

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYER FEEDBACK CHANNELS

FEEDBACK | GIVEBACK | IMPACT

# NATIONAL FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

Volume 2: April 2024 - June 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.

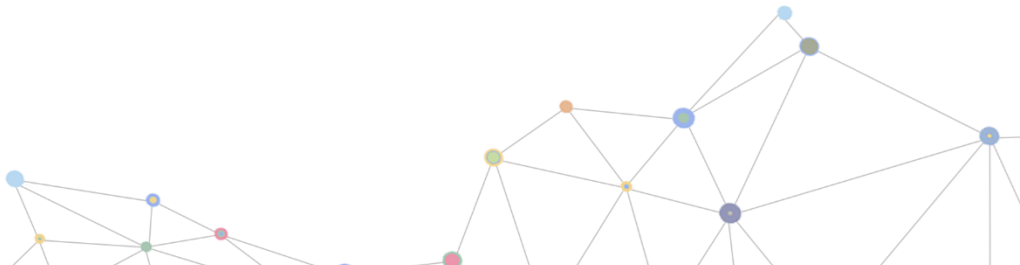
The Feedback Forums aim to gather valuable insights from employers, local business leaders, and community service providers across Canada to refine immigration policies and foster a collaborative environment for sharing best practices. Hosted in various communities nationwide, these forums promote vigorous 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.

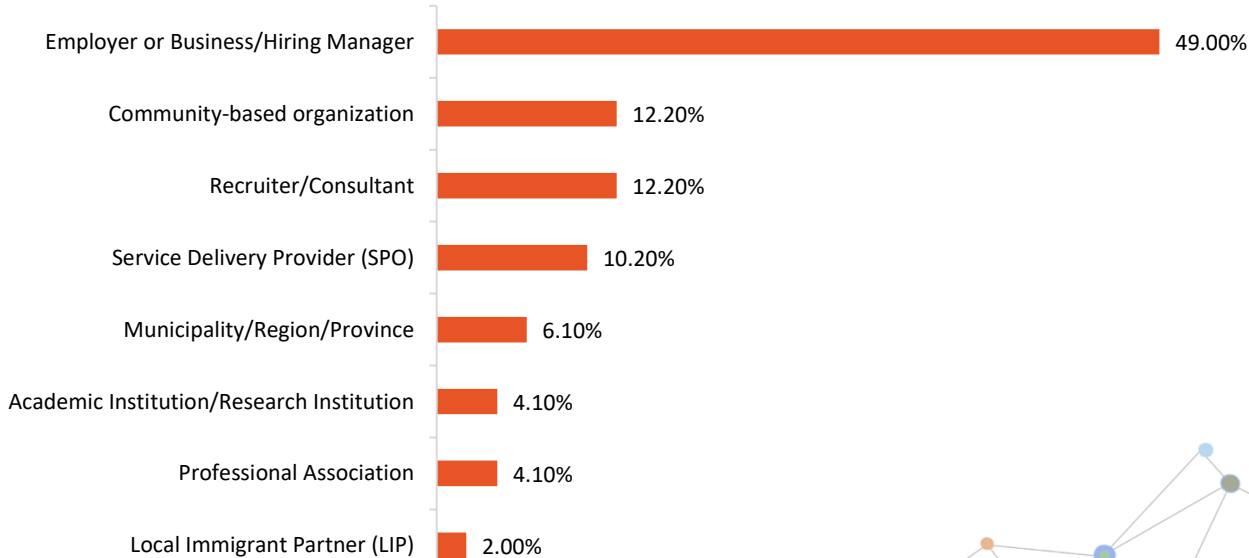
### Here’s what we heard

Employers identified several systemic challenges that hinder the successful integration of newcomers into the workforce, including the need for enhanced pre-arrival education and cultural integration, essential not only to address biases but also to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in Canadian workplaces. They also emphasized the importance of overcoming barriers related to credential recognition and job market navigation, addressing restrictions imposed by certain work visas, and ensuring a better alignment between industry needs and the skills that newcomers bring.

