

STRENGTHENING EMPLOYER FEEDBACK CHANNELS

FEEDBACK | GIVEBACK | IMPACT

NATIONAL FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

Volume 4: October 2024 - December 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.

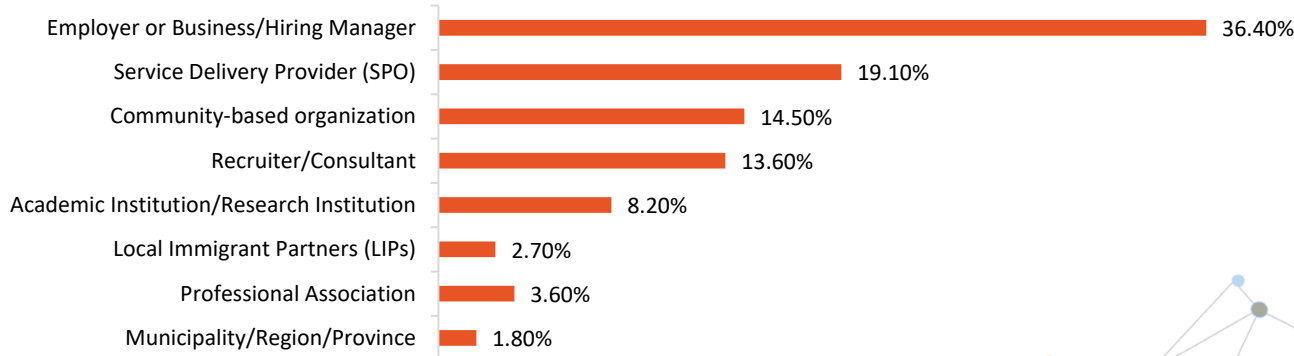
Here’s what we heard

Employers and industry representatives highlighted barriers in credential recognition, workplace readiness, and labour market alignment, compounded by immigration complexities, policy changes, and limited access to training and networking. Housing shortages, transportation barriers, and social isolation, particularly in rural areas, further challenge newcomer retention. To address these issues, stakeholders emphasized strengthening partnerships, expanding upskilling opportunities, and improving employer engagement through education, resource hubs, and streamlined hiring processes. Additional solutions include competency-based hiring, workplace cultural competency training, and enhanced community integration through housing and social support initiatives.

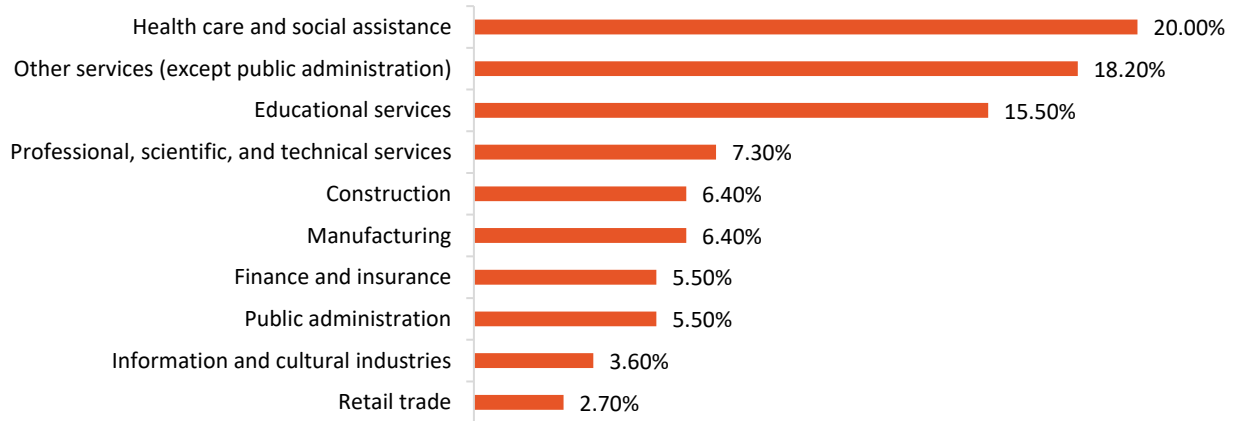
Good to know

Baseline insights were gathered from 110 individuals across feedback forums hosted in British Columbia; Calgary, AB; Edmonton, AB; Saskatchewan; Toronto, ON; Niagara, ON; New Brunswick; and Halifax, NS. Since October, an additional 17 sessions were hosted across these provinces, further providing deeper perspectives on workforce integration challenges and opportunities specific to each region.

