.

A federal government employer reflected that – though ALLIES has developed exemplary website tools and resources – it must also consider going to where the people are. “If you build it, they will come” was the old truth. With social media and networking, the newer truth is that organizations must go to where people are congregating and build relationships at those meeting points. This is particularly true for engaging SMEs, where small staffs, small or non-existent HR departments and overworked CEOs may not have the time, interest or resources to take on new initiatives.

SMEs – IEC recommendations:

- *encourage the recruitment of SME representatives to governance councils (terms of reference changes may be required).*
- *establish an SME recruitment committee.*
- *develop a database of SMEs to target and engage them.*
- *go door-to-door – establish personal relationships, build the human bridge.*
- *involve SME representatives as champions and leaders.*
- *encourage each Governance Council member to reach out to at least one SME and invite them to events and other forums.*
- *find SME meeting points – networks, associations – but keep in mind that involvement of this type of organization only creates awareness at the top level and employer engagement will only come through direct outreach efforts.*

13. When will ALLIES' work be finished?

For her part, Ratna Omidvar would like to see multisectoral councils become so healthy that ALLIES could recede from growing and supporting the IEC network. It could function instead as a supporter and encourager. If IECs became sufficiently robust, they could in turn demonstrate their support for a national body by becoming its funders.

Stephen Huddart believes that ALLIES' work will be done when professionally trained immigrants find an array of options and supports that enable them to realize their intent and objectives in coming to Canada. The wider community – government, private enterprise and community organizations – must work collaboratively to make that end possible.

Naomi Alboim sees two paths emerging for ALLIES. In her words: “A visionary organization is able to both see and set new directions. ALLIES either has to find resonance in new things – perhaps by finding out what individual IECs really want from it – or it has to discover whether IECs can function on their own. If we cannot fulfill one or both of these roles, there may not be any value in continuing ALLIES.”

Naomi concludes: “Ending ALLIES would suggest that the work is done – that all immigrants are successfully integrated – which is different than dissolving an organization because there is no ongoing interest. It would be wonderful if IECs could take it upon themselves to coordinate efforts across the country. ‘Finishing’ the work in this way would suggest that immigrant employment is flourishing and that there are new ways for IECs to interact, without the need of a convening network.”

14. Lessons to share

ALLIES continues to work to improve its operations and provide the support required by its network. It has created a space and a structure for local leaders to act. IECs have played a critical role in bringing the necessary actors to the table.

ALLIES had the good fortune of building on the successes and lessons learned by TRIEC and Vibrant Communities, the latter being another Maytree- and McConnell-supported multi-sectoral initiative. Like TRIEC, Vibrant Communities began operating in 2002. Though its focus is on poverty reduction and community revitalization, its work provided ALLIES with an example of a national structure that was adaptable to local circumstances.

From these initiatives and its own experience of operating a national network and movement for change, ALLIES has distilled some lessons its members feel would be of value to others contemplating the construction of their own ‘Canadian railroad.’

ALLIES has been deliberate in *maintaining its focus* on the issue of the successful attachment of skilled immigrants to the labour market. Though often tempted and, in some instances, pressured to deal with related immigrant groups (e.g., international students, refugees, immigrant entrepreneurs), maintaining its focus on skilled immigrants allowed the organization the opportunity to develop a significant depth of understanding of the issue. This choice also allowed ALLIES to build robust partnerships with employers whose interests were closely aligned with the ALLIES objective of having access to the most qualified person for any given job. A more diffused organizational focus that included an emphasis on social justice and equity might not have been as effective in achieving a high level of employer commitment.

It is also a key success ingredient that ALLIES brought *well-formed, actionable ideas* to the table, ensuring efficient uptake and application. Many of these were rooted in the experiences of TRIEC and a 2002 vision paper entitled *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy* [Alboim 2002].

Another valuable learning for ALLIES was the importance of *engaging real employers* – not employer associations or other industry groups. Prominent business leaders are often the best “face and voice” of an initiative. An IEC and its business partners both achieve higher levels of visibility and credibility when a committed business champion speaks out on their successes in a particular area – in this case, hiring skilled immigrants.

National organizations must *understand the local context* and get buy-in from local leadership. Doing so can make a critical difference to an initiative. Partners should be chosen on the basis of their involvement and familiarity with local labour market demands and supply gaps. Their input and participation will result in viable, effective initiatives.

