

## Chapter 8

# Economy – Coordinating English-Language Programs

### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of the Economy (Ministry) is responsible for attracting immigrants<sup>1</sup> to the province, and for assisting and facilitating their settlement<sup>2</sup> and integration into Saskatchewan communities and workplaces. The ability to understand and speak English is integral for immigrants to become self-sufficient in Saskatchewan. It is important that the Ministry coordinates English-language programs so that Saskatchewan immigrants can secure jobs and contribute to the province's economy.

This chapter sets out the results of our audit of the Ministry's processes for coordinating English-language programs that assist in employment and settlement of recent immigrants over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan. It includes five recommendations to assist the Ministry in improving its processes for coordinating these programs.

The Ministry needs to improve its oversight of provincially-funded English-language programs to ensure that they are performing and delivering as expected. While the Ministry receives performance reports on student progress in English-language programs, it has not assessed whether all of the agencies providing the programs are meeting the Ministry's expectations.

In addition, the Ministry lacks information about federally-funded English-language programs in the province. This information would help the Ministry conduct a system-wide assessment of the programs offered in Saskatchewan, which would help it make decisions about the nature, extent, and location of provincially-funded programs.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

*The Ministry of the Economy Regulations, 2014* gives the Ministry responsibility for facilitating the integration of immigrants into Saskatchewan's economy. This includes the responsibilities for:

- › Attracting immigrants to the province to contribute to the economy and to meet labour market needs for employers
- › Assisting immigrants and refugees in settling and integrating in Saskatchewan communities and workplaces
- › Facilitating the acceptance and reception of immigrants and refugees in Saskatchewan communities and workplaces

<sup>1</sup> Immigrants include all residents who were not born in Canada. There are two types of these residents: non-permanent and permanent residents. Non-permanent residents include temporary residents and international students.

<sup>2</sup> Settlement is the integration of immigrants into society, including creating community connections and labour market access [www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/ctf/ctf-guide2-2011.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/ctf/ctf-guide2-2011.pdf) (3 March 2015).



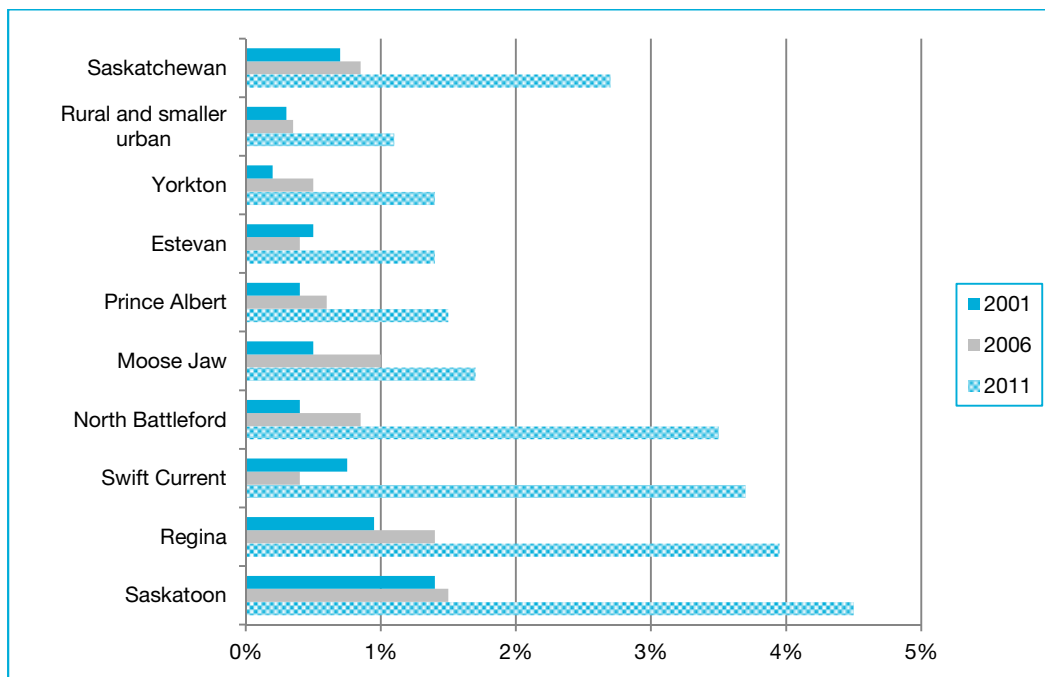
In its *Plan for 2014-15*, the Ministry has identified attracting and retaining skilled and knowledgeable workers from across Canada and around the world as a priority.<sup>3</sup> The Plan notes that the Ministry should:

