ALLIES

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A Maytree idea

In partnership with The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

More Employers Adopt Good Immigrant Employment Practices

A trend analysis of the *Best Employers for New Canadians* competition

A partnership of:

MAYTREE
For Leaders. For Change.

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

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ALLIES supports local efforts in Canadian cities to successfully adapt and implement programs that further the suitable employment of skilled immigrants. Through a series of multi-stakeholder initiatives, ALLIES and local partners contribute to building a stronger Canada by using the talents, connections and experience of skilled immigrants who have made Canada their new home. The project is jointly funded by Maytree and The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

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- The employers that continue to add to, improve and share their successful immigrant employment practices.

Canada
The Government of Canada's
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary 4
Introduction 6
Method 6
About the Applicants 7
Large employers in large provinces have practices focusing on immigrants 7
Financial, health care, energy and manufacturing sectors lead the field 8
Employer Practices 9
More employers adopt good practices for hiring and integrating skilled immigrants 9
Leading employers use combination of practices 10
Employers are working towards religious and cultural accommodation 11
Measuring Diversity in the Workforce and in Leadership 11
Visible minorities are on staff and in management, but fewer on boards 11
Conclusions and Recommendations 13

Executive Summary

Leading employers are increasingly recognizing the benefits of tapping into the skilled immigrant talent pool.

Each year, Canada receives 250,000 newcomers, most with high levels of education and international work experience, and many who are underutilized in the Canadian labour market. These skilled immigrants can boost innovation in Canadian businesses by contributing new ideas, perspectives and approaches, speaking languages in addition to English or French, and providing insight and connections with global markets and diverse domestic markets.

This analysis highlights trends in the immigrant employment practices of leading employers in the annual national competition, *Best Employers for New Canadians*. It draws on practices reported in 69 winning applications to the 2011 and 2012 competitions, and adds to a previous report on winning employers in the 2008-2010 competitions.

Key Findings

The findings suggest that leading employers have some characteristics in common, and are continuing to use and improve their immigrant employment practices. In particular:

- Large employers (with more than 500 employees), and employers in large provinces have employment practices that target immigrant employees.
- The financial, health care, energy and manufacturing sectors lead the field in immigrant employment practices.
- More employers are adopting good immigrant employment practices, and more employers are using combinations of practices to hire, integrate and retain skilled immigrant employees.
- In addition to immigrant employment practices, employers are working towards religious and cultural accommodation for all employees.
- Leading employers are doing well in terms of visible minority representation on staff and in management, but must continue to work towards diversity on their boards.

Recommendations

Employers play a critical role in ensuring full and meaningful employment for skilled immigrants. We must therefore look to these leading employers to innovate and implement immigrant employment solutions. To this end, ALLIES recommends:

1. Employers should set goals and measure the representation of immigrants in their staff, management and boards.
2. Employers should champion the case for hiring skilled immigrants, as well as the practices that have helped make them leaders in this field.

3. Immigrant employment councils, community organizations, government and other stakeholders should recognize employers for their leadership in this field, and create opportunities for these leaders to share good practices.
4. Future employer competitions and knowledge exchange events should actively seek participation from small and medium employers, as well as employers from all provinces and regions in Canada.
5. Further research should explore leading employers' religious and cultural accommodation practices.

Introduction

Across Canada, leading employers are increasingly recognizing the benefits of tapping into the skilled immigrant labour pool. These employers are adopting good practices to recruit, integrate and retain skilled immigrant employees.

This report examines the practices of leading employers identified through *Best Employers for New Canadians*, an annual, nation-wide competition managed by the editors of *Canada's Top 100 Employers*, in partnership with ALLIES (Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies). It draws on 69 winning applications from the 2011 and 2012 competitions.

This report updates and adds to previous research[1] on applications from the 2008-2010 competitions. Our previous study found that large employers (500+ employees) and employers in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia were well-represented among winning and short-listed employers. Further, energy/environment, financial and health industries led the field in immigrant employment practices. The most common practices reported in 2008-2010 were related to recruitment and hiring, credential recognition, and mentoring.

Many of these trends identified in our previous research continued into 2011 and 2012.

Method

The research comprises a review and analysis of 69 of the winning applications to the 2011 (38 applications) and 2012 (31 applications) for the national *Best Employers for New Canadians* competition.