ALLIES proponents appreciate that businesses tend to learn most effectively when they learn from each other. By respecting and supporting the priorities of its business partners, ALLIES has helped position employers as agents of social change.

Similarly, ALLIES members appreciate that all levels of government are important in achieving changes in attitude, not simply because they hold the levers of policy and funding, but because they are significant employers in their own right.

An abiding ALLIES value is that both immigrants and their potential employers share the need to *learn about each other and with each other*. Just as the skilled immigrant may need to improve their workplace communication, the employer may need to adapt and modernize some of the ways they access talent. While a great deal of attention has already been paid to the deficits of immigrants, ALLIES' greatest contribution is in addressing the deficits of employers and helping build their capacity.

The *right leadership* is a key ingredient to any successful initiative. It is vitally important to identify and include effective leaders, rather than making a point of securing representation from organizations or sectors. Continually seeking out and enlisting the support of leaders who are respected in their communities is essential to building and sustaining support for an idea or an issue.

In a speech at the May 2010 ALLIES Learning Exchange in Halifax, Maytree Foundation Chairman Alan Broadbent reflected that ALLIES has *exhibited a necessary boldness*. This meant acting on the issue of labour market attachment for skilled immigrants rather than slowly building consensus for the idea. In his words, "...we decided we would provide the leadership and management. If people didn't want it, we were fine to step back, but we didn't want things to founder because nobody would step forward. That tends to be the way we operate at Maytree, kind of a "build it and they will come" attitude, and if they don't come, we assume we got it wrong and we go back to the drawing board."

A willingness to take a stand, act on it and learn from its partners has brought ALLIES to its present form and function. In its desire to better equip Canada to welcome immigrants and allow them to fully use their skills and experiences, ALLIES continues to consolidate a network of support and build a movement for change.

Endnotes

1. CRIEC mentees must:
 - be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
 - be ready for employment in their area of expertise
 - be unemployed or underemployed
 - have a minimum of three years current experience (in or outside Canada) in their area of expertise
 - possess the English language skills necessary to perform in the workplace (Canadian Language Benchmark Level 7 or higher – or the equivalent)
 - have time to commit to the mentoring relationship (about 24 hours over a four-month period).
2. Ontario Local Immigration Partnerships – part of a Citizenship and Immigration Canada pilot project – now exist in many Ontario communities. Their mandates are to develop broad immigration strategies (including attraction, settlement, health, housing and labour market integration) in Ontario cities.

References

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Appendix: IEC Interview Summaries, Spring 2011

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
Vancouver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focus on policy and program changes · City- and provincially-supported mentoring, launched Jan 2011 · “Tap into Talent” website with Skills International 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Start-up funding · TRIEC support · ED meetings (the expensive face-to-face sessions could be every two or three years) · Shift noted from program focus to helping local organizations develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop a ‘how-to’ reference guide for startups (with terms of reference, board structures) · Encourage cross-linkages (e.g., establish mentoring partnerships where new IECS get paired with mature ones) · Develop a stronger national identity to help better coordinate funding; development of a network of informed funders 	<p>More time to lay out operation procedures and determine priorities</p>	<p>Working group’s commitment to due diligence and an evidence-based orientation (“go slow to go fast”)</p>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 35 mentees in a year, a few less mentors. In the first pilot cohort, of the 10 involved in the Career Mentorship program, nine are working in their fields · speed-networking (à la speed dating) process · mentorship symposium that focused on the banking sector · Three mentorship intake sessions a year and gets 30-40 applicants per intake. These are typically whittled down to seven to 12 that are job ready · Mentorship in Edmonton focuses on the quality of the mentorship relationship · Trying to create a ‘stable’ of mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tools/templates and techniques from ALLIES have been helpful, but they have to be grounded in local needs · Coaching networks and learning exchanges have been very valuable · Being able to bring board members and other stakeholders to events · Sharing with other EDs has also helped overcome the feeling that they’re alone in the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Do more to advertise Canada’s leading role in IEC work · Continue the face-to-face events · Teleconferences provide only limited opportunities for participation · Define the touchstones that make the organization unique. Its approach to date has been to look for innovation and creativity. We need to ask: Is this the best we can do? If not, how can we be better than this? 	<p>No changes to how they started: Do the work, use the recipe as a reference but don’t repeat the recipe as written.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Many people take courageous journeys to get here · Changes in local behaviour, higher levels of passion, people being won over · Skilled immigrant staff members’ zeal for making the program grow is inspiring