- › Work with the Government of Canada to increase permanent immigration to Canada
- › Increase settlement support services such as language training to assist in the attraction and retention of new Canadians to Saskatchewan<sup>4</sup>

## 2.1 Immigrants as Source of Labour Supply

As part of Saskatchewan’s workforce strategy, the Government has anticipated the need for an increase in workers. It has identified workers from other countries as a source of the province’s future labour supply to replace the portion of Saskatchewan’s population who are retiring from the workforce, and to address anticipated labour force growth.<sup>5</sup> Saskatchewan’s unemployment rate in 2014 was the lowest in Canada at 3.8%.<sup>6</sup> The national unemployment rate was 6.9%.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1 – Recent Immigrants (in Canada for Less Than Five Years), 2001 to 2011



Source: *Sask Trends Monitor*, April 2014.

As shown in **Figure 1**, Saskatchewan’s recent immigrant population has increased as a percentage of total population from approximately 0.85% in 2001 to approximately 2.7% in 2011.<sup>8</sup> From 2006 to 2011, the proportion of Saskatchewan city populations who are recent immigrants has grown from 1.2% in 2006 to 3.7% in 2011.<sup>9</sup> In 2011,

<sup>3</sup> [www.finance.gov.sk.ca/PlanningandReporting/2014-15/EconomyPlan1415.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/PlanningandReporting/2014-15/EconomyPlan1415.pdf) p. 6 (27 October 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> [www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor07c-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor07c-eng.htm) (9 March 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> [www.sasktrends.ca/State of the Cities Report JSGS.pdf](http://www.sasktrends.ca/State of the Cities Report JSGS.pdf) p. 32 (29 October 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

there were approximately 31,000 immigrants in Saskatchewan's labour force<sup>10</sup> (8.9% of the total labour force).<sup>11</sup> This is an increase of 53% from 2008, when approximately 20,200 immigrants were in the labour force (5.9% of the total labour force).<sup>12</sup> According to the 2011 census, 7.6% (approximately 77,000) of Saskatchewan's population were immigrants.

New or recent immigrants are commonly referred to as "newcomers". For newcomers to the province to become self-sufficient, they must be able to understand and speak English. Without these language skills, newcomers face significant challenges in integrating into Canadian society, attending post-secondary education or finding suitable employment. English-language skills are important for immigrants to secure jobs and contribute to the province's economy.

## 2.2 Funding for English-Language Programs

The overall goal of English-language programs is to help new immigrants integrate into Saskatchewan life and secure employment. Both federally- and provincially-funded English-language programs for immigrants exist in Saskatchewan to give immigrants over the age of 18 the opportunity to gain or improve their English-language skills. These programs are provided at no charge to immigrants.

Most of these programs focus on new immigrants over the age of 18, as students younger than age 18 can attend "English as an Additional Language" (EAL) classes in their elementary or high school. EAL classes for students younger than 18 are funded through the provincial Kindergarten to Grade 12 system which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Under the *Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement, 2005*, the federal government (through Citizenship and Immigration Canada) provides programs, such as English-language programs, designed to help settle and integrate immigrants who are *permanent* residents<sup>13</sup> in Saskatchewan.<sup>14</sup> Information on the amount of federal funding specifically for English-language programs is not readily available. The federal government provides funding to:

- › Community-based organizations (e.g., the Regina Open Door Society and the Saskatoon Open Door Society)
- › Regional colleges (e.g., Great Plains College, Southeast College)
- › Saskatchewan Polytechnic (SaskPoly) – the English-language program at SaskPoly is called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC).<sup>15</sup> The LINC program is available only to immigrants who are *permanent* residents of Canada

<sup>10</sup> Labour force includes individuals aged 25-54 [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2012006-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2012006-eng.pdf) (5 February 2015).

