

Ready to Work – Tourism: Proposal Brief

General Information

- Ready to Work – Tourism: Program to Connect Newcomers and Unemployed and Underemployed Canadians to the Tourism Sector
- No new or amended legislation or regulations are needed

Summary

Ready to Work – Tourism is a settlement program that can immediately support refugees and asylum claimants in Canada who are underemployed and unemployed by connecting them with well-paying jobs in the tourism sector. The program provides tailored training, settlement services and language skills to help individuals in Canada find and succeed in jobs in the tourism industry. Employers benefit from pre-qualified, trained candidates, HR tools geared specifically to working with newcomers, and onboarding support for new hires. This program can also be expanded to serve underemployed Canadians.

Proposal Description

Employment in the tourism sector remains around 4% below its 2019 levels, while that across the broader Canadian economy has grown by over 5%. This represents around 80,000 vacancies in tourism, and despite major efforts to recruit workers back to the sector, staffing levels remain a concern for many employers. The number of TFW permits issued for tourism-related occupations in 2023 increased dramatically since before the pandemic, but the majority of these (64%) were for occupations classified as TEER 0-3; employers are looking overseas to fill highly skilled roles that they cannot fill domestically.

The proposed program, Ready to Work - Tourism, will provide concrete training and employment support for anyone in Canada currently unemployed or underemployed. This includes newcomers to Canada (including asylum claimants and other displaced people) who have ample work experience but are not yet employment-ready in a Canadian context, as well as youth who are looking for a first job. This program will provide individualized needs assessments for job seekers, paired with appropriate training, that will allow them to enter the tourism labour force at the right level for them. It will attach economically vulnerable people to good jobs, while also helping the tourism sector meet its labour needs across all job types – from front-line roles through to supervisory and management positions.

Program aims

- Increase the number of unemployed and underemployed newcomers and Canadians in well-paying, stable, long-term employment in the tourism industry
- Enhance the ability of employers in the tourism accommodations industry to attract and retain employees

Program Design

Tourism HR Canada will lead on implementing the project, working in close collaboration with the Hotel Association of Canada, Restaurants Canada and regional delivery partners that include

settlement provider organizations (SPOs), community-based groups, and a network of fifteen provincial and territorial organizations.

Participants receive:

- Individualized assessment and tourism-specific career development services
- Tailored referrals and wraparound support to mitigate their unique challenges hindering their participation in the labour market
- Education/training on essential employability skills and job-specific skills and certifications to meet employers' needs
- Language training before and after placement
- Job placements and onboarding employment coaching
- Mentorship support during their onboarding period to support their workplace integration and career development, expand their professional and social networks, and reduce social isolation

The project will provide tourism businesses/employers with:

- Access to tools to improve human resource management capacity, with strategies to address new and emergent workforce issues and further diversification of the tourism workforce
- Professional development opportunities in enhancing leadership skills and building an inclusive workplace culture for equity-deserving groups
- Qualified candidates to fill job vacancies from diverse talent pools
- Onboarding support for new hires to mitigate any integration challenges
- Improved working relations and collaboration with community service providers and supports linked to labour supply

Career development service agencies, immigrant serving agencies, and other community groups working with the target populations seeking employment, will also benefit from:

- Tools, supports, and networks to help connect job seekers with tourism employment

Background and Program Interactions

Destination Employment 2019

This proposal is a revival and expansion of the 2019 Government of Canada program, **Destination Employment**, designed to help connect Syrian refugees with hotel sector jobs by coordinating with local businesses, settlement and government agencies. Ready to Work – Tourism would expand the program to the entire tourism industry and to unemployed and underemployed individuals in Canada.

While the program was interrupted by the COVID pandemic, results measurement found that: there was strong qualitative evidence to support that the pilot was meeting the needs of both newcomers and employers. (Please see attached for IRCC's final evaluation report and a third party program audit performed by Goss Gilroy.)

Findings from the employee focus groups revealed that the pilot helped to meet their needs by:

- Assisting them improve their English language skills;
- Assisting them to learn about the Canadian culture, the Canadian job market, and the Canadian workplace culture;
- Assisting them to build on skills that would help elevate their competitiveness in the Canadian job market, and;

- Providing a space in which social connections could be forged and networking could begin to occur.

Findings from the employer focus groups revealed that the pilot helped to meet the needs of employers by:

- Providing employers with access to a new pool of pre-trained and job-ready candidates;
- Taking on the HR tasks of matching employer job descriptions to suitable candidates that could then be proposed to managers for consideration; and,
- Providing opportunities through which managers could assess the capacity and fit of prospective candidates by allowing DE participants to complete training in their establishment
- Providing a “turnkey” program that met their needs
- Many employers noted the success of the mentoring component

Rationale

With existing infrastructure, the Ready to Work – New Canadians program can be immediately mobilized to help unemployed and underemployed individuals find well-paying jobs in the tourism industry.

The overall project objectives are to:

- Establish a rapid response mechanism to equip provincial bodies and settlement serving agencies meet the urgent settlement needs of newcomers to Canada
- Assist tourism industry with the recruitment of ‘job ready’ new hires during a period of recovery and rapid growth and competition for a limited labour pool
- Create a trusted system ensuring all program stakeholders accountable and able to mitigate risks and concerns about employee exploitation
- Enhance newcomers’ tourism sector knowledge, in-demand skills, and workplace language competencies
- Reduce newcomers’ social isolation, expand their networks, increase their self-confidence
- Increase employer capacity to attract and retain a diverse workforce with useful, relevant human resource strategies and training tools to build inclusive workplaces for equity-deserving groups.
- Improve coordination of community-based partnerships to help prevent duplication of services, improve efficacy, and supports for targeted client/job seekers.
- Improve the image of tourism as a destination for employment and good jobs
- Build more inclusive communities, help remove barriers, and promote equitable access to economic participation for immigrants and refugees, thus foster greater diversity within Canadian workplaces and the community at large

Costing and Scalability

This funding would cover program coordination, intake, language and workplace skills training, job placement, mentorship, wraparound support, employer engagement, program marketing and promotion, job retention support, and resources development. Elements of this project including program and material development, and employer and community partner training will be self-sustaining over the long term.

NUMBER OF PARTNERSHIPS PROVINCES/TERRITORIES	LENGTH of Program	NUMBER EMPLOYERS Engaged	NUMBER COMMUNITY PARTNERS Involved	NUMBER PARTICIPANTS (80% Employed)	BUDGET (over 3 Years)
6-7 Provinces/Territories	3 years	80-100	20-30	2000	\$40M

Stakeholder and Communications Considerations

The 2019 Destination Employment Program was launched on site at a hotel with the Minister of Immigration, the Minister of Tourism, industry stakeholders and media coverage.