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Economic Integration of Immigrants: Perspectives on opportunities, challenges, & solutions

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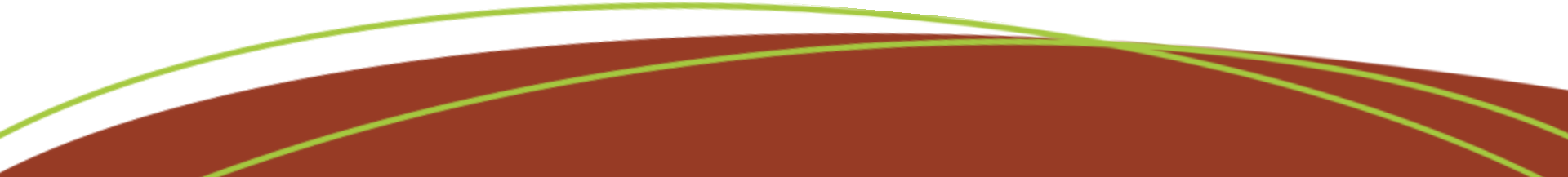
Canada



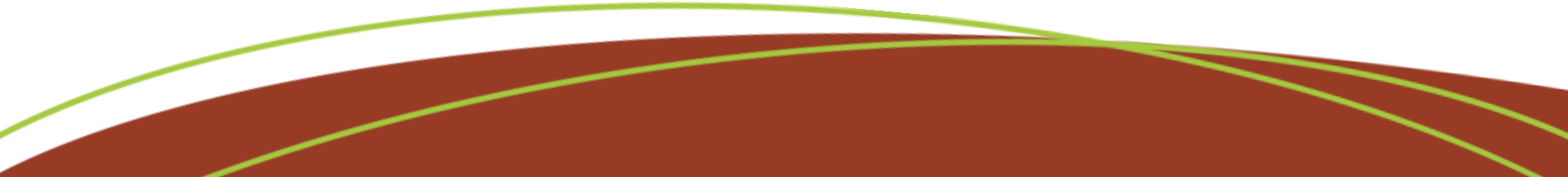
Content

- Our approach
- The Shared View
 - The Asset
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- Perspectives on solutions

Our Approach

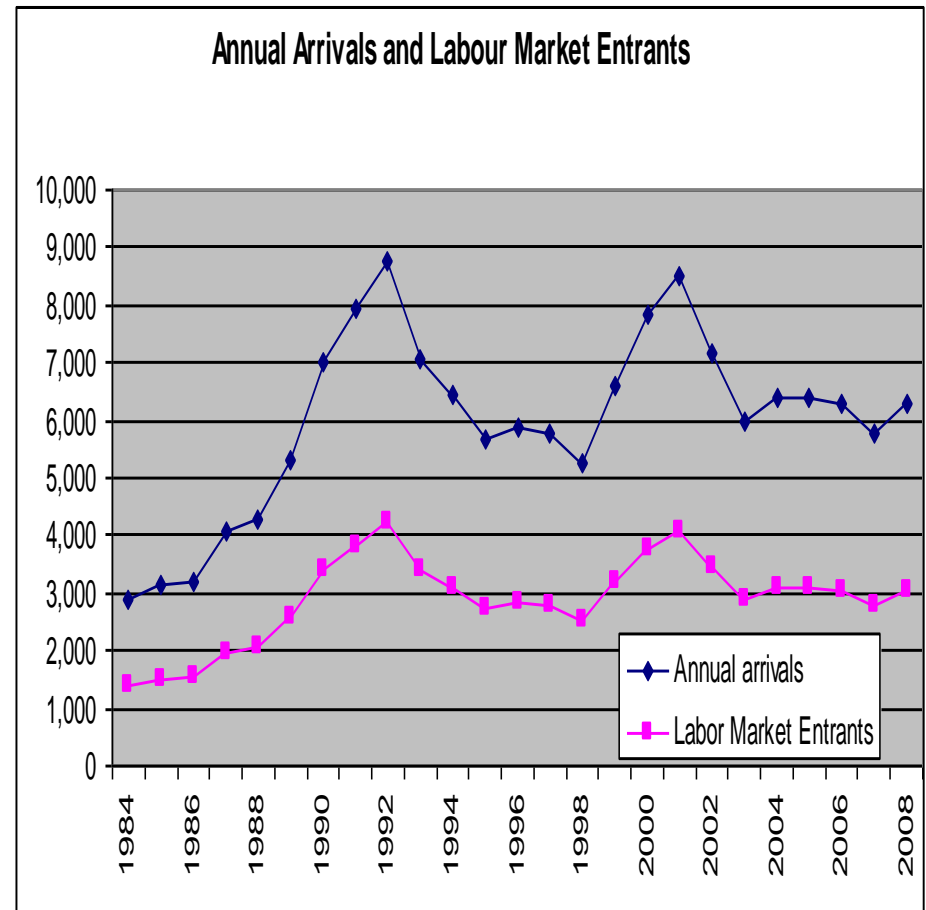
- *35 participants for a half-day session:*
 - Combination of employers, economic development thinkers/planners, and policy analysts
 - Input from key researchers and senior directors from the City of Ottawa leading development of social, environmental, and economic development planning
 - Pre-consultation documentation to help set the context and enable participants to prepare ahead of time
 - *6 small group tables (each with 6-8 people)*
 - 2 tables for employers; 2 for government policy analysts; and 2 for community economic development actors
 - Discussion on: a) awareness; b) contextual enablers and hindrances; c) challenges / barriers; d) solutions
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Begin with the shared view

