

6 gFindings from Focus Groups

6.1 Aboriginal Labour Force Issues Focus Group

Key Question: What is the responsibility of employers, training institutions and government in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal workers?

6.1.1 Employers

1. Employers need to be creative in how they recruit
 - Multiparty Training Agreements – These are contracts that companies or industries can sign with training institutions and government. The company or industry precisely specifies the type of training they want, when it will happen, and who will receive the training. The training institution provides the training, the government pays all the training costs, and the company or industry guarantees a job to everyone who completes the training.
 - Build relationships with Aboriginal bands and communities. For example, give Aboriginal communities a stake in the company. This puts the onus of responsibility on Aboriginal leadership to supply the labour force and take a role in the management of the company.
 - Offer full-time employment rather than casual or contract employment.
 - Give employees the option of taking the winter off to hunt, trap, etc. and then come back to their job in the spring. It is a leave of absence without pay, which creates loyalty to the company.
 - Employ Aboriginals in their own communities, enabling them to remain within their traditional support system.
 - Link together with other companies, forming “corporate circles” and sharing strategies with each other.
2. Employers need to provide a respectful work place, with a no tolerance policy toward racism. Company managers need to be educated as to the real cultural differences that exist. To establish credibility and build trust with Aboriginal employees is to do so with their community.
3. Employers need to have employee support systems in place such as the Employee Family Assistance Program, and managers who are concerned with the personal lives of their staff. Wherever possible, set up mentoring relationships with Aboriginal employees.
4. Employers need to provide opportunities for on-going training and promotion.

6.1.2 Training Institutions

- Training institutions need to provide basic skills for the job. If there is specific training that a company needs that institutions don't offer, then the institution should develop a training program to fit the employer.
- Institutions need to place more emphasis on the "soft" skills, such as teamwork and leadership.

6.1.3 Government

- Must reform the current legislation that gives on-reserve companies significant tax advantages. This policy only reduces the incentive to work off reserves, and is therefore not a long-term solution to increasing Aboriginal employment in Saskatchewan.

6.2 Out-migration Focus Group

Key Question: What can be done to decrease out-migration, and who should initiate and execute these ideas?

6.2.1 Government

- Lower tax rates.
- Improve the Healthcare system so it is comparable to the neighbouring provinces.

6.2.2 Industry

- Provide tangible incentives to stay, such as pension plans.
- Value your employees – pay employees what they are worth and express appreciation for them.
- Provide personal growth and development opportunities for employees.
- Develop a confident and aggressive style of business and marketing.

6.2.3 Both Government and Industry

- A change in attitudes and perceptions – There is an underdog mentality in Saskatchewan, i.e. the perception that things are always better somewhere else.
- Foster a business and investment climate for Saskatchewan.
- Market the tourist and holiday potential of Saskatchewan.
- Inform the young people about the opportunities available to them in Saskatchewan.
- Market the province better.

6.3 Foreign and Immigrant Worker Focus Group

Please note that, for the purposes of this study, “foreign workers” refer to non-Canadian citizens living outside Canada who are recruited by Canadian businesses to fill a specific position within Canada, while “immigrant workers” refer to immigrants who are already living in Canada when they are recruited to work for a Canadian business. However, in conducting the focus group it became clear that most people were not aware of this distinction between foreign and immigrant workers.

The following summarizes the key questions and answers of the focus group.

1. What difficulties would employers face in recruiting foreign or immigrant workers?
 - The interview process is very challenging.
 - Differing standards of training for certain occupations.
 - Significant paperwork and time delays slows the recruiting process down.
2. What are the challenges of retaining foreign or immigrant workers and how can these be dealt with?
 - Language barriers – taking English classes is the solution.
 - How the other employees respond to the worker – Employers need to communicate to their workers about the challenges that the foreign or immigrant worker will face, as well as create an environment of respect and acceptance.
 - Many foreign or immigrant workers tend to feel isolated – Employers need to have a work environment that has a social aspect as well.
 - Culturally different approaches to work – Employers need some knowledge of the culture the person is coming from.
3. What services need to be provided to employers in order to increase the participation in recruiting foreign workers?
 - There needs to be a service bureau for foreign workers, i.e. a single point of contact where employers can go to get all the answers to their questions.
 - The government programs need to be advertised and marketed more.