

# Building Workplace Resiliency

Hiring Internationally  
Educated Professionals  
(IEPs) resource



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## BioTalent Canada

BioTalent Canada supports the people behind life-changing science. Trusted as the go-to source for labour market intelligence, BioTalent Canada guides bio-economy stakeholders with evidence-based data and industry-driven standards. BioTalent Canada is focused on igniting the industry's brainpower bridging the gap between job-ready talent and employers and ensuring the long-term agility, resiliency, and sustainability of one of Canada's most vital sectors.

For more information visit [biotalent.ca](https://biotalent.ca).

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# 1 Executive summary

Canada's bio-economy is always in need of highly skilled and specialized people to fill both new and recently vacated positions. But with the Canadian population aging, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified candidates within this country, even among non-traditional groups (such as women and Indigenous communities). Recruiting and hiring internationally educated professionals (IEPs) is therefore very important to the success and future growth of bio-economy companies.

In its 2021 labour market intelligence reports, BioTalent Canada reported that an additional 65,000 workers will be needed to fill jobs in the bio-economy between now and 2029, but the current supply of talent in Canada is only 25% of that. The shortage of qualified talent in Canada presents an urgent requirement to look at other non-traditional groups, including IEPs, to help fill these roles. This group of skilled, experienced talent can offer new perspectives and knowledge, and create opportunities for innovation and growth.

IEPs include newcomers to Canada as well as immigrants recruited into specific jobs from abroad. Many of them are highly educated. According to 2016 census data, the percentage of foreign-born Canadians who hold a master's or doctorate degree is twice that of the Canadian born population (11.3% of immigrants aged 25–64 compared with 5.0% of the Canadian-born population).<sup>1</sup>

Despite being highly qualified, IEPs often experience significant barriers and challenges when looking for work in Canada, and many find the transition to Canadian culture difficult. Barriers for IEPs may include:

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2017). [Education in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census](#).

- Cultural barriers in the interviewing process
- Lack of adequate English skills and technical language skills development
- Lack of Canadian work experience relating to their professional background
- Exclusion from bio-economy referral networks, thereby missing opportunities
- Difficulty getting foreign credentials such as education and work experienced recognized
- Lack of social and professional networks
- Level of expertise and skill requirements
- Differences in work expectations, dress, climate, living arrangements, food, relationships and support
- Feelings of isolation
- Unfamiliarity with the Canadian business environment and culture

In addition to the difficulties associated with finding employment commensurate with their education and experience, IEPs, like many newcomers to Canada, may also face additional stressful personal challenges during their first few months, including:

- Housing
- Health coverage
- Government bureaucracy or complicated paperwork
- Family issues (e.g., relocation of spouse and children, finding work for spouse, finding schools for children)
- Gender differences and relations
- Differences in leisure activities

Employers should be empathetic to and aware of these challenges, recognizing that they may affect IEPs' work performance or increase their level of stress while they are still newcomers.

This resource will provide you with some of the key considerations and benefits of hiring IEPs to fill talent shortages, a business case for hiring IEPs, and tools to integrate IEPs into your workplace. It also offers ideas to support employee engagement, retention and acculturation (that is, the process of absorbing the culture in which a person lives and works).

Employee relations involve a complex blend of corporate culture, human resources practices and individual perceptions. As a result, hiring and integrating any new employee into your workplace will introduce a fresh set of dynamics into your company status quo.

To get the most from hiring IEPs into your workforce, you need to ensure leaders and employees have the awareness required to create a welcoming and supportive environment that will nurture harmonious working relationships. These play a crucial role in business success by improving productivity, fostering effective communication, reducing employee turnover, and helping employees grow and develop. It is helpful to start by examining expected behaviours related to inclusion and diversity along with your discrimination, human rights and other relevant policies. Review your hiring and interview practices to make sure you are providing inclusive experiences for candidates from different cultural backgrounds. Make inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) training on topics such as unconscious bias and cultural sensitivity a priority for all people managers, and employees. Determine areas that require improvement and create action plans to change them.

