

National Scan of IEHP Associations and Support Services in Canada: Updated as of March 30, 2021

Introduction

WES recently conducted an internet scan to identify and document the number and nature of initiatives that provide information, training, networks, and supports to internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) in Canada. Developing this living document can help to build out a fuller picture of ongoing initiatives across the country and create a resource to inform activities related to organizing, coordination, program development, and policy advocacy in this area.

Initiatives and organizations have been broadly categorized by:

- Geography (province, territory, or pan-Canadian)
- Target population (internationally trained physicians/international medical graduates (IMGs), internationally educated nurses (IENs), or other internationally educated health professionals, including individuals trained in dentistry, pharmacy, midwifery, sonography, or other regulated health care professions)
- Representation—whether the initiative represents an association/network, or support/service¹

The scan identifies a broad ecosystem of stakeholders and initiatives engaged in supporting commensurate employment of IEHPs across all regions of Canada. There are both government and grassroots approaches. Coordination among stakeholders is complicated by the federal-provincial separation of powers in relation to education, skills training, and health care. In the future, it will be important to consider how different approaches and levels of system stakeholders can be most effectively connected for broader impact.

¹ Programs supporting entry-level employment in the health care sector are not included in this scan. Private, for-profit exam preparation services are also not included, as these services are unregulated.

Overview of Key Actors and Stakeholders

Internationally Trained Physicians / International Medical Graduates (IMGs)

Networks / Associations	Services / Supports	Total
15	33	48

Networks and Associations: Across Canada, internationally trained physicians have organized both formally and informally into professional associations and networks. Social media and professional networking websites (for example, Facebook and LinkedIn) have facilitated organizing by IMGs, both to meet advocacy goals and to form study groups for medical licensing exams.

It is common for these online groups, such as **IMG Canada**, to have many thousands of members. Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs) for IMGs operate in several provinces across the country, supported by **Local Immigration Partnerships** (LIPs) and Immigrant Employment Councils, such as **TRIEC**. Some associations, such as the **Alberta International Medical Graduates Association** or **Foundation of International Medical Graduates**, have obtained non-profit status.

Services and Supports: Bridging programs have been developed to support access to professional licensure or registration as well as alternative employment, such as the **Internationally Trained Medical Doctors (ITMD) Bridging Program** through Ryerson University. In general, there is limited availability of seats in bridging programs supporting professional licensure; for example, the program for IMGs at **l'Université de Sherbrooke** in Quebec offers only three spots a year.

The **CÉDIS** (Centre d'évaluation des diplômés internationaux en santé) in Quebec and the **Non-Licensed IMG Support Program** through the University of Saskatchewan are two interesting examples of providing integrated support. They offer services to IMGs applying to residency programs, as well as advice to those who want to pursue meaningful alternative health care careers.

Practice-Ready Assessment (PRA) programs for IMGs are offered in seven provinces, through both universities and medical licensing bodies. While PRA programs have been standardized under the Medical Council of Canada since 2018, there is significant variation in how they are funded, governed, and implemented. Competency evaluation experts from the **Touchstone Institute** have been closely involved in PRA development.

Academics and policy analysts are engaged in research and advocacy in support of commensurate employment of IMGs across the country. Publicly funded information hubs (for example, the Vancouver Public Library InfoCentre – **Physician Alternative Careers**) also exist in several provinces. Finally, the emergence of microlending services targeting IMGs (for example, Windmill Microlending – **Helping Immigrants with Physician Training & Credentials in Canada**) speaks to the tremendous financial costs associated with training and licensing processes.

Internationally Trained Nurses (IENs)

Networks / Associations	Services / Supports	Total
12	33	45

Networks and Associations: Similar to IMGs, IENs across Canada have become organized online through social media and professional networking websites. These networks may be organized by geography (**IENs of BC**) or by ethnicity (**Pinoy Internationally Educated Nurses for Canadian Registration**), and may be dedicated to study support or advocacy goals. Many have several thousand members.

Services and Supports: IENs may also access bridging programs that support licensure or registration or bridging to alternative careers. These services are offered through community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions (including colleges and CÉGEPS) across Canada. In many cases, demand for enrollment in bridging programs that support professional licensure of IENs is very high. In recent years, demand for **Bridge to Canadian Nursing** at Mount Royal University in Calgary has **doubled**.

Particularly in light of COVID-19, provinces with critical nurse staffing shortages are apparently investing in programs and resources that support more effective assessments of IEN training and matching with employment opportunities. For example, the province of New Brunswick published the **Nursing Resource Strategy for New Brunswick** in July 2019, which appears to be linked to the development of the **Welcome New Brunswick - IEN career navigator pilot**, launched shortly afterward.

Several competency-based assessment programs for IENs have also been developed and implemented by Touchstone Institute in collaboration with provincial regulatory bodies, including the Alberta Registered Nurses Assessment Program (**ARNAP**) and the Internationally Educated Nurses Competency Assessment Program (**IENCAP**) in Ontario.

Internationally Trained Health Professionals (IEHPs)

Networks / Associations	Services / Supports	Total
8	50	58

Networks and Associations: IEHPs (including IMGs, IENs, and individuals trained in dentistry, pharmacy, midwifery, sonography, and other regulated health care professions) have become organized online and in their communities. Examples of these networks include **International Healthcare Graduates in Canada** (LinkedIn group) and the **Immigrant Researchers Support Network** (IRSN) through **Access Alliance** in Ontario.

Services and Supports: IEHPs may also access bridging programs supporting professional licensure, bridging to alternative careers, or both. Existing services target **dentists, medical radiological (x-ray) technologists, and midwives**. As with bridging programs for IMGs and IENs, seats in initiatives supporting professional licensure are limited. For example, the **Degree Completion Program** for internationally trained dentists at McGill University admits just two to three individuals per cohort.

There is a positive trend toward more integrated supports and services for IEHPs in several provinces. Collaborative information and resource hubs supporting IEHPs, such as the University of Manitoba **Access Hub for Internationally Educated Health Professionals** and the **Health Force Integration Research and Education for Internationally Educated Health Professionals** (HIRE IEHPs) project through HealthForceOntario and the University of Toronto, are two such examples.

Appendix:

International Medical Graduates (IMGs): Total n=48

Province	Networks / Associations	Services / Supports
Alberta	1	6
British Columbia	2	5
Manitoba	-	2
New Brunswick	-	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	-	3
Nova Scotia	-	3
Ontario	5	5
Pan-Canadian (P-C)	7	1
PEI	-	-
Quebec	-	4
Saskatchewan	-	3
Territories	-	-
Total	15	33

Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs): Total n=45

Province	Networks / Associations	Services / Supports
Alberta	1	5
British Columbia	2	4
Manitoba	1	3
New Brunswick	-	2
Newfoundland and Labrador	-	1
Nova Scotia	-	3
Ontario	3	7
Pan-Canadian (P-C)	5	1
PEI	-	1
Quebec	-	5
Saskatchewan	-	1
Territories	-	-
Total	12	33

International Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs): Total n=58

Province	Networks / Associations	Services / Supports
Alberta	1	2
British Columbia	-	7
Manitoba	-	3
New Brunswick	-	-
Newfoundland and Labrador	-	-
Nova Scotia	-	4
Ontario	5	28
Pan-Canadian (P-C)	2	2
PEI	-	-
Quebec	-	2
Saskatchewan	-	2
Territories	-	-
Total	8	50