



**TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER  
CHAMPION EMPLOYERS: *Case Studies*  
from Employers in the Prairie Region**  
REPORT  
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## Introduction and Methodology

Pivotal Research Inc., commissioned by Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), completed case study research with businesses in the Prairie region who exemplify “champion employer” criteria according to temporary foreign workers (TFWs). Employers chosen for the case study research are considered championing the rights and well-being of TFWs, which is why they are referred to as “Champion Employers”. By highlighting champion employers’ exemplary practices, this research aims to shed light on the importance of fair treatment and support for TFWs, promoting positive change in how these workers are treated within the Canadian workforce.

Thirty-six (36) TFWs were engaged in in-depth interviews and focus groups across the Prairie region to help shape the champion employer criteria and identify what characteristics TFWs value the most in their employers.

Service provider organizations (SPOs) associated with the Temporary Foreign Workers Prairie Region Project were requested to refer employers—they have interacted with or heard about through feedback from TFW clients—that match 2 or more of the champion employer criteria.

SPOs referred more than 20 employers in total from all Prairie provinces. All 20 employers were invited to participate in 60-minute in-depth interviews conducted with business owners and/or human resource specialists. Out of the 20 employers invited, five agreed to participate. Three more responded to the invitation but did not follow through. Of the five employers that took part in the interviews, four are based in rural areas in Southern Alberta, and one is in an urban area in Southern Alberta.

The research culminated in the development of champion employer criteria and completion of five case studies with employers representing various industry sectors critical to the Prairie regional economy.



### Prairie Region TFW Champion Employer Criteria

Based on what TFWs shared, Pivotal Research summarized and categorized these characteristics into 5 key criteria:



#### Employee Engagement & Culture

Good employers should facilitate a work culture that demonstrates encouragement and respect.

TFWs value a work culture in which they are treated equally to domestic workers, but are offered special supports, if needed; this also includes creating a safe working environment to ask questions and create mentoring opportunities.



## Adherence to Laws and Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) Requirements

Good employers should provide safe work conditions, appropriate paperwork on employment (and must adhere to work contract), workplace rights and sufficient training, consistent full-time work hours (30-40 hours a week), must pay on time and treat employees fairly and with respect.

TFWs having negative experiences with their employers (such as inconsistency with job responsibilities in contract and the job they were assigned to do or very low number of hours assigned), they pointed out adherence to the requirements of the program as important as they need to fulfil the full-time hours requirement to apply for permanent residence in Canada.



## Newcomer Settlement Support

Good employers should provide newcomer settlement supports and facilitate access to available supports, such as accommodation, transportation, necessities, and healthcare insurance.

Since many TFWs arrive to Canada without any connections or friends, they value if the employer offers them with support to help settle in, such as finding appropriate housing for them and their families, helping get to the grocery store if it is in a remote location, and explaining how to use healthcare insurance.



## TFW Education & Professional Growth

Employers should provide TFWs with learning opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills and grow professionally.

While TFWs come to Canada to work temporarily, they appreciate it if employers treat them as more than just temporary workers who come and go. They are interested in upgrading their skills, learning new skills, and becoming more competitive in the job market through additional courses, training, or mentoring.



## TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support

Good employers should support TFWs in maintaining their current TFW status through appropriate paperwork and processing and also supporting permanent settlement.

While the goal of the program is for TFWs to come to Canada to work temporarily and go back to their home countries, evidence shows that many (if not most) TFWs and TFW employers would like to find a pathway for them to stay in Canada as permanent residents. Depending on the program stream, employers can play an important role in facilitating TFW's permanent settlement in Canada, which is what many TFWs would like to get support with.

Champion Employers selected for the case studies demonstrate best practices in two or more of these criteria, which are listed in the beginning of each case study. However, since the case studies relied on what employers shared and did not involve reviewing their documentation, the criteria #2 Adherence to Laws and TFW Program requirements is attributed to all employers.