*NOTE: The information in this resource is based on best practices and should be adapted to your own situation. Required or strongly recommended items are noted explicitly.*





## 2 Diversity and change

Cultural diversity characterizes the world and country in which we live. In Canada, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees equality without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability. Introducing differences in customs, values, behaviours and work practices into a work environment brings change, but that change can be positive and result in higher productivity and financial gains if managed correctly.

Like all IDEA initiatives, hiring IEPs should be championed by leaders through encouragement and role modelling. Communication about hiring IEPs to managers and other employees should focus on the culture “add” and the significant business gains this group of talent can bring to your organization.

Bio-economy companies competing for talent on an international scale have the opportunity to grow a diverse workforce that fosters innovation and creativity. Embracing global diversity can enable your company to:

- **Attract talent** from a pool of highly skilled, specialized and innovative individuals bringing international knowledge and perspectives
- **Improve decision making and problem solving** by relying on individuals with varied backgrounds and unique perspectives
- **Leverage employees’ international connections** to attract and recruit additional talent and create innovation partnerships
- **Promote themselves as good places to work**, contributing to an equitable and progressive sector

For companies to hire IEPs effectively, leaders must acknowledge and address both the benefits and the challenges of change. Companies led by a culture of inclusion will be more successful in attracting, integrating and leveraging the benefits of IEPs as part of their team.

The [BioSkills Recognition Program](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent) ([biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent)) helps employers gain primary access to potential new employees entering the Canadian workforce for the first time and also helps IEPs find employment. Visit [biotalent.ca/bioready-review-board/](https://biotalent.ca/bioready-review-board/) to learn more about becoming a member of the BioTalent Canada BioReady Review Board.

## 2.1 Benefits of hiring IEPs

The most obvious benefit of hiring IEPs is that it enables you to fill vacant positions with qualified and often highly experienced people eager to make a positive contribution to your organization. But there are multiple other benefits as well:

- IEPs arrive in Canada with a wealth of experience, skills and knowledge that can help address the shortage of job-ready candidates in Canada. The two top fields of work experience among IEPs prior to immigrating to Canada are bio-health and biotechnology R&D.<sup>2</sup>
- IEPs bring new, global perspectives into your company and offer innovative ways of thinking, working and doing things.
- IEPs are often voluntary immigrants with motivation to excel in their new homeland. Harnessing that motivation and energy may help “lift” your company to a new level.
- Hiring IEPs can help make your company more representative of the clients and communities it serves.
- IEPs may have previous market knowledge and contacts outside traditional areas of business that can open new opportunities to grow your business.
- IEPs can improve the overall health of your company by sharing the load and reducing stress and overwork on other staff.
- IEPs are the only significantly growing skilled workforce demographic in Canada, making them a readily available source of skilled labour.
- Many IEPs are already in Canada and ready to work — you just need to reach them.
- Because of their previous experience, IEPs can often get up to speed and job-ready much faster than new graduates and other new hires.

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<sup>2</sup> BioTalent Canada (2017). [Paving the Way: Facilitating Career Paths for Newcomers in the Canadian Bio-economy](#).

## 2.2 Risks of not hiring IEPs

Given the current and forecast labour shortages in Canada, hiring IEPs is necessary to fill job openings and keep your company growing. The risks of not hiring IEPs include:

- **Chronic staff shortages**, leading to increased workload and stress on existing staff, which may result in less innovation, reduced output, lower work quality and higher staff turnover
- **Lack of business growth** and inability to keep up with workplace trends in Canada
- **Lower competitiveness** in the marketplace, especially against companies that do hire IEPs
- **Revenue loss if capital investments** are linked to deliverable deadlines that can't be met due to staffing shortages

## 2.3 Barriers to hiring IEPs

Many of the barriers employers experience when seeking to hire IEPs are the result of biases (conscious and unconscious) and a lack of cultural awareness about professionals coming from other countries. A common perception is that integrating IEPs into an organization requires a high level of effort. Training in unconscious bias and cultural awareness can help mitigate the biases leading to these perceptions. See BioTalent Canada's *Building Workplace Resiliency: Adopting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)* resource at [biotalent.ca/resiliency](https://biotalent.ca/resiliency) to understand the types of bias that may be affecting your company's ability to hire IEPs. Below are some common perceptions that may be potential barriers to recruiting IEPs:

