

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYER FEEDBACK CHANNELS

FEEDBACK | GIVEBACK | IMPACT

NATIONAL FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

Volume 1: September 2023 - March 2024



ABOUT IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCILS OF CANADA (IECC)

The National Network of Immigrant Employment Councils is a collaborative body dedicated to forging effective partnerships and innovative solutions. It aims to significantly improve labour market outcomes for immigrants and support a stronger Canadian economy.

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, 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. The project is organized by local immigrant employment councils across Canada, including the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC), Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC), Rural Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council (RMIEC), Saskatoon Open Door Society (SODS), Workforce Collective, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC), and Halifax Partnership.

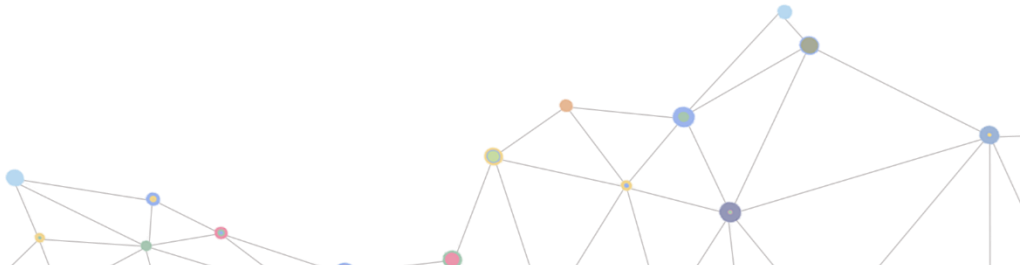
The Feedback Forums aim to gather valuable insights from employers, local business leaders, and community service providers across Canada to refine immigration policies and foster a collaborative environment for sharing best practices. Hosted in various communities nationwide, these forums promote vigorous discussions on strategies to align immigration efforts with labour market needs and improve the integration and inclusion of immigrant talent in the Canadian workforce. The project underscores the critical role of empowering employers with the necessary tools, resources, and voice to effectively recruit and integrate top immigrant talent, ultimately bolstering Canada's economic success.

This digest reflects the key discussions across the nine partner regions in Canada: Calgary, AB; Edmonton, AB; Halifax, NS; British Columbia; New Brunswick; Rural Manitoba; Saskatchewan; Toronto, ON; and Niagara, ON. Each quarter, a digest is produced to summarize key discussion points, themes, and findings from pre- and post-forum surveys.



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



NATIONAL FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Participants

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in our Feedback Forums across the nine communities in Canada. 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, local immigration partnership representatives, academic institutions, and professional associations. Each of you contributed a unique perspective, helping to create a more integrated and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

