Report on Foreign Qualifications Recognition and Alternative Careers

January 2014

Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)

The FLMM is an intergovernmental forum established to strengthen cooperation and strategic thinking on the labour market priorities of the provinces, territories and Canada. The FLMM is composed of federal-provincial-territorial ministers, deputy ministers and officials with labour market responsibilities. The FLMM was tasked with developing a principles-based, pan-Canadian framework to improve foreign qualification assessment and recognition processes across Canada. On November 30, 2009, governments responded by releasing *A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications* (the Framework).

The Foreign Qualifications Recognition Working Group (FQRWG), overseen by the FLMM, was established to guide and support the implementation of the Framework. This report was commissioned by the Best Practices and Thematic Task Team of the FQRWG.

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Disclaimer: *The recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the FLMM.*

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Appendices

Executive Summary

In 2012, the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Working Group (FQRWG) commissioned a research study on Foreign Qualifications Recognition and Alternative Careers to contribute to a better understanding of alternative careers for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs), to analyze the structure and delivery of effective alternative career supports, and to make recommendations to the FQRWG on next steps.

The Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (FQR Framework) committed governments to take collective action to support and improve the integration of immigrants across target occupations who may choose to pursue an alternate pathway to a related career if their qualifications do not meet the requirements of their occupation in Canada and skills and/or education upgrading is not an option. During FQR Framework consultations in 2010-2012, representatives from eight target occupations (medical laboratory technologists, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, physicians, dentists, engineers, engineering technicians, and teachers) identified advancing work on alternative careers as a priority item and noted the need for alternative career referral resources.

The research study examined alternative career needs and experience related to the eight target occupations, and surveyed select alternative career supports from different parts of the country. Information was gathered through interviews with occupational contacts, immigrant serving organizations (ISOs) and related organizations, and IEPs. Preliminary research findings and recommendations were validated with stakeholders and informants in a webinar.

Key findings of the study are as follows:

- Different target occupations have different alternative career needs. Some occupations with very specific professional training (physicians/dentists) appear to have limited alternative career options, while others (registered nurses/ licensed practical nurses and engineers/ engineering technicians) are concerned with distinguishing between related occupations in terms of the scope of work. Medical laboratory technologists have established and are exploring pathways to alternative occupations (some in unrelated fields), while teachers see possibilities for the transferability of skills to occupations that are not regulated on the basis of credentials.

- Accurate pre-arrival information in general is very useful to IEPs as it will frame their expectations and provide them with a basis to make career decisions and if necessary, undertake preparations while in their home country.

- IEP perceptions of alternative careers will change over time. Information on alternative careers should therefore be presented at different stages throughout the IEP's transition to working in Canada, including the pre-arrival stage, and prior to and after assessment of qualifications.

- Messaging about alternative careers should take into account IEP and professional sensitivities. Alternative careers should be presented as a parallel option to the IEP's original profession, and not as a failure option.

- Effective alternative career supports include information and referrals, counselling and guidance, employability training, career exploration and planning, bridging programs, employer linkages (including work placements and internships) and funding supports.

- The IEP is the driver and must make the decision him/herself as to which career to pursue, based on his/her own background and circumstances. Proactivity on the part of the IEP is important in finding suitable alternative careers.

- Identifying skills transferability and competency matching are key elements in successful transitions to alternative careers.

- Gaps in current alternative career supports remain in the areas of information, pre-arrival preparation, methodology and tools for career counselling, mechanisms and pathways for skills transferability, targeted programming, financial supports for IEPs, employer awareness and employer linkages, responsibility for supports, and funding to implement and sustain useful supports.

- Effective alternative career supports require partnerships between occupational bodies (regulatory bodies, certification bodies and professional associations), employers /industry and sector councils, educational and training institutes, ISOs and other service providers, and government. Different stakeholders may take the lead in specific alternative career initiatives but collaboration among all stakeholders is required for effective development and delivery. The different roles that stakeholders can play in alternative career supports draw on their unique expertise and function and are outlined in the study report.

Based on a synthesis of research findings, the study proposes a model for alternative career supports that takes into account the different alternative career needs of the eight target professions, the factors that influence alternative career choices, and the different alternative career pathways that IEPs may undertake. The study proposes a revised working definition of alternative careers, as follows:

> Alternative careers are career options that immigrants pursue other than the profession in which they were originally trained. Ideally, alternative careers make use of and relate to an immigrant's skills and experience.

> For some immigrants, alternative careers are sought to support themselves while pursuing licensure in a profession that is regulated in Canada. For others who are unable to achieve recognition or unable to find employment in their field once qualified, the alternative career may be a stepping stone to other careers, or become the end goal of the immigrant. In all cases, alternative careers improve the labour market integration prospects of immigrants by providing opportunities for immigrants to apply their skills and experience in a Canadian context and to learn new skills and gain further experience.

Alternative careers include:

- Professions or occupations that may not exist in the immigrant's country of origin, but for which the scope of work is similar to that of the immigrant's original profession in his/her home country.
- Related occupations in the same field
- Occupations in related fields
- Occupations in unrelated fields.

Alternative careers may require skills or educational upgrading on the part of the immigrant.

Recommendations for next steps for the FQRWG are proposed, as follows:

1. Promote a centralized database on alternative career resources.
2. Validate key messages on alternative careers with stakeholders and disseminate validated messages.
3. Develop concrete indicators of success for alternative career supports in collaboration with stakeholders.
4. Set an alternative careers agenda and promote the agenda in stakeholder exchange.
5. Develop alternative career roadmaps for ISOs and IEPs.
6. Identify best practice models in skills transferability.
7. Expand on the Alternative Career Sessions model to accommodate additional sectors, regions and a broader range of employers.
8. Develop a set of illustrative case studies of IEPs in different types of alternative careers.

Recommendations are also proposed for work to be done over the longer term in the following areas:

1. Competency mapping
2. Formal alternative pathways for specific professions
3. Comprehensive, consistent and accessible information for IEPs
4. Extension of alternative career supports to the pre-arrival stage
5. Awareness building among stakeholders

In moving forward, consideration should be given to enabling regulatory bodies to participate as an important partner in developing alternative careers, dealing with persistent Canadian workforce issues, and Canada's representation of itself as an immigration destination.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on research conducted on *Foreign Qualifications Recognition and Alternative Careers* in 2012–2013 for the Best Practices and Thematic Task Team (BPTT), a subcommittee of the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Working Group (FQRWG) that is accountable to the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) for progress in implementing *A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications* (FQR Framework). The purpose of the research was to contribute to a better understanding of alternative careers for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs), analyze how effective alternative career supports are structured and delivered, and to make recommendations to the FQRWG on next steps.

The FQR Framework committed governments to take collective action to support and improve the integration of immigrants across target occupations[1] who may choose to pursue an alternate pathway to a related career if their qualifications do not meet the requirements of their occupation in Canada and skills and/or education upgrading is not an option. During FQR Framework consultations in 2010-2012, representatives from eight target occupations (see box on right) identified advancing work on alternative careers as a priority item, and noted the need for alternative career referral resources to assist immigrants to gain employment in an alternative career while pursuing licensure, or as an alternative to their intended regulated profession as a result of non-recognition.

> **8 Target Occupations that identified Alternative Careers as a Priority**
>
> - Medical Laboratory Technologists
> - Registered Nurses
> - Licensed Practical Nurses
> - Physicians
> - Dentists
> - Engineers
> - Engineering Technicians
> - Teachers

This study examined alternative career needs and experience related to the eight target occupations, and surveyed a sample of alternative career supports across the country, including some resources and initiatives identified in a recent scan on alternative career supports commissioned by the BPTT. The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- Section 2 provides a description of the research methodology used in the study;
- Sections 3–5 summarizes research findings from different phases of the study;
- Section 6 presents a synthesis of research findings and proposes a model for alternative career supports, including a revised working definition of alternative careers;
- Section 7 sets out recommendations for next steps and identifies areas for further work;
- Section 8 raises considerations for moving forwards.

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[1] Architects, Engineers, Financial Auditors and Accountants, Medical Laboratory Technologists, Occupational Therapists, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Registered Nurses, Dentists, Engineering Technicians, Licensed Practical Nurses, Medical Radiation Technologists, Physicians and Teachers K-12

2. Methodology

2.1. Overview

Information was gathered through a series of interviews with occupational contacts, immigrant serving organizations and related organizations, and IEPs. Interviews were conducted over a period of four months, from November to February, 2013. Findings, conclusions and draft recommendations were shared with key stakeholders in a webinar in March 2013, following which stakeholder feedback was incorporated into this final report.

2.2. Alternative Career Working Definition

In addition to investigating several broad areas of interest described in Section 2.3, Research Questions and Informant Groups, this research study examined the validity of the term "alternative career" and the working definition currently adopted by the BPTT (reproduced below):

> Alternative careers are those career options that immigrants pursue other than but related to the regulatory profession in which they were originally trained, that make use of and relate to an immigrant's skills and experience.
> For some immigrants, alternative careers are sought to support themselves while pursuing licensure. For others who are unable to achieve recognition or unable to find employment in their field once qualified, the alternative career becomes the end goal. In either case, alternative careers improve the labour market integration prospects of immigrants by using some or all of their previously acquired skills and experience.
>
> Other attributes associated with alternative careers include: the requirement for little or no upgrading; provision of a professional or semi-professional salary; and opportunity for advancement.

2.3. Research Questions and Informant Groups

The research aimed to answer broad questions such as:

- What constitutes an alternative career?
- With the end goal of informed decision making about licensure and workplace integration, at what point in the licensing process should immigrants receive information about alternative careers?
- What is/can be the most effective means to provide alternative career supports (information, tools, programs, and initiatives) and who is/should be responsible for doing it?
- How are alternative careers best identified and matched to existing knowledge and competencies?

- What alternative career supports and processes currently exist? How could they be improved?
- What gaps remain in the area of supports and processes and how can they best be addressed?
- Do effective alternative career supports and processes require partnerships between stakeholders? If so, how could these partnerships be established and how would they function?

Interviews were conducted with three different informant groups in three phases, each designed to gather information on different aspects of alternative career needs and supports, as summarized in the table below.

Table 1   Research Informant Groups and Research Areas

Interview Phase	Research area	Expected Results of Analysis
Occupational contacts in select FQR Framework targeted occupations	• Current practices, capacity and future needs of priority FQR Framework occupations with respect to alternative careers • Optimal timing to provide alternative career information • Suggestions for messaging around alternative careers • Suggestions for the development and dissemination of tools/supports • Alignment between FQR Framework priority professions and alternative careers, and existing and potential connections between FQR priority Framework professions and other professional organizations, ISOs, career counselling organizations and employers who hire immigrants into alternative careers	• Recommendations for tools, resources, services, and relationships that could be developed
Immigrant serving organizations and related organizations (ISOs)	• Scope and delivery of initiatives/tools/information of select organizations • Program partnerships • Clients' uptake and experience • Timing of interventions • Identification of best practices and challenges • Suggestions/views on the development and dissemination of additional tools, supports and	• What "successful" tools/interventions look like or could look like • Considerations for moving forward and what is needed by the organizations to put tools/interventions in

Interview Phase	Research area	Expected Results of Analysis
	partnerships that can engage and reach IEP stakeholders at various stages (pre-arrival, post-assessment and pursuant to licensure)	place
IEPs	• IEP conception of alternative career • Willingness of newcomers to change careers • Participation in programs/use of tools/resources • Success rates • Experience working in alternative careers including relationship/correlations between the original regulated occupational training and alternative career practice • Views on optimal timing to provide alternative career information • Views on messaging around alternative careers • Suggestions for the development and dissemination of tools and supports	• What interventions/tools are most useful and important considerations • Who should be developing and delivering tools/services? • Optimal timing of interventions

The list of contacts interviewed for each informant group is provided in Appendix 1. The interview protocol used for each set of interviews is provided in Appendix 2.

The 13 occupational contacts interviewed included regulatory bodies, assessment bodies (e.g. examining boards), and professional associations. The contacts were all organizations with a national mandate except for one, and were identified by the BPTT based on their roles and their previous interest in foreign qualifications recognition and alternative careers. In addition, an interview was conducted with a consultant for Health Canada working on transition pathways for internationally-educated nurses.

The 12 ISOs and related organizations interviewed were from different parts of the country and were identified by the BPTT based on their experience in providing alternative career supports. An additional interview was conducted with the Canadian Immigration Integration Program (CIIP) of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and feedback on alternative careers from a CIIP workshop with CIIP focal partners was also collected.

The 13 IEPs interviewed were from different regions of Canada and were proposed as research informants by the ISOs that were interviewed. As well, interviews were conducted with a representative of the Office of the Fairness Commissioner of Manitoba (whose work has been informed by focus groups with immigrants) and a university professor who has researched career transitions among IEPs in Canada.

3. Research Findings—Occupational Contacts

Key findings from the interviews conducted with occupational contacts are summarized in this section.

3.1.   Key Concerns and Current Capacity

Key Concerns

Several occupational contacts commented on how "alternative careers" is an important but difficult area of work. The occupational contacts interviewed cited different concerns regarding alternative careers related to their profession, as summarized below.

Medical Laboratory Technologists

An estimated 50 percent of applicants that write the national exam administered by the Canadian Society of Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) can make use of alternative career supports. CSLMS acts as a "one-stop shop", and currently provides information on alternative careers on a case-by-case basis. Information is also available on its website. CSMLS has worked with BioTalent, a human resource organization, to identify transferable skills in internationally-educated medical laboratory professionals so that they can transition into the bio-economy workforce. CSMLS is also currently working on a proposal for a project on alternative careers (under discussion with Health Canada).

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

> "*Many internationally educated nurses only realize the difference [between registered nurses and licensed practical nurses] when they are practising as licensed practical nurses, at which point they note that they are more comfortable practising as licensed practical nurses.*"

The main concern for these two professions appears to be distinguishing more clearly between the professions. Internationally educated nurses that do not meet the requirements to be licensed as registered nurses may have experience and training that are more appropriate for licensed practical nurses. These individuals can choose to upgrade their skills and continue to pursue the registered nurse pathway, or may be referred to the pathway for licensed practical nurses. An estimated 25 percent of applicants need to do remedial or extended training while pursuing either pathway. It was observed that it is not known how many internationally educated nurses have stopped trying to get registered and that most internationally educated nurses come to Canada as a dependant and not because of their careers (they are not the primary immigrant). Identification of the status of different internationally educated nurses is first necessary to determine how best to meet their needs.

Physicians

There would appear to be a strong demand for alternative careers for this profession, as there are currently about 5,000 internationally-educated physicians in Canada who are not able to practise their profession (due to their qualifications and/or the scarcity of residency positions). However, occupational contacts for this profession remarked on the strong attachment that physicians have

"I have not talked to an IMG that came with the idea not to work as a physician."

"People want to work in what they were trained to be."

for their profession and the difficulties in finding suitable alternative careers. One contact noted that most focus groups with international medical graduates have shown that they are not happy with alternative careers.

Dentists

"There are no alternative careers that dentists are happy to consider."

"It is very difficult. The training is so specific. It is not useful for other careers. People are reluctant to give up their career as dentists."

Similarly, alternative careers would appear to be in strong demand for dentists as a reported 2,000–3,000 IEPs in dentistry live in Canada but are not progressing through the system (approximately 4,000 applicants—some not living in Canada—have applied for dental examinations over 3 years and the pass rate is less than 50 percent for the different exams). However, as in the case for physicians, the occupational contacts for dentists noted the difficultly in identifying alternative careers for dentists.

Engineers and Engineering Technicians[2]

The key concern for these two professions appears to be similar to that for nurses: distinguishing between the occupations to determine "better-matched careers". In many countries, unlike in Canada, there is no distinction between the work done by engineers, technologists and technicians (all are considered the work of "engineers"). IEPs that were "engineers" in their countries of origin may have been doing work that would be equivalent to the work of a technologist or technician, or work classified under other professions such as architects or natural scientists in Canada.

An estimated 20-25 percent of internationally educated engineers that come to Canada apply for licensure (out of approximately 5,500 – 6,000 applicants in total). In Ontario, an estimated 70 percent of applicants get licensed without having to take any exams or

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[2] In this report, the term "Engineering Technicians" will be used to refer to Applied Science and Engineering Technicians and Technologists. This distinction was emphasized by the occupational contact in the interview conducted for this study.

courses; fewer than 10 percent will not qualify eventually. Individuals that qualify can register to practice engineering without a licence as an "EIT" or "Engineer in Training" (EITs work under the supervision of a professional engineer).

The transferability of engineering skills to other occupations was noted by the occupational contact interviewed. Within Canada, only a third of those that pursued engineering studies still practice as licensed engineers at mid-career; the other two thirds might be operating a business, working in management or the financial sector, or in technical sales. The contact interviewed noted that the concern of the profession is not licensing but the chronic shortage of mid-career engineers with specific skill sets and how to develop people at this level.

Technologists and technicians are themselves not regulated occupations in Canada; certification is voluntary. As there is currently a shortage of technologists and technicians in Canada, it was pointed out that it would make sense to present these occupations clearly and positively as "alternative careers" for internationally educated "engineers".

Teachers

Alternative careers are needed for internationally educated teachers as regulation for entry into the profession in Canada is based on credentials, and primary and secondary school teacher training spots are limited. In addition, there are limited jobs in these professions in some jurisdictions.

Current Capacity

In general, the occupational contacts interviewed knew of few current alternative careers supports for IEPs who do not qualify for a licence in the targeted professions. The contacts interviewed were able to identify several profession-specific supports in addition to general employment preparation and counselling services for immigrants. Their responses are included in Appendix 3, which also lists supports and suggestions for further investigation mentioned by other informants for this study.

3.2.   Potential Alternative Careers and Relevant Competencies/Skills

Many of the occupational contacts interviewed were reluctant to identify potential alternative careers related to the professions in question, noting that it was not their role to advise on careers. In particular, the occupational contacts for physicians and dentists noted that competencies/skills for their professions were very specific and not easily transferable. One contact said, "To suggest other health professions as alternative

careers [for internationally educated physicians] is insulting to these professions as they require as much knowledge and skill as physicians."

The alternative careers and relevant competencies/skills for these occupations identified by occupational contacts are summarized below.