<sup>11</sup> [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2012006-eng.pdf](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2012006-eng.pdf) p.47 (5 February 2015).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> A permanent resident in Canada is someone who is not a Canadian citizen but has been granted permission to live and work in Canada without any time limit on their stay. A permanent resident must live in Canada for two of every five years or risk losing his or her permanent resident status.

<sup>14</sup> [www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/agreements/sask/sask-agree-2005.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/agreements/sask/sask-agree-2005.asp) (2 February 2015).

<sup>15</sup> The federal government has entered into a contract with Saskatchewan Polytechnic to provide the LINC program to permanent residents in Saskatchewan. The federal government monitors the delivery of this program under the terms of the contract.



with the purpose of facilitating social, cultural, and economic integration into Canadian society.<sup>16</sup>

The Ministry funds English-language programs for immigrants who do not qualify for federally-funded programs (e.g., non-permanent residents), and programs that target certain types of training that the federal government does not provide (e.g., English for Employment). During 2014, the Ministry funded three English-language programs and piloted two new programs (see **Figure 2**). It engaged non-government agencies (e.g., Regina Open Door Society, Saskatoon Open Door Society, Ukrainian Canadian Congress Saskatoon Branch, Moose Jaw Multicultural Council) and regional colleges to deliver these programs.

In 2013-14, the Ministry provided about \$2.4 million (comprised of \$1.7 million<sup>17</sup> to various non-government agencies and \$660 thousand<sup>18</sup> to regional colleges) for English-language programming and expects to provide similar funding in 2014-15. This includes programs jointly funded with the federal government such as English-language assessments.

**Figure 2—Ministry of the Economy English-Language Programs**

**Stage 1 English:** This program provides foundational language skills that assist in the settlement of immigrants in Saskatchewan and is focused on training immigrants assessed at Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels one to four. This program began in 2009.

**Stage 2 English:** This program assists immigrants who are assessed at CLB levels five to six to participate more fully in social, educational and work-related settings. This program was piloted in 2014.

**Advanced Language Training:** This program provides English-language training to immigrants who are assessed at CLB levels seven to eight. This program was piloted in Saskatoon in 2014.

**English for Employment:** This program assists immigrants assessed at CLB levels three to six in developing the English-language skills required to meet employment-related needs. This program began in 2010.

**English as a Second Language (ESL) training at regional colleges:** In rural areas, regional colleges deliver English-language training similar to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 English programs. This program began in 2009.

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Ministry of the Economy.

The Ministry and the federal government have similar policies that require immigrants who want to attend an English-language program to obtain a language assessment using Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).<sup>19</sup> They provide non-government agencies, regional colleges, and SaskPoly with funds to deliver programs that give immigrants access to English-language assessments. Such assessments describe each immigrant's reading, writing, listening, and speaking ability and use the 12 CLB benchmarks.

## 2.3 Responsibility for English-Language Programs in the Ministry

The Ministry has made its Labour Market Development Division responsible for coordinating English-language programming in the province. As shown in **Figure 3**, the

<sup>16</sup> [www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/liinc/2010/liinc-eval.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/liinc/2010/liinc-eval.pdf) (28 January 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Per briefing note provided by Ministry officials.

<sup>18</sup> Order in Council 352/2013 – funding to regional colleges for “English as a second language”.

<sup>19</sup> Canadian Language Benchmarks are recognized as the official Canadian standards for describing, measuring, and recognizing the language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants in both English and French.

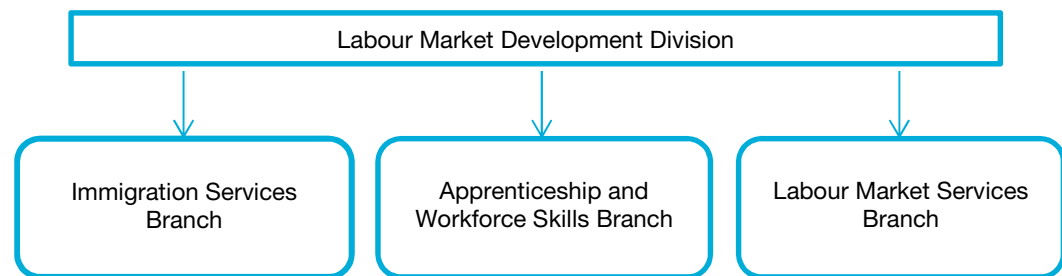
Division has divided the coordination of English-language programs amongst three branches.

