

# Multi-stakeholder Work Groups Project

## OVERVIEW

- Multi-stakeholder Work Group model is unique to Nova Scotia; recognized nationally as a best practice to address international qualifications recognition (IQR)
- Originated in settlement sector in response to barriers facing clients in regulated occupations
- Model recognizes that IQR is a complex problem; responsibility for finding solutions is not held by regulatory bodies alone but shared amongst key stakeholders
- A collaborative approach to making systemic change and developing innovative solutions
- Profession-specific work groups (12) aim to ensure fair, transparent and equitable pathways to licensure, and develop practical, sustainable programs to help newcomers become qualified and integrated into the provincial workforce in their chosen fields
- Supports the goals of the provincial Fair Registration Practices Act (FRPA) and the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment & Recognition of International Credentials
- Indicators of impact include: internationally educated individuals in Nova Scotia perform significantly better on national examinations than those in other provinces, 70% of settlement association clients find work in their field, increased immigrant retention rate
- External evaluation conducted in 2013; two other related studies currently underway

## BACKGROUND

International qualifications recognition is complex and to tackle IQR challenges effectively, all key stakeholders in a profession need to be at the table. Significant differences across occupations require that multi-stakeholder tables be profession-specific. Making systemic change and collaboration takes time, but once mutual trust and respect is established, a collective vision can develop, and the synergy around the table leads to critical thinking and innovation.

The Multi-stakeholder Work Group project is a collaborative approach to developing practical and sustainable solutions. The project was initiated by an ISANS staff because providing employment services is not enough to ensure workforce integration for clients in regulated occupations. Fair and transparent pathways to licensure and new pathways and competency assessment methods were needed. Unnecessary barriers had to be removed, and programs and supports were needed to provide orientation, address skill or knowledge gaps, and promote effective workforce integration.

Work groups were established in Engineering and Pharmacy in 2005, Medicine in 2006 and Law in 2009 but momentum increased substantially in 2011. At this time, a special project was initiated to support an ISANS staff to work within the Nova Scotia Department of Labour & Advanced Education as Consultant, International Labour Mobility. This provided dedicated leadership for the work group project.

## **DESCRIPTION**

There are currently twelve Multi-stakeholder Work Groups covering nineteen regulated occupations: Architects, Dental Professionals, Dietitians, Engineers, Lawyers, Nurses, Medical Laboratory Technologists, Pharmacists, Physicians, Respiratory Therapists, Social Workers and Teachers. A work group to support Accountants/Finance Professionals is in development.

Each work group is co-chaired by a high-profile member of the profession together with the Consultant, International Labour Mobility and meets quarterly or as needed. While the primary focus is provincial, the groups may include Pan-Canadian representatives and/or representatives from other provinces in the Atlantic region.

Key stakeholders vary amongst professions but generally include:

- Regulatory authorities
- Professional associations
- Educational institutions
- NGO immigrant serving organization
- Representatives of internationally educated professionals
- Employers and employer organizations
- Unions
- Sector Councils
- Government departments
- Community champions

## **PURPOSE & FUNCTION**

Members report back to their organizations and every member is there because they share some responsibility for addressing IQR and experience benefit from membership. The functions of each work group are to:

- Provide a forum for information sharing
- Review and confirm pathways to licensure
- Develop new pathways or routes to licensure
- Eliminate unnecessary barriers and make process changes to improve equity
- Liaise with and cooperate with national, regional & other provincial partners
- Identify critical issues, engage in informed dialogue; problem-solve
- Identify and pursue opportunities for partnership
- Develop collaborative programs and supports
- Act in an advisory capacity and/or as a steering group for programs
- Sustain the momentum for change

## **SAMPLE OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Developing an orientation program to provide contextual awareness for internationally educated teachers, to be available pre and post arrival, for preparation for certification, to increase success on the job and/or to assist with alternative career exploration
- Addressing the void in the Maritimes of any support for internationally educated dentists who would like to qualify and work as dental assistants, either as an interim measure as they challenge the pathway to licensure in dentistry or as a related career field

- Creating an observership program for dentistry (using previously developed models in Law and Medicine) and conducting second offering of the orientation to Canadian dental practice
- Advocating for Practice Ready Assessment and exploring alternative careers for international medical graduates
- Working with national & provincial regulatory bodies for Social Work to clarify and make transparent its requirements for eligibility; work to engage the university in providing gap training
- Developing a poster and resource guide on all provincial supports & programs for internationally educated nurses in Nova Scotia; presented at national IEN conference
- Working with other provincial partners towards a coordinated approach to competency assessment in Respiratory Therapy
- Increasing employer engagement to support internationally educated architects to demonstrate competency

### **SAMPLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS & RESULTS**

*Each of the following is a result of one of the multi-stakeholder work groups and impacts the success of immigrants to the province.*

