



Hamilton's Workforce Strategy: Harnessing the Ecosystem for Shared Success

September 2023



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A strong partnership between government, employers and workers is an essential feature of an effective and enduring bond between the world of learning and the world of work.

International Labour Office, Policy Brief, September 2020

Executive Summary

Communities across Canada, and indeed globally, are facing significant labour market challenges, driven in part by the accelerated impact of an aging population, advancements in technology, global competition for talent, and workplace transformation. A shift in thinking among many in the labour force is evidenced in an evolving approach to job search and career decisions. Workers that experienced more freedom and flexibility in their work during the COVID-19 pandemic, are now actively negotiating to reflect this in their employment agreements. Beyond their workplaces, businesses are having to adapt their operations and strategies to tackle and report on the technological, environmental, social and governance impact of their policies. These are the dynamics that are changing the world of work, and leaders are being called upon to address them.¹ Many of these challenges require a collective response across industry, organizations, levels of governments, and communities. They cannot be ignored and require considerable thought and strategic action. Now.

Canada's future labour market will depend on the ability to broaden labour force participation, support for immigration integration into the Canadian labour market, and opportunities to further strengthen alignment between labour supply and demand to meet employer skills needs.

In 2022, almost 100% of Canada's labour force growth was accounted for through immigration to Canada; looking ahead to 2032, it is projected that 100% of Canada's population growth will be driven by immigration. Simply stated, Canada's future labour market will depend on the ability to broaden labour force participation, support newcomer integration into the Canadian labour market, and create opportunities to further strengthen alignment between labour supply and demand to meet employer skills needs. With the worker-to-retiree ratio expected to shift from 7 to 1 (50 years ago) to 2 to 1 by 2035², the challenge is clear. It is upon us, and it requires a targeted and tailored approach to help communities win the battle for talent. Adding further complication, communities are also looking for solutions to proactively respond to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI), housing affordability and availability, transportation and mobility constraints, and health and wellness, among others.

The city of Hamilton is not immune to the shifting workplace pressures.

The city of Hamilton has one of the most diversified economies in Canada – a product of the city's rich history of innovation, the quality of its labour force, its numerous geographic advantages and the efforts of Hamilton's business community and institutions. Situated at the western end of Ontario's Golden Horseshoe region, the city is centrally located in Canada, and Ontario's manufacturing heartland. The city has seen significant growth and transformation over the past decade.

With a diverse economy, the rise in Hamilton's arts scene, and projects like the West Harbour waterfront redevelopment and Hamilton Light Rail Transit, the city has further enhanced its economic prosperity and vitality indices. Hamilton's position as a multi-modal transportation hub and its proximity to United States border crossings align to support the city as a major distribution hub of goods in Southern Ontario. Its competitive positioning is further advanced through its world-class universities, colleges, and research-intensive companies, influencing its capacity for human capital development and talent opportunities.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/12/how-to-adapt-post-pandemic-workplace-young-global-leaders/>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>

Hamilton is home to approximately 569,353 people, 16,348 business with employees³, and 37,111 businesses being self-employed/zero employees. In 2022, Hamilton's economic base provided an estimated GDP of \$34.62billion.⁴ The city accounted for 274,296 jobs after-COVID-19 employment gains (2021-2023) in sectors such as accommodation and food services, healthcare and social assistance and educational services.

However, a primary concern voiced by Hamilton business leaders is the presence of a growing skills gap, in which the skills of the labour force do not align with job requirements. Industries and occupations that have previously experienced robust growth are now facing a shortage of workers. Labour shortages continue in industries and occupations that experienced large declines during the pandemic and are struggling to replace workers during the recovery. Barriers to success facing underutilized domestic pools of labour, including Indigenous and First Nations Peoples, members of racialized communities, women, people with disabilities, and others, emphasize the need for opportunity for all who choose to be active in the labour market.

Hamilton recognizes these challenges and responds to drive impact.

A report titled "Women out of Work"⁵ highlights how women in Hamilton's workforce were disproportionately impacted due to the challenges surrounding the pandemic. Hamilton's Youth Strategy 2022-2027 addresses the accessibility of employment and training opportunities for this segment of the population and sets a positive direction in addressing overall labour challenges within Hamilton. Further, Hamilton's Economic Development has undertaken the role of convenor, facilitator, and collaborator to advance Hamilton's position as a workforce hub and the city of choice to live and work.

Global research suggests that recent trends in the economy have led workforce capabilities to be one of the most fundamental drivers of regional economic development.⁶ This further emphasizes the importance for economic developers to inform and support skills development of the labour force, seek investment that drives good quality jobs, and strengthen alignment with the needs of the economy that maximizes the potential of the workforce.

Hamilton's Workforce Strategy

Positioning Hamilton as a location of choice, and Hamilton businesses as progressive and responsive employers, contributes to the storyline of the city.

Hamilton's Workforce Strategy combines research and analysis of Hamilton's workforce ecosystem, its current economic target sectors and their workforce context with a comprehensive consultation and engagement process. The consultation and engagement involved over 270 interactions with a range of stakeholders across priority sectors, employers, jobseekers, community organizations, municipal leaders, and business associations. Additionally, insights and perspectives were garnered from the Employer One survey, carried out by Workforce Planning Hamilton and the Hamilton Economic Development Office earlier this year, resulting in input from over 650 Hamilton businesses.

Hamilton's Workforce Strategy positions a vision that ***Hamilton is recognized and celebrated for its workforce excellence where talent thrives, businesses succeed, and the community prospers***. The strategy offers a series of evidence-based areas of focus and objectives, and a tailored action plan. These areas of focus state the aspirational outcomes for Hamilton's future labour market and are supported by a series of objectives, that clearly define how the areas of focus will be achieved. Each objective is guided by actions that will be delivered over the life of the strategy through the collaborative efforts of Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem. The ultimate strategy outcome is

³ Based on December 2022 Canadian Business Counts

⁴Conference Board of Canada, Major City Insights Report. 2022 data are forecast values. Data cover Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area

⁵ Women Out of Work Report, Assessing Hamilton's Employment Disparities During COVID-19.

⁶ Talent-driven economic development: a new vision and agenda for regional and state economies. Brookings. Available at: Talent-driven economic development: A new vision and agenda for regional and state economies (brookings.edu)

for local industries and employers to have access to a skilled and resilient talent pool that fuels the city’s competitive position to attract and retain businesses and talent.

Figure 1 showcases the core elements of the strategy. The foundation to the strategy is a vision for the future of Hamilton as a workforce hub. Five areas of focus set the direction for action, supported by 13 objectives, and a total of 40 relevant actions to advance Hamilton towards its workforce vision. The action plan offers direction on who may lead, support, or serve as a connector that creates opportunity for the workforce ecosystem over the short, medium, and longer-term.

Figure 1: Strategy at a Glance



Hamilton’s Workforce Strategy Areas of Focus are detailed below:

Partnerships

Focus Statement: A shared commitment and efforts align to the needs of businesses and the labour force, demonstrating a seamless workforce ecosystem, and celebrating the shared strategic vision for Hamilton as a workforce hub.

- ❖ Objective 1.1: Foster a collective leadership approach to support workforce development and labour market planning
- ❖ Objective 1.2: Activate and foster collaboration within Hamilton’s workforce ecosystem (Government, Institutions, Employers, and Local Employment Support Organizations)
- ❖ Objective 1.3: Strengthen partnerships to demonstrate Hamilton’s ability to support investments and economic growth

Skills Development

Focus Statement: Enhanced education, training, and skills development offerings strengthen the availability of relevant programming, leading to an activated talent pool with the skills, motivation, and capabilities to meet labour demand needs and drive productivity.

- ❖ Objective 2.1: Work with educational institutions and industry partners to identify and respond in a timely manner to market needs
- ❖ Objective 2.2: Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among Hamilton's local labour force

Ongoing Data Utilization

Focus Statement: Ongoing data collection, analysis, and dissemination informs evidence-based decision making and shares insights on Hamilton's labour market, talent gaps, hiring trends, future labour market needs, and education and skills gaps.

- ❖ Objective 3.1: Disseminate reliable resources that inform about in-demand occupations and skills, and the broader future of work considerations
- ❖ Objective 3.2: Continue to promote new and existing training and employment programs and supports
- ❖ Objective 3.3: Ensure that the labour force has access to learning and tools that consider employers needs today and, in the future

Marketing

Focus Statement: Hamilton is recognized as a destination of choice for talent, offering a diverse labour market that respects and promotes an inclusive and equitable work environment where all individuals are motivated to thrive and contribute.

- ❖ Objective 4.1: Develop and share common marketing and communication messages and tools to be used by the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem, and across Hamilton's business community to increase familiarity and consistency in the city's value propositions
- ❖ Objective 4.2: Increase awareness through promotion of local initiatives that influence workforce attraction and development and labour market planning

Advocacy

Focus Statement: Decision makers advocate to all levels of government and other relevant bodies on behalf of Hamilton's residents, businesses, and organizations to advance policies, by-laws, programs, and resources that enable progress and address barriers to employment for all.

- ❖ Objective 5.1: Advocate for addressing core labour force wraparound supports for Hamilton's diverse communities
- ❖ Objective 5.2: Undertake concerted efforts to increase immigration to Hamilton
- ❖ Objective 5.3: Advocate for leadership on the wider range of issues impacting the labour force and the workplace

Report Structure

Hamilton's Workforce Strategy is presented as follows:

Framing Hamilton's Workforce Strategy introduces the reader to the context and background for the strategy. The development process, informed by Hamilton City Council's priorities for 2022-2026 and the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), was designed by Deloitte LLP as a four-phase interconnected process that began in January 2023. The strategy is informed by extensive research and analysis together with input from stakeholders including Hamilton residents, labour force participants, education and training providers, employers and businesses, industry organizations, and workforce intermediaries. The data and research analysis are grounded in quantitative and qualitative input, further informed through primary and secondary research.

Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem puts forth a shared vision through partnerships and collaboration. Presenting an overview of the existing ecosystem in Hamilton, this section highlights the need for strategically integrated collaboration and the role for the Hamilton Economic Development Office, the city, its partners, and workforce ecosystem stakeholders. The strategy recognizes that no single element of Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem can function without the other.

The Strategy: Areas of Focus and Objectives reflects the key areas of focus to increase Hamilton's talent attractiveness and position the city as "the best place to raise a child and age successfully". Hamilton's Workforce Strategy is grounded in a vision that reflects Hamilton as an interconnected workforce hub, where economic development and workforce development efforts contribute to the city's competitiveness and prosperity.

The Action Plan presents actions that emerged through comprehensive research of primary and secondary data and an expansive consultation process. The actions are further informed by recent work of Hamilton's Economic Development Office and the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem. Relevant recommendations from the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), Workforce Planning Hamilton – Local Labour Market Plan, sector-specific strategies, Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Recovery, Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Annual Report, City of Hamilton Housing & Homelessness Action Plan, and the 2022-2027 City of Hamilton Youth Strategy Report, among others have been incorporated. The Action Plan is supported by an implementation plan to advance execution and monitor strategic outcomes and impacts over time.

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

Deloitte LLP was commissioned by the City of Hamilton to support the Hamilton Economic Development Office with a Workforce Strategy Review. This review was carried out from January 2023 through to August 2023. It is grounded in extensive industry consultation, community and stakeholder engagement, and comprehensive research and analysis. Consultation with workforce development partners, labour force participants, and industry was carried out from February to June 2023.

