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Working in Alberta

A guide for internationally
trained and educated immigrants



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Alberta Government

Immigrant-serving agencies, career practitioners and educators

This guide contains information to help internationally educated and trained immigrants identify realistic work opportunities and make successful employment transitions in Alberta. It will help them

- find and use information to research the labour market
- learn about the requirements of occupations governed by law in Alberta
- research new work opportunities
- use job search skills and techniques to find work
- become familiar with the Alberta workplace
- find further information and resources

Immigrants living in Alberta and staff from Alberta immigrant-serving agencies were interviewed in the development of this book. The examples presented reflect their actual experiences. However, some of the individual stories are compilations of the experiences of two or more individuals.

Acknowledgment

Alberta Human Services extends special thanks to the individuals, immigrant-serving agencies, community organizations and government departments that contributed their insights, information and expertise to this publication.

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For copyright information, contact
Alberta Human Services
Online Initiatives and Information Supports
Telephone: 780-422-1794
Fax: 780-422-5319
Email: info@alis.gov.ab.ca

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Information in this publication was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. However, legislation, labour market information, websites and programs are subject to change, and we encourage you to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education, employment and business decisions.

The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

All photos in this booklet are for illustrative purposes only. They are not actual photos of any individuals mentioned.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Moving to Alberta	2
Finding employment—your responsibility	4
Doing Your Research	6
Getting ready to start your research	6
Researching your occupation in Alberta	12
Assessing and upgrading your qualifications.....	15
Researching new work possibilities.....	20
Meeting English language requirements	27
Finding Work in Alberta	30
Building your Canadian work experience	30
Making connections by networking	33
Finding work opportunities.....	35
Promoting yourself to employers.....	36
On the Job in Alberta	51
Alberta’s workplace culture and etiquette.....	51
Focus on the Future	57
Resources	58
Employment Terms Used in Alberta	63

Worksheets and checklists

My occupation in Alberta.....	18
Getting work in my occupation in Alberta.....	19
Your skills checklist	22
Considering new work possibilities	24
English language requirements in Alberta.....	29
Your resumé checklist.....	42
Your cover letter checklist.....	43
Your interview checklist.....	47

Introduction

People from all over the world come to Alberta seeking new opportunities and a new way of life. Alberta is a safe and prosperous place to live, work and raise children, in large part because of the contribution of newcomers. Alberta needs people like you to help our province continue to grow and prosper. We need people with the skills and knowledge necessary to keep our economy strong.

Moving to Alberta

New challenges

Making the decision to come to Alberta may have been one of the most important and challenging things you have ever done. But you and your family may be finding it difficult to adapt to a new country and a new way of life. You may have learned a new language already. Now you are learning about living in a new culture, community and society. You may be looking for a job to help support yourself and your family.

The Canadian workplace may be very different from that of your original country. Even if the Government of Canada has admitted you to Canada as a skilled worker, there is no guarantee that Alberta employers, professional regulatory organizations or provincial government departments will accept your qualifications or your experience. Being qualified to work in Canada does not mean that finding work will be easy. As well, the employment situation in any occupation may change depending on the economy and the supply and demand of workers in a particular industry.

You will probably find it easier to get through this period of transition by taking advantage of the many other resources available to help you: agencies, professional organizations, government departments, websites and publications. You can find contact information in the **Resources** section.

Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers

If you want basic information about living in Alberta, obtain a copy of *Welcome to Alberta*. Topics range from housing, health care and education to employment, transportation and citizenship. Copies are available to Albertans at immigrant-serving agencies and elsewhere. Order or download *Welcome to Alberta* at alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Education level of recent immigrants

In 2011, among new immigrants to Alberta aged 20 and over

- 12% had a non-university diploma
- 5% had a trade certificate
- 48% had a university degree (bachelor's, master's or doctoral)

(Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada)

Hasina—Taking a new career direction



Hasina was a French translator and teacher in her home country of Egypt. When she arrived in Alberta, she was not sure she wanted to teach again and could not find work in translating, so she decided to look at other options. When she had her qualifications assessed, it was determined that her bachelor of education/bachelor of arts degree from Egypt was the equivalent of a four-year bachelor of arts degree in Alberta. Hasina’s multiple language skills helped her get a job in an office where they needed someone who spoke French. Not only was she able to use her multiple language skills, she was also learning about the Alberta workplace.

Hasina eventually got a position that offered an unexpected opportunity. The office accountant left, and Hasina’s supervisor asked her to do some of the work. She was good at it and enjoyed it. She decided to take a business administration diploma with a major in accounting. Hasina found out that with her training, university education and other qualifications, she could challenge the professional accounting examination and potentially be eligible for an accounting designation. As she says, “You can always start something new.”

Coping with change

By getting the information and support you need, you can better prepare to deal with life’s changes. The better prepared you are, the more able you are to take control and make the career decisions and choices that work for you.

“People come here because they want a different life. That is the main reason. Canada is not all about getting a job. Look at the people who came before you. They had a plan. They stayed positive. They enjoyed life. Mental health—it means a lot. I came as a refugee. I would be killed if I went back. Before I came, I captained a ship and worked in business. When I first came, I delivered pizza. When I work with immigrants who are getting discouraged, I ask them if they would go back to their home country. Most say they would not.”

An immigrant who came to Alberta as a refugee and now leads a large organization

“One of the hardest things about coming to Alberta was leaving behind everything I knew. I did more than cook in Trinidad. When I was younger, I was a track and field star and coached part time... I knew ‘thousands of people,’ but when I came to Alberta, I knew few people.”

Reggie, a cook who worked for 25 years in Trinidad and Tobago before coming to Alberta a number of years ago

If you are having difficulty coping with change, there are organizations that can help. Contact an immigrant-serving agency to put you in touch with the appropriate organization. Visit humanservices.alberta.ca/newcomer-services. Click on “Settlement Services.”

Finding employment— your responsibility

The Canadian workplace may be very different from that of your original country. Even if the Government of Canada has admitted you to Canada as a skilled worker, there is no guarantee that Alberta employers, professional regulatory organizations or provincial government departments will accept your qualifications or your experience. Being qualified to work in Canada does not mean that finding work will be easy. As well, the employment situation in any occupation may change depending on the economy and the supply and demand of workers in a particular industry.

In Canada's and Alberta's labour markets, employers decide whether they are going to hire someone. It is also up to individuals to find their own work. Government, some immigrant-serving agencies and staff in community programs may

be able to help with your job search. However, it is ultimately up to you to go through the job search process to obtain employment.

"When we work with immigrants, our process has four components. We offer information, assessment, skills development and bridging programs. The strongest thing about our agency is our approach. We work with our clients as partners. We work together on the employment action plan rather than prescribe what to do."

A manager at an immigrant-serving agency



Karl—Building an occupation into a business



Karl had always wanted to be an architect. When he came to Alberta, he was determined to stay in his profession. As a young man in Poland, he earned his architecture degree at a well-respected technical university. He went to work for a large construction company, but for a variety of reasons, he and his wife immigrated to Alberta in the early 1990s.

Despite the downturn in the economy, Karl was able to get work as a draftsman. He was happy to have the work, but he did not intend to do it forever. Fortunately, he was working for another architect who advised him to get in touch with his professional association. He learned what he had to do to become a registered architect in Alberta. It meant a lot of upgrading and getting Canadian work experience in some specific areas. He also had to write a professional exam.

Karl spent the next several years working and learning about the practice of architecture in Alberta. He became involved with his professional community and got to know other architects. He successfully challenged his examinations and earned his registration about eight years after he first arrived in Alberta.

There were times when he wanted to give it all up and find something else. However, Karl feels it was worth the effort. Today—after many late nights and weekends spent working—Karl is a partner in his own successful architectural firm specializing in environmentally friendly buildings. He also volunteers with his professional organization on a number of committees. As Karl says, “It has been difficult, but I cannot imagine being anything else but an architect.”

Working in Alberta includes basic information on a wide variety of topics, including recognition of international qualifications, the registration and certification process, occupational information, career management, job search skills and the labour market.

What Does Being “Internationally Educated and Trained” Mean?

This guide defines an internationally educated and trained immigrant as a person who has a professional degree, post-secondary diploma or trade certificate from a country other than Canada. Examples of skilled immigrants include, but are not limited to, people who are accountants, engineers, nurses or carpenters.

If you obtained your education and skills training outside Canada, then you may need help figuring out how to have your qualifications recognized or updated. This guide can help.

Do you want to look for work related to the occupation for which you are trained? Are you considering another type of work? Do you know how to present international experience to Alberta employers? This guide has information and tools to help you research your occupation in Alberta, look at other work alternatives and become familiar with the Alberta workplace. By learning more about working in Alberta, you can move closer to your career goals.

Doing Your Research

Research plays an important role in making work decisions and finding employment. This part of the guide includes basic information, checklists, exercises and other resources for collecting information and asking questions. It includes information on what you need to consider as you explore working in Alberta.

Getting ready to start your research

Using research to make decisions

Before you begin your research, take some time to think about the information you want to find, and the tools and approach you will use to find it. Having a plan will help you stay focused and make the best use of your research time.

One of the first decisions you may have to make is what kind of work you will look for. You will not really be making *one* decision. Rather, you will be taking information from a variety of

sources—including yourself—and making a *series* of decisions.

There is no magic formula for making decisions. However, one way to make decisions is to collect information by doing research and asking questions. Making decisions involves taking what you have learned, evaluating all the factors, coming to some conclusions, making choices and putting these choices into action.

Be persistent in your research. It will take time and effort, but you will probably find that it is worth the effort. Taking the time now to learn how things work in Alberta will save you time and trouble later.

Do not give up if you do not find all the information you need right away. There are many places and ways to get information.

Finding labour market information

When you research occupational choices and other information related to work, what you are really doing is collecting labour market information. Labour market information is the information you need to make decisions about your career direction. It includes information about occupational options, training programs, employment opportunities and industry growth. Labour market information also includes information about the current labour market environment, as well as trends and forecasts about the future.

For example, labour market information could be information about what types of companies or industries are increasing or decreasing their labour force. You can use that information to decide which occupations have good employment prospects now and in the future.

Do you need access to a computer?

Do you need to do an online job search or other Internet research? Do you want to print your resumé? If you do not have a computer, there are places where you can use one. Try your local Alberta Works Centre or public library. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, for the Alberta Works Centre nearest you.

You can get labour market information from a variety of sources, including websites, resource centres, publications and people. It is a good idea to verify information by consulting more than one source. Following are some of the resources you can use to learn more about the labour market in Alberta.

Alberta Learning Information Service website (alis.alberta.ca)

The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website is a Government of Alberta site that provides career, education and job information and resources. It has several labour market information sections.

Alberta Work Search Online (alis.alberta.ca/worksearch)

Determine the skills and knowledge you have to offer. Identify potential employers and job opportunities. Market your skills and accomplishments to potential employers. You will find the latest information, examples, links and exercises to make the most of your work search.

CERTinfo (alis.alberta.ca/certinfo)

Are you wondering what certification or registration requirements you must satisfy before you can work in Alberta? The CERTinfo section of the ALIS website provides information on occupations that are governed by law in Alberta. It answers common questions about the certification and registration process in Alberta and includes a list of regulated occupations.

Company & Industry Research (alis.alberta.ca/lmi)

Get a realistic picture of what it might be like to work for a certain kind of company or industry. In this section of the ALIS website, you will find information on opportunities and trends in Alberta, industry outlooks, regional information, wage and salary information, and professional associations.

EDinfo (alis.alberta.ca/edinfo)

EDinfo lists current information on post-secondary education and training programs in Alberta. EDinfo also has information about distance-learning programs in Western Canada, as well as loans, grants and scholarships.

OCCinfo (alis.alberta.ca/occinfo)

In the OCCinfo section of the ALIS website, you will find detailed information on over 530 occupations in a set of occupational profiles. Each profile includes information about an occupation's typical duties and responsibilities, working conditions, personal and educational requirements, types of employers, occupational growth and salary ranges in Alberta. If you cannot find your occupation in the OCCinfo profiles, see if you can find a similar or related occupation. For example, a person working in the panel beater trade outside Canada may do work similar to the autobody technician trade in Alberta.

Publications (alis.alberta.ca/publications)

You can order or download copies of the following publication in Alberta.

Alberta Career and Industry Outlook

This book looks at the global and provincial trends affecting Alberta's economy and society. These trends have an impact on occupations in the province and can affect career planning decisions. An Occupational Outlook section includes projections for 130 occupational groups.

WAGEinfo (alis.alberta.ca/wageinfo)

If you want to know how much jobs pay in Alberta, check out WAGEinfo. It covers more than 400 occupations and provides current information on wages and salaries for full-time employees in Alberta. WAGEinfo includes information by geographic area and industry group. It also has information on skills shortages in Alberta.

