

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYER FEEDBACK CHANNELS

FEEDBACK | GIVEBACK | IMPACT

NATIONAL FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

Volume 3: July 2024 - September 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.



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 forums gathered a diverse group of attendees, including both first-time and returning participants. Your continued engagement and valuable contributions have strengthened our collective efforts by building on past discussions and offering deeper insights.

Hearing from employers, service providers, and representatives from academic institutions, professional associations, public administration, and various industries provided valuable insights essential for fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

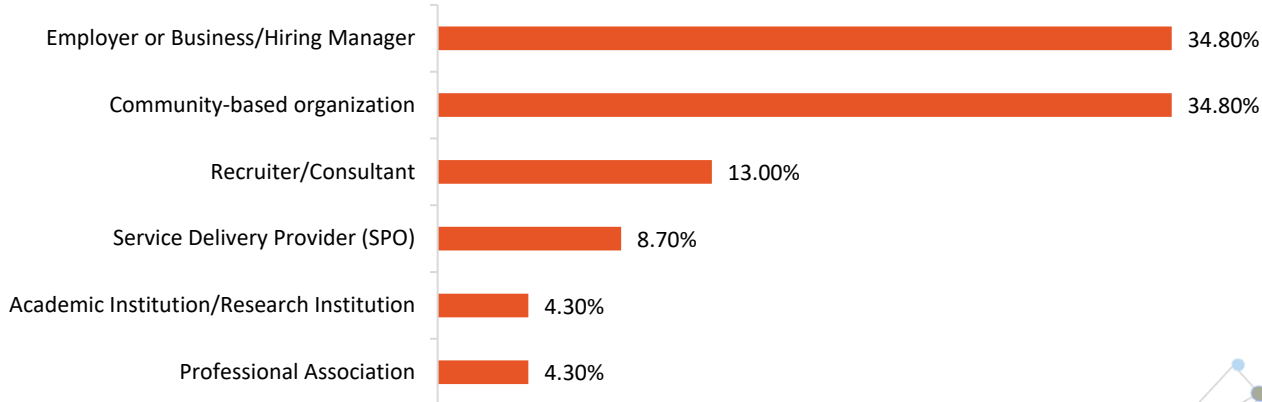
Here’s what we heard

Employers highlighted key systemic challenges hindering the successful integration of newcomers into the workforce, stressing the need for enhanced pre-arrival education and cultural integration to address biases and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in Canadian workplaces. Overcoming barriers such as credential recognition issues, complex job market navigation, restrictive work visa policies, and misalignment between industry needs and newcomers' skills emerged as critical priorities for fostering a more inclusive and effective workforce.

Good to know

Baseline insights were gathered from 23 individuals across feedback forums hosted in British Columbia; Calgary, AB; Toronto, ON; and Halifax, NS. Since July, an additional five sessions were hosted in these provinces, further providing deeper perspectives on workforce integration challenges and opportunities specific to each region.

Who’s shaping the conversation in the forums?



What are the industries represented?

17.4% Other services (except public administration)

13.0% Professional, scientific, and technical services

8.7%*

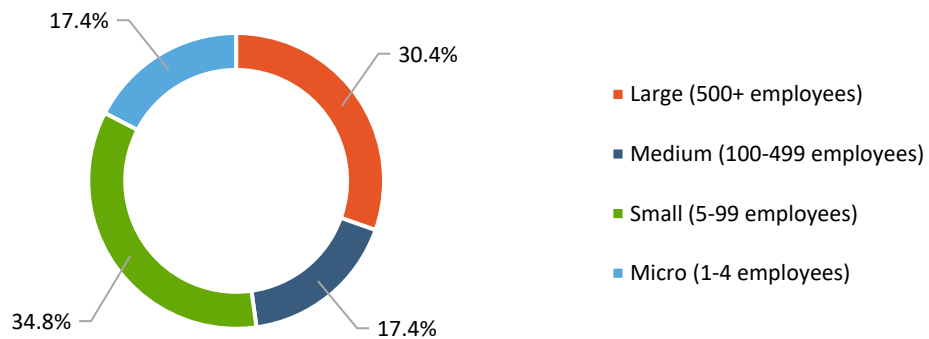
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Public administration
- Health care and social assistance
- Educational services
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Finance and insurance

4.3%*

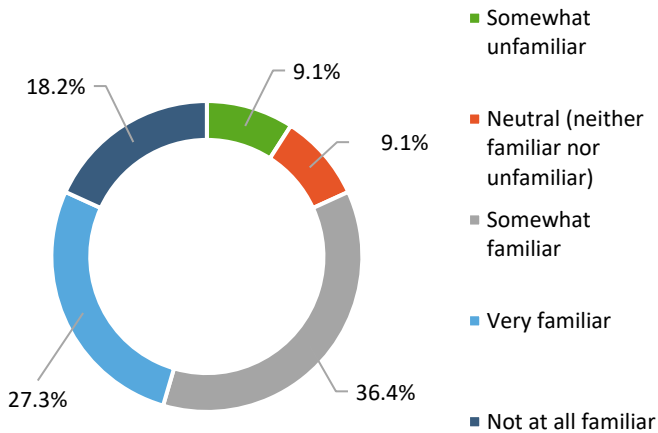
- Accommodation & food services
- Mining, quarrying, oil, and gas extraction
- Energy
- Construction