- Canadian employers may be hesitant to hire people with only foreign experience because they do not know if that experience provides the requisite skills to work in Canada and may not want to spend time bringing an IEP up to speed. BioTalent Canada's [BioSkills Recognition Program](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent) ([biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent)) can help employers understand how foreign credentials and qualifications match up with Canadian requirements and allow them to feel confident that the IEPs they hire are job-ready.
- Traditional recruitment strategies and interviewing techniques may not work, so strategies may need to be modified to effectively reach and hire IEPs.
- Affinity bias and attribution bias may lead to a belief that language and communication differences will negatively affect performance and professional

relationships between IEPs and Canadian-born employees. Supervisors must realize that each person has different needs and skills and that there will be a period of time when the IEP will need to adjust and work on these attributes — just as others would. BioTalent Canada's [Communications Fundamentals course](#) can ensure IEPs and others have the foundational communication skills they need to succeed.

- Some employers fear that IEPs are more likely to make critical mistakes that could lead to lost income, production shutdowns or failure to comply with regulatory requirements. Sometimes, mistakes may be as simple as errors in language or perceived meaning — but you should not assume that only IEPs can put companies at risk in this manner. Robust communications management and skills development through programs such as BioTalent Canada's [Essential Skills Fundamentals](#) ([biotalent.ca/essential](http://biotalent.ca/essential)) and [Technical Skills Fundamentals](#) ([biotalent.ca/technical](http://biotalent.ca/technical)) can minimize these risks.
- Supervisors may expect IEPs to understand the way things are done without additional explanation. BioTalent Canada's [Essential Skills Fundamentals](#) ([biotalent.ca/essential](http://biotalent.ca/essential)) training program can help ensure everyone starts with the same foundational knowledge.
- Benefit expectations differ between cultures and countries. For example, in some countries, entry-level positions may receive barely livable allowances, while senior staff members receive salaries almost equivalent to Canadian compensation, as well as benefits such as housing or a car. The Canadian bio-economy does not generally offer such benefits, but companies may choose to make exceptions for senior-level IEPs. Hiring managers may need to consider this when negotiating compensation.
- There may be a perception that cultural differences felt by IEPs may make them slow to start up and make their productivity low.
- Integrating an IEP may be challenging if existing employees feel the new hire doesn't "fit" the culture of their organization because of cultural differences such as attire, personal habits, food, gender relations, communication, socialization and interaction expectations (including religion, leisure activities, casual conversation, etc.). See Table 1 for more information on cultural fit.
- IEPs may have limited experience or knowledge of North American products, popular literature, terminology and other foundational information. As a result, IEPs may sometimes be isolated or even reprimanded for things beyond their knowledge.

Managing these challenges requires both organization and planning. Establishing what culture fit is and is not in your organization can help mitigate negative perceptions about IEPs and build more effective relationships between them and other employees.

Cultural fit is...	Cultural fit is not...
A shared enthusiasm about a company's mission or purpose	A common educational, career, racial or ethnic background
Being open to finding a common approach to working together	A sense of comfort or familiarity with co-workers
A common level of formality or informality	A shared enjoyment of things outside work such as sports or music
A shared focus on teamwork, co-operation or competitiveness	Dressing and sounding like the people around you

These and other barriers can make it difficult for IEPs to find the right work. Because their qualifications may not be recognized in Canada, many IEPs deliberately seek out roles at lower levels than those for which they are trained or educated. Yet many are rejected for these jobs as well because they are over-qualified. As a result, IEPs in Canada often remove qualifications from their resumes to improve their chances of being hired. BioTalent Canada's [BioSkills Recognition Program](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent) (biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent) can help solve this issue by enabling employers to match foreign experience and credentials with the requirements of their job openings.



