

Research Brief: Labour Market Trends for Marginalized Populations

Background

The Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership (RDLIP) is designed to improve the integration of immigrants in cities, as well as strengthen cities' ability to better integrate and address the needs of newcomers. The Red Deer LIP is a tool for economic development, a tool for effective health care, a tool for community development, and so much more. The RDLIP has been in operation in Red Deer since December 2015, with one full time employee. RDLIP operates under the umbrella of the Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)

For the better part of this century Alberta's economy was the backbone of the Canadian economy. Over the past 2 years Alberta has been in the grip of an economic downturn. In January 2014 unemployment levels were at 4.7%. Three years later unemployment sits at 8.5%, with Red Deer peaking at 10% unemployment in 2016. When an economy experiences a downturn, marginalized populations such as immigrants and First Nation persons are hit extremely hard, and the unemployment figures illustrate this. In December 2016, the First Nations unemployment rate (off reserve) in Alberta was 12%, and the immigrant unemployment rate was 8.5%, compared to Canadian Born unemployment rate of 6.3%. Immigration is 100% responsible for net population growth in this province, and the First Nation population is the fastest growing population in Canada. It is evident there is a need to understand local labour market trends and how best to position these two populations for future success in the local economy.

All levels of government speak of the need to support economic diversification, and position themselves and their communities for success in new economic conditions by making informed decisions with strong labour market evidence. It is through research projects such as the one proposed that will identify gaps in the local skills pool, highlight what skills local employers seek, whilst identifying what, where, and how local employers draw and connect to various pools of talent. Local labour market information enables local organizations to work collectively to strengthen the local economy.

The current unemployment rate for Red Deer sits at 8.5%, up from 6.2% in 2015. Local industries and sectors have experienced downturn while others have experienced growth throughout this current recession. What is clear is the need for understanding trends and needs of our local employers; this research project achieves this by asking local employers questions such as:

- Did you hire anyone in the past 12 months
- What were the top 3 occupations that you hired for in the past 12 months
- Are there hard to fill occupations? Why are they hard to fill (lack of education, lack of work experience etc.)

- When hiring, what recruitment methods do you use (word of mouth, job bank etc.)
- Do you anticipate hiring in the coming 12 months

These questions, along with others, will provide a strong regional picture of strengths and weaknesses within the local labour market. This enables our partners such as the Ministry of Labour, City of Red Deer, local organizations who support marginalized populations gain entry into the workforce to be adapt programming in order to meet the needs of local industry.

Various organizations and economic analysts use labour market information to examine national and provincial workforce trends and make projections about the future. While good labour market information is critical to our understanding of current and projected workforce needs, it is difficult to find local, regional and district level data. As there is no good mechanism to gather information directly from employers, the Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Urban Aboriginal Voices, Catholic Social Services, Alberta Global Talent, and the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce have designed a survey that will engage local employers about their current and future human resources needs, and their ability to tap into marginalized population talent pools.

Research objectives:

The partners within this research collaborative are looking to engage local employers in order to better understand the issues, challenges, and successes in the local economy. The survey is designed to collect information from local employers on a range of workforce issues, including projected vacancies, hiring employees, recruitment strategies and challenges, workforce development, under-represented populations within the workforce, as well as employer's perspective on candidate skills, education and training.

This research project will be done in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce, City of Red Deer, Catholic Social Services, Urban Aboriginal Voices, and Alberta Global Talent, and the Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership. These organizations lead local efforts in building a strong regional economy as well as directly work to support marginalized populations in gaining access to employment.

This will be the first significant survey of local employers, which will provide labour force data that can be used for workforce planning, determine recruitment strategies, skills and education needs, employment outlook, and can be coupled with concrete data sets from the Canadian EmployerEmployee Dynamics Database, 2016 Census, Labour Force Survey, or the Immigrant Mobility Database. The Red Deer LIP is a member of the Red Deer Data Consortium, enabling this project to request data sets that are not readily available to the general public.

