

Chapter 21

Immigration and Career Training—Coordinating English-language Programs

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By June 2024, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training fully implemented our two outstanding recommendations on coordinating English-language programs made in our 2015 audit.

Five of Saskatchewan’s regional colleges across the province deliver English-language programming on behalf of the Ministry, including: Carlton Trail, Southeast, Great Plains, North West and Suncrest (merger of Cumberland and Parkland in 2023).

The Ministry developed a policy manual for delivering English-language programs. This policy manual outlines information regional colleges should consider when performing local analysis to forecast the demand for English-language programs. The colleges submit their forecast assessments of demand for regional English-language programs to the Ministry in their annual business plans. We found all regional colleges submitted business plans as expected, and the Ministry used that information to allocate funding accordingly.

Since 2023, the Ministry formally assesses whether regional colleges meet the Ministry’s program delivery expectations by reviewing each college’s business plan (expectations) and semi-annual reporting of results. We found the colleges reported on their achievements to the Ministry. For three regional colleges we tested, two colleges met their English-language program delivery expectations in 2022–23 and the Ministry granted a delay in reporting to the other.

Clearly assessing student needs and whether provincial programs meet those needs informs the Ministry where English-language programs are needed and whether programs are effectively delivered to assist 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; and leads activities to assist employers with the development, recruitment and retention of workers. This includes providing effective English-language programs to assist newcomers in securing jobs and contributing to the provincial economy.

The Ministry spends about \$550,000 per year funding English-language programs at regional colleges for temporary residents over the age of 18. In 2022–23, Saskatchewan welcomed more than 25,000 newcomers. Approximately 383 full-time seats (each person taking English-language training does not attend full time) were funded for newcomers to Saskatchewan in 2022–23. The Ministry provides these programs to newcomers at no cost.



2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our fourth follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015.¹

We assessed the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training's (formerly the Ministry of the Economy) processes for coordinating English-language programs to assist in employment and settlement of recent newcomers, over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014. We concluded the Ministry had effective processes other than in the areas of our five recommendations. By January 2021, the Ministry implemented three recommendations.²

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's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Ministry management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our follow-up audit, we interviewed key Ministry staff responsible for coordinating English-language programs. We also assessed relevant documents such as policies and regional colleges' business plans and reports.

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 June 15, 2024, and the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training's actions up to that date.

3.1 English-language Demand Assessed

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—Implemented

The Ministry of Immigration and Career Training monitors demand for English-language program information through business plans from regional colleges.

We found the five regional colleges submitted business plans for 2023 outlining their forecasted English-language demand for the year. They considered factors such as number of hours learners attend, immigration and employment status of learners, and the specific needs of the region the college serves.

¹ 2015 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8, pp. 63–76.

² 2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 16, pp. 213–216, 2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 29, pp. 293–296 and 2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 19, pp. 223–226.

The Ministry's policy manual outlines the information required to assess demand for English-language programs (e.g., annual regional college business plans, English-language learner profiles, information from regional colleges outside of standard reporting).

For two regional colleges we tested, both colleges assessed their English-language demand reasonably in 2022–23 and 2023–24. For example, Carlton Trail determined it required 32 full-time seats funded by the Ministry in 2022–23, and 49 seats in 2023–24 to accommodate additional Ukrainian newcomers settling in that region.

The Ministry sets funding based on the demand forecasts from each college. In 2022–23, regional colleges fully used the Ministry funding to deliver English-language programs.³

The Ministry indicated it reviews the English-language demand in the business plans for reasonableness. We found the Ministry did not document its review, but we were able to see evidence of Ministry staff meeting with regional colleges and conducting site visits. We observed meetings scheduled between Ministry staff and each regional college to discuss business plans. We suggest the Ministry should document its assessment of regional college information.

Also, we observed the Ministry making adjustments year to year because of changes in student needs. For example, the Ministry approved one regional college to use some of its reserve to increase English-language programming to better serve the influx of Ukrainian newcomers.

Consistent analysis of English-language program demand assists the Ministry in funding English-language programs in the right locations.

3.2 Assessing English-language Program Delivery

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—Implemented

The Ministry of Immigration and Career Training assesses whether regional colleges meet its delivery expectations through each college's business plan and semi-annual reporting.

We found in our review of all five regional colleges' business plans, the plans identified consistent outcomes and how to measure outcomes. For example, the Ministry expects an outcome that 80% of enrolled English-language students would achieve growth in at least one Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) skill level and each business plan had this outcome.⁴ The business plans also identified that colleges would measure this outcome by comparing learner intake English-language levels to exit levels to identify advancement in CLB levels.

³ Regional colleges track excess funds in a reserve fund to be used with approval by the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training in future years if demand increases.

⁴ Canadian Language Benchmarks are recognized as the official Canadian standard for describing, measuring, and recognizing the language proficiency of adult newcomers and prospective newcomers in both English and French.



The Ministry communicates its requirements for reporting to regional colleges (e.g., reporting outcomes semi-annually) in its budget letters and in its policy manual.

We reviewed the annual reports for 2022–23 of three regional colleges and found in two instances the regional colleges appropriately reported on expected outcomes. For example, these two colleges reported that at least 80% of enrolled learners achieved growth of at least one CLB level. The third regional college requested, and the Ministry granted, an extension to reporting detailed results until October 2024.

We found the Ministry also reviewed the budget to actual dollars spent by each regional college.

We observed Ministry staff appropriately documented its review of results received when it compiled the results of all five regional colleges' semi-annual outcome reporting. The Ministry also held regular meetings with regional colleges to monitor the colleges' progress on achievements compared to their respective business plans.

Actively monitoring and assessing whether regional colleges' English-language programs meet its expectations allows the Ministry to know whether its funding achieves expected results.