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mentoring program, including an executive-level pilot Plans to work with ethno-cultural organizations (places of worship, cultural community organizations) to make more mentor and mentee contacts · Issues of interest: accreditation, providing high-level information to the provincial and federal government and working at policy issues · Plans to share success stories, work on retention issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Financial support, infrastructure support, peer-to-peer learning · National resources and tools, such as document databanks, contact lists and shared experiences · Gives national credibility to the work; exposure and marketing are attractive to employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Continue with solid funding for 'sticking with the right program · Continue doing ED get together · Can ALLIES operate as a policy influencer at the federal level? · Continue to work to better understand local realities among the ED group · Consider providing more support for capturing and writing success stories (in very brief formats) 		A mentee's career path changed dramatically over a five-week period as a result of the creative input of a mentor
Saskatoon	Because Aboriginals have struggled with employment issues for many decades, any immigrant employment strategy must also take into account the needs of First Nations people in Saskatoon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Because the Saskatoon Working Group could not provide a deliverable program that fit ALLIES' model, no further funding was available. Possible lesson: work has to be done to build partnerships · With the right combination of resources and stakeholders (e.g., university concern regarding international students), the good will for the work is there. 	Nonprofits can likely be counted on as partners, but not for their resources. It might be fruitful to establish a partnership among the City, Chamber and educational institutions. This group could build up credibility with five or six key people and re-involve the corporate sector.	

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Operates Skills International, an online Ontario-wide database · Business-to-business Employer Leadership Strategy has built employer engagement and utilization of regional recruitment and retention resources including Mentorship for Newcomer Success, Access Centre for Regulated Employment, Skills International and Canadian work experience placements · The majority of Corporate Champions of London's Mentorship program are engaged by LMIEC and its Employer Leaders · Mentorship program is celebrating more than 100 matches · Employer Leaders pool continues to grow and its work has been recognized as a provincial best practice by the Welcoming Communities Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ALLIES is evolving from a franchise model to an information and support conduit · Separation of ALLIES from TRIEC has been good · Learning exchanges, informal network, ED meetings all useful · Has been actively showcasing London's work on the website and in its newsletter · Organizational tools and resources are very helpful to use and adapt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Challenges of growing the network – e.g., how to phrase, accept and decline invitations · Importance of upcoming dialogue about national media focus – and suggestions for ways to leverage that for small- to medium-size communities · Could tie into other websites through its partnerships · Developing a policy strategy would be helpful – e.g., that advances SME issues. Could ALLIES host a policy conference to get the work started? · Recommendations should reflect needs of the various sizes of communities · Consider holding networking and convening opportunities for similarly-sized cities 	<p>Other communities are developing local employer leadership strategies, which LMIEC would do if more money and time were available.</p>	<p>London has grown its efforts incrementally and this has paid off. Regional stakeholders have seen both the council and the excitement around the work grow each year. The pool of actively engaged Employer Leaders continues to grow and the community has seen significant successes with SMEs.</p>

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
Kitchener-Waterloo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Immigrant portal program and the Local Immigration Partnership project · Mentorship – delivered by the YMCA; 100 matches per year. · Employer Advisory Team · Employer Engagement (visitation, database, job listings forwarded to service providers) · Internship program · Ambassadors Team (champions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bringing people together to share information · Written resources are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ALLIES needs to work with communities to be effective – don't take a cookie cutter approach · Anything that they can do collectively to promote a more stable, strategic funding environment is very useful · Continue to develop tools that can be shared (e.g., members need a strategic community awareness program at the national level) 	If LIP had been set up sooner, WRIEN would have moved more quickly into employer engagement (process took 4 years)	Playing a key role in the development of the immigration portal and LIP
Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Recently work to connect with professional immigrant networks, with support from the federal government and sponsors (other IECs would like an on-line hub to spin this out). Purpose: get immigrants networking with each other to build their own social capital · Working to engage SME employers – hopefully by streamlining the navigation they use to tap into services and service delivery partners · Working on the Employer Gateway – a simplified employer interface · Looking to diversify TRIEC's funding base 	<p>TRIEC's first big project was the www.hireimmigrant.ca website, which has since been handed over to ALLIES. Their fluid relationship has allowed trust to develop.</p> <p>TRIEC strength: maturity of their models; ability to effectively engage the private sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More of both kinds of meetings – face-to-face and teleconferencing · Growth and dissemination of the work with the professional immigrant networks · Be the conduit that encourages larger employers to take their commitment and grow it across the country · Policy work - as convener, ALLIES should be able to hear and listen to experiences from across the country and extract lessons and policy directions 		