How to Read and Use this Document

Presented as Hamilton's Workforce Strategy: Harnessing the Ecosystem for Shared Success, this document reflects a series of areas of focus, objectives, and strategic actions to advance sector priorities and address Hamilton's recruitment, retention, and labour training and development needs. As a tactical document, it will guide the Hamilton Economic Development Office, along with Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem, towards an aligned labour market. The actions have been validated based on community input and research at a point in time. This strategy is a fluid document to be adapted as changing environments, and emerging challenges and opportunities arise.

Notes for the Reader

Insight gathered from the engagement and consultation activities are marked within sections of this report. Conclusions drawn from these activities reflect the responses given at engagement sessions and should not be taken as generalizations about all employers within the target industry sectors.

If you have any further questions on the context of economic development within Hamilton, please contact the Hamilton Economic Development Office at economicdevelopment@hamilton.ca

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Glossary of Terms

- ❖ **Apprenticeship:** An apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and classroom learning. This form of training results in a skilled certification qualification. An apprenticeship relationship is usually administered by an employer. Employees are hired and trained through in-house on-the-job learning that are traditionally specific to a skilled trade, with periods of in-class training held throughout the apprenticeship.
- ❖ **Co-op:** A Cooperative program (Co-op) combines' classroom education with practical, structured work experience. It differs from the apprenticeship as it is usually provided by an educational institution. A student can complete several co-op placements throughout the period of academic study and receive academic credit for each. A co-op can be either paid or unpaid depending on the type of program.
- ❖ **Employability Skills:** The skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work—whether you work on your own or as a part of a team. Examples of Employability Skills include fundamental skills such as communication, personal management skills and teamwork skills.
- ❖ **Internship:** Traditionally, an intern receives on-the-job training in the workplace. Internships are usually completed as part of coursework and students receive credit towards final program completion. They can be completed full time or part time and can be paid or unpaid.
- ❖ **Job shadowing:** Job shadowing may be completed over a few hours to a few weeks and involves observing an employee in their workplace. Students interact and network with practitioners while gaining industry exposure to inform their career pathway decisions.
- ❖ **Labour Market Transfer Agreements:** Federal government agreements with provinces and territory for the purpose of designing and delivering employment programming, with the goal of helping unemployed Canadians find and return to work. ⁷
- ❖ **Lower-skill jobs:** Low-skill jobs are a segment of the workforce associated with a limited skill set or minimal economic value for the work performed. It is characterized by a lower educational attainment, such as a high school diploma, GED, or lack thereof, and typically results in smaller wages.
- ❖ **Micro-credential:** A Micro-credential is a certification that recognizes specific skills, learning outcomes or competencies that are valued by industry and employers. They are gained in a flexible, fast, and affordable way.
- ❖ **Middle-Skill Jobs:** those that require more education and training than a high school diploma but less than a four-year university degree.
- ❖ **NAICS:** The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the Canadian business economy.
- ❖ **NOC:** The National Occupational Classification (NOC) is the standard used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying occupations establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the Canadian business economy.
- ❖ **Target Sector:** Target sectors best match the unique competitive advantages in the area, as well as the needs of industry sectors. The ten industry target sectors in this strategy are Advanced Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Food Processing, Creative Industries, Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, Goods Movement, Information, Communications and Technology, Life Sciences and Tourism.

⁷ [Backgrounder: Labour Market Transfer Agreements - Canada.ca](#)

- ❖ **Workforce Development Agreements:** Through these agreements, financial support is provided to support the design and delivery of programs and services to provide participants with training, skills, and work experience they need to obtain meaningful employment.⁸

⁸ [Evaluation of the Workforce Development Agreements - Canada.ca](#)

Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
ABEA	Adult Basic Education Association
AI	Artificial Intelligence
COPS	Canadian Occupational Projection System
CoCs	Chambers of Commerce
CCSS	Children's and Community Services
CLH	Community Living Hamilton
EDAP	Economic Development Action Plan
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
EDI	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
FIRE	Finance, Insurance and Real Estate
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTE	Full Time Equivalents
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
HARRC	Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre
HBC	Hamilton Business Centre
HCCI	Hamilton Centre For Civic Inclusion
HCLC	Hamilton Community Legal Clinic
HED	Hamilton Economic Development Office
HIPC	Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council
HLC	Hamilton Literacy Council
HOPA	Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority
HDGs	Historically Disadvantaged Groups
HR	Human Resources
IWC	Immigrants Working Centre
IEC	Industry Education Council
IT	Information Technology
IF	Innovation Factory
IHP	Invest in Hamilton Partnership
LiUNA	Laborers' International Union of North America

MEDJCT	Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
MoE	Ministry of Education
MLITSDO	Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development of Ontario
NPAAMB	NPAAMB Indigenous Youth Employment and Training
OMAES	Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
OTEC	Ontario Tourism Education Corporation
OYAP	Ontario Youth Apprenticeship
PATH	PATH Employment Services
PSEs	Post-Secondary Education/Institutions
SDF	Skills Development Flagship
SMEs	Small Medium Enterprises
SHSM	Specialist High Skills Major
SOARR	Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, Results
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WC	Workforce Collective (Niagara)
WPB Grand Erie	Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie
WPH	Workforce Planning Hamilton



Framing Hamilton's Workforce Strategy

This section of the strategy introduces the reader to the context and background for the strategy. Ever mindful of the Hamilton Economic Development Action Plan call for '*facilitating a skilled and adaptable workforce*'⁹, Deloitte LLP developed this workforce strategy through an interconnected process that began in January 2023 (Figure 2).

The severe economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic made economic recovery an urgent priority in Hamilton. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on people, service delivery, and the economy have forced policy makers, community leaders, intermediaries, and businesses to rethink and respond to talent readiness and availability to sustain economic competitiveness. This was evidenced in the recommendations from the 2020 Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery. That work identified workforce training, employment, and ensuring work provisions as integral to economic recovery.

The Hamilton Economic Development Office, and its partners, have developed this first workforce strategy to support and advance a harmonized approach to workforce development and labour market planning in the city for the next five years. The strategy is timely and necessary, as evidence points to the need for a more intentional approach to workforce efforts.

Methodology

The workforce strategy is informed by extensive research and analysis together with input from those contributing to the workforce ecosystem in the city, including Hamilton residents, labour force participants, education and training providers, major employers and businesses, industry organizations, and workforce intermediaries.

The development phases of the workforce strategy included:

- ❖ **Background review and Labour Market Analysis (January – April 2023):** To inform on the local situation, a literature review and data analysis was completed. This included a review of the broader policy context as it relates to workforce development in Hamilton and insights related to Employment Services Transformation within the Ontario government context. The research also identified key assets in Hamilton that contribute to workforce attraction, development, education and training, employment and wrap around services. A snapshot of labour market trends, including current employment and projected labour needs for Hamilton's target sectors, was also developed. The result of this phase is provided under separate cover as Technical Report 1: Data and Desktop Research.
- ❖ **Stakeholder Engagement (May – July 2023):** Engagement and consultation informed the areas of focus, objectives, and actions of this strategy. The workforce strategy incorporated engagement insights from a broad representation of stakeholders, including approximately 270 participants including Hamilton residents, labour force participants, the business community with representation from target economic sectors, education and post-secondary partners, business intermediaries and associations, Workforce Planning Hamilton, and the Chambers of Commerce, among others that contribute to workforce development, directly and indirectly. Participants offered insights and perspectives pertaining to the local labour market, economic opportunities influenced by access to the right talent, and a defined role for the Hamilton Economic Development Office in the workforce development ecosystem. This phase ensures Hamilton is drawing on its

⁹ Workforce development is one of the 6 priorities of the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan

comparative advantages and aspirations, while identifying "gap" areas or constraints to workforce development. The result of this phase is provided under separate cover as Technical Report 2: Engagement Summary Report.

- ❖ **Draft Strategy Validation Session (August 2023):** Deloitte LLP and the Hamilton Economic Development Office hosted a strategy validation session, to gather feedback from workforce partners related to areas of focus, objectives, and actions. Through facilitated breakout sessions, 33 participants were engaged in a fulsome discussion, offering feedback on the emerging actions, potential leads and partners and timing for implementation. Input shared was used to refine the strategy actions and identify potential roles for partners in successful strategy implementation. Upon the completion of the validation session, the strategy was refined, and performance metrics for achieving outcomes were developed.

This report brings together the research and consultation to provide the Hamilton Economic Development Office and its partners with Hamilton's Workforce Strategy. The strategy recommends five Areas of Focus, namely partnerships, skill building, data collection, marketing, and advocacy. The strategy supports Hamiltonians' participation in the local economy and foster an aligned talent pipeline. The actions span employer supports for finding and retaining talent, student, and job seeker career pathway exploration, strengthening Hamilton's position as an inclusive and diverse community, and working with post-secondary partners and training providers to contribute to Hamilton's talent pipeline and the attraction and retention of international students.

The Workforce Strategy will elevate Hamilton's profile as a workforce hub that supports increased investment and future growth in the city. This living document sets direction and establishes workforce priorities that will support the labour market today and into the future.

Figure 2: Hamilton's Workforce Strategy Development Process – Phases of Work



Alignment with City Plans

Effective workforce development planning requires leadership, commitment, and collective effort. It requires alignment with corporate and economic development efforts to ensure labour supply and demand needs are clearly defined and that there are cross-benefits through implementation of City strategies. This, in turn, leads to sustainable economic growth and competitiveness. For Hamilton's Workforce Strategy, the development process

was informed by Hamilton City Council's priorities (2022-2026) and the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP).

Council approved 2021-2025 EDAP supports and advances economic development and growth for the city of Hamilton. The strategy focuses on maintaining and sustaining Hamilton's economy while pursuing opportunities that align with the city's economic strengths and momentum. Consideration of the current and forecasted global landscape, and insights and feedback leveraged from Hamilton business owners, developers, citizens, anchor institutions and City Council helped ground the strategy. The EDAP identifies six key priorities, as illustrated below:

Figure 2: 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan Priorities



This Workforce Strategy is a direct outcome of the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan, namely action #5, which states: *In collaboration with the workforce development community, create and implement a Workforce Attraction, Retention & Development (Talent) Strategy.* The strategy is driven by Action #3 (*Design and deliver an annual Local Economy and Workforce Needs business survey*) and recognizes Action #1 (*Approve and implement the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Strategy*) as essential to workforce growth. The role of the Hamilton Economic Development Office as the coordinator and convener for workforce development, builds on Action #11 (*Partner with the workforce and business community to identify employment programs, work development opportunities and initiatives in Hamilton focused on equity-seeking groups, groups disadvantaged by discrimination and marginalized communities to recommend future strategies to address existing needs and gaps*).

In addition to the EDAP, the Workforce Strategy sought alignment and leveraged actions from the following reports.