Table 2   Relevant Competencies/Skills for Potential Alternative Careers

Potential Alternative Careers	Relevant Competencies/Skills
Medical Laboratory Technologists	
Copy editor; working in accounts payable/receivable, or food/beer/wine quality control; insurance medical tester; food & safety inspector	Attention to detail, testing & quality control assessment, knowledge of chemistry
Registered Nurses	
• Anything related to nursing or human health sciences; e.g. licensed practical nursing, midwifery • Bridging programs recommend any kind of work in health care field while pursuing licensure (e.g. working in records office, kitchen, gift shop) as this allows for practicing English/French terminology and exposure to the health care culture in Canada	• Providing basic and supportive care to people in health care system (registered nurses also extend care to communities and societies) • Assisting with daily living activities—eating, walking, toileting • Critical thinking, organization, excellent communication skills
Licensed Practical Nurses	
Patient support worker, nursing attendant, care aide, pharmacy clinic aide	Knowledge of health care in general, medical terminology, safe working environment in hospital, long-term care, communication, therapeutic relationship with client
Physicians	
• Positions in health care system, education, pharmaceutical industry (e.g. research associate) • Research in hospital or health related field, research assistants or associates, federal government (e.g. drug assessment at Health Canada)	Clinical reasoning, critical thinking, broad medical knowledge, communication ability

Potential Alternative Careers	Relevant Competencies/Skills
• Physician assistants (although experience in Ontario and Manitoba physician assistant programs as well as in US show that physicians do not necessarily make good physician assistants)	
Dentists	
• Medicine, dental hygiene (dental technicians, dental assistants), denturists, traditional Chinese medicine • Dental receptionists or dental assistants. • Hard to become dental hygienist because of licensing • Difficult to identify as dentists are only trained as dentists	• Overlapping training in basic science only (no relevant competencies/skills for dental related field) • Dental assistant/ receptionist: dentists supervise these so would know skills required • Dental hygiene: depends on past education and experience–scaling and replaning, hygiene assessment • Dental technician: would have to upgrade skills (may need whole 4 years) significantly as dental schools do not teach much in this area
Engineers	
• Technologists or architects or career in natural sciences may be "better matched" careers" • own business, be in management or financial sector, technical sales • Other areas: health and safety, building security, software	• Problem solving skills, ability to use technology and engineering tools, safeguarding public safety, understanding of impacts on society, project management, communication skills (verbal, graphical, writing, communicating with non-technical audiences), working with teams
Engineering Technicians	
• Distinction to be made between technicians, technologists and engineers (see relevant competencies in next column) • Related occupations in architecture, chemistry, forestry, petroleum engineering	• Technicians: trouble shooting, team work multitasking, keep things working, build assemble • Technologists: design competencies, manage or supervise, teamwork, leadership, may build and maintain • Engineers: concept, research, design, application, more legal implications

Potential Alternative Careers	Relevant Competencies/Skills
Teachers	
Teaching aide, teaching assistant, careers in Early Childhood Education (growing need for teaching aides and assistants in this field), teaching at college level and at different types of schools (e.g. music schools, hockey schools), training developers or trainers in private sector	Pedagogical ability: ability to assess learning needs and learning styles and to develop specific programs for individuals

3.3.   Most Useful Alternative Career Supports and Perceived Gaps

Most Useful Alternative Career Supports

Occupational contacts identified the most useful alternative career supports as summarized below:

- *Information:* Contacts noted that reliable, complete and current information would be useful to IEPs. Links to other associations should be provided and information should be widely accessible (posted on the web, or distributed in print materials). Web videos and workshops (including web-based workshops for individuals not in Canada) were noted as other possibilities. Several contacts suggested that there should be one centralized information source to which IEPs can be referred for all questions other than registration.   It was also noted that the most current information should be obtained from professional bodies.

- *Referrals:* Referrals were identified as useful but labour- and time-intensive. One contact observed that it is unclear where regulatory bodies can refer IEPs to.

- *Tools:* Assessment tools (including self-assessments) were mentioned as a useful support. One contact suggested a toolbox that would help IEPs understand different jobs and simplify or demystify job titles (e.g. by listing the different names that apply to the same job, such as civil engineering technician, water quality technician etc.).

- *Counselling and guidance services:*   Individual counselling was identified as an important support by several contacts. One contact observed that counselling support is required along the IEP's "continuum of realization" [that the previous profession is not a possibility and an alternative career may be required].   It was noted that counselling support should be "outside the regulation system", and that

counsellors should explain to IEPs why their education is not equivalent to the Canadian standard. It was also suggested that during counselling, the skills of individuals should be defined and inventoried, and careers to which these skills can be transferred identified.

One contact commented that "integrating into the Canadian system is more than just alternative careers" and stressed the need for a holistic approach which would include addressing language issues, providing information on licensure, providing information on alternatives and pointing out things to consider.

> *"Counselling is essential. International medical graduates will be hurt and feel underappreciated ("we don't want you") when they realize there is no viable option. Self-esteem and personal respect are involved. It is a very complex area."*
>
> *"Providing information on websites is not enough, as IEPs will have many questions--"Why can't I? What's in the system? Is there a way I can make it up?"*

- *Specialized training and programs:* Other useful supports mentioned included specialized training, bridging programs (including those that actively encourage participants to purse temporary (alternative) work in their fields, job mentoring and shadow training programs.

- *Other:* Face-to-face classes and networking were also identified as useful supports. One contact noted that provincial programs for IEPs in the health professions were most useful as the "provinces have responsibility and have funding best suited to meet provincial needs."

Perceived Gaps

Occupational contacts identified the following gaps in alternative career supports:

- *Information:* Several contacts noted the need for information to be made available prior to immigration. Occupational contacts for physicians spoke about this issue strongly. One contact suggested that ideally, career choices and availability of careers should be sorted out before immigration and pointed to the huge disconnect between reality and what international medical graduates think overseas ("They score high on the immigration point system and so expect to practise their profession in Canada, but the system has nothing to do with licensure").

> *"Either counselling at the immigration level is not happening or IEPs are not listening."*
>
> *"At a recent IMG symposium [we heard that there are] 400 IMGs already in Canada but they are unaware of hurdles (exams, and in most but not all cases, residencies)…"*

Another contact noted that IMGs immigrating to Quebec have to sign a document stating that they recognize they may not get a position as a physician [in Quebec]. Occupational contacts also suggested that that information should be provided *after assessment* of the IEPs' qualifications. It was noted that IEPs have to make their own decision and that it is the not role of the professional bodies to help them do so.

Suggestions for addressing the information gap included an emphasis on pathways, offshore assessments of eligibility for licensing (assessments that predict success); clarifying terminology (e.g. technicians vs. technologists); providing concrete examples of the different skill sets of each occupation; and providing facts and figures about each occupation (e.g. pay and conditions). "

A more coordinated approach was recommended. In the case of nurses, currently, IEPs are referred to three or more groups during the entire process of applying for licensure. It was suggested that information should be combined into one pathway with three phases.

- *Finding a home for supports:* Most contacts identified a gap in responsibility in providing supports. Many noted that regulatory bodies do

> *"Who should build and sustain it?"*

not have the mandate to address alternative careers, and can only provide information on whether the IEP is recognized for the profession, and what training or bridging is required to be qualified. One contact also pointed out that regulators do not know about the eligibility and assessment processes of other professions and so cannot comment on the suitability of alternative careers. It was observed that regulatory bodies and professional associations may be differently motivated: regulators are concerned about *regulating* a particular profession, while professional associations have an interest in promoting the profession (and so may guide individuals to aligned alternative careers as these individuals may come back later to pursue the profession).

Various suggestions were made for addressing the gap in responsibility:

- Assignment of responsibility
- Assumption of responsibility by parties such as professional associations, the educational system, government, settlement agencies, NGOs, faculties of education and colleges. (Resources will be needed.)
- Industry sponsorship of supports (as they have labour shortages).

It was noted that understanding the comparability of careers is "a big task that needs a big investment".

- *Immigration policy:* Several contacts (particularly, but not exclusively, physician contacts) indicated that immigration policy should be addressed instead of focusing on alternative career supports. A sample of comments made during the interviews is provided here:

    - "Why are we promoting immigration of people who don't stand a chance?"
    - "If the goal is the integration of the individual into the profession, more funds should be directed to integration and selection, and not alternatives. [This contact pointed out the cost of investment in retraining and suggested that selection should be stricter.]
    - "It is a travesty to encourage people to follow a pathway with false assumptions…"
    - "The issue should be dealt with upstream. It is an ethical issue—for less developed countries, and also for Canadians wanting to be doctors…"

3.4. Messaging and Information

Sensitivities in messaging

In general, the contacts interviewed suggested that messaging about alternative careers should be positive and should take into consideration IEP and professional sensitivities. Some interview responses are presented below:

- Alternative careers should be presented as an opportunity.

- Messaging should convey the hope that "people with education and skills can achieve their highest level of potential so they can maximize their contribution to Canada…IEPs should not give up on their dream, and alternative careers should be seen as a stepping stone rather than the final destination."

- Messaging should not be "disrespectful or punitive, [but should] help the IEP recognize that she/he does not have the required substantive equivalencies in Canada and that an alternative career pathway allows one to continue to work while carrying on education."

    > "Alternative implies second choice, and may have stigma attached to it. Alternative careers should be repositioned as "complementary careers" that can use IEP's skills, and as a natural evolution from [one's] training, which provides a broad set of skills."

- Messaging should convey that "while the IEP is competent and well qualified in his/her home country, the qualifications may not be comparable in

Canada, and the IEP may end up in an alternate field in Canada (and there is nothing wrong with this)."

- "You need to be careful about what you say…[and] to manage expectations. You can't give false hope. . . . An alternative career is not a warranty."

- There are individual and professional sensitivities to be aware of in messaging. Alternative careers should not be presented as the less valued option.

One contact suggested that research should be done on appropriate messaging, noting that while some IEPs will benefit from available information on alternative careers, others might perceive the information as "setting them up to fail or not wanting to accept them".

Optimal Timing of Information

The occupational contacts interviewed had different views on the optimal timing of information.

Several contacts noted that information on alternative careers should be provided to IEPs *before they immigrate*. "The sooner the better, while in their country of origin," said one contact, who observed that if the IEP contacts the regulatory body while making application for immigration, he/she may be able to take programs in the home country to help with credentialing. Another contact observed the lack of basic information and misinformation common among IEPs, noting that only "20 percent of individuals who come actually talk to someone in Canada before coming… [They don't know that] if you are a petroleum engineer, don't go to Toronto; or if you are in shipbuilding, Saskatchewan. "

> *"International medical graduates should be made aware that there is no opportunity for practice. But the individual will not pay attention. Everyone thinks they will get in and will want to exhaust all opportunities."*

One nursing contact stated that information should be provided *before assessment of qualifications for the profession,* as health care systems are very different in other countries and individuals should have enough information on what they are applying for, and on alternatives if they are not successful.

Several contacts suggested that it was better to provide information on alternative careers *after assessment* of qualifications. One contact noted that assessment had to be done "to know where they fit and to provide a gap analysis (what's needed)". Another contact observed that if IEPs were told about alternative careers from the get-go, it would be discouraging, and that it was better to provide information after assessment, when the IEP is told significant upgrading is required.

Several contacts suggested that information should be provided *both before and after assessment.* One contact noted that information should be provided in this way on a case by case basis. Several contacts suggested providing information *during assessment* as well (one contact noted that assessment of credentials can take four to five weeks).

> *"…Most [internationally-educated nurses] will not be interested in alternative careers and will only consider them when they meet obstacles. "*

It was observed that even though information may be presented at various stages, IEPs may not be receptive to the information and will only consider an alternative career when they are ready (realize that they will not be able to practice their profession).

Realistic, consistent and practical information

Contacts suggested that both messaging and information should be consistent all along the IEP's transition to the workforce, from pre-arrival onwards.

When applying for assessment for a particular profession, individuals should have access to information on the scope of work for particular professions, as well as information on other careers. Information should be provided on the differences between closely related careers (e.g. between registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, and between engineers, technologists and technicians). It was suggested that for nurses, information about assessment and self-assessments should be made available, so that the individual can determine appropriate pathways (e.g. registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, or midwife).

One contact noted that career information should come from organizations involved in those careers.

Another contact spoke specifically about messaging for physicians, and emphasized that the key is to be realistic about how difficult it is to become a physician in Canada, and the limited number professions in the medical field that can serve as alternative careers. "The IEP needs self-awareness that the preferred profession is NOT POSSIBLE, and should have a good understanding that he or she may not have a job as a physician in Canada before coming to Canada."

3.5. Partnerships, Roles and Responsibility

Partnerships required

Occupational contacts interviewed identified different partners required to develop alternative career supports, including:

- Educators
- Employers and sector councils
- Government
- Regulatory bodies
- ISOs

Other comments offered regarding partnerships related to the need to bring all partners to the table and the need for commitment and inter-organizational cooperation, a clear reason (value added/benefits) for stakeholder participation, and stakeholder buy-in and ownership. As well, it was noted that clarification is needed upfront on roles and responsibilities, including tracking of outcomes, and that there must be assurances that participation will not take away from core responsibilities. The comment was made that leadership by government is necessary, and funds are required to do the work.

> *"Who will own the information on all professions?"*

One contact noted that a network of volunteers and professionals should be created and that industry should release time for HR staff to learn about what is going on. It was also observed that credential-based regulation needs to be translated into generic competencies, and that, as regulatory bodies work with credentials, a "cultural clash" will occur in talking about competencies. "Diplomacy is required," one contact noted.

Roles and Responsibility

Most contacts said that government should be responsible for funding alternative career supports. They pointed out that it is the government (both federal and provincial/territorial levels) that is recruiting immigrants, and that the government has an interest in workforce issues. It was observed that government needs to identify key players, and that funding is required to start initiatives and to develop a cohesive program.

One contact suggested that the private sector has a role in funding supports as it has an interest in hiring IEPs. Another contact suggested that responsibility for alternative career supports should be a joint effort between the government and private sector.

One contact stated that government funding is not appropriate as it is the individual responsibility of the immigrant to find an alternative career ("The system should not be set up to support those who fail in pursuit of professional qualification.")

Several contacts noted a role for government to play in needs assessment, and in coordination of the development of supports. One contact remarked that government departments will have interests in different outcomes (e.g. HRSDC with individual potential, and Health Canada with health outcomes). Another pointed out that since government labour market strategy deals with skills shortages, it is the role of government to develop a qualifications recognition model and methodology that uses generic competencies. Once such a model or methodology is developed, delivery of supports [using this model or methodology] can be done by job placement agencies, who can match skills to jobs.

Other contacts responded that responsibility for development and delivery of supports should lie with regulators, educational institutes, NGOs and settlement agencies, and other support groups. It was noted that

> *"People who need training need funding. Institutions that train need funding."*

additional resources are necessary for these parties to engage in development and delivery. One contact pointed out that it is difficult for regulatory bodies to present alternative careers to IEPs (as these bodies are concerned with credentials and not competencies), and suggested that information on alternative careers be provided by agencies such as ISOs (e.g. as information on the job market and which available jobs require certain skills). It was also observed that for ongoing sustainability, delivery has to be jurisdictionally based.

> *"It is not the role of the regulator to counsel on dreams."*

Most of the occupational contacts did not see a role for their organizations in providing alternative career supports. Many if not all contacts from regulatory bodies stated that providing alternative career supports was beyond the mandate of their organizations. One contact from a professional association echoed this statement, and noted that alternative career supports was not a priority concern for its membership. One contact from an assessment body noted that her organization's role was simply to provide information on assessment to regulators. Only one occupational contact (from a professional association) stated that her organization could be a delivery agent and could implement a pilot project.

At most, occupational contacts saw a limited role for their organizations to play in developing and providing alternative career supports, as summarized below:

- Leadership and advisory role in national harmonization of standards
- Key informant, stakeholder

- Cheerleader, support and encouragement.
- Provide help in defining competencies or provide input.
- Provide advice and participate as stakeholder (but have no funding nor capacity).

4. Research Findings — Immigrant Serving Organizations (ISOs) and other Service Providers

This section provides a summary of key findings from the interviews conducted with immigrant serving organizations and other service providers.

4.1. Alternative Career Supports of Select Organizations

Scope and Delivery

Table 3 on the following pages describe the scope and delivery of the alternative career supports provided by select organizations interviewed for this study.

Program Partnerships

The ISOs interviewed identified different partners involved in delivering current supports:

- Regulatory bodies, certification bodies and professional associations (for course development)
- Employers (in particular, sector-specific employers, to provide internships, placements, and to serve on advisory committees and panels), industry and sector councils
- Educational and training institutes (to provide technical advice and to address gaps in experience and knowledge of work culture)
- Government (for funding and support for clients in bridging/training programs)
- ISOs
- Other organizations that offer programs to IEPs: CIIP, ESL, mentoring, microloans etc. social Services, youth internship programs
- IEPs

Several ISO informants stressed the importance of mutual collaboration. One informant noted that her organization was able to engage employers as partners because it has been a source of ideal candidates for employers over the year. Another noted that it was important to keep in touch with partners to clarify and get up-to-date information on occupational demand, bridging programs, the regulatory process for licensing, etc. Informants also spoke of the need to educate employers, and of how partnerships allowed for approaching champions "on the inside" to help in setting up programs.

"The CIIP model works well. It brings together many organizations with different mandates but a common client group. Of particular note are some players who have participated but not to the level which we believe they should: regulatory bodies, universities and employers. An effort should be made to bring them into the fray in the future."

One informant noted the difference between her organization's friendships (with regulatory bodies and professional associations) and formal partnerships (with professional associations and sector councils, social services and employers).

Table 3   Selected Alternative Career Supports

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
Access Centre, Health Force Ontario (Ontario)			
• Case management and counselling (help clients make realistic plans and to include alternatives in their action plans to obtain licensure) • Piloted 12 Peer to Peer sessions (IEPs talk about their experiences) • Alternative career support is not part of mandate. Mandate is to be a one-stop shop for information and advice on pathways to practise 24 regulated health professions in Ontario. Organization began helping clients find alternative careers in response to demand.	Most support given post-arrival. Through CIIP, holds webinars in Philippines, India, UK (for Middle East), China: gives pre-arrival information on health care systems, timelines for licensure, etc.; may talk about alternatives.	• Established in 2006 • 3,600 clients/ year • 70–75% of clients are IMGs, 97–98% of them will require retraining • Hard to measure outcomes as may be measured differently—client may end up in alternative career but is that a success?	One-on-one case management. Clients often not feeling heard. Will work over several years and may help clients with language, testing and peer-to-peer sessions at the same time. Clients not handed anything; have to put work into alternatives. Individualized experience. Not easy.
ACCESS Employment (Greater Toronto Area, Ontario)			
• Bridge training, information and referrals, counselling (one on one, case management) • 7 programs provide sector-specific preparation (work and communication skills): Engineers, Financial Services, Information Technology, Human Resources, Sales & Marketing, Supply Chain, Leadership Connections • "ACCESS focuses on employment services so	• Programs promoted through CIIP; sometimes get overseas emails • IEPs use programs both before and after	• Majority placed; goal is to place in related field; • Serves 15,000 people/ year, most of whom are newcomers	Sector-specific programming is key: must invest in knowledge about each sector, know careers in demand, understand industry, train people appropriately, respond to employers' hiring needs, develop appropriate skill sets, and deal with international

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
alternative careers are its raison d'être"	assessment. • ACCESS may make referrals to regulatory bodies or vice versa.		differences.

BC Skills Connect (Immigrant Services Society of BC) (Greater Vancouver Region)

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
• Designed to get IEP back to field of work. • Client works one-on-one with counsellor and develops action plan, then upgrades necessary skills within a year. Also gets help in preparing resume, career coaching, and mentoring. Works with employer relations specialist to find work. • Skills enhancement funding: subsidizes 2/3 of training cost (client pays 1/3); cap of $2,100 • Links to organization's programs as needed (e.g. BC Employment Program, settlement integration, mentoring, and English language programs).	Program not promoted pre-arrival; program publicized through networks media, provide info at airport. Most clients hear about program through word of mouth. Some clients get info online (Facebook, website).	• 2005 pilot; began in 2009 • Program criteria: permanent resident for less than 5 years, CLB level 5, clear job target within own field • 30 new clients/ month • 80% find job (20% may have personal issues)	• Length of program allows for the time needed to get back into field, and allows for IEPs to work part-time. • Skills upgrading, funding support, and flexibility (one-on-one counselling support instead of class) also work well.

