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Choose the Right Work Permit Pathway

TIP SHEET #2

FROM THE IEC-BC EMPLOYER WEBINAR | 2026

IECBCLEARNING

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About Immigration Employment Council of BC

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering BC employers with the solutions, tools, and resources needed to effectively attract, hire, and retain skilled immigrant talent. We understand that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into BC's labor force is essential to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance. By collaborating with employers, government, and other partner stakeholders, we ensure that BC employers can effectively integrate global talent.

About the Resource:

Not every work permit fits every situation. Canada's immigration system has two main pathways for hiring international talent, and each comes with different requirements, timelines, and risks. This tipsheet helps BC employers decide which pathway fits the role, the candidate, and your hiring timeline.

“Choosing the right work permit pathway is one of the most consequential decisions in international hiring. Picking the wrong one can cost you months and a candidate. Picking the right one is a competitive advantage.”

1. Understand what an LMIA actually requires.

- LMIA-based work permits require you to prove that no qualified Canadian worker is available for the role.
- They include high-wage, low-wage, and Global Talent Stream categories, each with their own rules.
- Plan for longer timelines and more documentation than LMIA-exempt pathways need.

2. Know which LMIA-exempt pathways you can use.

- Free Trade Agreements such as CUSMA cover certain professions and nationalities.
- Intra-company transfers let you move existing employees from related foreign offices.
- Post-Graduation Work Permits let you hire international graduates of Canadian institutions.

3. Match the pathway to the role and the candidate.

- Look at the role. Is it senior, specialized, time-sensitive, or hard to fill locally?
- Look at the candidate. Where are they from? What is their current status? What are their long-term goals?
- The fastest pathway on paper isn't always the right one for retention.

4. Build in time for what could go wrong.

- Even strong applications can face delays, requests for more documents, or refusals.
- Don't make commitments to candidates or hiring managers that depend on processing times you can't control.
- Have a backup plan. If a pathway falls through, what is your next move?

“Each pathway has different requirements, timelines, and risks. Employers should assess options carefully based on role, urgency, and candidate profile.

- From the [IEC-BC Employer Webinar 2026](#)”

IEC-BC provides an extensive online library of employer tools and resources.

The IEC-BC Employer Tools and Resources Library is a collection of materials developed in part or entirely by partners or key organizations throughout Canada.

Click the button below to dig deeper in attracting immigrant talent!

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