



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL
HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

CONSEIL CANADIEN POUR LES
RESSOURCES HUMAINES EN AGRICULTURE

CAHRC-CCRHA

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT:
RESEARCHING BARRIERS TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT PILOT
PROJECTS

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) is a national, non-profit organization whose focus is to address human resource issues facing agricultural operations across Canada. In March 2016, CAHRC released several key findings from their labour market research. One of these key findings was that by 2025, the agriculture workforce may be short 114,000 workers.

In an effort to address the challenges faced by Canadian agricultural producers, CAHRC investigated barriers to employment and opportunities to increase participation in employment among traditionally underrepresented groups in the Canadian population. This initial investigation led to two pilot projects - one targeting persons with disabilities and one targeting immigrant workers.

The purpose of the summative evaluation is to assess the impact of the planning, implementation, and communication of the pilot projects as well as to determine if the pilot projects attained any of the intended goals and performance metrics. To conduct the summative evaluation, monthly reports and feedback from employment coordinators, employment services agency supervisors and the CAHRC project manager were reviewed.

Overall, the pilot projects were a success. There were 91 new hires as a result of the pilot projects (46 new Canadians and 45 persons with disabilities). The new Canadians originated from countries such as Eritrea, Syria, Africa, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Ethiopia. The range of disabilities for the persons with disabilities pilot project included depression, bi-polar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and learning and development disorders. The people that found employment as a result of the pilot projects reported being satisfied with their work and the employers that hired the workers reported being satisfied with their work performance. In many placements, the original work term was extended and promotions made.

The employment coordinators were successful in achieving the intended goals and outcomes of the project, including: initiating active outreach activities to find potential employers, informing employers about the services and clients available through an employment services agency, coordinating the placement of clientele in agricultural operations, and arranging activities that promote communication and understanding of agriculture employment opportunities. The challenges that were identified related to logistics, education and certification, economic factors, and lack of understanding about the agriculture industry.

This report presents a summative evaluation by project stakeholders of the progress and impact of the pilot projects. The sections that follow will include an introduction to the Labour Market Information project, a description of the pilot projects, and a summary of the findings of the evaluation activities.

2.0 Introduction

By 2016, updated information from their labour market information research estimated the number of new workers needed to satisfy workforce demand by 2025 is 114,000 people.

As a proven leader in innovative and customized labour market solutions for the Canadian agricultural sector, CAHRC launched a multi-faceted initiative to address labour market challenges for the agriculture industry in Canada. This initiative included four separate projects:

- The Labour Market Information (LMI): Agricultural Supply and Demand Forecast Model
- The National Agricultural Occupational Framework (NAOF) and Labour Market Support
- The Agri-Food Workforce Action Plan (WAP)
- Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture



Labour Market Information: Agricultural Supply and Demand Forecast Model

This three-year project is divided into two sub-projects:

- The first sub-project defines a labour market supply and demand model which will provide an overview of the current and forecasted labour supply; and
- The second sub-project identifies labour and skills gaps through an investigation of opportunities and barriers to employment among traditionally underrepresented groups (i.e., Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and immigrants).

National Agricultural Occupational Framework and Labour Market Support

This project is a comprehensive study of today's agriculture industry, specifically the skills required of exact jobs within particular commodity groups. This project details job information for entry-level, experienced, supervisory, and managerial roles. The Council has defined a multitude of job related materials (job descriptions, job ads, interview guides) for 66 modern agricultural positions. Through the project, important employment tools have been prepared to assist employers to ensure they use a best practice approach to managing their staff including: AgriTalent, AgriHR Toolkit, AgriJob Match, and AgriSkills..

Agri-Food Workforce Action Plan

This project is led by a Labour Task Force (LTF) that is comprised of representatives from Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain Roundtables. The LTF examines issues related to labour management and shortages. The LTFs has been focusing on clarifying the impacts of labour shortages on competitiveness across all commodities and regions. The leadership of this project communicates effective short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to agriculture labour issues including the industry's need for continued access to non-domestic agricultural workers.

Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture

The aim of this project is to examine and address critical barriers in the advancement of women in Canadian agriculture. A strategic program to support improved access to leadership opportunities and business success is being developed for implementation through the engagement of women and stakeholders within agricultural communities. Guides to support improved diversity of agricultural associations and businesses are being prepared as part of the initiative.

2.1 Addressing Barriers Pilot Projects Summative Evaluation

The purpose of this summative evaluation is to assess the impact of one sub-project of the Labour Market Information project (mentioned above). This report presents information specific to the identification of labour and skills gaps through an investigation of opportunities and barriers to employment among traditionally underrepresented groups (i.e., Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and immigrants).

To conduct the summative evaluation, several sources of information were reviewed:

- A semi-structured matching report was completed by the project manager and employment coordinator from each pilot site each month. The matching report questions explored employer outreach, employment workshops, applicant experiences, challenges encountered, extenuating circumstances that may have affected successful employment matches, and general comments and concerns.
- Project managers and employment services agency supervisors were asked to provide feedback on the pilot projects in terms of successes, challenges, and changes for future initiatives via an email questionnaire.
- Pilot project parameters and metrics.



- Additional project reports and news articles.

Overall, the feedback from interviewees was positive. The work of the pilot project led to new placement opportunities and the creation of partnerships with new agriculture employers. The clients that found placements as a result of the pilot projects are doing well in their new roles and the employers are satisfied with their work. The challenges that were identified related to lack of industry support, changes in the economy, lack of knowledge about the agriculture industry, and the rural nature of agriculture.

This report presents a summative evaluation by project stakeholders of the impact of the pilot projects. The sections that follow will include a description of the pilot projects, the evaluation methods employed to conduct the summative evaluation, and a summary of the findings of the summative evaluation.

3.0 Description of the Addressing Barriers Pilot Project Initiative

This section will summarize the preliminary research that was conducted prior to actioning the pilot projects, the goals of the pilot projects, the recruitment and selection of pilot project sites, and the implementation of the pilot projects.

3.1 Preliminary Research

The preliminary research that led to the pilot projects began in August (2014) as part of the Researching Barriers to Agricultural Employment project. Preliminary research included:

- Researching publicly available data to determine characteristics of underrepresented group in the agricultural workforce;
- Conducting an environmental scan of existing programs and services, including support and training programs that assist individuals into the workforce;
- Conducting interviews with organizations directly involved in labour force development among underrepresented groups;
- Presenting research findings to project advisory committees to narrow search populations to three groups;
- Investigating current and projected supply of human resources from three selected populations (i.e., Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, immigrants);
- Conducting interviews with members from each population to identify barriers to employment and opportunities for increased participation;
- Conducting focus groups with agricultural business owners to validate research findings and identify barriers to employment and opportunities for increased participation from their perspective; and
- Conducting research to identify examples of successful employment of members from the three identified populations.

The information found during the preliminary research was used to inform the design and goals of the pilot projects.

3.2 Goals of the Pilot Projects

The original intent of the Addressing Barriers to Agricultural Employment project was to move forward with one pilot project; however, at the conclusion of the research phase, the project advisory committees suggested CAHRC move forward with two pilot projects. The next step in terms of outreach was to develop Expression of Interest Invitations which would be distributed to employment services agencies and farm organizations



representing individual farmers in the hopes of making successful employment matches. The Expression of Interest Invitation can be found in Appendix A, page 14.

Before approaching underrepresented groups and employers to invite their participation in the pilot projects, the project managers and advisory committees outlined several pilot project parameters which were used to evaluate those who express interest in participating in one of the two pilot projects. The goals of each pilot project were that:

1. Each employment services agency will place 20 clients in agricultural jobs that could lead to long-term employment.
2. Individuals will be placed on existing farms or agricultural businesses rather than promoting the development of new agricultural operations.
3. Individuals must be employed for at least four months.
4. Placements will occur between September 2015 - September 2016.

