Unlock Canada's Talent:

Advancing Equitable Employment for Internationally Trained Professionals

Policy Advocacy Campaign Toolkit



Prepared by

ActionDignity

Funded by:

fcss family & community support services

United Way Calgary and Area

Calgary Foundation For Community, Forever

WES Mariam Assefa Fund



Acknowledgement

This toolkit was developed through community engagement, policy dialogue, lived experience, and systems-change advocacy led by ActionDignity and community partners. The content reflects the voices, experiences, and recommendations shared by newcomers, internationally trained professionals, immigrant-serving organizations, ethnocultural community organizations, policy stakeholders, and advocacy leaders working toward equitable employment in Alberta and across Canada.

The toolkit also draws upon evidence and recommendations from the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee (FCAC) Final Report, ActionDignity's Community-based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR), engagement and campaign strategies, community-based policy dialogues, and public policy research related to equitable labour market participation.

Access the Digital Copy of the Toolkit

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The scale with which newcomers are being de-skilled & exploited for free/cheap labor in the guise of Canadian Experience is simply beyond comprehension.

At the end, it helps nobody — neither the economy nor all the Canadians.

-A Community Member

Introduction & Purpose

Background

Canada and Alberta continue to rely heavily on immigration to address labour shortages and support economic growth, demographic changes, and workforce sustainability. Every year, thousands of internationally trained professionals arrive in Canada with advanced education, years of professional experience, technical expertise, and leadership capacity.

Despite these qualifications, many newcomers and internationally trained professionals remain unemployed or underemployed because of systemic barriers embedded within hiring systems, credential recognition processes, and labour market practices.



Community policy dialogues facilitated by ActionDignity identified two major systemic barriers consistently affecting newcomer employment outcomes:

1. **Non-recognition of foreign credentials**
2. **Unnecessary Canadian work experience requirements in hiring processes**

These barriers prevent highly skilled individuals from accessing meaningful employment and equitable economic participation.

As a response, community leaders, immigrant-serving organizations, and other advocates collaborated on community-led policy advocacy work to strengthen collective action.

Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit is created to provide advocates and our campaign supporters with a deeper understanding of the systemic issues facing the internationally trained professionals (ITPs) and their impact on Canadian society, economically and socially.

We aim to help advocates grow public support for the recognition of international credentials and the removal of Canadian work experience as a job requirement at both policy and practice levels. It is a key resource for our "Unlock Canada's Talent" campaign to equip stakeholders with practical advocacy tools and resources to build a support coalition and strengthen policy advocacy efforts.

What is Equitable Employment?

Definition

Equitable employment means creating fair and inclusive employment systems where all individuals have equal access to opportunities regardless of:

- Race
- Origin
- Ethnicity
- Immigration status
- Religion
- Colour
- Gender, gender expression, gender identity
- Disability
- Language
- Accent
- Country of education
- Cultural background
- Social income
- Family status

Equitable employment recognizes that some groups face systemic barriers that prevent equal participation in the labour market. Equity-focused hiring practices work to remove these barriers and create fair access to meaningful employment.



Legal Foundations in Canada

Equitable employment is supported by several legal and policy frameworks, including:

Canadian Human Rights Act

(R.S.C. 1985, c. H-6): Sections 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14. Protects individuals from discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, disability, and other protected grounds.

Full Text

Employment Equity Act

(S.C. 1995, c. 44 Assented to 1995-12-15)
Promotes workplace representation and equal opportunity for historically marginalized groups.

Full Text

Fair Registration Practices Act (Alberta)

(Aberta government page: General duty section)
Supports fairness and transparency in credential recognition processes.

Full Text

Alberta Human Rights Act

(R.S.A. 2000, c. A-25.5): Sections 7, 8, and 9
Prohibits discrimination in employment and hiring practices.

Full Text

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Guarantees equality rights and protection from discrimination.

Full Text

Government Guide

What does “Equitable Employment for ITPs” mean?

Equitable employment for Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) means creating fair, inclusive, and barrier-free employment systems that recognize and value the education, skills, credentials, and professional experience gained outside Canada.

It ensures that individuals are assessed based on their qualifications, competencies, and ability to perform a job rather than factors such as country of education, place of origin, accent, immigration status, or lack of Canadian work experience.

Equitable employment seeks to remove systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that limit access to hiring, credential recognition, career advancement, and workplace inclusion.

Grounded in principles of fairness, anti-racism, accessibility, and equal opportunity, it enables internationally trained professionals to fully contribute their expertise to Alberta's workforce while supporting their economic inclusion, professional integration, and long-term career success.

Who is Impacted?

> ***"My resume tells my story, but they only read the part that's Canadian." - A Community Member***



Systemic barriers in employment for internationally trained professionals affect far more than individuals seeking work in their field. These barriers create ripple effects that extend across families, employers, the economy, and society as a whole.