## Champion Employer #1 Plant nursery in Alberta

**Industry:** Agriculture.

**Location:** rural area of Southern Alberta.

**Interviewee:** Business owner.

This employer has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

1. **Employee Engagement & Culture**
2. **Newcomer Settlement Support**

### Company Overview

The nursery was started in the 1960s and is a family-run business in Alberta. Currently **5 TFWs** are employed as greenhouse labourers and one may be transitioning to a management role soon. The nursery has a long history of employing TFWs - they took part in the program **since 2008**, although in some years, the nursery had to forego recruiting TFWs. Two TFWs have been working in the nursery for **12 years**.



### TFW Recruitment Process

According to the business owner, they do not have many issues with recruitment, as they bring seasonal TFWs through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). The Mexican government does most of the recruitment process selecting TFWs and the business does not get to sort resumes, but rather trust that they will receive qualified TFWs. The business owner is satisfied with the TFWs that are recruited.

Some of the recruitment challenges include lengthy paperwork and TFWs' decision to stay in Canada for the whole season. While the nursery tries to get TFWs to stay working for them, two of the workers have returned to Mexico and have not come back. Sometimes TFWs fail physical exams due to some illnesses, like diabetes and as such not able to come back for another season.



### Employee Engagement & Culture

**Employee Events** - To facilitate employee engagement, the nursery holds employee events once or twice a month. Examples include staff barbeques or joint dinners with other companies, where business owners or senior staff take employees to a restaurant in the closest city - Calgary.

**Collaboration with Immigrant-Serving Agency** - The business collaborates with the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) in organizing outdoor events for TFWs, where they can meet CCIS staff and spend some time with other workers in an out-of-work setting. The nursery appreciates CCIS's support, in particular they mentioned CCIS's

assistance with airport consultations, provision of first necessity items to TFWs and informational brochures, paperwork assistance and organizing immunization clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Newcomer Settlement Support

**Accommodation Support** - Upon arrival and to facilitate settlement, the nursery provides accommodation for TFWs. TFWs are charged a "fraction of the actual cost of utilities," such as electricity and water. They are also provided a landline and internet access, "free fridges for 5 TFWs", "appliances", "stove and kitchen stuff".

**Healthcare Coverage** - Since the nursery hires TFWs under SAWP, TFWs do not qualify for provincial health insurance. They are, however, covered under private plans. The business owner takes health questions seriously: "if they have any problem - we solve it immediately" and mentioned a case of taking TFW with an urgent issue to emergency care in Calgary and paying around \$1,000 to the clinic.

### Future Plans

The nursery plans to employ more TFWs in the future through the same program stream. The business owner noted challenges in employing TFWs, but it is "worth it" since they are "very good workers" and few Canadians are willing to do this kind of work".



## Champion Employer #2 Large Agricultural Company in Alberta

**Industry:** Agriculture.

**Location:** Rural area of Southern Alberta.

**Interviewee:** Human Resource Manager.

This employer has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

1. **Employee Engagement & Culture**
2. **Newcomer Settlement Support**
3. **TFW Education and Professional Growth**
4. **TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support**

### Company Overview

A large farm based in Alberta has been employing TFWs for 18 years tapping into the TFWP and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).

The farm has currently opted to recruit TFWs through the TFWP, as SAWP has a limited program duration of six months.

An immigration consultant assists the human resources manager with meeting program paperwork requirements.

Currently the farm employs **70 TFWs** and another **27** previous TFWs are now either Permanent Residents or citizens. The majority of TFWs come from Mexico, but some are from France, South Africa, and Ukraine.



### TFW Recruitment Process

The farm relies on multiple channels for recruitment of TFWs, such as social media (they find Facebook particularly helpful), their website, job bank, and a variety of recruitment websites. The most successful recruitment method is their referral program – employees who refer someone they know can receive a bonus after two months of a new hire's employment.