- Immigration is good for business and economic growth
 - Immigrants, in particular recent immigrants, experience high levels of unemployment and underemployment.
 - impacts negatively on both Ottawa's economic prospects and immigrants' integration outcomes
 - Coordinated actions by the following actors are needed to address the challenges:
 - Immigrants
 - Governments
 - Employers
 - Service Providers
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The Asset: People, Resources, Knowledge, Talent and Drive

- On average, 6-7 thousand new immigrants each year
- Roughly 3-4 thousand new job seekers added to Ottawa's pool of available workforce every year
 - 80% with higher education diploma / degree in variety of disciplines – most educated immigrants in Canada
- Numbers add up over the years
- Many come with resources and are looking to invest in the Ottawa economy, buy homes, and contribute in many respects
- Drive to succeed (immigrating = manifestation of drive)

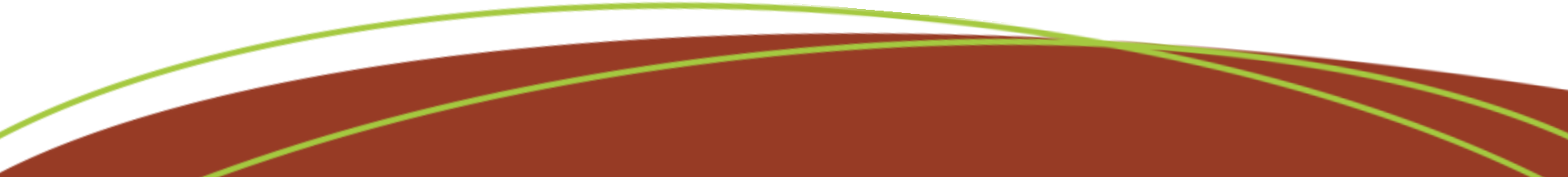


The Challenge:

Imminent talent shortages coexist with a reality of under-utilization of immigrants' human capital



The Under-utilization of Immigrant Talents

- High unemployment
 - Recent immigrants are 3 times more likely to be unemployed
 - Downward mobility
 - A quarter of university educated recent immigrants work in jobs requiring only high school
 - Process of de-skilling...and disadvantage
 - Underemployment
 - 59 percent of recent immigrants work in part time jobs (compared to 39 percent of the general population)
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The Challenge

- *Barriers to economic integration*

- *Canada-wide barriers*

- Undervaluing of international experience and education
- Requirement of Canadian experience, often used to mitigate perceptions of risk when candidates' experience is unfamiliar
- Perceptions of inadequate language skills by employers
- Systemic discrimination – stemming from subtle hiring practices that put immigrant job seekers at a disadvantage (e.g. expecting certain answers, hiring through established networks, etc.)

- *Barriers unique to Ottawa*

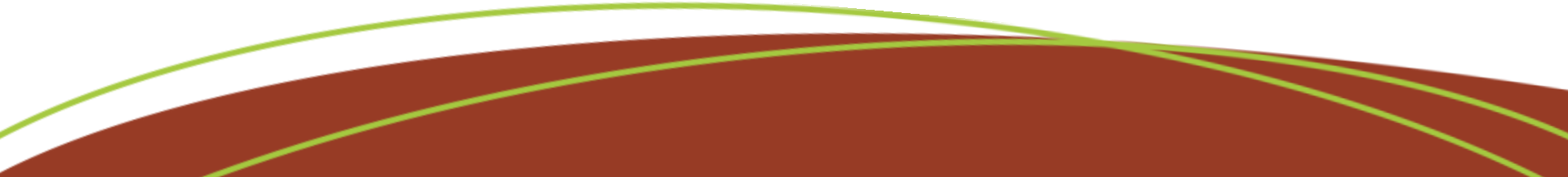
- All of the above, and
- Government jobs can be out of reach for most immigrants due to:
 - Requirement of bilingualism by public sector employers – when language services offerings allow for either English or French, not both
 - Lengthy security clearance requirements
 - Citizenship requirement policy – and tendency to mis-implement it