CRIEC SmartConnections (Calgary, Alberta)

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
• SmartConnections approach developed by Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC): provide information on accreditation process with stakeholders at table; discuss IEP choices (with IEPs and professionals at table);		• Council in formal existence for 2 years • Mentoring program now has 169	• Pulls everything together: practical matters, what employers what, IEP issues. • Workshop approach is hands-on and uplifting and

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
discuss skill transferability if alternative career path chosen • Approach used in workshops for lawyers and follow-up roundtables. Currently planning workshops for professionals in finance and accounting and possibly, insurance, electrical engineering, IT, and health care • CRIEC also has occupation-specific mentoring program		mentors/ mentees (first batch had 34 mentors/ mentees) • 55 participants at workshop for lawyers, 25 more at roundtables following workshops	inspiring (approaches IEPs as professionals). • Workshop is "robust and meaningful", and has follow-up.
Catholic Immigration Centre Career Transitions Program (Ottawa, Ontario)			
• Employment preparation for International Medical Doctors to support move into alternative careers, • 4 hour workshops on job search, targeted resumes, health sector interviews (using cameras, DVDs); • 300 page client workbook; online test after each workshop • 4 online self-study workshops: occupational clusters, health care occupations, Ontario healthcare labour markets, understanding Canadian employers • Exit test after workshop (employment readiness assessment), and one-on-one job development counselling: clients create action plan and develop list of 5-10 employers and plan of approach		• Piloted in 2005 and operating for 3 years • Program cut in Hamilton and Toronto although in high demand and exceeded targets. Similar program for legal professionals also cancelled. • 800-1000 clients. 4 cohorts/year, 22-25 participants/cohort • Targets exceeded	• Combines expertise, passion, knowledge of sector, funding • Responds to client and employer need. • Sector-specific programs work better than general employment programs (for clients from different occupational backgrounds) • Client workbook contains course material so participants can do self-study or find information

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (Edmonton, Alberta)			
All programs and services assist immigrants who want to be in alternative careers. Services include: • Individual services (career counselling and employment counselling) • Employment preparation courses • Bridging and training programs (4 months full time exposure to Canadian workplace culture, with technical update) Programs/services based on labour market needs and client makeup (education, experience in field). Expected outcomes are employment or further education in field.	• One officer deals with overseas inquiries and connects with IEPs pre-arrival (EMCN is CIIP Northern Alberta contact). Most clients already in Canada • IEPs access services both pre-and post-assessment, or after initial contact with regulatory body. Some are referred to EMCN before assessment.	• Has been providing individual services for 20 years; engineering bridging for 18 years; accountants bridging for 8; payroll for 4 • About 20% of clients pursue profession in engineering and accounting (can work in field without licence) • About 90% of clients are employed; 10% pursue further education	Heavy emphasis on soft skills (Canadian workplace culture, communications), skills that employers are seeking.
Global Experience Ontario (GEO) (Ontario)			
• Information and referral service: provides information on licensing process in Ontario, and on relevant programs or support programs (e.g. financial assistance, starting a business,		• In existence since 2006 • Does not track outcomes.	No timer. Take time to go through licensing process. Clients may be emotional or frustrated. They can get back to

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
language or bridge training). • If asked, will provide information but will not provide counselling or advice on alternative careers. Will refer to Employment Ontario (provides counselling, aptitude testing, support for developing career goals) or to bridge training programs funded by the Ontario government (http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/keyinitiatives/bridgetraining.shtml).		Serviced 11,000 clients over 6 years (not including this year). • Voluntary surveys show that clients are very satisfied.	GEO at any time.
IEHP Atlantic Connection IEHP Self-Assessment Readiness Tools (Atlantic Region)			
• 12 self-assessment tools for different health professions developed by Nova Scotia Community College and Price-MacDonald & Associates Consulting Inc., in partnership with national regulatory bodies (used national competency profiles) (http://atlanticcanadahealthcare.com/default.asp?mn=1.20.326.) • Also posted on regulators' website together with tools for professions at assisted level. • Gives IEPs idea of what they are facing and likely result when applying for licensure; helps in determining upgrading needed. Does not provide advanced standing in licensure application. • 15 more tools to be produced by end of March	• Currently partnering with CIIP to promote tools before IEPs come to Canada • Tools are primarily used pre-arrival but also used in Canada.	• Began in 2008, produced 2-3 per year • Survey after IEPs complete tool shows good outcomes. • Tools now being used for career counselling in high school and also for early professional training	

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS) (Nova Scotia)			
• One-stop shopping settlement services: labour market information, employment counselling, navigation of pathway to licensure • Developed pathways to licensure for various occupations (started 6–7 years ago) and created lists of alternative careers for some professions (e.g. teachers, lawyers) • 6 week work placement program with wage subsidy: identify occupational interest, find employer, provide employment preparation and any required support (e.g. language training) • Successful pilot: dental technology program (3 month work-training placement) for 6 international dentists	Pre-arrival onwards. Clients may access services pre-arrival (through referral by Nova Scotia Start) by filling in online form. Clients will get an individual counselling session with an ISIS employment specialist (using Adobe Connect) and can also link to social cafes, discussion boards, and facilitators for different courses.	• About 150 new clients this year • 90% of clients that receive pre-arrival services find job in 3–6 months. • Work placement program: 85–90% success	• Direct one-on-one interaction with client • Career coaching • Work placement program (opportunity for both parties; • no risk or obligation for employer; ongoing language support and cultural counselling, and wage subsidy; opens doors as employers perceive IEPs as overqualified) • Direct referrals to employers

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
ISIS Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model (Nova Scotia)			
• Profession-specific Work Groups (14 professions) bring together stakeholders quarterly to share perspectives on international qualifications recognition. Stakeholders include regulators, government, educational institutes, IEPs, employers, unions, sector councils, employers. • Alternative careers are agenda item for Work Groups. Work Groups will brainstorm on topic and stakeholders may take back ideas (e.g. qualifications required, possible careers, areas for research, ways to disseminate information) • List of alternative careers developed for some professions (See ISIS website) • Work Group may develop program proposal and submit for funding			• Recognizes IQ challenges not solely responsibility of regulatory bodies; e.g. gap in training is responsibility of educational institutes but government needs to be at table if funding is required. Employers are needed to hire IEPs, and unions to do competency assessment…) • Work needs to be sustained (not just one-off meeting). • Specific focus provides momentum for change that can be sustained. • Model creates synergy, and is more imaginative, more practical and realistic (e.g. in defining pathways, observership programs)
Manitoba Start—Employment Solutions for Immigrants (ESI) (Winnipeg, Manitoba)			
Provides information and referrals to orientation and language services, and registers immigrants for appropriate employment program. ESI also has: • Employment preparation workshop	Some clients come before assessment and some after (have partnerships with regulatory	In 2011-2012: • 6,265 went through intake; 2,223 accessed career development and	• Programs are interactive • Engage clients through workshops • Get clients early in process

Type of Alternative Career Support	Timing of Intervention	Outcomes, Client Uptake and Experience	What Works Well
• One-on-one counselling • Service Canada program for immigrant youth and 6 week work experience placement (employer can "test" and assess employees for job opportunities) • Specialized workshops (e.g. computer training, toastmaster's class, cleaning in health care facility) Recently discussed in house the need for specific programming for alternative options (clients need more guidance in identifying options in the field).	bodies, which refer clients to Manitoba Start)	employment services. • Estimated 50% of clients pursued alternative career. • 684 clients accessed through CIIP (website Immigrate Manitoba)	• Help clients not just to get job, but to identify long-term goal (clarifies what they need to do) and put together plan (what jobs to go after and needed education) • Work experience placements takes pressure off employers to decide right away and gives client exposure to workplace
Success Skills Centre (Winnipeg, Manitoba)			
• Employment services, internships and training (computerized training for accountants, Canadian payroll, AutoCAD for engineering, etc.). • No separate program for alternative careers. Prepare IEPs based on their backgrounds, what's possible and what's available. Focus on alternative careers as an interim effort when resources are not available, or age and other factors preclude IEPs from working in their field • Provide information to IEPs or individual counsellors will meet IEP to discuss what next.	Some info given overseas. Clients come both before and after assessment. Some have been in Canada for a number of years and come after layoff.	• 1100 clients/year. • 350-400 (1/3 of clients) people placed yearly in chosen/related occupations; other 2/3 need language or other training, or to resolve other issues • Clients happy to get job, • internships often lead to jobs (8/10)	• Clients can come back anytime when they are ready; and access counsellor. • Clients are individually assisted to develop a Career Action Plan that keeps them moving on (e.g. gather required documents, upgrade language) while working at interim jobs. • Follow up with clients and remind them about their plan.

Identifying Alternative Careers

A range of responses were received when ISOs were asked how alternative careers are identified.

IEP background and circumstances

The ISOs interviewed reported working with IEPs in a variety of different ways to identify alternative careers. In order to identify suitable alternatives, ISO counsellors will first learn about the IEP's interests, intentions, strengths, background, abilities (language skills, technical ability and computer skills, etc.) and personal situation (available time, funding support, etc.), The IEP may also do a self-assessment of his/her interest, values, and transferable skills.

> *"It is not "one size fits all". "*

A range of possible scenarios was raised: some IEPs are clear about their intentions, while others have no idea about possible alternatives. Some are already working in alternative careers but want something else. Some may try alternative careers and later move back to their original career, or pursue further education or training. Some will prefer to work at occupations that are less demanding because of time pressures. Some may have never worked before in their countries of origin. It was noted that the choice of alternative careers is also affected by the necessity IEPs face in making a living, often, to support dependants.

> *"It all depends on what the client presents. We will get the individual to do research on what they can do and what they can learn."*

ISO informants emphasized that the choice of the alternative career rests with the IEP. "Advisors do not determine alternative careers but figure out viable options depending on clients' background and personal circumstances." One contact informant described the process of identifying an alternative career as "self-paced" and another cautioned sensitivity in convincing IEPs to look at alternative careers ("they are proud about their jobs").

One informant noted that hearing other IEPs share their experience about alternative careers can help IEPs learn about what to do next. It was observed that the process is very discouraging for many IEPs.

Researching alternative careers

The importance of research in determining alternative careers was stressed by many informants, as was the role of the IEP as the driver (It's their life, their career"). Contacts reported that counsellors will initiate IEPs in the process of conducting research, and help them develop research skills (e.g. Internet searches, website

browsing). Ideas for alternative careers may come from searching career websites, job postings and employer websites and websites of regulatory bodies.

Many informants talked about the role of the counsellor/advisor in providing suggestions and guidance. Depending on the IEP's background, information may be provided on possible alternative careers and their responsibilities (e.g. teachers may be given career maps for ECE, elementary and secondary school teaching). The counsellor may provide guidance on research, or on labour market needs, and certification requirements. The counsellor may also direct IEP clients to other alternative career services, or refer IEPs to relevant programs, such as bridging programs, language training, community college programs for certification, internships, mentoring, job shadowing, financial supports, and employment agencies to explore career option. In some cases, the counsellor may IEPs refer to career planners (who use career planning tools).

> *"One-on-one counselling is important. The larger community wants to help but don't have the skills and may not give the best advice."*
>
> *"IEPs…can benefit from good info and supports and feel hopeful, encouraged, and motivated."*

It was noted that self-assessment tools can provide the opportunity for IEPs to get a sense of where they fit, or which professions best fits them.

Competencies and skill transferability

ISO informants reported different methods for identifying competencies for alternative careers. One informant from an organization with established bridging programs reported that identification of competencies for the bridged professions had been done by partner professional associations and educational institutes. Other informants reported looking at employer websites (which may list required competencies), searching career resources and networking (with professionals in the field).

Informants also reported different methods used to assess IEP competencies for alternative careers, such as:

- Using people in the field: phoning professional associations and sitting down with specialists to get feedback
- Using information obtained by IEPs from the licensing body (e.g. gaps in qualifications indicated by professional associations)
- Using "prove it assessments"—tests to gauge certain technical abilities—along with Canadian Language Benchmark testing, client interviews, feedback from career coaches/facilitators, employer feedback, and interviews with partners like sector councils and professional associations
- Applicants for bridging programs may do self-assessments and use PLAR. Partners will review self-assessments and look at additional documentation

(resume, course description, degrees, and diplomas). A program may have a specific skill test, to see if applicants qualify.

- Using IEP demonstration of relevant competencies through portfolios
- Helping individuals discover transferable skills in a variety of ways such as observational opportunities, work placements, etc.
- Engaging employer partners to meet with IEPs and look at skill transferability for a specific field of work; providing a forum for exchange between employers and IEPs on opportunities in the field, the core competencies required, and examples demonstrating IEPs competencies
- Listening to employer feedback.

> *"We try to get the Internationally Trained Professional to understand that he/ she is not "a lawyer for the past 15 years" but someone with 15 years' experience working with people, time management, leadership, decision-making skills. We get them to tell a story that shows this from their experience. This is a brand new concept to 75 % of Internationally Trained Professionals."*

Difficulties in comparing competences were noted. One informant observed, "Analyzing competencies is complex, and takes time, effort and interpretation." Another noted that assessment of common competencies is required, so that related occupations can establish processes to identify which competencies are needed for practice, and IEPs can challenge assessments (or identify additional training); however, this does not exist at the moment.

Tools used

The various tools that ISO informants reported using to identify alternative career options are included in Appendix 3.

The importance of selecting the right resource was stressed by one contact. One informant pointed to the lack of good tools, noting that the Career Cruising site was geared to youth. She observed the need for a tool such as an "interest inventory" or test similar to the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB),

> *"If individuals can create their own career action plans, it creates confidence and commitment, and provides a psychological push."*

to provide guidance to counsellors (she also cautioned against gender- or culturally biased testing). This informant recommended the development of a general guide of procedures for agencies and clients on how to do a skills check (e.g. aptitude tests, or identifying strengths and weaknesses) for an individual and determine specific directions to take. She also suggested that online tools on how to transition into alternative careers would be useful.

Types of alternative careers

ISO informants stressed that the choice of alternative career will depend on the individual IEP and also on the availability of jobs. Other factors affecting choice of alternative careers mentioned included as the IEP's language ability and location (some IEPs cannot move into remote or rural communities), the IEP's circumstances (e.g. security guard good temporary alternative for studying). One informant suggested that the term "alternative career" was not suitable as the alternatives pursued by IEPs may be temporary and may not pay at the same level as the original career. It was also noted that IEPs may choose to pursue education as an alternative instead of making a career choice. This informant suggested considering the use of other terms such as parallel career, complementary career, or alternative starting point instead of "alternative career".

It was observed that the same barriers that may prevent an IEP from qualifying for a license in their original profession may apply to them finding an alternative career (e.g. language and communication skills). One informant observed that for someone that cannot get licensed immediately, it is best to work in something closely aligned or in the same

> *"The reality is that some clients will never get back to their original career. Unless bridging is available right up front, the client can't move into the occupation."*

environment and continue to move towards licensure (e.g. internationally educated physicians can work as laboratory researchers or as phlebotomists). She noted that often, the typical gap for IEPs is knowledge of the working environment.

The alternative career that IEPs pursue may or may not be regulated (or may be in the process of being regulated). Not surprisingly, most informants agreed that it was easier to pursue non-regulated positions as regulated positions may have requirements that IEPs lack. One informant noted that the first goal is to place IEPs in their field, whether in a regulated or non-regulated occupation. One informant observed that an alternative career in an assisting role

> *"Make sure that alternative work for internationally educated health professionals is in the health care system and as close to their profession as possible; this will have the best impact for the health care system."*

(pharmacy assistants, medical laboratory assistants, or nursing) is the best way to get an internationally-educated health professional in the health care field. Another informant related that her organization will normally present non-regulated roles related to the original field as alternatives to IEPs (e.g. pharmacist technicians for pharmacists, dental assistants for dentists, clinical associate or assistant for physicians). She observed that some

> *"Other regulated occupations do not have lower level of competencies."*

previously non-regulated professions have become regulated (e.g. pharmacy technicians) over the course of time. Another possibility mentioned was another occupational level within a regulated profession (e.g. licensed practical nurses within

nursing), although it was noted that in some cases, the IEP may not really be pursuing an "alternative" career but one which is closer in scope to his/her original profession.

A few informants noted that alternative career options may be new to the IEPs and may not have been evident in their countries of origin. For example, alternatives for pediatricians might include working with autistic children, or as a lactation or genetics counsellor. In some countries, one occupation may combine several occupational categories that exist in Canada.

One contact stated that choices of alternative carers are "only limited by imagination", and suggested that alternative careers can be related to the profession in in other non-related fields, where the same skills are required.

Challenges

The ISOs interviewed identified the following challenges faced in developing and offering alternative career supports:

- *IEP-related challenges:* These include IEPs' language ability, cultural competency, basic employment skills, unfamiliarity with job search and the labour market, lack of time (the IEP may be working and can only attend programs on weekend or when they are laid off). Informants also mentioned the need to keep IEP clients motivated, and to manage client expectations and possible resistance to alternative careers.

- *Working with employers:* Several informants mentioned the importance of working with employers. "Awareness of employer needs has to be on top of one's mind," said one informant, noting the challenge in getting employers involved in programs [for IEPs]. Another informant spoke of the need to change the mindset of employers: "There is a lack of understanding and employers are reluctant to bring in qualified IEPs at a lower level." She emphasized the need to build trust so that employers know that IEPs that are referred by ISOs to fill positions are pre-screened and prepared. One informant cautioned that, in a booming economy, employers may not take the time to assess proper fit, and may want to jump straight to recruitment—if employers act too quickly in hiring IEPs, the consequence may be that people fail on the job.

"Cross-cultural training is needed for clients and employers."

- *Lack of sustained funding:* ISO informants stressed that funding was required for the work it takes to provide their services, as well as for building partnerships and informing people about programs, getting to understand industry, and maintaining community and employer connections.

- *Training and tools:* One informant noted the need for more tools for assessing careers and abilities. Another described a challenge in developing soft skill training.

- *Other:* Other challenges cited by ISO informants include politics between the different professions, service standards and risks in the health care field, preferences of unions in using union members, and the lack of alternatives for some professions.

> *"Many alternative professions that suit IEPs with experience require certification (e.g. health care aides as alternative for nursing). There are no real alternatives for some professions (e.g. physicians, dentists), aside from entry level junior positions in the health care field….this is hard to accept and we need to support feelings."*
>
> *"Many employers of health care aides demand that individuals have the equivalent of a Canadian certificate…it takes $8,000 to complete the course or $2,500 to write a challenge exam…all for a job that pays $13/hour."*

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The contacts interviewed shared the following lessons learned and best practices:

General

- The situation is always evolving.
- Never assume anything (about clients, employers, what jobs are out there).
- There is never enough time.

Start early

- Offer supports as early in the process as possible.
- Allow IEPs to access information and initiate licensure, and provide information on alternative careers pre-arrival so that IEPs can come with eyes wide open and make informed choices.
- Engage IEPs early on in the process so they don't make a wrong decision. If they find jobs, they may stay there, as it is comfortable.

Information

- Many people are not well informed. Online access to better information pre-arrival will have an impact and better prepare IEP to look at options. Labour market information is very important.
- IEPs need information before they arrive. They need to be directed "to the right info at the right source at the right time" to eliminate misunderstanding and miscommunication, and so that they do not have to find it themselves.
- Build realistic expectations pre-arrival. This will cut certification time for the immigrant to enter his/her previous or alternative career. Provide one-to-one

online employment counselling pre-arrival (IEPs can get lost with so many websites available).