The farm has established a comprehensive recruitment process that includes reference checks, pre-screening, and two interviews. The company sometimes includes the TFW's family into the interview process as they play a role in the decision of the TFW to move to

### Recruitment Challenge

The business relies heavily on the TFW program, which is why they cannot afford to make a mistake in LMIA applications to Service Canada. While the requirements in agriculture industry are strict and may be challenging to comply with, the farm has more difficulties explaining the specifics of positions and job duties to Service Canada to get approved for hiring TFWs. According to the HR manager, there is lack of knowledge in Service Canada regarding the regulations and positions in agriculture.



Canada for work. The farm goes a long way to make sure that TFWs have an accurate picture of what their work and life in Canada would be like.

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## Employee Engagement & Culture

**Safety As Priority** - The farm prioritizes safety by making sure TFW are informed of their safety policies and provides “extensive new employee orientation” as well as on-site training for TFWs as soon as they start working. Multiple training courses are provided in safety and refresher training is offered if there are repeated safety incidents.

**Peer Support** - TFWs are paired with workers who have been working at the farm for a long time and who speak their language. Supportive environment is encouraged among Canadian workers and TFWs. The farm “doesn’t expect excellency from TFWs right away” and acknowledges they may have their own challenges and language barrier that they need to address first.

**Success Metrics and TFW Feedback** - The farm collects feedback from TFWs during performance reviews and tracks metrics around “safety, productivity.”



## Newcomer Settlement Support

The farm provides a welcoming environment for its TFW employees to smooth out their settlement into the rural community, providing a personalized support approach. The human resources manager noted that such extensive support practices have led to no concerns raised by TFWs so far.

**English Classes** - The farm offers in-house English classes, as well as connects TFWs with local organizations, such as the local church and library that provides classes for TFWs and their families.

**Healthcare** - Explanation on how to navigate healthcare in Canada is included in the employee’s comprehensive onboarding package. In case of need, TFWs are taken to the doctor’s office. TFWs are provided with health benefits from the beginning of their employment, in comparison, while domestic employees receive benefits after 3 months of probationary period.

**Appointments/Documentation** - The employer’s human resource department supports TFWs and their families with all aspects of completing required paperwork and documentation for banking, Service Canada, and driver’s license, including accompanying workers to their appointments.

**Accommodation** - Housing is provided to TFWs, including essential furniture, even though TFWP does not require the employer to provide free-of-charge accommodation to TFWs.

“We go a little bit more than is required. The process involves a house inspection and the availability of a maintenance technician on call. If we won't live in that house, neither will they.”

Lack of housing has been an issue in the small community where the farm operates. The business owners are looking into building more houses to accommodate the increasing number of TFWs flocking to their area.

**Additional Support** - The farm facilitates TFWs taking the driver license exam in Spanish. If TFWs fail, the employer encourages them to take it again. The employer also provides groceries support in case of need.



### TFW Education & Professional Growth

**TFW Upskilling** - The farm is committed to supporting TFWs upskilling. New hires are provided with trainers and are offered job shadowing opportunities so they can better understand their roles and responsibilities. When they get promoted to higher positions, they are offered leadership and people management training, more suitable for managerial positions. TFWs usually start at lower-level positions, working with cattle, but based on their performance, can move up the career ladder and become leads, assistants, and managers.



### TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support

**PR Pathway Assistance** - The farm offers assistance with completing applications for permanent residency, including taking in-house English classes necessary for passing the English language proficiency test.

**High Skilled Job Placement** - To facilitate transition to permanent residency, the farm hires TFWs in higher skilled positions and provides support to those who “work hard and put the effort to learn the language” to get to the higher positions that open a path to permanent residency, such as assistant manager and quality control manager.