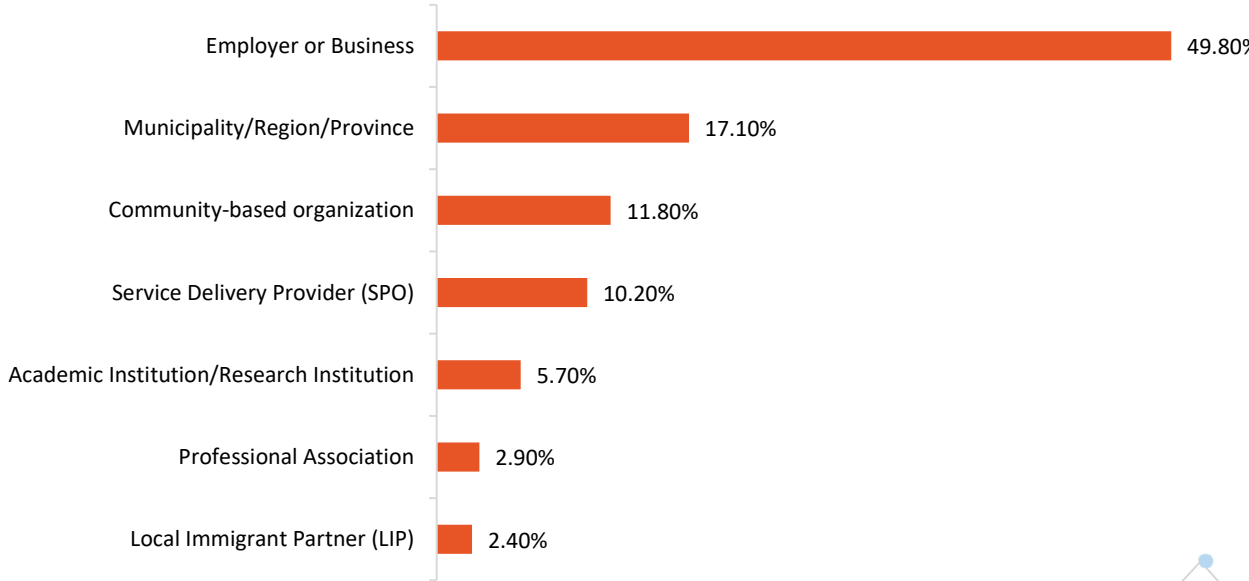
Here’s what we heard

Employers highlighted several pressing challenges in integrating skilled immigrant talent into the workforce. These include navigating a complex, slow, and inconsistent immigration system, addressing the misalignment between immigration policies and the local workforce’s actual needs, and overcoming difficulties in recognizing foreign credentials, particularly in regulated professions.

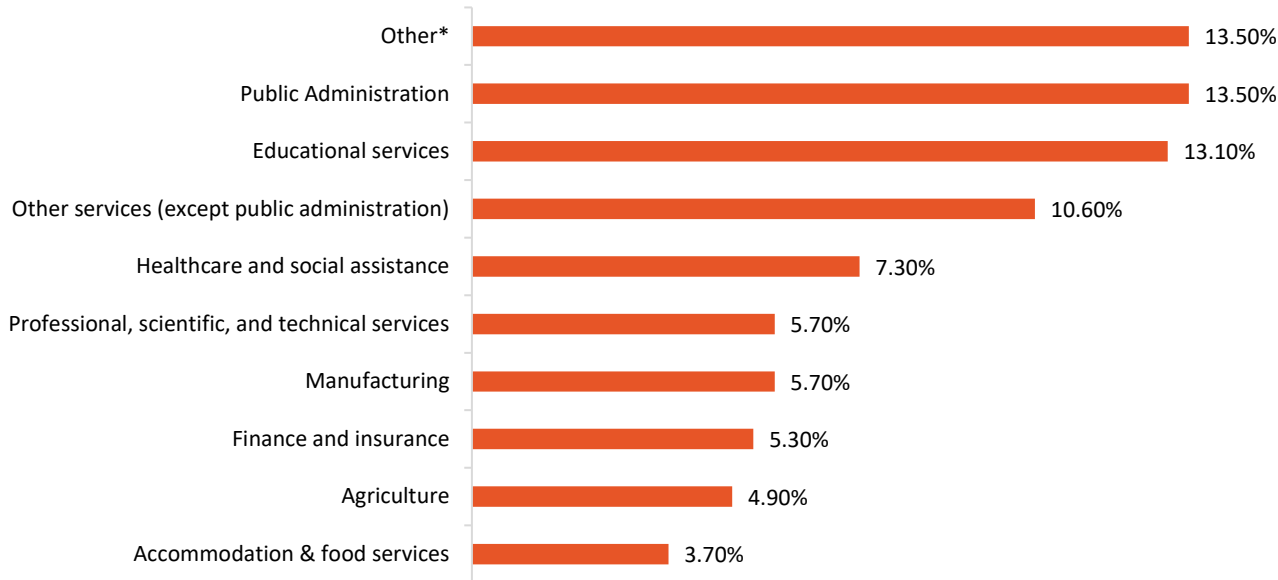
Good to know

Baseline insights were gathered from 245 individuals across the partner regions.

Who’s shaping the conversation in the forums?

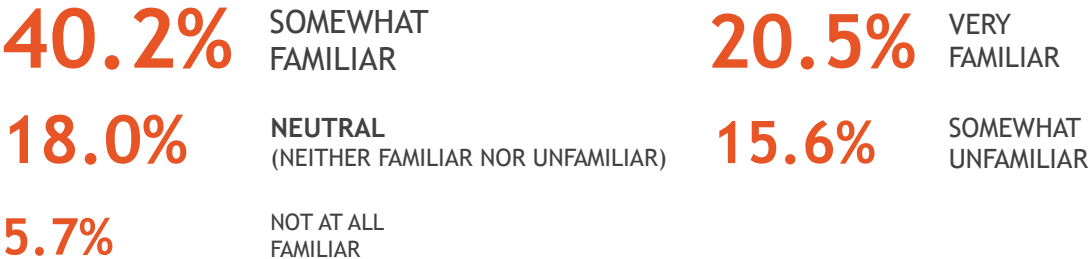


What are the top 10 industries represented?



