

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 November 13, 2024, in Vancouver. 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 both first-time and returning attendees, representing employers, immigrant service providers, academics, professional associations, recruiters, and consultants. Each of you brought unique perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

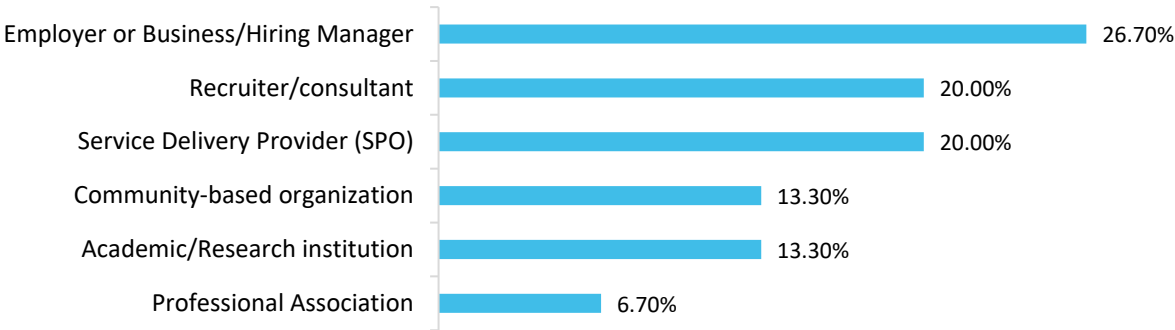
Here’s what we heard

Forum participants highlighted challenges in integrating immigrant talent, including difficulties in recruiting, hiring, and retaining newcomers, inconsistent credential recognition, and a misalignment between training and labor needs. Internationally trained individuals face barriers such as work permit restrictions, difficulty securing jobs aligned with their experience, and gaps in how the immigration points system translates to opportunities. Limited rural support, high living costs, and inadequate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, compounded by cultural misunderstandings and hiring biases, further hinder participation. Opportunities include emphasizing skills over credentials, streamlining processes, offering mentorship and upskilling programs, and fostering partnerships to address housing, transportation, and workforce needs. Enhanced onboarding and leadership training were also identified as essential solutions.

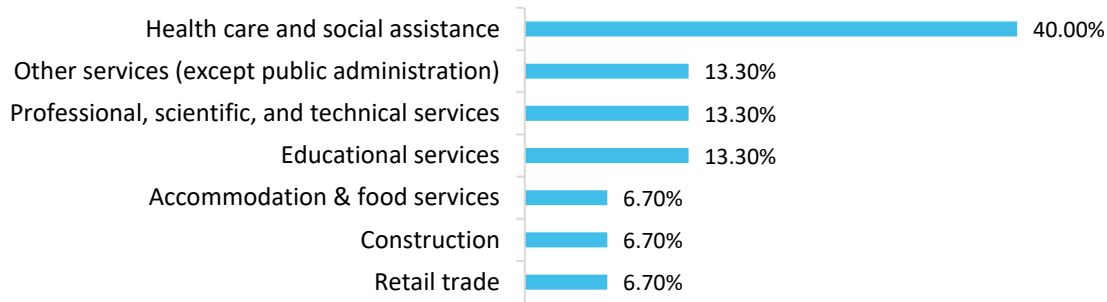
Good to know

Baseline insights were collected from 15 forum participants.

Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



What are the industries represented?



How familiar are participants with the immigration system, and how aligned is it with employers' needs?

57.1% SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR AND ALIGNED

How important is using inclusive hiring processes in their workplace?

42.9% VERY IMPORTANT

Employer engagement with newcomer talent

Of all participating employers and recruiters,

85.7% adopted inclusive hiring practices

71.4% hired newcomers in the past

14.3% experienced challenges hiring newcomers

28.6% experienced challenges recruiting newcomers

experienced challenges retaining newcomers

Non-employers' perspectives on system challenges

Insights were gathered from individuals not representing employers, such as service provider organizations and non-traditional partners, to understand system challenges from their perspective. The most frequently highlighted issue was difficulties with skills recognition and credentialing, underscoring significant barriers to the effective integration and utilization of newcomer talent.

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](#).



Harnessing newcomer potential through skill-focused approaches and workplace support

Across the four represented sectors, common themes emerged around the need to better leverage newcomer skills and address systemic barriers:

- **Shifting the focus to skills:** Prioritizing assessment-based competencies and apprenticeships over formal credentials. Inconsistent credential recognition across sectors, within Canada, and internationally limits newcomers' ability to fully utilize their expertise, highlighting the need for more tailored, sector-specific evaluations.
- **Providing workplace support:** Creating opportunities for newcomers to develop workplace-related interpersonal skills, such as communication and cultural adaptation, while supporting upskilling initiatives, including apprenticeships and language practice.
- **Building connections:** Establishing networking opportunities to help newcomers integrate into their industries and implementing mentoring and bridging programs tailored to specific sectors.

Sector-specific Challenges and Opportunities:

Education

Internationally trained individuals face credential recognition barriers, work permit restrictions for non-"in-demand" roles, and difficulty securing jobs aligned with their experience. The immigration points system does not always translate into meaningful job opportunities, while insufficient DEI policies, hiring biases, and cultural misunderstandings further limit workplace inclusivity.

Key opportunities to address these challenges include employer-sponsored volunteer roles, sector partnerships to develop tailored credential evaluations, and government-funded sessions on workplace culture. Enhanced onboarding programs emphasizing DEI, communication, and cultural awareness are also crucial, alongside leadership training, trauma-informed approaches, and formalized methods to track DEI efforts and their impact on retention.

