

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 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

As Canada continues to refine its immigration strategy to better align with labour market needs, the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) launched the Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels (SEFC) Project, an initiative that places employer perspectives at the centre of the conversation.

The project creates a structured feedback mechanism that enables employers, local business leaders, and community service providers to share on-the-ground insights that help inform both government and organizational strategies on immigration.

Through forums held across eight regions in Canada, the SEFC Project promotes vigorous discussions on systemic challenges, fosters a collaborative environment for dialogue, and encourages the sharing of best practices to improve the integration and inclusion of immigrant talent in the workforce. The project underscores the critical role of employers in shaping more responsive and inclusive immigration systems and supports the co-development of practical solutions for attracting, onboarding, and retaining global talent, ultimately bolstering Canada's economic success.

This digest reflects the forum hosted in Vancouver. Following each session, a digest is developed to summarize key discussion points, emerging themes, and findings drawn from participant surveys conducted before and after the forum.

Canada



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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 8, 2025. Your insights and contributions were invaluable and have made a significant impact. The rich discussions and perspectives shared during these forums are systematically documented and will be presented to policymakers and program partners.

Our forum brought together a diverse group of attendees whose perspectives help foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

Together, we are shaping the future of Canada’s immigration programs and policies, building communities where every newcomer feels welcomed and valued.

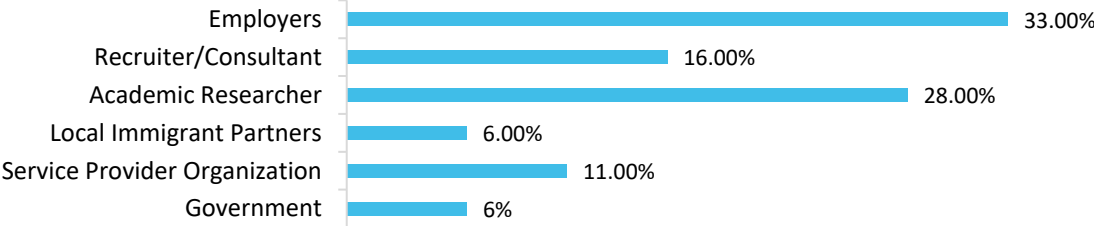
Here’s what we heard

The forum reinforced that Canada’s core challenge is not immigrant talent but system alignment, with credential recognition delays, inconsistent licensing standards, and slow, complex immigration pathways limiting employer access to skilled workers. Employers highlighted persistent bias toward “Canadian experience,” unclear work-permit and PR pathways, and the need for more agile immigration streams in tech, healthcare, and the trades. Newcomers continue to face cultural competency expectations, communication gaps, and uneven access to practicums, bridging programs, and language supports. The discussion underscored the need for stronger collaboration among employers, regulators, IRCC, ESDC, and educational institutions, clearer and faster pathways, expanded mentorship and practice-ready models, and more responsive education and immigration systems that reflect real labour market needs.

Good to know

A total of 44 participants attended the session, with baseline insights collected from 18 attendees.

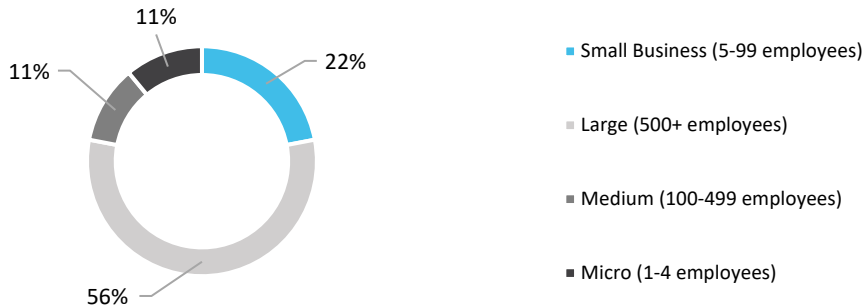
Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



What are the industries represented?

Participants were primarily from the **education, tech, skilled trades, and healthcare sectors.**

How were businesses of different sizes represented?



Employer Insights on Immigration, Hiring, and Inclusion

100% reported being **somewhat or very familiar** with the immigration and settlement systems.
100% responded that **it's somewhat or very important** to use inclusive hiring processes in your workplace.

67% said their organization **adopted inclusive hiring practices** to support the recruitment or retention of internationally trained talent.

66% saw that the **immigration system as neutral or somewhat unaligned** with their labour market needs.

Nearly 60%

said they **feel somewhat or very confident understanding key factors in immigrant employment**, including work permits, credential assessments, cultural norms, and references.