Perspectives on Solutions

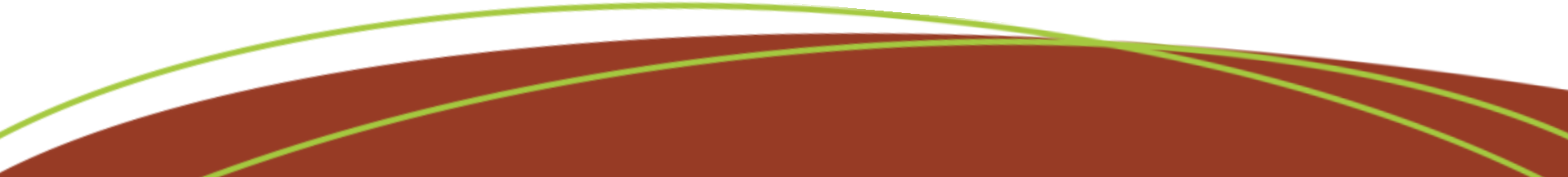
“We tend to focus our attention on problems / barriers; not sufficiently on possibilities and progress...”



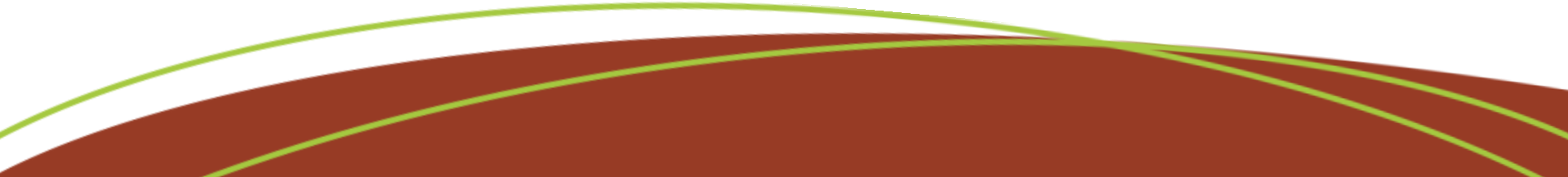
“Progress on general awareness little movement on change”

- *Employer & Immigrant support:*
 - Development of tools, guidelines and supports ... providing the dotted lines for both employers and immigrants ...
 - More training on both sides
 - For employers, middle managers; HR staff, to make hiring more fair and sensitize them to the benefits of diversity in workplaces
 - For immigrants, training on workplace integration and on un-articulated expectations
 - SMEs – huge area of potential, though more challenging as they tend to not have HR staff
 - Sharing and publicizing good practices between employers in different sectors
 - Support more collaboration between actors
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Public Education / Communication / Awareness Building

- Recognize/broadcast the value of immigrant talents ... otherwise immigrants leave
 - Action most strong where employers are confronted with an “....or else” situation
 - Target sectors experiencing skills shortage and support them with immigrant recruitment campaigns
 - Prioritize public service institutions where there may be more openness - school boards, hospitals, etc.
 - Disseminate to immigrants and employment support service providers information about sectors with skills shortage
 - Work with universities/colleges to profile immigrants with local credentials and partake in broadcasting the success of their graduates
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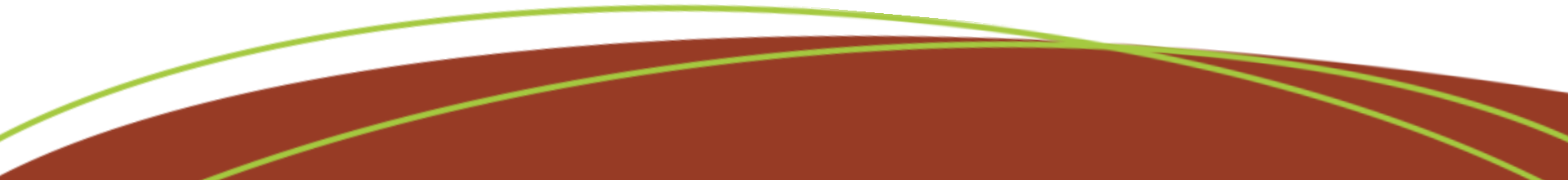
Public Education / Communication / Awareness Building