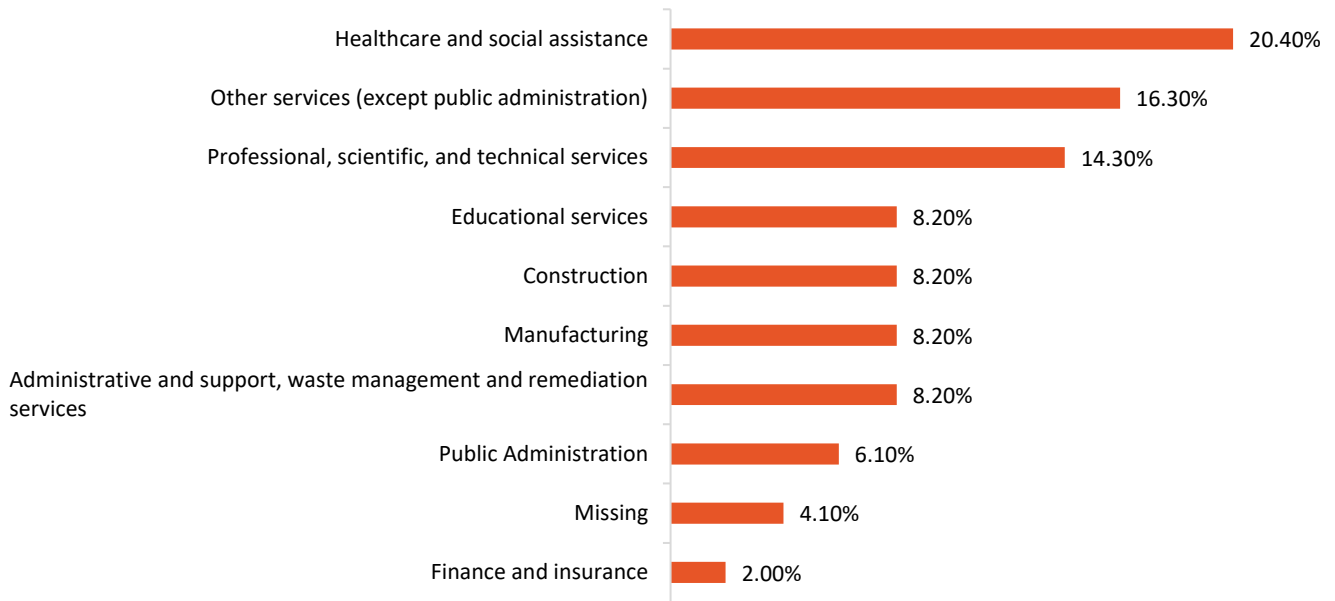
### Good to know

Baseline insights were gathered from 49 individuals across feedback forums held in British Columbia; Edmonton, AB; Saskatchewan; Toronto, ON; Niagara, ON; New Brunswick; and Halifax, NS.

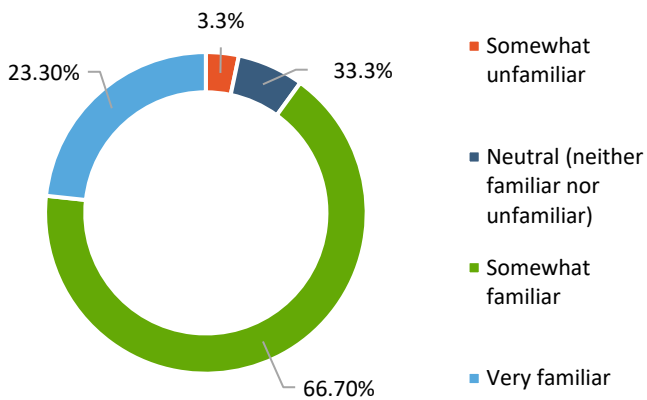
### *Who’s shaping the conversation in the forums?*



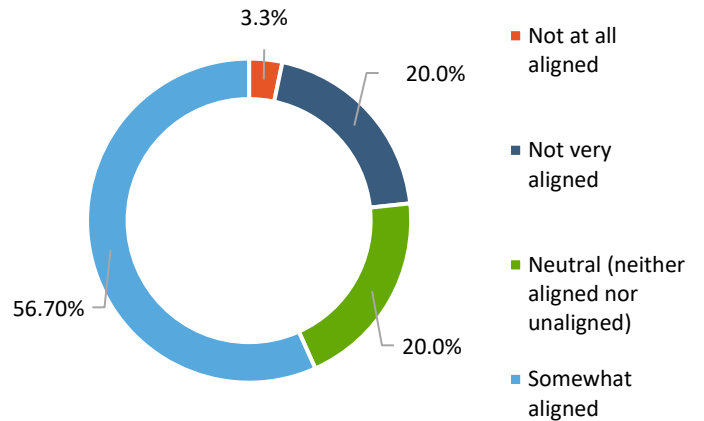
### What are the top 10 industries represented?



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



### How aligned has the immigration system been with their needs?





## Employer engagement with newcomer talent

Of all employers and recruiters,

**90.0%** have hired newcomers in the past

**66.7%** have adopted inclusive hiring practices

**56.7%** have expressed slight confidence in understanding immigrant employment

**46.7%** have experienced challenges in recruiting newcomers

**36.7%** have experienced challenges in hiring newcomers

**26.7%** have experienced challenges in retaining newcomers

Key challenges in employer engagement include language and communication barriers, particularly with industry-specific terminology, systemic constraints like complex processes and credential recognition, and difficulties in cultural adaptation.



## Non-employers' perspectives on system challenges

We heard valuable insights from a diverse group of representatives from settlement service organizations, municipalities, academic institutions, and professional associations!

Participants identified several key challenges, including cultural and systemic barriers such as differing cultural norms, a mismatch between newcomers' skills and job market needs, and employers' lack of cultural competency and understanding in recognizing international qualifications and skills. Additionally, they highlighted gaps in system integration and the limited support available to newcomers in crucial areas like housing, mental health services, and transportation.

