

Federation of Black Canadians

EVALUATION REPORT YEAR 1

Written by the Students Commission of Canada

Project Description

As a Pan-Canadian body, the Federation of Black Canadians (FBC) seeks to discuss the opportunities, contributions, and challenges that exist for people of African descent nationally. They want to ensure that as their communities grow, they unlock the opportunities that will help build a promising future, building on and celebrating their diverse heritages, histories, cultures, and contributions to Canada. Through their program, EmpowerBrampton, FBC will deliver tailored workshops, mentoring support, tutoring, and a career fair meant to address barriers, foster skills development, and enhance educational and employment opportunities for Black youth with a focus on newcomers and NEET Canadian youth.

Highlights (Executive Summary)

The purpose of this report was to capture the needs of Black newcomers related to language, employment and financial aid and inform the curriculum of EmpowerBrampton. In July 2024, participants were invited to a focus group to share their experiences with navigating the challenges they are facing and recommendations for outreach strategies.

Participants face significant employment barriers, including the need for Canadian work experience, cultural differences in job hunting and work environment, unrecognized foreign credentials and reliable financial aid.

To better support newcomers and NEET Canadian youth, the findings from this report revealed that a tailored support program should include:

1. **Understanding Canadian work culture**
2. **Provide province-specific information**
3. **Access to networking and practical work experience**
4. **Mentorship**
5. **Language support**
6. **Financial support**
7. **Effective outreach and promotion**



Needs Assessment

In July 2024, participants (n=) shared their thoughts, needs and experiences with seeking employment as Black newcomers through a focus group that consisted of 9 questions. Their experiences and recommendations will inform the programming of EmpowerBrampton. The following thematic analysis illustrated the key themes that emerged from the discussions.

Employment barriers

Participants identified some barriers to employment that they experienced as newcomers in Canada: 1) Canadian work experience requirement, 2) cultural differences in the process of job hunting (e.g., company culture, extracurricular experience), 3) underemployment of skilled newcomers and immigrant workers, and 4) lack of recognition of foreign credentials.

I will say yes, I have experienced like the Canadian work experience barrier, especially like applying for, like internships or applying for like, just random jobs in general.

I think I actually realized that as a university student like I have to have extracurriculars, and volunteering. I never would have had that experience back home.

I actually know someone from my country. She went to like, definitely the best university back home. And she has like, really first class and all of that. Then coming here and having spent all these years all those like she worked with, like a manager of Apple and everything, and coming here to start at square one. So like, I've seen so many, like, personal relationships where people have that situation and it's actually very difficult because it does go from grace to grass at my perspective.

I feel like it should be recognized, because regardless of where you're coming from, you still went through the process, you went through hard work to get the credentials or the certificates that you have.

Participants discussed some of the resources that they found helpful in overcoming barriers to employment, shedding light on a program design that will be beneficial to newcomers and immigrants. They expressed their need for support in understanding Canadian work culture, specifically expectations and communication styles, and having information about province-specific requirements. They also would like to have access to networking opportunities and work experience, leveraging existing university and college resources such as co-op programs and internships. Offering one-on-one mentorship where experienced professionals can guide newcomers through the employment landscape was also seen as essential to ensuring that participants are able to identify the steps needed to achieve their career objectives and are fully aware of the resources available to them, and understand how they can effectively utilize such resources.

I think if we're able to like compromise and understand what they mean, then we could bring it down to the level where we train because there are a lot of like skills trainings and everything that are out there. So if you understand the Canadian work experience or what is expected, we could like streamline that and make other legal advice or international people understand what they need to work and to aligned that.

I know some universities make different programs available if it's province-related because provinces make different things a little bit.

I would use the colleges or universities. Some programs do offer co-ops where you can do internships or co-ops and then gain experience. You may not necessarily be paid. Sometimes you may be paid, but it definitely gets you experience.

I'll be talking from like a university perspective. I know like some schools have like, specific groups that cater to like, incoming students like not from the country, but international students. So they mostly like organize events for them provide resources, like make things easier for them. So they don't have to like go through the entire process, like, knowing how and why and like just finding everything confused and just like for someone to break it down for them. And also like the one among people that even Canadian citizens, or like domestic students too. There's also, like, mentors who can go through it with you and then you get to speak to those mentors.

Language barriers

Participants highlighted the importance of working on their language skills to enhance employment opportunities. Being well-versed in English, both in colloquial and formal terms, were seen as essential for successfully integrating into the workforce and advancing in their chosen career paths.

I think that if you're like, you know, in a country you need to know the language they speak even if it's not English. There are some countries you go to speak French language, they speak Spanish. So we just have to like, learn it. It's very important to learn it.

