

English Where it Counts: Engaging Rural Employers in Workplace English Success

SPELL (Sector Partnerships for Enhanced Language Learning)

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YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs

As a multi-service organization committed to building healthy communities, the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth offers a variety of programming that supports newcomer settlement and integration.

35 years of providing province- wide support for employment, language and settlement services.



Resilience

Innovation

Community

Economic pillars

“Rural communities in Nova Scotia are like no other. They are places of strength, creativity, generosity, and grit. They know what it means to face hardship – and to rise above it, together.” ~ *Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia*

Rejuvenation



Immigration is a key driving force behind rejuvenation of rural Nova Scotia. Why are the rural areas important?

Why are newcomer staff so important for rural Nova Scotia?



Nova Scotia, along with other Atlantic Provinces, has one of the higher percentages of workers over 65 (22.2%), with a higher number in rural areas.



The prime working-age (25–54) is declining in Nova Scotia

The major age group of newcomers settling in Nova Scotia is 25 to 34.

The number one concern for newcomers starting work in NS is usually related to language and communication.

Workplace English proficiency

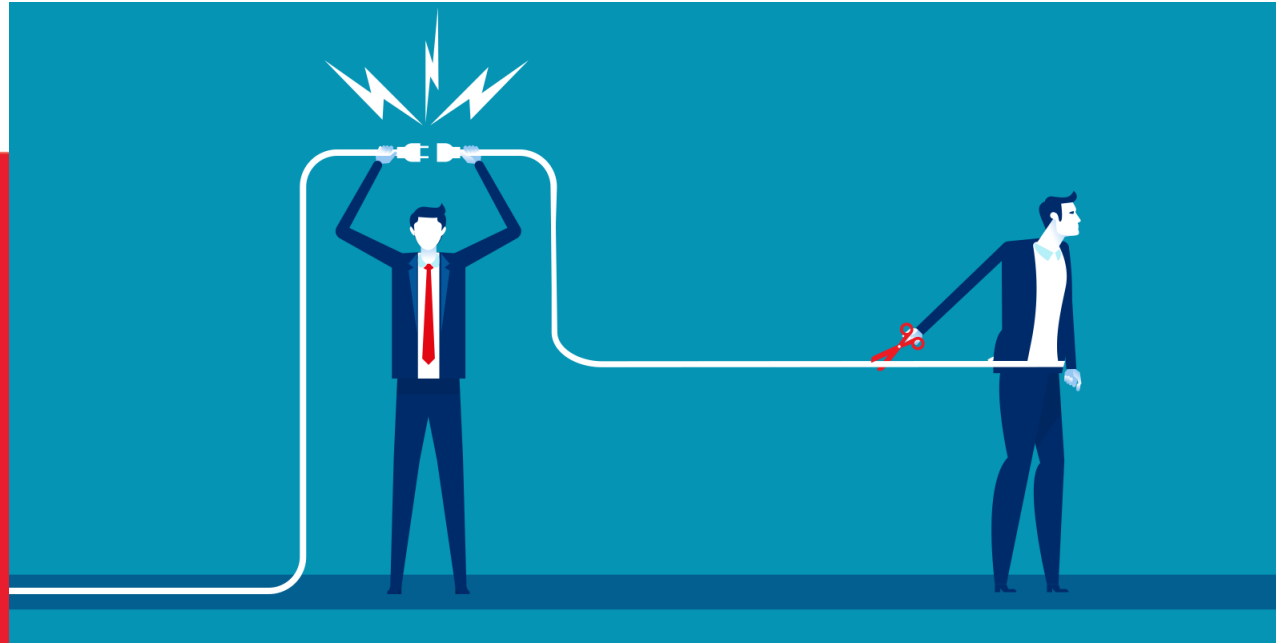
- Many newcomers worry about understanding instructions, workplace jargon, informal rules, communication styles, safety protocols, or communicating with colleagues and supervisors.
- Limited English can affect **confidence, job performance, and opportunities for advancement.**

After compliance and documentation, the biggest concern for companies hiring newcomers in Nova Scotia is workplace communication and English proficiency.

Language & Communication

- Employers worry that newcomer staff may not fully understand instructions, workplace safety protocols, or client/customer communication needs.
- Miscommunication can affect **productivity, safety, and service quality.**

Where is the disconnect?



How We Make the Connection

Preconceived Challenges by small rural companies	Reality – Support
Limited resources – small staff numbers make flexibility for supporting classes tough.	The YMCA Immigrant Services offers English programs that have flexibility. Early mornings, after work, evenings, in person and online.
Loss of work time – staff off the floor reduces productivity.	Most English programs offer classes that are offered twice a week for approximately 1.5 hours each.
Administrative burden – paperwork, coordination, or dealing with external providers. Some small companies don't have an HR Dept.	Employers need only provide staff names and contact information and approval. Program staff make it easy by checking client eligibility, registration, and class placement tests when needed. Meetings with employers take no more than 15 minutes twice in 20 weeks.
Return on investment unclear – difficulty measuring results.	Feedback from employers and clients indicate more confident and dedicated staff, along with promotability.
Resistance from staff – employees may feel nervous or embarrassed.	Employers are provided with tips on how to talk with immigrant staff about English classes and posters to garner interest.

Rural Partnerships



Support for rural businesses and newcomer staff in Nova Scotia



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YREACH

Funded by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

NOVA SCOTIA
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LINC Language Instruction
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