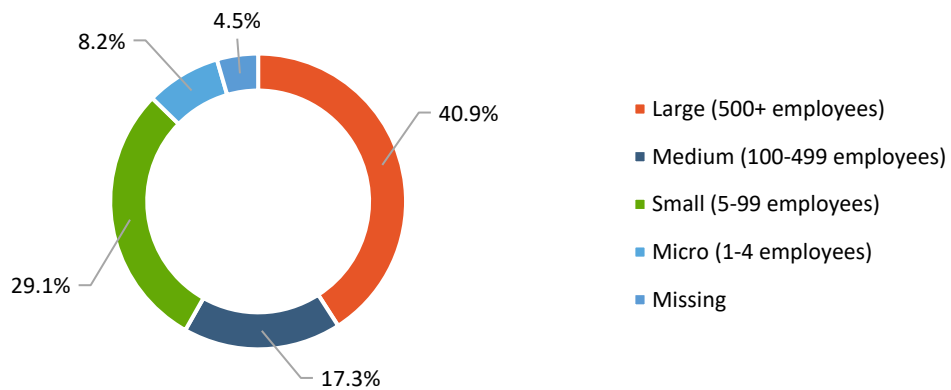
Who’s shaping the conversation in the forums?



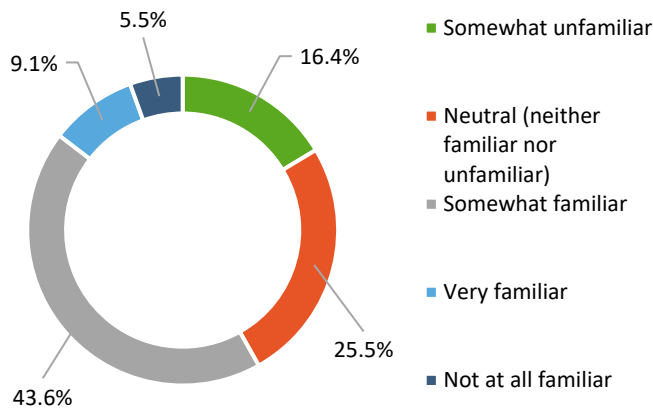
What are the industries represented?



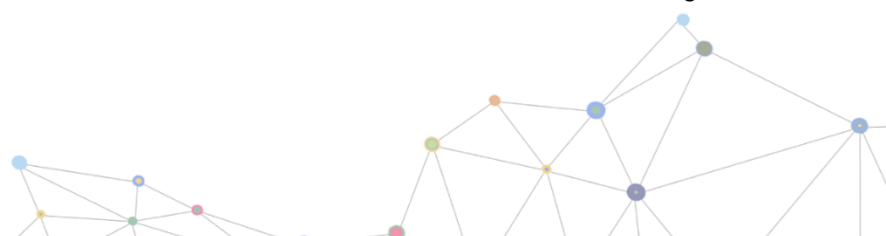
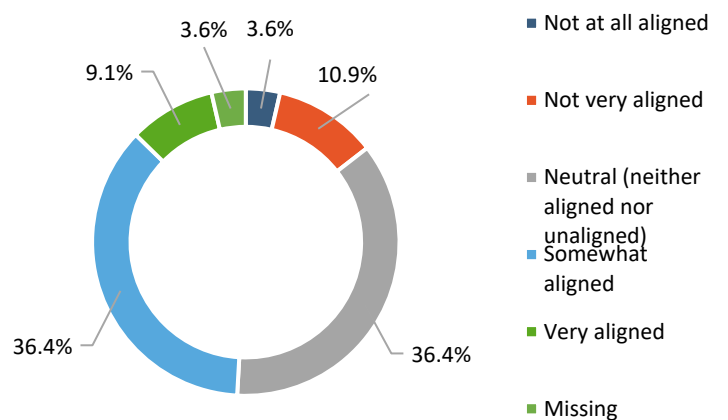
What types of business sizes were represented in the forums?



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,

89.1% have hired newcomers in the past

40.0% have experienced challenges in hiring and retaining newcomers

38.2% have experienced challenges in recruiting newcomers

85.5% have adopted inclusive hiring practices

Employers identified recurring challenges in credential recognition, particularly in aligning foreign qualifications with local standards. Many were uncertain about how to support newcomers in obtaining permanent residency (PR) status, while also facing difficulties in finding candidates with the required skill sets. Additionally, complex and protracted immigration processes, including gaps in work permits and delays in PR approvals, disrupt workforce stability and limit access to skilled immigrant talent. Employers also noted challenges related to language and cultural differences in the workplace, further complicating integration efforts.

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 highlighted challenges in assisting newcomers, particularly in overcoming language barriers and adapting to Canadian workplace communication styles. Difficulties in matching skilled newcomers with local job opportunities due to credential recognition gaps further complicate integration efforts. Additionally, navigating—and helping others navigate—the complexities of the immigration system remains a significant hurdle, alongside the broader challenge of supporting individuals in settling into new communities.

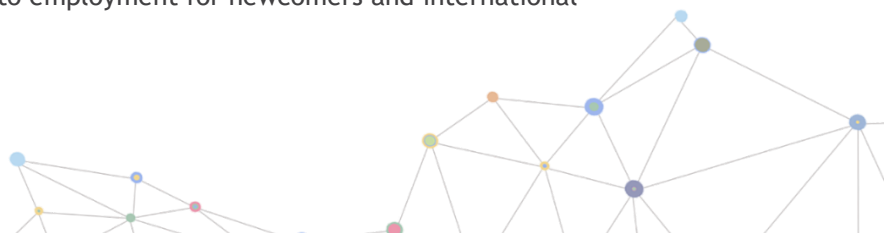
Common Themes and Key Insights

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 skills recognition, workplace inclusion, and talent alignment

Employers and industry representatives highlighted barriers in credential recognition, workplace readiness, and labour market alignment, limiting newcomers' ability to secure jobs that match their skills.

