

Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels

FORUM DIGESTS



ABOUT IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL OF BC

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering BC employers with the solutions, tools, and resources needed to effectively attract, hire, and retain skilled immigrant talent. We understand that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into BC's labour force is essential to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance. By collaborating with employers, government, and other partner stakeholders, we ensure that BC employers can effectively integrate global talent.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In response to Canada's ambitious goal of welcoming up to 500,000 immigrants by 2025 and the employment disparities faced by newcomers highlighted by Statistics Canada, the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) has launched the National Employer Feedback Forums Project. This crucial initiative shifts the focus to employers' perspectives by establishing a structured feedback mechanism designed to inform both government and organizational strategies on immigration. By gathering insights from employers, local business leaders, and community service providers nationwide, the project aims to refine immigration policies and foster a collaborative environment for sharing best practices. The forums, hosted across nine regions in Canada, promote vigorous discussions on strategies to align immigration efforts with labor market needs and improve the integration and inclusion of immigrant talent in the Canadian workforce. This project underscores the critical role of empowering employers with the necessary tools and voice to effectively recruit and integrate top immigrant talent, ultimately bolstering Canada's economic success.

This digest reflects the local discussions hosted in British Columbia. Following each forum, a digest is produced to summarize key discussion points, themes, and findings from pre- and post-forum surveys.



Ministry of
Social Development
and Poverty Reduction



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Participants

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in our Feedback Forum on June 27, 2024. Your voices were not only heard—they made a significant impact. The rich discussions and perspectives you shared are systematically documented and will be presented to policymakers and program partners. Together, we are shaping the future of Canada’s immigration programs and policies, building communities where every newcomer feels welcomed and valued.

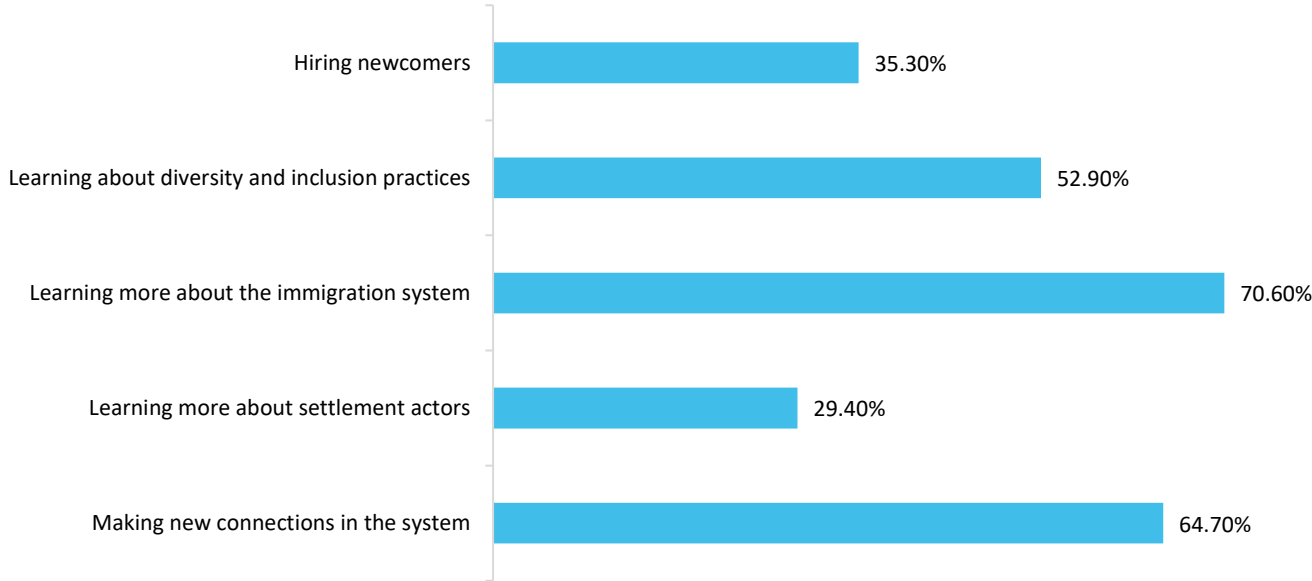
Our forum brought together a diverse group of attendees, including employers, immigrant service providers, representatives from municipalities, academic institutions, professional associations, and independent consultants. Each of you contributed a unique perspective, helping to create a more integrated and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

Here’s what we heard

One of the significant challenges highlighted by participants is the intricate and often lengthy credential recognition process, which frequently hinders or stalls the career progression and workforce integration of skilled immigrant talent. Additionally, the lack of networking opportunities leaves newcomers struggling to forge the local connections crucial for successful community integration.

Good to know

What are participants most interested in when attending the forum?



How familiar are the participants with the immigration/settlement system?



How aligned has the immigration system been with employers' business needs?