## Champion Employer #3 Greenhouse based in Alberta

**Industry:** Agriculture.

**Location:** Rural area in Southern Alberta.

**Interviewee:** Director of Human Resources and TFW Program Coordinator.

This employer has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

1. **Employee Engagement & Culture**
2. **Newcomer Settlement Support**
3. **TFW Education and Professional Growth**
4. **TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support**

### Company Overview

The greenhouse has locations in British Columbia and Alberta and employs over **110 TFWs** in Alberta. For comparison, the total employee count in peak season is 800. The company has been employing TFWs for **15 years** with some TFWs who were recruited 15 years ago still working for the company. The company has relied on the TFW Program and the numbers of their TFW recruitment have been increasing every year.



### TFW Recruitment Process

The company prefers to recruit through referrals: current or previous TFWs refer to potential candidates. The company also relies on other recruitment channels, such as a recruitment agency in Mexico and working directly with the governments of Mexico and Guatemala for certain seasonal farmworker program streams, including the SAWP. The company also recruits TFWs from the Philippines and some countries in the Caribbean basin and plans to hire workers from Netherlands and other European countries in the future.

According to the Director of HR, the company uses the services of the agency that is approved by agriculture associations in British Columbia and Alberta and makes sure that TFWs are not charged extra fees by interviewing them:

*"I've sat down with Mexican TFWs and summarized everything that they were charged."*

The company has a comprehensive recruitment process with two rounds of interviews. When they are provided with a list of workers by governments or recruitment agencies, they narrow it down twice in size through the interview process. The human resources department is responsible for recruitment, with the Director of HR filling out and submitting LMIA applications.



## Employee Engagement & Culture

**Human Approach** - A human approach is prioritized through building trust with TFW employees to make them feel comfortable to voice their needs and share any concerns with ability to do so in their mother tongue.

**Personal Touch** - The Director of HR believes that a personal touch is important, which is why he visits workers from time to time, shakes their hands, always smiles because “that gives them courage and confidence, and makes them feel valuable.” There is constant communication with TFWs – through WhatsApp groups (there is a WhatsApp group for each house and TFW program stream, check-ins during breaks, and monthly and weekly meetings).

**Equal Treatment** - TFWs are treated similarly to Canadian workers, they can become Employees of the Month and are shared information about the company performance during meetings. They also sign a commitment to adhere to company values. The HR department takes these steps to ensure that workers do not feel that they are temporary, but that they are important just like anyone else in the company.

**Peer Support** - TFWs are paired with workers who have years of experience with the company and are trusted by the HR department to provide the support needed by newcomers. Housing placements determined by the Director of HR are intended to help TFWs integrate faster and feel comfortable based on similarities with other workers. TFWs also interact with Canadian workers who “enjoy working with them,” which helps them integrate.

**Respect for TFW Cultures** - The company tries to “adapt a little bit to their culture” by celebrating cultural events, such as Mexican Independence Day, sometimes organized in collaboration with cultural associations. However, the company sometimes has challenges with cultural differences, such as keeping all workers informed about intercultural exchanges to minimize any negative interactions as certain words or gestures may be inappropriate for certain cultures. To reduce conflicts, TFWs are offered housing with workers of similar origin and offered peer support.

### Success metrics & TFW Feedback

TFWs' satisfaction with their work environment is important to the company and serves as one of the success indicators. It is measured through interviews with TFWs during which they can share their concerns. There are also frequent check-ins during house or program meetings and visits to TFW houses.

“We'll pick eight workers and just go through questions to get an idea of how their experiences. Are they being treated properly and respectfully?”

Another way the company measures its success is through referrals: TFWs who are happy with the company frequently recommend it to their friends or family in their home countries. The company also gets phone calls and emails from those in source countries who have heard of them from TFWs who returned home.



## Adherence to Laws and TFW Program Requirements

**Comprehensive Onboarding Process** - The company has an extensive TFW new employee onboarding process. The first day of orientation encompasses multiple components, such as payroll setup, filling out administrative data and informing TFWs of safety issues and guidelines, human and worker rights, house guidelines and expectations. Workplace orientation also includes a site tour and additional safety videos.