3.3 Recruitment and Selection of Pilot Project Sites

Recruitment for the pilot projects was initiated through the development of the Expression of Interest Invitation. The Expression of Interest Invitation was distributed in August 2015 to more than 150 agricultural employers, 35 employment services agencies, and dozens of industry associations. Of all those contacted, eleven employers and eight agencies expressed interest in participating. Each employer that expressed interest was sent the pilot project parameters and asked to comment regarding their ability to meet each parameter. Employers that could meet the majority, if not all of the parameters were then assessed against the employment services agencies that expressed interest. Based on their ability to meet the project parameters and to find a successful geographical match with an employment services agency, two sets were chosen to participate in the pilot projects. They were:

1. Calgary Catholic Immigration Society + Sunterra and All Seasons Mushrooms (immigrant population)
2. Saskatchewan Abilities Council + Olymel (persons with disabilities)

3.4 Pilot Project Implementation

With two pilot project matches identified, a Request for Proposal was developed to hire two employment coordinators, one for each location. The roles of each employment coordinator were to:

- Coordinate the placement of clientele in agricultural operations;
- Work closely with job seekers to understand the specific needs of the clientele;
- Identify agricultural employers that have job openings available and are interested in employing newcomers to Canada and persons with disabilities;
- Initiate active outreach activities to find potential employers and to visit job sites to learn about the jobs available in order to assist with making appropriate job placements;
- Inform potential employers about the services available through employment services agencies;
- Work with the employer and the employment services agency throughout the placement process to ensure both are satisfied with the placement and to troubleshoot problems as required;
- Work with employers to review and/or create job specifications and job descriptions;
- Arrange for a job fair(s) at the employment services agency with selected agricultural employers;



- Arrange activities that promote communication and understanding of agriculture employment opportunities such as agriculture site visits for other employment staff within the organization and hosting information sessions for agriculture employers;
- Provide or arrange for cultural sensitivity training, if required;
- Provide guidance to develop or adapt an orientation program including safety training, if required;
- Provide information about local or regional organizations (e.g., ethno-cultural), if required;
- Assist in monitoring progress of client(s);
- Conduct an interim evaluation with all stakeholders and be prepared to make adjustments to the placement if necessary;
- Document project activities, outcomes, lessons learned, and suggestions for improvements; and
- Submit regular matching (progress) reports.

Two employment coordinators were hired from the applications received. Following the hiring of the employment coordinators, an orientation package was developed specific to each employment services agency. The package included:

- Information about the Addressing Barriers in Agriculture project and the activities that were completed up to the point of hire;
- Information about the employment services agency (e.g., mission, vision, mandate, contact person, confidentiality agreement);
- Information about The Competency Group (e.g., what the company does, its role in the pilot projects, contact person);
- Information about CAHRC (e.g., what the organization does, its role in the pilot projects, contact person);
- An orientation checklist; and
- The template for the monthly matching report to be completed by each employment coordinator.

Each employment coordinator then developed a project work plan to be followed for the duration of the project, reporting on progress against that work plan as part of the monthly matching report.

4.0 Evaluation of the Addressing Barriers Pilot Projects

The purpose of the summative evaluation is to assess the implementation of the pilot projects as well as to determine if and how the pilot projects helped to reach any of the intended outcomes.

A participatory approach was taken to ensure the evaluation is consistent with the planning and decision-making needs of the project committees, sponsors, and project manager. The project manager and project steering committees provided input into the evaluation plan and data collection instruments (i.e., matching report template, email questionnaire) to ensure that all relevant issues are covered. As such, the evaluation of the pilot projects included a mixture of formative and summative evaluation activities.

The formative evaluation activities included monthly matching reports which were developed for the employment coordinators to capture monthly activities related to matching employees to prospective employers. The template featured questions about employer outreach, employment workshops, applicant experiences, challenges encountered, adherence to project timelines, and general comments and concerns.

To conduct the summative evaluation, monthly matching reports were reviewed in detail, and employment services agency employment coordinators and supervisors were asked to provide feedback on a questionnaire



about the strengths, challenges, lessons learned, unexpected outcomes, and success stories from the pilot projects.

The sections that follow will provide a summary of the matching report activities and summative questionnaire responses.