Roles and Occupations Employers Find Most Difficult to Fill

- Medical Laboratory Technologists
- Civil Engineering - related roles
- Health and Life Sciences professionals
- Digital, IT, and Data Analysts
- Finance and Administration roles
- Production and Installation Designers
- Specialized TBM (Tunnel Boring Machine) hourly workers
- Supply Chain and Logistics roles

- Manufacturing roles
- Executive-level positions
- Skilled Trades (e.g., electricians, plumbers, carpenters, millwrights)
- Technicians across multiple sectors
- Leadership and Supervisory roles



Non-Employer Perspectives and System Challenges

100%

reported employers' needs are **moderately to very considered in immigration selection policies.**

reported employers as **moderately or very active in contributing to improved hiring outcomes for newcomers** (e.g., through policy input, inclusive practices, or partnerships).

80%

said employers are **moderately or very invested in hiring newcomers.**

said employers' needs are **moderately to very engaged with the broader settlement and integration system.**

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](#).

Healthcare



Strengthening Pathways for Healthcare Talent Integration

Skills and Talent

Employers identified the most significant skills gap in medical lab technologists, particularly in their rural community locations such as Kamloops and Campbell River. They also reported a severe shortage of nurses, made worse by training disruptions during COVID-19. Certification through CMLS takes 1–2 years, and while motivated employees tend to stay once placed, employers continue to face high relocation and retention costs. Participants emphasized the need for paid practicums, strong practicum-based training, and credential harmonization, noting that delays and inconsistent licensing standards make it harder to bring qualified newcomers into the system. Employers also rely on bridging roles that allow candidates to work in non-registered positions while awaiting licensing.

Generational shifts are reshaping workforce expectations. New graduates prioritize flexibility and quality of life, choosing part-time or casual roles over traditional full-time schedules. The gig-model influence from tech is shaping expectations in healthcare, though 24/7 clinical operations limit how much flexibility employers can realistically offer.

COVID-19 reduced training quality for both Canadian and internationally educated nurses, further widening gaps in both frontline and management roles. Participants also raised concerns about inconsistent training standards between private colleges and universities and noted that these variations affect care quality.



Advancing Cultural Competency and Inclusive Onboarding

Client Service Excellence

Cultural competency remains a significant challenge, with newcomers often struggling with email etiquette, verbal communication, and workplace norms. Programs such as ASCEND, IEC-BC's blended-learning soft-skills program with self-paced modules and optional workshops, help build workplace readiness, but limited funding and low awareness restrict access. Newcomers also lack practical information on housing, utilities, and employment supports, which affects preparedness for client-facing roles. Employers noted that funding gaps and unclear eligibility criteria make it difficult for newcomers to enter frontline positions such as receptionists.

These issues reflect broader systemic barriers, including credential recognition delays, inconsistent licensing standards, and uneven access to training pathways. Promising models include HCaP, Ontario's paid practicum pathway, and Vancouver Coastal Health's aide-to-LPN ladder, all of which integrate training with financial and placement supports. Tuition forgiveness programs tied to rural service offer strong incentives but require better promotion. Employers emphasized that mentorship, coordinated supports, and employer-driven onboarding are essential to helping newcomers succeed in client service roles.



Improving Clarity and Consistency in Credentialing Systems

Integrity of Canada's Immigration System

Credentialing remains a major barrier, with newcomers required to pass national exams and navigate licensing processes that offer no shortcuts and often lack consistent standards. Although bridging programs support integration, licensing delays, limited recognition of international education, and inconsistent training quality in private colleges compared to approved nursing institutions continue to slow workforce entry and raise concerns about quality. Employers expressed frustration with unclear guidance on funding eligibility, work permits, and licensing timelines, noting that these issues reflect broader system misalignment rather than talent shortages. Participants emphasized the need for clearer pathways, harmonized credential requirements, and consistent standards across provinces and institutions, supported by stronger coordination among regulators, employers, and government bodies.



Aligning Workforce Strategies with Local Realities

Social Cohesion

Urban centres offer stronger community support, amenities, and transit, which significantly improves newcomer retention, while rural areas struggle with transportation, housing, schooling, and limited services that often prompt trained workers to return to cities even after receiving relocation bonuses of up to 15,000 dollars. Employers noted that weather, isolation, and the lack of amenities in communities such as Prince George and Campbell River continue to affect long-term retention despite supports from programs like Health Match BC and internal relocation assistance from LifeLabs. These issues reflect broader system alignment challenges, where workforce strategies do not fully account for local infrastructure and quality-of-life factors. Participants also emphasized the need for clearer employer-employee dialogue around flexibility and expectations, especially as newer generations seek greater autonomy and balance, while recognizing that clinical roles require thoughtful coordination due to the nature of healthcare delivery.