The Immigration Services Branch is responsible for outlining the related policies, including policies applicable to regional colleges for English-language programs, and determining the need for English-language programs and subsequent funding.

The Apprenticeship and Workforce Skills Branch is responsible for facilitating communication of grant funding to regional colleges.

The Labour Market Services Branch is responsible for managing the contracts with non-government agencies who deliver provincially-funded English-language programs.

**Figure 3—Ministry of the Economy: Labour Market Development Division**



Source: Adapted from information provided by the Ministry of the Economy.

### 3.0 AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, CRITERIA, AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the Ministry of the Economy had effective processes for coordinating English-language programs that assist in employment and settlement of recent immigrants over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan. We examined the processes the Ministry used for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2014.

For the purpose of this audit, English-language programs are those programs that provide training to recent immigrants over the age of 18 to become proficient in English in order to secure employment.

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry’s processes, we used criteria based on our related work, reviews of literature including reports of other auditors, and consultations with management. Management agreed with the criteria (see **Figure 4**).

We examined the Ministry’s documents, policies, and processes that relate to coordinating English-language programs for recent immigrants over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan. We interviewed management responsible for coordinating English-language programs. We reviewed contracts, grant funding, and other relevant documents that relate to English-language programs to determine whether the Ministry followed its processes.

**Figure 4—Audit Criteria**

Effective processes for coordinating English-language programs that assist in employment and settlement of recent immigrants over the age of 18 include:

- 1. Forecast needs for English-language programs**
  - 1.1 Determine English-language program needs (e.g., numbers of immigrants with English-language training needs, levels and nature of needs, location)
  - 1.2 Identify existing programs available (e.g., programs delivered by federal government, by other provincial agencies, by the Ministry, by immigrant agencies)
  - 1.3 Analyze the gap between existing program capacity and immigrant needs
- 2. Implement a system-wide strategy for English-language programs**
  - 2.1 Set English-language program objectives (e.g., key success factors)
  - 2.2 Consult with agencies for program delivery
  - 2.3 Require use of consistent method to assess English-language skills (e.g., Canadian Language Benchmarks)
  - 2.4 Facilitate communication to immigrants of English-language program options available
  - 2.5 Obtain program resources (e.g., contracts)
- 3. Monitor delivery of the English-language programs**
  - 3.1 Assess key success factors of the programs
  - 3.2 Assess delivery of programs (e.g., contracts)
  - 3.3 Analyze and adjust programs
  - 3.4 Communicate results (i.e., internal and external)

**We concluded that, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry of the Economy had, other than for the following matters, effective processes for coordinating English-language programs that assist in employment and settlement of recent immigrants over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan. The Ministry needs to:**

- › **Develop a formal methodology, including regional analysis, for assessing the demand for English-language program needs**
- › **Obtain information on federally-funded English-language programs to facilitate decisions on the nature and location of provincially-funded English-language programs**
- › **Select specific and measurable targets related to performance indicators for its English-language programs to monitor the effectiveness of program delivery**
- › **Sign agreements with regional colleges that provide English-language programs for the delivery of those programs**
- › **Formally assess whether regional colleges that deliver English-language programs comply with the expectations as set out in its Regional Colleges' Policy Manual**

## 4.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we describe our expectations (in italics), key findings, and recommendations related to the audit criteria in **Figure 4**. In this section, we refer to non-government agencies and regional colleges who deliver provincially-funded English-language programs as “agencies it funds”.

## 4.1 Forecast Needs for English-Language Programs

### 4.1.1 Methodology for Needs Assessment Not Documented

*We expected that the Ministry would determine English-language program needs. This would include identifying the current and future trends in the number of immigrants with English-language training needs, the levels and nature of those needs, and the physical location in Saskatchewan where the needs occur. We also expected the Ministry to identify existing programs available in Saskatchewan and who delivers those programs.*

We found that the Ministry uses an informal process to determine the need for English-language programs.