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
Ottawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Employer Council of Champions · Coaching and networking events · Cross-cultural competencies workshops · Employer summit – with a learning exchange · Ottawa Job Match Network · Continuing to develop resources and research and making that information available to employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Opportunities to network more easily with like-minded initiatives · ALLIES exchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Possible role for ALLIES to access the raw data sets from StatsCan and do an analysis for cities with IECs · Play an advocacy role at the national level (message: skilled immigrants and the business case) · Develop a media campaign strategy – help get attention for our good news stories · In cases where there is already a local IEC-type body, focus on building its capacity rather than adopting a set ALLIES-developed agenda 		Hire Immigrants Ottawa’s work with the federal government took a while to get on the table. As an employer, the public service sees itself as policy makers and funders, so effecting organizational change is a usually long-term undertaking. The feds surprised everyone with how quickly they took on the mentorship program.
Montréal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Most employers see diversity as an advantage, but the larger concern is about post-hiring management · Business point of view takes first place in all their activities; institutional community now fits into a secondary support role · Mentoring · Learning exchange tables · Strategic business council · Institutional table continues to evolve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Very helpful, both in terms of contacts and information · Practical tools (e.g., mentoring tools that could be adapted) were slow in coming · Network is moving and growing stronger · Face-to-face events but the 12-person teleconferences are tiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ALLIES needs to further develop its understanding that all IECs do different things in their different realities · QC can’t enter the national movement at some levels – e.g., the Mentor Match system · Communications campaign is not of interest · Regional meetings might be less time consuming and more interesting · Establish another ALLIES member in QC · Immigration is very touchy in QC; any kind of political lobbying is very difficult 		Local ED tries to show what business has found interesting and successful. When she describes mentorship, she might talk about the impact of one match – to the mentor and mentee.

<i>City</i>	<i>What works</i>	<i>Value of ALLIES</i>	<i>Further recommendations</i>	<i>Start again</i>	<i>Favourite story</i>
Fredericton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · NB continues to function as two distinct linguistic-cultural groups · NBMC's 17 members are settlement services and cultural groups · Business involvement problematic – complications with province's mentoring program · First mentorship matches made March 2011 · Operates the NB Employment · Language Training program and the prior learning assessments needed to get people job-ready 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Quality and quantity of the website materials · ED gatherings are particularly helpful · Teleconferences don't allow everyone to speak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Get more involved with briefing their provincial government contacts regarding EICs and the benefits of operating ALLIES as a national organization · A stronger, more targeted presentation could be made about ALLIES to specific government departments 	<p>Would like to have seen a stronger, more targeted presentation made about ALLIES to specific government departments</p>	
Halifax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Business-centric approach · Work followed three streams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) shifting attitudes (20 million media.) ii) presentations – members dropped into businesses to ask how they could help reach immigrant hiring goals (attraction goals) iii) Connector Program (ALLIES funded) · Talk to 300 companies face-to-face each year · Initiatives are integrated; they try to limit their own silos and avoid duplication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Learning exchanges have been very helpful at the ED level · Tying into the ALLIES and Maytree networks has been fantastic · Session featuring Gord Nixon and eight Vice-Presidents allowed Fred to attract two very serious Halifax business leaders; build capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Local organizations, needs and situations must be read and attended to. · Halifax tried to operate a TRIEC-type intergovernmental table, but the results were inconclusive · Operate learning exchanges two or three times a year · Do more local ideas exchanges. Having ALLIES come to visit is great – especially if GHP can schedule an event or announcement around it 		<p>Connectors – its simplicity, logic and intuitiveness. They talk about the individual success stories – every one of the nearly 100 immigrants placed in a job is a success and the 350 businesses that have engaged with this are all successes too</p>