5.0 Summative Evaluation Findings

5.1 Matching Report Findings

Matching reports were prepared by each employment coordinator beginning January 2016 from the Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society (CCIS) Pilot, and March 2016 from the Saskatchewan Abilities Council (SAC) Pilot. The matching reports provide details on monthly employer outreach, employment workshops, applicant experiences, challenges encountered, and general comments and concerns.

The responses were analyzed to identify common emerging themes. The findings are summarized under the following headings: employer outreach, pre-employment workshops and job fairs, in-house support, applicant participation, applicant perspectives, and challenges encountered.

Employer Outreach

The employment coordinators for each pilot project were successful in contacting several new agricultural employers each month. Overall, many employers were receptive to the idea of employing or considering employing immigrants and persons with disabilities. As of October 2016, **91 new hires** occurred as a result of the pilot projects.

Pre-employment Workshops and Job Fairs

The Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) hosted job fairs in May, June, and July with JBS Canada, a meat processing operation with a facility in Brooks, Alberta. This involved a 2-hour presentation for JBS at the CCIS office and a full-day tour of the Brooks facility and community of Brooks. As a result of these job fairs, 24 people were hired by JBS Canada.

Several pre-employment workshops were conducted by the Saskatchewan Abilities Council (SAC) over the course of the pilot project. Each month, the SAC offered resume writing workshops, interview readiness workshops, and one-on-one employment support workshops. In addition, the SAC employment coordinator attended several job fairs in various locations across Saskatoon and distributed promotional materials at community fairs and employment services agencies.

In-house Support

Employment coordinators were supported by colleagues and supervisors of the employment services agency as well as select advisory committee members. For the CCIS project, the employment coordinator indicated that the following personnel assisted during the pilot project:

- Ron Volk - Overall Managing Employment Services Coordinator;
- Chris Thomas - Rural Area Employment Coordinator;
- Silvana Primiterra - Employment Specialist;
- Eden Weredu - Enhancing Refugee Employment Program (CCIS);
- David Wright - Employing Coordinator (Calgary Immigration Education Society);
- Bruce Randall - CRIEC Representative;
- Jeremy Dutton - Mentorship Program Coordinator;



- Emily Ross - CIWA Business Development Coordinator;
- Edmee Moojen - Talent Pool, Research and Stakeholder Coordinator;
- Carmen Coussous - Syrian Refugee Employment Counsellor;
- Gordana Radan - Business, Employment and Training Services Manager; and
- Scott Dundas - Labour Recruitment Manager, Government of Alberta, Agriculture and Forestry.

For the SAC project, the employment coordinator indicated that the following personnel assisted during the pilot project:

- Janine Baumann - SAC Program Manager;
- Emily Hurd - Partners in Employment Senior Supervisor;
- Vocational Planners and Job Developers; and
- Regina, Yorkton & Swift Current Partners in Employment office team.

Applicant Participation

As of October 2016, the CCIS project assisted 207 applicants, of which 46 people were hired by agricultural operations. The breakdown of job applicants for the CCIS pilot are as follows:

- African (country not specified) - 18¹
- Canadian - 2
- Chinese - 1
- Ethiopian - 3
- Eritrea - 109
- Indian - 13
- Iranian - 22
- Iraqi - 6
- Latin - 6
- Pakistani - 5
- Philippine - 2
- Syrian - 19
- Ukraine - 1

As of October 2016, the SAC project saws **45 new hires** by agricultural operations. The applicants for the SAC pilot project have a range of self-identified disabilities including, for example: anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities.

Applicant Perspectives

There was a range of experiences reported by the applicants to the employment coordinators. The employment coordinator for the CCIS project reported that applicants' experiences with employment placement initiatives was generally positive; however, there were other contributing factors that affected the success of employment matching for immigrant populations. For example:

- For some applicants taking English classes was more important than searching for a job;
- For some applicants travelling to a rural location was not an option because they did not have transportation; and

¹ Applicants categorized as African are not part of the count of other listed nationalities that form Africa.



- For some applicants, there were unmatched expectations. Applicants were provided with a job offer which was below their skill level (i.e., they possessed Bachelor and/or Masters degrees).