To determine the general needs of immigrants and where the majority of immigrants settle, each quarter the Ministry obtains and analyzes data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada on various topics. This includes immigration to Saskatchewan by gender, age, source region and country of birth, destination in Saskatchewan, occupation, education level, mother tongue, and official language ability of immigrants aged 15 years and up. It periodically makes a summary of this information publicly available when authorized to do so by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.<sup>20</sup> The last statistical report publicly available at December 2014 was for 2011.

The Ministry tracks where all adult English-language programs are currently offered in Saskatchewan. This includes all provincially- and federally-funded English-language programs. It makes this information publicly available on an interactive map on its website.<sup>21</sup> To make this information accessible to immigrants, the section of the Ministry's website on English-language programs is available in 23 languages other than English.<sup>22</sup>

We found the Ministry considers the number of immigrants on waiting lists for provincially-funded programs and annually discusses demand for training seats<sup>23</sup> (number, location) with agencies it funds. It discusses with the federal government the number of permanent residents on waitlists for federally-funded English-language programs. The Ministry also obtains some information from SaskPoly on the federally-funded English-language programs SaskPoly delivers. For example, SaskPoly advised the Ministry that it foresaw an increased demand for English-language training above CLB level four from permanent residents in the LINC program (see **Section 4.1.2**).

Each quarter, the Ministry receives performance data (e.g., attendance, number of immigrants that have met their learning goals, class utilization statistics) from the agencies it funds. It uses this data to monitor provincially-funded programs.

Also, each quarter, the Ministry obtains information about the utilization of provincially-funded programs. While it receives similar information from regional colleges on jointly-funded programs, we found that it does not receive similar information on federally-funded English-language programs in the province. Although the *Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement, 2005* (section 6.1) includes provisions for Canada to provide

<sup>20</sup> [www.economy.gov.sk.ca/immigration/saskatchewan-immigration-data-and-trends](http://www.economy.gov.sk.ca/immigration/saskatchewan-immigration-data-and-trends) (2 February 2015).

<sup>21</sup> [www.saskatchewan.ca/live/moving-to-saskatchewan/immigrating/find-immigration-services-near-you](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/live/moving-to-saskatchewan/immigrating/find-immigration-services-near-you) (2 February 2015).

<sup>22</sup> [www.economy.gov.sk.ca/immigration/information-in-various-languages/](http://www.economy.gov.sk.ca/immigration/information-in-various-languages/) (2 February 2015).

<sup>23</sup> A training seat is a place available in a classroom session for an individual to receive English-language training.





Saskatchewan with information to aid the province in planning and program delivery, at December 2014, the Ministry had not asked the federal government for information on federally-funded English-language programs. See **Section 4.1.2** for further discussion.

In 2009, when the Ministry began funding Stage 1 English programming, it created a methodology to analyze and decide the number of training seats needed. This methodology uses assumptions such as estimated number of immigrants coming to the province, locations in which immigrants traditionally settle and reside, and past uptake for provincially-funded programs based on language levels. However, it has not updated this methodology since 2009 or tested the validity of its assumptions or the process.

Also, the Ministry has not documented methodologies to collect and analyze regional information for determining the number of training seats needed for English-language programs (see **Figure 2** for listing of provincially-funded programs).

Given that the Ministry involves three different branches in the coordination of English-language programs (see **Figure 3**), documented methodologies would help ensure staff understand the processes the Ministry uses to forecast needs for English-language programs. Documenting its processes and methodology will help facilitate the transfer of knowledge and provide the basis for funding decisions.

A lack of documented methodologies increases the risk that English-language program needs may be inconsistently analyzed each year, or regional English-language program needs may not be met. Also, a lack of periodic reviews of existing methodologies increases the risk of using inaccurate or ineffective processes and missing opportunities to make refinements.

- 1. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy develop a formal methodology, including regional analysis, for assessing the demand for English-language program needs.**

## 4.1.2 English-Language Program Gap Analysis Limited

*We expected the Ministry to analyze annually the gap between existing English-language program capacity (for federally-, provincially-, and jointly-funded programs) and the English-language program needs of immigrants. Such an analysis would help avoid duplication or overlap with federally-funded programs, and identify adjustments to provincially-funded programs so that they complement and/or supplement federally-funded programs.*

We found the Ministry's gap analysis focuses primarily on provincially-funded programs. It reviews past uptake of provincially-funded language programs to help determine the adequacy of the number of provincially-funded training seats and their locations for the upcoming year.