- ❖ 2021 Hamilton Economic Development Highlight Book
- ❖ City of Hamilton Report of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery - 2020
- ❖ Hamilton Economic Development Office Manufacturing Sector Strategy
- ❖ City of Hamilton Creative Industries Sector Strategy
- ❖ City of Hamilton FIRE Sector Strategy
- ❖ City of Hamilton Life Sciences FDI Sector Strategy
- ❖ City of Hamilton Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Digital Media Sector FDI Strategy
- ❖ Business Impact Survey – EmployerOne
- ❖ City of Hamilton Housing and Homelessness Action Plan – 2020
- ❖ Housing for Hamilton Community Improvement Plan 2019
- ❖ Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan Summary Report - 2017
- ❖ 2022 – 2027 City of Hamilton Youth Strategy Report

- ❖ Our Future Hamilton Final Report – 2017
- ❖ Our Future Hamilton Community Suggested Actions - 2017
- ❖ Our Future Hamilton Progress Report - 2018
- ❖ Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2025
- ❖ Newcomers and Immigrants in the Hamilton Labour Market: Outcomes and Opportunities for Improvement – 2020
- ❖ A Demographic Profile of Immigrants in Hamilton - 2019
- ❖ Migration and Mobility in Hamilton Report - 2022
- ❖ Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous People in Hamilton Report - 2021
- ❖ Workforce Planning Hamilton Local Labour Market Plan - 2021 – 2022

Key Findings that Inform Areas of Focus, Objectives and Actions

A research-based environmental scan of macro-economic trends and local community consultation, including the voice of Hamiltonians, the business community, and workforce ecosystem partners provides relevant insight into the city's current workforce challenges. These insights set the tone for the practical steps contained in the action plan. Key findings include:

- ❖ Continuing to encourage and support immigration
- ❖ Aligning education and training with employer needs
- ❖ Addressing the 'employer-employee' disconnect
- ❖ Leveraging and strengthening workforce ecosystem partnerships
- ❖ Enabling diversity, equity, and inclusion
- ❖ Fostering Hamilton's value proposition for talent attraction and retention

Continuing to encourage and support immigration

Hamilton, like other communities across Canada, is constrained by structural factors of an aging domestic population, barriers to employment facing underutilized domestic pools of labour (e.g., Indigenous and First Nations Peoples, members of racialized communities, women, people with disabilities, etc.), and reliance on immigration for close to 100% of net labour force growth¹⁰.

If unaddressed, immigrant attraction challenges and the aging population may restrict Hamilton's long-term economic prosperity. Attracting and retaining immigrants that can fill labour force gaps across all skill levels is critical to the city's competitiveness. Canada's Immigration Plan¹¹ with increased targets post COVID-19, creates opportunity for key sectors to attract the desired talent with the skills and knowledge necessary to fill job vacancies. The Plan projects that by 2032, immigration will account for 100% of Canada's population growth¹². With Hamilton being home to universities, colleges, and schools, including Mohawk College, Collège Boréal, McMaster University, Redeemer University, Columbia International College, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board, there are opportunities to build on Hamilton's value proposition as an education hub and leverage this strength to attract immigration and new talent to live and work in Hamilton.

¹⁰ Deloitte. September 2022. Understanding Canada's Labour Shortage.

¹¹ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2022. An Immigration Plan to Grow the Economy.

¹² Ibid.

The Hamilton Economic Development Office and partners need to undertake targeted measures to attract newcomers to Hamilton. This includes creating a welcoming and inclusive community, supporting measures that address housing limitations, and ensuring a skills-based approach to immigration to narrow the gap between employer needs and labour supply. Advocating to provincial and federal decision makers to address core labour force wraparound supports, including housing will help support a more equitable and inclusive city, where everyone can thrive.

As companies seek talent from around the globe, and individuals are more willing to work across borders, the dependence on digital nomads may continue to increase and be a prominent factor in labour force planning¹³. Hamilton can work with partners including Workforce Planning Hamilton to market the newly implemented Federal initiative, the Digital Nomad Program among its business community as a step towards addressing skills shortages.

Aligning education and training with employer needs

Community consultations highlight the need for enhanced collaborative efforts with the education and training sector to meet the current and future labour force needs of local businesses. Both the research and engagement point to employers across multiple sectors struggling to address skills shortages in a variety of positions and levels of experience. Businesses in manufacturing and goods movement¹⁴ identify a shortage of skilled tradespeople and technically skilled workers. These occupations are essential to the operations of these businesses and employers face difficulties in finding skilled workers to meet their needs. Businesses in creative industries, FIRE, and ICT mention the need for specialized information technology skills and sector-specific skills. Life sciences stakeholders mentioned the need for specialized roles, such as nursing, youth mental health, social work, and environmental aides, etc. This sector also identified that Hamilton also has a lack of C-suite talent necessary to grow Hamilton as an international destination of choice for life science research and commercialization.

Digital transformation, automation, and the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is also expected to impact the labour market, with workforce displacement being the most significant outcome¹⁵. Advances in automation, including large language models and generative AI, are positioned to potentially reduce demand for both physical or routine roles, as well as professional and creative positions¹⁶. Current research points to AI's anticipated effects in completing routine tasks in industries such as retail and healthcare, as well as in activities common to legal assistants, researchers, or programmers¹⁷. Overall, these findings suggest that the adoption of AI may increase labour market disparities between workers who have the skills to use AI effectively and those who do not. Making sure that workers have the right skills to work with new technologies is therefore a key policy challenge.¹⁸

Business leaders have emphasized the need for flexible and responsive skills development opportunities across all skill levels and priority sectors to address labour force gaps. Enabling individuals to transition from programs such as Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program into skilled trades/apprenticeships, or to utilize micro-credentialing and upskilling, may promote workplace participation through accommodation and inclusion. Additionally, incorporating experiential learning at the high school and post-secondary levels can create opportunities for career exploration and increased sector awareness. Programs such as LIUNA Hamilton Youth in

¹³ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. June 2023. Canada's Tech Talent Strategy.

¹⁴ Sectors include iron and steel mills and ferro-alloy manufacturing; motor vehicle parts manufacturing; railroad rolling stock manufacturing; general trucking; and couriers among other subsectors.

¹⁵ Deloitte. September 2022. Understanding Canada's Labour Shortage. Brookfield Institute. February 2021. Yesterday's Gone: Exploring possible futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world. McKinsey Global Institute. June 2018. AI, automation, and the future of work: Ten things to solve for.

¹⁶ Brookfield Institute. February 2021. Yesterday's Gone: Exploring possible futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world. McKinsey Global Institute. June 2018. AI, automation, and the future of work: Ten things to solve for.

¹⁷ Brookfield Institute. February 2021. Automation, AI, and Outer Space: Tech and the Future of Work in Canada.

¹⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/reports-and-data/AI-Employment-brief-2021.pdf>

Construction, Secondary Specialist High Skills Major, Foreign Worker Program, E-Compass Ontario, and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program could be leveraged to support these initiatives.

Upskilling, reskilling, and education initiatives are crucial for attracting, developing, and retaining talent by addressing skills gaps. By investing in these initiatives, businesses can promote workforce development and ensure that their employees have the skills needed to succeed in their roles.

Addressing the ‘employer-employee’ disconnect

Growing the labour force takes more than simply increasing awareness of career options. With an environment of labour scarcity, any disconnect between what job seekers want in jobs and what employers are offering, can impact job vacancies.

Macro trends related to the employer – employee disconnect include shifting expectations due to the rise, and in some cases strong persistence, of remote and flexible work options¹⁹. This trend may lead to changes in talent recruitment and a decrease in commercial space utilization. In a related area, workforce well-being has gained prominence as a critical factor in talent attraction and retention. Organizations investing in employee wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, and work-life balance initiatives have a competitive edge. There is a need to consider the generational divide in planning for workforce recruitment and retention, as the multi-generational workplace require varying leadership styles, from formal authority to leadership by influence²⁰. The rise of technology-based workplaces has also seen age-related discrimination, preventing mature workers from re-entering the workplace²¹.

Stakeholders identified the opportunity to work with youth to improve recruitment outcomes. Suggestions included school field trips and providing tours to connect local employers and students for sector awareness and experiential learning opportunities. There is also a defined need to encourage employers to recognize the value of flexibility in the workplace, where appropriate. Businesses could opt for flexible employment arrangements including the location, schedule, and number of work hours, or consider part-time work, job sharing, or reduced hour position. In sectors where traditional flexibility might be limited, cross-training programs, hiring temporary workers, flexible contracts, task rotation and shared labour pools could be implemented. Other ideas included investing in workplace opportunities, mentorships, internships and facilitating access to training supports and tools.

Leveraging and strengthening workforce ecosystem partnerships

Consultations on this project have identified the strength of Hamilton’s partnerships and collaborations as a unique value proposition. These relationships span businesses, industry associations, post-secondary education and training organizations, employment support networks, intermediaries, and advocacy groups and unions. Ongoing conversations and shared knowledge are needed to ensure that both labour force needs are understood, and employers have access to timely and relevant supports. It is these collaborative efforts that will inform and influence certifications and training programming, professional development, and continued program enhancements. Identifying new data sources and conducting additional data analysis that can inform labour force forecasting, in-demand occupations, talent pool skills gaps, education, and training needs, will help promote evidence-based decision making. Involving workforce partners in new business investment opportunities can strengthen the promotion of an employer-ready labour pool.

Given the strength of the existing ecosystem, the Hamilton Economic Development Office role as a convenor, facilitator, and collaborator was widely accepted in stakeholder consultation. The opportunity areas identified

¹⁹ Forbes Advisor. June 2023. Remote Work Statistics and Trends In 2023.

²⁰ Harvard Business Review. 2014. Managing People from 5 Generations.

²¹ Employment and Social Development Canada. 2021. Older workers: Exploring and addressing the stereotypes. Harvard Business Review. 2019. The Case for Hiring Older Workers.

include informing and supporting access to current labour market data, developing a consistent marketing message for Hamilton, and catalyzing partnerships for stronger talent attraction and retention. This further emphasizes the importance for economic developers to inform and support the skills development of the labour force, seek investment that drives good quality jobs, and strengthen alignment with the needs of the economy to maximize workforce potential.

Enabling Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Consultation and research findings suggest the need and opportunity for Hamilton to address the labour market barriers for disadvantaged groups²². There is an international discussion happening on the need to acknowledge labour market barriers for equity deserving groups, including youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. The Hamilton business community is engaged in this issue²³.

Anecdotally, there is a perception that Hamilton is less welcoming, which negatively influences talent attraction and retention. To promote a culture of opportunity for all, targeted approaches are necessary to address inclusivity in the workplace. Improved access to the labour market can be enabled through tailored approaches, such as mentorship programs for youth, addressing language barriers for refugees, and improving international credential recognition for immigrants. Employment services can help qualified job seekers who may be lacking in interview skills and confidence. This is particularly true for historically disadvantaged groups, women in trades or individuals with disabilities. Employment services directed to these specific population groups or those disproportionately impact can help address their barriers to employment.

Fostering Hamilton's value proposition for talent attraction and retention

Consultations have identified the need to continue promoting Hamilton's quality of life and place as a talent attraction and retention tool. Hamilton's assets, including diverse restaurants, a vibrant arts and culture scene, numerous galleries, museums, festivals, and a variety of parks and green spaces, should be promoted more broadly within the region. Opportunities also exist for Hamilton to showcase its community diversity and support policies and initiatives aimed at promoting social welfare and economic equality. However, some negative perceptions still exist that may discourage people from relocating to the city. Safety, a high level of homelessness in the downtown core, the high cost of living, and housing affordability were identified as barriers for people to relocate or remain in Hamilton. Stakeholders consulted as part of this project mentioned safety concerns affecting their motivation to work downtown. Labour force survey respondents also identified the least satisfaction with public safety and policing, along with the lack of affordable housing, childcare services, and access to public transit. These factors are barriers impacting their quality of life. Housing affordability has an impact on Hamilton's ability to attract talent to the city.