Impact of Systemic Inequality in Employment for ITPs

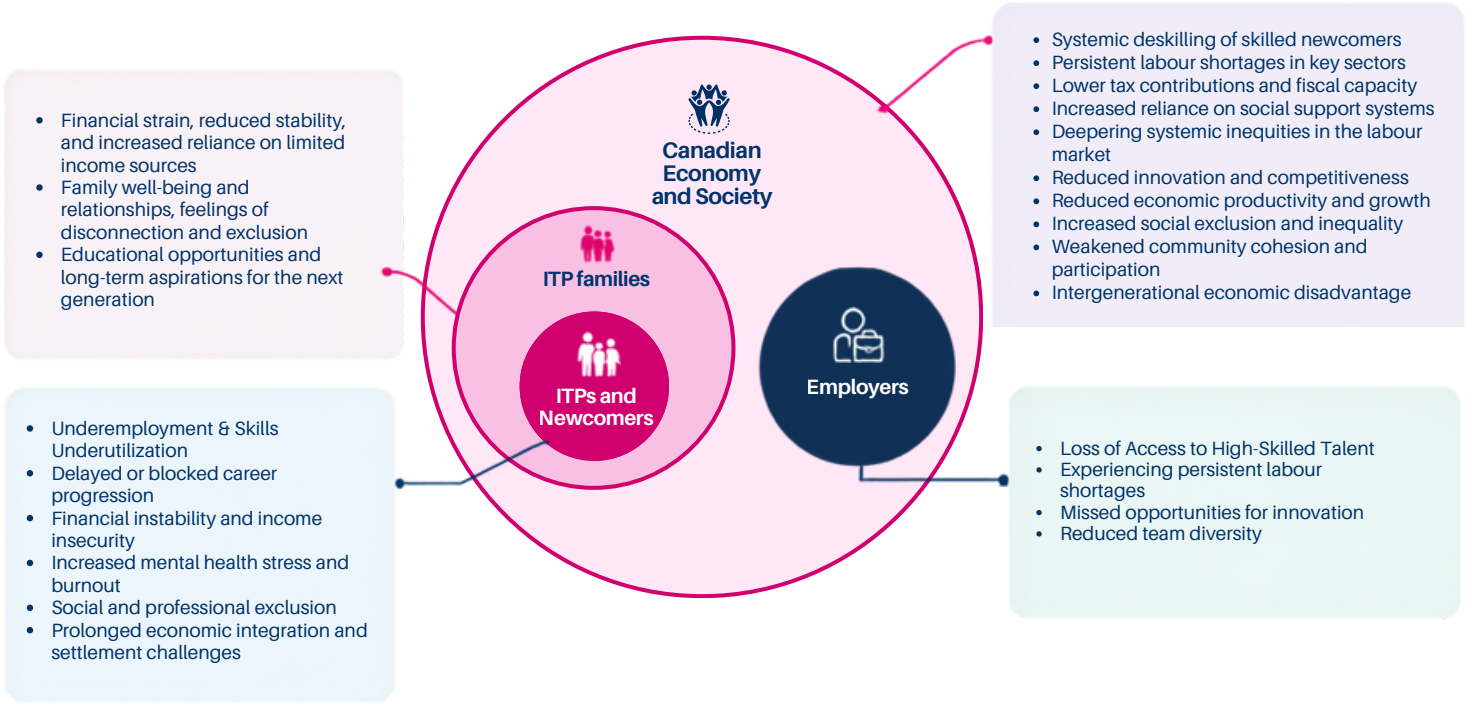


Figure 1: *Impact of Systemic Inequality in Employment. Developed by the project team of ActionDignity.*

Internationally Trained Professionals and Newcomers

> ***"Working twice as hard for half the recognition is not ambition—it's injustice." - A Community Member***

Newcomers and internationally trained professionals are among the most directly impacted. Many arrive with significant education, technical expertise, and years of professional experience, yet are unable to secure employment that aligns with their qualifications. Despite being ready to contribute, they often face structural barriers such as lengthy credential assessment processes, expensive licensing pathways, limited access to bridging programs, delays in professional registration, and a lack of opportunities to gain Canadian work experience.

This includes professionals across critical sectors such as physicians, engineers, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, lawyers, teachers, veterinarians, architects, and accountants.

When their skills are underutilized, individuals are often pushed into survival jobs that do not reflect their training, limiting their ability to fully participate in the labour market and contribute at their highest capacity.

Moreover, racialized newcomers and professionals continue to experience the impacts of systemic discrimination and unconscious bias within hiring and workplace systems. These barriers can shape who gets called for interviews, who is hired, how individuals are included in the workplace, and who is given access to leadership pathways. As a result, inequities persist not only at the point of entry into the labour market, but throughout career progression.

Internationally Trained Professionals and Newcomers

Refugees experience these challenges in even more complex ways. In addition to systemic employment barriers, they may face interrupted education, missing documentation, trauma-related impacts, financial instability, and limited access to professional networks. These compounded barriers make credential recognition and employment integration even more difficult, delaying their ability to rebuild stable professional and personal lives.

Newcomer Women often experience intersecting barriers related to gender inequality, caregiving responsibilities, language access, financial dependence, and workplace exclusion. These layered challenges can significantly limit their ability to pursue credential recognition or re-enter their professions at the same level, resulting in higher rates of underemployment and long-term economic disadvantage.

Newcomer Youth and International Graduates frequently encounter the "no Canadian experience" paradox. Despite having recent education and training from Canadian or international institutions, they are often excluded from entry-level opportunities that would allow them to build professional experience. This early exclusion can set the trajectory for long-term underemployment and reduced career mobility.

Families of Internationally Trained Professionals

The impact of employment barriers extends deeply into the lives of families. When internationally trained professionals are unable to secure work in their field, their families often experience financial strain, reduced stability, and increased reliance on limited income sources, leading to difficult trade-offs around housing, childcare, education, and basic needs.

Beyond financial pressures, these barriers can also affect family well-being and relationships, as the stress of underemployment and loss of professional identity contributes to emotional strain, reduced mental health, and feelings of frustration or disconnection. For children and dependents, these challenges may also influence educational opportunities and long-term aspirations, shaping intergenerational outcomes and limiting the full potential of families to thrive in their new communities.

Broader Impacts on Employer and Society

The effects of these systemic barriers extend beyond individuals and shape broader social and economic outcomes.

Employers are also directly impacted by these systemic barriers. When internationally trained professionals are excluded or underutilized, employers lose access to highly skilled talent at a time when many sectors are experiencing persistent labour shortages.

This results in missed opportunities for innovation, reduced team diversity, and increased recruitment challenges, as organizations are unable to fully draw on the global expertise already present within their communities.

Equitable employment is not only a workforce issue—it is a human rights issue, an economic issue, and a matter of systems accountability. When internationally trained professionals are prevented from fully participating in their fields, their skills and expertise are underutilized while labour shortages persist across key sectors. At the same time, families face financial instability, communities lose valuable economic contributions, and social inequities are reinforced.

In contrast, when these barriers are removed, the benefits are wide-reaching. Equitable employment leads to stronger workforce participation, increased economic productivity, greater social inclusion, improved newcomer integration, reduced poverty, better labour market outcomes, and more resilient communities.

Systemic Barriers in Hiring

> ***"Being overqualified doesn't mean I should be overlooked—it means the system needs to catch up." - A Community Member***



Systemic barriers are policies, structures, institutional practices, and social norms that create unequal outcomes for certain groups.

Employment barriers facing newcomers are not caused by a lack of skills or qualifications. They are structural barriers embedded within hiring systems.

Here are the common systemic barriers:

Non-Recognition of Foreign Credentials
Employers and regulatory bodies may not recognize education or professional experience obtained outside Canada.

Complex Licensing Systems
Many professions require multiple assessments and approvals.