**Conflict Management** - The company makes every effort to resolve all conflicts quickly to make sure they do not escalate. If TFWs are not happy with their living arrangements or roommates, they are relocated to another house. The company prioritizes "retaining workers' respect":

*"We want to be perceived as being honest and fair."*

**Evolving Program Requirements** - The company faces an ongoing challenge with adhering to changing program requirements and keeping up with records and documentation standards that are evolving annually.



## Newcomer Settlement Support

The company understands that TFWs are newcomers and have specific needs, which is why it has established an extensive support system that encompasses newcomer necessities.

**Housing** - TFWs are flown to Canada at the company's expense, picked up at the airport and provided housing. When assigning housing, the Director of HR pays attention to TFWs' needs, (for example, older TFWs). TFWs are provided with videos on how to use appliances in the house. The company understands that TFWs need to frequently connect with their families, so the wi-fi connection has to be strong.

**Finances/Taxes** - TFWs are supported with opening a bank account (Spanish-speaking staff goes to the bank with them), applying for SIN number, and buying groceries. They are also provided with an explanation of how to withdraw money and send it back home through remittance.

**Healthcare** - TFWs are provided with travel insurance for three months before they receive Alberta Health Care insurance. TFWs are also provided guidance on navigating the healthcare system and are provided with over-the-counter medicine, should they need it.

The company has built relationships with three clinics in the area that facilitate translation services to workers and create ongoing rapport with workers. They are collaborating with a dentist who speaks Spanish to facilitate oral health care for TFW employees. TFW employees are also included in the company benefit plan.

One challenge related to healthcare for TFWs is some restrictions to their eligibility for provincial health insurance. Despite being provided with another type of health insurance coverage, some medical clinics are not familiar with it and may still require payment of non-permanent resident fees.

**Translation Services** - While the company has staff speaking Spanish who can assist TFWs with their needs, the current challenge for the company is providing Tagalog translation for Filipino TFWs joining the organization.



## TFW Education & Professional Growth

**Access to Training** - Since TFWs are not eligible to access post-secondary education in the province due to their work permit restrictions, the company provides multiple on-site technical training and encourages personal development. Those who have low levels of Spanish or English also improve their language skills while working with other employees.

*"I have workers that didn't speak very good Spanish in the beginning. Now I see them speaking English, driving, using the applications for online banking."*

**Promotional Opportunities** - TFWs are provided with promotional opportunities to junior farm supervisors, assistants, or salespersons.



## TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support

TFW employees apply for the permanent residency pathway on their own; however, the company provides them with all necessary documentation required to complete the immigration application.

The Director of HR also shared several success stories of TFWs who obtain their permanent residency status, bring their families to Canada, and stay working for the company. In fact, those promoted along different occupational roles in the company, such as junior farm supervisors, have an easier pathway to Permanent Residency.

*"I have four growers currently. One of them has been not only an assistant grower, but he has become the main grower at one of our new facilities. He got married and is bringing his wife here."*

*Another grower has managed to get his wife here now as well, and she is pregnant and hoping to have a child soon. All those are constantly loyal to us and our company."*

*The first one that I brought in years ago was from the Philippines. This was his first job. Now I promoted him to another NOC code, and he is becoming a permanent resident and the key salesperson in our team. We've had a lot of success stories, and there is a lot more to come."*



## Champion Employer #4

### Hospitality & Entertainment Company in Alberta

**Industry:** Hospitality & tourism

**Location:** Urban area in Southern Alberta.

**Interviewee:** Director of People & Culture.

This employer has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

1. **Employee Engagement & Culture**
2. **Newcomer Settlement Support**

### Company Overview

A travel company based in Alberta employs 2,100 employees, including 70 TFWs. TFWs are mostly employed as cooks and housekeepers and come to Canada for 2 years. TFWs are employed from the Philippines and India. According to the Director of People & Culture, the company has been employing TFWs for years, but due to recent changes in ownership, this is the first year of employing TFWs for this specific company branch.



### TFW Recruitment Process

The company works with a third-party agency that is trusted with pre-screening and interviewing TFWs. The agency was chosen through references and referrals from other local businesses. The company does not always interview candidates, as this function is outsourced to the agency.