#### **Process Changes, New Pathways, Improving Access & Advocacy:**

- Engineers Nova Scotia credits the orientation/communication skills program delivered by ISANS for credit toward the required one year of Canadian experience.
- Internationally educated engineers with over ten years of experience may be assessed through a structured competency interview rather than compensatory exams.
- The incubation and implementation of the IMG Med III Clerkship, a unique program for immigrant physicians, has put 20 IMGs on a pathway to licensure and employment in the province.
- The College of Pharmacists of Nova Scotia eliminated the requirement for part of internship to be in hospital environment; can be done entirely in the community thereby overcoming a significant barrier in the process.
- The Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia created a special membership for immigrant pharmacists which includes access to professional practice insurance

#### **Program Development & Enhancement:**

- A Worksite-based Competency Assessment Program for internationally educated engineers was developed and implemented as a collaboration amongst Engineers Nova Scotia, Engineers Canada, ISANS & local employers.
- An Observership Program was developed to introduce internationally trained lawyers to Canadian legal practice. This program is run by the Barristers' Society of Nova Scotia.
- Online orientation programs specific to the profession have been developed in Pharmacy and Medicine; available to immigrants both pre and post arrival.

- An Orientation to Canadian Dental Practice workshop was developed and piloted to enthusiastic response, under the leadership of the Nova Scotia Dental Association. The workshop included a “Day in the Life” video funded by the province.
- A Hand’s on Practice Program (HOPP) to assist internationally educated dentists to prepare for the clinical skills assessment has been developed in collaboration with Dalhousie Faculty of Dentistry, experienced faculty facilitators and ISANS. It will be offered for the first time in the spring of 2015.
- Medical laboratory technologists in Nova Scotia access the IEMLT Bridging Program developed and launched in New Brunswick, but do clinical component in Nova Scotia.

#### **Participation of Canadian licensed professionals:**

- Thirty-eight Canadian licensed physicians have volunteered their time to teach IMGs at evening clinical skills review sessions conducted at ISANS
- The *Craig Ennett Award*, presented annually since 2011, recognizes the efforts of a Canadian licensed pharmacist to welcoming international colleagues
- Fifteen Canadian licensed pharmacists participate in and promote the Communications Skills Labs coordinated by ISANS with provincial funding
- Continuing education credits are awarded to pharmacists who take part in preparatory or assessment programs for professional immigrants in these fields.
- An information session conducted for internationally educated architects at the Nova Scotia Architects’ Association included local architectural firms and assessors.
- Local engineering firms participate in the workplace-based competency assessment.
- Dental professionals are speakers at the orientation workshop and appear in the video.

#### **Communications & Advising:**

- Website reviews and improvements made; ongoing efforts to integrate electronic information amongst stakeholders; articles published on profession-specific sites and journals
- Internationally Educated Nurses Work Group is an advisory committee for the IEN Bridging and Re-entry Program delivered by the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre.
- Work groups are advisory committees for bridging programs in Dentistry, Medicine, Engineering, Pharmacy and Dietetics. The Sustainable Bridging Process for Internationally Educated Dietitians has been nationally recognized as a best practice by the International Qualifications Network.

#### **Regional and Pan-Canadian Participation:**

- Work groups are forums for updates and feedback on Pan-Canadian initiatives – eg. National Nursing Assessment Service, Gateway to Pharmacy, Canadian Technology Information Network and others.

- National regulators have made presentations at work group tables including Social Work, Dental Professionals, Medical Lab Technology, Law and Architecture. They continue to follow our work through receiving all meeting minutes and correspondence.
- Managing Director of the National Committee on Accreditation for Law actively participates on ITL work group
- Dietitians Work Group includes regulatory bodies and settlement association representatives from all Atlantic provinces
- Respiratory Therapists Work Group includes regulators from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan
- Whenever practical, access to programs is opened to internationally educated individuals across the Maritimes

### **Measures of Impact and Indicators of Success:**

- Increased retention of immigrants in Nova Scotia (74%)
- Improved labour force attachment of immigrants in field of practice:
  - 769 jobs in past year, 70% in field/related (ISANS)
  - 78% of pre-arrival clients find work within six months
- Positive results on national qualifications assessments – internationally educated immigrants in Nova Scotia perform significantly better on national exams
- Increase in employer uptake for Internationally Educated Engineers Work-based Competency Assessment Program:
  - 3 month on-the-job competency assessment
  - 57 engineers completed the program, 37 secured jobs in engineering and 24 became licensed as PEng.
- Other provinces have replicated or are exploring the Multi-stakeholder Work Group model including NB, PEI, Manitoba and Ontario
- Successful launch of Atlantic IQR Network
- Gardner Pinfold Consultants evaluation report, 2013

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