In order to estimate the need for new English-language programs for the upcoming year, we found the Ministry consults several sources such as the 2012 national settlement survey.<sup>24</sup> This survey shows that immigrants had difficulty fitting into the appropriate

<sup>24</sup> BC Stats, *A Model of Settlement of Newcomers to Canada: Saskatchewan Results*, (2013).



labour market in Saskatchewan because they needed a higher level of English-language proficiency. Similarly, through SaskPoly, the Ministry was aware of an increasing demand from permanent residents for English-language programs above CLB level four. In response to this gap in English-language programs, starting in 2014, the Ministry began providing non-government agencies with funding for Stage 2 English and Advanced Language Training programs.

Federally-funded English-language programs are subject to a program evaluation once every four years. The Ministry indicated that it had reviewed the last program evaluation available (a 2010 evaluation). The Ministry receives information on program utilization from regional colleges on jointly-funded English-language programs. It receives limited information from SaskPoly and other agencies that deliver federally-funded English-language programs. However, as described in **Section 4.1.1**, the *Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement, 2005* includes provisions for Canada to provide Saskatchewan with information to aid the province in planning and program delivery. The Ministry does not receive utilization information on federally-funded English-language programs, and does not know if these programs are meeting the needs of immigrants who are permanent residents.

Without obtaining relevant information such as utilization reports or future funding levels of federally-funded programs, the Ministry is unable to assess whether additional or supplemental provincially-funded English-language programs are needed and where. Further, the Ministry does not have all of the relevant information necessary to conduct a system-wide assessment of English-language programs offered throughout the province. The Ministry needs this system-wide information in order to make decisions about the nature, extent, and location of provincially-funded English-language programs.

2. **We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy obtain information on federally-funded English-language programs to facilitate decisions on the nature and location of provincially-funded English-language programs.**

## 4.2 Implement a System-Wide Strategy for English-Language Programs

### 4.2.1 Strategy Incomplete and Performance Targets Not Yet Set

*We expected that the Ministry would set English-language program objectives (e.g., key success factors) and appropriate and measurable performance targets.*

We found that the Ministry developed a performance measurement framework in 2013 for provincially-funded English-language programs. This framework includes:

- › Program objectives (e.g., immigrants are connected and active participants in social and economic networks and the broader community)



- › Desired outcomes (i.e., expected results that the programs are to achieve) (e.g., that individuals have the skills needed to independently perform day-to-day interactions)
- › Performance indicators to measure or gauge success in achieving desired outcomes (e.g., percentage of individuals that have improved their language skills)
- › Performance measurement strategies for each of its English-language programs (e.g., Stage 1 English, English for Employment)

However, the Ministry had not yet developed targets (i.e., specific, measurable goals) for its performance indicators. The Ministry's performance measurement strategies include its strategic outcomes, indicators, and how it will measure them. However, as discussed in **Section 4.1.2**, the Ministry has not conducted a system-wide assessment of English-language programs offered throughout the province. As a result, it does not fully consider the outcomes and impact of federally-funded English-language programs in the development of its performance measurement strategies. See **Recommendation 2**.

We found that the Ministry bases its indicators on accepted practices. Its indicators included the number of hours students spent in real-life learning opportunities, identification and fulfillment of students' learning goals, and percentage of students who had improved their language skills (e.g., reading, writing, speaking).

Also, the Ministry participates in the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Language Training Forum, which is a venue for various levels of government to share best practices related to adult English-language programming. The Ministry indicated that its performance measures align with the performance measures used by the federal government and other provinces to monitor their English-language programs.

However, at December 2014, the Ministry had not yet set performance measure targets for its various English-language programs. Setting targets helps agencies decide how much they plan to achieve by when. This in turn helps agencies determine the necessary resources to deliver a program.

Lack of specific and measurable targets for each of its performance indicators for its English-language programs increases the risk that problems will not be identified and the programs not appropriately resourced (either too many or too few resources). This, in turn, could result in Saskatchewan immigrants not acquiring the English-language skills necessary to enable them to contribute productively to the Saskatchewan workforce.