These elements contribute to the ongoing trend of people leaving Canada's biggest cities to move to smaller, more rural communities, i.e., the rural boom²⁴. These barriers require thoughtful consideration and a collective effort spanning community organizations, all levels of government, among others, to advance solutions. One concept identified through the stakeholder engagement focused on the importance of a living wage for lower-skilled jobs that often pay minimum wage. While these solutions are beyond the scope of a workforce strategy, they are factors to its success and must remain a priority if Hamilton's vision to become a workforce hub is to be achieved.

Increased awareness and connection to local community support networks across the ecosystem will help those seeking information and assistance. To foster continued growth, Hamilton must ensure that its quality of place and

²² The Conference Board of Canada. February 2022. Recovery for All, Finding Equities in Education and Employment.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Brookfield Institute. February 2021. Yesterday's Gone: Exploring possible futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world.

quality of life factors into workers decision-making. A high quality of life and quality of place quite simply helps attract and retain workers.²⁵

Efforts may include working collaboratively with housing developers to better align development to community needs and leveraging Hamilton's Employer Crawl²⁶ which offers students the opportunity to meet with potential employers and get a better understanding of Hamilton's job market.

²⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/defining-quality-place-roi-carlotta-ungaro-cce-iom>

²⁶ <https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/students-employers-to-connect-at-annual-hamilton-employment-crawl/>



Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem – A Shared Vision through Partnerships and Collaboration

This section of the strategy provides a brief overview of the existing workforce ecosystem in Hamilton and highlights how the Hamilton Economic Development Office may support workforce development efforts for the city.

Defining Workforce and Economic Development

To establish clarity around the definition and practice of economic and workforce development as it relates to the context of this research, this subsection offers a summary of these key terms. This is to ensure that the reader and participants in this project are considering the roles and responsibilities in the same light.

Workforce Development

Workforce development, as a function area, has evolved from human resource development and workforce planning, and is described as “the coordination of public and private-sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context.”²⁷ In simple terms, workforce development focused on preparing individuals with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities to effectively participate in the workforce. This has expanded workforce development beyond policies in the Canadian context to include activities in economic development, immigration, human capital, social security, education, and training. In practice, this generally translates into the following types of activities in the community:

- ❖ Employment and training services
- ❖ Policy directions for employment and training
- ❖ Labour market research and planning
- ❖ Employer engagement and resourcing
- ❖ Skills development and educational alignment
- ❖ Employment, skills, and training grants/funding

Economic Development

At its most basic level, Economic development refers to the process whereby a society improves its economic, social, and political well-being by expanding the range of economic activities, increasing the level of productivity

²⁷ <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/bridges/spring-2010/what-is-workforce-development>

and efficiency in those activities, and improving the distribution of the benefits of those activities among the members of society. Economic development involves a range of activities, including investment in physical and human capital, technological innovation, institutional development, and policy reform, among others²⁸. In practice, this generally translates into the following types of activities in the community:

- ❖ Support and foster industry and business growth
- ❖ Investment attraction and aftercare
- ❖ Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)
- ❖ Entrepreneurial support
- ❖ Incubation, acceleration, and technology transfer
- ❖ Tourism development and destination marketing
- ❖ Supporting workforce development efforts

Aligning Workforce Development and Economic Development

Over the past decade, workforce development has become increasingly intertwined with economic development to support local economies. Communities recognize the need to be proactive in responding to business needs for a skilled and talented labour force. As a result, workforce development and economic development converge where the local labour force can meet industry's skills and knowledge needs.

Communities that can demonstrate the availability of a skilled and talented labour pool, one that meets local labour demands, are better positioned to compete for business investment and large-scale development projects. These investments, in turn, support the attraction and recruitment of people as workers and residents, due to the employment opportunities provided. Challenges arise when a lack of coordination impedes local workforce development, leaving the labour force underprepared to meet employer needs.

Consequently, the coordination of the local support ecosystem can influence decisions for new investments and business expansion, as the ability to support training and overall labour force availability has become a key consideration for site selectors and investors. To support coordination and cohesion of the workforce ecosystem, engagement across the community is necessary; whereby, all organizations commit to adapting to a new way of supporting local business.

Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem

Simply defined, a workforce ecosystem refers to the structure and interaction of partners and programs that influence skills development, talent attraction, retention, and labour readiness.

Hamilton has a strong workforce ecosystem base, comprised of the Hamilton Economic Development Office, education and training providers, major industry sectors and industry partners, and support organizations providing employment support, settlement services, youth services and other government services. The ecosystem actively engages in workforce planning, skills development and talent attraction and retention efforts. Hamilton's workforce ecosystem benefits from its geographical positioning near the Greater Toronto Area and the many universities, colleges, and schools across the region. Locally, Hamilton is home to Mohawk College, Collège Boréal, McMaster University and Redeemer University. All these institutions are highly recognized for their contribution to Hamilton's economy and competitive positioning. Columbia International College, the Hamilton-

²⁸ Farhad Taghizadeh-Hesary, "Economic Development: Definition, Theories, and Policies," *Journal of Economic Structures*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2021): 1-2

Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board are responsible for elementary to high school levels, which play an important role in providing formative career exploration and awareness. Secondary schools also work closely with employers and industry partners to inform curriculum, enable on-the-job training, and enable work-integrated learning opportunities essential to decision making for the future workforce.

Mohawk College's Challenge 2025 stands as an example of a strong ecosystem effort. This workforce training program was launched by Mohawk College and community partners including Workforce Planning Hamilton and the Adult Basic Education Association of Hamilton to address regional employment gaps and make skills training and retraining more accessible across the city.

Beyond education and training assets, Hamilton is home to a multitude of employment and wrap-around support organizations, which deliver client facing services and supports required to position many in the labour force for transition into the labour force. FedCap as the new Service System Manager for the Hamilton-Niagara region is mandated to ensure a more responsive and reflective labour market, while Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH), enables solutions to labour market issues through employer and community engagement and collaboration.

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) is unique among Ontario's Local Immigration Partnerships as the only LIP that is integrated within a municipal economic development office. This placement enables an extensive level of collaboration and cooperation between HIPC, the immigrant-serving organizations that contribute to HIPC's activities.

Hamilton's business support organizations including the three Chambers of Commerce (Hamilton, Flamborough and Stoney Creek), BLK Owned, in addition to local unions including Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA) contribute to information dissemination and help identify and respond to employer and labour needs. The Invest in Hamilton Partnership, including the Hamilton Economic Development Office, the Chambers of Commerce, post-secondary institutions, Hamilton Health Sciences, McMaster Innovation Park, Synapse Life Science Consortium, Hamilton Port Authority, and John C Munro Hamilton International Airport, play an essential role in enabling job creation, supporting business investment, and contributing to professional learning communities.

Role of the Hamilton Economic Development Office

Hamilton's Economic Development Office serves as the City of Hamilton's primary resource for investment inquiries, financial incentives, investment attraction, and services to support the growth and success of local businesses. The division offers sector specialists to support key industry growth, increase foreign direct investment and trade, and encourage the creation of satellite offices through a Soft-Landing Program. The department also houses the Hamilton Business Center, which provides direct support to entrepreneurs and small businesses operating in Hamilton.

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Research suggests that Hamilton's Economic Development Office undertake targeted initiatives to support Hamilton's labour market. These include:

- ❖ improving access to data and evidence-based decision-making

- ❖ working with service providers to integrate performance measurement systems into program monitoring to support continuous improvement and program outcomes
- ❖ supporting sector-specific working groups to build a shared taxonomy around available skills and advocating for more employer-led training
- ❖ disseminating relevant information in useful and useable format
- ❖ collaborating within the workforce ecosystem
- ❖ contributing to the integration all segments of the immigrant population
- ❖ working with local employers to increase awareness of work integrated learning opportunities

Role of Workforce Planning Hamilton

Workforce Planning Hamilton is one of 26 workforce planning boards across Ontario mandated to gather intelligence about labour supply and demand. The boards work with employers to identify current and emerging skills, and communicate those needs to the communities they serve. WPH will play a critical role working together to advance the strategy through:

- ❖ increasing labour market data and data accessibility
- ❖ encouraging information exchanges through networking events
- ❖ building out career pathways to promote growth occupations
- ❖ fostering employer-driven curriculum and training
- ❖ building partnerships in Hamilton's key growth sectors
- ❖ developing LMI tools that are made available to the entire workforce ecosystem

Role of Other Workforce Ecosystem Partners

Workforce development providers and intermediaries bring valuable insights and knowledge on the challenges facing employers and job seekers, as well as opportunities to ensure a stable workforce and growth in Hamilton's economy. Opportunities exist for the Hamilton Economic Development Office and its ecosystem partners to build on existing resources and foster active employer engagement in skills development and training. Facilitated forums for ecosystem collaboration can ensure timely opportunities to discuss workforce barriers and viable solutions. This will, in turn, empower local collaboration, deepen relationships, and build trust and connections across the ecosystem. Other areas of support include:

- ❖ enhancing wrap-around supports that are key attributes for talent attraction and contributing to the development of quality of place and life
- ❖ engaging with underemployed segments of Hamilton's population to promote meaningful work and provide sector-specific, flexible, and accessible skills development and professional programming
- ❖ agreeing on common language to describe programs and processes to make it easier to understand for the client, particularly when a client may use multiple service supports
- ❖ ensuring employer-led training prepares the workforce to respond to the skills demands of the future

- ❖ strengthening immigrant settlement services and other support organizations
- ❖ collaborating on foreign worker programs to aid recruitment efforts in priority sectors
- ❖ enabling more employer-directed curriculum and career pathways, employer-led training, and experiential learning through apprenticeships, co-op programs, work-integrated learning, volunteerism, internships, and entrepreneurship programs
- ❖ focusing on education, training, and skills development initiatives that align with labour demand needs of employers
- ❖ increasing awareness among small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion standards
- ❖ strengthening and delivering more targeted population-specific programming (such as that provided by Adult Basic Education Association and Hamilton Literacy Council) including credential assessments, language training for newcomers and Hamilton's diverse populations

Role of Provincial Government (Employment Ontario)

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) leads Ontario's effort to be the best jurisdiction in North America to recruit, train, retain, protect, and reward workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The Ministry's work on this front creates dynamic and equitable labour markets, safe and harmonious workplaces, and competitive labour and employment regulations.²⁹ A key area of responsibility is the Employment Ontario (EO) program that aims to address labour market and skills gaps and enhance employment opportunities for all Ontarians. The objective of the program is to support job seekers in connecting with opportunities to find and keep good jobs, ensure employers can hire the skilled workers they need, and make sure the province has the best possible employment services. Employment Ontario aims to achieve this by equipping more people with valuable skills through apprenticeships and transforming employment and training services to improve labour market outcomes for job seekers.³⁰ MLITSD is currently undertaking an Employment Services Transformation review with the goal of making employment services more efficient, more streamlined, and more outcomes based. The role of the provincial government includes:

- ❖ Leading the Employment Services Transformation and assigning Service System Managers
- ❖ Supporting the provision of funding to support employment readiness, employment access, and barriers to labour force participation including housing, transit, and wrap-around services
- ❖ Coordinating efforts with other Ministries to reduce duplication and promote maximum labour market impact through cross-ministry collaboration

Role of Federal Government

The Government of Canada has established the Labour Market Development Agreement and the Workforce Development Agreement (WDAs) with provincial and territorial governments for the development and delivery of

²⁹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2022-2023-ministry-labour-training-and-skills-development>

³⁰ *ibid*

programs and services that help Canadians get training, develop their skills and gain work experience.³¹ The Canada – Ontario Workforce Development Agreement reflects a common vision of supporting the employment and training needs of Ontario’s labour market by building an inclusive, integrated, client-centered, outcomes-driven, employment and training model for Ontario that responds to the evolving needs of individuals, employers, and communities. Employment and Social Development Canada has a mandate to improve the standard of living and quality of life for all Canadians by promoting a labour force that is highly skilled and promoting an efficient and inclusive labour market.³² Another key federal ministry, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada focuses on supporting settlement for immigrants and refugees that includes workforce integration. A leading source for reputable statistical data and insights, Statistics Canada helps Canadians better understand their country's population, resources, economy, society, and culture. StatsCan leads the Canadian Census every five years, along with about 350 active surveys that inform on many aspects of Canadian life.