- Assessments are important, and provide an objective reality check as to where they're at and what they need to work on.
- Provide access to good information about alternative careers (e.g. ISIS website, Nova Scotia Start).

Working with IEPs

- Work with the IEP client to make sure services are best utilized and the client is on track. Don't close clients' file even if the client has found work. Make sure probation is completed.
- Stay in close touch with the client and provide support.
- Provide support beyond the job search; e.g. provide support with applications and what's missing in interviews.
- Maximize opportunities by putting the IEP client in touch with the right program.
- Participants benefit from hands-on support.
- An individual participant focus works well.
- Supports can start pre-arrival but the IEP needs interactive support, not just a website. The IEP needs access to a counsellor, coaching, and a facilitator.
- Encourage the immigrant to be proactive, do research, think about and do active career exploration. Show the immigrant how to proceed.
- Empower IEPs to find options, map a plan and do a self-directed job search in their field.
- The facilitator must be knowledgeable about career development to be able to provide guidance and resources.
- Encourage education and training.
- Be more prescriptive in suggesting language and other training.
- Communications skills are the key.
- Help the IEP with cultural issues and to understand the need to invest in themselves (short term pain for long-term gain)

Messaging and approach

- Present the option for alternative careers as Plan 1A (parallel stream) instead of a Plan B (failure option).
- It is important that newcomers not be diverted to survival jobs. IEPs should be encouraged to work in the right environment or close to their profession. For example, for an IEP in pharmacy, working at cash in a pharmacy is better than working at cash in a coffee shop.

Employer engagement

- Ongoing education for employers to learn about skills and qualifications of clients and money saved by getting trained individual.
- All parties need to be well informed. Employers should know the potential of IEPs and IEPs should know what is required of the job.
- Focus on the employer, not employee.
- Employment preparation (including services that help IEPs gain an understanding of industry and language supports) is important. Employers confirm this. Employment preparation demonstrates the IEP's intent to be in the profession and helps employers understand who they are hiring.

> *"I can't think of one IEP that could jump into work right away, even if the work is not regulated…"*

Targeted programming

- Targeted programming is needed. Professions and industries should be targeted for placement. Precise expertise is required for targeted programming.
- Bridging programs to fast-track people.
- Internships (3 months to one year) benefit both IEPs and employers. But it may be difficult for some IEP clients to take internships as they have to pay rent and support themselves.
- Do a review at the end of the program each year; get feedback from IEP clients and teachers, so that you are constantly improving.

Partnerships

- Partner with stakeholders. Past IEP participants in programs belong to the Atlantic Network, a community of interests.
- Foster collaborative partnerships with stakeholders.
- A multi-stakeholder group is good for building connections between professional associations, colleges, and regulatory bodies.
- Settlement organizations assist newcomers on a wide spectrum of needs, from family issues to alternative careers, whereas other organizations can only focus on their mandates; e.g. community colleges on training available at their locations, or professional associations emphasizing pathways to licensure.

4.2. Suggestions for Alternative Career Supports

Ideal Delivery System or Format

ISO informants were asked for their suggestions regarding an ideal delivery system or format for alternative career supports.

Existing supports—need sustaining

Several ISO contacts suggested that the supports that they are currently offering are close to ideal and should be sustained. Their comments are summarized below:

- The ideal delivery system or format needs to be systemic and sustainable. [Our organization] is fairly effective. [What is needed is an]…organization that understands employment with a sustainable infrastructure (network of partnerships with employers, colleges etc.). Funding is required to sustain this.
- Helping IEPs benefits all. Benefits should be returned in funding so that organizations [like ours] can continue to help IEP clients and create income for government. Funding is required to continue with programs.
- "We have a dream program right now. It is almost perfect. We worked for years to set it up. A few more staff would be good…Taxes should be used to fund programs that actually work. There is a constant concern about funding. We can double the reaching of targets. Our set up is successful and should be used as model for other professions."
- Attention should be directed at improving infrastructure and resources that that are already in place (new ones my not be needed).

Approach

Informants offered their perceptions of the ideal approach in providing alternative career supports. One informant noted that the one-on-one approach with IEPs is key. Another indicated the importance of providing support to IEPs at different stages of transition. One informant

> *"Face-to-face instruction and facilitation is the biggest tool in success of delivery."*

suggested referring the IEP to the right resource, holding "a scientific conversation at the right place about placing strengths early in the game", and not waiting till the "frustration stage or when the ITP runs into a brick wall." It was observed that while pre-arrival online assistance to IEPs can be successful, exposure to Canadian workplace culture and communication skills cannot be done online and that IEPs need actual experience and practice giving and receiving feedback.

Providing information early in the process

> *"Providing options involves many different partners and access points …"*

Several informants focused on the issue of providing information to IEPs before they arrive in Canada. They

> *"Labour market information is key…clients are completely unaware about the market place and need to know about the local labour market. IEPs should have information before they come to Canada so they know the best areas to move to. It is easier than relocating afterwards."*

suggested presenting information on the labour market (e.g. occupational demand, level of competition, etc.), occupational requirements, licensure processes, and alternative careers. They also suggested providing opportunities for networking or mentorship so that IEPs get a realistic picture about pursuing their careers in Canada. Providing information early in the process will help IEPs that are still in their countries of origin to understand their options while they still have local supports. If they know the necessary requirements, they can do more research and choose appropriate options, and they can also prepare themselves by taking training, or making contact with appropriate bodies before coming. It was noted that individuals with this kind of preparatory foundation can transition more quickly to the workforce after arrival.

Specific programming

Several informants mentioned specific programming as part of an ideal system of alternative career supports. One informant emphasized that instead of generic counselling, evaluation of skills transferability for IEPs should be done systematically, by gathering employers and experts so that IEPs can evaluate "what's real". He noted the

> *"IEPs should be referred to short streamlined training for a particular industry (or to organizations that can help them, such as doctors to GEO, nurses to CARE)."*
>
> *"Sector links are important."*

importance of follow-up initiatives (providing tools such as self-assessments, addressing details such as who pays, what are related positions and how to get into them, creating competency-based resumes for real situations, translating new learning behaviourally, and working with other ISOs). Another informant suggested engaging different bodies (regulatory body, educational institutes, employers, and sector councils) to tailor specific programs for IEPs.

One informant observed that bridge training and enhanced training can be easily adapted [for alternative careers]. It was suggested that regulatory bodies should allow internationally educated health professionals into other health professions and that there should be bridging programs for allied health professions (e.g. anesthesia assistant programs for anesthesiologists). The need to educate everyone was noted.

One informant proposed finding employers that are open to new ideas and perspectives, and using strategies for "testing the water on both sides" such as worksite assessments (e.g. engineers are placed with a company with a training allowance for 4 months so that employers have the opportunity to assess their performance against a national set of competencies; the IEP either gets employed at the end of 4 months or leaves with a documented set of competencies).

Skills and Competency Assessments

Several ISOs commented on the importance of skills and competency assessments. Some comments are reproduced below:

- ITPs generally have no clue about skill transferability, it is not part of their DNA, and they do not veer off their professional path.
- There should be more self-assessment tools, so that more IEPs can see where they fit in. PLAR should be used to determine what IEPs would like to do, and to develop portfolios to show to employers…ideally, educators should use competency based assessments to identify gaps and then fill the gaps. This would lead to IEPs writing national exams to get Canadian credentials.
- Proper skills assessment is required. The IEP's skills should be defined [and the IEP should not be defined by his /her profession]. Skills should be identified (through self-assessments, research, mentoring) for their transferability to another career in which the individual can find success and satisfaction.
- There should be a balance between accuracy and amount of information. There is a need for professionals that can provide appropriate assessment of this balance. IEPs sometimes spend too much money on academic credential services.
- Qualifications assessment prior to arrival may be useful but are not always accurate.

Funding, partnerships, interest and commitment

Other requirements identified by ISO informants for an ideal system of alternative career supports included funding, partnerships, interest, and political commitment.

In terms of roles and responsibilities, different perspectives were offered:

- Professional associations and regulatory bodies have their specific mandates. They are not service providers and it is difficult for them to change their role and their mentality to look at counselling or career coaching, which are key to helping IEPs find alternative careers. It is important that alternative careers be brought up in a way that is respectful to IEP's culture and in a timely manner. Government should be aware of this in considering alternative career supports.

- Resources should go to the internationally educated health professionals, employers, educators, and regulators. They are best placed to define needs and skill sets. Settlement agencies should do settlement and community integration; they are good at facilitating and coordinating different bodies and linking things up but should not get involved in health care or training. In some cases they stepped in because they saw a need.

Ensuring Sustainability

The ISOs interviewed had the following suggestions for ensuring sustainability of supports:

- *Relevance and outcomes:* Almost half of the organizations interviewed mentioned relevance and outcomes as key in ensuring sustainability. One contact commented that supports that are well planned and work will be sustained, and suggested looking at "what's not working and fix it", so that resources can be moved to something else. Examples of useful supports that can ensure sustainability were cited: programs that encourage employers to hire IEPs, mentoring programs, and self-assessment tools (it was noted that these need to be tailored for cultural differences). The need to consider and plan for sustainability was also noted, and it was suggested that sustainability be built into the pilot phase of a program by conducting an evaluation.

  > *"You need to stay relevant, otherwise clients won't come."*
  >
  > *"Performance measures are important, but you need to take into account quality versus quantity. The client may be served but not satisfied."*

- *Collaboration:* Relationships and partnerships (e.g. with regulatory and non-regulatory bodies and with employers that are open to embracing new employees) were also mentioned as a way to ensure sustainability. It was observed that leadership and ownership were required for effective programs and strategies. One informant stressed the need for an integrated approach and "elevating initiatives to a collaborative effort among partners". He noted, "We should not fear that it is complex [it is important to] bring as many stakeholders in as possible at the right time. Don't do it in isolation; we need champions."

- *Sustained Funding:* Several informants cited sustained funding as a requirement for sustainability. One informant noted that sustained funding enables organizations to continue to improve and build capacity and noted the need to sustain networks of agencies. Another informant suggested that pilot projects can try to obtain private sector funding and consider how services can be maintained if government funding stops.

  > *"You can't charge money to clients. The program is a major enterprise—you can't hope the agency will deliver it with its own resources. "*

Engaging IEPs at Various Stages

When asked how stakeholders can be engaged at various stages, responses were as follows:

Provide support before arrival

Many organizations suggested that more information and support be provided to IEPs while they are still overseas. Information about where IEPs can go to find required information can be provided online. "Unless you know where to get info, you don't get info, "observed one informant. Language assessment can be a done pre-arrival, either at a location or online. Bridge programs can start also overseas. One informant commented that pre-arrival engagement of IEP not only relieves IEP stress but reduces input costs for [other] programs. This informant suggested partnering with regulatory bodies at this first stage.

> *"Clients that come through CIIP or are referred by them are more ready. They have many questions to ask, and have done research . . . clients that receive services pre-arrival are well prepared and realistic, know about alternative careers and may do training before arrival...clients that come post-arrival are lost in comparison."*
>
> *"Increasingly stakeholders, even employers, are looking at starting sooner—pre-arrival. Regulatory bodies see that it is to their advantage."*

It was noted that the Canadian government should provide more realistic information to immigrants. "Immigrants say they have been misled by Canadian immigration…they thought jobs were waiting for them," one informant said. One informant spoke of the critical "bridge of info" and of how it might be presented; e.g. "Canada needs engineers but you may not be able to work as engineer; here are alternatives." Another informant commented that the government does provide information overseas but what is not mentioned is how long it takes after landing to get into an alternative career, and the need to work in low-level jobs.

One informant noted that it was good to have more pre-arrival information available but expressed doubt as to how useful the information would be.

Provide support during all stages of transition

Several informants suggested that alternative career supports need to be present at all stages of transition (pre-arrival, pre-and post-assessment). It was noted that uptake of support will depend on the individual. Starting earlier is best, instead of working with IEPs only when they encounter problems, or when they are desperate for money and need a job immediately. The importance of counselling was stressed.

> *"Human beings like to hear what they want to hear. Sometimes they get info but don't understand the regulated profession…they still think they can get licensed easily."*

One informant that it is important for IEPs to have awareness at the beginning and to improve their awareness of qualification recognition processes. Before assessment, IEPs can go to workshops and meet with employers and associations and after assessment, ISOs can provide continued supports for the recognition process, provide short- term options and show ways to move up the career ladder.

One informant noted that pre-arrival case management can be done through Skype and telephone, and that her organization is currently working on an employment tool kit which will go online so that IEP clients can take advantage of it pre-arrival. She observed that the IEP mindset is different pre- and post-arrival, and that while many may not accept what they hear, it is important to give as much information as possible even though clients may not remember all they hear.

> *"The information takes on a different tone when the client arrives and goes through cultural shock."*

Other ways to engage IEPs

Other suggestions for engaging IEP stakeholders included making information "attractive" (e.g. posting interviews in Mandarin on a Facebook page) and making available on the web more information on alternative careers and what's involved in pursuing them. One informant noted that some sector and professional associations are active and promote themselves well (e.g. the Supply Chain sector, or the financial services sector which has an excellent website, www. financialservices.com). IEPs can be referred to these associations' websites or to the associations themselves. Caution was urged by one informant, who stressed sensitivity to cultural perceptions and timing. This informant noted that while information can be made available to IEP clients to "open their minds", alternative careers (even those related to their field) can only be discussed when the IEP expresses interest in them; otherwise, the IEP may be offended.

Other Comments

Several informants expressed approval of the attention that is being directed to the area of alternative careers, as demonstrated by the commissioning of this study.

> *"[This is a]…great direction of work which will have an impact on moving people into relevant careers."*

Some other noteworthy comments made by ISO contacts are summarized below:

- "Alternative Career" is new jargon. ISOs have always been exploring other types of jobs that relate to the IEPs' profession where they can use their skills. It is nothing new….it is tried and tested. We are trying to help people work in the field

of their choice. We can help IEPs discover [new options] in a variety of ways: observational opportunities, work placements...

- Most successful immigrants are working in a different field. Sharing stories about how other IEPs found success and fulfilment in other careers can be useful and provide comfort. The initial letting go is hard. Counselling can be useful. You need to have a conversation and engage clients to take a look at other options, and encourage them to continue to improve themselves. This is needed for all fields.
- A lot of immigrants are in alternative careers. They often go into alternative careers out of desperation or by default, for many, many reasons. It would help if they can get on track for alternative careers as soon as they realize they can't practice in profession. Otherwise, they become despondent.

5. Research Findings—Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs)
Key findings from the interviews conducted with IEPs are summarized in this section.

5.1. The IEP Experience

Pre-arrival awareness

> *"…I came as a skilled worked. I had the notion that my skills would be connected to my job, otherwise why was I given a visa?"*

Most IEPs interviewed said that they were not aware of the difficulties they would face in working in their professions in Canada. Several spoke of how they were not given a realistic picture of their job prospects in Canada, and noted that their expectations were based on acceptance of their immigration applications as skilled workers in their professions.

Readiness to accept alternative career

All the IEPs interviewed noted that they had no choice but to accept alternative careers, in order to earn a living (and in some cases, to support their families). Several spoke of how difficult it was to find any kind of job. One IEP described her difficulties in getting hired for low-level jobs (she was told she had no experience and was overqualified. She said, "I was shocked to discover the differences in Canada; I had thought that wages might be lower but did not anticipate how difficult it would be."

> *"I was told it was difficult to practise [my profession] before coming to Canada but it is "different when walking the journey".*
>
> *"It seems like Canada just needs blue collar jobs: cashiers, home support workers, waiters, cleaning houses—a college student can do what I do now…I am a misfit."*

Choosing alternative careers

The IEPs interviewed indicated that they had chosen their new careers or jobs through research, following suggestions by counsellors, or simply, because of the availability of

jobs. Several physicians reported that they were pursuing options to work temporarily as physician assistants, pharmacy assistants or ultrasound technologists while they pursued licensure in the longer term.

Participation in programs

The IEPs interviewed varied in their participation in programs. Many noted that employability training was useful only to a certain extent, as they still had to look for job themselves. Guidance by ISO counsellors was generally considered to be useful. One IEP reported that her experience with a non-ISO counsellor at a government employment centre was not productive, as the counsellor did not know about obtaining credentials in her field.

Experience working in other occupations

The IEPs interviewed ranged in terms of their current situations. One was not working as yet and pursuing language upgrading, several were in part-time "survival" jobs, some were training for a regulated occupation (for the short term , with a longer-term goal of gaining licensure in the original profession, and others were working in "lower level" jobs in their field or a related field.

"An alternative career is not the best way—I spent my whole life as a doctor. It is hard to start a new career now, it is a waste of time."

"Survival jobs are easier to accept if they are related to your profession."

"I have several tears out of my eyes…"

All the IEPs interviewed felt that they were only partially using their skills in the jobs at which they were currently working. A few indicated acceptance of their current situation, noting that their situation was acceptable in the overall balance, when considering other factors such as providing their families with opportunity by coming to Canada, or for the short-term, as they intended in the longer-term to gain licensure in their original professions, work towards a better job, or pursue other goals, such as starting a business).

Several spoke frankly about how their alternative jobs or careers were a waste of their ability, time and experience. Much disappointment and frustration were evident during some interviews.

5.2.   Suggestions for Alternative Career Supports

IEP suggestions for alternative career supports are summarized below.

Pre-arrival preparation

As noted earlier, most of the IEPs interviewed said that they did not know what they would be facing in Canada in terms of practising their profession. All IEPs agreed that it was preferable that immigrants be informed of the reality regarding their professions and finding a job. A sample of their comments is provided below:

- [For Physicians,] The government immigration website does not present a correct picture of reality; it is almost opposite.
- In my immigration interview, I was told that Canada required skilled manpower, but I have worked at underskilled, physical jobs after arrival. I would never recommend to friends to come to Canada.
- It is better to be direct and realistic so that you won't waste time—for immigrants, and for government. I could have studied something else if I had been told what kind of job would be easy to get. I could also have prepared funds and got training to open a business.

> *"Canada is asking for immigrants to help the country, why is it not taking their help? ...We got the message: please don't come!"*

IEP suggestions for pre-arrival preparation included:

- Providing language and employability training in the home country. (This will save time upon arrival, when the immigrant has to deal with other issues like culture shock, homesickness etc.)
- Allowing for other exams to be done overseas (as is the case with the US), so that IEPs do not need to make the decision to relocate until after passing exams.

Information on licensure, labour market and alternative careers

IEPs suggested that information should be made available pre-arrival onwards, in the following areas:

- Regulators can present more information on how residency works and options for applicants (otherwise the time to find out requirements and options is wasted);
- Emphasize the differences between engineer, technologist, technician—some countries do not make this distinction;
- State the difficulties in getting licensed on the immigration website; post alternatives for physicians (e.g. ultrasound technologists or technicians, research work, volunteer work) and places to apply to (e.g. Appletree Clinic);

- Summarize details for licensing and pathways on one site (currently, IEPs have to navigate through different sites of different organizations).

Counselling and guidance

The IEPs interviewed identified counselling and guidance as useful supports. One in particular noted that it takes relationship and time to" explore IEP hearts" and to explore and identify suitable alternatives. Mentoring was also noted as a useful support.