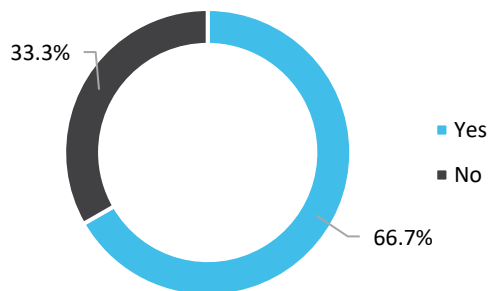


 Employer engagement with newcomer talent

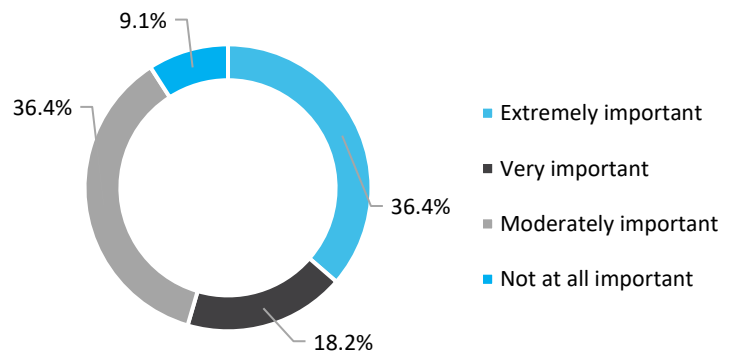
Of all participating employers and recruiters,



Have participants' companies adopted any inclusive hiring practices?



How important is using inclusive hiring processes in their workplace?





Non-employers' perspectives on system challenges

We explored diverse insights on the challenges of hiring newcomers and their readiness for inclusive practices. One key challenge that emerged is the lack of awareness and understanding among employers and newcomers about the wealth of available services available to support them.

Common Themes and Key Insights

Forum participants explored key themes drawn from an extensive consultation and review of Canada's immigration system, as outlined in [An Immigration System for Canada's Future](#). The forum was structured into three focus groups—technology, healthcare, and skilled trades—where participants engaged in thoughtful discussions about the challenges and barriers newcomers encounter in securing employment, along with the opportunities available. These conversations provided valuable insights into the current state of newcomer employment and inspired ideas for creating a more inclusive future.



Streamlining credential recognition to fully tap into skilled immigrant talent

Across all groups, key issues related to skills and talent focused on the lengthy and costly process of credential recognition and the requirement for Canadian experience for certification. Streamlining credential recognition and re-evaluating the necessity of Canadian experience is essential to unlocking skilled immigrant talent and fostering a more inclusive workforce that leverages diverse expertise.



Simplifying immigration pathways to support newcomers' workforce integration

During our discussions with the healthcare and skilled trades sectors, it became evident that the current processes surrounding Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) are complex, restrictive, and expensive, placing a significant administrative strain on employers. Recruiters expressed a preference for candidates with open work permits. This preference can restrict job opportunities for other newcomers, including those who are eligible to work in Canada under different visa categories. Simplifying visa and immigration processes, including reducing or eliminating LMIA dependency, is crucial for easing workforce integration and addressing labor shortages, particularly in healthcare and skilled trades.



Housing affordability in urban areas remains a key challenge for settlement

Participants expressed deep concerns about the rising cost of living, especially in urban centers. They emphasized how the challenge of securing affordable housing puts significant financial pressure on newcomers. Addressing housing affordability is critical for successful newcomer integration, as financial pressures from high living costs undermine their ability to settle and contribute to the local economy.



Supportive communities are vital to newcomer well-being

Newcomers experience mental health challenges due to isolation, underscoring the critical role of community support structures. Building strong, supportive communities is essential for newcomer well-being, reducing isolation and fostering successful social and economic integration.



Safeguarding the integrity of Canada’s Immigration System

Promoting greater transparency and efficiency in the immigration process, particularly around LMIA and work permits, is crucial to upholding the system’s integrity. This not only helps employers meet labor needs efficiently but also fosters trust in the system, reduces delays, and ensures they remain competitive while upholding ethical standards and legal compliance.



Encouraging rural growth for successful settlement

Rural areas offer great potential for immigrant settlement but face distinct challenges like limited infrastructure and services. Tailored strategies that improve housing, employment opportunities, and access to essential services are crucial for attracting and retaining newcomers. By addressing these needs and fostering strong community connections, rural regions can reverse demographic decline, fill labor gaps, and promote sustainable growth.

Additional themes by sector

Technology: This discussion focused on the high cost of immigration, challenges in workplace integration, and systemic hiring biases.

Support structures and integration

Challenges

Mental health issues due to isolation and challenges in workplace integration

Barriers

Lack of mentoring and networking support, and unconscious biases against foreign credentials and experience

Opportunities

Mentorship and networking programs, diversity training, and awareness campaigns to promote inclusivity and newcomer support

Skilled Trades: This discussion focused on the lengthy and expensive credential recognition process, work permit restrictions, and the lack of essential support such as mentoring and networking opportunities.

