

ALTERNATIVE CAREER TOOLKIT

MODULE 1



Ontario

HealthForceOntario Marketing
and Recruitment Agency

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Exploring Change and Transition

If you have recently arrived in Ontario, you may be experiencing an enormous amount of change. This module provides you with helpful links on settlement and transition.

Exploring Change and Transition

Moving to a new country changes your life in almost every way. It feels like you are starting all over again. Simple tasks such as taking public transportation, ordering food and drinks at restaurants, greeting people and getting comfortable in a different climate may seem new to you. And of course, you also have to learn critical employment skills such as how to describe your previous experience to employers. This may feel exciting at times, and then overwhelming. Some days, you are full of hope and other days, less optimistic. This is natural and part of the settlement process.

This is a huge journey. It may have taken you months, even years, to get immigration status. You likely started preparing for this shift for you and your family long before you landed in Ontario. Your journey continues as you begin to settle into your new home.

Helpful Resources for Settlement

There are many sites to help you settle in Ontario. **Newcomer settlement programs** and **helpful resources** provide useful information about everything from finding housing and language classes to registering your children in school. **Canada DayPlanner** is a tool that helps you organize your life by providing quick and easy access to information that will help you as you begin to build a new life in Ontario.



Culture Shock

Anthropologist Kalvero Oberg wrote about the concept of culture shock. We may pass through different stages when we arrive in a new place. Culture shock describes how we might move through these stages. Of course, everyone's journey is unique and the time it takes to move through each phase varies by individual; in fact, you may not even go through each one. However, understanding culture shock may help you better understand your experiences.

Five Stages of Culture Shock - Where Are You?

Commonly accepted stages of culture shock include:

1. The Honeymoon Stage – Everything is great!
2. Crisis – You may begin to feel more negative and criticize aspects of your new surroundings, believing that it is not the “right” way to do things;
3. Acceptance – You are more accepting of your situation and become active in moving forward. How/what can I learn?
4. Adapting - You welcome change and try to learn how you might fit into the new culture. How can I identify an area that I want to develop?
5. Reverse Culture Shock – Some people experience this upon return to country of origin. They find it difficult to readjust to the original country of origin after some time in a new country.

How severely you experience culture shock depends on different factors such as:

- Awareness of the new culture before you arrived;
- Amount of preparation before arriving;
- Availability of support systems in your new home;
- Degree of difference between your country of origin and Canada; and
- Your individual personality.

Corporate Change Management Concepts

Another way to understand culture shock is through a corporate change management model. This model helps organizations move through large changes. When an organization makes significant changes, it recognizes the difference between change and transition.

Change is situational. That means it can happen quickly (for example, you can buy a ticket for your flight and land in Canada in a day). Your situation can change quickly.

Transition is psychological. That means it happens more slowly. You may feel many emotions at the same time and although your “physical” world changes quickly, you may need more time to adjust to the many changes.

Three Stages of Change*

1. Loss of the old: End of that stage, letting go of old identity;
2. Neutral zone: In-between time, old is not quite gone, new is not quite formed, change is happening. This can be a very scary time, but also exciting and creative; and
3. Beginning of the new: Coming out of transition.

Recognize Change*

Gaining a better understanding of different change models will help you better understand that:

- It is natural to pass through some or all of these stages;
- You will continue to progress and move at your own pace; and
- Change happens quickly - transition takes longer.

* Based on *Managing Transitions, Making The Most of Change*, William Bridges



Where do you Begin?



You may be willing to pursue an occupation that is different from your most recent healthcare occupation. However, you may not know exactly what your options are. You may not know job titles, job descriptions, potential employers or even how to connect your previous skills to new positions. Where do you begin?

You will also need to think about what you can do, what you are willing to do and what you are interested in doing. You may also need to consider additional certification and training. Equally important, you might want to reflect about what this change means to you.

Do you accept that your career might change – either temporarily or permanently? Are you really ready to focus on a new direction? If you have never thought about working in another healthcare field, you may find it much more challenging than you think.

What do you hear in your head?

“But all I know is my current profession.”

Is this true for you? You may be frustrated about not being able to work in your chosen health-care field. People change professions for many reasons. The path to practice in any regulated health-care profession requires a lot of time and resources. And even when you plan to pursue a regulated healthcare profession, you may still require employment in the interim as you pursue licensing.