**Other includes individuals who indicated they represent multiple sectors*

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



How aligned has the immigration system been with their needs?

When respondents were asked about the alignment of the immigration system with their needs, the results varied based on their familiarity with the system. Among those very or somewhat familiar with the system, 47.3% felt that it was somewhat aligned with their needs, while 20.3% viewed it as not very aligned. In the neutral group, 68.2% found the system to be neither aligned nor unaligned with their needs, reflecting a balanced perspective. Meanwhile, among those very or somewhat unfamiliar with the system, 53.8% also perceived it as neither aligned nor unaligned, with 26.9% considering it somewhat aligned and 7.7% feeling it was not aligned at all.





Employer engagement with newcomer talent

Of all employers and recruiters,

85.2% have **hired** newcomers in the past

68% have **adopted** inclusive hiring practices

When assessing participants' confidence in understanding immigrant employment factors, 26.5% felt "extremely confident," while 28.6% were "moderately confident." However, a notable decline in confidence is observed among some, with 16.3% feeling only "slightly confident" and 2.0% expressing "no confidence" at all.

The commitment to inclusivity is evident—55.1% of participants consider inclusive hiring processes as "extremely important," and 34.7% as "very important," underscoring a strong, collective dedication to fostering inclusive workplaces.



Broader perspectives on systemic challenges

Hearing from diverse perspectives on the challenges within the immigration and settlement system, key issues identified include the complexity and inefficiency of the immigration process—such as prolonged wait times for permits and applications—difficulties in credential recognition, and employers' challenges in navigating the system. Additionally, there is a noted lack of tailored training and education for both employers and newcomers to help them understand Canadian workplace culture and expectations.

Common Themes and Key Insights

Collectively, 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](#).

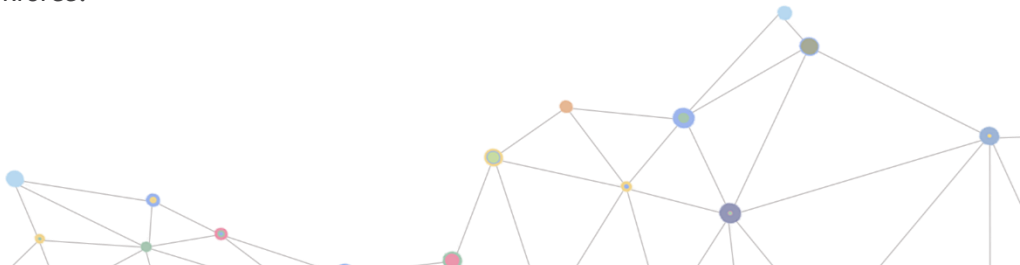


Recognizing newcomer skills and fostering inclusive workplaces

Employers often encounter difficulties in hiring and retaining immigrant employees, primarily due to the following challenges:

Credential Recognition: Many newcomers face significant hurdles in having their international qualifications and experiences recognized. This often leads to underemployment, as employers frequently require Canadian work experience—a prerequisite that can disregard the actual skills and contributions these individuals bring.

Cultural & Language Barriers: Differences in cultural understanding and language or communication proficiency, along with bias and discrimination. These barriers not only prevent newcomers from securing positions that match their skill sets but also hinder employers' ability to effectively assess and leverage the talent available within this workforce.



Overqualification & Job Retention: Many newcomers are overqualified for the jobs available, raising concerns about retention, especially as newcomers may leave positions after obtaining permanent residency or misunderstand work permit limitations.

Training & Education: There is a lack of training for both employers and newcomers on cultural competency, job requirements, and the intricacies of the immigration process.

These discussions underscore the urgent need for coordinated efforts within the immigration sector and among various stakeholders to enhance newcomer employment. Key strategies include improved training programs, clearer communication, policy adjustments, and stronger connections between employers and job seekers. Such initiatives are essential to bridge skill gaps and facilitate more effective integration of newcomers into the workforce.