Among challenges experienced with TFW recruitment, the Director of People & Culture mentioned the difficulty of finding high-skilled cooks in a competitive space. The long processing times (up to a year from advertising a position to having a TFW arrive) is a challenge as well.



### Adherence to Laws and TFW Program Requirements

The recruitment agency the company works with is trusted with TFW Program compliance. The company also subscribes to IRCC newsletter to not miss any updates.



### Employee Engagement & Culture

**Structured Arrival Program** - Once workers arrive, they are not met at the airport due to the company being located 4 hours away from the airport, but their accommodation in

the city at the point of arrival is covered for 1-2 nights. During this time, they are instructed to set up a bank account and obtain a SIN number. Their transportation on a bus or shuttle is arranged by the company and they are met by the HR team representative.

**Orientation and Onboarding** - During their first day at work, they attend an orientation, which includes introduction to services and supports that are available in the community, as well as training on safety, harassment, diversity, equity, and inclusion. TFWs can also be assisted with completing paperwork, including tax forms, and provided with information about pay dates.

**Team Building Activities** - Employee engagement and team building events (e.g., barbecues) are held regularly. TFWs can be connected to cultural events (such as Filipino community dinner) and their ethnic/cultural communities.

**Employee Recognition** - Several employees are selected monthly for employee highlight and appreciation. Employees also receive monthly newsletters about the company's initiatives. Some communication is also done through Facebook.

## Success Metrics & TFW Feedback

Engagement surveys are used to measure feedback. TFWs can be guided through those and provided translation support. Coffee conversations with team/department leadership and team events for departments are held regularly to obtain feedback. The company also considers the fact that many TFWs who obtained PR decided to stay with the company as long-term success as turnover costs are minimized.



## Newcomer Settlement Support

**Housing Support** - Housing is provided by the employer and includes dormitory and apartment style options (shared bedroom or shared apartment). TFWs are paired with other TFWs either from the same country or the same program stream to facilitate their settling in. Housing is subsidized and costs \$15 a day. Depending on the location (in case of remote locations), meals can be provided as well ("included in the rental fee").

**Healthcare** - The HR team confirms that TFWs registered for provincial healthcare in the first few days in Alberta. After 3 months of employment, they get access to private insurance benefits. In case of need, shuttle transportation to the city for a certain procedure can be organized. The Director of People & Culture also shared that in case of emergencies, the TFW's "family members are flown to the city and sent food certificates to the hospital to make sure they are well taken care of." Senior leadership would also develop a committee to support TFWs with emergency issues they might have.

**Translation** - The company has several people on the HR team speaking different languages that may assist with translation of documents, where necessary. TFWs are also paired with other TFWs speaking the same language to facilitate understanding of procedures or policies. Some policies are also translated into languages of TFW currently employed by the business, such as Tagalog.



**Additional Support** – TFW employees are provided with discounts on food and hotel and free access to attractions.



### TFW Education & Professional Growth

According to the Director of People & Culture, TFWs cannot be promoted to higher positions while they are on an LMIA TFW track, but once they receive permanent residency, the company can “consider them” for such promotional opportunities. Some employees who have been with the company for 10-15 years (and are Permanent Residents) are currently employed as executive housekeepers.



### TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support

The Director of People & Culture assumes all TFWs would want to obtain PR in Canada. If a TFW wishes to become a PR, the HR department team meets with them and “connects them to options and resources,” such as municipal settlement services, as well as supports by providing necessary documentation to successfully complete the PR application requirements. The company does not have the capacity to assist each employee, but they provide them with information to start their own research. The company also does not pay for English tests associated with qualifying for the PR pathway but can direct them to where they can take it.

### Future Plans

In the future, the company plans to provide more assistance to TFWs so that they can stay in Canada permanently, as it benefits their workforce stability.



