

Note: This is an overview of a 60-minute webinar. For details and additional resources, view the recording and slides available at www.imprintproject.org.

What Can the United States Learn from Other Countries?

While the United States has long been a beacon for highly skilled immigrants, it has typically taken a hands-off approach to integrating newcomers.

In contrast, Canada takes a more proactive approach. In this brief, we highlight two Canadian integration programs spearheaded by Maytree and discuss:

- How Canada is helping skilled immigrants gain suitable employment
- The critical role of cities in immigrant integration and innovative practices that promote diversity and inclusion
- Tips for replicating similar practices in the US



Maytree: Tackling Poverty Created by Integration Failures

Maytree (www.maytree.com) is a private Canadian charitable foundation committed to reducing poverty and inequality in Canada and to building strong civic communities.



Among its areas of focus is **reducing poverty experienced by immigrants and refugees to Canada, due to failures to effectively integrate the foreign-born population.**

Although historically a country of immigrants, Canada's demographic profile is undergoing unprecedented changes. By 2017, it is estimated that 22% of Canada's residents will be foreign-born. Of the 250,000 people who emigrate to Canada annually from all over the world, the largest cohort (over 60%) come as skilled immigrants.

Yet despite their qualifications, **only 1 in 4 skilled immigrants are employed in jobs that utilize their skills and education level.** A recent study found that employers discount their international experience by 70%. Education obtained abroad is discounted by 30%.

Maytree tackles immigrant integration issues through two programs that promote systemic change:

- **ALLIES** works to make employers "immigrant confident" and "immigrant competent"
- **Cities of Migration** shares innovative integration practices from cities around the world

Lessons from Canada: Turning Employers into Champions for Immigrants

ALLIES (Assisting Local Leaders in Immigrant Employment Strategies) supports local efforts in Canadian cities to successfully adapt and implement programs that further the suitable employment of skilled immigrants. It takes ideas and best practices from one city and replicates them across Canada.



<http://alliescanada.ca/>

It began in 2003 with the creation of the **Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)**, which brought together multiple levels of government, post-secondary institutions, occupation regulatory bodies, and most importantly employers. TRIEC focuses on helping immigrants and employers gain access to one another through reducing common employment barriers.

ALLIES has provided resources and funding to immigrant employment councils in 10 cities across Canada. It creates impact locally through:

- **Internship Program:** helps newcomers gain their first Canadian professional experience
- **National Mentoring Initiative:** supports cities in developing, implementing and enhancing mentoring programs for skilled immigrants in their communities (*read more about mentoring below*)
- **Hireimmigrants.ca:** provides employers with online, interactive tools and resources to support the recruitment, integration and retention of skilled immigrants
- **Public Awareness Campaigns**
- **Immigrant Professional Networks:** connects immigrants of similar ethnic backgrounds
- **Intergovernmental Roundtables:** engages three levels of government to create policies that promote immigrant integration

ALLIES's efforts not only address specific barriers, but larger issues at hand. It is changing the discourse in Canada from one that focuses on making newcomers "more Canadian" to helping employers develop new hiring practices and an organizational culture that can fully benefit from immigrant talent and experience. By bringing employers to the table, they are empowering them to become agents of change and champions for immigrants.

Lessons from Canada: The Power of Mentoring

The concept is simple: connect an immigrant professional to his or her Canadian counterpart over the course of 3-4 months.

This is a low-cost intervention that has significant benefits for multiple parties:

For **skilled immigrants**, mentoring gives valuable information about their profession in Canada and workplace norms while developing a network of contacts.

For **employers**, the benefits include exposure to a new talent pool that is readily available to them and the different ways business is conducted in other parts of the globe.