These federal Ministries/Agencies have a role to play in the Hamilton workforce ecosystem through:

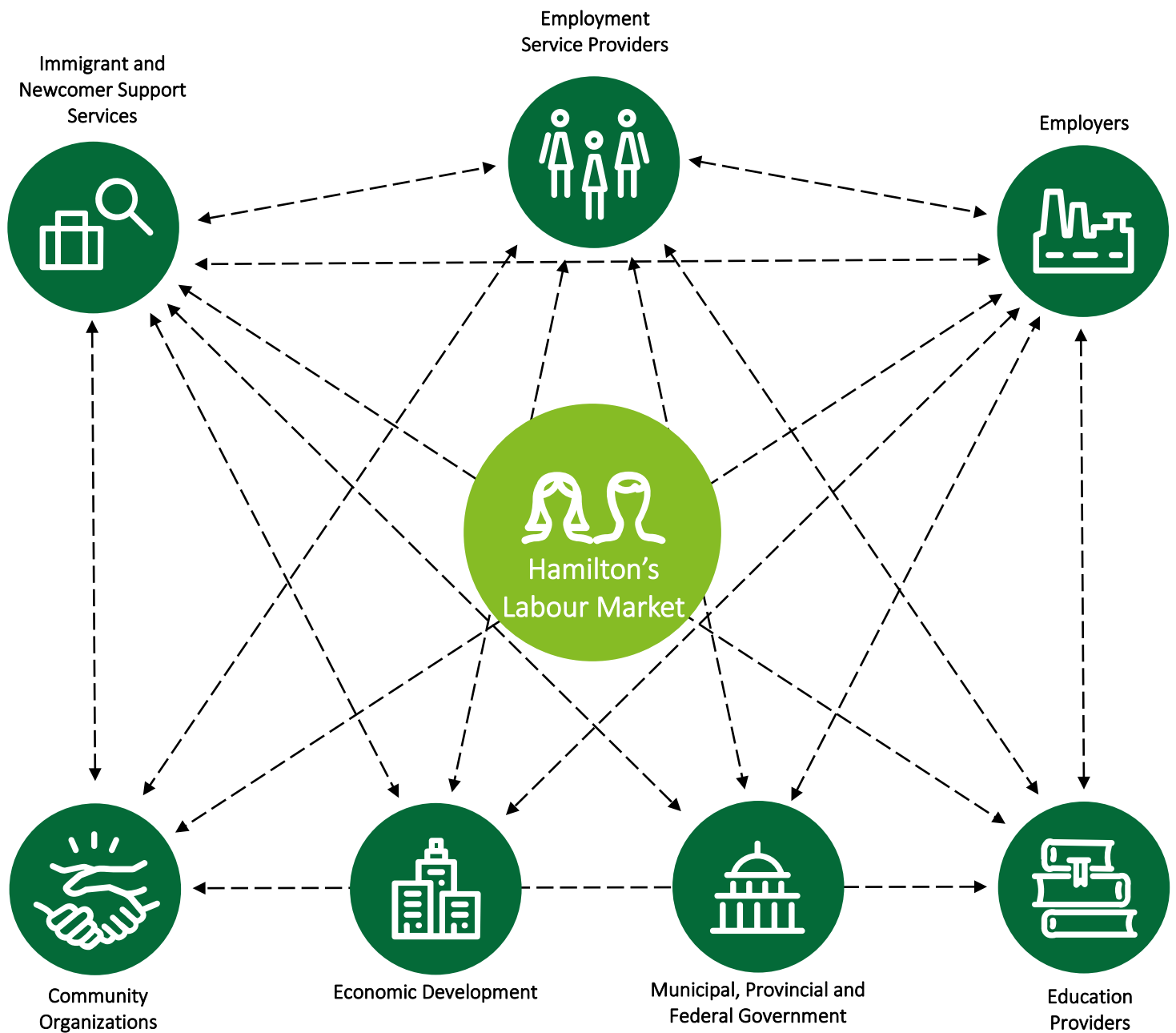
- ❖ participating in the exchange of relevant information, and dissemination of funding opportunities, grant programs, and available services and supports
- ❖ helping ecosystem partners to understand current policy and program requirements
- ❖ accessing relevant LMI to use for policy and program decision making
- ❖ engaging Hamilton’s workforce ecosystem through funded programming opportunities and initiatives
- ❖ Working with Hamilton’s workforce ecosystem partners to understand immigration policies and how to facilitate immigration supports that meets the needs of the newcomers and their families alongside the needs of Hamilton

Following is a visual presentation of Hamilton’s Workforce Ecosystem, reflecting the broad categories of those that contribute.

³¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/training-agreements/workforce-development-agreements.html>

³² <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html>

Figure 3: Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem



Strategically integrated collaboration is at the core of both Hamilton's workforce development ecosystem as well as this strategy. No single element of this ecosystem can function without the other. Likewise, the labour force itself is inclusive of newcomers and immigrants, youth, older workers, people with disabilities, and equity seeking individuals.



The Strategy Areas of Focus

Hamilton's Workforce Strategy is grounded in a vision that reflects Hamilton as an inter-connected workforce hub, where economic development and workforce development efforts contribute to the city's competitiveness and prosperity. In this vision, the labour market is aligned, businesses have access to a ready and skilled talent pool to fill job vacancies, labour force participation reflects an active and engaged labour force, and the community is recognized as a great place to live and work. This is our vision.

Areas of Focus are designed to move Hamilton towards this vision. These are supported by a series of relevant objectives and tangible actions that identify what needs to be done next, and why it is necessary.

Vision

Hamilton is recognized and celebrated for its workforce excellence where talent thrives, businesses succeed, and community prospers.

We know we have achieved our vision when:

- ❖ Hamilton has an active and goal-directed workforce ecosystem that fosters collaboration among industry and business, education, labour force participants, and community intermediaries
- ❖ The workforce is empowered and responsive to shifting employer demands in an evolving economy
- ❖ When decision making is grounded in relevant, reliable data and labour market analysis
- ❖ Hamilton is an inclusive and celebrated destination known for its diverse talent pool and equitable access to opportunity for all
- ❖ Performance indicators validate the outcomes and impact emerging from strategy implementation
- ❖ Strong partnerships across public, private, and the voluntary sector collaboratively advance talent development, and leverage evidence-based insights to position the labour market for today and tomorrow

Strategic Areas of Focus

The five areas of focus are highly interrelated and work collectively to strengthen workforce collaboration within the ecosystem, support talent development initiatives, and leverage evidence-based insights to position Hamilton's labour market for needs of today and tomorrow. The Areas of Focus and objectives of this strategy are grounded in local strengths. They aim to bridge skills gaps, strengthen partnerships, and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, this strategy emphasizes marketing and advocacy efforts to enable talent attraction, retention, and talent development.

Partnerships

Focus Statement: A shared commitment and efforts align to the needs of businesses and the labour force, demonstrating a seamless workforce ecosystem, and celebrating the shared strategic vision for Hamilton as a workforce hub.

- ❖ **Objective 1.1:** Foster a collective leadership approach to support workforce development and labour market planning.
- ❖ **Objective 1.2:** Activate and foster collaboration within Hamilton's workforce ecosystem (Government, Institutions, Employers, and Local Employment Support Organizations).
- ❖ **Objective 1.3:** Strengthen partnerships to demonstrate Hamilton's ability to support investments and economic growth.

Partnerships among Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem are identified as an area of focus to ensure a collaborative workforce planning ecosystem. A shared commitment to aligning the needs of businesses and the labour force will build a seamless integration of talent and skills development and advance a shared strategic vision.

Hamilton is home to a strong workforce ecosystem, with educational institutions, support organizations and an active business community. Continuing to create channels for communication, and enhancing connections among business leaders, academia, and employment support organizations is necessary to address labour market issues in a timely manner. Solutions cannot be achieved in isolation.

Involving employers from Hamilton's economic target sectors is crucial to planning for current and future labour needs. As of 2023, these sectors (excluding retail) employed more than 91,600 individuals (including self-employed individuals)³³, representing close to 33% of all jobs in Hamilton. Active and ongoing engagement involving employers from these sectors, along with policy makers, educators, and other intermediaries, will provide valuable insights into the specific skills and knowledge required for the jobs of the future.

The Canadian Occupational Projections System identifies that there is a relationship between the occupations projected to have stronger demand and those facing labour shortages in the coming decade. The increasing demand for these occupations amid falling labour supply further underscores the need to promote emerging career opportunities among students, as well as increase the training programs targeting these occupations. Collaboration with Hamilton's key industry partners also allows for the identification of emerging trends, technological advancements, and evolving job roles, enabling greater training flexibility and the creation of 'Made in Hamilton' solutions to local challenges. Such proactive engagement fosters a symbiotic relationship across the workforce ecosystem, and advances Hamilton's workforce strategy towards its shared vision.

³³ Lightcast, Data run 2022.3

Skills Development

Focus Statement: Enhanced education, training, and skills development offerings strengthen the availability of relevant programming leading to an activated talent pool with the skills, motivation, and capabilities to meet labour demand needs and drive productivity.

- ❖ **Objective 2.1:** Work with educational institutions and industry partners to identify and respond in a timely manner to market needs.
- ❖ **Objective 2.2:** Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among Hamilton's local labour force.

Stakeholders in Hamilton's life sciences, manufacturing, and information and communications technology sectors shared concerns of a skills gap. While many of these job opportunities seek to hire a workforce with some level of post-secondary education, there is considerable job demand that requires high-school level education or less. Insights and lived experience identified through background research point to opportunities to support a reduction of the skills gap. These opportunities include immigration and newcomer workforce engagement, wrap-around supports, sector-specific and industry-led training and skills development, employer engagement, and workforce inclusion and integration strategies.

As private sector investors explore relocation, reshoring, and business expansion, talent availability has become a key consideration in site selection activities. As such, demonstrating Hamilton's ability to respond to talent demands through effective strategies targeting talent attraction, retention, and training and development will serve the city well. The presence of a strong post-secondary sector within the city further strengthens the business case for investment in Hamilton.