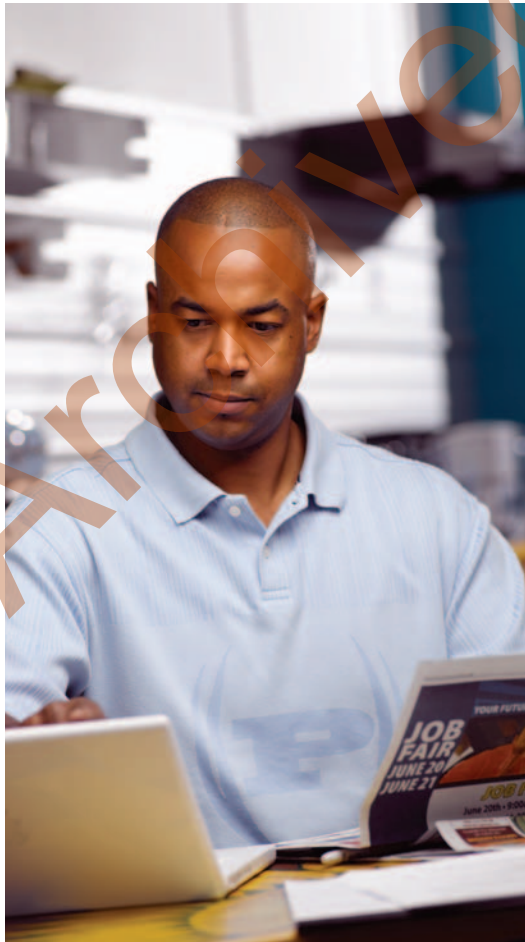
Alberta Works Centres

Alberta Works Centres are located in communities across Alberta. They provide information about career planning, occupations, the labour market and future trends. Some Alberta Works Centres have computers, telephones and fax machines you can use for your work search.

Print resources

Newspapers

The career and business sections of newspapers often have articles about economic, industry and business trends. You can also learn a lot about which companies are hiring and what occupations are currently in demand by reading advertisements in the classified and career sections of the paper.



Magazines

Trade or industry magazines publish articles and advertisements related to a specific field. To find relevant trade publications, ask at your local public library or talk to people in a related professional association or union.

Studies and reports

Libraries have copies of studies, reports and other documents produced by publicly funded organizations, such as Statistics Canada and economic development offices. Local economic development offices and chambers of commerce often provide information about the current business climate and local opportunities.

Media resources

Internet

The Internet can be a good place to find information on labour market trends. If you do a general search, type in terms like *labour market* and *Alberta* to get relevant websites.

Radio

Many radio stations broadcast informational programming and talk shows, which can be a source of labour market information.

Television

Watch television shows that relate to your career interests and evaluate the information they provide about the current labour market and future trends.

Information interviews

Another very useful way to get information about the labour market is to talk to people. Asking for first-hand information about a particular occupational field, the specific job, or required skills and qualifications is called an information interview. You can talk to staff at immigrant-serving agencies and Alberta Works Centres. You can also contact employers who work in your specific field. Contact your professional regulatory organization or professional association for the names of some employers in your community.

For an information interview, you will most likely call a company and ask to speak with a person doing the type of job you are interested in or with the manager of the department. It is a very useful way to get current information from someone who works on the inside of the sector where you want to work. You may have to get comfortable with the idea of cold calling—phoning someone you do not know and have never met. Remind yourself that information interviews are commonly used by Albertans who are seeking assistance to make career decisions.

“Believe in yourself. Also get as much information as possible. The information will empower you. Seek out an agency that will empower you. If you have an idea of what is really going on, you are prepared and you are ready to persevere. You can be successful here. You have to have drive and commitment to your professional goals.”

An employment counsellor who works with immigrants who are professionals

Interview dos and don'ts

- Do be specific. Decide what information you need before you ask. Doing so allows people to answer your questions more accurately.
- Do be prepared. Bring a list of potential questions with you.
- Do take advantage of off-peak hours. Try to talk to people when they are less likely to be busy. They may feel less pressured and have more time to help you.
- Do make an appointment. An appointment is especially important if you're asking for help or for detailed information—for example, what kinds of job opportunities a company might have. Show up at your appointment early or on time.
- Don't ask for a job. Most people will be happy to talk to you. However, they will not appreciate being asked for a job.

Sample scripts for information interviews

To prepare for an information interview, write out a script and practise it. The following are some examples of situations and some script ideas you may find useful as you do your research.

Example #1—In-person interview

Kristina is trying to find out if any companies are hiring chemists. She has 15 years' experience working as a chemist for a large company in Hungary but wants to find out if she can work as a chemist in Alberta. She has already contacted the Alberta professional regulatory organization for chemists and learned what she needs to do to become registered as a professional chemist. As part of her continuing research, Kristina is going to talk to some chemical companies about their hiring requirements.

Kristina: Hello, I'm Kristina (include last name). I'm a chemist from Hungary, and I would like to ask you a few questions about chemists at this company.

Human resources manager at chemical company: Nice to meet you.

Kristina: First, how many chemists do you employ?

Human resources manager: We now have approximately 90 chemists on staff at this site. We also have about 30 working at our smaller plant.

Kristina: Do you hire chemists based on their training and experience or do you also require them to be registered?

Human resources manager: It depends on the individual's background. We may be looking for a combination of training and work experience. Some people may have trained somewhere else and need to upgrade their skills before we would consider hiring them. Many of our staff are registered members of the Association of the Chemical Profession of Alberta.

Kristina: How does your company advertise job openings?

Human resources manager: People send us their resumés directly. Positions are posted on our company website.

Kristina: Here is my business card. May I contact you again if I have any more questions?

Human resources manager: Certainly.

Kristina: Thank you.

Example #2—Telephone interview

Charles was a veterinarian in China. He wants to talk to the professional regulatory organization in Alberta. He needs to find out what specific things he has to do before he can be registered as a veterinarian here.

Charles: My name is Charles Quek. I would like to speak to someone about veterinarians in Alberta. I have just emigrated from China, where I worked as a veterinarian. I would like to know what I have to do before I can practise in Alberta. I hope to work in an established clinic for a few years before I open up my own business.

Receptionist: The person you need to talk to is Diane Meeks. Ms. Meeks is not in right now. May I have your name again and your number so I can have her call you?

Charles: Yes, thank you. It is Charles Quek—Q-U-E-K (spell out your name). My phone number is...

Keeping notes on your research

You will be collecting a lot of information as you research, so keep track of everything by writing it down. As you gather information, keep notes about

- the conversations and interviews you have
- the information you find out
- your ideas, thoughts and feelings about the information you find out
- the contacts you make—names, telephone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses and other information

You can write these notes in a notebook or binder, on index cards or on a computer.

“Success depends on resourcefulness. Immigrants who are resourceful are the ones most likely to make it back to their occupation.”
 A counsellor with a training institute

Sample research notes

Babak is researching his trade in Alberta. He wants to find out whether there are any job opportunities and what he has to do to become certified to work in his trade. Babak keeps track of the information he collects this way:

Information I need	Who I contacted or where I looked	What I found out	Notes
What do people in my trade do in Alberta?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCCinfo on ALIS website (alis.alberta.ca/occinfo) • tradesecrets.alberta.ca 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in my trade in Alberta do very similar work to what I am used to doing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some tasks I have not performed before.
Do I have to be certified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tradesecrets.alberta.ca • Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office (called the Alberta Career Information Hotline to find out address for my local office) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I must be certified. • I will need to have my qualifications assessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the meantime, is there some other kind of job where I could use my skills?
Who is hiring people in my trade?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALIS website • Newspaper • Trade workers’ union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many companies are hiring. Most are in construction for the oil industry. It depends where I want to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I should decide where I’ll look for work when I’m certified. • I can start learning now about companies and how they work so I know who to apply to when I’m certified.

Researching your occupation in Alberta

Because you got your education and training outside of Alberta, you may not be able to work in your occupation of training right away. Doing what is necessary to work in your occupation could be a very time-consuming, expensive and occasionally frustrating process. The benefits may be worth the effort, but only you can decide what is best in your case.

Take time to research how your occupation works in Alberta. Some occupations in Alberta may not exist in your country and some occupations may be similar to those in your country but need different qualifications in Alberta.

See OCCinfo at alis.alberta.ca/occinfo for information about occupations, including those that are not regulated. If the name of your occupation is not included in the OCCinfo profiles, look for a similar occupation. For

example, if you were a building scientist in your home country, try looking under “Engineer” and “Engineering Technologist” to see how the occupations compare.

Regardless of your occupation, you must be able to demonstrate to potential employers that you have the knowledge and skills to do the work. Employers often ask to see documents that support what you say about your education, training and work experience. In regulated occupations, employers also ask for evidence that you have the required licensing, certification or registration. Later in this section, you will learn how to have your qualifications assessed for Alberta, if necessary.

You may wish to use the worksheets that are included at the end of this section to record the answers to your research. They contain

Matthew and Felee—Taking advantage of work opportunities in Alberta



Matthew and Felee, a married couple, both worked as nurses for over 15 years in their home country of the Philippines. Both had family who were already in Alberta, so they were not worried about being alone. Since English is one of the official languages of the Philippines, their English skills were already excellent. Before coming to Alberta, Matthew and Felee visited the professional regulatory organization’s website and learned about the steps they needed to take to get registered in Alberta. For example, they found out that in addition to needing official transcripts from their nursing school in the Philippines, they also had to take a nursing refresher course and write and pass a national nursing examination.

It took time, hard work and some of their savings to become registered nurses in Alberta, but for both Matthew and Felee, it was worth the effort. Matthew works at a specialized health facility in a community just outside Red Deer. Felee was pleased to get a full-time job at a hospital near her home. Since coming to Alberta, they have met many other people from the Philippines, reconnected with some of their relatives and become involved in the community.

questions that will give you the information you need to know about the way your occupation works in Alberta. **My occupation in Alberta** (page 18) has questions about regulated occupations in Alberta as well as certification and credential assessment requirements. **Getting work in my occupation in Alberta** (page 19) contains labour market information questions.

Regulated occupations and designated trades

Each province in Canada is responsible for setting the standards, education and training requirements for occupations and trades. As a result, there are different standards across Canada.

In Alberta, regulated occupations have legal requirements or restrictions in place to protect the public. In some regulated occupations, such as pharmacist, engineer or accountant, you must be registered with the appropriate professional regulatory organization. In a regulated (or designated) trade, such as welder, bricklayer or heavy equipment technician, you must be registered with Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT).

AIT is part of the provincial government ministry responsible for administering laws and regulations governing work in the designated trades. These laws require trades to have industry-established job skills and competencies, as well as a training program called an apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship programs include a combination of formal technical training (20 per cent) and documented on-the-job training and work experience (80 per cent). Tradespeople from outside Canada may be eligible to apply for certification in Alberta. For more information about certification in the trades, visit the AIT website at tradesecrets.alberta.ca or your nearest AIT office (see the **Resources** section for contact information).

For more information on regulated occupations in Alberta, visit CERTinfo at alis.alberta.ca/certinfo. It is a government resource that provides descriptions of each regulated occupation in Alberta, including

- typical duties and responsibilities and where you can find more detailed information about the occupation
- the title of relevant legislation and regulations
- basic education, experience and examination requirements for certification or registration
- contact information for the professional regulatory organization

Registration or certification process

If your occupation is regulated in Alberta, it may take weeks, months or years to register with a professional regulatory organization or to obtain the certification you need to work in your occupation. The length of time it takes will vary from one occupation to another and from one situation to another. It may also vary depending on the country where you received your training. The standards and requirements may be very different from those in Alberta.

Immigrant Access Fund

If you are a foreign-trained professional or tradesperson, you may be eligible for a loan from the Immigrant Access Fund. This fund offers loans of up to \$10,000 to help immigrants become accredited to work in Alberta.

Eligible costs include

- exam fees with professional governing association
- qualifications assessments
- professional association fees
- tuition fees at a recognized post-secondary institution
- cost of books and course materials
- living allowance during study time
- travel expenses to write exams

To find out more about the Immigrant Access Fund

- call 780-756-3023 in Edmonton or 403-204-2667 in Calgary
- go online to iafcanada.org

There will also be differences in the steps you must take to obtain your certification or registration. For example, you may have to write examinations, obtain work experience or get additional training or education before you can be certified to work in your occupation in Alberta. If you are certified, it means that the professional regulatory organization recognizes your qualifications. However, gaining additional education or attaining membership with the professional regulatory organization or professional association does not guarantee you a job. You then need to find an employer who will hire you.

In some occupations, professional regulatory organizations and professional associations have signed international mutual recognition agreements that make it much easier for members to have their credentials recognized in other countries. As well, some Alberta professional regulatory organizations may allow applicants for registration or certification to challenge examinations or meet other requirements while they are still living outside Alberta. Some occupations also have national examinations.

For general information on accreditation in regulated occupations, visit alis.alberta.ca/certinfo. For detailed information about accreditation in your occupation, contact the appropriate regulatory or professional organization.

Registration costs

Every regulated occupation has different requirements for licensing, registration or certification and related fee schedules. Requirements may include

- written examination(s)
- oral examination(s)
- language proficiency standards
- a qualifications assessment conducted by the professional regulatory organization or a specified assessment service (see **Qualifications assessments** later in this section)
- a period of supervised work experience

In addition to examination and registration fees, there may be other costs associated with obtaining registration or certification. Contact your professional regulatory organization for more information.

Non-regulated occupations

Only the occupations listed in CERTinfo are regulated in Alberta. Other occupations in Alberta are not regulated. You do not have to meet any specific legal requirements to work in non-regulated occupations. Employers set the standards and decide how employees will best meet their requirements.

Occupational associations

If you are a member of an unregulated occupation, you may still wish to see whether there is a professional organization or association for your occupation. These types of organizations can help you make connections and, in some cases, obtain voluntary certification. You can check the Internet or the business pages of your local telephone book for some possibilities. Review headings like “organizations,” “associations,” “society,” “institute” or “college.”

Designated occupations

Designated occupations recognize skills and competencies that meet industry standards. Participation in designated occupations is voluntary. An individual who has demonstrated the standards of competence may be granted an occupational certificate. However, this certificate is not required to work in the occupation. Some designated occupations may have formal training, some may have only work experience and some may have a combination of formal training and work experience. Those pursuing certification in a designated occupation are responsible for paying any associated tuition fees.