Bias, Discrimination, and Workplace Readiness: Cultural misunderstandings, language biases, and negative stereotypes pose significant barriers to employment for newcomers and international



students. Additionally, limited employer resources for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives hinder efforts to support newcomers in adapting to workplace culture and expectations.

Need for Targeted Training and Support: Long waitlists for English language and industry-specific training limit newcomers' job readiness, delaying their entry into the workforce. These challenges are further compounded by barriers to understanding Canadian workplace norms, building professional networks, and accessing mentorship opportunities.

Barriers to Credential Recognition, Integration, and Engagement with Labour Unions and Professional Associations: Employers face difficulties in assessing international credentials due to inconsistent evaluation standards and a lack of accessible assessment tools. In skilled trades, unionized work environments, complex credential validation processes, and lengthy certification requirements (e.g., Red Seal) create additional barriers, preventing newcomers from securing employment in their field. Furthermore, limited access to professional associations and networking events reduces newcomers' ability to build industry connections, placing them at a disadvantage in sectors where job opportunities often rely on professional networks and referrals.

Mismatch Between Skills and Local Labour Market Needs: Many international students and newcomers possess qualifications that do not align with local labour market demands, creating barriers to employment. Additionally, limited awareness of regional career opportunities and a preference for larger urban centres contribute to hiring challenges for employers in smaller communities.



Streamlining immigration processes and enhancing employer engagement

Frequent policy changes, provincial-federal misalignment, and administrative complexities make immigration processes difficult to navigate. Limited support awareness and bureaucratic hurdles further discourage employer engagement, highlighting the need for centralized, accessible resources.

Lack of Clarity in Immigration Processes: Frequent changes to immigration rules create confusion, making compliance and administrative processes difficult for employers to navigate. Additionally, misalignment between provincial and federal policies poses further challenges for both employers and newcomers.

Barriers to Employer Engagement: Limited awareness of available support discourages employers from hiring newcomers, while perceived risks, red tape, high costs, and lengthy processes further deter engagement, especially for those with limited time and resources.

Need for Centralized and Accessible Resources: The absence of centralized or sector-specific resources creates significant confusion for employers and newcomers, particularly in regions without local IRCC offices. A well-maintained, easily accessible hub with clear, step-by-step guidance on hiring pathways, compliance, and credentialing is essential to reducing uncertainty and streamlining workforce integration.



Improving housing and transportation accessibility

Limited access to affordable housing and transportation, along with high living costs, pose significant challenges for newcomers seeking employment in both urban and rural areas. Job offers may be less secure when local accommodation is required, and existing housing supports, such as allowances, often fail to meet the needs of families and students.





Strengthening social cohesion and workplace inclusion

Employers play a crucial role in supporting newcomers by connecting them to resources and fostering inclusivity in the workplace. Strong social and professional connections help newcomers navigate cultural barriers, racism, and stereotypes, promoting a sense of belonging in unfamiliar environments. Additionally, access to support systems can mitigate isolation caused by harsh weather, limited indoor activities, and unmet expectations about urban life.



Addressing barriers to newcomer retention in rural communities

Transportation and housing shortages in rural areas pose significant challenges to newcomer retention. Additionally, limited social support, cultural isolation, and fewer amenities make these communities less attractive, despite the availability of job opportunities.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

To address the identified challenges, several actionable solutions were suggested, focusing on strengthening partnerships, expanding training access, enhancing employer support, streamlining hiring processes, and fostering workplace and community integration through targeted collaboration, upskilling initiatives, and improved resources.

Strengthen Partnerships: Enhance collaboration among employers, academic institutions, service providers, and policymakers and establish industry-specific councils and cross-sector partnerships to address sector-specific challenges.

Expand Training and Upskilling Opportunities: Increase access to language training, cultural adaptation programs, apprenticeships, along with ensuring bridging programs for high-demand jobs, can improve newcomer integration. Sustained funding for successful pilot programs can help scale innovative solutions into long-term strategies.

Promote Employer Support: Raise awareness of available programs and supports, provide employer education on hiring internationally trained professionals through in-person or virtual workshops, and establish centralized resource hubs for credentialing and hiring guidance to streamline immigrant workforce integration. Expanding immigration support offices in underserved areas ensures broader access to essential resources.

Enhance Workplace Integration: Shift hiring practices to prioritize competencies over formal credentials and implement cultural competency training and wellness supports across workplace operations.

Advance Community Integration: Provide rental subsidies and temporary housing supports to improve affordability and increase awareness of living costs and available assistance to support newcomer retention. Expand community resources, educational programs, and cultural events to foster social integration and inclusivity.





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

Of all participants,

79.5% felt more equipped to navigate the challenges of integrating immigrant talent into their workforce

97.4% found the forum facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration among system actors

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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 <https://iecc.network/>