**3. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy select specific and measurable targets related to performance indicators for its English-language programs to monitor the effectiveness of delivery of the programs.**

The Ministry advised us that it is planning to set targets for its performance indicators in 2015. It noted that it will use the programs' performance data gathered in 2013-14 and 2014-15 to help set reasonable targets for 2015-16.

## 4.2.2 Consults on Needs and Obtains Resources to Deliver English-Language Programs

*We expected that the Ministry would consult with agencies delivering English-language programs to obtain information on immigrant needs. It would secure resources to deliver programs thus filling the gap between federal English-language offerings and the needs of new immigrants. The Ministry would require the use of a consistent method to assess English-language skills. The Ministry would facilitate communication to immigrants on the English-language program options available to them.*

Since both the federal government and the Ministry fund English-language programs, the Ministry communicates with the federal government and the agencies it funds each year to determine the number of available training seats and related provincial funding. Also, the Ministry considers the past performance data of provincially-funded programs and estimates the number of individuals requiring language assessments<sup>25</sup> in each location. It provides funding to regional colleges to deliver English-language programs in rural areas and smaller urban centres (e.g., Swift Current, Yorkton) and to non-government agencies to deliver English-language programs in larger urban centres (e.g., Regina, Moose Jaw).

We found the Ministry uses two different ways to set out its expectations for agencies it funds – one for regional colleges and one for non-government agencies.

The Ministry sets out its expectations for English-language programs delivered by regional colleges in the Ministry's *Regional Colleges' Policy Manual for English-language programs* (Manual). The Ministry developed the Manual in conjunction with the regional colleges. The Ministry provides regional colleges with the Manual via a file-sharing website.<sup>26</sup> The Manual describes the elements of the program, the performance measurement strategy framework, and the responsibilities of the regional colleges and the Ministry. However, the Ministry and the regional colleges that deliver English-language programs do not have a formal arrangement (e.g., a contract) that binds the regional colleges to meeting the expectations set out in the Manual. Lack of a written agreement increases the risk that regional colleges may not deliver English-language programs as expected by the Ministry.

### **4. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy sign agreements for the delivery of English-language programs with regional colleges that deliver those programs.**

The Ministry also did not include in the Manual specific targets for regional colleges that set out what the Ministry expects the regional colleges to achieve and by when. As noted in **Section 4.2.1**, the Ministry has not yet set performance targets for its English-language programs.

The Ministry uses contracts with non-government agencies that provide English-language programs to set out its expectations for English-language programs. For the

<sup>25</sup> Language assessments evaluate an individual's language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, in accordance with Canadian Language Benchmarks.

<sup>26</sup> Both regional college administrators and Ministry staff can use this file-sharing website.



contracts we tested, we found the contracts clearly outlined the responsibilities of each party. The contracts also included reporting requirements that aligned with the performance measures in the Ministry's performance measurement framework. The Ministry also consults with these non-government agencies annually when new contracts are signed or when it is considering offering new English-language programs.

Both the Ministry and the federal government require the agencies they fund to re-assess the language proficiency of students (i.e., CLB assessment) in English-language programs while the students are in a program. We found that these agencies, for provincially-funded programs, provided the Ministry with quarterly reports on the progress of students' language skills, as required.

The Ministry uses its website as one of the primary sources of information for immigrants to access information about English-language programs and their availability. As previously noted, the section of the Ministry's website on English-language programs is available in 23 languages other than English. Its website sets out who to contact for language assessments and how to reach them. It includes links to "Learning English" and details how to contact non-government agencies, regional colleges, or SaskPoly for English-language program options.

In addition to the website, the Ministry also communicates English-language program options to non-government agencies that immigrants are most likely to contact for information (e.g., Regional Newcomer Gateways).<sup>27</sup>

## 4.3 Monitor Delivery of the English-Language Programs

### 4.3.1 Need to Assess Program Expectations

*We expected that the Ministry would assess the key success factors (English-language program objectives) and the impacts and outcomes achieved through the delivery of English-language programs. We also expected that the Ministry would use its analysis of programs to adjust English-language programs.*

The Ministry uses its performance measurement framework and strategies, described in **Section 4.2.1**, to evaluate the success of its English-language programs in Saskatchewan.

