

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.



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FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Participants

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in our Feedback Forum on September 26, 2024, in Campbell River. Your insights and contributions were invaluable and have made a significant impact. The thoughtful discussions and diverse perspectives shared during the forum have been carefully documented and will be shared with policymakers and program partners. Together, we are shaping Canada's immigration programs and policies to build communities where every newcomer feels welcomed and valued.

Our forum gathered a diverse group of attendees, including employers and community-based organizations. Each of you brought unique perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

Here's what we heard

Forum participants highlighted key challenges in labor market and immigrant workforce integration, including the prevalence of casual and seasonal employment, difficulties in permanent residency applications, and delays in credential recognition, all of which hinder skilled immigrants from securing stable, long-term jobs. Many employers lack readiness to support immigrant hiring, but initiatives like targeted language training and mentorship programs are seen as opportunities to better align newcomer skills with job requirements and enhance cultural adaptation. Social isolation, high housing costs, and limited transportation, particularly in rural areas, further impede integration, underscoring the need for stronger community support and promotion of local lifestyle benefits to improve retention.

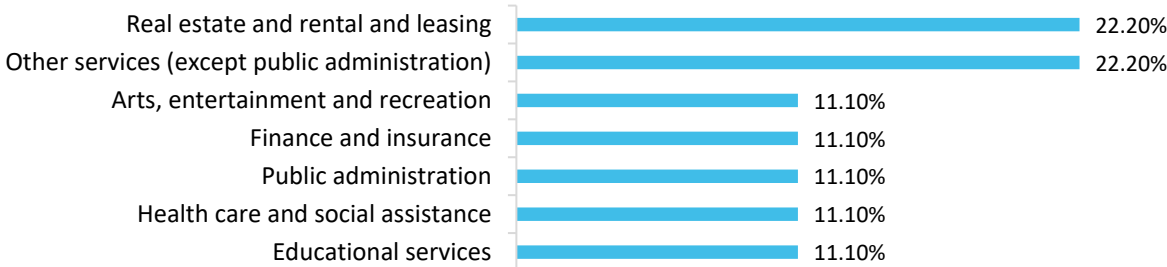
Good to know

Baseline insights were collected from nine forum participants.

Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



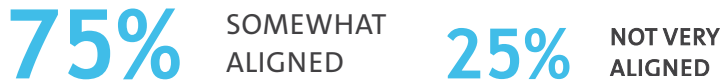
What are the industries represented?



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

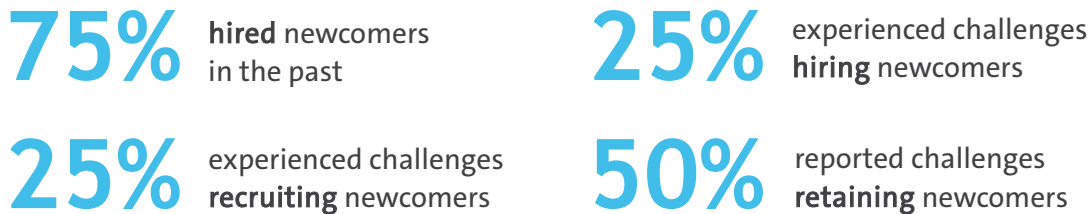


How aligned has the immigration system been with employers' business needs?

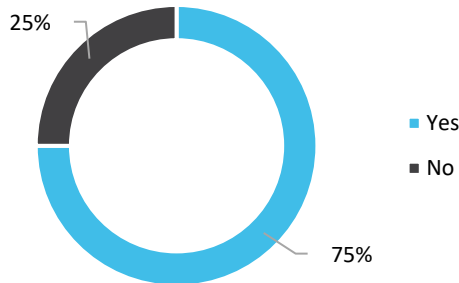


Employer engagement with newcomer talent

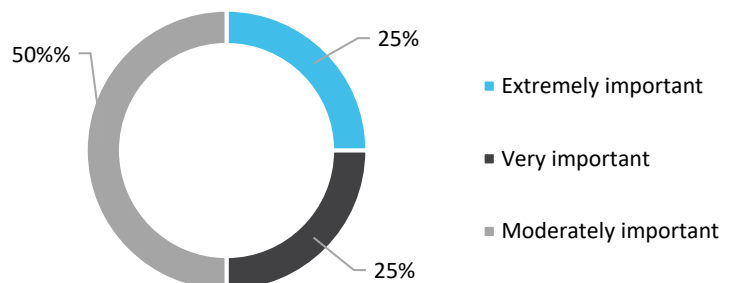
Of all participating employers and recruiters,



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 insights from individuals not representing employers to understand their perspectives on system challenges. Key issues included difficulties understanding work permits and employment requirements/processes in Canada, navigating complex systems, and overcoming cultural and language barriers in the workplace.

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](#).



Navigating key labor market challenges, barriers, and opportunities to integrate immigrant talent in healthcare, construction, and education

Casual/Seasonal Work: Many jobs are casual or seasonal, leading to employment instability and challenges in retaining employees. In contrast, growth sectors like healthcare and tourism provide more stable opportunities for newcomers.

Labor Shortages: Healthcare, construction, and education face significant labor shortages. While industry-specific language skills are crucial, many immigrants struggle with sector-specific jargon, creating barriers to employment. Offering targeted language training tailored to these industries could enhance employability and help address these shortages.

Credential Recognition: Slow recognition processes hinder immigrants' timely integration into the workforce. Additionally, credentials need alignment with local and provincial standards. Streamlining and accelerating these processes could help address labor shortages while ensuring immigrant skills are better matched to job requirements.