Each project partner have identified overlapping interests in data they are hoping to gather. In order to ensure these partners achieve the results they are hoping for, there will be specific questions put into the survey. An example of this is the Red Deer LIP have 6 questions related to immigration and the attraction and retention of immigrants. This information will assist the Red Deer LIP in assessing trends in workforce participation of immigrants within Red Deer.

As a predominately resource based economy that has experienced downturns, we are still struggling to understand how this latest downturn has affected the local economy and as the province slowly climbs out of this recession what will the economy look like – what populations are the hardest hit, what

industries have been affected, what are the needs of industries moving forward, what does economic diversification look like locally. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the needs of local industry through direct and reliable labour market information provided by local business. This forwardlooking research and data analysis will be instrumental in making informed decisions, workforce planning, education and strategic training investments to help people fully participate in the economy.

This research project aligns with the Government of Alberta's Business Plan 2016-19, Labour, specifically Outcome 6, key strategy 6.2: Develop labour market information to support informed decision making by Albertans, government, communities, training providers, and employers.

The results from this project can then be used to implement strategies related to Outcome 5 of the Government of Alberta's Business Plan 2016-19, Labour. The data can be used to highlight underrepresented groups within the local workforce, which in turn can be used to create employment initiatives targeted at those under-represented groups. The key strategies this project would link to are:

5.1: Provide funding for occupation related to training for unemployed or marginally employed Albertans to help them enter or re-enter the workforce

5.2: Develop and administer workplace training and employment programs to ensure employees are being trained in high-demand areas and to assist employers in developing workers and addressing skills mismatches

5.3: Improve participation in Alberta's workforce through targeted initiatives to support and assist all Albertans, and in particular, under-represented groups, in being better prepared to full participate in Alberta' economy

Target

This project will target small, medium, and large employers in Red Deer and throughout Central Alberta. Employers will need to decide the most appropriate person within their company/business to complete the survey.

This project will leverage the vast networks and contacts within the project partnership, as well as promote the survey through social media and more traditional marketing lines in order engage as many employers and businesses as possible.

Collectively, we will build a sampling frame (list of local employers with contact information) consisting of a minimum of 600 local employers, divided into small, medium, and large businesses. This will be used by the consulting firm to connect and engage local employers and gain their participation in the survey.

Objective:

300 organizations complete the survey consisting of 125 small businesses, 125 medium sized businesses, and 50 large businesses, and a 50% participation rate.

Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce business definitions:

Small: 1 – 10 employees

Medium: 11 – 20 employees

Large: 21+ employees

Research approach:

This project will be outsourced to Schollie Research & Consulting, who have extensive experience in conducting business/employer surveys in Red Deer, and in Central Alberta including:

- Central Alberta Labour Force Study for the Central Alberta Economic Partnership Ltd. (phone)
- Red Deer Region Manufacturing Survey for Red Deer Regional Economic Development (mail / phone)
- Red Deer Chamber of Commerce member / non-member survey (phone)
- Downtown business survey for the City of Red Deer's Downtown Marketing Opportunities Study (mail / online)

It is important to outsource this project as the project partners do not have the capacity to take this project on, nor do they have the experience or expertise to undertake such a project.

The consulting firm will work with the partners to review the survey to ensure clarity of questions, flow, readability, length and other market research best practices. The firm will also support the partners work in building out the sampling frame to ensure business and contact information is current and accurate. All of this will ensure a professional and efficient project from beginning to end.

Research will be done via:

- Online survey
- Hard Copies
- Telephone interviews
- Personal contact and follow-up is still required to maximize the participation rate with employer/business surveys.

Contact information

Duane Moleni

Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator

E: duane.moleni@care2centre.ca

P: 403.346.8818 Ext: 268

202-5000 Gaetz Avenue

Red Deer, AB

T4N 6C2