Business leaders have further expressed a desire for flexible and responsive skills development that can accommodate needs that arise quickly or require targeted skills building. These types of needs will differ depending on the sector and type of worker. For example, some consultations suggested exploring the potential to tap into programs such as Ontario Works as a potential source for skilled trades/apprenticeships. Paths to successful short-term training included micro-credential programs, upskilling programs, and incorporating technical training into workplace learning. Other identified paths to long-term skill development included investing in experiential learning, co-op placements, mentorships, internships. Programs such as LIUNA Hamilton Youth in Construction program, Specialist High Skills Major, Foreign Worker Program, E-Compass Ontario, and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program are all examples of programs that could be leveraged.

Ongoing Data Utilization

Focus Statement: Ongoing data collection, analysis, and dissemination informs evidence-based decision making and shares insights on Hamilton's labour market, talent gaps, hiring trends, future labour market needs, and education and skills gaps.

- ❖ **Objective 3.1:** Disseminate reliable resources that inform about in-demand occupations and skills, and the broader future of work considerations.
- ❖ **Objective 3.2:** Continue to promote new and existing training and employment programs and supports.
- ❖ **Objective 3.3:** Ensure that the labour force has access to learning and tools that consider employers needs today and, in the future.

Current labour trends are complex and constantly changing. A deeper understanding of sector specific labour market nuances can guide workplace practices that consider both employer and employee needs and preferences. Ensuring additional and relevant labour market data is available to inform new and existing training opportunities and employment support programming will further guide decisions that strengthen labour supply readiness and alignment with employer needs.

Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) data informs the national labour demand, leaving those seeking more local information to find other sources. Most individuals and employers are looking for LMI that is local, timely, granular, and frequent.³⁴ This is an area where established LMI can fall short. However, the opportunity to seek out additional LMI and examine multiple sources to inform decisions exists. Access to information on local job postings, emerging skill set requirements and labour demand projections would paint a picture of what is happening locally as such data may be examined to assess the occupational growth for Hamilton's CMA.

When considering data acquisition, it is necessary to understand the expected uses and users of that data. Researchers may work well with complex, multi-level data tables, while an individual looking for career direction would likely prefer the data disseminated in a more visual and easier to understand manner. As Hamilton explores where to access local data, there is an opportunity to be creative and serve multiple audiences. Data collected through employment support networks, as well as business retention meetings may be aggregated to create a new local perspective on what is happening across the city and within the labour market.

Tracking labour supply data is an important component that can be completed by connecting with workforce partners and through LinkedIn, online job boards, annual surveys to job seekers, and other online tools. A career laddering and mobility tool could be considered to further understand and support the transition of people from declining occupations into in-demand occupations and those projected to grow. Tracking mobility and spending data can help to understand key transportation nodes to promote and advocate for new transportation routes. Current post-secondary enrollment and graduation data can support the alignment of local demand and supply. Alumni data can inform on where graduates are working, career paths chosen, and potentially support a repatriation strategy for top talent.

³⁴ <https://lmi-cimt.ca/perceptions-of-lmi-feedback-from-the-canadian-ecosystem/#toc4>

Marketing

Focus Statement: Hamilton is recognized as a destination of choice for talent, offering a diverse labour market that respects and promotes an inclusive and equitable work environment where all individuals are motivated to thrive and contribute.

- ❖ **Objective 4.1:** Develop and share common marketing and communication tools to be used by the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem to increase familiarity and consistency in the city's value propositions.
- ❖ **Objective 4.2:** Increase awareness through promotion of local initiatives that influence workforce attraction and development and labour market planning.

Feedback received from Hamilton's workforce development partners and key employers during the creation of this strategy identified a need to improve talent recruitment and retention. Positioning Hamilton as a hub for talent requires increasing the awareness that quality of place and quality of work have on job seeker decisions to accept new job offers, or to relocate to a new community. Helping employers showcase their business and the community in which they operate will expand use of consistent messaging that can be shared across the ecosystem. Examples of such stories can celebrate how Hamilton offers a diverse labour market, good employment opportunities, natural beauty, rich cultural and historical assets, as well as a thriving nightlife and culinary scene.

Fostering Hamilton's brand as a destination for international talent attraction further requires a combination of tactics including promotion of competitive wages, wellness and mental health supports, and workplace culture and flexibility. It is necessary to demonstrate how EDI is an influencing factor to the city's workplace and labour market landscape.

Promoting Hamilton's strong positioning as an education hub through its post-secondary education partners contributes to a positive reputation for the city. Hamilton's major post-secondary education institutions, including McMaster University, Mohawk College, Redeemer University, and Columbia International College enable a talent pipeline to support local businesses. This includes potential workers from within Canada and internationally. Opportunities exist to promote and build on the existing talent available in the community, and through the international student community choosing Hamilton to continue their studies.

Stakeholder consultation also identified that Hamilton's reputation may discourage people from relocating to the city. It is important to tackle these perceptions strategically with consistent messaging and build and reflect pride of place within the city. For example, promotional campaigns can focus on Hamilton's workforce development partners working to ensure there are opportunities that fit all job seekers and that employers have access to the right labour in a timely manner. The daily work of these organizations contributes to dispelling myths surrounding select sectors that carry a negative image, and to showcase Hamilton for all it has to offer.

Along with a negative perception facing select sectors including manufacturing and the skilled trades, stakeholder consultation reported a disconnect between job seeker expectations and employer realities. Proposed solutions repeatedly noted the importance of working with youth to increase awareness and clarity around existing career opportunities and pathways, while also informing on workplace practices and culture.

Youth focused marketing and promotion activities are inclusive of school field trips that allow local employers to showcase the modernization of many workplaces in manufacturing and across the skilled trades.

Advocacy

Focus Statement: Decision makers advocate to all levels of government and other relevant bodies on behalf of Hamilton's residents, businesses, and organizations to advance policies, by-laws, programs, and resources that enable progress and address barriers to employment for all.

- ❖ **Objective 5.1:** Advocate for addressing core labour force wraparound supports for Hamilton's diverse communities.
- ❖ **Objective 5.2:** Undertake concerted efforts to increase immigration to Hamilton.
- ❖ **Objective 5.3:** Advocate for leadership on the wider range of issues impacting the labour force and the workplace.

Advocacy efforts can be far reaching and impactful. It is cross-cutting across all Areas of Focus noted in this strategy. Considerations for advocacy roles within Partnerships, Skills Development, Ongoing Data Utilization, and Marketing must remain top of mind to maximize the impact on Hamilton and its labour market. Key advocacy objectives relate to core wrap around services, equity, diversity and inclusion, and support for immigration to strengthen Hamilton's labour force talent pool.

A welcoming and inclusive community is one where differences are celebrated, seen as assets, a sense of belonging is fostered, and all are respected and included. Celebrating diversity can influence the brand attached to Hamilton, while supporting a more inclusive approach to engagement and active labour market participation from historically excluded populations. This theme can be carried over into all aspects of promotion for Hamilton. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion was a major theme that emerged from project research and stakeholder engagement. Hamilton has a diverse population, and it is important that this diversity be reflected throughout community groups, committees, boards, councils, associations, and beyond. Historically excluded populations must be visible, respected, included, and given an equal voice. These diverse populations will not only be more apt to actively participate in a welcoming environment, but also seek out Hamilton as a place to live and work. Engaging with diverse populations and creating opportunities for inclusion is an important step in the city's workforce strategy implementation.

Many stakeholders felt that there is still work to be done on meaningful inclusivity in the workforce within certain segments of Hamilton's population. Disadvantaged groups would benefit from partnerships across academia and businesses to create programs that result in skills development and upskilling. There is also a need to communicate the benefits of hiring a diverse workforce and encouraging more inclusivity in the workplace. For example, when considering the refugee population, there may be language and communications barriers. Employment services organizations mentioned difficulties that women in trades or those with disabilities face when seeking employment. International credential recognition remains a challenge. Workforce partners working with youth identified the need to create such programs as mentoring to showcase workplace culture to youth and inform on workplace skills development and enhancement opportunities. Whether it is a lack of confidence, communication barriers, gaps in interview skills, or credential recognition, connecting these individuals to the appropriate employment support services will foster a more positive outcome.



The Action Plan

The actions outlined have emerged through comprehensive research of primary and secondary data and an expansive consultation process. They were further informed by existing work of Hamilton's Economic Development Office and the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem. As such they incorporate relevant recommendations from the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP), Workforce Planning Hamilton – Local Labour Market Plan, sector-specific strategies, Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Recovery, Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Annual Report, City of Hamilton Housing & Homelessness Action Plan and the 2022-2027 City of Hamilton Youth Strategy Report, among others.

The actions are a starting point (and not presented in any priority sequence) based on input and research at a point in time. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all potential actions, as it is recognized that new actions will emerge based on influencing factors within the city, and more broadly.

Detailed Actions

The direction Economic Development, its partners, and ecosystem stakeholders will undertake to address the essential issues or opportunities that emerged as key areas of focus through the strategy development.

Potential Role

The identification of leads, supports, partners, or those that can make connections to advance implementation of an action.

Time frame

The length of time needed to implement each action is designated as:

- Short term (1-2 years)
- Medium term (3-4 years)
- Long term (5 years or beyond)

Following is a detailed action plan that presents each Area of Focus, along with a series of specific actions that support the stated objectives. Timelines and potential lead/partner organizations have been identified. However, it is recognized that further discussion within the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem is necessary to confirm identified actions align with the potential lead/partner organization mandate and interest. This is seen as an early next step following the strategy adoption.

Area of Focus #1: Partnerships

A shared commitment and efforts align to the needs of businesses and the labour force, demonstrating a seamless workforce ecosystem, and celebrating the shared strategic vision for Hamilton as a workforce hub.

#	Action	Potential Lead/Partner (Lead in Bold)	Timing		
			S	M	L

Objective 1.1: Foster a collective leadership approach to support workforce development and labour market planning.

1	<p>Facilitate the establishment of a Labour Market Advisory Table as part of the Invest Hamilton Partnership³⁵. This cohesive approach will strengthen ongoing dialogue, knowledge exchange, and advance the Hamilton Workforce Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Labour Market Advisory Table will reflect diverse participation that promotes EDI, is inclusive of urban and rural geographies, and offers a system-wide representation of decision makers to drive a pivotal response to emerging issues. ❖ This Table would serve as a governance body. The mandate of the Table includes strategy implementation, ensuring continued strategy response and relevance, focusing collective impact through a shared vision, and monitoring of strategy KPI's and impacts. ❖ Decision makers from priority sectors, education, employment and business intermediaries, Workforce Planning Hamilton, FedCap, and Economic Development Hamilton would make up this Table. <p>Early priorities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establishing a Terms of Reference ❖ Identifying the means to acquire a position (full or part-time) for a Strategic Plan Workforce Coordinator to support the Table and strategy implementation. (This may be a shared position with Invest Hamilton Partnership). 	<p>HED, WPH, Workforce Ecosystem partners, IHP</p>			
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³⁵ The Invest Hamilton Partnership is a collaboration between leading stakeholder groups including McMaster University, Mohawk College, Synapse Life Sciences Consortium, McMaster Innovation Park, Innovation Factory, The Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority, and Hamilton International Airport.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish a memorandum of understanding (or similar) that defines how the workforce ecosystem will work collaboratively, with the best interests of Hamilton's labour market at the centre, and all working towards the shared workforce vision for the city. 				
2	<p>To inform the Labour Market Advisory Table, establish Sector Response Committees to carry out on-the-ground solutions that address sector specific challenges and opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The committees may focus on relevant actions from both the workforce strategy and workforce-related actions identified in the sector-specific strategies (i.e.: Manufacturing Sector Strategy, Life Sciences FDI Sector Strategy, Creative Industries Sector Strategy, and the FIRE Sector Strategy). ❖ These committees would provide regular updates to the Labour Market Advisory Table, within information flowing in both directions. ❖ Establish mechanisms to engage industry/targeted sector employers to promote conversation and collaboration, strengthen talent recruitment and enable solutions for workforce challenges ❖ The Sector Response Committees will create a Terms of Reference to articulate roles and responsibilities and facilitate participation and engagement of all members. ❖ Structure must guarantee an equal voice for all members and include representation from minority groups/organizations, Indigenous Peoples, and people with disabilities. 	HED, WPH, IEC			

Objective 1.2: Activate and foster collaboration within Hamilton's workforce ecosystem (Government, Institutions, Employers, and Local Employment Support Organizations).