**These percentages represent multiple sectors with equal levels of representation in the data.*

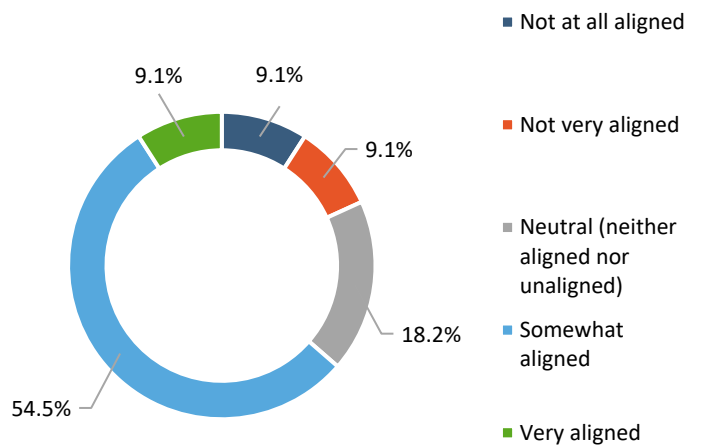
What types of business sizes were represented in the forums?



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,

81.8% have hired newcomers in the past

27.3% have experienced challenges in hiring and retaining newcomers

45.5% have experienced challenges in recruiting newcomers

63.6% have expressed that inclusive hiring practices are **extremely important** in their workplace

Employers identified persistent challenges affecting newcomer integration into the workforce, including unclear employment pathways, complex visa processes, and difficulties with credential recognition, which collectively limit immigrants' access to job opportunities.



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 shared challenges related to newcomer employment and workforce integration, including difficulties in attracting and retaining newcomer employees and navigating complex systems that hinder successful labor market integration.

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](#).



Advancing newcomer talent integration through inclusive hiring, onboarding, and retention strategies

Fora discussions underscored significant challenges affecting newcomer employment, spanning areas such as onboarding, retention, skills alignment, and labor market planning. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts from employers, policymakers, and support organizations.

Onboarding and Integration: Structured onboarding tailored to newcomers' needs is crucial for successful workplace integration. However, many employers overlook the importance of verifying newcomers' understanding during the onboarding and probation periods, assuming they are fully prepared. This gap is often compounded by insufficient diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training, limiting the effectiveness of integration efforts.



Retention and Workplace Readiness: Some employers lack training in hiring and supporting immigrant talent, often prioritizing cultural fit over skills. This practice exacerbates retention challenges, as employers may fear that individuals will leave for roles better suited to their qualifications or to fulfill permanent residence requirements.

Skills Alignment and Credential Recognition: Newcomers frequently encounter mismatches between their skills and available job opportunities, particularly in smaller towns and high-growth sectors. Slow and misaligned credential recognition processes further restrict access to suitable employment, limiting newcomers' ability to contribute effectively to the labor market.

Labor Market Insights and Policy Gaps: Limited data on future workforce needs, combined with trends of early retirement, creates uncertainty in labor market planning. Additionally, immigration policies and the use of short-term permits are often not aligned with long-term economic objectives, affecting the seamless integration of immigrant talent and efforts to address critical labor shortages.



Fostering social cohesion and community support

Discrimination and limited social networks pose significant barriers to newcomers' settlement and integration, affecting their ability to build connections and fully participate in their communities. These challenges limit employment opportunities by restricting access to jobs, career advancement, and professional support, ultimately impacting newcomers' well-being and sense of belonging. Addressing these barriers through inclusive hiring practices, mentorship programs, and community engagement initiatives is essential for fostering a more equitable and supportive environment.



Strengthening newcomer retention with accessible housing and transportation

Shortages of affordable housing and limited transportation options, especially in smaller towns, create significant barriers to newcomer workforce integration. Without stable housing and reliable transit, newcomers struggle to access jobs, attend training programs, and participate in community activities, affecting both employment stability and long-term settlement. Expanding affordable housing and improving public transit are essential steps toward enhancing newcomer retention and fostering a more inclusive labor market.



Promoting client service excellence amid evolving immigration policies

Shifting immigration policies and evolving program requirements create uncertainty for employers and immigrants, complicating long-term workforce planning. This uncertainty, combined with pre-existing stressors such as financial pressures and family responsibilities, affects newcomers' job stability, workplace performance, and overall well-being. Addressing these challenges through responsive client services and clear policy communication is essential for fostering a more stable and supportive employment environment.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

To address the identified challenges, several actionable solutions were suggested, focusing on improving workplace practices, enhancing employer accountability, strengthening communication, and promoting policy flexibility.

Enhancing Onboarding and Retention: Develop tailored onboarding toolkits for employers, assess hiring practices for inclusivity, provide clear probationary guidance, incorporate wellness support into



organizational culture, and implement mentorship programs and networking opportunities to support newcomers in the workplace.

Employer Accountability and Training: Train workplaces on cultural awareness and nuances, and promote employer-focused programs that offer practical strategies for hiring, training, and retaining newcomer talent.

Stronger Communication and Awareness Building: Enhance collaboration between the government, employers, and service providers to align expectations and improve access to support services. Increase outreach and information-sharing about available services for newcomers and employers. and ensure communication efforts set realistic expectations about the job search and immigration processes.

Flexible Policy and System Structures: Extend post-graduate work permits to five years, providing newcomers with more time to secure skills-related employment. Streamline credential recognition and licensing processes to expedite skilled immigrants' entry into the workforce. Involve stakeholders early in policy development to promote more effective and inclusive decision-making.

Data Insights: Leverage labor market research and conduct surveys to identify future workforce career interests, helping align immigration policies with evolving economic and industry needs.



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 22 individuals, with post-survey results highlighting the significant impact of the sessions and the progress we've made together.

Of all participants,

90.9% found the forum facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration among system actors

54.5% 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

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