### 3 Deciding to hire an IEP

Hiring IEPs requires planning; reviewing policies, costs and potential returns; and managing change.<sup>3</sup>

Senior leaders should clearly articulate the benefits of hiring IEPs to hiring managers and employees, and carefully outline the behaviours expected of all employees when it comes to welcoming new team members. Proactively providing team members with IDEA training on topics such as unconscious bias and cultural awareness, and communicating consistently with all hiring managers and employees, can help mitigate some of the misperceptions and stereotypes about IEPs.

What will your company actually face when looking to hire IEPs? You may need to make changes to your procedures and policies affecting:

- Searching for candidates and recruiting
- Interviewing techniques
- Experience and reference checking
- Skills development, education and verification
- Cultural diversity
- Communication and dispute settlement

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<sup>3</sup> This resource focuses primarily on hiring IEPs; however, new immigrants to Canada can also be a good source of talent. The process for recruiting and hiring each may be slightly different.

Ideally, you'll have a company plan and strategy in place before you start recruiting IEPs. This section will guide you through the planning stages. See the appendix for an organizational readiness assessment that can help you identify the areas you might need to work on.

See Appendix B for some of the many tools BioTalent Canada offers to help you find, recruit, hire and train IEPs.

## 3.1 The business case for hiring IEPs

Numerous studies have shown that a diverse workforce leads to more innovation, higher employee satisfaction and a positive bottom line, which means the business case for hiring IEPs is strong. According to studies conducted by independent research groups, because of Canada's aging population, IEPs will also be a growing labour force in Canada with purchasing power worth billions of dollars.

That means that, in most cases, hiring IEPs makes good business sense. However, every business has its own unique circumstances and requirements, so you may want to develop a business case specific to your own organization to ensure hiring IEPs is the right decision for you. This section presents some of the elements you may want to consider while you're building your business case.

### 3.1.1 Team building and succession planning

Determining whether someone meets your educational and experience requirements is only part of the hiring task. The employees you select should also help build your team and support and grow your business. Succession planning for the future in terms of team building and desired skill sets allows for smoother transitions when employees leave. If you decide to hire IEPs, your HR leads can help by marketing the changes to management and other employees.

### 3.1.2 Benefits and risks analysis

As part of developing your business case for hiring IEPs, you may want to conduct a benefits and risk analysis to help you weigh the costs of that decision. Your list of potential benefits and risks should account for factors including:

- Change to your current organizational culture (real or perceived)
- The need for more IDEA skills development for all employees
- Contingency plans regarding actions to take if things do not work out as hoped

- Effort required to locate and attract suitable, experienced IEP candidates (local, global, advertising in other languages, etc.)
- Effort required to validate references
- Effort required to help IEPs set goals and progress along their career paths

### 3.1.3 Case studies

The following short case studies are based on true stories and illustrate how two Canadian companies took steps to hire and develop IEPs. Names and circumstances have been modified.

#### ***Case study 1: Small company***

Alpha Labs is a locally managed laboratory that employs receptionists, technicians, laboratory workers/assistants, imaging specialists, drivers and health care professionals to perform routine laboratory tasks and document the findings of their analyses. The laboratory was persistently short of staff, which was affecting its business viability.

As with many employers, long-time staff members were approaching or reaching retirement age, and not enough college and university graduates were applying for the open positions. Alpha's biggest HR challenge was replacing staff when they took vacation or sick leave. To stay open and continue to provide high-quality service, the laboratory had to start hiring from outside its regular labour pool.

After consulting with local HR consultants and employment services, Alpha decided to seek qualified staff through traditional employment agencies, through word-of-mouth, and by advertising in local newspapers and immigrant serving agencies (ISAs). Within six months all empty positions (both full- and part-time) were filled with qualified staff. Today the company still employs fewer than 20 employees but its globally diverse staff includes IEPs from Poland, China, the former Yugoslavia, Central America and Colombia.