The applications contain self-reported information about the organization and its practices for recruiting, hiring, and integrating recent immigrant employees. The applications consist of multiple choice and short responses to standardized questions. Some applicants choose to submit supplementary material, such as longer and more detailed descriptions of their activities, internal or public communications (e.g. newsletters, annual reports, press releases), media reports of their activities, and so on.

Some employers applied to both the 2011 and 2012 competitions, and information for those employers is included in the findings for each year.

This research uses the terms *new Canadians, recent immigrants,* and *skilled immigrants* interchangeably. They refer to immigrants living in Canada as permanent residents or Canadian citizens. On the whole, this group is highly educated and gained international work experience before coming to Canada.

[1] ALLIES. (2011). *Attracting, Retaining and Integrating Skilled Immigrants: An Analysis of Canada's Leading Employers*. http://alliescanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AttractingRetainingIntegrating11.pdf

This study focuses on a small number of employers, which through self-selection, have applied to this employer competition. Since the sample is not representative of Canadian employers, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the employers examined here.

About the Applicants

Large employers in large provinces have practices focusing on immigrants

Half of the winning applicants in 2011 and 2012 are based in or report a head office in Ontario. The remainder of winning applications came primarily from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec. Saskatchewan and the Atlantic provinces had the fewest employers represented in this competition.

Table 1: Province where employer or head office is located, 2011 and 2012

	2011		*2012*	
Province	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**
British Columbia	5	13%	4	13%
Alberta	4	11%	3	10%
Saskatchewan	2	5%	1	3%
Manitoba	2	5%	3	10%
Ontario	19	50%	16	51%
Quebec	4	11%	3	10%
New Brunswick	0	0%	0	0%
Nova Scotia	2	5%	1	3%
Prince Edward Island	0	0%	0	0%
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	0%	0	0%
Total	**38**	**100%**	**31**	**100%**

The high concentration of employers in Ontario may reflect the prevalence of large employers in the winning applications, as many large employers are headquartered in Toronto.

As in past years, the overwhelming majority of winning applications are from large employers.

Table 2: Employer size, based on number of employees in Canada, 2011 and 2012

	2011		*2012*	
Size	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**
Micro (1-4 employees)	0	0%	0	0%
Small (5-49)	0	0%	0	0%
Medium (50-499)	2	5%	0	0%
Large 500+	35	92%	30	97%
N.A.	1	3%	1	3%
Total	**38**	**100%**	**31**	**100%**

Further, within the category of "large" employer, 60% have more than 1,000 employees in Canada and nearly a quarter have more than10,000 employees in Canada.

Table 3: Large employers, based on number of employees in Canada, 2011 and 2012

	2011		*2012*	
Size	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**	**Number of Employers**	**Percentage of Employers**
Large (500-999)	2	5%	4	13%
Very large (1,000-9,999)	24	63%	19	61%
Very, very large (10,000+)	9	24%	7	23%
Total	**35**	**92%**	**30**	**97%**

This could indicate that in comparison to smaller employers, large firms have more practices designed to facilitate hiring and integration of skilled immigrant employees, or that these practices are more formalized than in smaller firms. On the other hand, it could indicate simply that larger firms are more likely to have the resources to dedicate to applying to employer competitions and the motivation to develop their profile as employers of choice.

Financial, health care, energy and manufacturing sectors lead the field

While a variety of sectors are represented in the winning applications, four sectors were strongly represented in both 2011 and 2012. In addition to the financial, health care and energy-sectors, which were well also represented in our study of 2010 applications, the manufacturing sector was prominent in 2011 and 2012.

Table 4: Employers by sector, 2011 and 2012

Sector	Number of Employers, 2011	Number of Employers, 2012
Finance and Insurance	5	5
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	4
Energy (including utilities; oil and gas; regulation and administration; transportation of energy products)	6	4
Manufacturing	4	6
Government	5	3
Accounting and Legal Services	3	3
Scientific and Technical (including architectural and engineering)	3	2
Wholesale OR Retail Trade	2	2
Telecommunications	2	1
Educational Services	1	1
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1	0
Total	**38**	**31**

The prevalence of certain sectors could be the result of many factors. For example, sectors that are already experiencing labour and skill shortages might be motivated to develop strategies to tap into non-traditional talent pools.

Similarly, "client-facing" sectors might be motivated to employ immigrant employees as a means to better serve international and culturally diverse domestic markets (including customers, clients, patients, etc.).

In addition, the presence of a competing organization in past or current competitions might motivate other firms in that sector to enter the *Best Employer for New Canadians* competition.

