

BURNABY WORKPLACE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

In 2012 Burnaby hosted a remarkable program aimed at identifying and addressing some of the problems that immigrants to Canada face in the employment marketplace: the **Burnaby Workplace Ambassadors Program**. The project followed from research and experience with the prior Breaking Down the Barriers program showing that both employers and new immigrants lack a clear understanding of all that's required to support immigrant workforce integration. Employers often have no easy way of assessing experience and credentials acquired in another country, and hold reservations or uncertainty when meeting new immigrants trying to enter the job market. Immigrants sometimes not only lack the networking and communication skills necessary to break into the Canadian workforce but fail to fully recognize how crucial these are.

The program sought to dig straight into problems like these with a unique "ambassadors" approach using both jobseekers and employers as active participants. Thirty five internationally trained professionals (ITPs) new to Burnaby received focussed training and supporting resources on communication and networking, and then were introduced to a professional within their field and a 45 minute meeting was set up. This professional would then introduce the ITP to two more professionals – and so on. The purpose of the meetings was twofold; first, participants exchanged information about their shared occupational field and second, they discussed some of the existing barriers to immigrant workforce integration. The intent of the project was not employment but awareness raising - some of the immigrant ambassadors met with as many as 10 local professionals and most received at least five meetings. At project end, more than 240 employers had been engaged in discussions about immigrant workforce integration, many reviewed and discussed their own recruiting and hiring practices and shared the experience with their colleagues.

Here, in their own words, a few representatives of both types of ambassadors recount their experiences with the program. They are organized into six professional sectors important to Burnaby's economy. As a result of the Burnaby Workplace Ambassador Program, the ball is definitely rolling. The challenge now is to push it as fast and far as possible.

SECTOR OVERVIEW - LIFE SCIENCES

The life sciences cluster in Metro Vancouver is fairly diverse, with particular strength in biotechnology. Provincially there are about 100 biopharmaceutical companies, 60 medical device manufacturing and distribution companies, and 30 bio products companies, together employing about 2,700. Many thousands more work in the medical and health care sectors, in education, and in environmental fields. Most companies are small, but a few are fairly large and many others thrive through their linkages with larger companies.



KEY OCCUPATIONS IN THE LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

- Agrologist
- Anatomist
- Bacteriologist
- Biochemists and Biophysicists
- Biomedical Engineers
- Biological Technicians
- Biological Science Teachers, Postsecondary
- Epidemiologists
- Environmental Scientists and Specialists
- Microbiologists
- Medical Scientists
- Natural Sciences Managers
- Protozoologist
- Toxicologist
- Virologist
- Zoologist

The British Columbia life sciences industry benefits from some significant advantages, including the presence of major research networks and institutions and proximity to collaborators on the US west coast. Growth within the various fields has been uneven in recent years, however, as have employment prospects. Some jobseekers interested in scientific careers have benefitted from crossover opportunities in the healthcare field, where conditions are generally better.

THE AMBASSADORS

Immigrant Ambassador - Nancy Giron

I came here in 2011 from my home in Guatemala, where I obtained a degree in engineering. I also have a master degree in environmental engineering from an American university, and I worked in Guatemala on several projects related to water conservation and water quality in lakes. As a result of that experience I was able to teach at universities and work as a consultant. I like to work with anything related with water, including environmental education, conservation and climate change.

I learned of the Ambassadors Program through Skills Connect. I was interested because I wanted something more in terms of exposure to people in my field. To be honest, everyone stressed how important this is, but that didn't make it easier. I guess it's because of my culture: We're not used to knocking on a door and asking for an interview. But they helped me believe that it isn't that hard. It made me feel more comfortable.

I have completed eight interviews. It wasn't just making the connections in my field but learning to feel more confident doing it. And I learned more about the local market and where I might fit into it. I have been in Guatemala, doing some volunteer work, but when I get back to Vancouver I have some more interviews that I have been referred to.

Employer Ambassador – Dr. Anthony Marrotta, Chief Scientific Officer, AugurexLife Sciences Corp.

I met with one individual. He was knowledgeable, very well prepared, a pleasure to meet. We still stay in limited contact through LinkedIn and other mechanisms. It's unfortunate that we're not in a position to hire someone like him. I was able to pass him along to a couple of others, but the challenge right now with the life sciences is that there is a lot of consolidation and layoffs in our industry.

We have access to a couple of industry bodies, including Life Sciences BC and Biotalent, but what would be very helpful is a resource listing internationally trained professionals so that we could look at people and see where there might be a fit. It would be nice as an employer to have a list of potential candidates.



MS. NANCY GIRON

BEST PRACTICES OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION - EMPLOYERS IN THE LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

In 2012, forty employers across Canada were recognized for their initiatives around recent immigrants as part of the Best Employers for New Canadians list by Mediacorp Canada. Promising practices of best employers in Life Sciences sectors are summarized and listed below.

