

Chapter 19

Immigration and Career Training—Coordinating English-Language Programs

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By January 2021, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training had made limited progress towards implementing the two outstanding recommendations on coordinating English-language programs made in our 2015 audit.

The Ministry is in the process of updating its contract management handbook to guide its fall 2021 procurement and contracting process for English-language programs. It expects this process to provide the Ministry with estimated English-language program demand information (i.e., number of anticipated program participants).

Six of Saskatchewan's regional colleges deliver English-language programming on behalf of the Ministry. These include Carlton Trail, Southeast, Cumberland, Great Plains, North West, and Parkland.

The Ministry changed how it expects the six regional colleges to measure outcomes and report on their delivery of English-language programs. As of January 2021, the colleges are in the process of implementing these changes. The Ministry plans to assess whether colleges meet the Ministry's program delivery expectations in summer 2021.

Without clear assessment of client needs, and whether provincial programs meet those needs, the Ministry may not know if provincial English-language skills programs are sufficient and/or necessary. It also may not know if the programs are effective in assisting newcomers in improving their English-language skills.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Ministry of Immigration and Career Training helps individuals prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. The Ministry also leads activities to assist employers with the development, recruitment, and retention of workers. The Ministry's key tasks involve delivering services and programs that address labour demand and undertaking activities to fully engage Saskatchewan's labour supply.¹

The ability to understand and speak English is integral for newcomers to become self-sufficient. It is important that the Ministry co-ordinates English-language programs so that newcomers can secure jobs and contribute to the province's economy.

¹ Ministry of Immigration and Career Training 2019-2020 Annual Report. p 3.



Six regional colleges deliver English-language programming on behalf of the Ministry. The Ministry also contracts with thirteen service providers to offer English-language programming across Saskatchewan.

The overall goal of English-language programs is to help newcomers integrate into Saskatchewan life and secure employment. Both federally- and provincially-funded English-language programs for newcomers exist in Saskatchewan. These programs provide newcomers over the age of 18 the opportunity to gain, or improve, their English-language skills. The Ministry provides these programs to newcomers at no cost.

The Ministry spends about half-a-million dollars a year funding English-language programs at regional colleges. Approximately 7,400 newcomers moved to Saskatchewan in 2019-20.

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015.²

Our *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 8, concluded that, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training, had, other than the areas of our five recommendations, effective processes for coordinating English-language programs to assist in employment and settlement of recent newcomers, over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan.³ By February 2019, the Ministry had implemented three of five recommendations.⁴

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

Our follow-up audit included interviewing Ministry staff to discuss key actions management has taken to implement the outstanding recommendations and reviewing supporting documentation, communications and policies to obtain an understanding of these actions.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at January 31, 2021, and the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training's actions up to that date.

² The original report regarding these recommendations can be found at www.auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports. We reported the original audit work in *2015 Report – Volume 1* (Chapter 8, pp. 63-76).

³ In April 2019, the Government restructured the Ministry of the Economy, and assigned its responsibilities for immigration and career training to a new ministry called Immigration and Career Training.

⁴ *2019 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 29, pp. 293–296.

3.1 Forecasting Demand for English-Language Programs Needed

We recommended the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (formerly the Ministry of the Economy) develop a formal methodology, including regional analysis, for assessing the demand for English-language program needs. (2015 Report – Volume 1, p. 70, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016).

Status—Partially Implemented

As of January 2021, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training is in the process of updating its handbook to guide its fall 2021 procurement and contracting process for English-language programs.

The Ministry is updating its Outcomes-Based Contract Management Handbook—it expects to complete this by September 2021. The Handbook guides its contract management process including negotiating contracts and managing/monitoring performance. The Ministry expects to begin its procurement and contracting process for English-language programming in the fall of 2021. The Ministry expects responses to request for proposals to provide it with estimated English-language demand information.

As of January 2021, the Ministry continues to work on creating a repeatable process to assess demand for English-language needs. The Ministry currently relies on the federal government's assessment of English-language demand. The federal government funds about 70 percent of English-language programs and the Ministry funds the remaining 30 percent. The federal government funds permanent residents while the Ministry funds temporary residents and Canadian citizens.

A lack of documented methodologies increases the risk of inconsistent analysis of needs for provincially-funded English-language programs.

3.2 Assessing Program Delivery Needed

We recommended the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (formerly 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. (2015 Report – Volume 1, p. 75, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016).

Status—Partially Implemented

During 2020, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training changed how it expects the six regional colleges to measure outcomes and report on their delivery of English-language programs. As of January 2021, the colleges are in the process of implementing these Ministry-requested changes; and the Ministry has not yet assessed whether they meet the Ministry's program delivery expectations.

Starting in 2020, the Ministry expects the six colleges to use their business plans to set out the expected outcomes (e.g., 45 percent of participants will achieve growth in a



one-language skill level, 90 percent of participants will identify language learning goals) and how they will measure outcomes. Previously, the *Regional Colleges' Policy Manual* included the expected outcomes.

We reviewed two 2020-21 regional college business plans. We found the plans identified outcomes and how they expect to measure outcomes. We also found the Ministry approved the business plans.

In June 2020, the Ministry also changed its reporting requirements for the six colleges delivering English-language programs. Starting with the 2020-21 school year, the Ministry expects the colleges to use its student information system to record key information about the English-language students and program outcomes. It also expects the colleges to use the Ministry-provided template to regularly report outcomes (i.e., in January and July).

The Ministry plans to assess whether regional colleges deliver English-language programs as expected in August 2021.

Not actively monitoring and assessing whether the regional colleges' English-language programs meet its expectation means the Ministry does not know if its funding for these programs is achieving the results it expects.