Employer Practices

More employers adopt good practices for hiring and integrating skilled immigrants

This research focuses on eight categories of practice: recruiting and selecting, credential recognition, mentorship, internship, upgrading skills and designations, language training, partnerships with community organizations, and diversity training.[2]

[2] For more details about of these categories, please see: ALLIES. (2011). *Attracting, Retaining and Integrating Skilled Immigrants: An Analysis of Canada's Leading Employers*. http://alliescanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AttractingRetainingIntegrating11.pdf

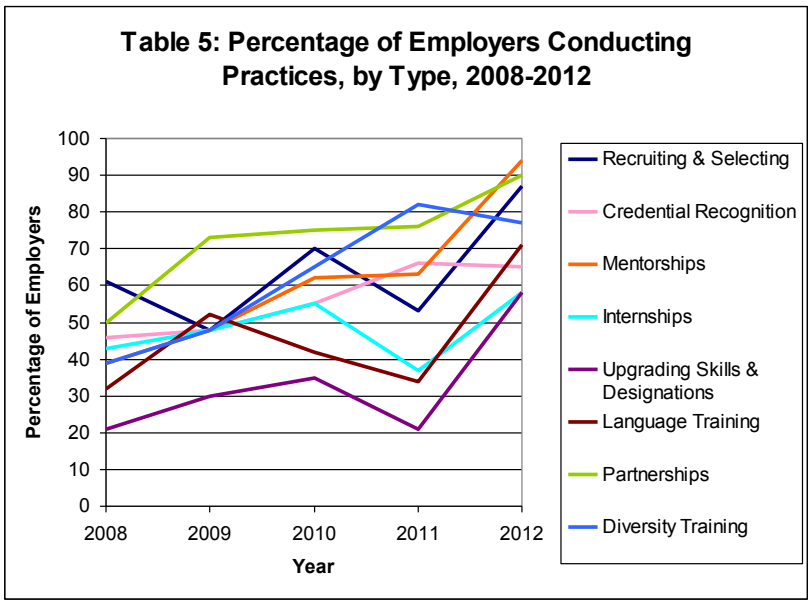
The most common types of practices reported in 2012 are:

- Mentorships[3]: 94% of employers
- Partnerships with community organizations: 90%
- Recruiting and selecting: 87%

Moreover, each of the eight categories of practice studied showed an increase over the first five years of the competition. Some practices showed considerable increases – for example, the use of mentorship increased by nearly 55%; similarly, the use of language training, skills training, and diversity training practices each increased by approximately 40% over these five years.

Other practices increased more modestly; for example, credential recognition practices increased by 19%, while internships increased by 15% over these five years.

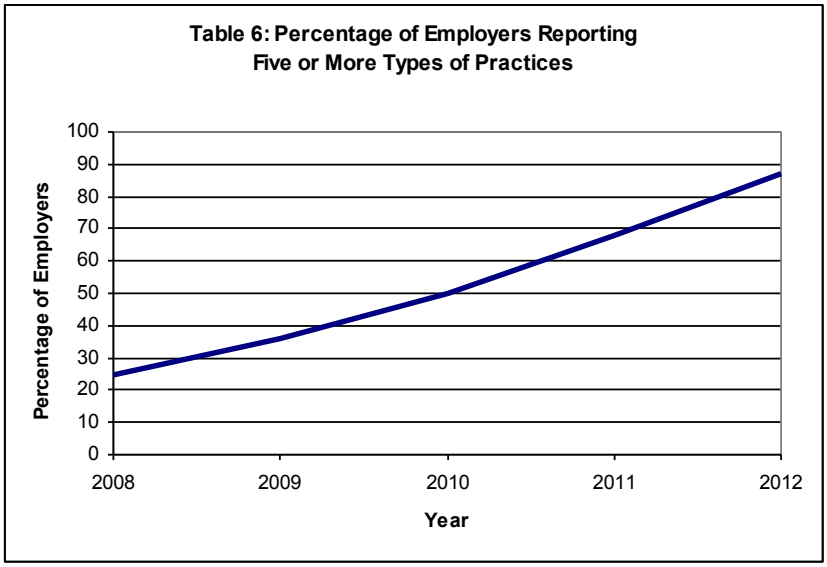
Notably, few of the practices showed a continuous increase; in fact, most showed one or more "dips" where the reported use of the practice decreased before rising again the next year.



Leading employers use combination of practices

In addition, the percentage of employers reporting the use of five or more different types of practices has steadily increased over these five years, from only 25% in 2008 to 87% in 2012.