## Champion Employer #5 Food Production Company in Alberta

**Industry:** Food production.

**Location:** Rural area in southern Alberta.

**Interviewee:** Head of the HR, overseas occupational health training, performance management and safety in the facility.

This employer has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

1. **Newcomer Settlement Support**
2. **TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support**

### Company Overview

An international food company with locations in Alberta and Ontario with 2,900 team members. Around 12% are TFWs (300) from countries including the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, El Salvador, and Belize. The company has been employing TFWs since 2006, where TFWs first were sourced from China.



### TFW Recruitment Process

Prior to starting recruitment, the company carefully determines labour needs through an established process:

*We do a regular labour review, and we project labour a year out. We anticipate what labor needs we have, what products we're producing. We put these together and come up with the needs. The first step is determining how many people we need and how many of them need to be TFWs.*

Then, LMIA applications are filed in-house. External legal support can be involved at times to review for possible mistakes.

The recruitment process varies based on the country, but primarily consists of sending the hiring requirements to partner agencies overseas, which will promote the hiring process and select TFWs, and then the head of HR sets up a mission to travel overseas as well to finalize recruitment on-site (after LMIA is approved).

The mission set-up is comprehensive and includes an operations team, health services team, nurse to do a physical assessment. Job offers are made on-site.

Partner recruitment agencies overseas are selected based on an established criteria and are asked a pre-determined list of questions "to make sure people are not being taken advantage of." There is a screening and audit process for each agency,



## Employee Engagement & Culture

**Orientation** - TFWs are provided with a comprehensive orientation that focuses on integration, tips for life in Canada, such as diet and surviving cold weather.

**Peer Support** - TFWs can be paired up with team members who have free basement units to alleviate home sickness. Team members can also provide them with a ride to work.

### Success Metrics & TFW Feedback

The farm tracks the following employee engagement metrics: retention rate, overall facility performance and specifically looks at performance of areas where TFWs are placed. According to the head of HR, TFWs' impact is visible and they see positive change in performance where TFWs are employed.

Additionally, sometimes TFWs explore other employment opportunities, including those in bigger cities, but tend to come back to the company.



## Newcomer Settlement Support

**Housing Support** - While TFW candidates are awaiting their visa approvals, the HR department searches for apartments/houses to have housing ready for TFWs upon arrival. All housing is inspected prior to TFWs' arrival according to company standards (such as cleanliness, good lighting). Housing is furnished with necessities, such as "bed, table, bed sheets, some utensils" and has food in the fridge once TFWs arrive.

Housing options include "two- or three-bedroom apartment, one- or three-bedroom house or basement unit" that follow the guidelines of the collective agreement. One bedroom can be shared by two TFWs. The company signs the lease with the landlord and pays the first month rent and damage deposit. TFWs are required to pay their rent after the second month, and repay money owed for rent over the span of 10 months.

**Additional Support** - Customized transportation and grocery support is provided in the beginning of TFW's journey:

*"Depending on what country they are from, we'll take them to specific stores to be able to pick up the things they need."*

Gift cards are also provided to buy necessities, TFWs are required to repay them over a 10-month period (through payroll deductions) "so that it doesn't put financial burden on new hires".

**Appointment Support** - TFWs are taken to Service Canada to apply for their SIN number.

**Community and Union Support** - TFWs are connected to various stakeholders in the community, such as non-profits (representatives come to the facility and introduce their services) and the union office. The company maintains good working relationships with the union office and has formed a joint committee for TFWs to meet and discuss issues affecting them.



## TFW Status and Permanent Settlement in Canada Support

**Early PR Pathways Support** - The company openly seeks to hire those TFWs who have plans to stay in Canada. After works pass the 90-day probation, the company initiates the process of PR application.

**English Language Readiness** - The next step is English assessment. If TFWs have a higher level of English, they are booked for an exam. If not, they are enrolled in an English as a Second Language program that is run on-site by the company in partnership with the local adult learning school. The full cost of ESL learning is covered by the company. Since COVID, English classes are provided online and have increased in attendance. Currently 150 students are enrolled.