To better support them, they suggested a program that offers an introductory course in English or French where sessions are accessible at little to no cost and the learning environment is self-paced and judgement-free. They also noted how this program should create opportunities for participants to engage in community activities and integrate into the local culture, helping them learn through daily conversation and social interaction but also the communication styles and nuances of the local culture.

I think some kind of support would be like having maybe intro classes to maybe languages, maybe English 101 or French 101 or something like that. Having like, classes where people are able to come, like judgment free. So if we have those, like intro classes, where it's like, really free or even at a cost, but they know the importance to them.

Its more of a thing of just the way they speak and communicate. So if you find yourself more in groups where there are more people that talk like that, you tend to adapt more and more. So give yourself time, don't try to change so rapidly and eventually it will happen if you're eager to learn.

Financial barriers

Some of the participants also reported facing financial barriers. They noted the withdrawal of financial support that was previously available to international students based on the assumption that they should already have sufficient financial resources upon arrival in Canada. However, this does not take into account the challenges that they encounter after arriving such as higher living costs or unexpected expenses.



Before we had our food bank, they give out gift cards, like \$50 or \$75 students, and you have like an estimate at the end of your academic year. I think it's like that but I'm not sure. But then recently, they didn't give that access to international students again, they're like, oh, anyway, you're coming to Canada, that you put it there that you have enough, like financial resources and accounts to support yourself and they stopped giving students that gift card.

Outreach strategies

They recommended strategies to broaden their reach for new participants. They recommended increasing in-person communication and promotion efforts, suggesting face-to-face interactions through setting up booths in university grounds, promotional events and personal invitations. Offering free items, like food or candy, was also deemed as an effective way to attract attention and create memorable experiences that they then can share with their peers. Additionally, they advocated for a balanced approach that combines in-person events with online promotion, such as live streaming on social media, to broader audience especially those unable to attend in person.

I feel like more of that in-person communication from that team leader or something just to put your face out there first, then you cannot switch to online and send emails and all that.

I think word-of-mouth really does it more. That's like more of the impressing, like tabling and promotional things, even if it's just one thing.

I think one thing that really touches people is just when they're free, even if it's like free food or free candy or free something. They will remember and they'll tell their friends.

I guess like both can balance each other like oh, if I'm having an in person event, I can do a live stream on social media so people that are online they're not able to attend can also see it.

Discussion

The purpose of this report was to capture the needs of Black newcomers related to language, employment and financial matters and inform the development of the program's curriculum next year. Participants were invited to a focus group to share their experiences and recommendations.

The results highlighted several barriers to employment faced by Black newcomers in Canada such as the requirement for Canadian work experience, cultural differences in job hunting, lack of recognition for foreign credentials, and inconsistent financial supports. These barriers limit employment opportunities as well as contribute to the systemic challenges that newcomers face as they integrate into the Canadian workforce and advance their careers.

They offered valuable insights into a support program that would be tailored to the needs of Black newcomers. Such a program should focus on the following components:

1. **Understanding Canadian work culture:** Newcomers need support in understanding the Canadian work culture, particularly the expectations, communication styles and job application process.
2. **Providing province-specific information:** Providing such information would help newcomers tailor their job search strategies based on where they live or where they want to move.

3. **Networking and practical work experience:** Access to networking opportunities and internships would allow newcomers to gain valuable Canadian work experience.
4. **Mentorship:** One-on-one mentorship programs would be crucial in guiding newcomers through the steps they needed to achieve their career objectives, navigate challenges, and make the most of available resources.
5. **Language support:** Offer accessible, judgment-free language courses that focus on both colloquial and formal language skills and offer opportunities for community engagement will support newcomers in integrating into the local culture through daily conversations and social interaction.
6. **Financial support:** Provide support at little to no cost to help alleviate the financial challenges that they face upon arrival and allow them to focus more on their studies and job search.
7. **Effective outreach and promotion:** Focus on in-person communication and promotional events and balance these efforts with online promotion to broaden the program's reach, especially for those unable to attend in person.

Conclusion

Black newcomers shared valuable experiences and recommendations on how to address the barriers they face regarding employment, language and financial aid. By capturing their needs and insights, they can directly inform the design and curriculum of EmpowerBrampton. Federation of Black Canadians can provide tailored workshops, mentorship and tutoring, as well as deliver a career fair and keynote speakers that are relevant to Black youth. With this youth-informed partnership and a focus on supporting newcomers and NEET Canadian youth, Federation of Black Canadians advances the interests and celebrates the histories, cultures and contributions of Black Canadians and most importantly, ensures accountability in the way they equitably serve all Canadians within the African Diaspora family mosaic.



The photo above was taken from <https://fbcfcn.ca/>.

