

How to Hire Foreign Workers Without an LMIA: A Guide to Canada's Francophone Mobility Program

EMPLOYER GUIDE

IMMIGRATION

HR RESOURCES

Many Canadian employers assume that hiring a foreign worker always requires a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). It doesn't. If your business is located outside Quebec and you're struggling to find qualified employees, Canada's **Francophone Mobility Program** could allow you to hire skilled French-speaking foreign workers **without obtaining an LMIA**.

For employers and HR professionals, this is one of Canada's most valuable—and least understood—international recruitment programs. Instead of completing the lengthy LMIA process, eligible employers can hire qualified French-speaking workers through an **LMIA-exempt work permit**, reducing both costs and administrative burden.

In this guide, we'll explain what the Francophone Mobility Program is, who qualifies, how employers use it, how it differs from an LMIA, and why it may save your business time and money. Whether you're a small business owner or an HR director at a large organization, understanding all available work permit pathways can reduce hiring timelines, lower costs, and help your business remain competitive in today's labour market.

What Is the Francophone Mobility Program — and Who Qualifies?

The **Francophone Mobility Program** is an **LMIA-exempt employer-specific work permit** that allows Canadian employers located **outside Quebec** to hire qualified French-speaking foreign workers. The program was created to strengthen Francophone communities across Canada while giving employers another option to recruit international talent. Unlike an LMIA, employers do **not** need to advertise the position for Canadian workers, prove a labour shortage, submit an LMIA application to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), or pay the \$1,000 LMIA processing fee.

Instead, employers submit an **Offer of Employment through the IRCC Employer Portal** and pay the **\$230 employer compliance fee**. For many businesses, this means significantly less paperwork and a faster path to hiring. The employee does **not** need to be a Canadian permanent resident or already living in Canada.

Employer Requirements

To use the program, employers must be located **outside Quebec** and submit an Offer of Employment through the IRCC Employer Portal. The job offer must be genuine and comply with provincial employment standards. After submission, employers receive an **Offer of Employment Number**, which the worker uses when applying for their work permit.

Worker Qualifications

To qualify, the foreign worker must intend to live and work **outside Quebec**, receive a genuine job offer from a Canadian employer, and demonstrate **French-language proficiency of at least NCLC (CLB) Level 5** using an approved language test such as TEF Canada or TCF Canada. The worker must also meet Canada's normal work permit admissibility requirements.

Which Jobs Qualify?

One of the biggest advantages of the Francophone Mobility Program is that it applies to **most occupations**. Whether you're hiring welders, software developers, engineers, accountants, chefs, or healthcare professionals, the program may be available if the candidate meets the language requirements. Eligible employers recruit workers across a wide range of industries, making this one of the most versatile international recruitment tools available to Canadian businesses.

Healthcare

Construction & Skilled
Trades

Manufacturing

Hospitality & Agriculture

Engineering & IT

Finance & Transportation

Professional Services

Why Employers Should Consider an LMIA-Exempt Work Permit

The Francophone Mobility Program offers five compelling advantages for Canadian employers looking to recruit international talent efficiently and cost-effectively. From eliminating the \$1,000 LMIA fee to accessing a global pool of French-speaking professionals, this program removes many of the traditional barriers to international hiring.

- 1

No LMIA Required

The largest advantage is obvious: employers can hire qualified French-speaking workers **without obtaining an LMIA**. This removes labour market advertising, recruitment documentation, labour shortage justification, ESDC processing, and the \$1,000 LMIA application fee. For HR departments, this can reduce weeks—or even months—from the hiring process.
- 2

Lower Recruitment Costs

Compared with the LMIA process, employer costs are substantially lower. Instead of paying a \$1,000 LMIA application fee, employers simply submit the Offer of Employment through the Employer Portal and pay the **\$230 employer compliance fee**. This makes international recruitment more accessible for businesses of every size.
- 3

Access a Larger International Talent Pool

Canada faces ongoing labour shortages across numerous industries. Recruiting French-speaking professionals opens access to skilled workers from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Cameroon, Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and many other French-speaking countries. Employers often discover highly qualified candidates they would never have considered through traditional recruitment methods.
- 4

Faster International Recruitment

Removing the LMIA step often allows employers to begin the work permit process much sooner. Although processing times vary by country, eliminating the LMIA stage removes one of the largest delays in hiring foreign workers.
- 5

