

THE OCECCA Project

creating a centre of excellence for communication competency assessment

OCECCA's vision is to support internationally educated health professionals in accessing employment and achieving success within the system in Ontario.

OVERVIEW

The OCECCA Project

Established in 2011 through funding from the Ontario government's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the OCECCA Project aspires to lay the groundwork for an accessible, inter-professional, full-service Centre of Excellence in Communication Competency Assessments for the province of Ontario that would centralize and consolidate occupation-specific language testing, research, and training. Focusing on Ontario's regulated health professions, the OCECCA Project is committed to investigating the practical and financial feasibility of establishing such a centre to support the delivery of better, more efficient healthcare for all Ontarians by aiding the successful integration of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) into the Canadian healthcare system. Working in consultation with representatives from major stakeholders within the health sector, the OCECCA Project has developed a business plan that outlines the most efficient, sustainable, and achievable scenario through which OCECCA can most significantly contribute to IEHP success in the workplace.

Why OCECCA?

Internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) are a vital asset to the Ontario health sector, and their skills are frequently under utilized due in part to difficulties they encounter in accessing and retaining employment within the sector. The main contributors to this problem? Inadequate workplace-specific language skills and cultural differences. While IEHPs' language proficiency is verified through the professional registration and licensure process overseen by the regulatory bodies that governing their respective professions, their skills are rarely assessed for occupation- and site-specific communication proficiency, and ongoing communicative skills training is difficult to access once employment is obtained. At the same time, employers have reported the need for professional development in language and communication for their healthcare teams, while regulators have indicated that they would benefit from dedicated expertise in setting language-proficiency standards that are fair and supportable.

The OCECCA Project proposes that these challenges can best be met through the

establishment of a centre of excellence for communication competency that would bring together the existing occupation-specific language assessment tools currently in use by regulators, expand the reach of these tools, support and encourage the development of new occupation-specific tests where appropriate, and provide customized communicative competency training options to IEHPs and employers.

What Services Would OCECCA Offer?

Once established, OCECCA would offer three main types of services: Assessment, Professional Development, and Consulting.

Assessment: OCECCA's proposed assessment services would focus on providing formal occupation-specific language assessments for IEHPs to meet the requirements of their professional practice.

Professional Development: OCECCA would offer targeted and intensive training sessions to enhance occupation-appropriate language skills, increase understanding of the Canadian workplace, and improve cross-cultural communication.

Consulting: OCECCA would be engaged in research, and be able to offer consulting services with respect to communicative competency assessments, test development, training.

How Would the Proposed OCECCA Function?

The proposed OCECCA would operate as a fee-for-service provider with a focus on serving internationally educated health professionals and the organizations that rely on them as important contributors to the workforce. A central office would oversee the delivery of assessment services through testing facilities across Ontario, with training services delivered online, at client sites, or in rented facilities, and professional services delivered through the central office.

Through the development of a business plan, the OCECCA Project has determined that the most cost-effective, service-oriented, financially sustainable, and professionally efficient solution is one in which OCECCA is hosted by an existing organization whose infrastructure can readily support the Centre's activities.

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