For more information about designated occupations in Alberta, visit tradesecrets.alberta.ca.

Assessing and upgrading your qualifications

Once you have gathered information about your occupation in Alberta, the next step is to compare your qualifications to the occupational requirements. You can then determine what you need to do to have your qualifications recognized, or what additional education or training you might consider.

Qualifications assessments

If you trained outside Alberta and want your education and experience to be recognized by professional regulatory organizations, employers or post-secondary institutions in this province, you will need to have your credentials assessed to determine how well you meet the standards for your occupation in Alberta. An assessment involves comparing your qualifications to similar qualifications in Alberta and Canada. Qualifications can include your credentials, training, work experience and education.

Assessments for regulated occupations

If your occupation is regulated, your professional regulatory organization may conduct its own qualifications assessments. But it could also require that you have your qualifications assessed by an assessment service. For more information on qualifications assessments, contact an immigrant-serving agency, professional association or professional regulatory organization. You can also see **Assessments of qualifications** in the **Resources** section.

Qualification Certificate Program

The Alberta Qualification Certificate Program allows tradespeople to prove that their skills and experience meet the Alberta standards. Individuals who meet industry-established competencies in an Alberta-designated trade or occupation are eligible to challenge the Qualification Certificate exam(s). Upon successfully passing the exam(s), they receive an Alberta Qualification Certificate or an Alberta Occupational Certificate.

For more information on the Qualification Certificate Program, contact AIT. For the office nearest you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, or visit tradesecrets.alberta.ca.

Prepare your documents to save time and trouble

An assessment of your qualifications can take months to complete. It may take longer if you have problems providing required documents. Make sure you have all of the original or notarized copies of documents you need in order to have your qualifications assessed, including

- degrees
- diplomas
- certificates
- employment records
- letters of reference
- official transcripts of marks from educational institutions

Allow time for any documents that must be translated into English and certified by a translator before they can be assessed.

International Qualifications Assessment Service

The International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) is a Government of Alberta service. For a fee, it does assessments and issues certificates that show how educational credentials from other countries compare to educational standards in Canada. Employers may use an IQAS assessment to help them understand the educational credentials presented by a job applicant. You can include an IQAS assessment certificate with your resumé when applying for employment. IQAS assessments will not automatically lead to employment, but they can help demonstrate your qualifications to Alberta employers.

For more information about IQAS, see the **Resources** section for contact information or visit eae.alberta.ca/iqas.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) evaluates the skills and knowledge that people acquire outside a formal learning environment. It considers learning through non-credit courses, on-the-job training and professional workshops, as well as people's life and work experience. The assessment determines how that informal learning should apply toward receiving credit in a post-secondary program, meeting regulated occupation requirements or other goals.

A PLAR assessment may include one or more of the following:

- written challenge exam
- oral exam or interview
- performance assessment
- product assessment
- portfolio assessment

See the **Resources** section for more information about PLAR programs.

Sample IQAS assessment

(This is not an actual assessment, nor is it intended to show any real qualifications. It is only an example of what a basic assessment might look like.)

Levels of Achievement Outside Canada

Romania:

High School Diploma (1997)
Ministry of Education, Romania
Four-year secondary school program
Language of Instruction – Romanian

Licentiate Diploma (Economics) (2002)
George Bacovia University
Four-year undergraduate degree program
Language of Instruction – Romanian

Comparative Levels of Achievement in Canada

Secondary

The high school diploma generally compares to the completion of Grade 12.

Post-Secondary

The licentiate diploma generally compares to the completion of a four-year bachelor's degree with a focus in economics and accounting.

Education and training upgrades

Additional training or education

After having your education and training assessed, you may discover that you need to upgrade your qualifications before you can work in your occupation in Alberta. Your professional regulatory organization or professional association may be able to advise you about suitable training. A career counsellor or immigrant-serving agency can also help you identify and select a suitable education program. For example, some immigrant-serving agencies offer computer training, communication skills courses and other training opportunities. Alberta Works Centres can help you find education and training resources. In some communities, the Government of Alberta funds career and employment services specifically for immigrants. Contact the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, for more information.

Bridging programs

Some community organizations work with educational institutions to offer “bridging” programs to immigrants seeking work in their

Concerned about your finances?

Maybe you are taking job-related training or are upgrading your English language skills. You may be wondering how you can support yourself and your family during this time of transition. Some Human Services programs and services include loans, grants and other types of financial assistance. Contact the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, to find an Alberta Works Centre near you.

occupation. Bridging programs help immigrants acquire the additional skills and training they need to successfully undertake their occupation in Alberta.

Bridging programs can provide training in Canadian workplace culture, training in how an occupation in Alberta differs from the immigrant’s country of origin and training in job search skills. Some bridging programs are designed for specific occupations, such as engineering, nursing and accounting.

See **Bridging programs** in the **Resources** section for information on these programs. You can also contact the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, for information about bridging programs in your community.

Rishad—Adapting to change by learning new skills

Rishad was a professional mechanical engineer in his home country of India. Soon after he arrived, Rishad began researching what he would need to do to become registered as an engineer in Alberta. At the same time, he visited a community agency that helped immigrants. There, he heard about a program that helps immigrants with an engineering background learn new skills so they can become certified engineering technologists. Although Rishad still eventually wanted to work as a professional engineer, he liked the idea that he could at least work in the same general field. Rishad was accepted into the program. It took Rishad 10 months to complete the program, but he is now qualified as an engineering technologist in Alberta. He learned new skills and acquired some Canadian work experience. Rishad has a job lined up and will work toward getting his professional engineering registration at some time in the future.



My occupation in Alberta

You can use this worksheet to record information about your occupation in Alberta.

1. What is the name of my occupation in Alberta?

2. What are typical duties and responsibilities for my occupation in Alberta?

3. What are the certification or registration requirements for my occupation, if any?

4. What is the name of the professional regulatory organization or professional association for my occupation, if there is one (e.g. Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA) or the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses (AARN))? What is its contact information?

5. Do I need to have my qualifications/credentials assessed before I can work in Alberta? If so, where can I get my credentials assessed? Who provides this service?

6. How much will it cost to have my qualifications/credentials assessed?

7. How long will it take to have my qualifications/credentials assessed?

8. Next steps:

Where to find more information

- alis.alberta.ca/certinfo: certification and registration requirements for regulated occupations and designated trades
- alis.alberta.ca/occinfo: job descriptions, education requirements, employment and advancement opportunities, salary information, and projected growth data for more than 530 occupations
- tradesecrets.alberta.ca: apprenticeship and industry training
- professional regulatory organization
- professional association

Getting work in my occupation in Alberta

You can use this worksheet to record information about work opportunities in your occupation in Alberta.

1. What industries hire people in my occupation in Alberta?
(See alis.alberta.ca/occinfo.)

2. What companies or organizations hire people in my occupation?
(Check the Internet, your local library or Alberta Works Centre for business directories.)

3. What qualifications and experience do companies or organizations want?

4. What job titles are in my occupation in Alberta? (e.g. information management technician, chartered accountant)

5. Is demand for workers increasing, staying the same or decreasing?

6. What are the salaries?

7. What are the opportunities for me to be self-employed in my occupation in Alberta?

Where to find more information

- alis.alberta.ca/certinfo: certification and registration requirements for regulated occupations and designated trades
- alis.alberta.ca/occinfo: job descriptions, education requirements, salary information, employment and advancement opportunities, and projected growth data for more than 530 occupations
- humanservices.alberta.ca/lmi: labour market information
- tradesecrets.alberta.ca: apprenticeship and industry training
- professional regulatory organization
- professional association
- information gathering interviews
- newspapers

Researching new work possibilities

Many workers in Alberta change their career direction. Instead of staying with one company or occupation, they manage their careers and move as new opportunities arise or interests develop. Their work history might involve different kinds of employment and a variety of employers. Along the way, they use their transferable skills and develop new ones. You may find it difficult to leave behind an occupation that you worked hard to enter and enjoyed doing. But you may also discover rewards that come from different work.



Gathering information to help you decide

By taking some time to research other occupations in Alberta, you can learn what other options are available and make an informed choice about whether or not to pursue a new career path. Researching new work options is similar to researching your occupation of training. For example, you can research the following questions:

- What industries are hiring people with my background and training?
- Which companies are recruiting?
- Which companies have a good record of hiring skilled immigrants?
- What occupations are in demand?
- What are the qualifications for these occupations?
- Am I qualified for these occupations?
- Do I need any additional education or training?
- What are the average annual starting salaries for the occupations I am considering?

Where to find more information

Use some of the same sources you used for researching the labour market and your occupation of training. For example, a good source of information about occupations is OCCinfo at alis.alberta.ca/occinfo. You can also visit an Alberta Works Centre or call the Alberta Career Information Hotline for information about work at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton.

Whatever sources you use, try to collect all the information you need to make an informed decision.

Transferring your skills to different work situations

You take your skills with you wherever you go. As you look at new work options, consider which of the skills you have developed could be applied to different work. Alberta employers are looking for people who can do more than perform a set of tasks. Yes, employers are looking for people

“Learn to talk about your skills, not your occupation title. Rather than just say ‘I’m a physiotherapist’ you should describe what you can actually do. Learn to talk about the skills that you can use. You can do this whether you’re working at getting registered or looking for a different kind of work.”

A counsellor who works with immigrants who are professionals

with skills for a specific job. However, they are also looking for people with skills that can be transferred from one job to another.

Once you begin working, you may be able to learn the required technical skills, such as how to operate specific equipment, through on-the-job or short-term training. Transferable skills are harder to teach, so employers want to hire people who already have them. For example, they are often looking for people who

- have good interpersonal and communication skills
- can plan, manage their work and solve problems
- can work independently or on teams

Take a few minutes to do the exercise on the next page. If you are able to identify, describe and highlight the transferable skills you have already developed, it may help you consider which new occupations might be suitable choices.



Your skills checklist

Whatever work you do, you can take your skills with you. You can transfer them from one situation to another, from one employer to another, from one occupational field to another. It's important to know your skills when you are considering other work possibilities.

The following is a list of skills that Canadian employers value most. Read the list and check off those you can do well.

Fundamental skills

The skills needed as a base for further development

Communicate

- Read and understand information presented in a variety of forms (e.g. words, graphs, charts, diagrams)
- Write and speak so others pay attention and understand
- Listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others
- Share information using a wide range of information and communications technologies (e.g. voice, email, computers)
- Use relevant scientific, technological and mathematical knowledge and skills to explain or clarify ideas

Manage information

- Locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems
- Access, analyze and apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines (e.g. the arts, languages, science, technology, mathematics, social sciences and the humanities)

Use numbers

- Decide what needs to be measured or calculated
- Observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology
- Make estimates and verify calculations

Think and solve problems

- Assess situations and identify problems
- Seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts

- Recognize the human, interpersonal, technical, scientific and mathematical dimensions of a problem
- Identify the root cause of a problem
- Be creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions
- Use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- Evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions
- Implement solutions

Personal management skills

The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive one's potential for growth

Demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours

- Feel good about yourself and be confident
- Deal with people, problems and situations with honesty, integrity and personal ethics
- Recognize your own and other people's good efforts
- Take care of your personal health
- Show interest, initiative and effort

Be responsible

- Set goals and priorities balancing work and family life
- Plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
- Assess, weigh and manage risk
- Be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group
- Be socially responsible and contribute to your community

Be adaptable

- Work independently or as part of a team
- Carry out multiple tasks or projects

- Be innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest alternate ways to achieve goals and get the job done
 - Be open and respond constructively to change
 - Learn from your mistakes and accept feedback
 - Cope with uncertainty
- Learn continuously
- Be willing to continuously learn and grow
 - Assess personal strengths and areas for development
 - Set your own learning goals
 - Identify and access learning sources and opportunities
 - Plan for and achieve your learning goals

Work safely

- Be aware of personal and group health and safety practices and procedures and act in accordance with these

Teamwork skills

The skills and attributes needed to contribute productively

Work with others

- Understand and work within the dynamics of a group
- Ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear

- Be flexible: respect, be open to and be supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group
- Recognize and respect people's diversity, individual differences and perspectives
- Accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner
- Contribute to a team by sharing information and expertise
- Lead or support when appropriate, motivating a group for high performance
- Understand the role of conflict in a group to reach solutions
- Manage and resolve conflict when appropriate

Participate in projects and tasks

- Plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives and outcomes
- Develop a plan, seek feedback, test, revise and implement
- Work to agreed quality standards and specifications
- Select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task or project
- Adapt to changing requirements and information
- Continually monitor the success of a project or task and identify ways to improve

(Source: Employability Skills 2000+, Conference Board of Canada)

My main skills

Look over the skills you checked off in the skills checklist. On a separate piece of paper, write down

- the 10 skills you do best
- the 10 skills you enjoy doing most
- the 10 skills you would like to or need to further develop

Now you can link your skills and qualifications with the occupational research you have done, as well as opportunities that might interest you. Use

the following worksheet, **Considering new work possibilities**, as you think about how you can use familiar skills for different kinds of work.

Take the time to become more aware of your skills. People who can adapt their skills to a variety of work situations often find it easier to move in new career directions. Check out CAREERinsite, a one-stop guide to online career planning at alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite. Explore and compare career options based on your values, skills and interests, and develop an action plan for your future.

Considering new work possibilities

Use this worksheet to record information as you consider different work options.

	1	2
New occupation I am considering		
Qualifications and skills required by the occupation I am considering (use information from OCCinfo and elsewhere)		
My relevant qualifications and skills (use information from the skills checklist)		
Am I qualified? (yes, no, maybe)		
What additional education or training do I need? (e.g. ESL or computer training)		
Am I willing to consider this type of work? (yes, no, maybe)		

This item has been either discontinued or is out of date. It is provided for informational and research purposes.