Tech



Improving Immigration Agility for a Competitive Tech Sector

Integrity of Canada's Immigration System

Tech employers stressed that Canada's immigration system is too slow and complex to compete globally, making it difficult to attract niche and high-demand talent. Many skilled newcomers use Canada as a stepping stone to the United States, while smaller firms struggle with visa approvals because they lack resources, internal HR capacity, and established government relationships. Participants noted that current pathways often favour large corporations, leaving SMEs at a disadvantage. To improve system alignment, employers recommended more agile immigration pathways for specialized tech roles, along with shared supports for smaller firms, such as pooled sponsorship models, centralized legal guidance, and onboarding tools that strengthen soft-skills integration for newcomer hires.



Aligning Education and Industry Needs in Tech

Skills and Talent

Employers noted a widening gap between post-secondary outputs and real industry needs. Many graduates lack hands-on experience and job-ready technical skills, while fast-paced tech environments prefer experienced hires who can contribute immediately. The rapid evolution of technology continues to outpace curriculum updates and policy changes, creating system alignment gaps and leaving employers without the time or capacity to upskill staff internally. Participants highlighted the need to expand internships, co-ops, and subsidized placements for both newcomers and local graduates, supported by more employer-driven feedback to help institutions keep pace. Companies were also encouraged to invest in continuous learning and technical development to future-proof their workforce.

Skilled Trades



Improving Recognition and Mobility in the Skilled Trades

Integrity of Canada's Immigration System

Skilled newcomers face long delays, often lasting years, before they can work in their trained occupations due to rigid certification structures and inconsistent provincial standards. These barriers discourage mobility, strain employer retention efforts, and reflect broader system alignment issues between immigration pathways and licensing requirements. Employers noted that international experience is rarely recognized, forcing workers to retrain from the beginning and creating significant financial and time burdens. Participants recommended fast-track credentialing pathways that allow supervised conditional practice, national bridging programs modeled on global best practices, and tuition parity for work-permit holders. They also emphasized the need for coordinated action between IRCC, ESDC, and provincial regulators to better align immigration streams with occupational licensing systems.



Accelerating Pathways to Retain Global Trades Talent

Skills and Talent

Canada is losing skilled trades talent to countries such as Germany, Australia, and Qatar, which offer streamlined visa-to-work pathways, faster credential recognition, and more predictable immigration timelines. Employers described losing qualified candidates to jurisdictions that move quickly, while Canada's fragmented provincial processes and slow system response limit competitiveness. To keep pace, participants recommended adopting international mobility benchmarks, pursuing bilateral recognition agreements with key source countries, and embedding economic and workforce planning goals directly into immigration frameworks. These measures would position immigration as a strategic workforce lever rather than solely a population-growth tool.

Education



Addressing Credentialing Gaps and Talent Underutilization

Integrity of Canada's Immigration System

Participants emphasized ongoing labour shortages across BC's K–12 and post-secondary systems, especially in francophone teaching, early childhood education, and support roles. These gaps are aggravated by slow and inconsistent credential recognition processes that prevent internationally trained educators and professionals from entering the workforce, often leaving their skills underutilized compared with other provinces such as Ontario.

They noted that many licensing and regulatory rules have not kept pace with labour market needs, creating barriers that delay mobility and limit access to urgently needed roles. Requirements for "Canadian experience," work-hour restrictions for international students, slow work-permit transitions,

and IRCC processing delays all contribute to newcomers losing valuable time before entering the job market. Language progression delays, particularly for francophone immigrants who may wait months to move between levels, further slow access to pathways that require CLB6.



Strengthening Pathways for Newcomer Graduates and Educators

Skills and Talent

Participants highlighted significant system misalignment in the education sector, driven by limited coordination among regulators, government, institutions, unions, and employers. This siloed environment slows credentialing reforms, creates unclear processes, and makes it difficult for both employers and newcomers to navigate hiring and licensing pathways.

Employers, particularly smaller institutions, often lack the tools to assess international qualifications or support newcomer hires. Newcomers face additional barriers such as restricted work hours during studies, slow immigration and licensing timelines, and unclear transitions from education to employment. These combined challenges delay integration, limit retention, and make it harder to fill ongoing vacancies. Strengthening alignment and improving pathways were seen as essential to enabling newcomers to contribute fully to BC's education system and to building a more stable pipeline of qualified educators.

What We Heard Across Sectors

The mixed-sector table brought together employers, academic institutions, and consultants, with representation from retail, a Crown corporation, and education. Despite their different contexts, participants identified shared challenges related to intercultural competence, communication gaps, and the bias toward "Canadian experience." These issues create mismatched expectations and often divert qualified immigrants into survival jobs. SMEs reported hesitancy to hire due to unclear immigration timelines, work-permit rules, and limited onboarding capacity. Newcomers, though technically strong, often lack networks, confidence in self-promotion, and access to occupation-specific language training after years of program defunding. Participants emphasized the need for stronger mentorship and networking supports, more inclusive HR practices, and clearer communication with IRCC.

