

WORK CENTRAL AB

Hiring International Talent

Understanding the LMIA Process and Your Options

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

Hiring International Talent in Alberta

When domestic recruitment isn't meeting your needs, hiring internationally can help fill critical roles - particularly in sectors like health care, skilled trades, and agriculture, where Central Alberta demand is strong. This guide covers the main pathways employers use, at a high level; always confirm current requirements directly through official federal sources before applying, since rules change regularly.

1. Understanding the Two Main Pathways

- **Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)** - generally requires a positive Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) before a work permit can be issued, confirming there's a genuine need and that no qualified Canadian or permanent resident is available.
- **International Mobility Program (IMP)** - allows employers to hire certain foreign workers without an LMIA, typically under international trade agreements, intra-company transfers, or other exemption categories.

2. The LMIA Process at a Glance

- Determine whether your position requires an LMIA, and identify the correct stream (low-wage or high-wage, based on the median wage for the occupation and region).
- Advertise the position according to current recruitment requirements before applying - as of April 2026, low-wage LMIA applications require a minimum 8-week advertising period, an increase from the previous 4 weeks.
- Submit your application through LMIA Online, along with recruitment evidence, business legitimacy documents, and wage justification.
- Applications can generally be submitted up to 6 months before the expected job start date - plan ahead, since processing times vary by stream and demand.
- High-wage applications require a transition plan describing how you'll reduce reliance on temporary foreign workers over time.

3. The Global Talent Stream

For specialized, high-demand roles - particularly in technology - the Global Talent Stream offers expedited LMIA processing. It includes a category for high-growth companies referred by a designated partner organization, and a category for employers hiring into a specific list of in-demand technical occupations. Processing under this stream is typically much faster than standard LMIA processing.

4. Recent Changes to Be Aware Of

2026 Program Updates

- Low-wage LMIA advertising requirements increased from 4 to 8 consecutive weeks, effective April 1, 2026.
- Employers must demonstrate concrete recruitment efforts targeting young Canadians for eligible positions.
- Processing restrictions apply to low-wage positions in certain census metropolitan areas with higher unemployment rates.
- A temporary rural exception allows a higher share of low-wage temporary foreign workers for qualifying rural employers during a defined window - confirm current eligibility, as these provisions are time-limited.

5. Supporting International Employees Once Hired

- Understand your ongoing employer obligations under the TFWP, including record-keeping and compliance requirements - these are actively enforced.
- Connect new international employees with local settlement services to help them and their families settle into Central Alberta smoothly (see our Newcomer Resources section).
- Consider whether supporting a path toward permanent residence, such as through the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, could help you retain strong international employees long-term.

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

How long does the LMIA process take? Processing times vary significantly by stream and demand - the Global Talent Stream targets much faster turnaround than standard LMIA processing, which can take considerably longer.

Can we hire an international candidate already in Canada? Yes, in many cases - including international students transitioning to work permits or candidates on other valid temporary status, depending on the specific pathway.

What are our obligations after hiring a temporary foreign worker? Employers must meet the conditions outlined in their LMIA and offer of employment, maintain records, and be prepared for compliance reviews, which are actively enforced.

International Hiring Checklist

- ✓ Confirmed whether the role requires an LMIA or qualifies under the IMP
- ✓ Reviewed current recruitment advertising requirements before applying

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- ✓ Gathered business legitimacy and wage justification documentation
 - ✓ Explored the Global Talent Stream for eligible technical roles
 - ✓ Planned for settlement support once the employee arrives
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Build Your Team With Work Central AB

See our Newcomer Resources section to help your new international hires and their families settle into Central Alberta. Visit workcentralab.ca/resources.