Duplicative Testing
Internationally trained professionals may be required to repeat language or competency testing unnecessarily.

Long Processing Time
Licensing processes can take several years.

Limited Bridging Opportunities
Access to bridging programs and supervised practice opportunities is often limited.

Financial Barriers during the Credential Recognition Process

Costs associated with:

- Exams
- Licensing
- Credential assessments
- Retraining
- Bridging programs

Fragmented Systems

Many internationally trained professionals struggle to navigate:

- Multiple agencies
- Regulatory requirements
- Different application systems
- Inconsistent information

Canadian Work Experience Requirements in Employment

Many employers require applicants to have previous Canadian work experience, even when international experience is relevant and transferable.

Unconscious Bias

Employers may make assumptions based on:

- Names
- Accents
- Country of origin
- Race
- Communication styles
- Educational background

Common Employer Assumptions

Employers may incorrectly assume:

- International experience is of lower quality
- Newcomers cannot adapt to workplaces
- Communication styles indicate competency
- Canadian experience equals professionalism

Limited Professional Networks

Newcomers may lack access to networks that support employment opportunities and career advancement.

Campaign Goal & Policy Ask

Campaign Goal

To advance legislative, regulatory, and systems reforms that improve recognition of foreign credentials and eliminate unnecessary Canadian work experience requirements, enabling internationally trained professionals to access employment that matches their qualifications and experience. This will be done through influencing government, policymakers, decision-makers, employers and other stakeholders.

Policy Ask

Recognition of foreign credentials and removal of Canadian work experience requirements for employment.



The Issue

Many internationally trained professionals face barriers to employment because their education, credentials, and experience obtained outside Canada are not fully recognized, and employers often require prior Canadian work experience.

These barriers prevent qualified individuals from working in occupations that match their skills and qualifications, resulting in underemployment, lost income, and reduced economic participation. Alberta also loses the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of skilled professionals at a time when many sectors face workforce shortages.

A Path Forward: Foreign Credential Advisory Committee (FCAC)'s Recommendations

The Government of Alberta established the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee (FCAC) (hereafter called the Committee) in March 2024 through Bill 203: the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act (FCACA).

The Committee was tasked with identifying challenges and opportunities to streamline recognition processes for internationally trained professionals (ITPs) seeking to become licensed or registered in regulated professions.

The Committee is comprised of representatives from post-secondary institutions, professional regulatory organizations, immigrant-serving organizations, and industry.

Members were appointed through a cross-ministry process and brought diverse expertise to the table. From July 2024 to June 2025, the Committee met regularly, conducted extensive research jurisdictional scanning, and engaged with over 100 stakeholders across Alberta's FCR ecosystem.

The Committee developed 11 strategic recommendations to enhance Alberta's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) system and tabled its report in Alberta Legislature in May 2025.

Full Report

Recommendations from FCAC

01 Proactively Lead an Alberta-Driven Approach to Align Provincial and Federal Supports for ITPs

02 Establish Fair and Coordinated Navigation Supports Across Alberta's FCR System

03 Strengthen Regulatory Reporting, Coordination, and Data Use to Improve Licensure Transparency and Outcomes

04 Support Regulatory Capacity for Expedited Pathways and Enhanced Credential Recognition

05 Eliminate Duplication and Streamline Language Proficiency and Other Testing Requirements for ITPs

06 Explore and Expand the Use of Provisional and Limited Licences to Address Labour Force Needs

07 Remove Unnecessary Canadian Work Experience and Canadian Degree Requirements

08 Enhance Employer Supports for Effective ITP Mentorship and Workforce Integration

09 Establish Equitable and Coordinated Funding Models to Reduce Financial Barriers for ITPs

10 Support Rural Communities in Building Capacity to Attract and Integrate ITPs

11 Establish a Foreign Credential Advisory Council to Provide Strategic Guidance and Oversight of FCR in Alberta

Additional Consideration: Investigate the Potential for Regulatory Amalgamation to Improve FCR Outcomes in Alberta

Advocacy Actions

For Provincial Government

01

The Government of Alberta implement the recommendations of the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee (FCAC)'s final report which has been tabled in the Legislative Assembly (Government of Alberta, 2025).

02

Establish a Foreign Credential Advisory Council to provide strategic guidance and oversight of foreign credential recognition in Alberta.

- ☑ Representation of ethnocultural grassroots organization

03

Develop legislation, employer guidelines, and enforcement mechanisms to eliminate unnecessary Canadian work experience requirements in hiring and employment practices across Alberta.

(Amendment to the Fair Registration Practices Act only talks about Regulatory bodies, but not employers).



Establish Equitable Access to Bridging Programs

Expand Eligibility for Student Loans

Allow ITPs who are enrolled in bridging programs, including modular or part-time courses, to qualify for provincial student loan programs.

Expand Bursaries and Grants Across Professions

Increase financial aid availability beyond healthcare, providing bursaries, grants, and non-repayable funding to support credentialing expenses, exams, and bridging programs.

Specific Academic and Workplace Bridging Programs

Provide targeted funding to support the delivery and expansion of workplace-integrated and academic bridging programs.



Strengthen the Fairness for Newcomers Office (FNO) through Community-Informed Evidence and Engagement

Formal engagement or partnership mechanism established between FNO and ActionDignity and ethnocultural communities.

Evidence that FNO policies, practices, or initiatives have been informed by community feedback gathered through ActionDignity.

Regular reporting or feedback mechanisms established between FNO, ActionDignity, and community stakeholders.

For Regulatory Bodies

- Support Regulatory Capacity for Expedited Pathways and Enhanced Credential Recognition.
- Reduce processing delays: streamline credential evaluation, examination, and registration processes to improve efficiency and reduce barriers to workforce participation.
  - Develop Best Practice Guidelines and Tools for Expedited Licensure: Create regulatory guidance outlining successful expedited licensure practices from Alberta and other jurisdictions, helping regulators identify practical streamlining options that ensure public safety and maintain high standards while reducing delays.
  - Promote Competency-Based Assessments: Encourage and incentivize regulatory bodies to develop profession-specific competency-based assessments.
- Implement and comply with the Fair Registration Practices Act's prohibition against requiring Canadian work experience for the registration of internationally trained professionals (ITPs).