#### ***Case study 2: Large company***

Acme Bio-Pharmaceutical Company is one of the world's foremost firms, with several thousand employees in almost 100 locations. The company has a full-service HR department, company-wide IDEA policies and procedures, a comprehensive skills development plan (including diversity training) and a long-term succession plan. Acme seeks long-term sustainability and boasts a low employee turnover rate. To remain competitive, the company needs to continue to attract the best and brightest employees.

Ewa was a chemical engineer with a university degree and several years of work experience in Eastern Europe before coming to Canada in 2000, where she hoped to continue her engineering practice. During her first year in Canada, a local multicultural agency helped her apply for a job as a chemical engineer at Acme. Although Ewa's qualifications and experience warranted a senior role, her university degree was not recognized in Canada. Nevertheless, Acme hired her on as a junior engineer.

Ewa's initial project tasks included client contacts and meetings, which she found difficult because the language barrier made it challenging to communicate effectively with Acme's clients. After several months, she asked for less client contact and was demoted to laboratory work. However, Acme believed that the language barriers could be eliminated over time and continued to employ Ewa while she worked to improve her language skills.

After several years, Ewa was able to work on her professional engineer's licence and write the tests. She then applied for and secured a job in an engineering department within Acme more suited to her long-term experience. Gradually, she gained confidence and the confidence of those around her, and ultimately went on to become a successful project engineer in her field.

These examples are intended to demonstrate the positive results of hiring IEPs for both small and large companies, and the development of viable careers for IEPs over time. Both companies have embraced diversity and use HR planning and recruitment to their advantage.



## 4 Recruitment and hiring

Attracting the right candidates for a job is always a challenge. Attracting candidates from abroad can be even more difficult unless you have a strategic plan or experienced staff. When searching, consider IEPs already living in Canada, who are often underemployed. Additional considerations for your recruitment strategy could include:

- Using domestic and overseas advertisements
- Using local ethnic and community news outlets
- Placing advertisements on Canadian cultural websites or job boards targeting newcomers
- Contacting associations and organizations that serve newcomers
- Partnering with ISAs
- Taking advantage of government programs such as:
  - Federal Foreign Worker Program
  - Provincial/territorial immigrant nominee programs
  - Post-graduation work permits for international students
  - Hire Immigrants
  - Other organizations, such as BioTalent Canada
- Using BioTalent Canada's [BioSkills Recognition Program](https://biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent) (biotalent.ca/bioreadytalent)
- Using employee referral networks that include skilled IEPs

The following sections provide additional tips on specific parts of the recruitment process.

## 4.1 Checking references

References in other countries may be hesitant to answer questions. Be prepared to spend time creating a dialogue to ensure the purpose of the call is very clear. The following tips may be useful if a candidate has only references outside of Canada and the United States:

- Ask the candidate if they have any letters of reference from employers that you can review.
- Let the candidate know you would like to contact some of their references and ask them if they could contact them in advance to let them know you will be reaching out for a reference check.
- Consider translation or interpretation services where needed to improve communication.

## 4.2 Hiring

Once you have successfully recruited an IEP, checked their references and agreed to hire them, they may need to relocate if they live in Canada. IEPs living abroad (and their families, if applicable) must enter Canada through the channels of Canadian immigration. Your organization must make a permanent job offer (called "arranged employment") or agree to hire temporary workers using the official process. Be sure to account for the time it takes for applications to be processed and for all other arrangements to be made.

### Recruitment and immigration

One option for hiring IEPs is to sponsor an immigrant. When a company sponsors an immigrant, the IEP can apply to enter Canada with a confirmed job offer, which carries the greatest success for immigration.

For full information on the immigration process, see the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website](#). You can also contact the office of your Member of Parliament, whose staff can answer or direct questions about immigration to the correct government department. They can provide information about local immigrant-serving agencies (ISAs) that can help employers connect to talent.

## 4.3 Provincial initiatives

Although immigration is a federal responsibility, provincial programs exist to help immigrants as well. In the past, most immigrants settled in large urban centres in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. Now, many are going to smaller communities where they are needed.

Independent reports indicate a growing trend of provinces offering incentives and programs to attract immigrants to settle in their locations. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta have been especially successful in attracting newcomers who may have otherwise gone to Ontario. Consult your province or territory's ministry of immigration to find out what programs are currently available.