3	4

Where to find more information

You can get copies of the following Human Services publications by visiting alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Assessing You: The First Step in Career Planning

This book will help you adapt in today’s world of work. Read about the skills employers are looking for and work on written exercises that will help you identify your own strengths. *Assessing You* includes suggestions for keeping track of your skills and ideas for packaging your career assets to suit your current needs.

Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation

This plain language workbook is full of exercises and tips to guide you through five career planning steps. It will help you decide what occupation is right for you by asking these questions: What am I doing right now? What do I need to know? What are my best choices? What do I need to do now? What actions will I take?

My Choices, My Work, My Life

Whether you’re considering planning your career, changing jobs, upgrading your skills or trying to balance work with the needs of your family, *My Choices, My Work, My Life* will help you see your options, make a decision, set goals and complete the tasks that will lead you closer to your vision for your life.

Research career and occupational information at the following websites:

- alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite: online activities to generate occupational options and develop an action plan
- alis.alberta.ca/edinfo: Alberta post-secondary schools and programs and distance-learning options in Western Canada
- alis.alberta.ca/occinfo: job descriptions, education requirements, salary information, employment and advancement opportunities, and projected growth data for more than 530 occupations
- alis.alberta.ca/wageinfo: wage and salary information by occupation, geographic area and industry group
- tradesecrets.alberta.ca: apprenticeship and industry training

Making your decision

The information you collect during your research will help you make decisions and take action. You will probably spend considerable time looking at new work choices and weighing your options. As you go through this process, look beyond the facts. Consider your family situation as well as your own feelings and attitudes. For example

- How would you feel about leaving your occupation of training?
- How would you feel about trying something new?
- What new challenges and opportunities would this new occupation provide?

- Will this new occupation help you move closer to your goals?
- How would your decision affect your family?
- What other factors will affect your choices? (e.g. finances, age, transportation)

If you consider more than the facts, you may be more comfortable with your decisions.

Do not be too concerned if you cannot make a decision about a new occupation right away. The process of managing your career in today's changing world can be complicated. There is not one "right" occupation for you. Rather, there are many interesting occupations you could feel satisfied working in. Be curious and open so you can consider new possibilities as they arise. Look for chances to apply your skills and experience in new ways.

Parveen—Using employability skills to move forward



With a six-year university degree and a background in teaching and economics in India, Parveen worked in a day-care centre not long after she arrived in Alberta. She was glad to earn the money to support her children, but she missed her former job where she worked with university students.

Parveen continued to work in a variety of transitional jobs. She was beginning to wonder when she was ever going to get back on track and start using her education again. The turning point came when she met a human resources manager during an interview for a cleaning job. Instead of hiring Parveen, the manager told her she was overqualified and encouraged her to pursue her occupation. She told Parveen, "If you get this job, you'll stay for the rest of your life." Parveen was surprised at the time but now sees the manager's response as a positive event. She did work as a child care provider again but started to actively pursue getting back to her field of training. Parveen took part-time computer courses and grammar training. She also saw counsellors and learned how to revise her resumé, write cover letters and start looking for new employment opportunities. Parveen also continued to improve her English language skills.

After progressively more responsible positions, hard work, persistence and a bit of luck, Parveen now works as an employment counsellor. Her job combines everything she had learned before and more. Over the years, she has taken countless workshops, short-term courses and training from employers to arrive in her current position.

Meeting English language requirements

In all skilled occupations, you must be able to speak, read and write in English very well to obtain employment in Alberta. Immigrants who have basic communication skills in English must often upgrade their language skills before they are able to convince employers that they are the best candidates for employment opportunities.

You can use the worksheet **English language requirements in Alberta?** (page 29) to record information you gather about English language requirements.

Assessing your English language skills

You can demonstrate your English language skills by taking part in an interview or by submitting the results of an English language proficiency examination. There are several different examinations that can assess your English language proficiency, including those listed below. Different professional regulatory organizations and professional associations may use different tools. Find out which one is accepted before you take an assessment. Examples of commonly used assessment tests include

- Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL)
- Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELP)
- Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) and Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
- Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)
- Test of Spoken English (TSE)

Several organizations offer English language assessment services. For information on the assessment services in your community, contact your local immigrant-serving agency or the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton.

Communicating in the technical language of your occupation

Although you may already have excellent English skills for communicating in everyday life, your occupation may use very specific technical terminology. In order to obtain work in Alberta, you will also have to know this terminology. In technical occupations, there may be operating manuals or specific codes that you must know how to interpret. For example, architects must know how to interpret provincial building codes and technical drawings. Check with the professional regulatory organization or professional association for your occupation. They can tell you the English language requirements of your occupation.

Try to speak English as often as you can

There are conversational, business and technical ways to speak English. By practising your English in a variety of situations, you can become comfortable using a variety of English language speaking styles.

Getting English language training

There are different types of English language training available. Once you get your English language skills assessed, you can find out what training will best meet your needs.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

The Government of Canada funds the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program for newcomers. You can find out more about LINC through your local immigrant-serving agency or the language assessment and referral centres (see the **Resources** section for contact information).



“Learn as much English as you can. When you understand, everything comes easily. You need the language to understand the information. I knew a computer programmer who wanted to do upgrading, but what he really needed was language training. He found work cleaning buildings. That was OK for a while. But once he improved his English language skills, he was able to get a job in his field.”

Ed, an emigrant from Nicaragua

English as a Second Language

English as a Second Language (ESL) is English language training for people whose first language is not English. Training is designed to help participants learn basic to advanced reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Visit these websites to find out more about ESL programs in Alberta:

- Calgary area—immigrantservicescalgary.ca (click on “How We Can Help,” and then click on “ESL Directory”)
- Edmonton and other select urban centres in Alberta—catholicsocialservices.ab.ca (click on “Find Programs by Service,” and then click “Immigration and Settlement Service”)
- alis.alberta.ca/edinfo (click on “Search by Program,” and then enter “ESL” in keyword search)

Occupational language training

Occupational language training is specific to a particular occupation. It goes beyond basic language training and may include technical terminology. Some professional regulatory organizations or professional associations provide occupational language training.

English language requirements in Alberta

You can use this worksheet to record information about the English language requirements of your occupation.

1. What English language proficiency examination does my professional regulatory organization require?

2. What level of English is required for my occupation?

3. Do I need to know more technical English for my occupation?

4. Where can I get my English language skills assessed? (Be sure to include the name, address and telephone number and, if applicable, website address.)

5. Do I need more English language training?

6. What type of training do I need? (There are different types, such as LINC, ESL and occupational language training.)

7. Do I need help with clearer pronunciation?

8. Where can I get more English language training or training to improve pronunciation? (Be sure to include the name, address and telephone number and, if applicable, website address.)

Where to find more information

- Calgary area—immigrantservicescalgary.ca (click on “How We Can Help,” and then click “ESL Directory”)
- Edmonton and other select urban centres in Alberta—catholicsocialservices.ab.ca (click on “Find Programs by Service,” and then click “Immigration and Settlement Service”)
- Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)—alis.alberta.ca/edinfo (click on “Search by Program,” and then enter “ESL” in keyword search)

Finding Work in Alberta

Whether you are considering a new career path, working in a transitional job or moving toward getting your certification, these examples, checklists, ideas and other resources will support your search for employment.

Building your Canadian work experience

One of the biggest challenges newcomers face in the labour market is getting Canadian work experience. You may find yourself thinking, *I cannot get a job because I have no Canadian work experience. But I cannot get work experience because I cannot get a job.*

Yes, many employers are looking for people with Canadian work experience. It can be difficult to get work experience, especially if your English skills need improvement or if you do not know very many people yet. However, there are ways to start building your Canadian experience.

Full-time work and alternatives

If you are open to many possibilities, you may find it easier to obtain work in Alberta. There are many different work arrangements that have become increasingly common, including the following:

Part-time employment—Working for a single employer for less than 30 hours a week

Job-sharing—Two or more people sharing the same job for the same employer, with each person working part time

Self-employment—Developing, producing and marketing services in a one-person operation

Transitional jobs

More likely than not, you will begin your time working in Canada in a transitional job. A transitional job can be best described as a job you need in order to earn money while you are looking for other opportunities. Maybe you have decided to get Alberta certification in your occupation of training, but that's going to take some time. In the meantime, you still need to pay your bills. A transitional job—or jobs—can help you get through this period of change. Transitional jobs may seem like a step down from your former type of work. But they are often an important part of the settlement process for many immigrants. It may surprise you, but a transitional job can do more than just help you meet your basic needs. Transitional jobs can also lead to unexpected work opportunities.

“You have to have realistic expectations and plans. If you come in as an engineer, do not expect that your first job will be as an engineer. This is a new country. You have to be realistic about your expectations for employment and where you are going to start and where you are going to end up.”

A career counsellor who is also an immigrant

Transitional jobs can have some real advantages. A transitional job can help you

- get Canadian work experience
- get yourself known to employers who may be hiring for other jobs later on
- learn more about other work opportunities in a particular industry
- learn about Canadian workplace culture
- meet other people in the workforce and build up your network of contacts
- make new acquaintances and friends
- earn the money you need to care for yourself and your family
- improve your professional and conversational English skills

A transitional job can also help you impress employers. If you are already working and have proven yourself, employers may be more willing to hire you than to hire someone who is unemployed.

A qualifications assessment may help in your search for a transitional job. Employers may use a qualifications assessment to help them understand the educational credentials presented by a job applicant. You can attach an assessment certificate to your resumé when you apply for employment. Qualifications assessments will not automatically lead to work, but they can help demonstrate your qualifications to Alberta employers.

Where to find more information

See the official Immigrate to Alberta website, under the Working in Alberta tab, for information on how to work in your occupation and finding a job.

albertacanada.com/immigration

1-877-427-6419 (toll-free in Alberta)

780-427-6419 (outside Alberta; long-distance charges apply)

Oscar—A transitional job can lead to a new direction



Oscar was a business school graduate who managed a large food processing plant in his home country of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He had tremendous responsibilities but often felt like he had little or no control over his daily work. When Oscar first came to Alberta, his first job was as a manager for an apartment building. He intended to work his way back into administration and only intended to stay at his job until a better opportunity arose. He was going to take business courses at night and also improve his English skills.

Oscar ended up taking several English upgrading courses but not the business classes. Somewhere along the way, he discovered that he liked being a building manager. Not only was he more independent and less stressed, but he was also able to solve problems daily and interact with many different people.

Oscar has been the building manager for six years and is much more satisfied than he was in his former occupation. Because he was open to new possibilities, Oscar turned a temporary solution into a positive change.

Volunteer work

Another way to start getting Canadian work experience is to volunteer. People from all kinds of backgrounds give their time and skills to help others. You may feel that you cannot afford the time to volunteer. After all, you do not get paid to volunteer. You are busy settling in Alberta and are already spending a lot of time doing other things. Try to think of volunteering as an investment in yourself as well as others. You can help other people by giving your time, and you can also help yourself.

Volunteering can help you

- get valuable Canadian work experience to put on your resumé
- demonstrate the skills you already have
- practise your English language skills
- learn new skills
- meet people and make connections that may help you get paid work
- try career ideas by working in fields that interest you
- demonstrate your maturity to future employers

- gain confidence in your abilities
- get a Canadian work reference

Many organizations use volunteers to get important work done, including

- community organizations and groups
- cultural organizations
- volunteer centres
- immigrant-serving agencies
- places of worship
- schools and other educational institutions
- hospitals and health authorities

Look around your community for opportunities to volunteer. You never know where it may lead!

Where to find more information

The following tip sheets, available at alis.alberta.ca/tips, describe the many benefits that volunteering offers people as a career-building strategy for gaining experience, adding new skills, making contacts and researching career ideas.

Volunteering: Putting Your Volunteer Experience to Work

Volunteering: 6 Ways Volunteering Can Boost Your Career

George—Volunteering to build Canadian work experience



George recently arrived in Alberta from the United States after growing up in Sudan. He needed Canadian work experience but was not sure where to start. He talked to his counsellor at an immigrant-serving agency, and she suggested that he volunteer. Given his educational background in business, his skill with numbers and forms, and the fact that his English language skills were excellent, the counsellor thought that George would enjoy volunteering to help people prepare their tax forms. George took a short training course that helped volunteers learn the rules. Under the supervision of the program manager, he spent about a month helping people fill out their income tax returns. He was not paid but met some new people, had fun and got some work experience to put on his resumé. George also felt good knowing his volunteer skills helped people.

Making connections by networking

One of the most effective ways to find work in Alberta is networking. Through networking, you can get support for your job search. More importantly, you can learn about job openings, especially those that are not posted, advertised or made public.

“Look beyond your immediate community and get integrated. You should get information from people who know. Just because someone else in your community could not get certified or could not get the work they wanted does not mean you cannot. It is very individual. This is a country where there are lots of resources. Friends and family are just one area.”

An immigrant who has been both a counsellor and a policy analyst

What is networking?

Networking is an organized way to make links from the people you know to the people they know. It is a process of linking contacts together to form a “net” of personal contacts that can provide support and information.

Networking involves asking people for advice, information and referrals to others. You can network anywhere and any time you are talking to people. Your circle of friends, acquaintances, counsellors and advice-givers can help you connect with many others who may be able to help you find the information you need.

How to network when you are new to Alberta

There are many ways to network, both formal and informal. Ease into it by talking to the people around you. You might chat with the other parents sitting beside you at your child’s school event. Or perhaps there is a coffee gathering at your place of worship. Your new neighbour may work in an industry or occupation that interests you or may know someone you should talk to. You will never know until you ask.