Source: <http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/>

RECRUITMENT

- Hires newcomers with foreign credentials at temporary junior-level positions while they pursue credential equivalencies (McGill University and Mount Sinai Hospital and Providence Health Care)
- Launched a formal employment strategy for internationally educated professionals (IEP), which includes attending in-house mentoring events and career fairs, mentoring, and assistance with foreign credentials (Mount Sinai Hospital)
- Manages a dedicated website for the recruitment of IEPs and forwards vacancies to a variety of multicultural media outlets (St. Michael's Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital and Providence Health Care)

ORIENTATION

- Provides mentoring/ buddy program as well as job shadowing opportunities to new immigrant employees. (Providence Health Care and St. Michael's Hospital)
- Provides extensive support to international hires, from providing settlement information to coordinating arrival information such as formal documentation and licensure (Saskatoon Regional Health Authority)

RETENTION

- Offers language courses to further develop the communication skills of employees who are new to Canada (McGill University)
- Manages a committee / advisory group for internationally educated professionals and offers additional support to IEPs which include promotion of cultural integration and workshops and coaching (Mount Sinai Hospital and St. Michael's Hospital)
- Offers multicultural awareness training for all employees (Providence Health Care)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - BEING A GOOD COMMUNITY CITIZEN

- Partners with community organizations to help newcomers adjust to the Canadian work environment through employment presentations, career counselling, mentoring and networking opportunities (McGill University, St. Michael's Hospital and Saskatoon Health Region Authority)
- In partnership with community agencies, helps internationally educated professionals gain work experience through paid or no paid internship opportunities (St. Michael's Hospital and Mount Sinai Hospital)



LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR IN BURNABY

The City of Burnaby recognizes the life science sector as one of the signature industries in Burnaby as there is a large cluster of biotechnology, life science firms, and a major hospital. There are also a number of firms that specialize in medical devices and e-health.

Factors that have drawn biotechnology and life science firms to Burnaby include the availability of shared laboratory space, transportation for employees, founder's home or hospital association, and affordability of space.

The two major educational institutions, SFU and BCIT, in addition to Burnaby General Hospital, enrich the platforms and provide tremendous opportunities to promote the clustering of biotechnology and life science firms in Burnaby and the start-up of new firms.

The City of Burnaby's Economic Development Strategy 2020 identified the life sciences industry as one of the seed industries in Burnaby¹

NOTABLE LIFE SCIENCES EMPLOYERS IN BURNABY

COMPANY	WEBSITE
Amgen Inc. 7990 Enterprise Street, Burnaby	http://www.amgen.com/careers/overview.html
Burnaby General Hospital 3935 Kincaid Street, Burnaby	http://www.fraserhealth.ca/about_us/get_involved/volunteer/burnaby_hospital
Methylation Sciences Inc. 108-4475 Wayburne, Burnaby	http://www.methylationsciences.com/
Maxxam Analytics Inc. 8577 Commerce Crt. Burnaby	http://maxxam.ca/about-maxxam/laboratory-careers
SFU - Biomedical Engineering 8888 University Drive, Burnaby	http://www.ensc.sfu.ca/undergraduate_students/academic-programs/biomedical.html
Sorin Group 5005 North Fraser Way Burnaby	http://www.sorin.com/page/en/working-sorin-group
Tekmira Pharmaceutical Corporation 8900 Glenlyon Parkway, Burnaby	http://www.tekmirapharm.com/Careers/Careers.asp
Xenon Pharmaceuticals Inc. 3650 Gilmore Way, Burnaby	http://www.xenon-pharma.com/careers/
Verathon Incorporated 2227 Douglas Road, Burnaby	http://verathon.com/about-verathon/career

¹Source: <http://www.burnaby.ca/Assets/multiple+locations/EDS+-+Burnaby+EDS+2020.pdf>

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE FOR IMMIGRANTS IN BURNABY

SKILLS CONNECT FOR IMMIGRANTS PROGRAM

- **Back in Motion**
<http://www.skillsconnect.ca/>
- **Douglas College**
<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/training-community-education/skills-connect.html>
- **Training Innovations**
<http://www.skillsconnectbc.com/>

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES AND PROFILES

- **WelcomeBC's Occupational Guides for Immigrants**
http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/work/occupational_guides.page#Technology
- **Skilled Immigrants InfoCentre – Vancouver Public Library**
<http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>
- **WorkBC Career Profile**
<http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/Career-Profiles/Pages/Career-Profiles.aspx>

REGULATORY BODIES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- **Life Sciences of British Columbia**
<http://www.lifesciencesbc.ca/>
- **BioTalent Canada**
www.biotalent.ca
- **College of Applied Biology of B.C.**
www.cab-bc.org
- **Canadian College of Microbiologists (CCM)**
<http://www.ccm.ca/>
- **Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board (CECAB)**
<http://www.cecab.org/public/default.aspx>
- **Canadian Society for Molecular BioSciences (CSMB)**
www.csbmcb.ca
- **Canadian Environmental Certifications Approval Board (CECAB)**
www.cecab.org
- **Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of B.C. (ASTTBC)**
www.asttbc.org