Some smaller regions also have their own initiatives, such as the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, the Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council, the Vancouver Foundation, Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies (Toronto) and the Maytree Foundation (Toronto). These agencies may be able to put your organization in touch with programs or even funding to help with the immigration of IEPs.

## 4.4 Grants and wage subsidies

A number of grants and wage subsidy programs exist to help businesses hire apprentices or interns, train on-the-job staff, and employ researchers, including IEPs. They are offered by a wide range of sources, from private interests to national non-profit associations such as BioTalent Canada.



## 5 Integrating IEPs into the workplace

Organizations that value diversity and foster an inclusive culture will generally be more successful in integrating IEPs into the workplace. The attitude of managers and supervisors toward IEPs plays a significant role, so they should exhibit inclusive leadership behaviours and role model these behaviours to their teams.

As with all employees, maintaining positive attitudes and an environment that supports growth and advancement for IEPs is important and affects integration. Social interaction is natural in any work environment and is a critical element of integration. IEPs will do best in an inclusive and equitable environment where their colleagues and supervisors accept their unique differences while helping them navigate Canadian social norms and behaviours. Expectations about performance and productivity, and opportunities for advancement must be clearly explained so IEPs (and other new employees) can set achievable goals. Probationary periods should be set fairly and equitably for all new employees to the organization.

### 5.1 Integration tools

Orientation and onboarding programs are some of the first steps to integration of new employees, providing information about the company and their role. As part of this process, supervisors and mentors should offer guidance and answer questions. Checking in with new employees after 30 days, 60 days, 6 months and 12 months, is also helpful, as it enables managers to identify and address challenges new employees may be having.

Written communication, including information websites, should be planned and designed for all employees, regardless of background. All communication should be simple but complete to ensure messages are conveyed effectively to everyone.

Expectations for work and job performance must be clearly explained to IEPs. Many biotechnology organizations are small to medium-sized, and individuals within these companies may be expected to perform tasks outside their usual job descriptions because there are not enough employees. IEPs may not be used to such requirements and may find the transition to Canadian expectations difficult. The key is open communication and balanced feedback.

These measures are generally viewed as adequate for non-IEP workers and, in most cases, they will be sufficient for IEPs as well; however, some IEPs may also need additional language skills development. There are many courses, classes and other options available through high schools, community colleges, universities, not-for-profit organizations and local multicultural agencies.

BioTalent Canada's [Essential Skills Fundamentals courses](https://biotalent.ca/essential) (biotalent.ca/essential) can support the onboarding of new employees — especially IEPs — by helping them develop key skills such as writing, document use, collaboration and problem-solving.

## 5.2 Skills development

Skills development is another key factor in IEP integration. Long-term staff and new hires all need skills development to support their integration into the organization.

Trainers involved in onboarding and orientation must recognize and account for differences in comprehension levels and levels of assistance requirements. Additional support, such as language skills development and mentoring programs, will help IEPs integrate faster. Your organization may also wish to consider partnering with multicultural centres or individual community contacts for cultural orientation training by members of an IEPs own national community.

## 5.3 Team building

In a diverse workforce, team building is essential to effectively integrate all new employees, including IEPs. Team building starts with the attitudes and philosophies of long-term employees and management, so start by examining your organization's policies, mission statements, values and principles to ensure an underlying fairness for all employees. Evaluate how competency reviews and your company's incentive programs are communicated to employees and whether there is enough emphasis on the importance of all team stakeholders.

When planning team-building events, be sure to consider the needs of all members of your team. For example, if you plan to use experiential skills development methods based on practical activities and games, make sure you deliver them in a way that will be understood by everyone participating. Additional explanations and instructions can help.

Mentoring programs that pair IEPs with long-term employees (who could be IEPs themselves) is a great way to help IEPs navigate the expected norms and behaviours in their new workplace and better understand company values, mission and work processes. These programs may look different from organization to organization, depending on the line of work and the goal of the mentoring program (e.g., attaining proficiency in work tasks, achieving certification, writing reports, social mentoring). When engaging IEPs to mentor newer international employees, make certain the mentoring IEP is sufficiently comfortable and experienced in your company's organizational culture.