We found the Ministry's processes to assess the performance of non-government agencies and regional colleges also differed.

For non-government agencies, the Ministry requires that it assess whether each non-government agency fulfilled the Ministry's expectations set out in contracts. The Ministry's processes require that it conduct at least one interim financial review (e.g., monitor to determine whether costs incurred were allowed under the contract), at least one activity review (e.g., verify the program was run), and a final review (e.g., verify that key deliverables outlined in the contract were completed). For the contracts of non-

<sup>27</sup> Saskatchewan has 11 Regional Newcomer Gateways where immigrants can access information, assessments, settlement advisors, and other supports to help them make the transition to life in Saskatchewan.

government agencies we tested, we found that the Ministry completed this monitoring when required, and did not identify any significant compliance or performance issues.

For regional colleges, we found that the Ministry had not formally assessed whether the regional colleges were meeting the Ministry's expectations as set out in the Manual. If the Ministry does not monitor and assess whether the regional colleges' English-language programs are meeting the Ministry's expectations, it does not know if its funding of approximately \$660 thousand annually for these programs is achieving the results it expects.

**5. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy formally assess whether regional colleges that deliver English-language programs meet its expectations as set out in its Regional Colleges' policy manual.**

As part of its performance measurement strategy, the Ministry indicated that it expects to evaluate the regional college English-language program in 2015-16.

We found that the Ministry uses its analysis to make adjustments to its programs. As described in **Section 4.1.2**, the Ministry arranged for two new English-language programs to be offered in 2014. The Ministry also arranged for the adjustment of class times for some programs in order to accommodate students who were employed.

As previously noted, each quarter the Ministry obtains performance reports (e.g., students' CLB progress and learning goals fulfilled) from agencies it funds. For 2013-14, the Ministry compiled this reporting information by program into an annual internal performance report. The report summarizes data, trends, and highlights key indicators and outcomes (e.g., number of self-identified learning goals fulfilled, improvements in CLB levels) included in the performance measurement strategies for the Ministry's English-language programs. The Ministry distributes this report to its branches within the Labour Market Development Division (see **Figure 3**). Because it does not have performance targets, as noted in **Section 4.2.1**, the report does not show whether the Ministry's progress meets its expectations.

As recommended in **Section 4.2.1**, the Ministry needs to set specific and measurable targets related to performance indicators for its English-language programs to determine whether its progress meets its expectations.

### 4.3.2 Identified Results Communicated

*We expected that the Ministry would communicate the results of English-language programs to key stakeholders. Key stakeholders would include non-government agencies, regional colleges, and the public.*

We saw evidence that the Ministry communicated the results of its English-language programs to stakeholders that it had identified in its analysis. For example, it shared the annual results of specific program data (e.g., Stage 1 English) with the non-government agencies that deliver those programs. The results included the attendance levels, number of immigrants with improved English skills, and the number of hours each class spent in real-life learning opportunities for each agency.



Periodically, the Ministry uses conferences or forums to share its program results. For example, in September 2014, the Ministry presented information about its English-language program outcomes to the participants as part of a provincial conference. The participants in the conference included representatives from Regional Newcomer Gateways, non-government agencies offering English-language programs, SaskPoly, and regional colleges.

The Ministry uses regular meetings with non-government agencies and regional colleges to communicate trends from performance reports. It uses its annual report to provide legislators and the public with some information on the Ministry's activities to support the settlement of immigrants. For example, the Ministry's 2013-14 annual report includes information on the number of non-government agencies it funded to provide settlement support services such as English-language programs.

However, current reporting presents limited information on whether the Ministry was successful in achieving its strategic priority of "increasing permanent immigration to Canada" and "increasing settlement support to assist in the attraction and retention of new Canadians to Saskatchewan."<sup>28</sup> Setting and using targets will enable the Ministry to determine its progress and improve its reports about its English-language programs to the public.

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<sup>28</sup> [www.finance.gov.sk.ca/PlanningandReporting/2014-15/EconomyPlan1415.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.sk.ca/PlanningandReporting/2014-15/EconomyPlan1415.pdf) p. 6 (1 April 2015).