

## 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.



**Canada**  **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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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 October 28, 2024, in Victoria. 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, immigrant service providers, municipal representatives, academics, professional associations, recruiters, and consultants. Each of you brought unique perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

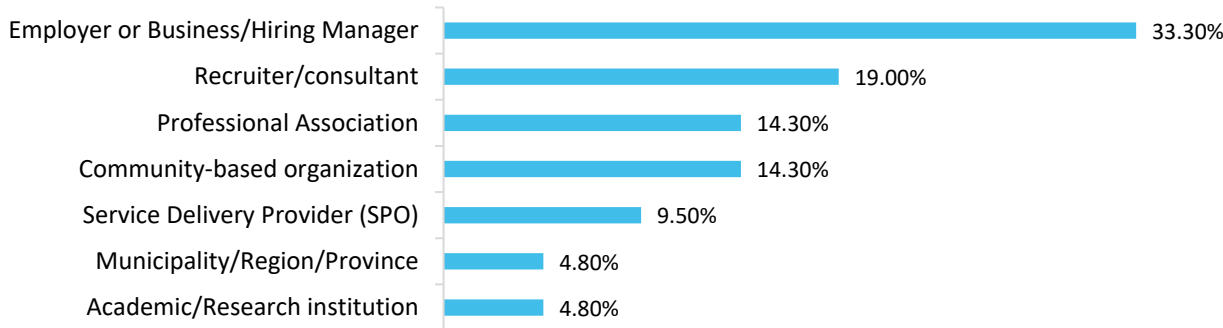
## Here's what we heard

Forum participants highlighted key challenges in newcomer integration, including barriers in credential recognition, reliance on "Canadian experience" that limits skilled immigrants, and insufficient employer support for diversity and international qualifications. Additional issues such as social isolation, limited access to mental health services, high housing costs, and inadequate transportation, particularly in rural areas, further hinder successful settlement and retention. Proposed solutions included mentorship and bridging programs, inclusive onboarding processes, policy reforms to expand PR job eligibility, and tailored language training. Building stronger community connections through cultural awareness initiatives, support networks, and social activities was identified as crucial for fostering inclusion and long-term success.

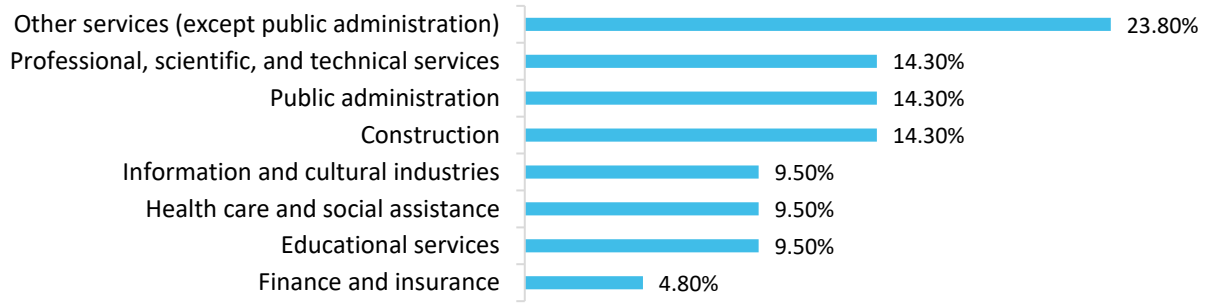
## Good to know

Baseline insights were collected from 21 forum participants.

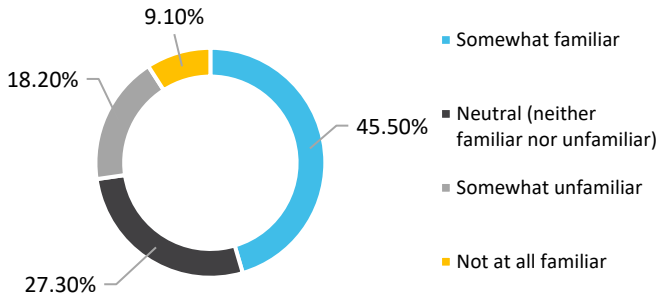
### Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



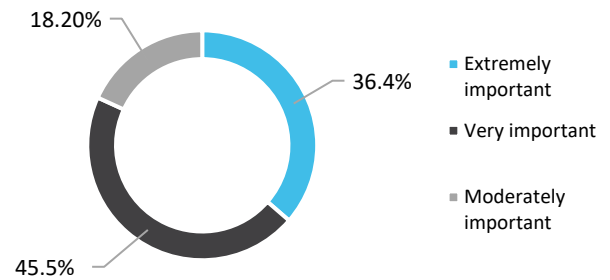
*What are the industries represented?*



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



*How important is using inclusive hiring processes in their workplace?*



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



**Employer engagement with newcomer talent**

Of all participating employers and recruiters,

**100%** hired newcomers in the past  
adopted inclusive hiring practices

**63.6%** experienced challenges recruiting newcomers  
experienced challenges hiring newcomers

**36.4%** reported challenges retaining newcomers



## Non-employers' perspectives on system challenges

Insights were gathered from individuals not representing employers to understand system challenges from their perspective. Key issues included language barriers and difficulties navigating the system, particularly in areas such as application processes, adapting to changes, and accessing available support.