Options are available. Start with completing a thorough inventory of your knowledge, competencies and skills. By understanding how you can transfer your expertise into other areas in health-care, you will be able to effectively determine in which direction to move and successfully promote yourself to employers.

Next, begin systematic research to determine what options are out there for you - options that you might enjoy, and to which you might contribute. Determine if there are any bridging programs to which you might apply, start to develop a list of additional training programs that might help you meet your current, midterm or long-range employment goals.

“But that will take too long.”

Doing a thorough skills inventory, conducting occupational research and getting familiar with Labour Market Information (LMI) does take time.

Applying for and completing another education program is also not an easy choice, but it broadens your options. That decision leads many internationally educated health professionals to alternative and satisfying careers in health care.

The licensure path is complicated, and typically people outside the sector may not fully understand the process. The cost of pursuing exams, the degree of competition you face and the limited number of bridging spots and training positions available for healthcare professionals make it extremely tough.

If you are ready to explore other options, it is important to identify personal challenges that you may face. Start to prepare strategies to handle these challenges and make every effort to set yourself up to effectively manage obstacles and build bridges for success. For example, if you think communicating new plans to your family will be difficult, you should plan for it.

“What will people say?”

For many, being a health-care professional means much more than practising in that sector. As a health-care professional, you may make a certain income; enjoy a certain status and level of position within your community. Change is difficult to explain to family members. In fact, you may come to terms with “not” being in your profession before members of your family accept it. There may be additional stress that you feel when you have to explain to your family about changing plans. People may ask you, “If you’re a healthcare professional, then why aren’t you practicing?”



Work in Your Profession

Seeking employment will likely be one of your most important concerns. When you begin your employment search, it may seem overwhelming at first. As with everything else, much of it is new.

The Guide to **Working in Canada** helps you get ready for the challenges of finding a job. The “**Working in Canada**” tool helps you understand how to determine if your qualifications are recognized in Canada and how to start your job search. You can explore careers by occupation, wages and outlook, education program, skills and knowledge. This is an advisable first step.

You will need to gain a better understanding of your profession or what professions you might target by getting more familiar with job titles and descriptions, understanding which professions are regulated and non-regulated and how to apply for jobs in Canada.

Think of this as a three-step process:

1. *Develop a list of options;*
2. *Shortlist your options and research in detail;*
3. *Work with your advisor to apply findings, develop and pursue your action plan.*

This resource from Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, www.settlement.org, (available in 16 languages) will help you learn more about:

- How professions are regulated in Ontario
- What is required to enter many professions
- How your academic credentials will be assessed
- How career maps and bridging training programs can help you
- How Ontario is helping newcomers succeed



Entry to Practice Requirements

To practise as a regulated health professional in Ontario, an individual must be a member of the regulatory college for his or her chosen profession and hold a certificate of registration from the college. Regulated health providers are required by law to deliver competent, ethical and professional services, and are accountable to the public through their respective colleges.

Learn about the practice requirements for each regulated health profession:

Audiologists

Chiropodists and Podiatrists

Chiropractors

Dental Hygienists

Dental Technologists

Dentists

Denturists

Dietitians

Massage Therapists

Medical Laboratory Technologists

Medical Radiation Technologists

Midwives

Nurses

Occupational Therapists

Opticians

Optometrists

Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians

Physiotherapists

Psychologists

Respiratory Therapists

Speech-Language Pathologists

Work in a Different Regulated Healthcare Profession

If you plan to pursue a regulated health-care profession that is different from your original health-care profession, first get in touch with the new regulatory body that you want to join. If possible, make sure you understand how to transfer any of your previous experience. Often, regulatory colleges have competency profiles on their web sites. Competency profiles and checklists allow you to effectively compare in detail what skills you have against expectations regulatory colleges have in regard to skills and knowledge. By carefully reviewing competency checklists, you will develop a clear understanding about which options suit your experience better.

Explore Bridging Possibilities

Bridging programs are available to some professions and can help to make the transition a smoother one.

www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/working/OI_BRIDGE.html

Explore all possible bridging opportunities. However, keep in mind, your previous experience may not be taken into account. Experience in one regulated health-care profession may not be recognized by another regulated health profession and you may be required to take specified courses to be eligible for certain programs. Keep in mind that bridging programs are typically designed to connect you to the healthcare profession in which you have previous training and experience.