Skilled Trades

Lengthy Red Seal certification processes, unionized work environments that restrict external recruitment, and Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) procedures that delay newcomers' entry into the field present significant barriers. While demand for skilled trades labor is high in remote areas, newcomers tend to settle in urban locations, creating a geographic disconnect between job opportunities and workforce availability.

Establishing a centralized hiring platform tailored to skilled trades or enhancing existing platforms like "Welcome BC" to deliver accessible, trade-specific information, along with investing in industry-led

workforce planning initiatives, presents a significant opportunity to align labor needs with available talent more effectively.

Technology

A disconnect between educational training programs and local labor market needs, coupled with some newcomers' expectations that their degree in a technical or specialized field will be sufficient to quickly secure employment, highlights the need for targeted solutions. Prioritizing emerging skill sets, such as machine learning and AI, and developing a comprehensive guide to popular universities and their programs can help simplify educational comparisons and better align qualifications with market demands.

Healthcare

Healthcare credential requirements and regulations differ across provinces, posing significant challenges for individuals seeking to utilize their skills when relocating within Canada. Harmonizing credential recognition across provinces is essential to enable healthcare professionals to transition seamlessly into the workforce.



Enhancing client services through accessible information and streamlined support

Clear and accessible information, streamlined processes, and centralized resources are critical for effective client service. Employers and newcomers need comprehensive and widely promoted resources that address employment as well as essential needs such as housing and childcare. The complexity of credentialing, visa applications, and hiring procedures, including LMIA and permanent residency pathways, highlights the necessity of developing centralized, sector-specific tools to simplify processes and enhance support systems.

Opportunities to address these challenges involves simplifying and streamlining processes, creating tools or platforms to provide clear and accessible guidelines such as centralized hiring platforms and step-by-step credentialing instructions, and offering dedicated immigration support from IRCC to assist employers effectively.



Navigating housing affordability and accessibility for newcomers

Representatives from the technology industry highlighted significant challenges tied to the cost of living, particularly in relation to housing and rural immigration. Many newcomers moving to areas like Vancouver are unprepared for the high housing costs and often arrive with expectations of purchasing homes, which proves unrealistic in such competitive markets. For temporary residents, these challenges are compounded by the lack of necessary documentation, such as references and proof of work, making it even more difficult to secure housing.



Enhancing rural immigration through community support and trade-focused initiatives

The skilled trades discussion emphasized the need to support rural immigration, as newcomers often settle in urban areas due to limited social support and fewer amenities in rural locations. However, rural areas offer many skilled trade opportunities that remain untapped due to this migration trend.

To address this, programs like "Try a Trade" could help shift perceptions about the trades and attract individuals to these roles. Additionally, community-level initiatives aimed at making rural areas more welcoming and appealing could encourage newcomers to consider settling in these regions, helping to bridge the gap between labor demand and settlement patterns.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

- **Streamlining credential recognition:** Establish sector partnerships, employer-supported certification pathways, and standardized national requirements, with a stronger focus on competencies in hiring. These initiatives would create a more efficient system for recognizing skills and qualifications, promoting better workforce integration across sectors and regions.
- **Improving immigration policies:** Simplify processes, tailor policies to address diverse needs, and accelerate procedures for in-demand jobs. These changes would enhance efficiency and better align immigration pathways with labor market demands.
- **Employer supports:** Implement mandatory DEI training for staff at all levels, allocate long-term funding for workforce development initiatives, and increase investment in mentorship, bridge training, and onboarding programs. Strengthen awareness of available resources, develop step-by-step guides and FAQs for both employers and newcomers, and support programs aimed at training foundational roles. Expanding mentorship and networking opportunities will further enhance workforce integration and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment.
- **Government-industry partnerships:** Strengthen collaboration between government and industry to align infrastructure, such as housing, transportation, childcare, and education, with immigration and workforce needs. Introduce incentives or subsidies to encourage training initiatives and establish dedicated IRCC staff to assist employers in navigating immigration systems, ensuring smoother integration and workforce alignment.
- **Adaptable and holistic approaches:** Ensure ongoing efforts are responsive to local needs and remain proactive in addressing emerging challenges, while adopting a holistic approach that considers wraparound supports such as housing, childcare, and mental health services to effectively support individuals and foster successful integration.



Our insights

Opportunities to integrate newcomer talent include streamlining credential recognition, prioritizing competencies in hiring, and simplifying immigration policies to better align with labor market demands. Expanding employer supports, such as DEI training, mentorship, and bridge programs, alongside centralized hiring and credentialing platforms, can enhance workforce integration. Strengthening government-industry partnerships to align infrastructure like housing and childcare with workforce needs, supported by rural immigration initiatives and holistic wraparound supports, will further promote sustainable integration.



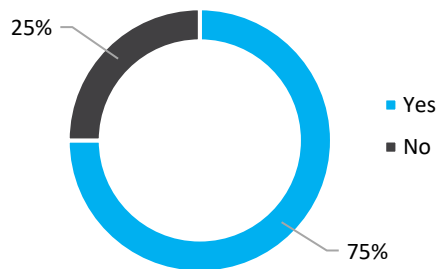
The impact is clear.

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.

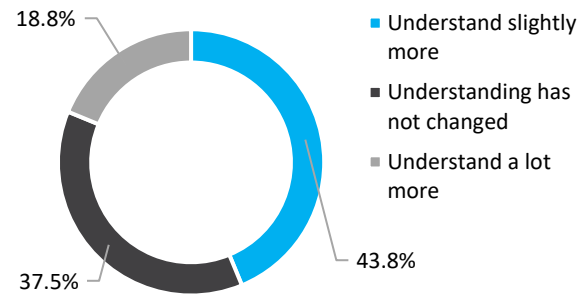
The post-survey results are compelling, highlighting the significant impact of the session and the progress we've made together.

Follow-up insights were collected from 16 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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