People whose work involves a lot of contact with other people can be particularly helpful. Get to know your community and the people in it. Teachers, counsellors, religious leaders, health-care professionals and community leaders are good possibilities. Be sure to talk to anyone you know in these fields and tell them about your skills and work search. They may have heard about a job opening, and you could be the right person for it. Visit an immigrant-serving agency as soon as you can to make connections to other people in the community.

“My advice to new immigrants trying to get work? Get out and network with as many different kinds of people as you can. There are so many places you can network: with others who work in the same occupation as you, with people who are from the same country, with your cultural group or with people in your neighbourhood. If you have school-age children, get to know the other parents. You never know who they know.”

Kathryn, a physician who emigrated from South Africa

Networking tips

- On a sheet of paper, list all of the people you know. Do not worry about how well you know them. Write down what you know about each person. Include their contact information, such as address, telephone number and email address. You can even make a note of how you know them (for example, “Gina’s friend”). If you know, also write down what they do for a living. This list can help you identify possible contacts for use later on. Keep adding to the list as you meet more people. You will soon have a long list of people in your network.
- Tell anyone and everyone that you are looking for career and employment information and/or job leads. Ask for their help. Ask your friends, relatives and acquaintances to watch for any opportunities that might interest you.
- Review your list of all the people you know. Decide which ones to contact first. Have a business card made up that briefly describes your qualifications. Include your name, telephone and fax numbers, and email address.
- Make your information request specific. Tell people exactly what you need to know and describe the type of people you need to meet. Describe the kind of job you are looking for and your qualifications.
- Ask for referrals. If the people you speak to do not have the information you need, ask them to refer you to others who might.
- Keep at it. If your contacts do not have the information, ask whether they know anyone else who does.
- When you talk to people, give them a business card. They can then contact you if they hear something that might be helpful to you. Business cards are a way to show that you are serious about promoting yourself. You can create business cards on a computer at home. For a more professional look, have business cards printed at an office supply store that will print a large number of cards for a reasonable price.

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Alexandra—The power of networking



Alexandra emigrated from the United States to Alberta because her new husband has family here. Before she arrived, she had a two-year diploma from a business college and was well on her way to a successful career in banking. She had already received her Canadian residency card and Social Insurance Number (SIN), which legally entitled her to work in Alberta. Alexandra was anxious to start work.

Happily, that's when an opportunity arose. Her husband's aunt regularly attended an exercise class and asked Alexandra if she wanted to come along for fun and to meet some other women. Alexandra was a bit nervous but agreed. Not only did she enjoy the socializing and exercise, she also learned that one of the other women worked for a local bank. Alexandra mentioned that she was looking for work, and the bank worker said she would give her name to her bank manager. She also gave the manager's name

to Alexandra to use in her cover letter. A few days later, Alexandra talked to another woman in the class. She offered to help her write her resumé and cover letter. Alexandra made changes to these documents and included them with her application form to the bank. She got an interview and was hired about two weeks later.

Through her husband's aunt, Alexandra created a network for herself by talking to many different people and making new connections. She was nervous at first but realized that people are usually happy to help and share their expertise. Now that she has a job, Alexandra plans on making more connections and building her networking skills. She's also looking forward to a time when she can help other people with their networking.

Finding work opportunities

The visible job market includes jobs posted on the Internet or advertised in local newspapers, on job boards and in other publicly accessible places. The challenge in finding work is that most jobs are part of the hidden job market; that is, they are not advertised. In fact, some people say that about 80 per cent of positions are never advertised anywhere. People who use creative means to find work often find they are more successful than those who stick to just a few work search methods.

Where to find more information

There are many places to find information about jobs. A great place to start is the Job Postings section of the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website at alis.alberta.ca/jobpostings. You can also check job posting websites that are run by private companies, organization websites, government websites and employment agencies. Newspapers also have career sections.

Promoting yourself to employers

Knowing how to look for work is only one part of getting a job. You also need to use several other tools to promote yourself, your skills and your qualifications to employers. You are probably familiar with most of these tools, such as resumés and cover letters. Maybe you have used them in a different way. Some may be completely new to you.

Resumés

A resumé is a typed summary of your qualifications and work experience that quickly draws an employer's attention to your education, skills and experience. It is a marketing tool designed to get you invited to an interview. In Alberta, it should include the following information:

- your name and address (including postal code), email contact and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day
- statements about your skills and accomplishments

Translations

You may have to include copies—or in some cases originals—of your credentials with your resumé. If they are not in English, have these documents translated well in advance of applying for any positions. Translations can take days, weeks or even months depending on how busy a translation service is or how complex your information is.

Immigrant-serving agencies may be able to assist with document translation. To find an immigrant-serving agency near you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753 toll-free, or 780-422-4266 in Edmonton, or visit humanservices.alberta.ca/newcomer-services (click on "Settlement Services").

- names and addresses of former employers, dates of employment and duties performed
- names and addresses of schools and training institutions you have attended, dates of attendance and credentials earned

Sample resumé— Before and after

On the following pages are two sample resumés. They do not belong to real people. One is a resumé as it looked "before," that is, when a skilled immigrant (a mechanical engineer in his country) first arrived in Canada. The second sample is how the resumé looked "after" the individual learned how to prepare a resumé for an Alberta employer. These "before" and "after" resumés are examples only. However, they help demonstrate how international resumés can be changed to better demonstrate skills and experience to Alberta employers.

Take a look at the two resumés. Using the resumé checklist on page 42 as a guide, answer the following questions:

- How well does the first resumé meet the typical requirements of an effective resumé in Alberta?
- How well does the second resumé meet these requirements?
- Can you see what is different?

Resumé #1 BEFORE (used outside Canada)

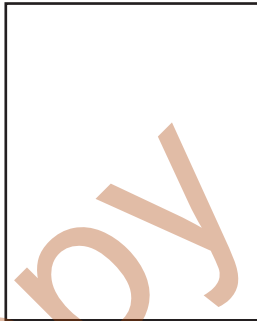
NAME:

Registered Mechanical Engineer

Registration No.:

Mailing address: Apt. 99, 123 Main Street, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Tel. No. 12345657-89 (Home country telephone number)



PERSONAL DATA

Birthplace Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Age 30 years old
Sex Male
Nationality Saudi
Civil status Married
Birthdate April 14, 1983
Spouse's name Khadija
Religion Muslim
Height 5' 10"
Weight 162 lb

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Level	Name of school	Date grad.	Course
College	ABC University	April 2005	BSME
Secondary	DEF High School	2000	

TRAINING ATTENDED

Computer Aided Design 1 Institute
Refinery Oil Movement Course Company

RESUMÉ OF WORK EXPERIENCES

Position: Piping Supervisor
Company: Engineering Co. Ltd.

Inclusive Dates
February 16, 2009
to May 12, 2011

Project
Central desert development
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Duties & Responsibilities
Supervise the sub-contractor shop pre-fabrication works of pipe spools/pipe supports.

Position: Piping Supervisor
Company: Industrial Co. Ltd.

Inclusive Dates
March 23, 2008
to December 22, 2008

Project
Co-generation power plant
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Duties & Responsibilities
Supervise/implement (shop pre-fabrication and field installation) piping works.

Position: Field Mechanical Supervisor
Company: EnerWorks Construction & Development Corporation

Inclusive Dates
February 16, 2007
to January 12, 2008

Project
Power Plants Project
Amman, Jordan

Duties & Responsibilities
Supervise the fabrication and installation of piping for fire protection and plumbing. Work with client regarding pipe routing variations.

Position: Field Supervisor
Company: Construction Corporation

Inclusive Dates
November 12, 2005
to December 12, 2007

Project
Area Telephone Development Program (30 sites)
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Duties & Responsibilities
Supervise the installation of water supply and plumbing system.

Resumé #2 AFTER (rewritten for Alberta employers)

Name

#123, 11111 - 23 Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta
T9H 4V9

Telephone: (780) 000-0000
Email: xxxxxxxxx@email.address

Employment Objective

To obtain a position as a piping drafter

Summary of Achievements and Qualifications

- Alberta mechanical engineering technologist graduate of requalification program for internationally trained mechanical engineers
- Six years of professional work experience in construction industry (power/petrochemical plants); work included project field supervision and engineering of large and small projects
- Technologist-in-Training Member of Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET)
- Appropriate knowledge of codes and standards, including ASME XIII, API 650 and TEMA
- Confident with Microsoft Office 2010 (Word and Excel) and AutoCAD 2012
- Dependable, motivated and organized worker who learns new procedures quickly, meets schedules and is able to work under extreme time pressure
- Excellent communication skills; patient and tactful when dealing with difficult situations

Relevant Employment History

Piping Supervisor

2009–2011

Engineering Co. Ltd., Central Desert Development, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

- Worked as a member of the project management team (pipe spools and pipe support section)
- Controlled and oversaw the subcontractor fabrication work to ensure the availability and correctness of fabricated materials required in the field
- Involved in implementing major piping works equivalent to about 77,000 kg of fabricated pipe supports and more than 120,000 dia-inch of weld joints

Piping Supervisor

2008

Industrial Co. Ltd., Cogeneration Power Plant, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

- Designed installation/erection of carbon/stainless steel and alloy piping into the pipe racks/mechanical equipment

Field Mechanical Supervisor

2007–2008

EnerWorks Construction & Development Corporation,
Power Plants Project, Amman, Jordan

- Led a team of 35 people in completing piping fabrication and installation works for the simultaneous construction of four separate geothermal power plants, ranging from 15 to 30 MW capacities
- Designed lifting gear used in the safe and successful rigging/mounting of the 70,000 kg EGCT steam turbine set from the flatbed trailer to its foundation; was commended by the client

Field Supervisor

2005–2007

Construction Corporation, Area
Telephone Development Program, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

- Installed all piping works in the simultaneous and fast-paced construction of 30 telephone buildings in six areas

Education and Continuing Professional Development

Graduate of special integration program for engineers

Jan–Oct 2012

Main subjects include Productivity Improvement, Introduction to Design, Machine Design, Hydraulics, AutoCAD 2012, Technical Vocabulary and Professional Communication

Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering
ABC University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

2001–2005

How do the before and after resumés compare?

The following table shows some of the major differences between the two resumés. There are also other differences, but these are the most important ones. Did you notice these differences? What changes might you make to your own resumé?

Information that you do not have to give employers

The Alberta Human Rights Commission says that no employer can require a job applicant to provide any information concerning race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status.

In Alberta, you do not have to include this information in your resumé or job application form. As well, a potential employer cannot ask you to give this information during a job interview. To contact the commission, see the **Resources** section.

Resumé #1 (Before)	Resumé #2 (After)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very difficult to see what the individual actually did or what he wants to do. • Information is spread throughout the resumé. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications are listed in a new section called Summary of Achievements and Qualifications. • It is right at the beginning of the resumé so employers will see it right away.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes personal information on age, marital status, religion, etc. • Includes a personal photograph. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of Alberta human rights laws, personal information on age, marital status, religion, height, weight, etc., has been omitted. • The photograph has also been removed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has no Employment Objective section. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Employment Objective as a simple statement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment history is listed at the end. • Position descriptions are vague. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment History is listed right after Summary of Achievements and Qualifications. • Position descriptions are more detailed and include actual skills using action words such as led, designed and worked.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists all academic background from kindergarten through university. • Education located at beginning of resumé. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary educational information about elementary and high school has been omitted. • Only lists the most relevant educational background and places it toward end of resumé. • Includes professional development completed in Canada.

Your resumé checklist

Use this checklist as you prepare your resumé. Ask yourself whether your resumé meets these standards. If it does not, keep working on it until it does. Most employers only take a few seconds to look at a resumé for the first time. You do not have long to make a good impression!

- Is it written specifically for the position you are applying for based on the research you have done?
- Does it name the skills you have that are related to the position?
- Is it short and to the point? (Busy employers will not take the time to read through a lot of information.)
- Have you listed your name, address (including postal code), email address and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day? (Do not include a photograph or information such as height, weight, sex or state of health. Also, do not put the title Resumé at the top, or date or sign your resumé.)
- Is it well organized and readable? Do key points and headings stand out? Is your eye drawn immediately to the information you want employers to notice first—your most relevant accomplishments and achievements?
- Have you described how your work benefited your former employers? (e.g. you improved sales by a certain percentage, you made procedures more efficient, you developed an innovative program or you completed all your projects on schedule)
- Is the language clear, simple and concise? Does every statement emphasize a skill or ability? Have you eliminated unnecessary words or sentences?
- Is all of the information relevant and positive? (Never include anything negative.) Does everything you say about your qualifications relate to the requirements of the type of work you are applying for?
- Does every item start with a verb? (Avoid the pronoun “I” and inexpressive phrases such as “I was responsible for...” or “My duties involved...”)
- Is the information accurate? (Do not exaggerate or misrepresent yourself—most employers check. On the other hand, do not sell yourself short by being too humble.)
- Are you sure there are no spelling, grammar or typing errors? (Use the computer program’s spell check and ask someone to proofread your draft.)
- Is it printed on good quality white or off-white standard, business-size bond paper? Are the margins at least one inch wide?
- Does it look professional and inviting to read? Are items listed in point form? Is there enough white space on the page?

Cover letters

A resumé in Alberta should always be accompanied by a cover letter. You use a cover letter to attract employers' attention and tell them why you are right for a job or organization. A cover letter is a typed formal business letter that should be no longer than about three or four paragraphs. It talks about your strengths and what makes you a good candidate for the job. It does not just repeat what is in your resumé.