Support structures and integration

Lack of mentoring, networking, and language supports, which are important for successful integration

Financial constraints due to costs associated with recertification and joining professional associations

Establish mentorship and networking programs, provide financial assistance for recertification, and create community support and integration programs

Healthcare: This discussion centered on the complex and costly registration processes, limited residency opportunities for international professionals, and the lack of communication between relevant bodies.

Hiring practices and job search

Small business owners are often unaware of resources available for hiring newcomers, and biases in resume screening further obstruct the job search process

Banks' perceptions of financial risk towards foreign-trained professionals and the restrictive LMA process limit opportunities for healthcare newcomers

Develop support tools for small business owners and highlight successful newcomers in the media to positively influence public opinion and encourage more employment opportunities

Support structures and integration

Lack of communication between government entities (e.g., IRCC, PNP offices, health ministries) creates challenges for healthcare professionals in workforce integration

Financial constraints and limited resources hinder the streamlining of communication and application processes

Collaborate with banks and Boards of Trade to offer insights and resources, while leveraging COVID-era expedited pathways for international healthcare workers to improve workforce integration

Actions and Proposed Solutions

- Streamline credential recognition processes and eliminate non-essential Canadian experience requirements
- Minimize dependence on LMIs by introducing policies that allow visas to cover both work and study simultaneously
- Establish services that offer mentorship, networking opportunities, cultural competency training, and language support
- Allocate government funding to promote collaboration within the system, including integration programs, partnerships with educational institutions, public awareness campaigns, etc.



Our insights

Collaboration and coordination among government, educational institutions, employers, and community organizations are essential to addressing the challenges faced by both employers and newcomers.

Recommendation Summary

Technology

Action

Reduce immigration costs

Increase support for technical newcomers

Improve workplace integration

Promote cultural competency

Information transparency

Streamline credential recognition

Details

Provide subsidies or reduce fees associated with immigration to make the process more affordable for newcomers

Offer targeted support for highly skilled newcomers in technical fields through specialized programs

Develop initiatives to assist in the workplace integration of newcomers, including mentorship and feedback mechanisms

Implement training programs to cultivate an inclusive and supportive work environment for all employees

Improve transparency in the immigration application process by providing real-time updates and clearer communication channels

Streamline credential recognition processes and eliminate unnecessary Canadian experience requirements where possible

Skilled Trades

Adjust visa policies

Support apprenticeship entry

Implement inclusive hiring practices

Implement visa policies that support apprenticeships and reduce reliance on LMIA for hiring

Create pathways that recognize international experience and provide language support for apprenticeships

Develop policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion in hiring and workplace environments

Healthcare

Streamline licensing/ registration process

Enhance communication channels

Support small business owners

Develop training programs

Rural and remote placements

Align BC's requirements with other provinces to facilitate easier movement of healthcare workers

Improve communication between IRCC, PNP offices, and Ministry of Health to ensure streamlined processes

Provide resources and guidelines to help small business owners find and hire newcomers effectively

Offer training for staff to better understand and address challenges faced by newcomer employee

Develop strategies to attract newcomers to settle long-term in rural and remote communities by highlighting success stories and fostering supportive environments in these areas

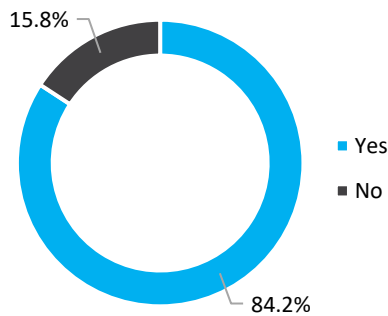


The impact is clear.

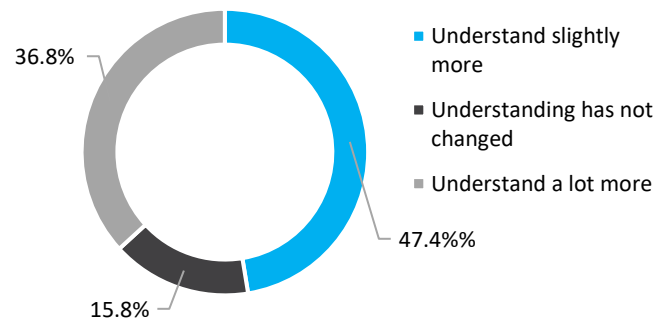
Integrating immigrant talent into the workforce is a shared responsibility, and our recent forum has been instrumental in equipping participants with the knowledge and confidence to navigate this complex landscape.

The post-survey results are compelling, highlighting the significant impact of the session and the progress we've made together.

Did participants feel better equipped to tackle the challenges of integrating immigrant talent into their workforce?



How has participants' knowledge of the immigration system changed?



We value your feedback! If you have any questions or insights, reach out to us at employerengagement@iecbc.ca.

If you're interested in participating in our Feedback Forums, register now to receive exclusive invites, updates, and access to valuable resources. **Join the conversation in shaping our future initiatives!**

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