



FOOD AND BEVERAGE ONTARIO

Workshop on Connecting New Canadians to Careers in Food & Beverage Processing

Post-Workshop Report

January 31, 2018



Overview

As part of the Taste Your Future career awareness program, Food and Beverage Ontario (FBO) hosted a workshop on January 16, 2018, in partnership with the City of Brampton's Economic Development office, bringing together food and beverage (F&B) processors with organizations providing employment services to new Canadians. The workshop's objective was to discuss the ways that industry and service providers can work better together to provide career opportunities to Ontario newcomers and benefit from their skills.

Participants discussed the following:

- Perceptions of the F&B industry among newcomers;
- Categories of unfilled positions for which F&B companies are recruiting;
- Challenges newcomers face accessing these positions;
- Challenges employers face in recruiting newcomers to fill open positions;
- Opportunities for greater collaboration between industry, employment service providers and newcomers seeking jobs; and
- Ways to encourage newcomers to consider employment opportunities in the F&B industry.

The workshop featured networking opportunities, presentations, a panel discussion, and group discussions to explore the opportunities and challenges that exist in recruiting newcomers for employment in Ontario's food and beverage processing industry.

Presentations included an overview of the Taste Your Future program and the growth of the F&B industry in the City of Brampton.

The panel discussion focused on strategies for recruiting newcomers and overcoming barriers to recruitment. The following panelists shared their experience and expertise:

- Kristi Barnes, Human Resources Director of Performance Culture, Maple Lodge Farms
- Althea Samuels, Youth Job Link Specialist (Employment Services), Centre for Education and Training
- Deanna Zenger, Ontario Regional Coordinator, Food Processing Human Resources Council (FPHRC)
- Isabel Dopta, Communications Director and Taste Your Future Program Manager, Food and Beverage Ontario

This report summarizes observations, recommendations and next steps. A full list of workshop participants is included at the end of this report.

Workshop's Key Findings

- **Industry and service providers need a forum for collaboration.** Consistent and sustained opportunities for collaboration are needed to better serve newcomers in their search for a job in the F&B industry. If there is a forum for collaboration and/or if the two groups know where to find each other, they are more likely to share resources and F&B processors can better convey what the industry has to offer.
- **Employers need to invest in adequate training.** Many newcomers struggle because they are not fluent in English. Providing in-house, sector-specific language and other training will encourage better integration in the workplace. In addition, service providers indicated that they would like industry to be more involved in raising awareness of services available through the newcomer employment sector to better position newcomers for success.
- **Retention is a significant problem.** Industry representatives indicated that sometimes newcomers see these positions as a temporary or short-term job before moving on to a long-term career in another industry. This contributes to high turnover. Refocusing efforts on fully preparing newcomers for what to expect in these jobs, offering additional incentives, and outlining the path to promotion can help to rectify these challenges.
- **There is a disconnect between employer and newcomer expectations.** Employers and service providers need to address newcomer expectations by providing a clear picture of the career pathway and advancement and transition opportunities for prospective employees. Education and awareness are key in attracting newcomers for the longer-term.
- **Recruiting for foundational positions is a challenge.** There's a stigma against foundational-level jobs in the F&B industry and qualified newcomers may therefore be unwilling to work in these positions. Where possible, organizations can connect newcomers with a mentor or peer who has successfully made the transition. Pairing them with people who have been in their shoes is meaningful and powerful.
- **Newcomers have negative or inaccurate perceptions of the F&B processing industry:** All attendees agreed this is a gap that needs to be rectified by generating awareness about the industry and its opportunities.
- **Employers need to hear more about the benefits of hiring newcomers.** Small companies who do not have an HR department often discredit candidates who are non-citizens. More can be done to educate these employers about the benefits of hiring newcomers.
- **Service providers and employers need to work collaboratively on job postings.** Together, both can create job postings and descriptions that are clear and map back to the skills of newcomers. This collaboration should also raise awareness of career opportunities as they arise and identify gaps in training as they relate to skills.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the feedback from participants and the above findings. While FBO, through the Taste Your Future program, is well-suited to support many of the findings above, the organization can only be successful with the participation of employers and service providers and with additional funding. Where possible, employers and service providers can also collaborate directly, sharing information with each other to better enable collaboration.

1. **Establish a permanent forum to drive collaboration**

With an abundance of expertise both within industry and the newcomer employment services sector, a regular forum for collaboration between the partners would be mutually beneficial. Such a forum should be established, meeting regularly on at least a semi-annual basis. FBO can assist in facilitating this forum, though funding may be required to support event organization and logistics. As part of this forum, workshops like the one held in Brampton in January 2018 should be held on a regional basis to ensure representative input from organizations across the province, to broaden engagement opportunities, and to maintain province-wide momentum.

2. **Develop newcomer-focused content on the F&B sector**

Both industry and service providers identified a need to raise awareness among newcomers and influence perceptions of the industry as an attractive place to establish a career. This content should include detailed and clear descriptions of the work environment and job roles, and should be available at multiple stages of the recruitment process including in information sessions, job descriptions and interviews. This content should be used by newcomer employment service providers in counselling newcomers on job opportunities in food and beverage processing. Content should be created in a coordinated way by Taste Your Future, employers, service providers and associations.