For International Credential Organizations

Create an Expedited, Transparent Assessment Process.
We ask the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Service of Canada to implement a faster, user-centered credential assessment system with reduced wait time and clear communication at every step—aligned with best practices from other provinces and the federal government.

For Employers

Remove Unnecessary Canadian Experience Requirements

Review job postings, screening criteria, and recruitment policies to eliminate Canadian experience requirements unless they are genuinely necessary for the position.

Recognize Relevant International Experience

Give international professional experience fair and equal consideration when assessing candidates' qualifications, skills, and competencies.

Adopt Competency-Based Hiring Practices

Assess candidates based on demonstrated skills, knowledge, qualifications, and ability to perform the job rather than where their experience was gained.

Strengthen Fair and Inclusive Recruitment Practices

Review recruitment, interviewing, and selection processes to identify and address unconscious bias and systemic barriers affecting internationally trained professionals.

Create Pathways into Professional Employment

Expand paid internships, work placements, supervised practice, job-shadowing, and other workplace-based opportunities that allow ITPs to demonstrate their professional competencies.

Partner with Community and Workforce Organizations

Work with immigrant-serving organizations, ethnocultural organizations, professional associations, and bridging programs to recruit qualified ITPs and strengthen their workplace integration and retention.

Track ITP Hiring and Career Progression

Monitor recruitment, retention, promotion, and workplace outcomes for internationally trained professionals to identify barriers and improve organizational practices.

For Community Organizations

Support advocacy and public awareness:

raise awareness of barriers faced by internationally trained professionals and advocate for policy and system changes that promote equitable employment

Provide newcomer employment supports:

offer employment preparation services, career coaching, mentorship, networking opportunities, credential navigation assistance, and workplace integration supports

Share lived experiences and research findings:

amplify community voices and use evidence-based research to inform policymakers, employers, regulators, and the public about challenges and promising practices.

For Federal Government



Ratify and implement the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education



Develop a national framework for the recognition of internationally obtained qualifications in collaboration with provinces, territories, regulatory bodies, employers, and community organizations



Fund research, data collection, and community engagement initiatives to better understand barriers faced by internationally trained professionals



Support interprovincial and international cooperation to improve the portability and recognition of foreign qualifications across Canada

Evidence & Data



Evidence plays a critical role in effective policy advocacy. Data helps demonstrate the scale of an issue, identify systemic barriers, elevate lived experiences, and strengthen the case for meaningful change. By grounding advocacy efforts in credible research and community-informed evidence, advocates can engage decision-makers with greater confidence and accountability.

This section brings together evidence from three complementary sources: labour market research that provides context on the challenges and opportunities facing internationally trained professionals; findings from community policy dialogues that capture the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders; and results from a participatory community survey conducted by ActionDignity that reflects the realities of those directly impacted.

Labour Market Context

Canada continues to face labour shortages across multiple sectors, including:

- Healthcare
- Engineering
- Education
- Information technology
- Social services

Canada anticipates a shortage of 78,000 doctors by 2031 and 117,600 nurses by 2030 (Health Canada, 2024).



Canada anticipates a shortage of

78,000

doctors by 2031

117,600

nurses by 2030

(Health Canada, 2024)

Read the full statement

Statistics Canada reported 42,045 nursing vacancies in the second quarter of 2024, a 147% increase over five years (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2025).



Statistics Canada reported

42,045

nursing vacancies

in the second quarter of 2024, a 147% increase over five years.

(Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2025)

Read the full analysis

At the same time, internationally trained professionals remain underemployed. Newcomers experience significantly higher rates of skill mismatch than Canadian-born workers.

A 2026 scorecard on immigrant skill utilization found that newcomers are 1.8 times more likely to experience overeducation and 1.7 times more likely to experience involuntary part-time employment (Signal49 Research, 2026).

Read the full report

A 2026 SCORECARD
on immigrant skill utilization found that newcomers are

1.8 times

more likely to experience overeducation
(working in a job that requires less education than their qualification level)

1.7 times

more likely to experience involuntary part-time employment
(working fewer hours than they want)

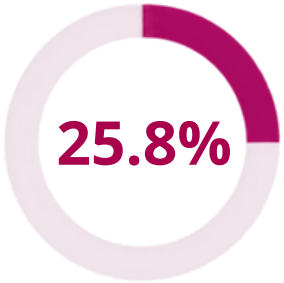
(Signal49 Research, 2026)

Over one-quarter of newcomers with foreign degrees work in jobs requiring only high school education:

According to 2021 Census data, 25.8% of newcomers with foreign degrees were employed in jobs requiring at most a high school diploma, compared with 10.6% of Canadian-born or Canadian-educated degree holders.

(Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023)

Read the full briefing



of newcomers with foreign degrees were employed in jobs requiring at most a high school diploma.



of Canadian-born or Canadian-educated degree holders were employed in jobs requiring at most a high school diploma.

Community Engagement Findings

> ***"I didn't come here to start from zero—I came with a life of experience, but no one was willing to see it."***
> ***-A Community Member***

ActionDignity conducted a series of community policy dialogues in 2024, listening to community members about the issues in the community. More than 191 participants joined the conversation. Over 389 community sentiments and experiences were shared. Among those community voices, 118 pieces of feedback mentioned the systemic barriers in employment.



191

PARTICIPANTS

More than 191 participants joined the conversation .



389

COMMUNITY SENTIMENTS & EXPERIENCES

Over 389 community sentiments and experiences were shared



118

FEEDBACK ON EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

118 pieces of feedback mentioned the systemic barriers in employment

Key Findings from Community-Based Participatory Research

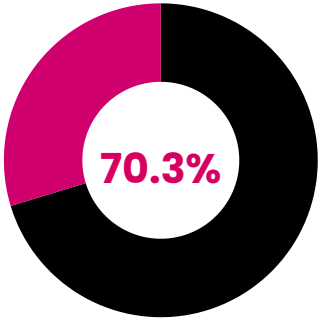
ActionDignity partnered with six grassroots ethnocultural community organizations and conducted a community-based participatory action research study in 2026, hearing from over 500 newcomers, to analyze the impact of non-recognition of foreign credentials and the Canadian work experience barrier on the lives of newcomers, their families, and communities (ActionDignity, 2026).

The study provides evidence that economic integration has a direct implication on social inclusion, mental well-being, and the overall quality of life of newcomers.