Opportunities to show ability

Many suggestions were made by IEPs for providing them with opportunities to get Canadian experience and to show their ability. The IEPs suggested providing work placements, unpaid internships, observerships and even volunteering opportunities in their field. It was suggested that employers should host work opportunities for immigrants, not necessarily in their original professions, but in the same field, so that immigrants can get a foot in the door and gain experience that will enable him/her to later find a better job. One IEP noted, "Supports need to be more than about resume building; they should have more orientation to industry and direct interface with industry. They should have industry come to talk to participants, and bring HR people for actual recruitment."

> *"Canadian employers rely too much on credentials, not the person's real ability; they should let immigrants try."*
>
> *"An immigrant does not have Canadian experience or certificate, but has knowledge and expertise…"*

Recognize prior learning

Several IEPs called for more recognition of their prior learning for greater ease of entry into alternative careers (e.g. there should be short term courses for physicians to become laboratory technicians, nurses, or midwives). One IEP commented on how immigrants' knowledge is not respected and they have to "start from the beginning" in finding jobs. "Please recognize our knowledge and let us into the system," she commented.

Financial support

Many IEPs spoke of their concerns about sustaining themselves while looking for work. Many noted the high cost of professional training and exams. IEP informants suggested that government should assist immigrants by providing funding for training so that the immigrant can pursue certification for employment (even if it is for the short term, as the immigrant can achieve financial stability through short-term employment that will enable him to pursue his long-term goal—"the immigrant cannot rely on government all the time," one contact noted).

A few IEPs who spoke of starting their own businesses commented on how difficult it is to obtain financing as newcomers. One IEP suggested that the government should start a fund or provide low interest loans to help immigrants start small businesses.

Other

Other various suggestions made by IEPs for alternative career supports include:
- [The certifying body] should visit schools in other countries to see if practice is at par, so that it can grant automatic certification to accredited schools.
- Put immigrants in contact with friends who can help with settlement (with finding schools, housing, shopping etc.)
- Form a group for teachers that can exchange ideas on part-time work or alternative careers. Keep a database of qualified IEPs and match individuals to available jobs.
- Immigrant services should provide services specific to different groups, and make opportunities for exchange and discussion

> *"Don't focus on why you cannot, but instead, give it a chance…"*

6. A Model for Alternative Career Supports—Synthesis of Findings

This section presents a model for alternative career supports based on a synthesis of research findings. The features of the model are described in detailed answers to the study's research questions.

6.1. What constitutes an alternative career?

Informant responses indicated some issues with the term "alternative career" and the validity of the current working definition for alternative careers.   These issues are described below and a revised definition of "alternative career" is proposed.

Some professions are more limited in alternative career options than others.

Informant responses indicated that the eight targeted occupations have different experiences regarding alternative careers.

Occupational contacts for physicians and dentists noted that training for these professions is very specific and is not applicable to other professions, even related occupations in the same field (e.g. dental technologists for dentists). They indicated that in their experience, IEPs in these professions are reluctant to pursue other occupations, and that outcomes are not always successful (e.g. experience from Ontario, Manitoba and the U.S. that show that physicians do not necessarily make good physician assistants). The perception that there are limited alternative careers for some professions was echoed by some ISO informants, and the strong attachment of

physicians to their professional identity was confirmed in interviews with IEPs and other informants.

On the other hand, it was observed that the majority of Canadians who are trained in engineering are, by mid-career, working in occupations other than engineering, but are applying skills gained during their training in engineering. It is not known if the same situation applies to individuals trained in engineering in other countries; however, the flexibility in the application of engineering professional competencies to other occupations would imply a greater likelihood of internationally educated engineers finding alternative careers in Canada.

Suitable alternative careers suggested by the occupational contact for medical laboratory technologists included occupations in non-related fields that make use of some professional competencies, such as copy editor; working in accounts payable/receivable, or food/beer/wine quality control; insurance medical tester; food & safety inspector. As well, the occupational contact for this field identified a pathway to alternative careers in a related sector (biotechnology) for this profession.

"You see headlines in newspapers that state that two-thirds of ITPs are not working in their field of expertise— the statement is meaningless. 75% of McGill law graduates are not practising law. The key to success for those with post-secondary education is critical thinking… [which] leads to skill transferability."

Interview responses from the three informant groups were not as clear regarding the scope for transferable competencies or the strength of professional identification for the remainder of the 8 targeted occupations (licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, engineering technologists and teachers).

It cannot be determined from the research findings whether there truly is a limited scope for transferability of competencies for certain professions, or whether this is a simply matter of perception due to factors such as a lack of established pathways, or strong professional identification for certain professions. Several ISO informants and IEPs mentioned that personal adaptability and identification with one's profession are factors that influence the IEP's readiness to pursue an alternative career. The IEP's identification with his/her profession may be stronger in some individuals, and perhaps,

"The choice of alternative careers is only limited by imagination…"

for the type of individuals that are found in certain professions (e.g. physicians). Or, it simply may be that not enough creative thinking has been applied to identifying alternative careers for certain professions.

IEP experience does not correspond to the ideal represented in the current working definition of alternative careers.

The current working definition notes the following attributes of alternative careers:

- Make use of and relate to an immigrant's skills and experience.
- Requirement for little or no upgrading
- Provision of a professional or semi-professional salary
- Opportunity for advancement

However, the actual experience of IEPs (as indicated by interviews with ISOs and IEPs) is that the alternative occupations IEPs undertake in Canada:

- Only partially use their skills and experience and sometimes not at all (many IEPs spoke strongly about the waste of ability, time, experience in their current alternative occupations);
- Sometimes require full upgrading, or may require a credential that is costly to obtain. Both ISOs and IEPs reported that IEPs still have to start training "from square one" for many occupations despite their prior knowledge and experience. Both ISO and IEP informants also pointed to lack of employer awareness of IEP abilities and experience as a barrier to finding employment.
- Can vary widely in terms of compensation, from simply providing a living to a more ample wage/salary (this was not determined through the research interviews, but can be inferred from the types of alternative occupations mentioned by IEPs);
- Are viewed as providing opportunity for advancement in terms of providing Canadian experience and therefore creating the possibility of movement to a better job.

In addition, IEPs reported that they simply had no choice but to pursue an alternative occupation in order to earn a living. Many (notably IEP physicians, but IEPs in some other professions as well) are still pursuing licensure or hope for eventual return to their profession, while some would like to start a business or are contemplating new careers (not necessarily in their field).

The discrepancy between IEPs' experience and the idealized "alternative career" of the working definition may be attributed to various factors: the labour market (availability of suitable jobs), difficulty in obtaining recognition of qualifications, lack of employer acceptance, IEP adaptation issues (e.g. the poor language and communication skills that prevents an IEP from qualifying for a license in the original profession and may also hinder him/her in finding an alternative career), and the IEP's personal situation. This discrepancy is summarized in Figure 1 on the next page.
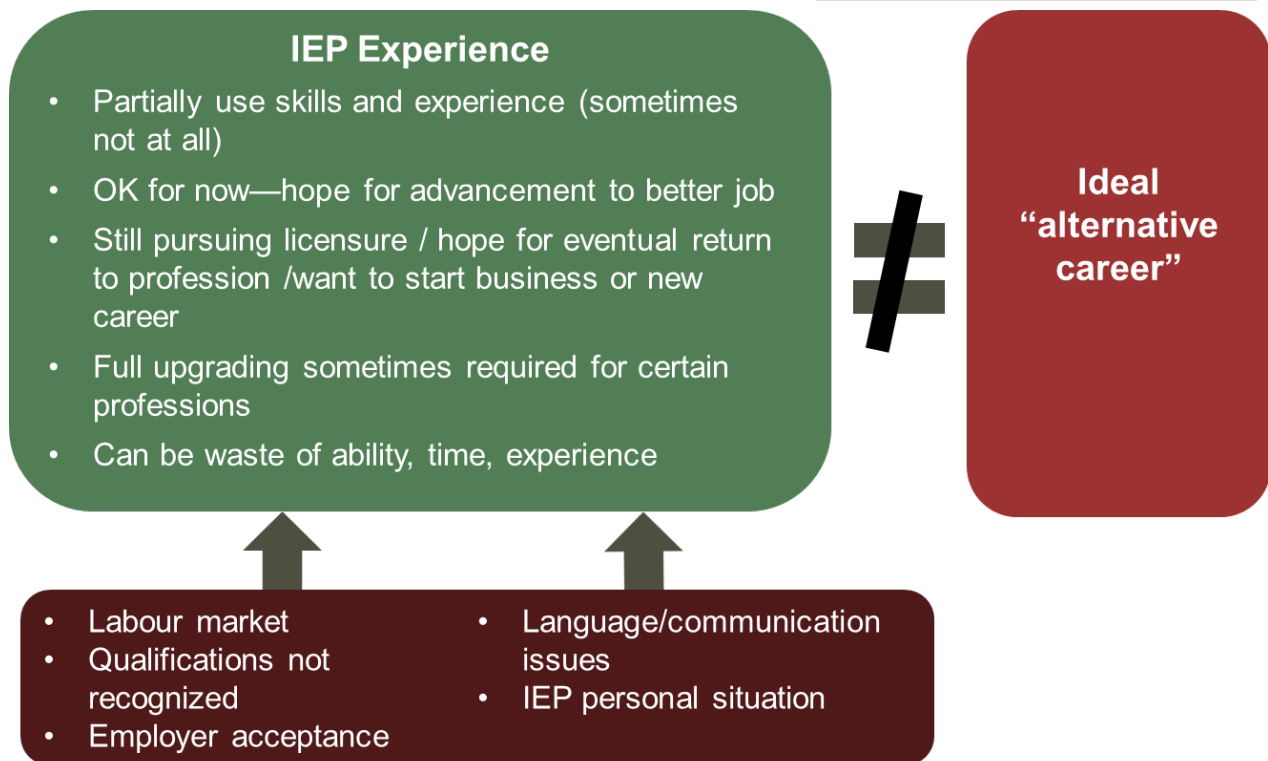
IEP Experience
- Partially use skills and experience (sometimes not at all)
- OK for now—hope for advancement to better job
- Still pursuing licensure / hope for eventual return to profession /want to start business or new career
- Full upgrading sometimes required for certain professions
- Can be waste of ability, time, experience

Ideal "alternative career"

- Labour market
- Qualifications not recognized
- Employer acceptance
- Language/communication issues
- IEP personal situation

Figure 1   IEP Experience with Alternative Careers

Culture, individual attributes, and personal circumstances influence perception of and adaptability to alternative careers

All informant groups stressed that each individual IEP situation was different, and that alternative career choices are ultimately up to the IEP to pursue, depending on their own individual situation.

The IEP's readiness to consider different types of alternative career choices is influenced by:

- The IEP's personality and cultural conditioning: these have a bearing on IEP attachment to their professional identity, flexibility, and openness to change
- The IEP's satisfaction with his/her professional career and aspirations for improvement/change.
- The IEP's approach to starting a new life in Canada[3]

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[3] See, for example , CIIP's September 2012 statistical report (available at http://www.newcomersuccess.ca/images/stories/reports/2012-september-stats-report.pdf), p.27: "Considering other occupational choices after CIIP services – At the time of registration, the vast majority of participants indicated they planned to work in their current occupation in Canada (90% or

- The IEPs' ability to adapt to working in Canada: factors related to the IEP's inability to get licensed (e.g. poor language, communication skills may also affect his/her ability to find a suitable or satisfactory alternate career). As noted by an ISO informant, few IEPs move directly into their chosen occupation and some adaptation is required in almost cases

- Settlement issues and personal life choices: these may affect choice of careers or suitable jobs; e.g. an IEP may opt for an occupation that uses fewer of his/her professional competencies and/or provides less pay, but is less demanding in terms of continual upgrading or overtime, so that more time can be devoted to family life.

Finally, it should be remembered that things are not static, and that the IEP's life circumstances and mindset change over time. Acceptance of alternatives may grow as the IEP's mindset changes over time, and choices may vary depending on the situation.

Many different pathways are possible

The alternative occupations that the IEPs find for the short term may sometimes just be a stepping stone to other occupations in the longer term. IEPs may travel different career pathways, as summarized in Figure 2 on the next page.

7,919). However, after attending CIIP's services, slightly over three-quarters (77% or 6,558) were considering other occupational choices as well. Of these, the top three reasons include expand career options (87% or 5,692), reinvent selves in Canada (37% or 2,443), and pursue higher demand occupations (36% or 2,384)."
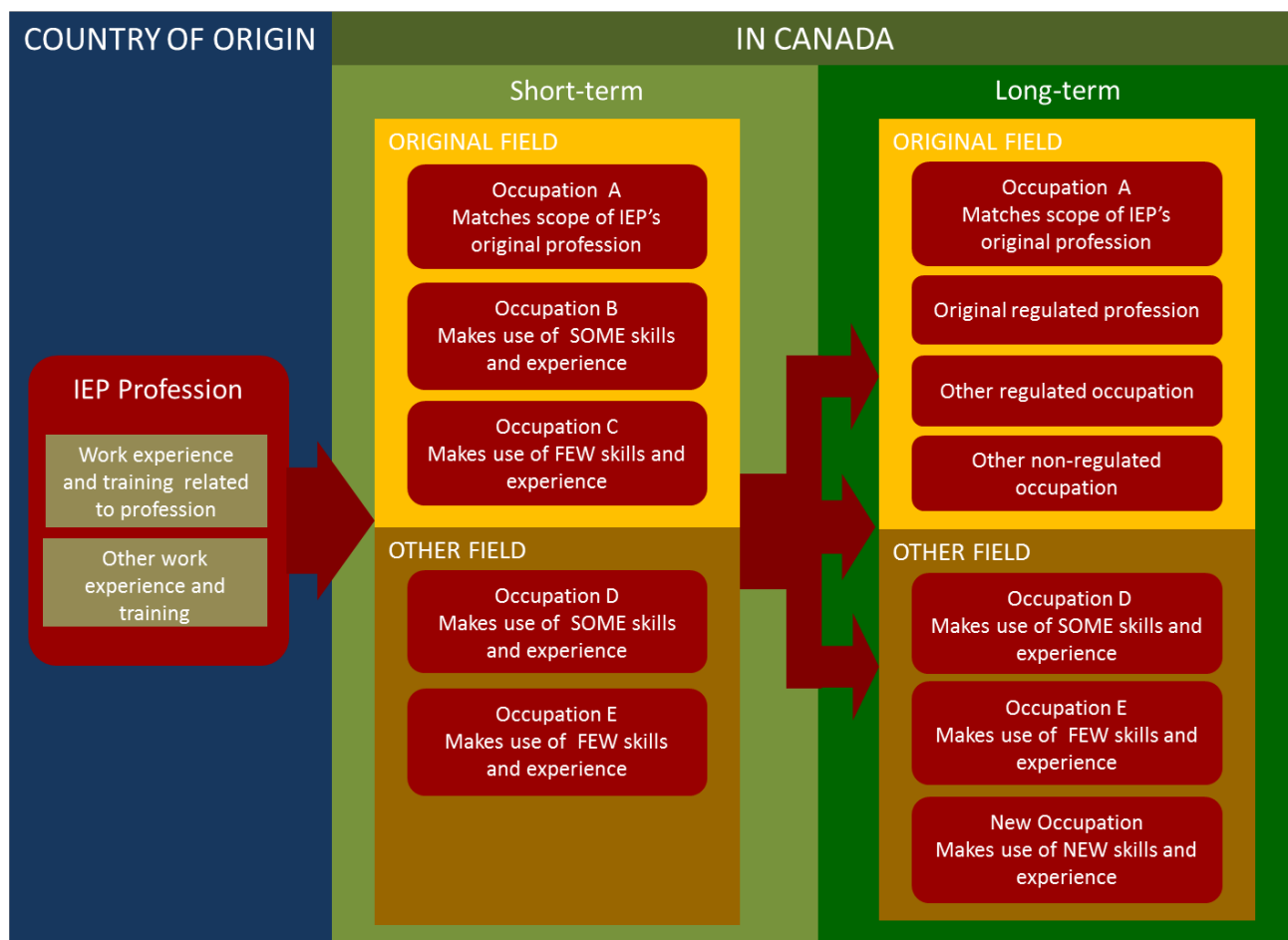
Figure 2   Career Paths for IEPs—the Range of Possibilities

IEPs who are not able to practise the profession in which they were originally trained may become employed in a variety of different occupations, including:

- An *interim occupation* that makes use of and relates to *some* of the IEP's skills and experience: an occupation taken up by the IEP for the short term, during which the IEP continues to pursue licensing for the original profession, or to train for another profession/career (e.g. a former physician may work as a sonographer while pursuing medical licensure, or an "engineer" may work as a technician while looking for work as a technologist or pursuing licensure as an engineer).
- An *interim occupation* that makes use of and relates to *few* if any of the IEP's skills and experience.
- A *more accurately matched occupation:* an occupation that resembles more closely the IEP's original profession, despite the designation or name given to that original profession (e.g. an internationally-educated "engineer" finds work as a technologist, or an internationally trained nurse works as a licensed practical nurse instead of a registered nurse).

- A *related/parallel/complementary* occupation: an occupation that is in the same field as the IEP's previous profession that makes use of some of the IEP's professional skills and training (e.g. an engineer may work in supply chain, or in technical sales). Some occupations in related fields are close to survival jobs in terms of the compensation and use of skills, while others may be closer to the level of the original profession.
- *Another occupation*: an occupation that is not related to the IEP's previous profession but may make use of life experience and work skills (e.g. a career in business, retraining for other fields).

A revised definition of alternative careers

Based on the above analysis, a revised working definition is proposed:

Alternative careers are career options that immigrants pursue other than the profession in which they were originally trained. Ideally, alternative careers make use of and relate to an immigrant's skills and experience.

For some immigrants, alternative careers are sought to support themselves while pursuing licensure in a profession that is regulated in Canada. For others who are unable to achieve recognition or unable to find employment in their field once qualified, the alternative career may be a stepping stone to other careers, or become the end goal of the immigrant. In all cases, alternative careers improve the labour market integration prospects of immigrants by providing opportunities for immigrants to apply their skills and experience in a Canadian context and to learn new skills and gain further experience.

Alternative careers include:

- Professions or occupations that may not exist in the immigrant's country of origin, but for which the scope of work is similar to that of the immigrant's original profession in his/her home country.
- Related occupations in the same field
- Occupations in related fields
- Occupations in unrelated fields.

Alternative careers may require skills or educational upgrading on the part of the immigrant.

This revised definition is different from the original working definition in the following ways:

- It takes into account the variety of pathways that different IEPs may follow (see Figure 2);
- It takes into account the unpredictability of career pathways while recognizing that skills and experience can be transferred across different occupations;
- It recognizes that IEPs end up in different alternative careers for different reasons (and therefore makes no reference to salary levels);
- It makes no reference to "advancement" but recognizes that, alternative careers improve the labour market integration prospects of immigrants by providing opportunities to apply their skills and experience in a Canadian context, and to learn new skills and gain further experience.;
- It expands the scope of possibilities for alternative careers, including occupations that are unrelated to the IEP's original sector or field but which may make use of the IEP's knowledge and skills (e.g. nurses may find an alternative career as health insurance claims officer);

6.2. When should immigrants receive information about alternative careers?

Setting realistic expectations and making informed decisions

"Most clients are unaware of the regulatory bodies and that they may not legally be able to apply for jobs and work in their profession upon arrival in Canada. Since they have been approved for visas, they think that their skills and education are recognized by Canadian employers... They are not willing to hear about alternative careers because they don't believe that they are not able to find employment in their own field.