[3] NB: Some employers report mentorship activities that are not targeted specifically for recent immigrant employees; however, they also report that these activities are particularly beneficial to this group.



The adoption of multiple practices indicates that employers are looking beyond the initial phase of recruiting and selecting to the integration, retention and promotion of their recent immigrant employees.

Employers are working towards religious and cultural accommodation

In our initial research[4], employers also discussed their religious accommodation practices. In the 2011 and 2012 applications, many employers provided supplementary information that reported a variety of religious or cultural accommodation practices. These practices include providing a meditation/reflection/prayer space, time off for religious or cultural holidays, multicultural events in the workplace, and creating or distributing multicultural calendars. In 2011, 37% of employers reported such practices; in 2012, this increased modestly to 41%. However, as the application does not specifically ask for these practices, more research is needed to determine how prevalent these practices are among these leading employers.

Measuring Diversity in the Workforce and in Leadership

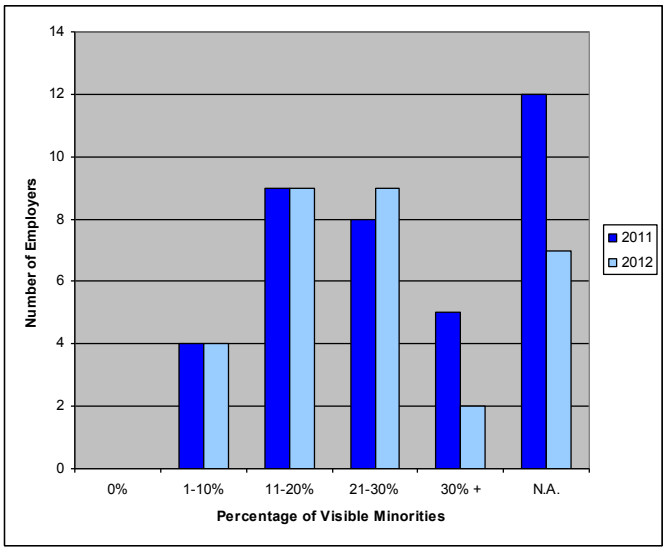
Visible minorities are on staff and in management, but fewer on boards

Applicants have the opportunity to provide information on the number of visible minorities on staff, in management and on their board. While metrics on visible minorities are *not* interchangeable with those on immigrants, they can broadly indicate the extent to which cultural diversity is included in their workforce and leadership.

[4] ALLIES. (2011). *Attracting, Retaining and Integrating Skilled Immigrants: An Analysis of Canada's Leading Employers*. http://alliescanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AttractingRetainingIntegrating11.pdf

In 2011 and 2012, the majority of employers had staff composed of 10-30% visible minorities. The number of employers with 11-20% and 21-30% visible minorities on staff was similar.

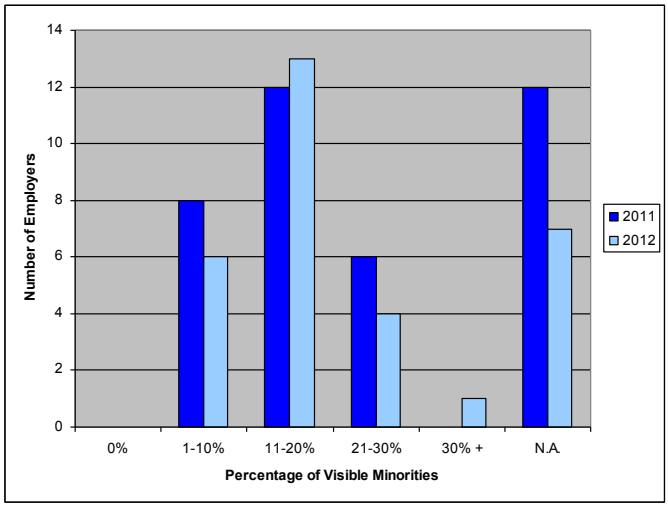
Table 7: Number of employers by percentage of visible minorities on staff, 2011 and 2012



Visible Minorities on Staff	2011	2012
0%	0	0
1-10%	4	4
11-20%	9	9
21-30%	8	9
30% or more	5	2
N.A.	12	7

In terms of management positions, the majority of employers showed 11-20% visible minorities, followed by 1-10% visible minorities.

