

8.0 Research

The Research sub-committee was created to support the work of the other sub-committees by conducting research at their request. It had also developed its own goals: to determine how and by whom data can be gathered to better understand the IEG; and to develop a clearer picture of the IEG. However, given the speed with which the other sub-committees were working to develop final recommendations in eight months, it was decided that Research would focus on those issues raised in the Phase I report but not being dealt with by other sub-committees. This resulted in the following list:

- Confirmation of the most widely used sources of information by immigrants in order to better determine how to ensure IEGs have the information they need prior to making the decision to immigrate.
- Determine how to consistently gather information on IEGs within every regulatory body, to assess how they move through the licensing process.
- Determine how to source up-to-date regional labour market information.
- Better understand the determinants of success for IEGs – for example, what impact does language proficiency have? What impact does settling within one's own cultural group have?

The Licensing sub-committee had not specifically requested research assistance but had noted that the low number of IEGs applying for licensure in some areas of Canada was a concern.

Overall, however, there was no consensus from the Committee of Chairs as to which of the four research projects should form the basis of the Research sub-committee's work. Instead, the sub-committee looked at each area and decided that it would be best to determine how to track IEGs throughout the licensing process.

The rationale was clear: because the regulatory bodies do not track IEGs through the licensing process, it is difficult to determine where they leave the process and therefore to make a determination as to whether or not a particular aspect of the

process is proving more difficult to achieve than others. This particular project, therefore, was seen as a priority. The other areas were not recommended:

Confirming sources of information most used by IEGs.

This would be a very large project, beyond the scope of Phase II. The Phase I report (and a recent Statistics Canada study) highlighted that IEGs turn to “friends and family” and it is known that the federal government is moving to an electronic information base and away from print materials at consulates and embassies.

Understanding determinants of success.

The broad factors contributing to the successful integration of IEGs are outlined in the Phase I report: a command of English (or French in Quebec) and a positive attitude. To study the full determinants of success would mean entering into a longitudinal research project well beyond the scope of Phase II.

Sourcing accurate regional labour market information.

The group originally felt that this was not an issue to be tackled by the profession on its own but that others could take the lead. Governments, in particular, have access to – and indeed gather – this information. Ultimately, because the issue of labour market information was raised by so many others, and so often, the Research sub-committee incorporated a recommendation for this area among its other, final recommendations.

8.1 LABOUR MARKET

One of the recurring issues with which the Steering Committee wrestled was the lack of information relative to labour market supply and demand. While not addressed specifically by the Research sub-committee, it was a recurring research-based issue.

On a yearly basis, there are many more engineers entering the Canadian marketplace today than there were a decade ago. However, over that same period, the Canadian labour force and economic growth have not kept pace with the number of engineers available. While there may be certain regions of the country looking for engineers, there are also areas where over-supply is a problem. With this kind of situation, it is no surprise that many IEGs are having difficulty finding engineering work. This does not mean that the engineering profession should not take on a project like FC2I – the profession has a responsibility to ensure that IEGs are integrated into the profession and the engineering workforce – but it does mean that any recommendations must be seen through the lens of economic reality. That reality, however, is clouded by a lack of specific research detailing the regional/local labour market situation for engineers or the situation by discipline (e.g. civil, electrical.) Only anecdotal information is available to the IEG who asks where mechanical engineers are in demand, or where the ideal place to live is if one wants to practice as a biological engineer.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based on these discussions, the Research sub-committee drew the following conclusions:

- It is important for the profession to understand how the licensing system is being navigated and where there may be difficulties.

- Thousands of IEGs enter Canada but only a small percentage apply for licensure. As regulatory bodies, it is important to understand the perception and value of licensure as there may be implications for the profession as a whole.
- Government immigration and employment policies are based on government research which projects a shortfall in skilled labour; the profession and other interested parties must have a detailed picture of the current and future engineering labour market to adjust its own programs accordingly, and to counsel IEGs fairly and accurately.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Research sub-committee made the following recommendations to the CCPE Board of Directors:

- Track all applicants, including IEGs, throughout the licensing system.
- Conduct research to determine the factors leading to low licensure uptake.
- Undertake an engineering labour market study that also develops models to provide current and ongoing labour market information, including maintenance and dissemination.