Do thorough research before making big decisions. Check requirements very carefully and keep detailed records of your research. Determine from appropriate regulating authorities - **Access Centre**,

all details about language tests, verification documents and registration requirements. Often, these requirements are non-transferable, meaning one test may not be accepted by multiple educational institutions.

If you plan to apply to a Master's program or a PhD program, universities and colleges have requirements that vary between institutions. By keeping an ongoing list of requirements, you can identify what you need to do for each application and make a considered decision. By understanding the full process before making big decisions, you can minimize your cost and increase your efficiency.

Settlement.org posted a helpful article on choosing post-secondary education. Read **6 Tips for Choosing Post-secondary Education**.

As part of your exploration, determine a realistic timeline for reaching your goal. As you develop your action plan, your advisor can help you understand how to best reach your target.

What are the non-regulated professions?

In exploring options in health care, you might want to consider non-regulated health-care professions. "Non-regulated" means you do not have to register with a regulatory college. You may have the opportunity to use some of your skills in non-regulated healthcare professions but it is likely that you will have minimal clinical interaction and clinical decision-making opportunities.

Entering non-regulated professions

Some professions are not regulated by law, but may have voluntary professional bodies.

In many cases, certification with these professional bodies is often valued within the profession, and is important to finding employment in the field. (from: Work in Your Profession, www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/working/OI_HOW_WORK_PROF.html). Always start your research with a call to the certifying authority. If you plan to take a course or program, make sure it will be recognized by them and will lead to the certification you are targeting.

If your skills are current, up-to-date and the target occupation is non-regulated, you may wish to start job search immediately.

If you decide to pursue additional training, select programs carefully. A good way to gain an understanding of what employers are looking for when hiring is to become familiar with job postings. Note down keywords and phrases. Consider whether you have the qualifications they are seeking. Speak to someone who works in the occupation that you are interested in pursuing and make every effort to attend networking events to connect with other professionals such as www.NetworksForImmigrants.ca. Seek a professional mentor who can assist you along the way. And when you get established and settle in your career, become a mentor.

For some examples of non-regulated alternate jobs in healthcare for nurses, pharmacists, dentists and doctors, check out www.settlement.org. Under the employment tab, you can search for several examples of alternative jobs under “plan my career.” Remember: this is only the start. www.settlement.org/alternativejobs/default.aspx

Find Titles of Occupations

If having a list of occupations might help you, begin a catalogue of potential options. You will also need to think about how your skills, competencies and interests fit with specific occupations and what makes sense for you given your personal circumstances (budget, timeline and long-term goals).

You can use a number of resources to develop a personalized list of occupations:

The **National Occupational Classification (NOC) System** provides a list of titles by sector. You can search the NOC by occupational structure and then by skill type. For example, (3) is health.

You will find a comprehensive list of both regulated and non-regulated healthcare professions. The NOC provides you with valuable information such as example titles, main duties of the occupation and employment requirements. This information can be helpful in understanding different occupations, how they relate to your previous experience, and, how to develop content for your resume and cover letters.

Use specialty sites to research occupations. Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com) is an interactive career guide featuring multimedia interviews with real people in every career, in-depth occupational profiles and information on colleges and universities. Career cruising also allows you to search by a “health cluster” of occupations for education and careers. You may find additional occupations that you previously did not know about. Your advisor can help you navigate this site effectively.

Review university and college online calendars regularly to familiarize yourself with different programs. Book an appointment with an academic advisor to get a better understanding of the programs you are interested in pursuing. Come prepared to ask important questions.

Think Outside the Box

Consider other industries where you can transfer your skills, such as the bio-economy sector. This emerging industry offers a range of opportunities. BioTalent Canada is the Human Resources hub of Canada’s bio-economy. A non-profit national organization, BioTalent Canada anticipates needs and creates opportunities, connecting employers with job seekers and delivering human resource, information and skills development tools to the bio-economy.

BioTalent Canada provides information on the field, current job postings and career profiles, which gives you a better understanding of different positions available in this up and coming growth sector.