Your cover letter checklist

Use this checklist as you prepare your cover letter.

- ❑ Clearly identify the job you are applying for and state how you learned about it (for example, "Carl Jones, your customer service manager, suggested I write to you about..."). If you are responding to an online job posting or newspaper advertisement, refer to the source and note the job competition number if there is one.
- ❑ Tailor your letter to the requirements of the job. Show your awareness of the company's objectives and activities and show how your skills relate to the employer's needs. Generic letters and photocopies will not make a good impression.
- ❑ Be brief and to the point. Your letter should be no more than one page long. Use simple and direct language, even if you are applying for a technical or professional position (applications may be screened by people who do not work in your field).
- ❑ Try to make your letter reflect your personality. It is nice to let a little of yourself come through in your letter. Do not write anything that you would not actually say.
- ❑ Anticipate any questions the employer may have and answer them. Describe where or how well you would fit into the organization. Show how your international training and experience can benefit the employer.
- ❑ Close by saying that you are available for an interview or to discuss other opportunities. If appropriate, set a date after which you will call the employer to follow up.
- ❑ Check your letter very carefully for any spelling, punctuation, grammar or typing errors.

Sample cover letter format

Use a standard business letter format, such as the sample provided, for your cover letter. Alberta employers prefer documents that are easy to read, so use white or ivory stationery and sign your letter in blue or black ink.

In your cover letter, try to anticipate any concerns the employer may have and respond to them. If possible, turn the concern into a positive. For example, "Your customers will benefit from the service I can provide in three languages."

Sample cover letter

Your Return Address
Community, Province
Postal Code

Date

Employer's Name
Position Title
Company Name
Street Address or Box Number
Community, Province
Postal Code

Dear Ms. (or Mr.) Employer's Name: *(If you are unable to get a contact name, the greeting line may be left out.)*

Tell the reader which job you are interested in and why. Briefly let the reader know that you are familiar with the company and its operations.

Point out your key experience (including volunteer or school experience) that qualifies you for the position. Keep your paragraphs short.

State that a resumé or application form is enclosed and request an interview.

Sincerely,

Your Name

(If you're sending your resumé in hard copy, leave three lines for your signature before your name. If you're sending it electronically, you don't need to leave space before your name.)

Enclosure

Do you need help writing your resumé or cover letter?

There are many places you can get help preparing a resumé, cover letter or other document. Many immigrant-serving agencies, Alberta Works Centres and community agencies offer assistance with these tasks. They may also have computers and photocopiers that you can use. If you already have a resumé, you can have it reviewed to help you tailor it for a specific position. Submit an electronic copy to the e-Resumé Review service through the Alberta Career Information Hotline on the ALIS website at alis.alberta.ca/resume. Other resources, such as websites, publications and workshops, are also available.

References

Put together a list of people who are willing to provide references for you, along with their contact information. Contact information will include names, position titles, telephone numbers and addresses. Always find out whether the people on your list are willing to provide a positive reference and get their permission to use their name. Make sure they can verify the skills you have chosen to emphasize.



"If you create a portfolio, you can answer the question 'Why should I hire you?' Immigrants with international qualifications can use portfolios to market themselves—they're a great way to showcase experience. Portfolios can also be a great tool for working with your professional association. Some of our clients have their portfolios on DVD or in a book. Some have pictures. This way, they can create a storyline, especially when they have no paper records. It helps immigrants create a presence through storytelling. You have to be able to communicate what you can do. Organize your portfolio so it can tell your story."

A counsellor from an immigrant-serving agency

Most Alberta employers will not contact a reference in another country, so try to include the name of a Canadian reference. If you volunteer, your reference could be whoever is in charge of volunteers. If you work in a transitional job, your supervisor could be your reference. If you took a training program, your instructor could provide a reference. Your counsellor at an immigrant-serving agency could also act as a reference.

You may want to attach a copy of a letter of reference from an employer outside Canada if it supports the work you are applying for. Be aware, however, that most Alberta employers give more weight to a reference they can talk to rather than a letter. It is not recommended that you use personal friends or family as your references.

Portfolios

You may also want to put together a portfolio. Portfolios are a particularly useful way to show employers in Alberta how your training and work experience relate to their organization. A portfolio is a portable collection of items that demonstrates your skills. You take your portfolio with you when you visit potential employers or go to an interview. It is a way to support your achievements and prove you have the skills described in your resumé. You decide what describes you best and therefore what goes into your portfolio. Some of the things you can put in a portfolio include

- certificates
- awards
- things you have written or created
- letters of commendation
- newsletter articles written about you or by you
- performance appraisals
- copies of presentations and publications
- pictures or brochures about projects completed on your own or with others

You can organize your portfolio using a file folder with pockets or a binder with dividers and pages in plastic sleeves. You can also create it digitally on a computer flash drive or DVD. When you go to an interview, use your portfolio to highlight your skills and accomplishments. For example, you might say, “I can answer that question by showing you the brochure I created for a program I developed.” Before you go to an interview, research the employer and customize your portfolio.

“When I first got here, I carried my papers in a plastic bag everywhere I went. Now, I use a briefcase!”

Maria, an emigrant from Guatemala

Job interviews

Job interviews are an important part of getting employment. If you know what to expect in an interview with an Alberta employer, you can be prepared and feel confident.

In Alberta, a job interview is a business meeting—a discussion of your skills and how they support the employer’s work. Your first task is to show you have the skills the employer needs to get the job done. Your second task is to find out whether you are interested in working with that employer. You should be prepared to ask questions as well as answer them.

Preparing for a job interview

As you get ready for a job interview, be strategic and think like an employer. Employers have to consider the risks of hiring new employees, including the following:

- Do they have the skills to do the work accurately and efficiently?
- Can they provide the kind of customer service that keeps customers coming back?
- How well can they communicate with others?
- What experience can they bring to the job?
- How well will the rest of the team be able to work with a new person?
- Will they be reliable?
- How much training will they need?

Your interview checklist

Use the following checklist before you go to an interview. It can help you anticipate employer needs and minimize the risk in hiring you.

- ❑ Review your resumé and the information you have gathered about the employer and the work. If you have not already researched these things, do! Use the research techniques and ideas presented in the Doing Your Research section.
- ❑ Prepare a list of references.
- ❑ Anticipate potential interview questions and prepare answers. Practise your answers until you feel confident. You could also get a friend or other person to act out an interview situation with you. Use your practice time to improve both your verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Your posture, facial expressions and gestures should communicate a positive attitude.
- ❑ Prepare your questions. What do you know about the job and the organization? You may want to ask questions about the company's goals and objectives, the working conditions or the people you would be working with. Do not ask questions about pay and benefits until after you have been offered a job.
- ❑ Make a good first impression by deciding what you will wear and planning ahead so you get to the interview 10 to 15 minutes early. Look neat, clean and well groomed. Dress the way you expect the interviewer to dress. Visit the organization a day or two earlier to see what other employees are wearing so you know how to dress appropriately.
- ❑ Allow plenty of time for the interview. Your interview may take longer than you expect. Do not make other plans too close to the time of your interview or pay for limited parking time.

Who conducts interviews?

When you accept an interview, ask for the names and positions of the people who will be interviewing you. Doing so will give you a better idea of what to expect. In Alberta, interviews are usually conducted by the following people:

- managers
- supervisors
- human resources personnel
- third party interviewers, such as representatives of a company that has been hired to recruit for the position

You will often be interviewed by more than one person. For example, a panel interview could include a manager, a human resources representative and another person from the same branch of the company. Be prepared to answer questions from each person.

"Albertans are very polite. Just because an employer is nice to you during an interview, do not assume the job is yours. Alberta employers treat everyone they interview the same way. There is no way to know whether you have the job during the actual interview. You will have to wait until everyone has been interviewed, and then the employer will contact you."

**A counsellor at an
immigrant-serving agency**

Tips for making a good first impression

Most interviewers in Alberta form an impression of job applicants in the first minute or two. Pay attention to how you appear and what you do when you first arrive. You want to do your best to make a good first impression. Here are some tips for making a good first impression with an employer in Alberta. You can also use these tips for other kinds of interviews and meetings:

- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early and let the receptionist know you have arrived.
- Do not chew gum or drink coffee. (It is OK to accept a glass of water if you are offered one once you are in the interview room.)
- Be pleasant, honest and sincere with everyone in the office. Interviewers may ask other staff members for their opinions.
- When you first meet the interviewer(s), introduce yourself, shake hands firmly and make eye contact.
- Remain standing until you are offered a chair and then sit up straight.
- Take a copy of your resumé and cover letter, the job posting or advertisement (if there was one), your portfolio and any other relevant documents with you.
- Follow the interviewer's lead. The interviewer may spend a few moments just chatting with you. If so, listen to what he or she has to say and try to say something positive. Be prepared to move quickly into the main part of the interview when the employer is ready.

How to talk about your skills to Alberta employers

Earlier, we asked you to complete the skills checklist on page 22. Go back to that exercise and look at your results. Look at the skills you checked off and your main skills checklists. Use this information to talk about your skills to employers. For example, if an employer asks you about your strengths, you can list some of the things you wrote down for “the 10 skills you do best” or “the 10 skills you enjoy doing most” (see page 23). If you are asked about your weaknesses, you can choose something from “the 10 skills you would like to or need to develop.” By saying you want to further develop something, you can turn potential weaknesses into strengths. Look for opportunities that allow you to minimize any concerns an employer may have about hiring you.

Typical interview questions

It's impossible to know for sure what questions you will face in an interview. But generally speaking, you can expect Alberta employers to ask the following sorts of questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What skills would you bring to this job?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What five words describe you best?
- What kind of working environment do you prefer?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- What did you like about your last job?
- Tell us about a situation you did not handle well and what you learned from it.
- Why should we hire you?

There are many other questions an employer can ask you, including questions about your reaction to certain work situations or your plans for the future. Whatever questions you are asked, you will find them easier to answer if you have identified your skills and learned about the job and employer.

Know your answers

Write down and practise your answers to possible questions before you go to your interview. To make a good impression in a job interview in Alberta, do more than tell employers what you can do. Describe situations in which you have demonstrated what you can do. For example, instead of saying “I have excellent communication skills,” say “I successfully planned and executed a strategic communications plan to tell over 300 staff about a new company product.”

Tips for answering questions

- Identify the connections between your capabilities and the employer’s needs even if they seem obvious to you.
- Avoid *yes* and *no* answers. Think about what the interviewer is trying to find out and respond to that.
- Avoid talking about your family, friends or any other personal matters. Focus on giving work-related information.
- Use action words to describe what you can do. Use words such as *achieved*, *delivered*, *implemented*, *improved*, *established*, *recommended*, *promoted*, *solved*, *strengthened*, *initiated* and *delegated*.
- Use lots of strong, clear words to describe yourself. Such words could include *adaptable*, *courteous*, *creative*, *logical*, *disciplined*, *knowledgeable*, *people-oriented* or *versatile*. These are just some examples. Use the words that describe you best.
- If the interviewer asks more “open” questions (e.g. Why are you interested in this position?), use this as an opportunity to lead the conversation toward a discussion of your strongest qualifications as they relate to the job.

- If you do not understand a question, politely ask the interviewer to ask the question another way. If you do not know the answer, say so.
- Let your interest and enthusiasm show. Take your cues from the interviewers about how formal or informal to be and let your personality come through.

When asked about weaknesses, you might respond as follows:

Example #1: “Weaknesses? My work experience is all in the textile manufacturing industry. But I can use my leadership and analytical skills anywhere.”

Example #2: “I have a lot to learn about Canadian ways, but I am disciplined and versatile. I also learn quickly. I have a strong Canadian support group, and I’m taking some training to improve my English skills. People do not have a problem understanding me.”

Example #3: “My training and previous experience were not in Canada, and some might see this as a problem rather than an asset to the organization. But I can bring new perspectives and different ways of doing things to the job.”



“The biggest thing is maintaining your professionalism. Even if you have been turned down for a job a thousand times, treat every interaction as an opportunity and act like it is your very first job interview.”

A trainer from an immigrant-serving agency

After the interview

After the interview, it is a good idea to follow up by thanking the interviewer(s) for their time and consideration. You can do so through a brief letter, email or telephone call. Following up can set you apart from other applicants and may remind the employer about you and your strongest qualifications.

Where to find more information

The job search process does not end with the first interview. If you want to know about other aspects of the job search such as follow-up interviews, negotiating and accepting job offers, there are many other resources and tools to help you. These include Alberta Works Centre staff, the Alberta Career Information Hotline, the ALIS website and Human Services publications. Some immigrant-serving agencies can also assist you with your resumé, cover letter, interviews and other parts of the job search.

You can download or order a copy of the following Human Services publication by visiting alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Advanced Techniques for Work Search

This workbook helps adults improve their work search strategies. It includes techniques to help you sell your skills in today’s competitive job market, plus marketing tools such as portfolios, proposals and resumé.

Self-employment: Is it for you?

In some occupations in Alberta, most people are self-employed. For example, many dentists, lawyers, optometrists and physicians set up professional corporations or joint partnerships and operate their practices as businesses. People certified in a trade often go into business for themselves and offer services related to their trade. A certified electrician might start an electrical contracting company, or a carpenter might start a home renovation business. In other occupations, relatively few people are self-employed. For example, most chemists, foresters, medical laboratory technologists and nurses work for publicly funded institutions or private companies. Other newcomers to Alberta start completely different businesses.