### 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](#).



#### Enhancing credential and hiring systems to fully recognize newcomers' skills and work experience

Newcomers' qualifications and skills often remain untapped in the Canadian workplace, primarily due to the following challenges:

**Credential Recognition:** The current foreign credential recognition system is often seen as restrictive and costly, creating significant barriers for skilled immigrants and employers. Improving the efficiency



of these processes is essential to effectively assess and utilize newcomers' skills and experience, giving employers access to a wider and more diverse talent pool.

**Hiring practices:** Shifting hiring practices to focus on candidates' potential, passion, and adaptability, over traditional reliance on experience alone, offers numerous benefits for employers. It expands the candidate pool, bringing in diverse perspectives and talents, especially from underrepresented groups. Adaptable employees help organizations stay agile and innovative, essential in rapidly evolving industries. Hiring for potential also improves retention, as passionate employees are more engaged and committed to growth.

**Structured support through the hiring process:** Offering tailored language training, mentoring, and professional development programs is essential for enhancing newcomer integration, helping them navigate workplace challenges and succeed in their roles. Employers should actively engage with newcomer candidates throughout the hiring process by providing constructive feedback, which fosters growth and demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity. Additionally, companies should work to eliminate systemic biases against international credentials by reassessing hiring criteria and ensuring fair evaluation practices. Accessible training opportunities for all employees and leaders can further create a more welcoming and cohesive environment.



#### **Fostering social cohesion to support newcomers in the workplace and community**

Forum discussions emphasized the importance of fostering inclusive environments for newcomers, underscoring the need for employers to provide better support by connecting them with local services. Promoting social cohesion and engaging in community outreach through partnerships with local immigrant support networks can enhance newcomer integration, improving their overall well-being. In turn, employers benefit from a more engaged, resilient workforce, leading to increased productivity, retention, and a stronger organizational culture.



#### **Enhancing client service excellence within the immigration system**

Participants identified several systemic and administrative barriers, particularly with the IRCC employer portal. One significant issue is the portal's inability to add secondary users, limiting access and preventing additional personnel from effectively managing tasks. This challenge is compounded by high immigration costs and unclear timelines, adding further complexity for employers. The LMIA process was also identified as complex, restrictive, and costly, placing additional administrative strain on employers.

Streamlining these procedures would create a more flexible, responsive, and cost-effective way for employers to access skilled immigrant talent, enriching the workforce with diverse skills and perspectives. Collaborative efforts with policymakers are crucial to reforming these systems, enabling businesses to efficiently tap into the global talent pool. Participants also expressed concerns about worker mobility and immigration policies, emphasizing the need for better alignment between the rules governing temporary foreign workers and international students.

Moreover, the importance of supporting Francophone and rural immigration was discussed, underscoring the need for enhanced local services in underrepresented regions. Participants further called for closer alignment and collaboration between different levels of government and settlement agencies to ensure consistent information, reduce biases against international skills, and uphold the integrity of Canada's immigration system.

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## Actions and Proposed Solutions

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### Building employer capacity for inclusive workforce integration

- Raise awareness and deepen understanding of immigrant talent, including international students and graduates, to facilitate seamless workforce integration
- Provide virtual information sessions and one-on-one support for employers to navigate immigration basics and pathways effectively
- Coordinate communication through the IRCC Employer Portal Assistance to address challenges related to adding secondary users
- Educate leadership and hiring managers on the advantages of workplace diversity and the importance of supporting newcomer hiring
- Emphasize and demonstrate practical strategies for integrating these processes into workplace operations

### Streamlining processes for efficient immigrant workforce integration

- Streamline licensure and qualification recognition processes
- Eliminate the requirement for Canadian experience
- Implement policies that enable simultaneous work and study visas
- Simplify hiring and immigration procedures to reduce paperwork and delays
- Enhance credential recognition processes with clear, standardized guidelines

### Empowering newcomers through tailored support and training initiatives

- Establish comprehensive services, including mentorship, networking opportunities, cultural competency training, and language support
- Design strategies to support overqualified newcomers in navigating job applications and career pathways, incorporating innovative solutions like virtual speed-jobbing events
- Enhance language resources tailored to the specific needs of newcomers in the workforce
- Identify high-demand areas and develop specialized language training programs to meet sector-specific needs
- Ensure training opportunities are accessible by addressing factors such as cost, time, and travel

### Addressing systemic issues to enhance evaluation, feedback, and integration strategies

- Rethink soft skills evaluation to prevent bias and explore alternative methods
- Provide constructive feedback to job applicants, particularly newcomers, when turned down for a position
- Raise awareness of AI's impact on employment barriers for newcomers
- Develop needs assessment tools that account for diverse backgrounds
- Promote flexible approaches to workplace integration, recognizing there is no "one size fits all" solution
- Investigate disparities between international student program enrollment and labor market needs
- Encourage strategies that foster inclusive workplaces, such as mentoring, intercultural competence training, and celebrating diverse holidays





## The impact is clear.

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

Follow-up insights were gathered from 69 individuals, with post-survey results highlighting the significant impact of the sessions and the progress we've made together.

Of all participants,

**100%** found the forum facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration among system actors

**75.4%** 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](mailto: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**

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 <https://iecc.network/>