3	<p>As an add-on to the Connect to Careers Annual Job Fair, explore the opportunity to integrate an Information Exchange that brings workforce ecosystem partners together for an interactive dialogue and sharing of organization updates on services and programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The session will broaden understanding of the services available, how these services support clients and employers, and to identify any areas of challenge or barriers that would benefit from a collective resolution. This event would further strengthen the network and help inform all ecosystem partners on current activities within Hamilton's labour market. 	Workforce Ecosystem partners, Chambers of Commerce, business associations			
4	<p>Through data sharing agreements between the City of Hamilton (across related departments) and the Hamilton workforce ecosystem partners, maximize data utilization and dissemination of data products that can be shared and used broadly to support talent retention, recruitment, domestically and internationally. (<i>Data sharing restrictions and costs often restrict access, preventing its use and usability to inform and support workforce planning decision-making.</i>)</p>	WPH, HED, FedCap, Workforce Ecosystem partners			

5	Mitigate barriers resulting from restricted access of job seekers to employers in more remote areas of the city, where high employment opportunities exist for good jobs. This must be cost effective and may require employer and employee contributions to offset costs.	WPH, HED, Hamilton Transit, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Just Recovery, Housing			
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Objective 1.3: Strengthen partnerships to demonstrate Hamilton's ability to support investments and economic growth.

6	Hamilton Economic Development Office, the Labour Market Advisory Table and the broader Workforce Ecosystem share updates of labour demand needs that evolve from investment opportunities and BR&E. This will enable key labour market needs to be shared with those partners that can support talent readiness and connections. Existing publications (e.g., Hamilton by the Numbers) may be leveraged toward this goal.	HED, IHP, Workforce Ecosystem partners			
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Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ❖ # of partnerships committed to developing a top-quality labour force and aligned workforce ecosystem
- ❖ # of Labour Market Advisory Table meetings
- ❖ # of Sector Response Committee information sessions
- ❖ # of workforce information exchange sessions i.e. Connect to Careers Annual Job Fair

Area of Focus #2: Skills Development

Enhanced education, training and skills development offerings strengthen the availability of relevant programming leading to an activated talent pool with the skills, motivation, and capabilities to meet labour demand needs and drive productivity.

#	Action	Potential Lead/Partner (Lead in Bold)	Timing		
			S	M	L
Objective 2.1: Work with educational institutions and industry partners to identify and respond in a timely manner to market needs.					
7	<p>Map detailed career pathways within each of Hamilton’s target growth sectors to demonstrate career progression from entry level to highly skilled occupations that are in demand.</p> <p>❖ These pathways should be created in collaboration with employers and focus on education/training requirements, competencies, capabilities, and skills. They should also emphasize the transferable skills that can be applied across distinct roles or industries. Sources for sharing could include Workforce Planning Hamilton’s Career Pathways, Industry Education Council of Hamilton’s Experiential Learning and ABEA’s career ladders.</p>	IEC , WPH, School Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Business Associations, Employers			
8	<p>Partner with government funded programs to advance employment and training services to ensure relevant essential, technical, and employability skills for the unemployed and underemployed labour force. This can help address the labour force shortages in Hamilton’s target sectors. The Elevate Plus program could serve as a best practice example.</p>	HED , PSEs, Employers			
9	<p>Capture employer input regarding job requirements and skills needs to best position workforce development organizations to be responsive and timely in curriculum and training program development.</p> <p>❖ This can inform on micro-credentials, shorter-term training programs, and higher-education learning needs. This requires a commitment to share aggregated key findings emerging from discussions with the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem related to skills, competencies, and upskilling needs.</p>	WPH , HED, McMaster University, Mohawk College, Redeemer University			

Objective 2.2: Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among Hamilton's local labour force.

10	Host a Lion's Lair series across local high schools in Hamilton to foster creative and innovative thinking among students to promote entrepreneurship and skills building. Better practices may be drawn from LiONS LAIR by Innovation Factory - Startup Pitch Competition & Gala	IEC, IF, School Boards			
11	Support networking and collaboration opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs/international entrepreneurs through events, industry-specific meetups/coffee chats and forums to promote Hamilton's entrepreneurial ecosystem and the available services and supports to assist aspiring entrepreneurs to be prepared for operating a business	HBC, IF, HED, PSEs, Employers			

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ❖ # of experiential learning opportunities
- ❖ # of support activities to connect students to business
- ❖ # of support activities to connect employers to employment and other training agencies
- ❖ # of start-ups
- ❖ # of support activities (training & seminars) for SMEs

Area of Focus #3: Ongoing Data Utilization

Ongoing data collection, analysis, and dissemination informs evidence-based decision making and shares insights on Hamilton's labour market, talent gaps, hiring trends, future labour market needs, and education and skills gaps.

#	Action	Potential Lead/Partner (Lead in Bold)	Timing		
			S	M	L
Objective 3.1: Disseminate reliable resources that inform about in-demand occupations and skills, and the broader future of work considerations.					
12	Explore a platform to regularly showcase target sector job vacancies to raise awareness of hiring activity within the sector and the types of jobs available in Hamilton.	WPH, Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem partners, Sector Response Committees			
13	<p>Increase awareness and understanding among employers and the labour force of the influencing factors impacting the future of work. This can be facilitated through information sharing resources that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Present data on occupations and skills,❖ Communicate how the future of work is changing, areas of importance to focus on, how the labour force can best be prepared and positioned for future career opportunities,❖ How employers can build successful approaches to employee recruitment, retention practices <p>These resources may be shared through the Workforce Planning Hamilton Job Portal, and through the Workforce Ecosystem partners.</p>	WPH, Future of Work Canada, Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem partners			
14	<p>Develop a Hamilton LMI Data Strategy to identify/validate data needs, data sources, opportunities for data sharing (possible Hamilton LMI dashboard), and data utilization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Demonstrate in the strategy the value and return on investment to the workforce ecosystem and the broader community.❖ Provide a focus on data that informs on diverse populations and groups including youth, women etc.❖ The data can promote opportunities to recent graduates and mid-level talent within the target sectors and subsectors	WPH, HED, PSEs			

15	<p>Examine the feasibility to create an aggregated data repository that captures enrollment and graduation data across participating post-secondary institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Feasibility report to address such questions as: how is this created? What is its purpose and use? Who is it serving? Access to the repository and data use restricted must be determined. ❖ Consideration to utilize AI to conduct, at least in part, the preliminary research to inform on models that may already exist. 	WPH, HED, PSEs			
Objective 3.2: Continue to promote new and existing training and employment programs and supports.					
16	Engage CEWIL partners with post-secondary institutions and community partners to design and deliver sector-specific work-integrated learning (WIL) programs in Hamilton.	WPH, HED, CEWIL, Mohawk College, IEC			
17	Collaborate with Palette Skills to leverage Upskill Canada and promote the partner registration and funding application process among Hamilton employers. The program connects employers to qualified talent, to address their need for workers. It prioritizes job placement as the key performance indicator they will be evaluated on.	FedCap, Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem partners, Palette Skills			
18	Support the Career Laddering Regional Project that looks at entry level jobs in Manufacturing and Healthcare and Social Assistance that has potential for employees to progress through the company. Career Ladders.	WPH, ABEA, WC, WPB Grand Erie			
19	<p>Develop a “Hamilton Way” to promote youth directed programming related to skilled trades and career promotion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Leverage existing efforts including the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Specialist High Skills Major, Dual Credit, and Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program. ❖ Options may include engaging high-school youth or college students to build an immersive experience using select Hamilton workplaces, showcasing “a workday as an.... (auto mechanic; chef; welder) Example: “Trade Up! Be Proud, Be Skilled” Virtual Reality Careers Campaign 	IEC, WPH, LUINA, School Boards, PSEs, MoE, OMAESD, Employers			
20	Continue to track Employment and Social Development Canada funding programs and promote them among the local labour force and employers to ensure a work-ready labour force is available.	Workforce Ecosystem partners, WPH, FedCap, HED			

Objective 3.3: Ensure that the labour force has access to learning and tools that consider employers needs today and, in the future.

21	In partnership with HIPC and immigrant serving organizations, explore the feasibility of monitoring immigrant hiring outcomes. Metrics to be tracked can include hiring and retention results (i.e., those still employed after 3 months, 6 months and 12 months etc.) and the recognition of employee foreign credentials among these hires without the need for additional training.	HIPC, HED, WPH			
22	Create a centralized, online calendar that presents upskilling and professional development training opportunities that employees, labour force and employers can access. This could be presented with links directly to the provider/training opportunity to promote what is available locally. Posts to be validated by host organization, with each participating organization responsible to keep their information current and relevant.	WPH, HED, Local Training and Education Providers			

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ❖ # of visits to Hamilton LMI dashboard, data points collected, analyzed, and shared
- ❖ # of job seekers supported
- ❖ # of businesses provided with LMI information
- ❖ # of College and University admissions/graduates from courses relevant to target sectors

Area of Focus #4: Marketing

Hamilton is recognized as a destination of choice for talent, offering a diverse labour market that respects and promotes an inclusive and equitable work environment where all individuals are motivated to thrive and contribute.