Where to find more information

If you are interested in starting a business in Alberta, check out the Self-Employment and Small Business section of the ALIS website at alis.alberta.ca/self-employment. You can also read the Human Services publication *Self-Employment: Is It for Me?* This publication outlines the benefits and challenges of self-employment and examines the motivation, skills, traits and background of successful entrepreneurs. You can obtain a copy by visiting alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Some immigrant-serving agencies offer workshops or other assistance for immigrants who may want to start a small business. Check with the agency in your community for more information.

On the Job in Alberta

Workplace culture includes practical details, such as hours of work and what to wear to work. It also includes ways that people work together and communicate, as well as employers' values and employees' rights and responsibilities. This section talks about what to expect when you are on the job in Alberta.

Alberta's workplace culture and etiquette

Fitting into your workplace

Alberta's workplaces may be very different from those in your home country. There may be different behaviours, practices and manners. People may have different expectations. There may be different ways of working. Ask your supervisor or another employee if you are uncertain about directions or procedures. Whatever situation you face, you will probably have to spend some time adapting to your new work environment.

Organizational charts

Some workplaces—especially larger ones—have an organizational chart. An organizational chart is a diagram that shows who does what in the organization. It gives titles of employees as well as the branch or section they work for or supervise. Organizational charts also show how the parts of an organization fit together. Some organizational charts show everyone in the organization. Others only show those in upper management or executive positions. Organizational charts can help you see where you fit into the organization.

"At our employment workshops, we talk about eye contact, handshakes, gender issues, age issues—all those protocol things. Some issues are hard to discuss, for example, speaking English too slowly. Employers want to know how their current team members will work with new employees who are immigrants. If immigrants attend the workshops, they should do OK..."

An employment counsellor at an immigrant-serving agency

Hours of work

Hours of work vary from workplace to workplace. Some organizations and industries have a work schedule from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. People may have weekends and evenings off. Other organizations, such as hospitals and factories, are open all the time, so they need people to work in shifts. Find out what the expected hours of work are and how the organization handles extra hours of work in unusual situations.

No matter what the hours are, always show up on time and work the full hours required. Alberta employers want workers who are reliable and do all that is expected of them. If you are going to be late for any reason, call

your direct supervisor and tell him or her why you will be late and when you will be coming to work. Expect to make up the lost time by staying late or working during your mealtime or other breaks.

Meeting new people

Albertans usually shake hands, smile and say, “How are you?” or “Pleased to meet you,” when they first meet someone in a business situation. In many Alberta workplaces, people call each other by their first names even when meeting for the first time. If the person is in a very high position in the organization, you may be required to address him or her more formally. It usually depends on the individual person. Some organizations may have a formal, businesslike atmosphere. However, many encourage a

relaxed and informal work site. If you are not sure, ask. You can also listen to how other people address each other and their supervisors and then decide how you will address them. Always be respectful.

Do you want to learn more about Canadian culture?

Some immigrant-serving agencies offer classes that provide basic information on Canadian culture, conventions, norms and values.


Dressing for work

Styles of dress vary from workplace to workplace. When you go to a job interview, observe how people in the organization are dressed. Some workplaces have dress requirements. For example, banks and law firms may require their staff to dress for business—suits, shirts, ties, dress pants and dress shoes for men, and suits, blouses, skirts or dress pants, pantyhose and dress shoes for women. If you are working in a skilled trade or outdoors, you may wear casual clothing such as denim pants and open-collared shirts. For safety reasons, you may be required to wear steel-toed boots, a hard hat or other protective equipment. Some workplaces use uniforms and name tags to identify staff. No matter what the workplace, it is important to be clean and well-groomed.

Strong scents and odours

Some workers may be allergic to or offended by strong scents such as perfume or men’s cologne, hairspray or other personal care products. Some workplaces have rules that disallow scents of any kind. Avoid wearing anything with a strong scent to work. Ask about any rules regarding scents and other odours that may irritate co-workers. Also, be aware that workplaces in Alberta prohibit smoking.

Sulma—A case of misunderstanding



Sulma immigrated to Alberta seven years ago. She took some upgrading and has been working as a licensed practical nurse (LPN) for a home care agency. She did most of her work caring for patients in their homes. But while she was in the office, Sulma felt that people were avoiding her, especially during lunchtime or during staff meetings. She often found herself sitting alone, cut off from her co-workers. It did not bother her at first, but over time, she started thinking that maybe her co-workers were avoiding her because she was from another country or because she had an accent. She began to feel more and more isolated. One day, however, someone at work took her aside for a talk. She told Sulma that her strong perfume was bothering the other employees and they found it hard to be near her because of the scent. Sulma was very surprised to hear this

but was also relieved. She realized that people were not avoiding her because they did not like her or were prejudiced. They were avoiding her because her perfume made them sneeze! Sulma stopped wearing the strong perfume to work and soon found herself with plenty of company.

Decision-making and reporting structures and teamwork

In larger organizations, reporting and decision-making structures tend to be more complex. Smaller workplaces tend to be less formal.

Generally speaking, managers make the major decisions in Alberta organizations. However, Alberta employers appreciate employees who have initiative and come up with new solutions. You can go to your supervisor to ask questions and get feedback. In the early days of your employment, you may need more supervision and direction from your supervisor. But as you gain more confidence and experience, you will probably become more comfortable with working independently and making decisions.

Most Alberta employers value teamwork. Many workplaces expect employees to work with others to achieve goals and complete tasks. Being on a team does not necessarily mean that you will be working with your co-workers every minute. However, by working on teams, people can solve problems they might not be able to solve on their own. Teamwork lets employees share experience, ideas and expertise and build positive relationships with one another. You may find yourself working on a team to do everyday tasks, or you may work with other employees on short-term projects. Whatever the case, working well with others is a valuable skill.

Managing conflict

An important skill in Alberta workplaces is managing conflict. It is normal for people who work together to disagree on things. The world would be very dull indeed if we all thought alike! However, some disagreements can lead to ongoing conflict. Employees who are able to resolve problems with the people they work with will be more successful in the workplace.

If you are having problems with someone you work with, it may seem easier just to leave things alone and say nothing. But unresolved conflict can lead to even bigger problems and make it difficult for people to work together effectively. Managing conflict involves looking at problems and coming to solutions that satisfy all the parties involved. Talking openly and honestly is

a big part of resolving conflict. So is negotiating. In these ways you can move past conflict and build positive working relationships.

What employers want

No matter what business they are in, employers are usually looking for certain qualities in their employees. Valued employees

- are prepared, pay attention and follow directions
- come to work willing to do the job
- have a positive attitude and show enthusiasm for their job
- ask questions if they do not understand
- are open to learning new personal and technical skills, which includes taking responsibility for mistakes
- are team players who work well with others to achieve a common goal
- take initiative to do something when they see that it needs to be done, instead of waiting for someone to ask them to do it
- dress appropriately for the type of work
- have good attendance records and show up for all of their scheduled shifts
- are on time, whether it is showing up for work, returning from breaks, going to staff meetings or completing tasks
- call if they will be late or cannot come to work—but do not abuse this privilege
- work safely and healthily
- come to work substance-free, by not using alcohol or drugs and making sure that any medications they may take do not interfere with their ability to do their job
- are honest and trustworthy
- are knowledgeable about the organization

Employees who have these qualities are often more confident in their ability to do their job well and have more job security. They are also more likely to be given opportunities, responsibilities or promotions.

Rights and responsibilities of workers in Alberta

There are laws in Alberta to ensure workplaces are healthy, safe and fair. Take some time to learn about Alberta's workplace laws by visiting alis.alberta.ca/workplace. You can read the Human Services publication *Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work*. If you are new to the Alberta workplace, this publication can help you find answers to questions about employment standards, health and safety, human rights and workers' compensation procedures. You can get a copy by visiting alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Employment standards

Employment standards are the minimum employment-related requirements for employers and employees in the workplace. In Alberta, our employment standards are contained in the Employment Standards Code and the Employment Standards Regulation. Through these laws, minimum standards of employment have been established for

- payment of earnings
- hours of work, rest periods and days of rest
- overtime and overtime pay
- vacations and vacation time
- general holidays and general holiday pay
- maternity and parental leave
- termination of employment
- employment of people under 18 years of age

Occupational health and safety

Occupational health and safety deals with the dangers and potential hazards that could affect your health or safety while you are working. In Alberta, there are laws to ensure that workplaces are safe. Under the law, employers must take the proper steps to ensure that their workplaces are free of these dangers and hazards. As an employee, you are also expected to help make your workplace safe.

Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta

If you have an accident on the job and are injured, you may be eligible for benefits through the Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta. Employers cover these benefits by paying into an insurance fund. You may receive these benefits if your accident causes you to miss work.

Human rights

In Alberta, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects workers from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, colour, gender, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, family status, source of income, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation. If employers discriminate against employees, then employees can file a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission within one year after the alleged incident. There is also protection for employees under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. This legislation applies to employees who work for certain employers, such as the federal government.

Unions

Some workers in Alberta are members of unions. Unions allow groups of workers to collectively negotiate wages, working conditions and other aspects of employment. Depending on your workplace, you may become a member of a union. If so, you will have to pay union fees or dues.

Amin—A possible case of discrimination



Despite working for the company for nearly two years, Amin, an immigrant from Morocco, was still classified as a “temporary worker.” This classification meant he was not entitled to the company benefits and could lose his job with little or no warning. He noticed that Caucasian workers employed for less time than him were given permanent or long-term jobs. They also earned a higher wage. Amin contacted the Alberta Human Rights Commission to see whether he should make a complaint.

Dermot—Learn what employment standards apply to you



Dermot worked at a restaurant soon after he arrived in Alberta. He was often called upon to work overtime, but his employer did not pay him for the extra time he worked. Instead of asking for the money he was owed, Dermot decided to find a job at another restaurant. Dermot felt that because he was a recent immigrant, he did not have the power to complain to his employer. Looking back, he knows the restaurant was in the wrong and he had a right to be paid his overtime. He would handle things differently now and probably talk to the employer about the pay. If his employer did not co-operate, Dermot would contact Employment Standards at Alberta Human Services.

Ways to keep developing yourself at work

Once you find a job, it is important to keep learning. Through lifelong learning, you can continue to develop your skills and enhance your ability to get work. Learning can also build your self-esteem and give you the confidence to pursue other goals in your life.

Learning to improve your professional English language skills

You can attend classes or take other training to improve your language skills, improve pronunciation or learn the technical terminology of your occupation. You can also take training to learn informal, conversational English rather than formal English.

Learning from your co-workers

The people you work with every day are an excellent source of information and expertise. The knowledge they share could be as simple as how the office telephones work or how to run the photocopier. Or it could be more complicated, such as how to use new software or computer equipment. If your co-workers are members of the same occupation as you, they can also help you get some technical expertise.

Co-workers can also help you to understand the culture and practices of the organization and Alberta’s workplaces.

Training available from your employer

Many employers in Alberta offer training to help their employees develop new skills and knowledge. Training can be in a variety of areas, such as computer training, supervisory training, training on equipment or training specific to a position. Some employers help their employees with English language training. As a new employee, you may be required to take some training as soon as you start your job. Talk to your employer about what kind of training is available for employees.

Training available from professional and trade organizations

Many professional and trade organizations offer or arrange learning opportunities for their members. Such opportunities could include conferences, seminars, information sessions and training. Check with your professional or trade organization for more information.

Find a mentor to help you at work

A mentor is someone willing to share experience, knowledge and wisdom with you. That person can be any age and can be your supervisor or co-worker. A mentor takes the time to help you learn about an occupation or job. He or she can also help you learn more about Canadian workplace culture and practices. Some occupations use mentors to help people who have just become members of that occupation.

Talk to your co-workers or supervisor and see if you can find a mentor at your workplace. Not only can you learn more about your work, you could also build a strong relationship with a colleague.

Learning to be healthy and safe on the job

It is also important to learn how to be safe and healthy on the job. Workplace safety does not just apply to people who work with things that are obviously risky, such as toxic chemicals or dangerous machinery. People who work in offices can also be exposed to unsafe and unhealthy things if they do not take the right steps or follow instructions. Office machinery can be dangerous if you are not careful. As an employee, you share some responsibility for ensuring that you work safely. Talk to your employers or supervisors about what you can do to be a health- and safety-conscious employee.

Where to find more information

You can get copies of the following Human Services publications by visiting alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Job Smart: Tips for Staying Employed

This guide features information about what employers are looking for in their employees. It includes self-assessment exercises, tips on problem solving and a list of community resources.

Let's Talk: A Guide to Resolving Workplace Conflicts

This publication is intended to help employees resolve workplace conflicts. It presents information on how to handle situations internally and where to get outside help.

"I tell my clients to set up sources of support—their church, school, cultural group. If you have a strong foundation of support, you will have the focus. If you have focus, you will be able to withstand the challenges."

An immigrant services worker

Focus on the Future

Settlement is a process. It can take a great deal of time to adjust to major changes in your personal, family, community and professional life. You may feel like you are starting all over again. In fact, some Canadian studies say that it can take an average of 10 years before immigrants who choose to are able to work again in their occupation of training.

Settling into your new life

As you adjust to your new life in Alberta, take the long view and remember that you will probably be more successful in managing your career if you get the help you need and plan. Build up supports in all parts of your life. Make connections that will sustain you. Get to know the people in your community. Learn to set both short-term and long-term goals in your personal and professional life. Celebrate your progress along the way. Most importantly, be patient with yourself. You have already come a long way to get to Alberta. But in many ways your journey is just beginning.

"Getting immigrants back into their occupations is a process that is going to take time. We have more highly educated people coming now than we ever have. I'm very encouraged. I was a speaker at a business symposium, and I was the fifth speaker. Everyone before me talked about the importance of immigration. I did not have anything left to say!"