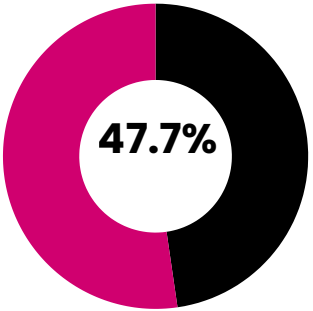
Read the full report

Recognition barriers persist



of internationally trained professionals participating in the survey reported that their foreign credentials are not recognized, only partially recognized, or still awaiting recognition.

Canadian work experience remains a significant barrier



Nearly half (47.7%) of the survey participants identified Canadian work experience requirements as a barrier to obtaining employment aligned with their skills and expertise.

The Hidden Costs of Talent Underutilization

Underutilization affected both economic well-being and personal well-being.



57.4%

reported mental health stress and burnout



51.7%

reported financial instability and debt



31.1%

experienced exclusion from professional networks

Lived Experience & Community Voices



When my family moved to Canada, I discovered that my foreign credentials weren't recognized, so despite years of experience, I could only find work far below my qualifications. Taking a survival job helped us pay the bills, but over time, I felt my skills slipping away. My confidence dropped, and I became stressed and withdrawn at home.

It wasn't just about the job; it affected my sense of identity. My family worried about me, and I saw many others in my community facing the same struggle. Highly trained people were stuck in low-wage work, and it created a shared feeling of frustration and wasted potential. The experience took a toll on my mental health and made me realize how deeply employment barriers can impact both individuals and the community.

-A Community Member

Stories are a powerful tool for advocacy.

While data and research help demonstrate the scale and scope of an issue, lived experiences bring that evidence to life by illustrating the human impact of policies, systems, and barriers, creating empathy, connection, and a stronger sense of urgency for change.

In this section, you will find guidance on how to collect, document, and share lived experience stories in ways that are respectful, impactful, and aligned with your advocacy goals.

Ethical Storytelling Principles

Storytelling should be:

- Obtain informed consent
- Trauma-informed
- Respect confidentiality and privacy
- Avoid re-traumatization
- Dignified
- Community-led
- Empowering rather than exploitative

Story Collection Framework

Suggested story categories:

- Journey to Canada
- Professional background
- Licensing experiences
- Employment challenges
- Economic impacts
- Family impacts
- Community resilience
- Advocacy experiences

Story Collection Methods

- Interviews
- Video storytelling
- Community forums
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Podcasts
- Written testimonials

Story Sharing Approaches

Policy briefs and advocacy reports – Include quotes, case studies, and personal stories alongside data to illustrate the real-world impact of policy issues and recommendations.

Meetings with decision-makers – Share stories directly with elected officials, government representatives, regulators, and employers to humanize policy discussions and demonstrate why change is needed.

Public presentations and community forums – Use stories during town halls, workshops, conferences, and public education events to engage audiences and build understanding.

Media outreach – Feature lived experiences in news stories, opinion articles, interviews, podcasts, and media campaigns to raise public awareness and influence public discourse.

Social media campaigns – Share written testimonials, videos, graphics, and story highlights to increase visibility, engagement, and public support for advocacy efforts.

Employer engagement and training – Incorporate stories into employer workshops, diversity and inclusion training, and recruitment discussions to highlight systemic barriers and opportunities for change.

Who Has the Power to Influence Change—Power Mapping



Effective advocacy requires a clear understanding of who has the power to influence change. Power mapping is a strategic tool that helps advocates identify the individuals, organizations, and institutions that can affect policy decisions, shape public opinion, or contribute to systems change.

By understanding each stakeholder's level of influence and interest in the issue, advocates can prioritize engagement efforts, tailor messaging, build strategic relationships, and use resources more effectively.

Overview of Stakeholders' Influence and Responsibilities

Here is an overview of the power and responsibilities of each stakeholder:

Stakeholder	Influence	Responsibilities
Governments and Policy Decision-makers • Municipal governments • Provincial ministries • Federal departments • Members of Parliament • MLAs and policymakers	These stakeholders have the authority to create, change, or implement policies.	• Policy reform • Funding • Oversight • Equity legislation
Regulatory Bodies • Professional colleges • Licensing organizations	These organizations often control credential recognition, licensing, and professional registration processes.	• Conduct fair and transparent licensing processes • Implement competency-based assessment

Stakeholder	Influence	Responsibilities
Employers • Chambers of Commerce • Corporate employers • Recruitment agencies • Economic development organizations	Employers play a direct role in hiring practices and workplace inclusion.	• Equitable hiring • Workplace inclusion • Removing discriminatory barriers
Labour and Professional Associations • Labour unions • Professional associations • Sector councils • Industry workforce councils	These groups shape workforce standards, influence labour market policy discussions and workforce practices.	• Advocate for equitable workforce access • Promote inclusive professional practices • Support recognition and utilization of international talent
Community Organizations and Leaders • Immigrant-serving organizations • Ethnocultural community organizations • Equity-seeking groups • Advocacy coalitions • Ethnocultural Grassroots Advocacy Group members • Community connectors • Lived experience leaders	These stakeholders often provide services, mobilize communities, and influence public dialogue.	• Navigation supports • Advocacy • Public education • Community organizing and capacity building

Stakeholder	Influence	Responsibilities
Media and Public Influencers • Journalists and media outlets • Community media • Social media influencers • Researchers and subject matter experts • Think tanks and policy institutes	These stakeholders can shape public awareness, influence public opinion, amplify community voices, and help set the agenda for public and policy discussions.	• Raise public awareness and understanding • Amplify diverse voices and lived experiences • Promote accurate, evidence-based narratives
Internationally Trained Professionals and Community Members • Internationally trained professionals • Newcomers • Refugees • International graduates • Families of internationally trained professionals • Community members	These groups shape workforce standards, influence labour market policy discussions and workforce practices.	• Advocate for equitable workforce access • Promote inclusive professional practices • Support recognition and utilization of international talent

Power Mapping Matrix

	High Influence	Low Influence
High Interest	• Federal government departments (e.g., Immigration, refugees, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, employment and Social Development Canada) • Provincial ministries (labour, immigration, advanced education, economic development) • Members of parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) • Professional regulatory bodies (e.g., nursing, engineering, medicine, law, accounting regulators) • Major employers in high-demand sectors (Healthcare, engineering, education, public sector) • Industry associations and chambers of commerce • Public-sector employers and workforce planning agencies	• Internationally trained professionals • Newcomers • Refugees • International graduates • Families of internationally trained professionals • Immigrant-serving organizations and settlement agencies • Ethncultural and racialized community organizations • Anti-racism organizations and advocacy coalitions • Community-based workforce development organizations • Labour unions and worker advocacy groups
Low Interest	• Senior public servants and policy advisors • Credential assessment organizations • Universities and colleges (institutional leadership) • Recruitment agencies and large HR networks • Some professional associations (when focused primarily on members protection rather than equity reform) • Sector councils and workforce planning bodies • Large corporate employers not currently facing acute labour shortages	• General public and local communities • Media audiences not yet engaged in the issue • Some private sector employers not affected by labour shortages • Social media users outside of advocacy networks • Broader educational audiences (students not in affected pathways)

How to use this matrix?