Most clients are not prepared to even consider an alternative career path because there is the notion that "I was accepted to migrate to Canada on the basis of my current career experience and qualifications." Their previous career or choice of career has become their identity. Clients are afraid of change and there may also be a prestige issue present. This hurdle must be overcome pre-arrival so that they are emotionally and mentally prepared for the challenges when they arrive."

The issue of information was cited by all three groups of informants. Most IEPs are not aware of the "reality" in Canada before arrival—they do not know about the licensing process, the likelihood of obtaining a licence, difficulties in finding work, labour market conditions, possibilities for alternative careers, etc.

Accurate pre-arrival information in general, and not just as it pertains to alternative careers, is very useful to IEPs as it will frame their expectations and provide them a basis to make decisions and if necessary, undertake preparations (including skills training or assessments) while in their home country.

Even if accurate information is presented to the IEP, the IEP may not be ready to accept the likelihood that he/she may not be able to practise their original profession. As the mindset of the IEP will change over time, information should be presented at different stages throughout the IEP's transition to entry into the labour force, including pre-arrival, prior to and after assessment of qualifications.

IEP awareness needs to be created about the concept of alternative careers, possible alternative careers, and ways in which to identify suitable alternative careers. Information on alternative careers should be presented with sensitivity but it is better to be realistic so that the IEP is fully informed and prepared for reality.

Messaging

In presenting information about alternative careers, messaging should be consistent with and/or convey the following points:

- IEPS are not defined by their profession. Their education/training can be applied to many different career paths in Canada, not just one.
- Alternative careers offer IEPs another career option other than their original profession and may be considered for many reasons: lifestyle, new beginnings, new learning, expanded opportunities
- Some alternative careers may be a better match for IEP skills and training (this point should be targeted at engineers/technologists and licensed practical/registered nurses).
- Alternative careers are an opportunity for IEPs to use and develop their skills and training in other areas.
- Alternative careers can provide IEPs with the opportunity to gain new skills and experience.
- Alternative careers can be a stepping stone to the IEP's end goal (be it licensure in the original profession or other career goals)
- Alternative careers can allow IEPs to support themselves while pursuing further professional upgrading or licensure in the original field.

The following considerations should be taken into account in messaging:

- Messaging should recognize and acknowledge that the IEP is competent and well qualified in his/her home country, even though his/her qualifications may not be comparable in Canada.
- Messaging should not give false hope, but should acknowledge possible limitations in suitable alternative careers and factors that might influence the availability of alternative careers (labour market, location, licensure, etc.).
- Alternative careers should not be presented as a less valued option, or as careers/occupations that require lower level of competencies.
- Skills transferability is a new concept for many IEPs in many countries.

- Different professional groups may have other specific considerations for messaging.

6.3. What is/can be the most effective means to provide alternative career supports?

The supports identified to be useful by the three sets of informants were very similar and fell into four main areas, as summarized in Table 4. Responsibility for these supports is also indicated in the table.

Table 4   Effective Alternative Career Supports

Types of Support	Examples	Responsibility
Information and referrals	- Information on profession, alternatives, and licensing and training pathways - Self-assessment tools (for both alternative careers, and original regulated profession) - Labour market information - Occupational descriptions (for regulated professions and alternative careers) - Explanations of closely related occupations - Alternative career lists and pathways - Licensing pathways - Competency assessments for various professions - Competency maps for alternative pathways - IEP stories - Pathways to sectors	Occupational bodies, employers, government
Counselling and Guidance	- Identifying transferable skills - Identifying alternative careers - Job search - Identifying required training - Proactivity skills training	ISOs, Educator/trainers
Employability training	- Language training and communication skills - Job research skills - Employment preparation - Job search skills	ISOs, Educator/trainers

Types of Support	Examples	Responsibility
Career exploration and planning	• Career exploration guides • Career assessment and aptitude tests • Career planning tools	ISOs, Government
Bridging programs	• Gap analysis for competencies • Bridge training to close competency/skill gaps • Work experience placements	Employers, Educators/trainers, ISOs, Occupational bodies
Employer linkages	• Observerships/ volunteering • Work placements • Internships • Mentoring and networking	Employers, ISOs, Educators/trainers
Funding supports	• Funding for training, credential recognition, childcare, and for starting businesses.	Government, Employers

In terms of effective delivery, a summary of best practices is provided in Table 5 on the next page. This summary is derived from ISO informant responses detailed earlier in Lessons Learned and Best Practices.

Table 5   Best Practices for Alternative Career Supports

1. Start early. Allow IEPs to access information on their profession and alternative careers pre-arrival so that they can form realistic expectations and make informed choices. Offer alternative career supports as early as possible.
2. Provide hands-on individual support to IEPs. Make sure that IEPS utilize all available services and provide support beyond job search support.
3. Stay in close touch with the IEP and follow up on the IEP after he/she has found work.
4. Provide face-to-face interaction and support opportunities for the IEP with a counsellor, coach, or facilitator.
5. Encourage the IEP to be proactive in career exploration. Show the IEP how to proceed in career exploration and empower them to find options, map a plan and do a self-directed job search.
6. Help the IEP with cultural issues and help them to understand the need to invest in themselves (short-term pain for long-term gain).
7. Prepare IEPs for employment. Help IEPs gain an understanding of industry and provide language supports if required. Encourage employability training (including language and communications training).
8. Present the option for alternative careers as a parallel option to their original profession instead of a failure option.
9. Encourage IEPs to work in an environment related to their profession.
10. Promote awareness among employers about IEP skills and qualifications and the benefit of hiring IEPs.
11. Create programming for target professions and target industries. Provide bridge training and internships to fast-track people.
12. Review programs regularly for continual improvement. Get feedback from IEP clients and program delivery staff.
13. Foster collaborative partnerships with stakeholders.

6.4.   How are alternative careers best identified and matched to existing knowledge and competencies?

The processes that are being used currently for identifying alternative careers are depicted in Figure 4 on the next page.

The IEP is the starting point and driver for identifying alternative careers. While ISOs and other organizations can provide information on choices of alternative careers, it is the IEP who must make the decision him/herself as to which career to pursue, based on his/her own background and circumstances. All informants noted that the IEP goes through a process in terms of accepting the option of an alternative career, and that the

IEP's perception of alternative careers will change over this process. The importance of proactivity on the part of the IEP was also noted by several informants. One informant suggested that proactivity is a skill that can be taught.
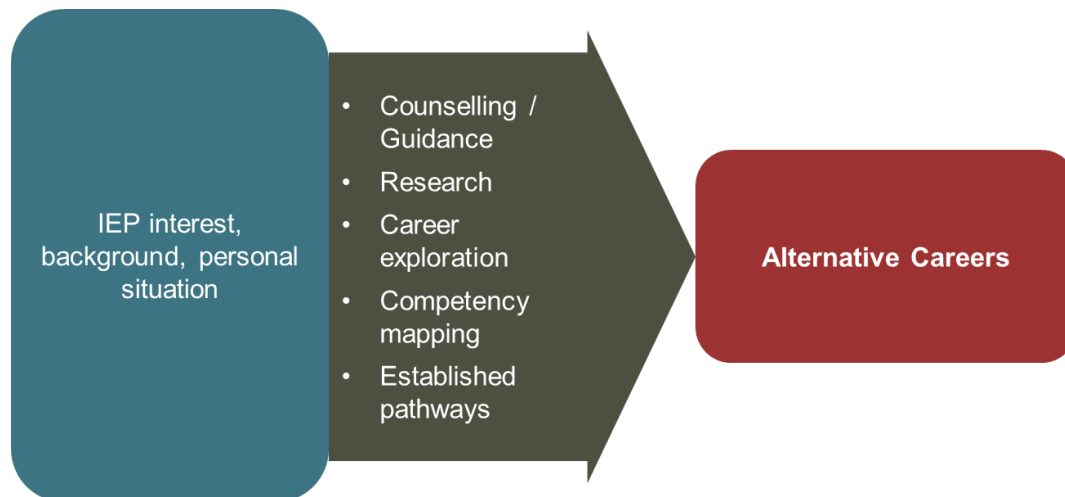

Figure 3   Identifying Alternative Careers

All informant groups noted the importance of career counselling in identifying alternative careers. Many informants also commented on how IEPs have little experience in changing professions, as the culture in IEP home countries are not familiar with this concept. They noted that counselling and guidance must take into account IEP sensitivities.

ISOs and IEPs spoke about conducting research on suitable careers, through Internet research, interviews with employers and professional associations, or through mentor or personal network connections.

Career exploration was cited by many as an important means to identifying an alternative career.

Skills transferability and competency matching were mentioned by several informants but exact mechanics were not well articulated. Individual ISO counsellors undertake their own informal process of competency matching in identifying alternative careers for IEP clients, by comparing job descriptions to IEP resumes and portfolios. However, mapping of competencies for different profession has only been done systematically in a few instances, for bridging programs and for certain pathways (discussed below).
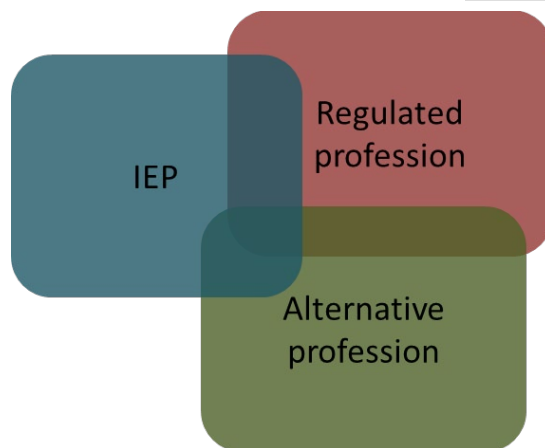
Figure 4   Matching Competencies for Alternative Careers

As depicted in Figure 4, three separate processes of competency matching (formal or informal) take place when IEPs move from their original professions to alternative careers:

- *Mapping IEP competencies against competencies required by the regulated profession:* in most cases, this determines the IEP's ability to practice his/her profession, and therefore, his/her need of an alternative career
- *Mapping competencies of the regulated profession to alternative professions:* this mapping presumes preliminary identification of suitable alternative careers and would lead to identification of transferable competencies. A large number of transferable competencies would hopefully, attract IEPs to these alternative professions,
- *Mapping competencies of the IEP to those required by the alternative profession:* this mapping would identify gaps to be bridged for the IEP to enter the alternative profession. Some training may be needed.

Competency matching between professions requires common standards in mapping competencies. However, there is no standardized competency framework in place that is used by all professions, although some efforts have been made to map common competencies for certain groups of professions (see <u>Competency mapping</u> in the list of alternative career supports listed in Appendix 3).

Some pathways to alternative careers have been established or are emerging:

- Lists of alternative careers have been drawn for certain professions
- Bridging programs have been set up for certain professions: engineers, nursing, dental technologists
- Some sectors have promoted themselves as alternatives: e.g. the biotechnology sector, through BioTalent's collaboration with the CSMLS in identifying transferable competencies for biotechnology occupations, the supply chain

sector, working with ACCESS Employment on a bridging program to supply chain occupations.

These established and emerging pathways are listed in several sections of this report: [Alternative Career Supports of Select Organizations](#), [Tools used](#), and [Appendix 3](#).

6.5.   What alternative career supports and processes currently exist?

A variety of alternative career supports and processes currently exist, including:

- Information and referrals
- Counselling and guidance
- Employability training
- Career exploration and planning
- Bridge training
- Employer linkages (work placements, internships, observerships, mentoring)
- Funding supports

These are detailed in [Alternative Career Supports of Select Organizations](#) in this report, and also in [Appendix 3](#).

How could they be improved? What gaps remain and how can they best be addressed?

The responses from different informant groups regarding these questions are combined in the following list, which itemizes gaps and areas for improvement:

- *Information:* Most IEPs are not aware of the "reality" in Canada before arrival—they do not know about the licensing process, the likelihood of obtaining a licence, difficulties in finding work, labour market conditions, possibilities for alternative careers, etc. Information about these areas (and not just about alternative careers) can be better assembled and organized to be accessible and useful by IEPs. Information materials that should be available include "alternative" career lists and pathways, licensing pathways, competency profiles, labour market information, and IEP stories.

  > *"Having actual career planning workshops embedded into the current CIIP model would help most. Clients would have the opportunity to take formal assessments, conduct research and make wiser choices prior to landing. "*

  The information should be centralized for accessibility, consistent, and available. Sources of information should be reliable (e.g. professional bodies should be responsible for information on competencies).
- *Pre-arrival preparation:* IEP preparation for the labour market should start as early as possible, while the IEP is still in the home country. Supports normally delivered after arrival (e.g. counselling, employability training, even bridge

training) can be extended so that portions of the supports are delivered pre-arrival.

- *Methodology and tools for career counselling:* A defined process for identifying alternative careers would be helpful to counsellors and IEPs. Career exploration tools such as aptitude tests, self–assessments, alternative career resources would also be useful.

- *Mechanisms and pathways for skills transferability:* competency assessments and mapping of competencies, PLAR

- *Targeted programming:* Bridge training and enhanced training should be adapted for alternative careers. Bridging programs should be developed for allied health professions, with input and collaboration from occupational bodies. Specific programs can be tailored for IEPs with input from and collaboration between regulatory body, educational institutes, employers, and sector councils.

- *Financial support for IEPs:* IEPs need to be able to maintain themselves while searching or training for alternative careers. Funding should be made available to IEPs for training, credential recognition, childcare, and for starting businesses.

- *Employer awareness and employer linkages:* Employers need to "educated" more about IEP skills and the benefits to hiring IEPs. More linkages with employers need to be established, so that there are opportunities for IEPs to meet face to face with employers for recruitment, and for IEPs to participate in work placements or internships, during which they can both show their ability and gain experience. Employers can also provide opportunities for observerships. Employer linkages can also lead to mentoring and networking opportunities which can provide supportive guidance to IEPs in navigating alternative career pathways.

- *Responsibility for supports:* ISOs and other service providers have expanded their normal mandates to incorporate alternative career supports. However, collaboration of other stakeholders would greatly increase the reach and extent of alternative career supports (see next section for more discussion).

- *Funding:* Funding is required to implement and sustain useful supports. A systemic network of organizations that understand employment (employers, colleges, immigrant serving organizations) is required for delivering alternative career supports, and this takes time and resources to build and maintain.

It should be noted that while pre-arrival preparation is stressed as a key element in alternative career supports, alternative career supports should be equally targeted at immigrants who are still in their home countries as well as at immigrants that are already living in Canada.

6.6. Do effective alternative career supports and processes require partnerships between stakeholders?

ISO informants clearly indicated that partnerships between stakeholders are required for effective alternative career supports (see Program Partnerships and Funding, partnerships, interest and commitment).

The key stakeholders that need to be involved in partnerships are:

- Occupational bodies: regulatory bodies, certification bodies and professional associations
- Employers /industry and sector councils
- Educational and training institutes
- ISOs and other serviced providers
- Government

If so, how could these partnerships be established and how would they function?
To establish partnerships:

- Stakeholders must recognize (or be made aware) of the value of or benefits to be gained from the partnership (what's in it for them?);
- There should be sustained exchange among partners at the same table on ideas, constraints, agendas, current practices, and opportunities;
- The role and expected contribution of each partner to the initiative should be identified and agreed upon;
- Stakeholders must be willing to commit to the partnership and to collaborate with other partners;
- Adequate resources must be available so that stakeholders can devote time and energy without infringing on their core mandate.

The appropriate partnership model will depend on the alternative career initiative. Several functioning and effective models for working partnerships in the area of immigrant workforce integration exist. The ISIS Multistakeholder Work Group (see description under Alternative Career Supports of Select Organizations) is an excellent model for exchanging ideas and planning initiatives, while the CIIP, which received high praise from ISO and IEP informants, draws on and coordinates the resources of many partners to deliver pre-arrival preparation to IEPs.

Another interesting model is that of the Alternative Career sessions (similar to CRIEC's SmartConnections) piloted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in Ottawa and Toronto in March 2013, in collaboration with partnering regional immigrant serving organizations. These sessions targeted the finance, engineering, and biotechnology sectors, and brought together a diverse range of partners and stakeholders including provincial governments, regulators, professional associations, academic institutions,

and employers to educate IEPs on alternative career pathways commensurate with their skills and experience. The sessions provided IEPs in the above-mentioned sectors with information on licensure processes/requirements, identified opportunities for employment in related career paths, and linked IEPs to employment readiness supports (i.e. information on transferable skills, skills upgrading options, internship initiatives, and mentoring). In addition, each session included interactive roundtables with employers, whereby IEPs had the opportunity to network with employers.

Different stakeholders may take the lead in specific alternative career initiatives but collaboration among stakeholders is required for effective development and delivery. The different roles or actions that different partners can undertake in developing and providing alternative career supports are listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6   Stakeholder Roles for Effective Alternative Career Supports

Stakeholder	Role
Occupational Bodies	• Define needed skill sets/Share knowledge of professional competencies • Advise on comparability of professional competencies • Coordinate pathways for related occupations • Post information on alternative pathways • Develop and use competency assessments/PLAR for professional evaluation • Develop professional evaluation and licensing requirements based on actual requirements of job
ISOs	• Counselling /guidance • Career exploration • Referrals/ facilitation • Coordinate and facilitate IEP programs • Assistance with cultural integration • Employability training and job search assistance • Settlement assistance
Educational and Training Institutes	• Skills assessment/gap assessment • Use and promotion of PLAR • Develop and deliver skills/bridge training
Employers/ Industry, Sector Councils	• Provide accurate and competency-based occupational descriptions • Use competency assessments in evaluating job candidates • Provide observerships, internships, work placements mentorships
Government	• Career counselling

Stakeholder	Role
	• Facilitation, coordination, funding • Federal: best practices, knowledge sharing • P/T: programming

7. Recommendations

7.1. Next Steps

Based on the findings of this research study, recommendations are made for next steps regarding alternative career supports.

1. *Promote a centralized database on alternative career resources.*
   The need for accurate and consistent information (pre and post arrival) was identified as a priority. Informants recommended that there should be one centralized source which can provide consistent and accurate information required by IEPs to make informed decisions. In addition, many effective alternative career supports are currently in place and much learning has taken place. These supports and the lesson learned should be shared widely with all parties with an interest in providing alternative career supports.

   The International Qualifications Network (IQN) is a good mechanism for sharing resources. The IQN website is administered by the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO), which is a branch of CIC. The IQN Advisory Council provides advice to the FCRO on how to build and strengthen the body of knowledge on the subject of international qualification assessment and recognition in Canada. It is recommended that the FQRWG develop a partnership with the IQN Advisory Council to identify and promote the use of the IQN as the common data base on alternative career resources.

2. *Validate key messages on alternative careers with stakeholders and disseminate validated messages.*
   The need for consistent and careful messaging on alternative careers was emphasized by informants.

   It is recommended that the FQRWG validate the key messages derived in this study (see Messaging) with occupational bodies, ISOs and educational/training institutes. These stakeholders may have specific nuances to add, and in particular, occupational bodies may indicate a need for additional profession-specific messaging. Once validated, the key messages should be posted on the IQN and disseminated widely through existing stakeholder networks.