In addition, specific content should be developed to outline the possibilities for long-term career progression. This content should cover a range of skill levels and specializations, and feature relatable success stories.

3. **Establish a distribution network for newcomer-focused content on F&B careers**

Both industry and the Taste Your Future campaign are one step removed from a newcomer audience. In many cases, service providers have developed robust communication channels to reach their newcomer clients directly. FBO, through Taste Your Future, should develop an inventory of the most effective channels used by service providers to reach a newcomer audience—for example, email newsletters, social media, and/or websites, along with widely-used languages other than English. With this inventory, FBO and its partners should develop a plan of action for content creation that outlines frequency of communication, languages for translation, and the most appropriate channel (for example, whether this information would be most credible coming from service providers, FBO, or employers).

To guide and support the creation of relevant, credible and useful content, Taste Your Future should create a volunteer working group with regular meetings in person or remotely

to create content and facilitate its distribution to a network of service providers.

4. Identify and promote services to employers

With a large number of service providers and programs, employers would benefit from a better understanding of opportunities for collaboration with newcomer organizations. Creating an inventory of the newcomer service provider programs specific to the F&B sector, and promoting these programs to employers, could help improve take-up and lead to more job placements. FBO through Taste Your Future can assist in making connections between newcomer organizations and employers.

5. Empower peer success stories

For many prospective employees, hearing from peers who have been through the hiring process—and who can speak to opportunities for career progression—is a particularly impactful and credible communication channel. Taste Your Future should work with employers as well as with service providers to identify spokespeople who are successfully building careers in food and beverage processing—the same way Taste Your Future has identified students and young professionals to act as industry ambassadors with their peers. Additionally, Taste Your Future should identify and facilitate opportunities for these ambassadors to share their stories and experiences at relevant conferences, industry/sector meetings, recruitment events, and through original content.

Next Steps

Following the January 2018 workshop—and at the request of attendees—FBO shared the contact list for all attendees to encourage open lines of communication and further collaboration.

Building on this desire to keep the conversation going, FBO should consider coordinating a follow-up meeting (in person or remotely) with a smaller volunteer group made up of representatives from industry and service providers to provide feedback to the Taste Your Future program on the above recommendations. This group could become a more permanent working group, as outlined above.

Appendix: Workshop Attendees

Attendee List - Newcomer Workshop (January 16, 2018 - Brampton)			
First Name	Last Name	Role	Organization
Dima	Alkabani	Programs Manager	Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
Sandra	Araujo-Behal	Employment Consultant	Job Skills
Kristi	Barnes	Human Resources Director of Performance Culture	Maple Lodge Farms
Ophelia	Barnes	Employment Relations Liaison, Community Connects	John Howard Society Peel-Halton-Dufferin
Virginie	Caya-Trottier	Talent Acquisition Senior Advisor, Human Resources	Saputo
Shalini	da Cunha	Executive Director	Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council
Bren	De Leeuw	Director - EMC Food, Beverage, Bio & Ag Program	EMC
Isabel	Dopta	Director of Communications, Taste Your Future Program Manager	Food and Beverage Ontario
Mohamed	Elsayed	Talent Acquisition Manager	Maple Lodge Farms
Neela	Gomes	Director - Human Resources	Cardinal Meat Specialists
Craig	Griffith		90TLR
Judith	Hewko	Program Coordinator Economic Integration	Newcomer Centre of Peel
Nancy	Klassen	Associate Director - HR	Kerr Bros. Ltd.
Amanda	Leard	Sector Manager, Food & Beverage	City of Brampton (Economic Development & Culture)
Silvia	Lubecki	Employment Consultant, Brampton Employment Services	COSTI Immigrant Services
Tom	Lusis	Talent Attraction Initiative	County Wellington Economic Development
Fazan	Malik		Premier Employment
Warren	Morris	VP - Operations	Greenhouse Juice Co.
Shivani	Patel		Conestoga College
Althea	Samuels	Youth Job Link Specialist, Employment Services	Centre for Education and Training
Jason	Sandhu		Premier Employment
Robyn	Scotland	Human Resources Coordinator	Foray Group
Annie	Singh	Manager, Employer Relations	Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council
Amal	Soliman		Nubia Food and Beverage
Artan	Spahiu	Community Resource Worker	Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
Josh	Stewart	Program Facilitator Economic Integration	Newcomer Centre of Peel
Angela	Tellez-Lance	Director of Operations, Guelph Food Innovation Centre	University of Guelph

Kumanan	Thanikachalam	Employer Liaison/Career Specialist	Centre for Education and Training
Ivan	Todorovski	Business Development Advisor	Newcomer Centre of Peel
Lina	Varriano	Employer Engagement Specialist	Newcomer Centre of Peel
Randy	Winslow	Sales Manager - Canada	Langguth
Isabella	Yan	JSW Facilitator	Peel Multicultural Council
Hina	Zaidi	Permanent Placement Consultant	Newcomer Centre of Peel
Deanna	Zenger	Ontario Regional Coordinator	Food Processing Human Resources Council