1. **High Influence + High Interest**
   → Engage directly, build partnerships, co-develop solutions.
2. **High Influence + Low Interest**
   → Strategically persuade and raise urgency.
3. **Low Influence + High Interest**
   → Mobilize, amplify lived experience, support storytelling.
4. **Low Influence + Low Interest**
   → Educate and shift public awareness over time.

Advocacy Strategies

This campaign is guided by four interconnected advocacy strategies that work together to advance equitable employment opportunities for internationally trained professionals. Each strategy plays a different role in creating change—from amplifying lived experiences to influencing systems and policy. Community partners and supporters are encouraged to engage in the areas that best align with their strengths, capacity, and relationships.



Engagement Supporters Analysis

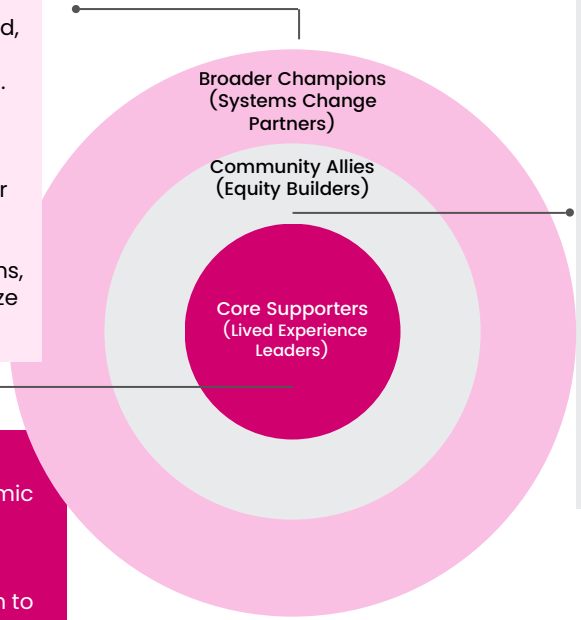
Effective advocacy is strengthened by understanding who can contribute to a campaign and how they can engage. The Engagement Supporters Analysis helps map supporters across three layers—Core Supporters, Community Allies, and Broader Champions—based on their relationship to the issue, lived experience, influence, and capacity to contribute.

This analysis can help advocacy teams identify the right people and organizations to engage, understand how different supporters can contribute, and build meaningful pathways from lived experience to broader community and systems-level action.

Engagement Supporters Analysis

Traits

- Equity-seeking individuals & orgs (funders, policymakers, NGOs, researchers);
- Not always directly impacted, but aligned with values of justice, equity, and inclusion.
- Motivated by partnership, social responsibility, long-term systemic impact;
- Have resources, influence, or platforms that can help advance systemic change;
- Can advocate within systems, fund initiatives, and legitimize community-led knowledge



Traits

- Racialized/marginalized members who may not be directly impacted;
- Grassroots groups, ethnocultural associations, informal networks;
- Motivated by solidarity, shared cultural identity, and collective empowerment.
- Often engaged in advocacy, peer support, or community capacity building.
- Can amplify the voices of core supporters and mobilize wider community action

Traits

- Directly affected by systemic barriers;
- Racialized, newcomer, migrant;
- Deep personal connection to mission;
- Motivated by survival, voice &representation;
- Bring lived experience, storytelling, grassroots energy

Centering Lived Experiences

This strategy focuses on ensuring that the voices of internationally trained professionals and impacted communities are at the heart of advocacy efforts. Lived experience brings visibility to systemic barriers and helps ground policy discussions in real human impact. By collecting and sharing stories, building leadership capacity, and engaging communities in participatory research, we strengthen the legitimacy and urgency of advocacy efforts while empowering communities to speak for themselves.

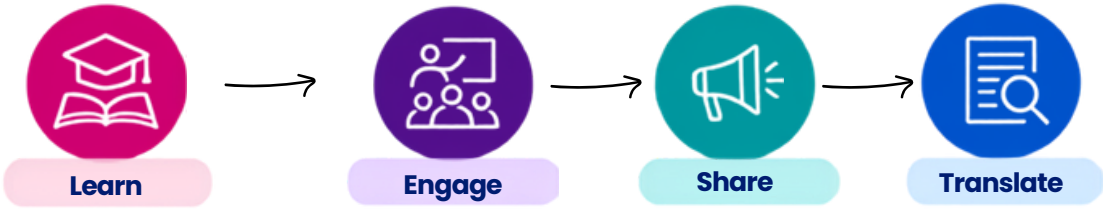


What you can do:

- Collect stories, testimonials, and community experiences ethically and respectfully
- Help amplify stories through your networks, events, and digital platforms

Public Education & Knowledge Translation

This strategy aims to build public understanding of the systemic barriers faced by internationally trained professionals and shift narratives around employment equity. By translating research and community knowledge into accessible formats, we can engage broader audiences and build support for change. Education plays a key role in challenging misconceptions and increasing awareness of systemic inequities.

