

CIRCULAR

Date: July 11, 2013

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Alternate Program(s):

To: Community Social Service Supervisors/Program Managers

Subject: *Recognition Counts!* Program - SEED Winnipeg

Type: Policy

Replaces: N/A

Procedure

Effective Date: Immediately

Recognition Counts! is a two-year pilot program that provides accessible, low interest loans to foreign-educated workers and professionals to assist with the costs of training, qualification recognition and professional registration. The loans will help skilled immigrants become eligible to work in their field in Manitoba. This program **is not** for newcomers who wish to begin training in a field but rather serves professionals and tradespersons educated outside of Canada in regulated and non-regulated professions and trades. The program is co-funded by the governments of Canada and Manitoba, and will be available throughout Manitoba.

Program participants must be either permanent residents of Canada or Canadian citizens born abroad. Participants agree to work with **SEED Winnipeg** staff to develop budgets and financial plans and submit a Career Action Plan. They must have a household income at or below the current Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO).

Program loans are provided by the Assiniboine Credit Union for **up to \$10,000** based on the Program Application budget. The program participant has up to 5 years to repay the loan at a fixed rate of prime plus 2%. Interest on the loan begins with the first disbursement and payments start the next month. The interest only phase can last up to 30 months. The second phase is an interest and principal payment phase. The two phases combined can last up to 5 years. If an individual is enrolled on EIA, SEED indicates that they would discuss deferral of payments on a case-by-case basis to prevent undue hardship while the participant is seeking work in their field.

The *Recognition Counts!* loan can be used for educational purposes such as tuition, textbooks, computers, tools, equipment, work clothes and expenses associated with registering with a professional regulatory body or association or Apprenticeship Manitoba. **Loans for the items and costs listed will be exempt from consideration as a financial resource as long as the disbursement amount is used for the stated educational purposes.**

Non-EIA program participants can use the loan for living costs or for a leave of absence from employment. If an EIA applicant or participant indicates that they are involved with *Recognition Counts!* or have a loan to help them acquire professional credentials, SEED Winnipeg will have to be contacted to verify the loan and to provide information on disbursements. An EIA Program Specialist should be contacted to notify the EIA Programs liaison for SEED Winnipeg.

EIA participants may apply to the *Recognition Counts!* program but **may not** use the loan for living costs. SEED Winnipeg has committed to monitoring any applications from EIA participants. If approved, living costs **will not** be included in the Program Application budget. SEED Winnipeg will track the outcome of the application and contact the EIA Programs liaison for SEED Winnipeg to advise of the application, who will contact the case coordinator to discuss the EIA action plan and the *Recognition Counts!* Career Action Plan.

SEED Winnipeg will provide reports to the EIA Programs liaison when an EIA participant applies and is approved for the program. The liaison will in turn advise the case coordinator of all information provided on a quarterly basis until all disbursements are completed or the individual leaves EIA. The monthly reports will include itemized loan details and the disbursement schedule. The EIA Programs liaison will check the reports to ensure that only exempt costs are included in the individual's program budget.

Recognition Counts! participants can choose the number of disbursements they want, up to a maximum of 4 per year. The disbursements can occur in any month, but there must be a minimum of 3 months between disbursements.