3. *Develop concrete indicators of success for alternative career supports in collaboration with stakeholders.*
    The challenge in evaluating the success of alternative career supports was identified by informants. Alternative career supports may assist IEPs in finding an alternative career but the success of this outcome will be evaluated differently for different measures, such as utilization of current skills, potential development of IEP skills, opportunity for advancement, IEP satisfaction, matching IEP skills to labour shortages.

    It is recommended that the FQRWG consult with occupational bodies, ISOs, educational and training institutes, employers and IEPs on desired outcomes for alternative career supports and reach consensus on concrete indicators of success based on the measures listed above. These indicators of success can then be used to evaluate alternative career supports.

4. *Set an alternative careers agenda and promote the agenda in stakeholder exchange.*
    Exchange and collaboration among stakeholders was identified as an essential element for developing and delivering alternative career supports.

    It is recommended that the FQRWG set up an "alternative careers agenda" which would serve to guide discussion during stakeholder exchange and move discussion forwards towards collaborative initiatives. The agenda should include the key gaps in alternative career supports identified in this report (see [How could they be improved? What gaps remain and how can they best be addressed?](#)). The FQRWG should promote this agenda at special sessions at different existing stakeholder-specific meetings (e.g. hold an alternative careers session at a conference, workshop or meeting planned by the stakeholder group), bringing in other stakeholders to attend and exchange views. This kind of stakeholder exchange will provide the opportunity for collaborative partnerships to be formed, and for collaborative effort to develop, adjust and improve alternative career supports. It will also allow for the understanding of different constraints and different roles for each organization, and the generation of ideas for new alternative career pathways. All stakeholder groups hold many conferences, workshops or meetings. The FQRWG should investigate which events would be appropriate for adding such a session.

    In the longer term, it is recommended that the FQRWG consider setting up work groups based on the model of the ISIS Multi-stakeholder Work Group. Similar groups should be set up based on the 8 target professions, both at the provincial level (to address issues within provincial/territorial jurisdiction) and at the national level (to address issues of national scope). This targeted approach focuses attention on finding solutions to address the specific needs of the target profession. Stakeholders for allied professions and other sectors may be brought

in to widen the scope of discussion and allow for identification of skills transferability across professions and sectors.

5. *Develop alternative career roadmaps for ISOs and IEPs.*
   The lack of methodology and tools for career counselling was identified as a gap in current alternative career supports. As can be seen in research findings presented in this report, much learning about alternative careers has taken place in different jurisdictions across the country.   Many different ISOs and other service providers have worked in their own ways with IEPs to navigate alternative career pathways.   Their methods have evolved with their experience and resources, but show some commonality (as described in Identifying Alternative Careers and also Choosing alternative careers).

   It is recommended that the FQRWG capture existing knowledge in a set of roadmaps, one aimed at ISOs and the other at IEPs. The ISO roadmap would assist counsellors to help immigrants navigate alternative career pathways and the IEP roadmaps would assist immigrants in navigating alternative career pathways.   The roadmaps could serve as a template for online alternative careers modules that could be accessible in Canada (and/or overseas for IEPs). The roadmaps should include alternative career resources and best practices identified in this study and may be customized for the 8 targeted occupations. ISOs should be the lead stakeholder in this next step, as they have been the key providers of alternative career supports and hold much of the knowledge.

6. *Identify best practice models in skills transferability.*
   Skills transferability is key in successful transitions to alternative careers. Best practices models in skills transferability can serve to spur development of more initiatives that promote skill transferability.

   Two sector councils have worked hard to establish skills transferability pathways to their sectors. BioTalent has developed a tool that identifies transferable skills from professions in other fields (as noted in this report, BioTalent worked with the CSMLS to identify transferable skills for medical laboratory technologists), and the Supply Chain Sector Council has reached out to attract IEPS from different backgrounds to its sector (the council collaborated with ACCES Employment in developing a bridging program to supply chain occupations). It is recommended that FQRWG examine these initiatives and consider adopting them as best practices. The FQRWG may also consider issuing a call for submission of best practices and evaluate applications for adoption (all stakeholders could be asked to submit input). Best practice models should be posted on the IQN site and also publicized widely through existing stakeholder networks.

7. *Expand on the Alternative Career Sessions model to accommodate additional sectors, regions and a broader range of employers.*

The SmartConnections approach, in which a range of partners and stakeholders, including employers, are gathered to provide information to IEPS on alternative career pathways in specific sectors, has proven to be successful both in CRIEC sessions in Calgary and in CIC pilots in Ottawa and Toronto. This approach works well as it responds to labour market demand, provides consistent information from reliable sources, and allows for face-to-face interaction between IEPs and occupational bodies, educational/training institutes and employers.

It is recommended that that the FQRWG promote the model (with expansion to accommodate additional sectors, regions and a broader range of employers) to ISOs and make available the minimal necessary resources to deliver such sessions. Different occupational bodies, educational/training institutes and employers should be invited to participate in these sessions, depending on the target sectors.

8. *Develop a set of illustrative case studies of IEPs in different types of alternative careers.*

This study has proposed an alternative career model that, it is hoped, will serve as a basis to develop effective alternative career supports. IEP stories that illustrate aspects of this model will be useful to all stakeholders in developing initiatives. IEP stories will also serve as examples to IEPs who are considering alternative career options.
It is recommended that the FQRWG develop a set of illustrative case studies featuring IEPS that have benefitted from the different types of supports (including pre-arrival supports), IEPs that have travelled different alternative career pathways, and IEPs that successfully transitioned to new or unrelated careers. ISOs and IEPs themselves should be the lead stakeholders in this next step. As with the best practices proposed above, these case studies/"stories") should be promoted and disseminated, both through the IQN and existing stakeholder networks.

7.2.   Areas for Further Work

While next steps are actionable immediately, some areas of work will require more time to achieve results. These areas are outlined below.

1. *Competency mapping*
Comparing competencies is necessary for skills transferability across professions, and meaningful comparison requires common standards in mapping competencies. Although some efforts have been made to map common competencies for certain groups of professions, there is no standardized competency framework in place that is applicable to or used by all professions. It is recommended that the FQRWG examine the work that has been done in this

area (see Competency mapping in the list of alternative career supports listed in Appendix 3) and identify ways in which the development of common competency frameworks can be promoted.

2. *Formal alternative pathways for specific professions*
While some pathways to alternative careers have been established or are emerging (see discussion under How are alternative careers best identified and matched to existing knowledge and competencies?), there is room for developing more formal alternative pathways for specific professions. It is recommended that the FQRWG explore opportunities to develop more formal pathways such as competency matching mechanisms (as done by BioTalent with CSMLS), or bridge training and enhanced training for alternative careers in allied professions in the same field, as well as across sectors. Collaboration with regulatory bodies, educational/training institutes, employers, and sector councils will be necessary.

3. *Comprehensive, consistent and accessible information for IEPs*
The need for comprehensive, consistent and accessible pre- and post- arrival information was identified as a priority. While having a centralized information database (see the first recommendation under Next Steps) is one step towards ensuring a reliable source of consistent information, more work needs to be done in this area. This study has identified the many areas in which information materials need to be produced (see Table 4 in What is/can be the most effective means to provide alternative career supports?). It is recommended that the FQRWG develop a systematic plan to address gaps in these information materials. Different stakeholders will be involved in developing the different information materials (as indicated in Table 4). The packaging of information in a format that is accessible to and easily navigated by IEPs should be considered (where information should be posted, and how different pieces of information can be linked). This report has stressed the importance of pre-arrival information but it should be remembered that information should also be targeted towards immigrants that are already in Canada.

4. *Extension of alternative career supports to the pre-arrival stage*
Pre-arrival preparation was emphasized as a priority by all informants. It is recommended that the FQRWG examine opportunities for extending the range of alternative career supports to the pre-arrival stage, taking advantage of the CIIP's overseas and domestic network. Counselling, guidance, language and employability training, interaction with employers, mentoring, even portions of bridge training can be made available to the IEP overseas, giving the IEP a headstart in integrating into the Canadian labour force. Discussions with ISOs and other providers of alternative career supports and the CIIP should be facilitated to explore these possibilities.

5. *Awareness building among stakeholders*

Lack of employer awareness was identified as a gap to be addressed. In recent years, there have been many successful efforts across the country to increase general awareness (e.g. through immigrant-employment councils in different cities). It is recommended that the FQRWG undertake further work to raise awareness among employers in a more specific way that would be beneficial to supporting alternative careers: e.g. awareness building focused on the transferability of skills, connecting sectors/employers with labour demand with IEPs from specific professions who may have transferable skills. Awareness of effective mechanisms such as internships and work placements should be raised among employers. Information about how to implement these mechanisms, incentives, and success stories should be shared to raise general awareness but also to enable employers to take action.

Awareness building should also be undertaken for other stakeholders. ISOs can benefit from greater awareness and knowledge of how to assist IEPs in identifying suitable alternative careers. Workshops can be held, and manuals and guides developed to help raise ISO awareness and level of capacity. Educational and training institutes can benefit from awareness of effective alternative career supports currently offered by similar institutions (e.g. bridging programs, PLAR processes). And finally, occupational bodies can benefit from greater awareness of their potential to contribute to alternative career supports without conflict with their mandates. It is recommended that the FQRWG consider and identify ways to raise awareness among all stakeholders.

8. Considerations Moving Forwards

8.1. Public Interest, Shared Responsibility and Commitment

Informant responses consistently noted that collaboration among many bodies is required to develop alternative career supports. While some informants stressed shared responsibility and commitment, others, notably occupational contacts, cautioned that providing alternative career supports is outside their scope of responsibilities. Regulatory bodies noted that they have a clear and narrow mandate set out in legal statute to protect the public by ensuring that members are competent, qualified and ethical. Regulatory bodies may also be concerned that identifying alternative careers could be interpreted in a negative manner by applicants (i.e. that the regulatory body is trying to promote other careers in order to protect opportunities for its own members) and by Fairness Commissioners (i.e. that the regulatory body has made a premature decision about the applicant's qualifications).

Further involvement of regulatory bodies in work to develop alternative career supports must take into account these concerns. However, at the same time, it should be noted that the public interest is the reason for the existence of the regulatory bodies, and that the particular set of knowledge that regulators have developed in order to carry out their

mandate can be used to serve the public interest in other ways without detracting from their mandate.

Attention should be paid to enabling regulatory bodies to participate as an important partner in developing alternative career supports. Additional resources may be required to enable their participation and clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and ownership of information is necessary. Participation in developing alternative career supports as outlined in [If so, how could these partnerships be established and how would they function?](#) is not necessarily incompatible with the regulatory body's function and may even contribute to the execution of its function in a fairer and more effective way.

8.2. Canadian Workforce Issues

Some of the obstacles that IEPs face in finding appropriate alternative careers are similar to the barriers IEPs face in finding work in their professions: e.g. employer acceptance, language skills and communications, unfamiliarity with job search techniques, lack of opportunities to connect with employers and to show abilities, etc. While some of these obstacles can be attributed to IEP gaps in relation to Canadian requirements, some obstacles may stem from Canadian workforce issues that relate to non-immigrant Canadians as well, such as:

- Employer readiness to assess competencies gained outside of Canada
- Employer gender preferences for certain occupations
- Lack of comparable occupational standards impeding labour mobility
- Lack of a standardized competency framework that can be used across professions

Attempts to address these obstacles for IEPs should be allied with efforts to address these workforce issues for all Canadians. It should also be realized that some issues have not been solved despite earlier and ongoing efforts, and may not be immediately solvable. The design of alternative career supports should take into account the persistence of these obstacles.

8.3. Canada as an Immigration Destination

All informants in this study commented on the mismatch between the importance accorded to immigrants' professional qualifications in their application for immigration to Canada and the difficulties they faced in applying their professional skills in the workforce. Disappointment due to unrealistic expectations based on lack of information or misinformation affects potential and landed immigrants' view of Canada as an immigration destination. As well, the underutilization of immigrants' skills and experience does not fulfil the goals of immigration programs, nor does it contribute to the country's workforce objectives.

Canada's representation of itself as an immigration destination should take into account the current reality that many IEPs must find alternative career options that do not necessarily make full use of the skills and knowledge that allowed them to gain entry to Canada. The various departments involved in immigration (both federal and provincial/territorial) should examine their policies and programs in light of this reality, and determine and present to immigrants a consistent approach that promotes Canada as an attractive immigration destination.

The recent introduction of pre-arrival initiatives such as the CIIP was noted as being useful in providing IEPs with a more realistic idea of what they can expect, and may be considered an important alternative career support, with potential for even greater utilization. New immigration policies are planned for introduction in May 2013, which will require immigrants to have a higher level of language skills, to obtain assessment of credentials against a Canadian standard, and to promote employer linkages. These new policies will lead to a shift in alternative career needs. To be effective, supports will need to adapt to new opportunities and requirements brought about by changing policies and programs.

Appendix 1   List of Research Informants

Occupational Contacts

Medical Laboratory Technologists

   Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS)
   Christine Nielsen, Executive Director

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

   Canadian Nurses Association
   Margot McNamee

   Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators
   Cathy Giblin, Registrar/Director, College and Association of Registered Nurses of
   Alberta

   School of Nursing, Mount Royal College, Alberta
   Dr. Pam Nordstrom, Director

   Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators (CCPNR)
   Ann Mann RN, MN, Chairperson, Halifax

   Lisa Little
   Consultant to Health Canada
   Nursing Transition Pathways Study

Dentists
   Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation
   Irwin Ferfegrad, Registrar

   National Dental Examining Board of Canada
   Jack Gerrow, Registrar

Physicians
   Medical Council of Canada
   Ian Bowmer, Executive Director

   Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
   Andrew Padmos, Chief Executive Officer

Engineers
   Engineers Canada
   Kim Allen, CEO

Engineering Technicians
        Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists
        Isidore J. LeBlond, CEO, FCSC CSP

Teachers
        Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
        Daniel Buteau, Coordinator of Pan-Canadian Projects

Immigrant Serving Organizations (ISOs) and Related Organizations

Access Centre, Health Force Ontario
Stephanie Hooker and Stuart McAslan, Employment Counsellors

ACCESS Employment
Allison Pond, Executive Director

BC Skills Connect for Immigrants (Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)
Freda Fernandez, Manager

Calgary Regional Immigrant Economic Council (CRIEC) SmartConnections
Bruce Randall, Executive Director

Catholic Immigration Centre
Arber Zaplluzha, Manager

Edmonton Mennonite Newcomers Centre
Laurie Hauer and Qing Cai, Program Coordinators

GEO Ontario
Thierry Guillaumont, Information and Referral Officer

IEHP Atlantic Connection
June Price-Macdonald, P rice-MacDonald &. Associates Consulting Inc.,

Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS)
Mohja Alia, Manager, Employment and Bridging

ISIS Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model
Jan Sheppard Kutcher, Consultant, International Labour Mobility; ISIS staff on special assignment with Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education

Manitoba Start
Norman Umali, Programs and Services Coordinator, Team Leader – Job Matching Unit

Manitoba Success Skills Centre
Monica Feist, CEO and Ha Nguyen

Other Informants

Canadian Immigrant Integration Program, Association of Community Colleges of Canada
Maha Surani, Senior Program Officer, Stakeholder Engagement

Internationally-Educated Professional (IEPs) and Other Informants

IEP	Gender	Country of Origin	Profession	Alternative Career	Jurisdiction
1	M	Philippines	Engineer	Foiling Operator (Technician)	Manitoba
2	M	Iran	Engineer	Technical Sales	Ontario
3	M	India	Engineer	Inventory Controller	Ontario
4	F	China	Nurse	None at present	British Columbia
5	F	Egypt	Physician	Ultrasound Technician (still pursuing licensure)	Ontario
6	F	Egypt	Physician	Ultrasonographer	Nova Scotia
7	F	Rumania	Physician	Physician Assistant (still pursuing licensure)	Ontario
8	F	India/Dubai	Physician	Research Assistant (unpaid; intends to pursue licensure)	Ontario
9	F	Philippines	Physician	Caregiver & Residential Support Worker	Manitoba
10	M	Egypt	Physician	Pharmacy Technician (currently undergoing training; intends to pursue licensure	Alberta
11	F	Philippines	Teacher	Family Support Worker	British Columbia
12	F	China	Teacher	Language Teacher (part-time) and Education Agent	Ontario
13	F	Former Yugoslavia	Veterinarian	Social Worker	Nova Scotia

Note: The identities of IEPs interviewed have been kept confidential, as per their request.

Other Informants

Robert Millman
Policy Analyst, Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner

Dr. Jelena Zikic
York University

Appendix 2   Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Occupational Contacts

A. General

1. Does your organization have any experience in assessing the qualifications of internationally educated professionals and advising or providing information, tools, referrals or other support on alternative careers?
2. Is there a demand for alternative career information/referral resources/other supports for internationally trained applicants intending to be licensed in your profession? Do you know what percentage of applicants would benefit from this?

B. Alternative Careers for Your Profession

1. What types of alternative careers might be applicable for internationally educated professionals while they pursue licensure for the profession, or as an alternative to the profession as a result of non-recognition of their qualifications?
2. What are the competencies / related skills relevant to both these alternative careers and your profession?
3. What suggestions do you have for the messaging around alternative careers for your profession (how can or should alternative careers be presented as an option to internationally educated professionals)?

C. Current Alternative Career Supports

1. What kinds of alternative career supports (information, referrals to other organizations, processes, tools, programs, etc.) are in place for internationally educated professionals who intend to practice in your profession?   Please describe these supports in detail.
    i.   Who developed them?
    ii.   Who administers them?
    iii.   At what point in the assessment and recognition process are they being utilized?
    iv.   Are the outcomes of the applicants tracked?

D. Improving Alternative Career Supports

1. What are the gaps in the availability and delivery of alternative career supports (information, referrals, processes, tools, programs, etc.) and in your view how can they be best addressed?

2. From your organization's point of view, at what point should internationally educated professionals receive information about alternative careers? Before assessment of qualifications? Or after assessment (when it has been determined that the applicant needs skill upgrading/ is not licensable without significant retraining)?
3. Is there an obvious window in your current assessment and recognition process for providing information/referrals to alternative careers supports?
4. How can alternative careers be identified and matched to existing competencies? Who is best placed to do this work?
5. What sorts of supports would be most useful and why (e.g. information, tools, referrals, programs, etc.)?

E. Developing Alternative Career Supports
1. Who is best placed to be responsible for funding, developing and delivering alternative career supports (please specify which type of alternative support)?
2. What role do you see your organization playing in providing alternative careers supports (funding, developing, delivering, or other)?
3. What kinds of partnerships are necessary to support this work and how can they best be formed?

F. Other
1. Would you suggest other individuals or groups that I should contact regarding alternative careers?
2. Any other suggestions?

Interview Questions for Immigrant Serving Organizations and Related Organizations

Aim: To determine what successful alternative career supports (programs/services/tools) for internationally educated professionals (IEPs) look like, how these supports are delivered, and what is needed by organizations to put these supports in place.

Thank you for taking part in this research study on Foreign Qualifications Recognition and Alternative Careers. The study (for which Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the lead contact) is part of the work of federal/provincial/territorial governments to implement a *Pan Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*. The research is intended to contribute to a better understanding of alternative careers for internationally educated professionals (IEPs) and the development of recommendations for alternative career services and tools.

Alternative careers are "career options that immigrants pursue other than, but related to, the regulatory profession in which they were originally trained, that make use of and relate to an immigrant's skills and experience" (current working definition for the study).