Study Job Postings

Take time to analyze positions you are interested in pursuing. Get to know:

- ✓ **Job titles**
- ✓ **Job descriptions**
- ✓ **Mandatory requirements including certifications (for non-regulated positions), memberships and education**
- ✓ **Typical salary**
- ✓ **Preferred experience**
- ✓ **Preferred education**
- ✓ **Full-time and part-time job availability in this area**

Learn how to compare the skills and experience you have against the skills and experience an employer wants. Get in the habit of reviewing and analyzing jobs postings. Identify what you have and what you need. It is also helpful to identify what you don’t know so you can review key words, note potential courses and certifications. Get to know job-related keywords - terms, designations, certifications often repeated in job profiles - that you are not familiar with, write them down and look them up to increase your understanding of the field.

Regardless of what occupation you target, it is important to find out what the professional competencies are. If you already have them, promote them. If you need them, find a way to develop and strengthen them.

Research:

Labour Market Information (LMI) and Occupational Research

You will need to understand how labour market information (LMI) and occupational research impact your decisions. This information helps you select healthcare professions with good prospects. Where LMI focuses on the broad picture (macro), occupational research focuses on specific information about different types of positions (micro).

According to the **Guide to Using Labour Market Information in Ontario**, LMI addresses questions such as:

- What are the highest paying occupations?
- What geographic regions have the brightest employment prospects?
- How are different segments of the population faring in the labour market?
- What jobs are employers having difficulty filling?
- What types of training and education do employers require of prospective employees?
- At what age does the typical worker retire?
- What occupations are projected to grow the fastest?

LMI can shed light on these and many other important questions related to the operation and the performance of the labour market. It can come in different forms depending on the needs of users:

- For individuals making career choices, the most relevant LMI is about available occupational options, training and educational opportunities, the current labour market environment, and future trends.
- For job seekers, LMI may be about job opportunities, skill level requirements, working conditions, prevailing wage rates, and effective job search strategies.

Occupational Research considers whether a career option is a good one for you and addresses questions such as:

- What are the personal qualifications, skills and abilities required for this position?
- What education, training and experience are required?
- What is the nature of the work – earnings, working condition?
- Who are the typical employers?

How to Research

Start simple. A lot of information is available. The **“Working in Canada”** tool provides simple steps to help get you started. Explore careers by occupation, wages and outlook, education program, skills and knowledge. Revisit the **NOC website** for additional information on main duties of a position and employment requirements of a target healthcare position.

Start at the end

Think about the goal you want to achieve and work backwards from the goal. This helps you develop the most effective strategy.

Job that I want▶ What do I need?▶ How do I get it?

Training/Education

In choosing educational programs, consider how the training program you are considering will prepare you for employment in the future. Do your research.

- ✓ Is this position in demand? How do you know? What are the demographics?
- ✓ Who are the typical employers? How is this industry doing?
- ✓ Does the program have a co-op/internship associated with it?
- ✓ How long is the program? Do they do Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR)? **Prior Learning Assessment** is a process that helps adults to demonstrate and obtain recognition for learning that they acquire outside of formal education settings. PLAR focuses on what adults know and can do.
- ✓ Are the prospects good not only at present time, but also at the time you would potentially be graduating?
- ✓ Do any bridging programs exist?

Different Ways to conduct research

- ✓ Internet/social media
- ✓ Occupational profiles/competency checklists
- ✓ Business section at the library
- ✓ Newspaper articles/newscasts
- ✓ Informational interviews - Talk to people who do the job that you're interested in doing, book appointments with university/college career counselors

This helps you better understand the impact of your choices.



What do other health-care professionals do?

No two health-care professionals are exactly the same. There are similarities, of course, but also many unique skills and competencies. It is important to network and connect with other health-care professionals to find out what they know, and what they are doing. However, it is equally important to know yourself and make sure it's a good choice for you. Following someone else's goals may not work for you.

When weighing alternatives, consider how your skills transfer into different areas. You may make some logical connections, between your previous experience and current options. For example, if you have experience in research, you may reasonably choose to pursue that as an option; if you had experience in pathology, you may choose to investigate pathology assistant (non-regulated) positions in that area. It follows that your chances of employment likely increase when you have previous experience in a specific area and it may help expedite the process to get recognized designation from a certifying body. On the other hand, it doesn't mean you have to pursue those options. You may focus on something entirely new. Ultimately, you need to consider your timelines, your budget and your end goal.

Do the work to identify *YOUR* skills, strengths and needs. Then connect to viable options.

Thank you for using Module 1 of the Alternative Career Toolkit. Share your feedback with us via this [link](#).

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