Make sure supervisors are fully on board with team-building efforts and activities so they can support IEPs where needed. Ensure all communication methods throughout the company are open and positive. Help IEPs understand what is required of them and make sure they know where they can turn for help if they don't understand something or encounter complex issues.

## 5.4 Employee engagement and retention

Employee retention and engagement is critical for companies in the bio-economy, and research has found that a sense of inclusion is strongly linked to employee engagement and retention.<sup>4</sup> Employees feel most included in organizations that prioritize inclusive leadership, are committed to meritocracy initiatives that support equitable and fair performance evaluations, and offer opportunity for advancement.

Regular communication across all levels of a company can foster greater employee satisfaction and help retain employees. Company or group-wide communications (e.g., email, newsletters, posters, memos, websites), as well as verbal and other forms of communication, should be crafted for general understanding and carefully worded to convey exactly what is intended, so messages are not misinterpreted. For example, use plain language to communicate your organization's benefits programs so all employees understand. This is especially important because benefits can vary considerably between companies. Offering benefit programs that meet the needs of a diverse group of employees and ensuring those benefits are clear provides incentives to join and stay with your organization.

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<sup>4</sup> McKinsey & Company (2020). [Understanding organization barriers to a more inclusive workplace.](#)

Opportunities for professional development also support employee retention and engagement. IEPs are often highly educated and may have had opportunities for professional development in their country of origin. Ensuring they have development opportunities in their new workplace and fostering an environment of open communication will keep employees engaged, help them integrate, and ensure they feel satisfied and fulfilled in their career development.

See BioTalent Canada's *Building Workplace Resiliency: Adopting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)* resource at [biotalent.ca/resiliency](https://biotalent.ca/resiliency) for more guidance.



# Appendix A: Organizational readiness checklist

If you're thinking about recruiting IEPs, start by answering the following questions as truthfully as possible to assess your hiring readiness

## Organizational practice and policy foundations

- ☐ Does your mission statement include explicit reference to serving or marketing to diverse communities, and to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce?
- ☐ Does your organization include inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) as part of its strategy, vision and values?
- ☐ Does your organization have a policy on harassment and discrimination?
  - If not, you can use the information and samples in BioTalent Canada's *Building Workplace Resiliency: Understanding Canadian Human Rights* resource at [biotalent.ca/resiliency](https://biotalent.ca/resiliency).
- ☐ Is your organization willing to accommodate special cultural or religious needs?
  - If not, it could be easier than you think! See BioTalent Canada's *Building Workplace Resiliency: Adopting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)* resource at [biotalent.ca/resiliency](https://biotalent.ca/resiliency).
- ☐ Have you considered the multiple different ways a job can be done while still conforming to quality assurance and regulatory guidelines?
- ☐ Does your organization have a policy on professional development that might include overseas travel?
  - If not, would you consider it as viable?

If this area is not well developed, take steps to strengthen your policies, especially your diversity and anti-harassment statements. Discuss with your management team simple steps to make your organization more flexible and welcoming to newcomers.

## Training and communication

- ☐ Does your organization provide IDEA training that includes cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity to existing employees and management?
  - If not, ask a manager or supervisor to lead some essential staff training.
- ☐ Are supervisors, project managers and HR staff aware of common areas of cultural difference such as eye contact, greeting etiquette, use of silence, communication style, etc.? Are they aware of similarities?

- ❑ Does your organization have a mentoring, coaching or “buddy system” in place for members of various employment equity groups?
- ❑ Does your organization consider the needs of members of employment equity groups when designing communication material (e.g., large fonts, level of language, Braille translation)?
  - If not, consider revising communication materials with this audience in mind.
- ❑ Is new employee training inclusive and accessible to all diverse groups, including IEPs, recent immigrants, visible minorities, youth, Indigenous peoples, seniors or mature workers, and people with disabilities?
  - If not, consider taking action to remove biases.
- ❑ Does your organization actively seek suggestions for improvement from members of the employment equity groups present in your organization? Does your organization act on these recommendations?