The discussion also pointed to a broader misalignment between immigration pathways, education systems, and labour-market needs. International students are frequently misinformed about job prospects, curricula are slow to adapt to shifting skill demands, and employers lack consistent channels to influence policy or program design. Stakeholders across retail, government, and education highlighted challenges assessing soft skills, adaptability, and coachability. Participants called for coordinated feedback loops among employers, educators, and policymakers; employer-driven curriculum development; better access to real-time labour and immigration information; and practical tools that strengthen onboarding, retention, and inclusive hiring practices.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

Healthcare

Streamline licensing and certification

- Accelerate timelines and reduce costs for exams, applications, and retakes
- Introduce financial supports (bursaries, subsidies, loan forgiveness)

Expand bridging and practice readiness programs

- Scale supervised mentorship models (e.g., PRA in Halifax)
- Allow newcomers to work in non-licensed roles while preparing for exams

Improve regulatory clarity and consistency

- Harmonize licensing rules across provinces to support mobility
- Ensure regulatory bodies provide clear guidance to employers and newcomers

Increase funding and access to training

- Promote and expand paid practicums, tuition forgiveness, and upskilling programs
- Target supports for rural and underserved communities

Support employer flexibility and retention

- Encourage employer-employee dialogue around scheduling and expectations
- Balance union protections with operational needs to keep doors open

Strengthen government-employer collaboration

- Create forums for employers to share real-time challenges with policymakers
- Ensure government involvement happens early and at the source of decision-making

Tech

- The sector needs faster and more responsive immigration and education systems to keep pace with rapid industry change.
- Employers prioritize adaptability, learning agility, and reskilling capacity over specific technical skills.
- Key supports include mentorship programs, wage subsidies, and on-the-job training, with a particular focus on SMEs and entry-level talent.

Skilled Trades

- Pilot bridging programs with provincial regulators to expedite certification and recognize international experience.
- Employer-sponsored PR pathways for work-permit holders with ongoing employment to improve retention.

- Joint labour market dashboards linking IRCC and industry data to support real-time workforce planning.
- Mentorship and buddy systems to support newcomer integration and workplace belonging.
- Tuition equity and funding supports for work-permit holders pursuing job-related training.
- Cross-departmental coordination between IRCC, ESDC, Infrastructure, and provincial training bodies to streamline efforts.
- Global competitiveness benchmarking to ensure Canada keeps pace with countries offering faster, more agile trades pathways.

Education

Leverage internationally trained educators

- Expand opportunities for newcomers to contribute in non-regulated or transitional roles
- Recognize prior experience to reduce underemployment and support smoother integration

Modernize credentialing and licensing processes

- Improve transparency around timelines and requirements
- Adopt more flexible and responsive pathways that reflect real hiring needs

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration

- Improve alignment among regulatory bodies, institutions, employers, and government partners
- Break down silos through coordinated planning and shared problem-solving tables

Align training with labour-market needs

- Promote employer-driven curriculum development
- Build stronger placement and practicum partnerships with school districts and post-secondary institutions
- Expand responsive training models that reflect evolving labour-market demand

Position BC as a leader in talent integration

- Modernize processes and adopt innovative pathways that set national standards
- Showcase best practices to strengthen recruitment, retention, and educator mobility

Mixed Sectors

Systemic Collaboration & Navigation

- Expand centralized navigation bodies (e.g., Health Match BC model)
- Establish multi-sector alignment tables and improve cross-sector information sharing
- Build trust through more meaningful engagement with IRCC

Credentialing and Language Pathways

- Develop faster, more flexible credentialing and national standards

- Expand experiential programs during licensing wait times
- Improve profession-specific language training, including francophone supports

Employer Tools and Capacity Building

- Promote skill-based hiring tools beyond NOC
- Equip SMEs with practical recruitment and retention resources
- Share inclusive onboarding and HR practices across sectors

Policy and Advocacy

- Introduce impact checks for new policies
- Launch public awareness campaigns on immigration's economic value
- Increase diverse representation in policymaking
- Provide longer lead times for policy changes



The impact is clear.

Follow-up insights were collected from 13 forum participants.

The forum had a clear and meaningful impact, with participants reporting increased understanding, confidence, and readiness to take action on the integration of internationally trained talent.

100% agreed the session **revealed critical policy and system-level gaps.**

83% felt **better equipped** to take action on immigrant workforce integration.

Moving Forward

Participants emphasized the need for stronger collaboration among employers, regulators, and government partners. Key priorities include streamlining credential recognition, expanding mentorship and bridging programs, and improving transparency around immigration and permanent residency pathways. The forum reinforced that breaking down silos and aligning immigration systems with labour-market needs are essential to sustaining momentum and strengthening Canada's workforce resilience.

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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