The experience of the applicants from the SAC project was also positive. The employment coordinator conducted follow up with clients and employers on a monthly basis. All reported the jobs were going well and the employers were satisfied with the placement. In some instances, the original employment term was extended and an employee was given a pay increase after just one month of employment.

Challenges Encountered with Matching Employees to Employers

Many challenges were encountered by employment coordinators as they sought to match potential employees with potential employers. These challenges can be summarized under four headings:

1. Logistical Challenges for Prospective Employees
2. Educational and Certification Challenges for Employers and Employees
3. Lack of Understanding About Agriculture Industry
4. Economic Factors in the Agriculture Job Market

Logistical Challenges for Prospective Employees

Prospective employees encountered several challenges finding employment in the agriculture job market such as a shortage of local available housing and a lack of public transportation. Other challenges that prevented successful matches included factors such as seasonal work, long or irregular hours, or lack of flexibility in obtaining full- or part-time work depending on the employee's specific needs. Moreover, employers were often looking for employees who were considered 'jack of all trades', which made employment matching difficult as these kinds of employees were difficult to find.

Educational and Certification Challenges for Employers and Employees

Barriers also exist in hiring with respect to education, certification, and qualification. Some applicants held qualifications such as university degrees and preferred not to consider a career in agriculture because of this qualification. Also, minority groups such as newcomers to Canada may not be considered suitable for employment due to language barriers and not possessing a Canadian driver's license. The possession of a Class 1A driver's license was also reported to be a barrier for prospective employees. The employment coordinator for the SAC project indicated there was a perceptual barrier for hiring persons with disabilities that is based upon incomplete information regarding specific disabilities (e.g., some interpret disability to be physical disability wherein someone could not perform the physical roles associated to a particular job role). Employment coordinators identified that a shortage of training on heavy equipment and farm machinery imposed a barrier in terms of meeting required job qualifications.

Lack of Understanding About Agriculture Industry

Employment coordinators indicated there appears to be an implicit lack of interest in careers in agriculture based on a lack of understanding of the opportunities in this sector. Others challenges found by employment coordinators included religious convictions such as kosher beliefs regarding the handling of meat, the strenuous and physical nature of a career in agriculture, and the perception that working in agriculture is not considered fashionable or 'cool'. The essence of the barrier here is that some may be lacking information about the industry that would provide a more holistic and balanced view at what a career in agriculture may offer.

Economic Factors in the Agriculture Job Market



Barriers also exist in economic trends that influence the job market in the agriculture sector. In some cases, the business needs of an employer shift and as a result, the needs in terms of human resources shift. These shifts can result in delays and stall-outs in hiring prospective candidates. In other cases, a business is multinational, or houses its headquarters in another geographical location. As a result of this, there is a disengagement of the employer in terms of local interest and support of local initiatives. Additionally, due to downturns in other sectors (i.e., from the oil industry), a surplus of potential candidates led to increased competition for available positions.

5.2 Employment Services Agency Questionnaire Feedback

The employment coordinators and employment services agency supervisors were asked to provide feedback on their experiences in implementing the pilot project via an email questionnaire. The responses from the questionnaire are summarized below.

Strengths of the Pilot Projects

Each employment services agency identified several strengths that resulted from participation in the pilot projects. These strengths can be summarized under the headings: Working Through an Employment Services Agency, and Placements and Partnerships.

Working Through an Employment Services Agency

Operating each pilot project in conjunction with an employment services agency was identified as a strength by both pilot project sites. Agency supervisors indicated that the availability of a dedicated staff member with an agricultural background and interest in the agricultural sector who could work with CCIS staff and agriculture employers was very beneficial. This connection enabled CCIS employment staff to have a clearer understanding of what the agricultural industry entails and the types of jobs and career opportunities that are available.

The employment coordinators appreciated the support received from experienced team members within the employment services agencies. Working with an employment services agency also provided the coordinators with access to the support and services of satellite offices or employment services agencies in other communities aside from the designated pilot site. While the pilot projects may have led to the initiation of discussions with other employment services agencies, these connections remain in place with employment services agencies working together to conduct job searches for clients and connecting with employers for potential job placements.