The head of an immigrant-serving agency

Resources

This guide is one source of information. There are many other places you can get information and help.

Alberta Human Services

Alberta Human Services provides career and workplace information along with financial and health benefits, child support services and employment training to support Albertans in need. The department also provides programs and services to support workplaces that are safe, healthy, fair and stable. You can access the department's career, workplace and labour market information in one of three easy ways: click, call or come in.

Click

Alberta Learning Information Service alis.alberta.ca

The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website is Alberta's online source for career, education and jobs information, including

- **Alberta Work Search Online**—information, examples and activities to make the most of your work search using the Internet
- **CAREERinsite**—online activities to generate occupational options and develop an action plan
- **CERTinfo**—certification and registration requirements for regulated occupations and designated trades
- **EDinfo**—Alberta post-secondary schools and programs and distance-learning options in Western Canada

- **OCCinfo**—job descriptions, education requirements, salary information, employment and advancement opportunities, and projected growth data for more than 530 occupations
- **WAGEinfo**—wage and salary information by occupation, geographic area and industry group

Call

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Hotline staff can answer your questions about

- career planning
- educational options and funding
- occupational descriptions
- labour market information
- work search skills
- the workplace

1-800-661-3753 (toll-free)

780-422-4266 (Edmonton)

Come in

Alberta Works Centres

Alberta Works Centres across the province provide information on occupations, career options, ways to find work, education programs and funding. To locate a centre near you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline or visit alis.alberta.ca and scroll to "Career Services Near You."

Resources by topic

Assessments of qualifications

Assessments may be available from a variety of sources, including post-secondary institutions, associations, employers and private organizations.

Alberta Qualification Certificate Program

The Alberta Qualification Certificate Program is a Government of Alberta service for certification in the trades. It provides an opportunity for people to prove that their skills and experience meet the standards set for trade and occupational certification in Canada. Individuals who meet industry-established competencies in Alberta-designated trades or occupations are eligible to challenge Qualification Certificate exams. Upon successfully passing the exams, they receive an Alberta Qualification Certificate or an Alberta Occupational Certificate. For more information, contact an Apprenticeship and Industry Training office near you.

tradesecrets.alberta.ca

International Qualifications Assessment Service

The International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) is available from the Government of Alberta. IQAS assesses academic credentials from other countries and issues assessment certificates that show how those credentials compare to educational standards in Canada. **It is a mail-in service only.**

eae.alberta.ca/iqas

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta, and then enter 780-427-2655.)

780-427-2655 (Edmonton)

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is used to evaluate skills and knowledge learned outside of a formal learning environment. Alberta Enterprise and Advanced

Education is responsible for advancing PLAR in Alberta. Contact the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer for more information about PLAR programs.

eae.alberta.ca/plar

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta, and then enter 780-422-9021.)

780-422-9021 (Edmonton)

Bridging programs

Bridging programs help immigrants acquire the additional skills and training they need to successfully undertake their occupation in Alberta. Several community organizations work with educational institutions in Alberta to offer bridging programs to immigrants.

humanservices.alberta.ca (Search with the keyword “bridging” for immigrant bridging programs.)

Career planning

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation

A Guide for Midlife Career Moves

Women in Non-Traditional Occupations: Stories to Inspire

English as a Second Language assessment and training

Language assessment and referral centres in Calgary and Edmonton provide English language skills assessments and referrals to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment, Referral Centre

immigrantservicescalgary.ca

403-262-2656 (Calgary)

Language Assessment, Referral and Counselling

catholicsocialservices.ab.ca

780-424-3545 (Edmonton)

You may also be able to receive assessment and training from ESL organizations, volunteer tutor adult literacy programs and Community Adult Learning Councils. For more information, contact your nearest immigrant-serving agency or the Alberta Career Information Hotline.

Entrepreneurship

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Employee or Contractor? Know the Difference

Self-Employment: Is It for Me?

Alberta Self-Employment Program

This program offers business startup training and coaching for qualified clients.

humanservices.alberta.ca/selfemploymentprogram

1-866-644-5135 (toll-free)

780-644-5135 (Edmonton)

Alberta Women Entrepreneurs

This organization offers advice, business skills development, finance and networking opportunities for women in business.

awebusiness.com

1-800-713-3558 (toll-free)

The Business Link

This organization offers information and services for Alberta entrepreneurs and small businesses.

canadabusiness.ca/Alberta

1-800-272-9675 (toll-free)

780-422-7722 (Edmonton)

403-221-7800 (Calgary)

Rocket Fuel for Your Biz

This website offers online, self-paced learning modules that guide you through the entrepreneurial process.

alis.alberta.ca/rocketfuel

Family supports

Becoming a Parent in Alberta

This publication provides information on maternity, parental leave and employment insurance benefits.

humanservices.alberta.ca/es (In the left-hand menu, click on “Publications.”)

Alberta Adult and Child Health Benefit

This program helps with health-care needs of families with limited incomes.

humanservices.alberta.ca/hb

1-877-469-5437 (toll-free)

780-427-6848 (Edmonton)

Alberta Child Care Subsidy Program

This program provides financial assistance for child care to families with preschool children.

humanservices.alberta.ca/childcaresubsidy

1-866-714-5437 (toll-free)

780-427-0958 (Edmonton)

Alberta Supports

Alberta Supports provides up-to-date information and assistance on Government of Alberta social-based services by helping Albertans and clients find programs they need and assisting clients in their moves from program to program as circumstances change.

albertasupports.ca

1-877-644-9992 (toll-free)

780-644-9992 (Edmonton)

Child Support Services

The Child Support Services program is a free service that helps single parents and parents in blended families with limited incomes negotiate a child support agreement or obtain a court order. Child support can bring a greater sense of financial security and help to improve the quality of life for you and your child(ren).

humanservices.alberta.ca/css

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta and ask for the Child Support Services office in your area.)

780-415-6400 (Edmonton)

403-297-6060 (Calgary)

Parent Link Centres

These centres offer information and support for parents and caregivers.

parentlinkalberta.ca

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta and ask for the centre in your area.)

Immigrant-serving agencies

Immigrant-serving agencies provide newcomers with information and guidance about settlement and employment readiness services. Some of these agencies also offer employment-related programs and services for internationally trained and educated immigrants such as accountants, engineers, educators, nurses, physicians, pharmacists, and electricians and other tradespeople. To find an immigrant-serving agency near you, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline (see page 58).

humanservices.alberta.ca/newcomer-services
(Click on “Settlement Services.”)

Job search and resumé

To access the following job postings and resources, visit alis.alberta.ca/jobseekers.

Alberta Work Search Online—use the Internet to search for work

e-Resumé Review—submit your resumé online for specific feedback

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Advanced Techniques for Work Search

Workability: What You Need to Get and Keep a Job

Work Search Basics

Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Service (JOBS)

This free job information service is for job seekers and Alberta employers. Job seekers can search a list of jobs available across Canada to find job opportunities. The Job Match feature allows job seekers to complete a skills survey that employers can use to fill positions.

jobbank.gc.ca

Immigrating to Alberta website

See the official Immigrating to Alberta website, under the Working in Alberta tab, for information on working in your occupation and finding a job.

albertacanada.com/immigration

1-877-427-6419 (toll-free in Alberta)

780-427-6419 (outside Alberta; long-distance charges apply)

Working in Canada website

This free Government of Canada job information service gives newcomers regional information about job opportunities and wages.

workingincanada.gc.ca

1-800-O-Canada, or 1-800-622-6232 (toll-free)

1-800-926-9105 (toll-free, for deaf or hard-of-hearing callers with TTY)

Labour market information

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Alberta Career and Industry Outlook: Economic and Other Trends Affecting the World of Work

Making Sense of Labour Market Information

Life transitions

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Change and Transitions: The Path From A to B

Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers

Social Insurance Numbers

Service Canada Centres

Visit a Service Canada Centre to apply for your Social Insurance Number.

serviccanada.gc.ca

1-800-206-7218 (toll-free)

Trades and apprenticeship

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training

This Government of Alberta program provides a guide to trades, apprenticeship and industry training in Alberta, and information about the Alberta Qualification Certificate Program.

tradesecrets.alberta.ca

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta and ask for your local Apprenticeship and Industry Training office.)

Workplace issues

ALIS publications

To view, order or download the following publications, visit alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Let's Talk: A Guide to Resolving Workplace Conflicts

Workability: What You Need to Get and Keep a Job

Your Rights and Responsibilities at Work

Alberta Human Rights Commission

The commission responds to questions about human rights and deals with complaints of discrimination.

albertahumanrights.ab.ca

310-0000 (Call toll-free in Alberta, and then enter the 10-digit regional office number.)

780-427-7661 (north of Red Deer)

403-297-6571 (south of Red Deer)

Employment Standards

Employment Standards offers information about minimum rights and responsibilities of employers and employees relating to employer records, minimum wage, hours of work and overtime, general holidays and pay, vacations and pay, maternity and parental leave and termination of employment.

humanservices.alberta.ca/es

1-877-427-3731 (toll-free)

780-427-3731 (Edmonton)

Occupational Health and Safety

For publications and resources about safe work practices and workplaces, and workplace hazards, call the Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre.

humanservices.alberta.ca/ohs

1-866-415-8690 (toll-free)

780-415-8690 (Edmonton)

Employment Terms Used in Alberta

You may be unfamiliar with some of the terms in this guide and elsewhere. Here are definitions for some of the more common employment terms used in Alberta.

Apprenticeship—A combination of on-the-job training, work experience and technical training. People who want to learn a trade in Alberta must become registered apprentices.

Career—The sum total of your life experiences, including education, paid and unpaid work, and community, volunteer and family activities.

Career management—Making informed choices to manage the events of your career. A vital part of the career management process is gathering information on learning and work opportunities and applying it to yourself and your situation.

Certified—Recognized by a professional association or professional regulatory organization as possessing the appropriate combination of credentials, training and/or experience. “Certified” is sometimes used interchangeably with “registered” or “licensed.”

Credentials—Official testimonials or documents showing that a person is qualified to do a particular job. Examples of credentials include professional registration certificates, diplomas and degrees.

English as a Second Language (ESL) training—English language training for individuals whose first language is not English. ESL training is designed to help participants learn English reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

Immigrant-serving agency—An organization offering general settlement assistance, including information, orientation, English as a Second Language (ESL) assessments and training, interpretation or translation, and employment and referral services.

Industry—A group of establishments engaged in similar types of activities and producing similar goods and services. Examples are the construction and health-care industries.

Information interview—A scheduled meeting used to collect information about an occupation, company or industry.

International mutual recognition agreements—Agreements that set out the terms and conditions for recognizing and accepting the qualifications of workers who have been certified or registered in other jurisdictions.

International qualifications—Qualifications and credentials obtained in a country outside Canada.

Job—A set of specific duties performed for a specific employer. Jobs may be paid or unpaid, part time or full time, and of short or long duration. “Grade 1 teacher at city school” is a job.

Job or work search—Steps you take to find work or get a job, such as writing your resumé, preparing for an interview and networking.

Journey person—Someone who has satisfied all the requirements to be certified in a specific trade, for example, a journey person millwright. In order to be certified as a journey person, an apprentice must complete on-the-job training, work experience and technical training and pass a theory and/or practical exam. This term is used for both men and women.

Labour market—Employers offer jobs or work. Employees offer skills and perform work. Along with economic conditions and other factors, they make up the labour market.

Licensed—Recognized by a professional association or professional regulatory body as possessing the appropriate combination of credentials, training and/or experience. “Licensed” is sometimes used interchangeably with “certified” or “registered.”

Mentor—Someone who shares experience, knowledge and wisdom about his or her occupation or about the workplace in general.

Occupation—A group of similar jobs or fields of interest that require specific training or expertise. “Occupation” is sometimes used interchangeably with “profession” or “trade.” “Teacher” and “motorcycle mechanic” are examples of occupations.

Occupational language training—Language training that is specific to a particular occupation. It goes beyond basic language training and may include technical terminology.

Profession—A group of similar jobs or fields of interest that require specific training or expertise. “Profession” is sometimes used interchangeably with “occupation.” “Physician” and “teacher” are examples of professions.

Professional association—An organization that represents the interests of members who practise an occupation or profession.

Professional regulatory organization—A professional association that has been granted authority by the provincial government to protect the public’s interest. Its members are certified to work within a regulatory framework established by government. Professional regulatory organizations have the authority to

- set initial requirements for certification and the standards of practice
- assess applicants’ qualifications and credentials
- certify, register or license qualified applicants
- discipline members

Registered—Recognized by a professional association or professional regulatory body as possessing the appropriate combination of credentials, training and/or experience. “Registered” is sometimes used interchangeably with “certified” or “licensed.”

Regulated occupation—A profession or trade that has legal requirements or restrictions with regard to licensing, certification or registration. Regulated occupations are controlled by law to protect the public.

Trade—Occupation in which standards have been set to promote quality work, safety and excellence of skills among tradespeople. Tradespeople are trained through an apprenticeship program.

Transitional job—A job taken to earn money and gain work experience in Alberta while looking for other opportunities. It can be short term or long term depending on your situation.

Work—The task, job or activities performed to reach a goal. Work can be paid or unpaid, and short term or long term.

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Working in Alberta

A guide for internationally
trained and educated immigrants

Have you obtained your education and skills training outside of Canada? Do you need to make decisions about your work life in Alberta?

Working in Alberta will help you research your occupation in Alberta, look at other work alternatives and become familiar with the Alberta workplace.

It covers

- recognition of international qualifications
- registration and certification
- occupational information
- career management
- work search skills
- the labour market