Addressing housing and living cost barriers to welcome newcomers to communities

Limited accommodation and high living costs present significant challenges for newcomers, which can be a barrier to employer to attract and retain talent. In some areas, there is insufficient housing, and existing land is often inadequate for new developments. Consequently, newcomers often stay in hotels upon arrival. The high costs of housing and living impact employers' capacity to offer competitive compensation, leading to underemployment and forcing many newcomers to take on multiple jobs to meet their financial needs.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive strategy that includes creative housing solutions, the development of available land, government support, and improved transportation options to make communities more attractive and accessible for newcomers.



Streamlining processes to improve service excellence for newcomers and employers

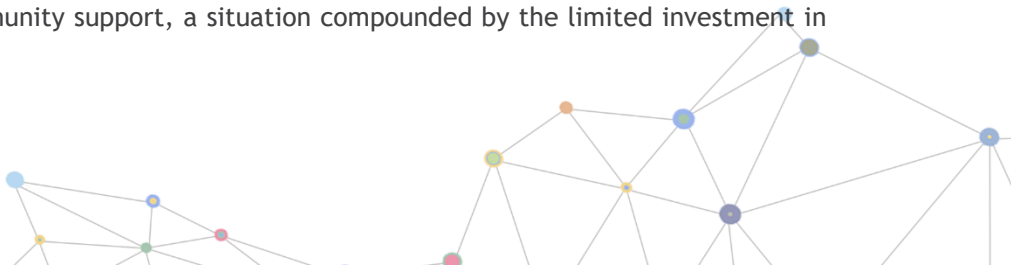
There is a pressing need for more localized support systems offering clear information about living and working in Canada, both pre-arrival and throughout the settlement process. Key challenges to achieving service excellence include excessive paperwork, long processing times, high costs, and differing priorities across levels of government. Essential information should cover healthcare, work permits, visas, labour market details, mental health support, language skills, cultural adaptation, accommodations, and employment and training services. Newcomers must be fully informed of their employment rights, and a more seamless hiring process is crucial, as many employers are either unaware of or disengaged from service providers due to fragmented information and processes.

This underscores the importance of a streamlined, coordinated, and transparent immigration and settlement process to better support both newcomers and employers, with clear referral points being key to success.



Improving newcomer retention in rural communities

Some rural areas, particularly those highlighted in our fora across Rural Manitoba, face substantial challenges that impact newcomer settlement. Housing shortages and affordability issues make it difficult for newcomers to establish themselves, while limited public transportation and the lack of valid driver's licenses further restrict mobility. The shortage of daycare options, exacerbated by long waitlists, presents additional challenges for families. Furthermore, newcomers often rely more on settlement agencies than on community support, a situation compounded by the limited investment in northern communities.



Several fora emphasized the need for better coordination, increased investment, and enhanced communication to effectively address these challenges and improve rural retention.



Offering holistic support to strengthen social cohesion and integration

Holistic support is crucial for employers to retain and attract talent. Without these wrap-around services, there's a higher risk of losing skilled workers or failing to attract them due to inadequate support for them and their families.

Additional themes

We've heard unique insights from specific communities!



Enhancing access to French public services for francophone newcomers

Enhanced services for French-speaking talent in communities can help businesses retain skilled workers and prevent relocation to areas with better support for French speakers. Better access also helps newcomers adjust quickly, reducing cultural and language barriers that affect work performance.



Responding to growing demand for refugees and asylum seeker services

Niagara Falls has become a key destination for asylum seekers, resulting in an increase in demand for services. An overstretched support system delays newcomer integration, slowing their entry into the workforce.