If this area is not well developed, there are many resources, IDEA consultants and a wide variety of online virtual training on IDEA in the workplace, many of which are not expensive or overly time-consuming.

### **Work practice**

- ❑ Do you ask all new hires — including IEPs — whether they have needs that require special support or accommodation during work?
  - If not, consider doing so to create an environment of inclusion for all staff.
- ❑ Are supervisors and project managers able to adapt their communication style in dialogue with newcomers? Are your supervisors and project managers willing to use simpler language or rephrase questions?
- ❑ Do supervisors and project managers avoid using terms, metaphors and jargon when introducing project work that may be specific and meaningful only to members of Canadian culture or that organization?
  - If not, help them improve by arranging to provide cultural awareness training (which could take place on-site or virtually).
- ❑ Is your organization able to consider and accommodate slower initial productivity from new staff during a period of adjustment?
- ❑ Are supervisors and project managers able to accommodate different ideas about work procedures, workflow, equipment and other procedures, as long as they conform to regulatory and quality control requirements?
- ❑ Do you make sure supervisors and project managers evaluate and review employees based on objective information and don't jump to conclusions about someone's ability to do

a job based on race, culture, gender, age, disability or physical appearance (e.g., by providing them with sensitivity training, ensuring notes in evaluations address objective information rather than “gut feeling”)?

- ☐ Do supervisors and project managers recognize and compensate for their own biases and personal preferences?

If this area needs improvement, review your new employee training processes and make changes to communicate the information necessary the next time someone is hired. Speak with supervisors and managers about effective communication styles and work expectations, either one-on-one or at your next management team meeting.

You can use the checklist above as a guide to help you create a work environment that can successfully attract, retain and engage IEPs. If you identify any gaps or barriers to inclusion for IEPs, consider the suggestions provided and take steps to develop areas of weakness.

## Appendix B: BioTalent Canada tools and resources

BioTalent Canada offers a range of programs, courses, tools and other resources to help bio-economy companies access the skilled talent they need to grow, thrive and compete on the world stage. Some of the key offerings that can help you recruit, hire and train IEPs include:

- [The PetriDish™](#): a national job board focused exclusively on bio-economy job opportunities.
- [BioSkills Match™](#) ([biotalent.ca/BioSkillsMatch](http://biotalent.ca/BioSkillsMatch)): an online database of candidates certified BioReady through our BioSkills Recognition program.
- [National Occupational Standards](#) ([biotalent.ca/NOS](http://biotalent.ca/NOS)): Standardized national profiles of the skills, education and credentials required to perform specific roles within the bio-economy.
- [BioSkills Recognition Program](#) ([biotalent.ca/BioReadyTalent](http://biotalent.ca/BioReadyTalent)): A program based on our industry-validated skills profiles to identify individuals who have proven their skills, competencies and preparedness for specific roles and their readiness to work. By participating in BioReady Review Boards, employers get a first look at prospective employment candidates.
- [Essential Skills Fundamentals courses](#) ([biotalent.ca/essential](http://biotalent.ca/essential)): A set of self-paced, online courses that support the development of key fundamental skills needed to succeed in the bio-economy. The program includes the following courses:
  - Bio-economy Fundamentals
  - Reading Fundamentals
  - Writing Fundamentals
  - Numeracy Fundamentals
  - Document Use Fundamentals
  - Communication Fundamentals
  - Collaboration Fundamentals
  - Problem-solving Fundamentals

- [Technical Skills Fundamentals courses](https://biotalent.ca/technical) (biotalent.ca/technical): A set of self-paced, online courses that enable learners to develop some of the critical technical skills required to succeed in the bio-economy. The program includes the following courses:
  - Scientific Report Writing Fundamentals
  - GLP Fundamentals
  - GMP Fundamentals
  - QA/QC Fundamentals
  - GCP Fundamentals

Funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.



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