

Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels

FORUM DIGESTS



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A Feedback Forum Follow-Up Session

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 labor 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 **Post-Feedback Forum Follow-Up session** on January 21, 2025, which built upon insights and discussions from previous forums in **Campbell River, Victoria, and Prince George**. Your insights and contributions were invaluable and have made a significant impact. The thoughtful discussions and diverse perspectives shared 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.

What Led Us Here

This follow-up session built on insights from previous Feedback Forums, bringing together past participants—including employers, service providers, professional associations, community-based organizations, and academic institutions—from Campbell River, Victoria, and Prince George. They identified three key challenges across their regions and collaborated in breakout discussions to develop actionable solutions.

This report outlines the key takeaways and proposed strategies. While this session focused on organizational and individual solutions, future discussions will explore broader policy and systemic approaches at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

Challenges

Lack of resources for supporting newcomers

Many employers noted a lack of resources to support newcomers, emphasizing the need for stronger DEI initiatives and cultural competency training.

Identified Opportunities

DEI training for leadership & employees	Provide tailored DEI training for leadership and staff focusing on unconscious bias, inclusive hiring, and workplace integration. Industry-specific content was recommended to address unique challenges.
Industry-specific language training	Provide industry-specific language training for newcomers covering technical vocabulary, workplace communication, and professional writing. These programs should be designed through collaboration with language training providers or immigrant-serving organizations.
Education & training for business owners & managers	Organize workshops for employers, especially small businesses, on available newcomer support resources, including government funding, cultural competency, and legal responsibilities.
New employee mentorship	Create a mentorship program pairing newcomers with experienced employees for guidance, networking, and workplace integration. Options include informal peer support or more formal goal-oriented meetings with mentor training.

Employer & newcomer mentorship	Develop a structured mentorship model with measurable outcomes that support employers and newcomers. The model should offer guidance on inclusive leadership and workplace integration. Offering subsidies may also incentivize employer participation.
Newcomer-focused resource list	Create a comprehensive guide for newcomers featuring community programs, professional development, social groups, and company initiatives. It should cover housing, financial literacy, networking, and mental health. The list should be shared and available via company intranets, HR, and onboarding materials.
Work closely with immigrant-service organizations	Strengthening partnerships should improve access to resources, provide opportunity to create tailored programs, co-host events, and develop industry-specific toolkits.
SME-specific support	Acknowledge SMEs' limited HR capacity and offer tailored solutions like simplified toolkits, advisory support, and DEI consultants. Advocate for incentives to help SMEs adopt newcomer-friendly policies.
Partnerships with government & industry associations	Encourage collaboration among different levels of government, Chambers of Commerce, and industry associations to create standardized, adaptable resources. Create shared orientation tools and streamline access to grants, funding, and training for SMEs.

Retention

Newcomers often leave for urban centers due to housing costs, limited infrastructure, and lack of community support.

Identified Opportunities

Newcomer-focused resource list	Develop a multilingual directory with details on rental housing, cost of living, transportation, and community activities. Highlight regions with strong newcomer communities and support networks.
Public boards for housing & events	Create a platform (digital and/or physical) for newcomers to access housing listings, community events, and job opportunities. Collaborate with municipalities, employers, and organizations to keep it updated, ensuring user-friendly integration with existing platforms.
Directory for social & professional groups	Develop a directory of social and industry-specific groups, including parent groups, clubs, and networking circles. Connect newcomers to support belonging in a new community.
Structured events with guest speakers	Organize hybrid events where recent immigrants share experiences, provide guidance, and engage in mentorship, Q&As, and networking to strengthen support networks.
Collaborative events with community support groups	Host quarterly or semi-annual events that include representation from service providers (e.g., from housing, employment, legal aid, healthcare, language training) featuring information booths, panel discussions, and networking in collaboration with local governments and immigrant-serving organizations.
Internal social groups for newcomers	Encourage workplaces to establish newcomer social groups led by employee volunteers, or supported by HR, to share experiences and settlement tips.
Enhancing childcare support	Advocate for employers to offer on-site or affiliated childcare, supported by municipal and provincial government (e.g., funding, grants, logistical support). Emphasize benefits like improved retention, productivity, and morale.

Media campaigns	Launch media campaigns to combat immigration misinformation and showcase newcomer contributions. Collaborate with policymakers, journalists, and advocates for balanced public narratives.
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Transportation

Communities see heavy reliance on personal vehicles to access employment and essential services. However, acquiring a vehicle and driver's license is often costly and time-consuming, posing a significant barrier for newcomers.

Identified Opportunities

Organizational carpooling	Develop an internal carpooling system to help employees coordinate rides and reduce transportation barriers and costs.
Community-led carpooling	Encourage community-led carpool groups on social media platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp, with support and promotion from local community centers or immigrant-serving organizations.
Free/low-cost shuttle services	Partner with employers to offer shuttle services for employees in areas with limited transit, and explore cost-sharing models with businesses, local governments, and transit authorities.
Public transit advocacy & support	Encourage employers to subsidize transit passes for employees and collaborate with municipalities on transit assistance programs. Survey employers on transportation barriers and share findings with BC Transit; work with BC Transit to improve service in high-demand areas.
Cycling programs & infrastructure	Launch a Bicycle Donation & Training Program by partnering with donors, community groups, and volunteers to provide refurbished bikes and safety training for newcomers. Collaborate with local bike shops for discounted repairs and gear and seek corporate sponsorships for growth.
Driving training	Partner with organizations and driving schools to provide free or subsidized driving lessons for newcomers and secure funding to cover licensing and related costs for those in need.
Remote work & online services	Advocate for remote work and expanded online services to support employees and reduce travel needs. Promote digital literacy programs to help newcomers access online platforms effectively and expand government and businesses services to have a larger online presence.

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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