**Paperwork and Legal Support** - The team assists candidates with filing the paperwork and providing necessary documentation. The company also has a registered immigration consultant on-site who can help with complicated cases and rare circumstances. A lawyer can be hired too in case of need.

*"No cost is spared in making sure that candidates reach their goal of PR"*



## TFW Education & Professional Growth

**Promotional Opportunities** - The company has to constantly hire more TFWs to take up lower positions, as their workers move on to other departments, including trades and maintenance. Due to restrictions of the closed work permit, TFWs can only be promoted to lead hand position, while keeping their title. In rare cases when the work permit is renewed, it could become open. In that case TFWs would become eligible to work in different roles.

**PR-Track TFWs Become Managers** - The head of the HR department also mentioned that many of those TFWs who became permanent residents and citizens now "do very well career-wise" and take supervisor or managerial positions.

## Future Plans

The company plans to hire the same number of TFWs next year, unless there are significant slowdowns, which they currently do not foresee. The company has had a generally positive experience with the program.

The Head of HR highlighted that while the public perception of the program is frequently negative, by employing TFWs in labour-intensive positions that Canadians are not willing to take, more positions are created that local workers are hired for.

The Head of HR also noted that the government could do more to raise awareness about the importance of the program and possibly do rebranding, as the name "temporary foreign worker program" sounds hostile, a better example for a name would be "guest worker program" implemented in U.S.

## Conclusion and Key Takeaways

The **most common best practices** include translating company's policies into the TFW's languages (Spanish and Tagalog most mentioned), and pairing TFWs with someone speaking their language or coming from the same country in both work environment (for coaching or mentorship) and/or housing arrangement for faster integration.

There is **wide variation in support** among employers for TFWs. Since legislation and the TFWP requirements are not prescriptive in terms of worker supports, it is up to the employer to determine what supports can be offered. Examples of variations in level of support include dedicating staff who speak the same language as the TFW to help them complete required paperwork and providing TFWs with in-house access to English language classes compared to others who provide information and guidance to TFWs to navigate the Canadian landscape of services and settlement requirements and access community-available English language resources.

There is a clear gap in **collaborations of employers with SPOs**. If employers collaborate with SPOs in providing support to TFWs, it is mostly limited to occasional events (like cultural dinners), but among the interviewed employers, none reported an established partnership with SPOs. Some employers direct TFWs to access services or provide information about the existence of SPOs, but no formal partnership between employers and SPOs was discussed.

Almost all employers were concerned about **staying anonymous**, as they feared of being criticized by other parties about their participation in the TFWP. Interviewed employers have positive perceptions of the program and state that they value TFWs and are happy that through the program TFWs can build up significant savings to invest in their home countries and impact the growth of their businesses and communities.

### Recommended Considerations to Improve TFW Program

**Standardize Comprehensive Supports to TFWs** - While some employers are comprehensive in the supports and information they share with TFWs, they sympathize with TFWs considering their newness to Canada and go beyond the requirements in assisting their seamless integration. Meanwhile, other TFWs are less lucky as their employers may provide information about existence of support resources but do little to directly connect TFWs to those resources or invite a representative of support organizations to their facilities directly, as an example.

**Raise Awareness and Improve Public Perception of the TFW Program** – During interviews with employers, employers shared their reliance on the program and praised TFWs for their performance and commitment. At the same time, due to negative public perception of the program, they were cautious to remain anonymous. It is recommended to improve public perception of the program, especially regarding the role TFWs play in successful functioning of the Canadian economy, while at the same time strengthening TFW protections to annihilate cases of abuse.

**Re-Assess Promotion and Continuing Education Restrictions in Closed Work Permits** – Employers noted the challenge with providing education to TFWs, as they are not eligible for studying or offering higher grade jobs not described in their work permits. It is recommended to reassess this restriction by revising the requirements of the closed work permit for LMIA TFWs.



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