Placements and Partnerships

Through sustained efforts in reaching out to existing and new employers, CCIS and SAC now have an expanded network of agriculture employers that can be nurtured for continued partnerships. The outreach activities provided agriculture employers with a better understanding of the services that CCIS and SAC provide as well as the type of clients available for hire.

Challenges Encountered During the Pilot Projects

Employment coordinators and employment services agency supervisors identified several challenges that arose over the course of the pilot projects. The challenges are summarized under the headings: Changes in the Economy, Matching Jobs to Clients and Clients to Jobs, The Rural Nature of Agriculture, Lack of Industry Support, and Lack of Knowledge about Agriculture.

Changes in the Economy



Over the term of this LMI project (2013-2016), the Canadian economy has changed. In 2013, employers in most sectors were having difficulty in obtaining qualified workers. This presented an opportune time to reach out to underrepresented groups; however, since that time, changes in the economy (i.e., layoffs in the oil and gas industry) have lessened the need for agriculture employers to actively reach out to persons from underrepresented groups.

Matching Jobs to Clients and Clients to Jobs

Often, the needs of agricultural employers and the skills and abilities of clients did not match. For example, employers were often looking for 'jacks of all trades' - someone who can run farm machinery, fix machinery, and drive large trucks (requiring a license different from a passenger car license). Agricultural employers were often looking for seasonal employees who could work long hours (e.g., 18 hours/day) that made the job for some clients (e.g., persons with physical disabilities) unmanageable. Many clients of the employment services agencies did not have on-farm experience, did not drive or have access to a vehicle, and were not capable of working full time.

The Rural Nature of Agriculture

The rural nature of agriculture presented challenges in a couple of ways. For many job openings, the clients would need to relocate to rural areas. Aside from the physical relocation, clients would also need to find accommodation, religious institutions, ethnic food, jobs for spouses, schools for children, and community support services. For many persons with disabilities, relocation was not an option at all.

Another challenge with respect to the rural nature of agriculture is that people looking for work or employers looking for workers may not have an employment services agency in their community. The employment coordinators worked with employment services agencies in rural locations, when possible, but there were many communities that did not have this service. For example, the employment coordinator for the SAC project received a call from a farmer in Meath Park but was unable to assist due to lack of knowledge about potential clients or employment services agencies in that specific area.

Lack of Industry Support

Challenges were identified related to lack of buy in from the agriculture industry and lack of existing formal partnerships with employers. The employment coordinator for SAC found that although farmers seemed genuinely interested in the pilot project, some farmers could not see how hiring a person with a disability would benefit them. Furthermore, the immediate need to fill a position(s) did not allow for long-term planning or in many cases, training, as the employer required the person to start right away.

The CCIS employment coordinator heard frustration from primary agriculture employers in not being able to secure the employees they need. This frustration was further exasperated by restrictions in place by the federal government which prevents immigrants with a farming background to access permanent residency status more readily.

Employment coordinators found a lack of formal partnerships among ministries of agriculture, employment services agencies, and agriculture employers. While the pilot projects made positive gains in establishing partnerships, more work is needed to advance the agriculture industry.

Lack of Knowledge about Agriculture

Through the course of the pilot projects, it was apparent there was a general lack of knowledge about agriculture by employment agencies and job applicants. The majority of clients of the employment services



agencies did not grow up on a farm or spend any time on or near a farm. Raising awareness of agricultural career opportunities and benefits with the general population is critical. While employment coordinators indicated that *Ag in the Classroom* does a great job of educating students about agriculture, incorporating agriculture into school curriculum on an ongoing basis (e.g., from kindergarten through twelfth grade) would help to address this challenge. Coupled with the lack of knowledge about agriculture is the lack of introductory and short-term training programs specific to agriculture. In cases where the agencies found clients interested in agricultural jobs, they often had no firsthand experience in the industry and were unable to find relevant training for these individuals to meet their immediate training needs.