12 months after mentoring, employment outcomes for skilled immigrants include:

- A decrease in unemployment from 73% to 19%
- An increase in full-time employment from 30% to 65%
- Employment in one's original field increases from 27% to 71%
- Full-time earnings increase 62%, from \$36,905 to \$59,994



For more, see: <http://tinyurl.com/ALLIESmentoringreport>

Case Examples: Ensuring Diversity & Cultural Competency in Cities

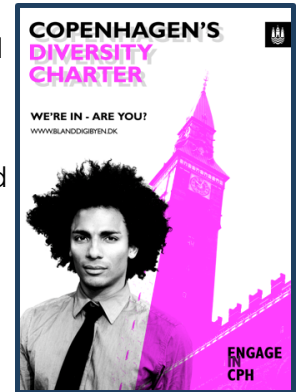
Cities across Europe realized that their local workforces were not representative of their increasingly young population from immigrant backgrounds. They turned to major, multilingual **recruitment campaigns to encourage a diverse applicant pool for jobs in local government.**

- **Copenhagen, Denmark** adopted a diversity charter and established a board of business and institutional leaders outside of city government to help it achieve its goal of becoming the “warmest and most welcoming city in the world.”

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/engaging-in-copenhagen/

- **Bremen, Germany** paired their recruitment efforts with apprenticeships and training opportunities.

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/bremens-key-to-inclusive-hiring/



There have also been efforts to **help employers become more culturally competent** to better serve their diverse employee and customer base.

- In **London, Ontario** multinational technology conglomerate 3M Canada incorporated a communications exercise into their management training to help supervisors understand the challenges of speaking in a second language even with high levels of fluency

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/creating-language-empathy-in-corporate-canada/

- In **Celle, Germany** anonymous job applications have been found to help employers overcome hiring biases.

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/anonymous-job-applications-help-overcome-hiring-biases/

Bolstering Immigrant Entrepreneurs & Small Businesses

Cities around the world are also recognizing immigrant entrepreneurship as means of neighborhood revitalization and urban prosperity.

- **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:** the city's Department of Commerce took steps to bridge the divide between immigrant entrepreneurs and access to capital

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/the-philadelphia-story-economic-integration-through-integrated-services/

- **Barcelona, Spain:** local business development agency “Barcelona Activa” adapted its programming to support the growing population of immigrant entrepreneurs

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/barcelonaactiva/

- **Vienna, Austria:** business incubation agency “MINGO” was created to deliver business advice and support to immigrant entrepreneurs in their mother language

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/talking-business-in-your-mother-tongue/

- **Toronto, Canada:** “Connect Legal” was created to provide entrepreneurs with legal and commercial advice

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/business-law-for-immigrant-entrepreneurs/

Taking Active Steps to Create A Welcoming Atmosphere

Immigrants will settle not only where there are economic opportunities but also where they feel welcomed and supported.

Cities that have taken steps to make sure newcomers feel welcomed include:

- **Barcelona, Spain:** City Council launched an *anti-rumor campaign* to dispel myths about immigrants and fight discrimination with facts and good humor

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/fighting-fiction-with-facts-the-bcn-anti-rumour-campaign/
- **Botkyrka, Sweden:** municipal leaders designed *intercultural dilemma workshops* for city staff to help break down stereotypes, develop "intercultural intelligence" and overcome biases in moments of conflict

See: citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/the-dilemma-workshop/



A pamphlet from Barcelona's anti-rumor campaign

Adapting Similar Practices in the United States

The case examples cited in this publication are not isolated situations for which there is a unique solution. Rather, similar issues exist for many different communities around the world, including the United States.

As part of its overarching goal, Maytree and its initiatives seek to promote solutions that are not only innovative, practical and successful but ultimately *transferable*.

When good ideas travel, they can promote peer-to-peer learning and build communities of practice, reducing costs and mitigating risk in new program design and development. Most importantly, it creates collaboration and new partnerships.

Practices that are worth replicating are solution-seeking, have proven results and support from leadership and community partners.

In adapting similar practices, it is best to:

- Keep a singular focus on skilled immigrant issues, rather than trying to take a comprehensive approach
- Start small, taking a phased-in approach
- Engage community stakeholders early to get their input, support and to cultivate a sense of ownership
- Get buy-in from external and internal champions
- Document the replication process, lessons learned and share your success story!

Above all, ***culture trumps strategy***. If you create the right culture, you will get much further than you can with just strategy.