Retention Challenges: Immigrants may choose to leave after securing permanent residency, often in search of higher-paying jobs or more affordable housing in other areas. Strategies such as pre-screening, mentorship programs, cultural events, and social networking can help strengthen connections and improve long-term retention.

Employer Readiness: Many employers lack the necessary training and resources to effectively hire and support immigrant talent, creating challenges in navigating the complexities of workforce integration. Implementing targeted training and support programs can help employers better understand and address the needs of immigrant workers, enhancing overall readiness and success in integration efforts.

Skills and Cultural Fit: Newcomers may arrive with skills that do not align with the requirements of available jobs, particularly in smaller towns, which can affect retention. Credential recognition programs, tailored job descriptions, and cultural support can help address these mismatches. Business-to-business (B2B) mentorship initiatives can further assist immigrants in adapting to workplace cultures.



Building social connections to strengthen newcomer integration

A lack of social networks and community support weakens newcomers' sense of connection to their communities. Additionally, limited awareness and understanding of newcomers within the community further challenges integration. Developing social and cultural networks offers an opportunity to build stronger connections and support newcomers in becoming active members of their communities.



Addressing housing and transportation barriers to improve newcomer retention

Housing shortages, slow development, and high living costs present significant barriers to newcomer retention. Discussions emphasized the importance of planning for affordable housing, providing support to help newcomers secure housing, and fostering collaboration between employers and local organizations to identify housing solutions. Additionally, limited transportation options in Campbell River, due to its location, further challenge accessibility and integration efforts.



Promoting rural communities as attractive and supportive environments for immigrants

Retaining immigrants in rural communities remains challenging due to limited job opportunities, housing shortages, and transportation issues. Promoting the unique benefits of rural living, such as the natural environment and lifestyle, is essential to positioning these communities as attractive and supportive places for newcomers.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

- **Enhancing Employer Education Programs:** Employers in Campbell River can gain valuable support through mentorship programs connecting them with skilled immigrants, B2B partnerships to share best practices, and tailored DEI training focused on cultural adaptability and inclusivity. Additionally, detailed guidance on credential recognition and workshops to align international qualifications with provincial standards will equip employers to navigate these processes effectively.
- **Fostering Awareness and Collaboration Initiatives:** Many participants were unaware of local settlement services or how to collaborate with them. Improved coordination, communication, and outreach among service providers are essential to connect employers and newcomers with training and upskilling support. Developing resource kits for employers and hosting community events to foster dialogue and share best practices can promote effective integration and retention strategies.
- **Encouraging Ongoing Dialogue and Resource Sharing:** Attendees expressed interest in participating in more forums and discussions to foster collaboration, share resources, and develop strategies for attracting and retaining immigrant talent. Quarterly forums and digital platforms for employer feedback can facilitate the exchange of insights, assess policy effectiveness, and align with labor market needs.
- **Advancing Policy Adaptation for Workforce Needs:** Adapt policies on job duties, wages, and National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes to address regional labor needs, including subcategories for in-demand roles in rural areas, such as healthcare aides and skilled trades. Tax credits or subsidies for employers in labor-shortage sectors like construction and education can further incentivize hiring, and streamlining credential recognition pathways for regulated professions, such as nursing and teaching, will help reduce onboarding delays and accelerate workforce integration.
- **Addressing Housing and Transit Barriers:** Participants highlighted the need to collaborate with municipalities to address housing and transit challenges. Accelerating the development of affordable housing near employment hubs and partnering with local governments to establish

reliable transit options, such as subsidized shuttles for rural areas, can improve accessibility and facilitate newcomer integration into local communities.

- **Promoting Rural Communities:** Marketing campaigns should highlight the unique lifestyle benefits of rural areas, including their natural environment, community safety, and affordability, to attract newcomers. To boost retention, creating social clubs and hosting cultural events can help newcomers build meaningful connections and foster a sense of belonging, strengthening their long-term ties to the community.



Our insights

Mentorship programs and cultural groups were highlighted as essential for enhancing employer readiness and facilitating newcomer integration. Local employers require greater support through targeted initiatives to attract and retain immigrant talent, as well as improved coordination, communication, and awareness of available services.



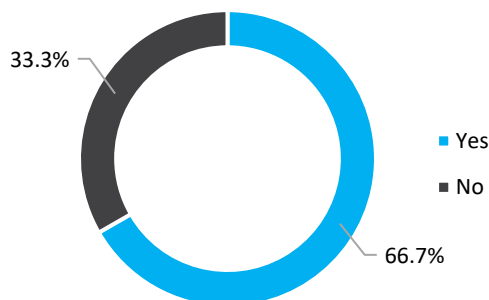
The impact is clear.

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.

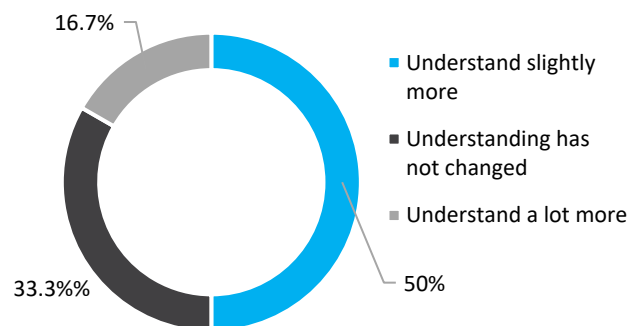
The post-survey results are compelling, highlighting the significant impact of the session and the progress we've made together.

Follow-up insights were collected from six forum participants.

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 communications@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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