The research will gather information on the alternative career experience and the needs of different groups involved in alternative career related work, such as regulatory bodies, national associations, immigrant-service organizations, career counselling services, educational institutes, and IEPs themselves.

A. Your Organization's Programs

1. What programs/services/tools provided by your organization relate to alternative careers for IEPs that are or were seeking to practise in a regulated profession in Canada?

2. Please describe in detail these programs/services/tools.
    a. How does it help IEPs?
    b. What is the target group of IEPs?
    c. What is the client uptake per year?
    d. How long has each program/service/tool been in existence (in months or years)?
    e. At what point do IEPs *receive information* about your programs/services/ tools that relate to alternative careers:
        — pre-arrival in Canada?
        — before assessment of qualifications for their intended profession?
        — after assessment of qualifications by a national association or regulatory authority in their field, when IEPs are informed that they

either do not qualify to practice in the profession in Canada or require significant upskilling?

    f. At what point do IEPs *make use* of your programs/services/tools that relate to alternative careers:

      — pre-arrival in Canada

      — before assessment of qualifications for their intended profession

      — after assessment of qualifications by a national association or regulatory authority in their field, when IEPs are informed that they either do not qualify to practice in the profession in Canada or require significant upskilling?

    g. Can you identify any outcomes from your programs/services/tools to date? Can you provide any quantitative or qualitative data on these outcomes?

3. Who were the partners that were involved in *developing* your programs/ services/ tools that relate to alternative careers?

4. Who are the partners involved in the *delivery* of your programs/services/ tools that relate to alternative careers? (For example, regulatory bodies, professional associations, employers, etc.)

5. How did you *identify* and *engage* partners for your programs/services/tools that relate to alternative careers?

6. What works well in your programs/services/tools and why?

7. What are some of the challenges you faced in *developing* your programs/services/tools that relate to alternative careers?

8. What are some of the challenges you faced in *delivering* your programs/services/tools?

B. Alternative Careers for IEPs

1. How did you determine which alternative careers are most suitable for IEPs in different fields?

2. In determining suitable alternative careers, did you use an occupational analysis of competencies to look at related knowledge, skills and abilities and/or existing career counseling job classification/cluster charts?

3. Are the alternative careers presented to IEPs non-regulated occupations related to the original intended occupations of the IEPs? Or are they regulated occupations with a related scope of practice, but lower level of competency requirement?

4. How did you determine the competencies required for the alternative careers?

5. How are the competencies of IEPs assessed for these alternative careers?

C. Suggestions for Developing Alternative Career Supports

1. What lessons learned or best practices can you share regarding the development and delivery of your programs/services/tools that relate to alternative careers?

2. Do you have any suggestions for the ideal delivery system or format for alternative career programs/ services/tools ?

3. What needs to be in place to develop and deliver/disseminate programs/services /tools on alternative careers?

4. Do you have any suggestions for ensuring the sustainability of *existing or to-be-developed* programs/services/tools?

5. How can alternative career supports engage and reach different stakeholders at various stages:

   a. Pre-arrival of IEP
   b. Pre-assessment of IEP
   c. Post assessment of IEP

D. Other

1. Can you suggest IEPs whom I should interview about their experience in finding alternative careers? I would like to be put in contact with them if possible. What steps need to be taken prior to passing on their contact information?

2. Any additional comments/concerns/suggestions about alternative careers for IEPs?

Interview Questions for IEPs

Note: Bullet points will not be included in the list of questions sent to IEPs, but the interviewer will try to elicit information on these points during interviews.

1. What made you decide to pursue a different career from your original profession?
   - *Concept of alternative career*
   - *Willingness to change careers*
   - *Participation in programs/use of tools*

2. How did you choose this new career? How does this new career relate to your original profession?
   - *Relationship between original profession/training and new career*
   - *Participation in programs/use of tools*
   - *Success rates & experience working in alternative career*

3. What would have helped you when you were choosing a different career in Canada? (How can immigrants to Canada be helped if they need to or want to choose another career in Canada?)
   - *Optimal timing for career information*
   - *Views on messaging around alternative careers*
   - *Suggestions for development and dissemination of tools*

Appendix 3   List of Alternative Career Supports

Alternative Supports Featured in the Study

Access Centre, Health Force Ontario (Ontario)

Case management and counselling; alternative career support is not part of mandate. Mandate is to be a one-stop shop for information and advice on pathways to practise 24 regulated health professions in Ontario. Organization began helping clients find alternative careers in response to demand. Piloted 12 Peer to Peer sessions.

ACCESS Employment (Greater Toronto Area, Ontario)

Bridge training, information and referrals, counselling (one on one, case management). 7 programs provide sector-specific preparation (work and communication skills): Engineers, Financial Services, Information Technology, Human Resources, Sales & Marketing, Supply Chain, Leadership Connections

BC Skills Connect (Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)) (Greater Vancouver Region)

Program is designed to get IEP back to field of work. Client works one-on-one with counsellor and develops action plan, then upgrades necessary skills within a year; gets help in preparing resume, career coaching, and mentoring; and works with employer relations specialist to find work. Skills enhancement funding is provided.

CRIEC SmartConnections (Calgary, Alberta)

SmartConnections approach developed by Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC): provide information on accreditation process with stakeholders at table; discuss IEP choices (with IEPs and professionals at table); discuss skill transferability if alternative career path chosen. Approach used in workshops for lawyers and follow-up roundtables. Currently planning workshops for professionals in finance and accounting and possibly, insurance, electrical engineering, IT, and health care

Catholic Immigration Centre Career Transitions Program (Ottawa, Ontario)

Employment preparation for International Medical Doctors to support move into alternative careers.

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (Edmonton, Alberta)

All programs and services assist immigrants who want to be in alternative careers. Services include: Individual services (career counselling and employment counselling), Employment preparation courses, Bridging and training programs, Programs/services based on labour market needs and client makeup (education, experience in field). Expected outcomes are employment or further education in field.

Global Experience Ontario (GEO) (Ontario)

Information and referral service: provides information on licensing process in Ontario, and on relevant programs or support programs (e.g. financial assistance, starting a business, language or bridge training). If asked, will provide information but will not provide counselling or advice on alternative careers. Will refer to Employment Ontario (provides counselling, aptitude testing, support for developing career goals) or to bridge training programs funded by the Ontario government

IEHP Atlantic Connection IEHP Self-Assessment Readiness Tools (Atlantic Region)

12 self-assessment tools for different health professions developed by Nova Scotia Community College and Price-MacDonald & Associates Consulting Inc., in partnership with national regulatory bodies (used national competency profiles)

Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS) (Nova Scotia)

One-stop shopping settlement services: labour market information, employment counselling, navigation of pathway to licensure. Developed pathways to licensure for various occupations (started 6–7 years ago) and created lists of alternative careers for some professions (e.g. teachers, lawyers). Has 6 week work placement program with wage subsidy. Completed successful pilot of dental technology program for international dentists.

ISIS Multi-Stakeholder Work Group Model (Nova Scotia)

Profession-specific Work Groups (14 professions) bring together stakeholders quarterly to share perspectives on international qualifications recognition. Stakeholders include regulators, government, educational institutes, IEPs, employers, unions, sector councils, employers. Alternative careers are agenda item for Work Groups. Work Groups will brainstorm on topic and stakeholders may take back ideas (e.g. qualifications required, possible careers, areas for research, ways to disseminate information). List of alternative careers developed for some professions.

Manitoba Start—Employment Solutions for Immigrants (ESI) (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Provides information and referrals to orientation and language services, and registers immigrants for appropriate employment program. ESI also offers employment preparation workshops, one-on-one counselling, Service Canada program for immigrant youth, 6 week work experience placement, and specialized workshops (e.g. computer training, toastmaster's class, cleaning in health care facility).

Success Skills Centre (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Employment services, internships and training (computerized training for accountants, Canadian payroll, AutoCAD for engineering, etc.). No separate program for alternative careers. Prepare IEPs based on their backgrounds, what's possible and what's available. Focus on alternative careers as an interim effort when resources are not available, or age and other factors preclude IEPs from working in their field. Provide information to IEPs or individual counsellors will meet IEP to discuss what next.

Alternative Supports Identified by Occupational Contacts

Medical Laboratory Technologists

- CSLMS frontline staff gives advice and information about other career possibilities before or at the outcome of assessment of qualifications, and information is also available on the website (http://www.csmls.org/Certification/Certification-Process/IEMLT.aspx). After assessment, applicants may be referred to the Medical Laboratory Assistant program managed by CSLMS, or elsewhere, such as the biotechnology sector (CSLMS has worked with BioTalent Canada to identify transferable skills for IEP transition into the bio-economy workforce).

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

- Regulator suggests contacting LP (provides website & phone number) if applicant is not acceptable.
- Alberta: has supports for English language training and preparation for regulation exam (open to graduates of nursing program in Canada or other country, or licensed in other country) but not necessarily alternative careers:
- Community placement agencies and schools offer bridging programs may know of alternative career supports
- Directions for Immigrants (Bow Valley College)
- Alberta Network of Immigrant Women

- Edmonton Filipino Nurses Association
- Edmonton Mennonite Newcomers Centre
- Registered Nurse Professional Development Centre provides general orientation to the health care system (online course or 10 week face-to-face program) for all IEPs (including physicians, occupational therapists). Internationally educated nurses required to attend this course within a year of licensure and also asked to check the websites of ISIS and Nova Scotia Community College.

Physicians

- Most provinces have some form of recruitment centre for health professionals (e.g. Health Force Ontario in Ontario). These provide counselling, advice, and courses that help individuals move through hurdles, and some programs that provide alternative careers.
- Programs developed through provincial health contract, administered at arms-length from province (supported by federal contribution grant); e.g. Ontario: physician assistant program; Alberta: surgical assistant program; Nova Scotia: bridging, counselling, courses, interview skills, study programs for exams, career development (for alternatives)
- Catholic Immigration Centre Career Transitions Program (Ottawa, Ontario)
- Canadian Post-M.D. Education Registry (CAPER) tracks IMGs.

Dentists

- Health Force Ontario one-on-one counselling for internationally trained dentists.

Engineers and Engineering Technicians

- Skills for Change – helps people identify their skills
- The Canadian Council for Technicians and Technologists has good working relationships with organizations in related fields that IEPs work in, including the RAIC (architects), Chemical Institute of Canada, petroleum industry, Canadian forest industry.

Teachers

- None identified.

Tools Used by ISOs in Identifying Alternative Career Options

- Cluster charts
- Self-assessments (the site www.careercruising.com was mentioned by one contact; self- assessment tools for engineers, lawyers, pharmacy assistant, physicians are available at http://www.isisns.ca/ under the tab "Employment" and subtopic, "Working in your Field")
- Occupational filters
- Career decision making tools
- The NOC
- Career exploration websites such as Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com), Career Options (http://careers.novascotia.ca/)
- Employment and immigration websites such as "Working in Canada" and "Immigrate to Manitoba"
- Career maps such as Ontario career maps (http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/working/OI_HOW_WORK_CAREER_MAPS.html) and
- Occupational profiles such as Alberta occupational profiles (http://alis.alberta.ca/occinfo/Content/RequestAction.asp?format=html&aspAction=GetHomePage&Page=Home) and FCRO Occupation Facts (http://www.credentials.gc.ca/immigrants/factsheets/index.asp)
- Lists of alternative careers, such as those on www.settlement.org (http://www.settlement.org/alternativejobs/) and on the ISIS website (http://www.isisns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Alternative-Careers-for-Teachers.pdf,http://www.isisns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Alternative-Careers-for-Lawyers.pdf)
- Program-specific tools (e.g. http://www.imd-info.ca/job-info-sheets.htm)

Suggestions for Further Investigation

This list contains individuals, organizations and initiatives mentioned by research informants that may be currently offering alternative career supports, have interesting perspectives on alternative careers for IEPs, or may play a potential role in future alternative career supports. Also included are resources related to alternative careers discovered by the researcher during the course of research

Medical Laboratory Technologists

- Health Force Ontario: Wayne Oake, 416-598-6979
- Professional associations for associations with assistant-level professions (e.g. physiotherapy association)
- Alliance of Physiotherapists, Katya Duvalko, kduvalko@alliancept.org
- Association of Medical Radiation Technologists
- New Brunswick Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists Bridging Program: uses PLAR; IEP can demonstrate through portfolio relevant competencies.

Registered Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses

- Dr. Andrea Bauman (McMaster University) and Dr. Ivy Bourgeault (University of Ottawa): both are conducting research on internationally educated nurses
- Other regulators, especially the College of Nurses of Ontario which registers both registered nurses and licensed practical nurses (note: important to speak to colleges that process a large volume of applications as well as to colleges in smaller jurisdictions that deal with low volumes and have few staff resources)
- Cathy Rose, College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia
- Anne Coghlan, College of Nurses of Ontario
- Ann Mann, Licensed Practical Nurse program (very innovative)
- Western and Northern Health Human Resources Planning Forum (contact Crista Carmichael of the Alberta Ministry of Health)
- CARE (Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses): NGO in Ontario that receives government funds for helping internationally educated nurses
- National Assessment Centre for Nurses: Work is currently underway on developing a centre which will assess the first level of credentials in the same way for all provinces and help internationally educated nurses to navigate the system)—information on alternative careers can be provided at this centre.
- Nova Scotia Community College *Pathways to Success for Practical Nursing*: places IEPs who have undergone PLAR assessment in second semester courses for licensed practical nurses, filling spots vacated by domestic students who did not pass; 96 percent pass rate. (Paramedic bridging program being discussed.)

- Bridging programs: e.g. Algonquin College bridging program for nurses
- Algonquin College community placement group
- Pan-Canadian Framework of Guiding Principles and Essential Components for IEN Bridging Programs
  http://www.casn.ca/en/Competencies_and_indicators_168/items/2.html

Physicians

National
- Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FMRAC)
- Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad (CEPHEA)
- College of Physicians of Alberta, BC, and Ontario: for another perspective on working with IEPs

Alberta
- Alberta Clinical and Surgical Assistant Program (ACSAP)
  http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/7094.asp : program for international medical graduates

Ontario

- Bridge to Respiratory Therapy, College of Respiratory Therapists
- Physician's Assistant program at U of Toronto
- Bridge to Practical Nursing at Conestoga College
- Bridge to Registered Nursing at York University

General

- ISIS (Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services, Nova Scotia)
- Nova Scotia Community College PLAR Coordinator
- Alternative Healthcare Careers — Overview and Tips http://www.isisns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/FactSheet_Alternative_-May2010.pdf : information on alternative careers for international medical graduates prepared by ISIS of Nova Scotia

Dentists

- Lawrence Cordero, Health Force Ontario (counselling for IEP) 416-945-3666
- Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (www.ani.org)
- SIAST Dental Hygiene (http://www.gosiast.com/distance/?p=117, http://www.siast.sk.ca/programs_courses_descriptions/DHDIP.shtml): a diploma `program that provides knowledge and skill development in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating dental hygiene care to meet the oral wellness needs of clients in a variety of clinical and community settings. The Canadian

Commission on Dental Accreditation accredits the program. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and transfer credit may be options for receiving credit.

Engineers and Engineering Technicians

- Larry Rosia, Former Dean at SAIT
- Nobena Robinson, Polytechnics Canada
- Ron Farrell, Dean of Technology, Nova Scotia
- Professional Practice Seminar for Internationally Educated Engineers and Engineering Technologists and Technicians MB
- PEO (Professional Engineers of Ontario): Internationally trained engineers can have their documents assessed for free by the within 6 months of landing. Their first year membership fee will also be waived.
- Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA): regulates the practices of engineering and geoscience in Alberta. In 2007, changed ways of assessing engineers to be more realistic

Teachers

- Ontario College of Teachers: since Ontario is the largest province, the college might have looked at information needs for alternative careers
- BC College of Teachers: BC has a high immigration rate, and also some innovative bridging programs
- Faculty of Education, University of Calgary has some new bridging programs

Health Professions

- Bridging programs at George Brown College or language training (through school boards)
- Career Edge (for internships),
- Employment Ontario (network of 100 agencies contracted by government) to explore career options
- Clinician Assessment for Practice Program (CAPP): a program of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) that assesses the readiness for family practice of international medical graduates (IMGs)
- BioTalent Biotechnology Sector Programs and Tools: a suite of programs and tools that assist individuals to transfer their skills to the biotechnology sector. These include the BioSkills Recognition Program http://www.biotalent.ca/eportfolio, BioSkills Portfolio online tool, the BioSkills Transfer Tool (identifies transferable skills from other professions like traditional manufacturing, medicine, nursing, veterinary, etc.), Bio-economy Skills Profiles and Summary, BioCareer Pathways. Some of these tools were developed

specifically for internationally educated medical professionals such as medical laboratory technologists, physicians, veterinarians and nurses

- Health Force Ontario is about to launch a major province-wide program on alternative careers

General

Financial supports

- Career Pathway Loan Project (http://www.isisns.ca/employment/for-immigrants/career-pathway-loan-project/): a community–based partnership to provide support services for Internationally Trained Workers to overcome financial barriers in the foreign credential recognition process, and to assist them in their return to work in their occupational field, or another related field.
- Micro loans available for the recognition process (http://www.cicic.ca/401/Immigrating_to_Canada.canada)

Competency mapping

- New Brunswick Competency Database (currently under construction): a structured database of "competency profiles" (occupational standards) for regulated professions in the province of New Brunswick. The database will be structured with fields for each component of a competency profile (e.g. performance criteria, knowledge, assessment criteria) so that different professions can be more easily compared in spite of their different formats, and it will be searchable. The database will be available online.
- BC competency mapping for skilled trades: competencies have been mapped using the same framework and are comparable across all trades
- Manitoba Health is working on one competency assessment for Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses (All assessments for eligibility to write nursing licensing exams are competency-based, and competencies for registered nurses were mapped to licensed practical nurses several years ago in Alberta.)
- Competency Frameworks for Health Professions (http://rcpsc.medical.org/clip/cpd/competencyframeworks/index.php): a list of competency frameworks
- Health Canada will soon be funding a project that will map competencies of Health professionals

Other

- Alternative Career sessions (similar to CRIEC's SmartConnections) piloted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in Ottawa and Toronto in March 2013, in collaboration with partnering regional immigrant serving organizations. These sessions targeted the finance, engineering, and biotechnology sectors, and brought together a diverse range of partners and stakeholders including provincial governments, regulators, professional associations, academic institutions, and employers to educate IEPs on alternative career pathways commensurate with their skills and experience. The sessions provided IEPs in the above-mentioned sectors with information on licensure processes/requirements, identified opportunities for employment in related career paths, and linked IEPs to employment readiness supports (i.e. information on transferable skills, skills upgrading options, internship initiatives, and mentoring). In addition, each session included interactive roundtables with employers, whereby IEPs had the opportunity to network with employers.
- Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council mentoring program
- Catholic Crosscultural Services (CCS)
- Supply Chain Sector Council (collaborated with ACCESS Employment on bridging program)
- Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education, Toronto, Ontario (http://www.tfsa.ca/coe), Catherine Chandler-Crichlow, Executive Director
- Financial services sector (http://www.explorefinancialservices.com/)
- CIIP Field Offices
- Select CIIP Focal Point Partners:
  - DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society in Surrey
  - SIAST Saskatchewan
  - Vancouver Community College
  - Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning (Conestoga Career Centre)
  - New Brunswick Community College