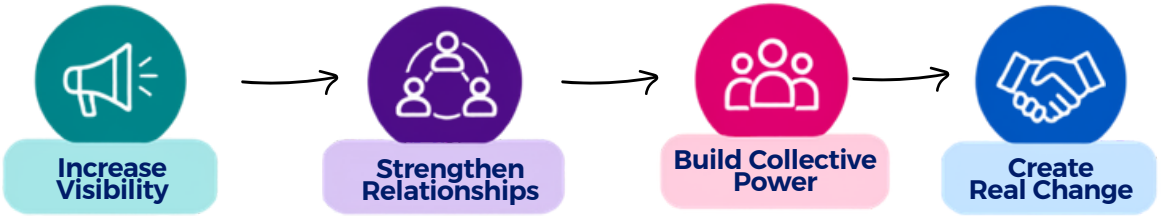


What you can do:

- Support or participate in ActionDignity's equity literacy sessions
- Host or co-host community workshops and learning sessions
- Share campaign materials through your newsletters, events, and social media
- Help disseminate research findings and key messages in accessible ways

Community Organizing & Mobilization

This strategy focuses on building collective power within communities and strengthening relationships across organizations and networks. By organizing and mobilizing community members, we can increase visibility, strengthen advocacy voices, and build strong coalitions for change.



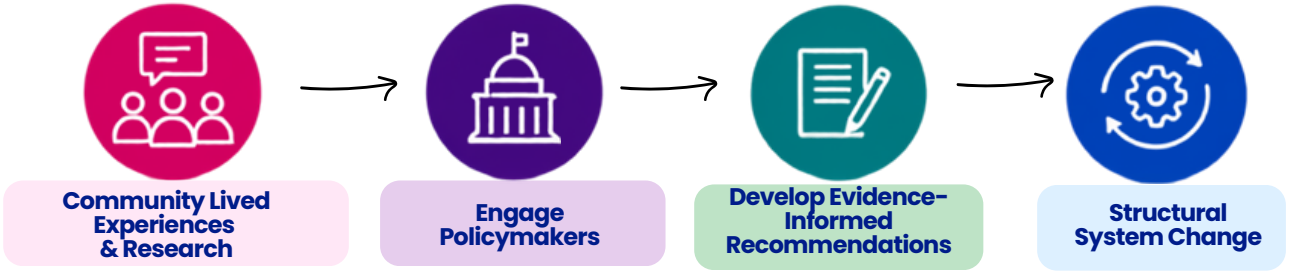
What you can do:

- Join the Ethnocultural Grassroots Advocacy Group (EGAG) to support leadership development within ethnocultural and newcomer communities
- Conduct outreach activities to recruit community supporters
- Build or join coalitions with aligned organizations and partners

Learn More about EGAG

Policy Advocacy

This strategy focuses on directly influencing decision-makers and systems to create structural change. It involves engaging with policymakers, developing evidence-informed recommendations, and ensuring community voices are present in policy conversations. Policy advocacy transforms lived experience and research into actionable system reforms.



What you can do:

- Participate in meetings with elected officials and policymakers
- Support the development of policy briefs and recommendations and share it with stakeholders
- Contribute community perspectives to consultations and engagement processes from the policy makers

Messaging & Talking Points



Consistent and aligned messaging is essential for building a strong and unified advocacy voice. When different organizations, community leaders, and supporters share clear and coordinated messages, it strengthens public understanding of the issue, reinforces credibility, and increases the impact of collective action.

In this campaign, messaging is used not only to inform, but also to shift narratives about internationally trained professionals, challenge systemic barriers, and build support for equitable employment policies. The core messages below are designed to guide how we communicate this issue across communities, partners, media, and decision-makers.

Core Messages

1. Internationally trained professionals bring valuable skills and experience that are essential to Canada's workforce.

Many newcomers arrive with advanced education, professional credentials, and years of experience, yet their skills are often underrecognized or underutilized due to systemic barriers. Recognizing and fully integrating their expertise strengthens labour markets and supports long-term economic resilience.

2. Systemic barriers—not lack of ability—prevent internationally trained professionals from fully participating in their fields.

Challenges such as complex credential recognition processes, high licensing costs, limited access to bridging programs, and lack of Canadian experience requirements create structural exclusion. These barriers, rather than individual capability, are the primary obstacles to meaningful employment.

Core Messages

3. Exclusion from meaningful employment has wide-reaching impacts on individuals, families, and communities.

When professionals are unable to work in their fields, it leads to underemployment, financial instability, mental health stress, and loss of professional identity. These impacts extend to families through economic pressure and intergenerational effects, and to communities through reduced social and economic participation.

4. Employers and the economy lose out when internationally trained professionals are excluded from their professions.

Labour shortages persist across key sectors while highly skilled talent remains underutilized. Removing systemic barriers improves workforce capacity, increases innovation, strengthens productivity, and supports more inclusive and resilient economic growth.

Core Messages

5. Equitable employment is a shared responsibility that requires coordinated action across systems.

Governments, regulatory bodies, employers, educational institutions, and communities all play a role in creating fair and accessible pathways to employment. Meaningful change requires collaboration, accountability, and sustained commitment to removing structural barriers.

Tailored Messaging Strategy



Stakeholder
Municipal (City of Calgary)

Tailored Message

"Calgary thrives when all residents can contribute. Let's work together to ensure skilled newcomers are not left behind due to outdated hiring practices."

Talking Points

- Calgary's economic and social success depends on full participation of its diverse workforce.
- Many skilled newcomers living in Calgary are underemployed despite high levels of education and experience.
- Municipal leadership can influence local hiring practices, workforce strategies, and inclusion initiatives.
- Supporting credential recognition pathways and local bridging partnerships strengthens Calgary's labour market resilience.
- Inclusive employment policies contribute to stronger communities, reduce inequality, and improve newcomer integration.

Tailored Messaging Strategy



Stakeholder
Provincial
(Provincial Government, Regulatory Bodies)

Tailored Message

"Alberta's labour shortages—especially in healthcare and trades—can be addressed by removing credential and experience barriers for newcomers."

Talking Points

- Critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and skilled trades are facing persistent workforce shortages.
- Internationally trained professionals already possess the skills needed but are blocked by regulatory and credential barriers.
- Streamlining licensing processes and expanding bridging programs can quickly increase labour market participation.
- Reducing barriers is a cost-effective workforce strategy compared to long recruitment and training pipelines.
- Policy and regulatory reform can directly improve labour supply while supporting economic growth across Alberta.

Tailored Messaging Strategy



Stakeholder
Federal (IRCC, MPs, Prime Minister's Office)

Tailored Message

"Federal investment in credential recognition and bridging programs is essential to building a resilient, inclusive workforce."