Lessons Learned

The pilot projects enabled networks to be established between the two employment services agencies and agricultural employers that will continue to be developed. The pilot projects laid the ground work for other employment services agency staff to build on the accomplishments achieved to date and to develop new goals and strategies to continue the work moving forward. The barriers that were identified for each group in the pilot projects with respect to finding work in the agriculture industry will be ongoing; however, as strategies are developed and shared, the industry should see a positive increase in participation of persons from traditionally underrepresented groups.

The projects afforded an opportunity to provide labour market supports in the agriculture industry for newcomers and persons with disabilities. Designated employment coordinators were instrumental in ensuring clients interested in a job or pursuing a career in agriculture have a contact person sensitive to their needs and the needs of the industry.

Recommended Changes

Employment coordinators and employment services agency supervisors were asked what they would change if they were to participate in another similar initiative. Respondents said they would:

- Prefer a more focused approach targeting one or two sectors of the industry (e.g., processing);
- Prefer more in-depth work with one or more of the agricultural associations;
- Prefer working more closely with rural communities to develop "At a Glance Community Profiles" and "Community Reports" to assist in relocation efforts;
- Establish formal partnerships with employers (i.e., written, signed agreements);
- Focus on grass roots of industry to garner buy in for the project; and
- Clarify the role of government, specifically supports that could be provided and the parameters surrounding those supports.

Success Stories

There were several success stories identified as a result of the pilot projects. These include:

- Employment coordinators connected with more than 175 individual agriculture employers.
- 17 Eritrean refugees, primarily from Israel, have relocated to Brooks, Alberta and have gained employment at JBS Foods. The refugees have found accommodation, gone through training, and are receiving ongoing support from staff at Brooks and County Immigration Services.
- A 4-member Iraqi family has been employed at JBS Foods. The family moved to Brooks two weeks after arriving in Canada.



- Opportunities at Rhodes Raspberries and Black Currants, and Agriculture in the Classroom have resulted in excellent placements for persons with disabilities with very supportive employers. In both locations, the original term of employment has been extended.
- The pilot projects enabled staff from the employment services agencies to learn about the agriculture industry. Staff participated in monthly agriculture awareness and education presentations and tours. This work has assisted staff with identifying agriculture-related jobs, the skills required to perform particular jobs, and the types of clients that would excel in various jobs.

6.0 Recommendations

To build on the work of the pilot projects, it will be important that CAHRC continues to work closely with employment services agencies and agricultural employers. Working more closely with producer organizations by presenting at annual general meetings, conferences, and career fairs will help to establish relationships and general targeted discussion. Clarifying government involvement (e.g., roles and supports) will also be critical to advance this work for the industry.

More research is required to better assist groups such as new Canadians, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and youth to find meaningful employment in the agriculture sector. Targeted initiatives could include:

- Continue the existing pilots. Leverage the findings of the strengths and challenges of pilot projects to update the project approach to further advance success. Add additional under-represented groups to the projects. Validate the proposed new approach with employment coordinators, employment agencies, clients, and agricultural employers. Continue to gather evaluation data and adjust the approach on an ongoing basis.
- Roll out new pilots in other regions using the learnings from the pilot projects.
- Develop case studies that highlight the successes that are being achieved within the pilot projects. Case studies should highlight practical strategies from the perspectives of clients, employers, and employment agencies.
- Expand the role of rural municipalities in agricultural employment, as they are keenly interested in economic development and job creation. Create research projects that seek to form partnerships to assist with employment creation and matching. For example, outreach could occur directly with rural municipalities or through rural municipality associations such as the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association.
- Develop introductory information and training about job opportunities in the agriculture industry. Tailor the information and training to specific audiences such as potential employees, employment agencies, and the general public.
- Develop career awareness materials and support broader awareness of the available jobs and careers in the industry.
- Replicate the model with other under-represented groups to remove barriers for women, youth, aboriginals and refugees.
- Conduct research into innovative ways to engage youth in agricultural employment. Seek out existing successful models that could be leveraged or replicated. For example, Fusion Charlottetown (<http://fusioncharlottetown.ca>) is a volunteer-based non-profit organization challenging young professionals, aged 20-40, to be active in shaping their city's future. The founding Board of Directors is made up of determined local young leaders across a variety of industries. Their model is grassroots and their mandate is to connect, engage and inspire their members to get involved. *The 21 Leaders for the*



21st Century, commonly known as 21inc.(www.21inc.ca) is an innovative non-profit organization dedicated to fostering entrepreneurial leaders aged 40 years old and under across Atlantic Canada.