### 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](#).



#### Leveraging immigrant talent to meet critical workforce needs

There is a high demand for skilled immigrants in sectors such as healthcare, construction, and education. However, systemic barriers, including challenges with credential recognition and the focus on "Canadian experience," often prevent immigrants from fully utilizing their skills and expertise. These challenges create significant difficulties for both immigrants and employers, leading to the following challenges and opportunities:

##### Challenges & Barriers:

- Employers face persistent talent shortages in critical industries.
- Permanent residency (PR) requirements compel immigrants to remain in roles that do not align with their skills.
- Language and cultural adaptation issues limit workplace integration.
- Employers often lack the resources or strategies to support diverse cultural needs and recognize international credentials.
- Access to industry-specific language training and orientation on Canadian workplace norms is insufficient.

##### Opportunities:

- Promote mentorship and bridging programs to support credential recognition.
- Establish co-op and training initiatives that align with local labor market demands.
- Advocate for policy reforms to broaden job eligibility for PR applicants.
- Implement inclusive onboarding practices with cultural competency and DEI training.
- Offer industry-specific language courses and expedite certification processes for in-demand professions.



#### Strengthening social connections and mental well-being for newcomer integration

Stronger social integration and enhanced mental health services are essential to support newcomers, who often face isolation due to limited community connections. This lack of support for employees and their families frequently leads to high turnover among newcomer staff. Proposed measures to address these issues include cultural awareness training for employers, organizing community events to promote inclusivity, improving access to mental health services, and introducing mentorship programs and initiatives aimed at fostering meaningful social connections.



### **Improving housing stability and access to services in rural communities**

High housing costs and shortages pose significant challenges to immigrant retention, often resulting in unstable accommodations. In some cases, employers withdraw job offers when suitable housing cannot be secured. Current supports, such as housing allowances, frequently fall short of addressing the needs of families and students. Furthermore, limited transportation options in smaller communities exacerbate these issues by restricting access to essential services, creating additional barriers to successful settlement in rural areas. Proposed solutions include implementing rental subsidies, offering temporary housing support, and increasing awareness of available healthcare services.



### **Promoting rural communities as attractive and supportive environments for immigrants**

Challenges in smaller communities are further compounded by limited resources and infrastructure. Effective strategies for improving integration and retention include establishing mentorship programs and organizing community-building activities to cultivate a sense of belonging.

## **Actions and Proposed Solutions**

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- **Aligning immigration programs with local labor needs:** Tailor provincial nominee programs to address regional labor demands, prioritizing critical sectors such as healthcare, construction, and education.
- **Streamlining credential recognition and training:** Expedite certification processes for in-demand fields and offer language training and equivalency programs to bridge gaps in qualifications.
- **Enhancing job accessibility:** Simplify job postings by eliminating jargon and complex language, making opportunities more accessible to immigrants. Additionally, expand the range of PR-eligible roles to promote more inclusive and diverse hiring practices.
- **Promoting fair hiring practices:** Address hiring biases by advocating for inclusive recruitment practices and promote fair assessments of international credentials to recognize immigrant talent.
- **Fostering inclusive workplaces:** Design and implement cultural awareness initiatives to promote supportive and inclusive work environments.
- **Building social networks:** Organize local events to help immigrants build meaningful connections and foster a sense of belonging within their communities.
- **Expanding housing support:** Increase housing allowances and establish dedicated housing options for newcomers, families, and students.
- **Improving transportation infrastructure:** Enhance public transportation systems in smaller communities to improve access to essential services and employment opportunities.
- **Supporting integration in rural areas:** Develop mentorship and community programs in rural regions to facilitate social integration and reduce isolation for newcomers.

## Our insights

Addressing workforce shortages in critical sectors requires targeted solutions to support immigrant integration. Key opportunities include tailoring immigration programs to align with local labor needs, streamlining credential recognition, and expanding access to industry-specific training and resources. Strengthening housing and transportation infrastructure, fostering inclusive workplace environments, and providing robust support for cultural and language adaptation are critical steps to enable immigrants to fully contribute their skills, particularly in rural areas where these challenges are often amplified.

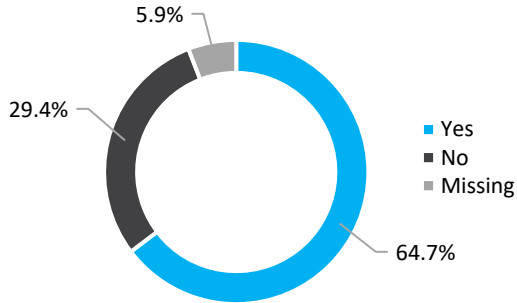
## The impact is clear.

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.

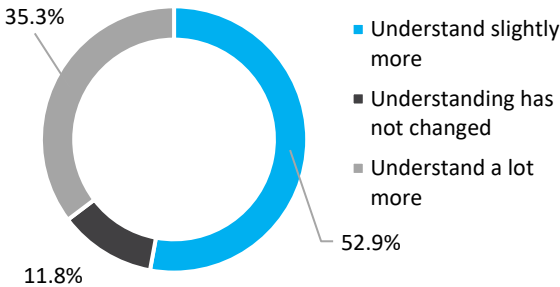
The post-survey results are compelling, highlighting the significant impact of the session and the progress we've made together.

Follow-up insights were collected from 17 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](mailto: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!**

**SIGN UP NOW** 

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