Improving data coordination to better support newcomer needs

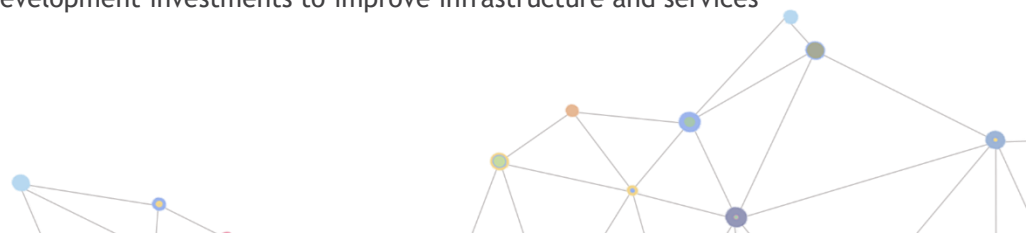
The importance of data emerged as a central theme across discussions in promoting rural immigration and strengthening client service excellence. Coordinated data handling gives employers deeper insights into newcomer skills, enabling strategic hiring, especially in rural areas facing labor shortages. Localized data helps employers advocate for policies that support effective newcomer integration, boosting economic growth and community development.

There is an increasing demand for data-driven solutions that not only align with private sector needs and inform policy development but also offer deeper insights into the talent and skills newcomers bring, enabling better support for employers' business plans.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

Strengthening Community & Employer Support

- Establish localized support systems to create tailored networks that assist employers and help integrate newcomers into the community
- Develop a central hub or full-service local immigration consultant office to provide streamlined, clear, and accessible support for newcomers and employers
- Design toolkits that highlight local resources and strategies for successful newcomer integration
- Collaborate with local stakeholders, chambers of commerce, and organizations to create networking opportunities and strengthen community connections
- Advocate for community development investments to improve infrastructure and services



- Facilitate partnerships between local stakeholders, cultural groups, and employers to share resources and develop innovative solutions for integration and support

Streamlining immigration and settlement processes

- Simplify and accelerate immigration procedures, expedite licensing processes, and improve alignment between federal and provincial policies for smoother transitions
- Provide clear, accessible information on immigration policies, services, and employment opportunities to guide newcomers effectively
- Advocate for policy alignment between federal and provincial governments to minimize bureaucratic challenges
- Offer wraparound services that address essential needs like housing, transportation, childcare, and mental health, ensuring a holistic approach to newcomer support

Building pathways for effective training & integration

- Provide targeted training programs in language skills, digital literacy, and industry-specific certifications, including language proficiency
- Collaborate with post-secondary institutions to create pathways and integrated learning opportunities for newcomers
- Develop employer education focused on intercultural competencies, effective newcomer hiring strategies, and understanding the settlement process

Promoting rural communities

- Effectively market rural communities by setting realistic lifestyle and work expectations, highlighting advantages such as affordable housing and remote work opportunities
- Share success stories of newcomers who have successfully integrated into rural areas to boost awareness and attract potential residents



The impact is clear.

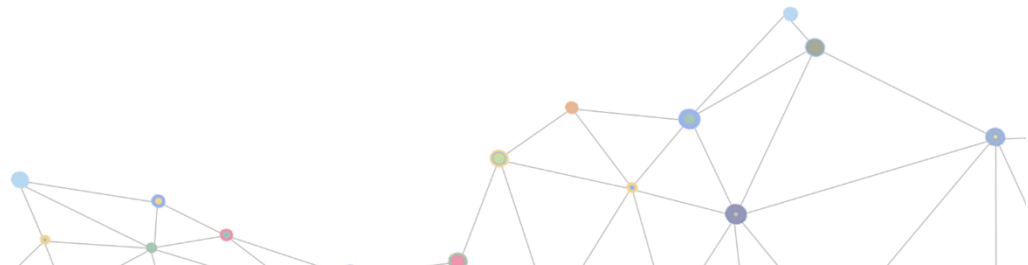
Integrating immigrant talent into the workforce is a shared responsibility, and our forums hosted across nine regions in Canada have been instrumental in equipping participants with the knowledge and confidence to navigate this complex landscape.

Follow-up insights were gathered from 201 individuals, with post-survey results highlighting the significant impact of the sessions and the progress we've made together.

Of all participants,

94.5% found the forum facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration among system actors

72.6% felt more equipped to navigate the challenges of integrating immigrant talent into their workforce



We value your feedback! If you have any questions or insights, reach out to us at info@iecc.network.

If you are interested in participating in our feedback forums that span across nine regions, register now to receive exclusive invites, updates, and access to valuable resources.

Be part of the conversation in your local communities and help shape our future initiatives!



SIGN UP NOW

Stay connected. Follow us on:

 <https://iecc.network/>