Build a More Competitive Workforce

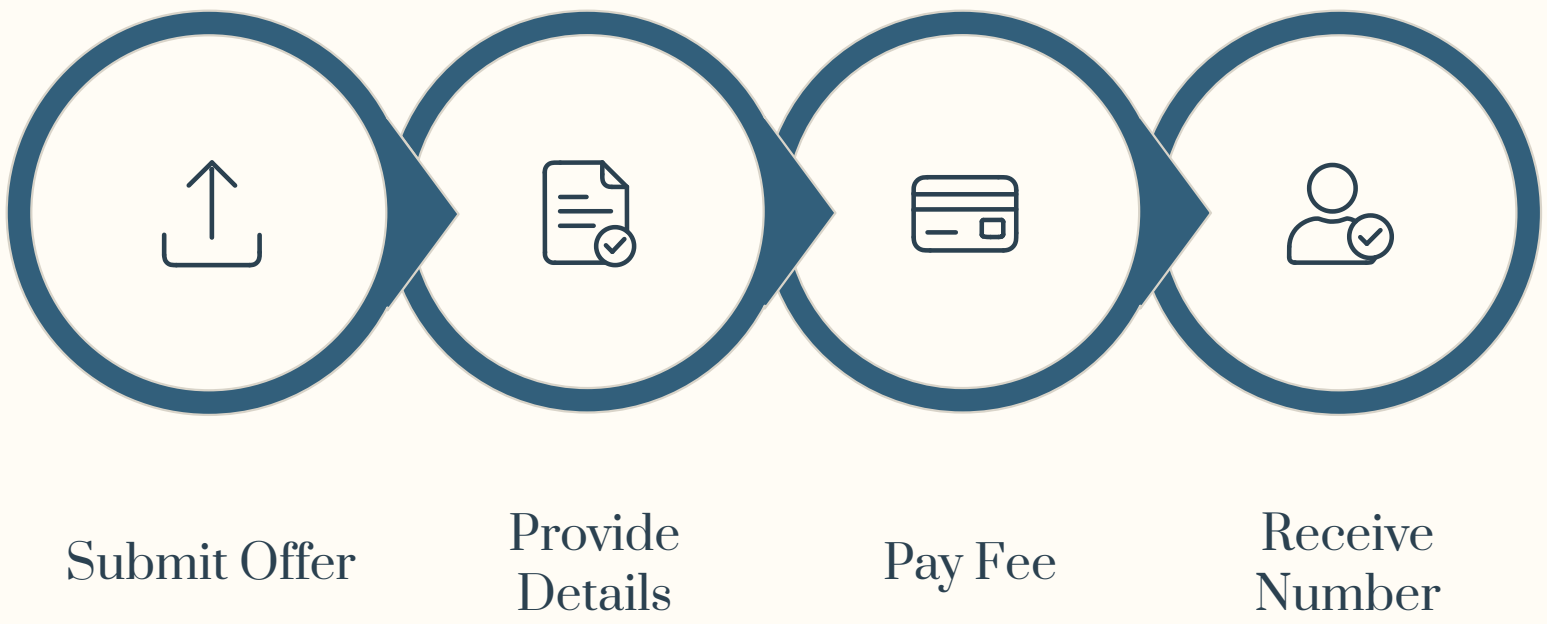
French-speaking employees can strengthen organizations by expanding bilingual customer service, supporting national business growth, serving Francophone communities, increasing workplace diversity, and improving communication with international clients. For many employers, bilingual talent becomes a competitive advantage.

Francophone Mobility vs. LMIA: What's the Difference?

Feature	Francophone Mobility	LMIA
LMIA Required	No	Yes
Submission Method	Employer Portal	ESDC Application
Employer Fee	\$230 compliance fee	\$1,000 application fee
Recruitment Advertising	Not required	Required
Processing Speed	Faster	Longer
Candidate Requirement	French-speaking	English and/or French

How to Apply: Employer Steps, Worker Requirements & FAQs

Even though an LMIA isn't required, employers still have responsibilities under Canada's immigration system. The process is straightforward, but it requires careful attention to detail when submitting the Offer of Employment and ensuring the job offer is genuine and compliant with provincial employment standards.



Employers create or log into the IRCC Employer Portal and submit details including the position, salary, duties, work location, and employment conditions. After submission, employers receive an **Offer of Employment Number**, which the worker uses when applying for their work permit.

What Does the Worker Need?

The employee generally submits their job offer, the Employer Portal Offer of Employment Number, French-language test results showing **minimum NCLC (CLB) 5**, required immigration documents, and a work permit application. The employee must intend to work **outside Quebec**.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can employers hire without an LMIA?** Yes. The Francophone Mobility Program is one of several LMIA-exempt work permit programs available to Canadian employers.
- **Does the employee have to be fluent in French?** No. The employee must demonstrate minimum NCLC (CLB) Level 5 in speaking and listening using an approved language test such as TEF Canada or TCF Canada.
- **Can employees work in Quebec?** No. The program is intended for workers who will live and work outside Quebec.
- **What fee does the employer pay?** Employers submit the Offer of Employment through the Employer Portal and pay a \$230 employer compliance fee.
- **Is this an open work permit?** No. It is generally an employer-specific work permit tied to the employer named on the application.

Looking Beyond the LMIA

Many employers automatically begin the LMIA process because they are unaware that LMIA-exempt work permit options exist. The Francophone Mobility Program is one of the most effective alternatives for employers hiring French-speaking professionals. It eliminates the LMIA requirement, reduces employer costs, simplifies recruitment, and provides access to skilled international talent.

If your organization is recruiting internationally, it is worth determining whether the Francophone Mobility Program could be a better option than an LMIA. Understanding all available work permit pathways can reduce hiring timelines, lower costs, and help your business remain competitive in today's labour market.

**Need help determining whether the Francophone Mobility Program is right for your business?** Warwick Immigration Canada works with employers across Canada to identify the most effective work permit options, navigate Employer Portal requirements, and develop international recruitment strategies that align with business goals.