#	Action	Potential Lead/Partner (Lead in Bold)	Timing		
			S	M	L
Objective 4.1: Develop and share common marketing and communication messages and tools to be used by the Hamilton Workforce Ecosystem, and across Hamilton’s business community to increase familiarity and consistency in the city’s value propositions.					
23	<p>Develop a marketing profile and communication materials that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Promotes Hamilton’s collective commitment to strengthening its labour market through the Workforce Strategy.❖ Demonstrates using multimedia formats (print, digital, video, etc.), Hamilton’s lifestyle, cultural experiences, and quality of life assets. This is to be shared with local employers and community partners to support their recruitment efforts, internally within the city, and externally to the broader region and beyond.❖ Promotes Hamilton as a hub for remote workers.	HED, WPH, PSEs, Businesses, IWC, NPAMMB, HIPC			
24	<p>As part of the marketing profile,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Share employee experiences living and/or working in Hamilton via a social media campaign targeting students, parents, post-secondary students, career practitioners, etc. The messaging should address Hamilton’s perceived nature as an older industrial city focused exclusively on heavy industry compared to a reality of high-skill, green, and clean job opportunities.❖ Develop creative messaging utilizing Hamilton’s multicultural events, festivals, and activities that highlight diverse cultures, traditions, and contributions of immigrants choosing Hamilton.❖ Create a “Learn about Hamilton” guide that is available at high traffic pedestrian locations around the city, Hamilton International Airport, Bus/Go Train Depots. Example: Getting started in Calgary	HED, WPH, Post-secondaries, Businesses, IWC, NPAMMB, HIPC			

25	<p>Demonstrate the modernization of the workplace often challenged by negative perception in sectors such as manufacturing (including steel, metal fabrication and clean technology), and agriculture. Other sectors may be identified through the Sector Response Committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Utilize career education and awareness classes with a focus on all skill levels, from entry level occupations to senior management opportunities to demonstrate opportunities. ❖ Identify businesses and employers to be 'local champions,' speaking to students in the classroom, workplace familiarization tours to showcase the workspace, and sharing employee stories of successful career progression. 	IEC, School Boards, Employers			
26	<p>Market the newly implemented Federal initiative, the Digital Nomad Program among Hamilton's business community to address skills shortages. The program allows remote workers to stay in the country for up to six months without needing a work permit. This program can also serve to attract and retain remote workers by promoting Hamilton's quality of life and place.</p>	HED, WPH, IRCC			

Objective 4.2: Increase awareness through promotion of local initiatives that influence workforce attraction and development and labour market planning.

27	<p>Coordinate with community partners to provide authentic and transformative city experiences that attract tourists and potential residents.</p>	Tourism Hamilton, OTEC, HED			
28	<p>Continue to highlight successes such as the Newcomer Week line-up, museum exhibition Stories of Migration and Belonging and Hamilton Employers Hire Immigrants Campaign more broadly in the community through social media and media materials to increase awareness, garner interest and participation.</p>	HIPC, HED, Hamilton Civic Museums			
29	<p>Strengthen promotion of Challenge 2025 to broaden initiative awareness and understanding. Focus on encouraging employer participation and collaboration with Mohawk College to deliver rapid, demand-led training that closes workforce gaps, provides employers skilled workers, and supports reduction in the skills gap among Hamilton's labour force.</p>	Mohawk College, WPH, HED			

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ❖ # of views/engagement / reach of marketing activities related to worker attraction and promotion of the city
- ❖ # of initiatives and participation numbers in events
- ❖ # of Challenge 2025 initiatives

Area of Focus #5: Advocacy

Decision makers advocate to all levels of government and other relevant bodies on behalf of Hamilton's residents, businesses, and organizations to advance policies, by-laws, programs, and resources that enable progress and address barriers to employment for all.

#	Action	Potential Lead/Partner (Lead in Bold)	Timing		
			S	M	L
Objective 5.1: Advocate for addressing core labour force wraparound supports for Hamilton's diverse communities.					
30	Work collaboratively with the Employment Supports Network in Hamilton to share quantifiable data at the provincial and federal government level to maximize the benefit to Hamilton employers and job seekers through the Labour Market Transfer Agreements (LMDAs) and the Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs).	FedCap			
31	Be responsive to the changing needs of Hamilton's early years and childcare sector and actively engage in advocacy efforts to provincial decision-makers to address the need for quality childcare in Hamilton.	CCS, Today's Family, MoE,			
32	Working collaboratively with Hamilton Poverty Reduction and Living Wage Ontario, advance strategies that assist the labour force in addressing challenges that impede their active participation in the labour market. These may include local cost of housing, access to healthcare, mental health, drug addition, transportation, food, and other essential expenses.	Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Just Recovery, HED, WPH, All levels of government			
33	Identify a federal champion who is kept informed with current economic development investment successes and opportunities (e.g., high-ranking local MP's such as cabinet ministers).	HED, WPH, All levels of government			
34	Advocate for ongoing provincial and/or federal funding to support a local response to areas of challenge including housing, transit, and wellbeing services.	HED, IHP, HIPC, WPH			
35	Through the Hamilton for All – Campaign, continue to broaden city-wide awareness against discrimination of all kinds. Positive efforts to promote EDI within the workforce ecosystem, and the broader community should be reflected in social media, and other platforms.	HED, HIPC, HARRC, HCLC, HCCI			

	The intent is to promote success stories that reflect Hamilton as a welcoming community that nurtures equity, diversity, and inclusion.				
Objective 5.2: Undertake concerted efforts to increase immigration to Hamilton.					
36	Apply to participate in the Municipal Nominee Program. This will require wrap around services such as housing, transportation, workplace transition supports, among others.	HED, WPH, IRCC			
37	Work with support settlement and integration services to be informed and advocate for immigration policies that support family reunification, improve pathways to permanent residency and citizenship, and provide adequate resources for immigrant settlement and integration.	HIPC, EC. DEV., CLH, YMCA			
38	Pilot a post-graduate retention program to retain international student graduates and enhance their integration into the community. The program will provide detailed information on coaching on the immigration pathway and supports to immigrate.	HED, Post-Secondary's, IRCC			
Objective 5.3: Advocate for leadership on the wider range of issues impacting the labour force and the workplace.					
39	Investigate the feasibility of a SME concierge service to assist SMEs with support for grant writing, reporting to accompany subsidy applications, HR supports, connection to employment support organizations, among other services identified by the businesses.	Innovation Factory, HBC, HED, FedCap			
40	Work with major employers in Hamilton to create and launch a Hamilton Business to Business EDI Ambassador Campaign. The campaign will share business driven initiatives that promote integration of EDI in the workplace, enabling the creation of a diverse workplace, and promote a living wage for employees.	SDF, WPH, HED, Businesses			
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)					
❖ # of views/engagement /reach of marketing activities related to worker attraction ❖ # of new projects initiated that support refugee and immigrant populations ❖ # of workers from marginalized population groups supported into employment					



Next Steps: Implement and Market

The Implementation Plan will be supported by the Hamilton Economic Development Office along with partners within Hamilton's Workforce Ecosystem. The Economic Development team will lead, support, or convene stakeholders to advance the strategy's implementation and monitor its outcomes and impacts. Implementing the recommendations and actions contained in this strategy will require a collaborative approach involving a commitment to workforce development and labour market alignment for Hamilton. Successful implementation needs to consider the following:

- ❖ Leadership and commitment provided by the Hamilton Economic Development Office shared commitment and buy-in among Hamilton's workforce ecosystem stakeholders including education and training institutions, workforce partners and intermediaries, employers, and municipal, provincial, and federal government
- ❖ A working partnership among workforce ecosystem stakeholders to support and advance implementation of the strategy through a shared vision, knowledge sharing, and collaboration
- ❖ Ongoing coordination and monitoring of strategy implementation, outcomes, and impact
- ❖ Procured funding to implement strategic initiatives outlined in the strategy. Funding sources may include public, private, and not-for-profit financial and in-kind contributions

Marketing

The following messages have been developed for use in marketing materials. These messages can be leveraged through print, digital platforms, social media. Where the opportunity exists, the Workforce Ecosystem partners may provide a direct on-line link to the materials to maximize exposure and demonstrate shared buy-in to the messaging.

Why Hamilton? (Levelling up!)



Discover Hamilton. A truly welcoming community. Over 145,000 immigrants and 100 ethnic groups call our city home!



Explore Hamilton. A city of abundant natural beauty with over 3,480 acres of pristine parks and an extensive trail system that allows you to explore and get lost in nature.

Why Hamilton? (Levelling up!)



Embrace Hamilton. A city that offers you a harmonious balance. Experience the best of nature through Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment and have unparalleled access to museums, art galleries, and incredible restaurants and shopping experiences.



Experience Hamilton. Immerse yourself in a year-round extravaganza as you enjoy our array of exciting events and festivals. Create lasting and memorable experiences as you explore Hamilton Fringe Festival, Super Crawl, Victoria Day Fireworks, Boots in the Creek, Hamilton Winterfest, Winona Peach Festival and more!



Learn in Hamilton. Embark on a journey of knowledge and excellence. With over 20,000 post-secondary students graduating each year from our two largest post-secondary institutions, Mohawk College, and McMaster University, we are truly empowering our next generation of leaders and change makers.



Find your dream career in Hamilton. Hamilton is a remarkable ecosystem of over 53,000 businesses spanning manufacturing, technology, digital media, life sciences and the trades. Thrive in this landscape of innovation and disruption; your options are endless.



Thrive in Hamilton. Work and call Hamilton home, as we continue to seek exceptional talent!



Enjoy your best life in Hamilton. Hamilton's overall cost of living is 25% lower than living in Toronto.³⁶



Experience health care excellence in Hamilton. Hamilton offers you world-class excellence in health care with cutting-edge expertise, top-tier medical care and some of the most talented medical professionals in Canada, we are committed to your health and well-being.

³⁶ <https://moving2canada.com/planning/destination-guides/hamilton/cost-of-living-in-hamilton/>



Moving Forward

Workforce development and labour market planning is complex. The way forward will take collaboration, collective effort, and shared vision. The way forward will take a commitment to make purposeful choices to embrace disruption and get ahead of the curve with a futurist mindset. The way forward will require acceptance that all stakeholders must give up something to achieve a great good that positions Hamilton competitively in the war on talent.

Hamilton has a strong Workforce Ecosystem that has demonstrated an approach to workforce development that is cooperative and connected. This approach must remain top of mind to maximize impact. Efforts and initiatives must leverage existing projects and partnerships to support and create relevant, strategic workforce development opportunities that reinforce Hamilton's capacity for an aligned labour market. The focus is on preparing labour force participants with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities that promote success in today's labour market, while fueling resiliency for the workplace of tomorrow.

The strategy aligns with the 2021-2025 Economic Development Action Plan that lists 'Facilitating a skilled and adaptable workforce' as one of its six priorities. Moving Hamilton's Workforce Strategy forward is an important and integral task, with no single partner being the owner of this important work. It is important for each stakeholder to ask themselves what role they might play in achieving maximum impact of workforce alignment and reaching the shared vision:

Hamilton is recognized and celebrated for its workforce excellence where talent thrives, businesses succeed, and community prospers.

We know we have achieved our vision when,

- ❖ Hamilton has an active and goal-directed workforce ecosystem that fosters collaboration among industry and business, education, labour force participants, and community intermediaries
- ❖ The workforce is empowered and responsive to shifting employer demands in an evolving economy
- ❖ When decision making is grounded in relevant, reliable data and labour market analysis
- ❖ Hamilton is an inclusive and celebrated destination known for its diverse talent pool and equitable access to opportunity for all
- ❖ Performance indicators validate the outcomes and impact emerging from strategy implementation
- ❖ Strong partnerships across public, private, and the voluntary sector collaboratively advance talent development, and leverage evidence-based insights to position the labour market for today and tomorrow

To achieve the necessary impact will require alliances and relationships among key stakeholders, investments in education and training offerings, targeted skills development programs, and a commitment to EDI. Strategic approaches also need to consider the changes in the hiring landscape as competition for talent is intermunicipal, interprovincial, and international in nature. As job seekers continue to customize their work environment desires and prioritize geographic freedom, Hamilton must harness its place-based potential to attract and retain talent and stimulate the local economy.