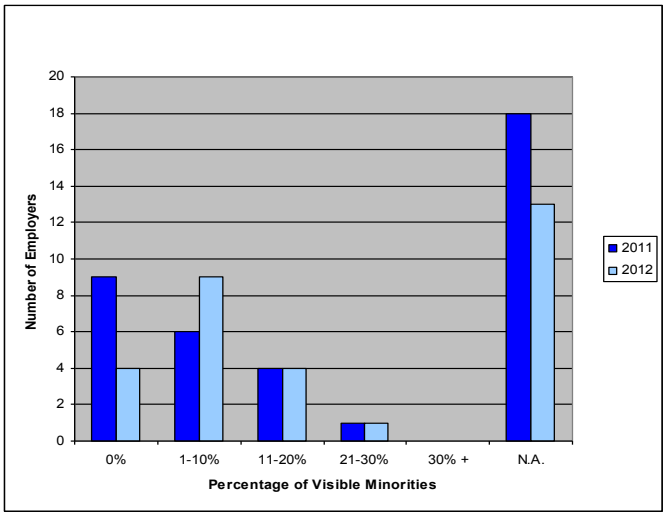
Table 8: Number of employers by percentage of visible minorities in management, 2011 and 2012



Visible Minorities in Management	2011	2012
0%	0	0
1-10%	8	6
11-20%	12	13
21-30%	6	4
30% or more	0	1
N.A.	12	7

On the other hand, for those organizations that track or report diversity on their boards, the majority had boards composed of 0% or 1-10% visible minorities.

Table 9: Number of employers by percentage of visible minorities on boards, 2011 and 2012



Visible Minorities on Boards	2011	2012
0%	9	4
1-10%	6	9
11-20%	4	4
21-30%	1	1
30% or more	0	0
N.A.	18	13

Considering the workforce availability of 15%[5] for visible minorities in Canada, these organizations are doing well in terms of staff and management, but less so in terms of the composition of their boards. This indicates that diversity in leadership is still an issue that even leading employers must continue to work towards.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study is based on a small, select group of employers with an expressed interest in employing recent immigrants, and cannot be generalized beyond the specific employers examined here. Nevertheless, these results add to our previous study and ongoing work by ALLIES.

On the whole, the leading employers identified in the *Best Employers for New Canadians* competition have increased their efforts to recruit, integrate and retain skilled immigrant employees. More employers are using each category of practice, and more employers are using combinations of these practices to enhance their workforce.

These promising upward trends indicate the growing recognition of the value that skilled immigrants bring to Canadian workplaces and our economy. They also confirm the

[5] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (2009). Data Highlights – Total Population, Members of Visible Minorities. In *2006 Employment Equity Data Report*. Retrieved from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/equality/employment_equity/tools/eedr/2006/data_reports/page06.shtml

critical role that employers play in ensuring the full and suitable employment of recent immigrants.

Immigrant employment councils, community organizations, government and other stakeholders must look to these employer leaders for meaningful immigrant employment solutions.

To this end, ALLIES recommends:

Employers should set goals and measure the representation of immigrants in their staff, management and boards.
Many employers, including federally regulated employers, track and measure the representation of women, aboriginals, people with disabilities and visible minorities. Including recent immigrants in these metrics will help indicate the impact of their hiring and integration practices.

Employers should champion the case for hiring skilled immigrants, as well as the practices that have helped make them leaders in this field.
Employers can raise their profile as good corporate citizens while also encouraging healthy competition for talent. Further, employers are likely to have the most influence over their peers, and the most practical, first-hand knowledge about how to implement immigrant employment strategies.

Immigrant employment councils, community organizations, government and other stakeholders should recognize employers for their leadership in this field, and create opportunities for these leaders to share good practices.
The pool of employers examined here are leaders in this field, and should be recognized as such. Further, they represent a wealth of knowledge and experience on successful immigrant employment practices that can be of value to other employers.

Future employer competitions and knowledge exchange events should actively seek participation from small and medium employers, as well as employers from all provinces and regions in Canada.
While large employers and employers from a few of Canada's largest provinces are well represented in the discussion on immigrant employment, it would be valuable to learn more from small and medium enterprises, which might need or use different immigrant employment strategies. Similarly, employers from smaller provinces will have insights to share on immigrant employment in areas that traditionally have lower rates of immigration.

Further research should explore leading employers' religious and cultural accommodation practices.
Many applicants discussed their religious accommodation practices, even though the application does not specifically ask about them. This could indicate high employer interest and activity – and therefore potential for learning and uptake – in this area.