- Flip dialogue: from “Canadian experience” to the “benefit of international experience”
 - Connect the stakeholders in a virtual space for easy sharing of information
 - So much good work is being done – we need to recognize our success
 - Create a story book on Ottawa Successes
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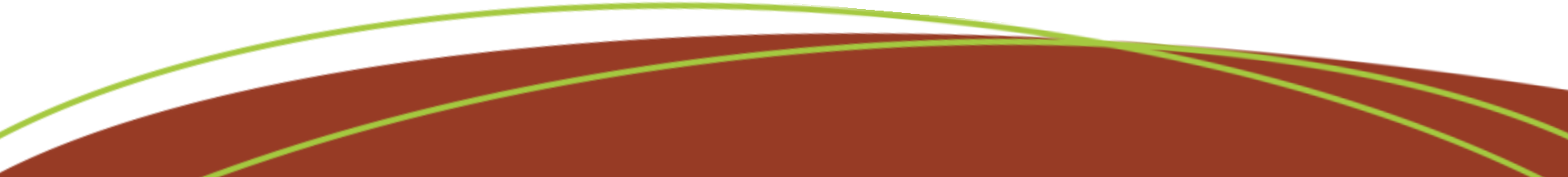
Build-up! & Connect!

Scale and connectivity are often the problem

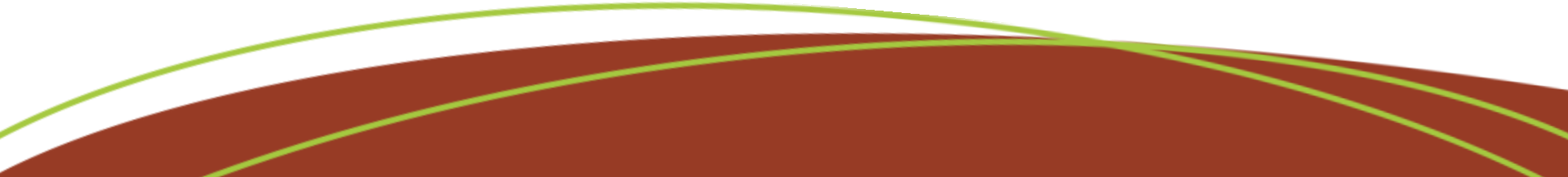
- Challenge is one of scale
 - Good innovative solutions abound – they are not at the right scale, and they maybe “creaming” due to funders’ requirement
- Challenge is also connectivity
 - Most immigrants do not know about the good services being offered



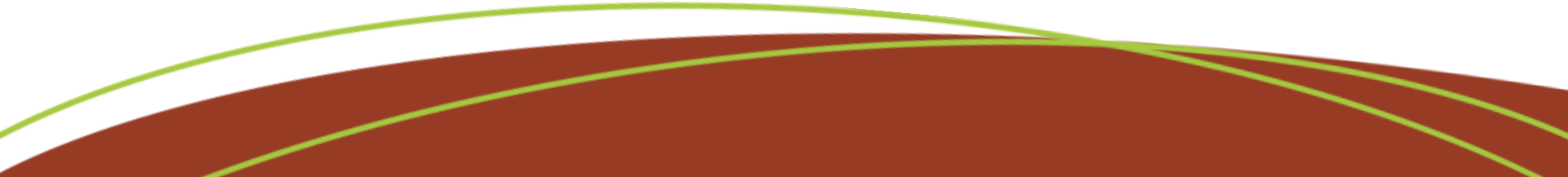
Beyond employment: Tapping into Immigrants' Entrepreneurial spirit

- Entrepreneurship: a strong pathway to economic integration
 - Support immigrant entrepreneurs with information / technical assistance / access to loans
 - Prioritize sectors where immigrants have competitive advantages, which can enhance both Ottawa's vitality and prosperity
 - cultural industry (arts, photography, festivals, etc.)
 - import/export
 - Small scale production to cater to changing tastes (clothing, interior design, foods and condiments)
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Beyond employment: Promoting Social Enterprises Among Immigrants

- *A Big Idea: I.S.E.E (immigrant social enterprise ecosystem)*
 - Mobilize \$25 million to build a social enterprise sector in Ottawa to compliment our current economic sectors
 - Aim to create 25,000 jobs in Ottawa - \$1000/job
 - OLIP may work with Causeway Collaborative, OCLF, United Way, Alterna and others to promote social enterprises as a solution to immigrants' economic integration
 - Social Return on this investment is as/more important as the economic return
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What can governments do?

- Leadership and setting standards
 - Aligning plans on economic labour market development by the three levels of government and link them with OLIP
 - Policy statement is needed on the issue of immigrants' economic integration
 - Benchmarking and monitoring – we need to keep moving the yard stick
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Thank you!

Questions and discussion?



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