Talking Points

- Canada invests heavily in attracting skilled newcomers, but systemic barriers prevent full labour market integration.
- Federal leadership is needed to coordinate credential recognition systems across provinces and sectors.
- Expanding and sustaining funding for bridging programs improves employment outcomes and economic returns on immigration.
- Reducing underemployment among skilled newcomers strengthens Canada's productivity and tax base.
- A coordinated federal approach ensures consistency, fairness, and efficiency across the immigration-to-employment pathway.

Tailored Messaging Strategy



Stakeholder
Employers & Industry Associations

Tailored Message

"Hiring foreign-trained professionals isn't just the right thing to do—it's a smart business decision in a tight labour market."

Talking Points

- Employers are facing ongoing recruitment challenges across multiple sectors and occupations.
- Internationally trained professionals represent a highly skilled and underutilized talent pool.
- Inclusive hiring practices improve innovation, problem-solving, and workplace diversity.
- Removing "Canadian experience" requirements can significantly expand qualified candidate pools.
- Partnering with bridging programs and immigrant-serving organizations improves hiring outcomes and retention.

Tailored Messaging Strategy



Stakeholder
Public & Media

Tailored Message

"Your neighbour, your nurse, your engineer —newcomers are already qualified. Let's remove the barriers that hold them back."

Talking Points

- Many newcomers in Canada are already trained professionals who cannot work in their fields due to systemic barriers.
- These barriers are not about skill or ability, but about recognition, access, and institutional processes.
- Underemployment of skilled newcomers affects everyone through labour shortages, higher service gaps, and lost economic potential.
- Sharing real stories helps shift public perception and challenge stereotypes about newcomer workers.
- Greater awareness builds public support for fair, inclusive, and evidence-based policy change.

Advocacy Tools & Templates



Letters and Templates

- Letter to policymakers
- Letter to bureaucrats
- Letter to regulatory bodies
- Guide for meeting with policymakers
- Petition template

Community Engagement Tools

- Workshop agendas
- Outreach tracker
- Volunteer sign-up forms

Policy Advocacy Resources

- Policy brief
- Policy stakeholder list

Communications Resources

- Press Release
- Media Pitch Template
- Social Media Toolkit
- Communication Graphics

Access Advocacy Tools & Templates



Conclusion

This toolkit is more than an educational resource—it is a roadmap for systems change.

By centering lived experience, building community power, strengthening public education, and advancing policy advocacy, communities can work collectively to remove systemic barriers and create equitable employment pathways for newcomers and internationally trained professionals.

The work of equitable employment is not the responsibility of one organization alone. It requires governments, employers, regulatory bodies, community organizations, and communities themselves to work together toward fairness, inclusion, and justice.

Together, we can build employment systems that recognize talent, value diversity, and ensure everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



Glossary

Bill - A Bill is a proposed law introduced in a legislative assembly, such as the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. A Bill must go through several stages of review, debate, and voting before it can become law.

Act - An Act is a Bill that has been passed by the legislature and received Royal Assent. Acts are written laws that establish legal rights, responsibilities, and rules. Acts are legally binding.

Law - A Law is a rule that people and organizations must follow and that can be enforced by courts or government authorities. Laws include Acts, regulations, court decisions, and other legally binding rules. Acts are legally binding.

Policy - A Policy is a guideline or direction for action adopted by a government, organization, institution, or employer to achieve specific goals. Unlike laws, policies are not necessarily legally binding, although they often guide decisions and the implementation of laws. Policies can become mandatory within an organization or government program, but they generally do not carry the same legal force as laws unless supported by legislation or regulation.

Regulation - A Regulation is a detailed rule made under the authority of an Act. Regulations explain how parts of a law are applied or implemented. Regulations are legally binding.

Amendment - An Amendment is a formal change made or proposed to an existing Bill, Act, regulation, or other legal document.

Royal Assent - Royal Assent is the formal approval given to a Bill after it has passed the legislature, allowing it to become law.

Policy Advocacy - Policy Advocacy refers to organized efforts to influence government policies, laws, regulations, institutional practices, or decisions.

Policy Ask - A Policy Ask is a specific change that advocates are requesting from a government, regulator, employer, or other decision-maker.

Policy Brief - A Policy Brief is a short, evidence-based document that explains a policy issue and presents recommendations or proposed solutions to decision-makers.

System Change - System Change involves changing the policies, practices, relationships, power structures, and underlying conditions that contribute to an issue, rather than addressing only individual cases.

Systemic Barrier - A Systemic Barrier is a policy, practice, process, or institutional structure that creates unequal access or outcomes for particular groups.

Equitable Employment - Equitable Employment refers to employment systems and practices that identify and remove barriers so that people have fair access to employment, advancement, and workplace opportunities.

Foreign Credential Recognition - Foreign Credential Recognition is the process of assessing education, qualifications, training, or credentials obtained outside Canada to determine how they compare with Canadian requirements.

Credential Assessment - Credential Assessment is the evaluation of education or qualifications obtained in another country to determine their Canadian equivalency or relevance.

Regulated Profession - A Regulated Profession is a profession in which a person must meet legal or regulatory requirements and usually be registered or licensed by a regulatory body before practising or using a protected professional title.

Regulatory Body - A Regulatory Body is an organization authorized by legislation to regulate a profession, including setting registration, licensing, competency, and professional-practice requirements.

Professional Association - A Professional Association is an organization that represents or supports members of a profession. Unlike a regulator, its primary role is generally not to determine who may legally practise the profession.

Licensure / Professional Registration - Licensure or Professional Registration is the process through which a regulatory body determines whether someone meets the requirements to practise a regulated profession.

Bridging Program - A Bridging Program provides education, training, workplace experience, or other support designed to help internationally trained professionals meet Canadian employment or licensing requirements.

Canadian Experience Requirement - A Canadian Experience Requirement is a hiring or licensing requirement that asks a person to have previous work experience obtained specifically in Canada.

Underemployment - Underemployment is a situation in which someone is working below their level of education, skills, experience, or desired employment capacity.

Unconscious Bias - Unconscious Bias refers to assumptions or attitudes that may influence decisions without a person being fully aware of them, including decisions related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion.

Lived Experience - Lived Experience refers to knowledge and understanding gained through a person's direct experience of an issue, system, or situation.

Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) - Community-Based Participatory Action Research is a research approach in which community members participate in identifying issues, gathering knowledge, interpreting findings, and using the results to support action or change.

Coalition - A Coalition is a group of organizations, communities, or individuals working together toward a shared advocacy or policy goal.

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