- Develop a youth engagement panel of young agricultural leaders from across Canada who generate new ideas for improving the image of work in the agriculture sector and increasing employment.



Appendix A - Expression of Interest Invitation



Call for Expression of Interest for Agriculture Employers to participate in an exciting pilot project designed to increase participation of traditionally underrepresented groups of workers!

Are you having difficulty finding and retaining employees? Would you like to find new sources of employees?

Research shows that Aboriginal people, Immigrants, and Persons with Disabilities are three populations that are generally underrepresented in the Canadian workforce. For example, did you know:

- More than 1.4 million people in Canada identify themselves as an Aboriginal person?
- Canada is expected to welcome between 260,000 and 285,000 new permanent residents in 2015?
- Approximately 3.8 million people, aged 15 and older, reported being limited in their daily activities because of a disability according to the Canadian Survey on Disability (2012)?

And yet, agricultural employers have difficulty filling the positions available in their businesses. Unfortunately, history shows that many of these potential workers do not consider a job or career in the agricultural industry. We would like to change that!

An Invitation to Agriculture Employers

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) will be conducting two pilot projects in which employment coordinators will work with employment services agencies to place underrepresented groups within agricultural employment. CAHRC is inviting agriculture employers to identify their interest in participating in one of these pilot projects.

For further information or to confirm your interest in participating in a pilot project, please contact [Lori MacDonald](#) at The Competency Group.



Benefits to Agriculture Employers

- Find new sources of employees.
- Learn how employment services agencies can help you find long term, productive employees.
- Take advantage of the supports that employment agencies provide to ensure their clients are successful on the job.
- Create win-win partnerships with employment agencies, and the Canadian Agricultural HR Council, that will continue long after the pilot project is completed.
- Get practical human resource advice and tools from an employment coordinator throughout the pilot project.

Objectives of the Pilot Project

The objectives of the Employing Underrepresented Groups within Agriculture Pilot Projects are to:

- Create sustainable networks between employment services agencies and agriculture employers that support ongoing placement of people from the three underrepresented groups within agriculture settings;
- Increase the awareness of agricultural employers about the services offered by employment services agencies and of the potential of the three populations in the workforce;
- Increase the knowledge and understanding of employment services agencies of agriculture jobs and career opportunities;
- Create sustainable strategies to address the barriers to employment of the three underrepresented groups that can be replicated across the sector;
- Provide meaningful work within agriculture for people from the three underrepresented groups; and
- Employ at least 40 people (20 within each pilot project) from the underrepresented groups for at least 4 months toward a goal of long-term employment.

Role of an Employer Participating in the Pilot Project

- Work with the employment services agency and employment coordinator to employ persons from one or all of these groups on your operation; and
- Employ people from any or all of the three underrepresented groups in agriculture for at least 4 months toward a goal of long-term employment. Note: We do not expect you to hire all 20 people!



Role of the Employment Coordinator

- Identify agriculture employers that have job openings available and are interested in employing people from these three underrepresented groups;
- Match suitable employees to the needs of the agricultural operation;
- Visit job sites to learn more about the jobs available in order to make appropriate job placements;
- Inform employers about the services available through employment services agencies (e.g., employment assistance, language services, community outreach, multi-cultural education programs);
- Work with the employer and the organization throughout the placement to ensure that both the employer and employee are satisfied with the placement and troubleshoot problems as required; and
- Provide human resource assistance to the agricultural employer.

Pilot Project Timeline

- Job placements are made any time between November 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016
- Pilot project evaluation activities will occur from May to August, 2016
- Pilot projects are completed by August 2016