

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

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 Kamloops, B.C. 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 November 26, 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.

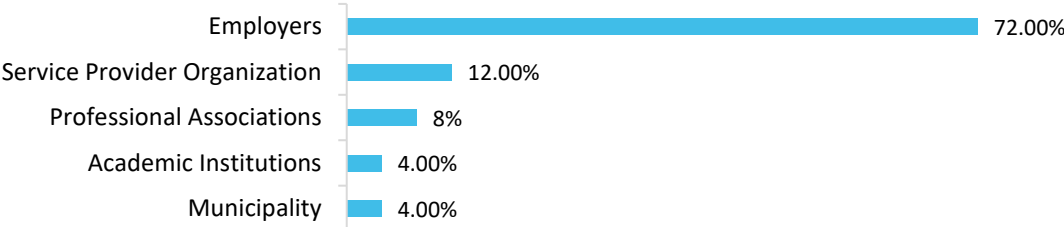
Here’s what we heard

The labour market is shaped less by applicant shortages and more by persistent misalignment between job readiness, employer needs, and system design. Despite high application volumes, gaps in communication skills, workplace readiness, and expectation-setting continue to limit effective talent matching and contribute to retention challenges, intensified by generational shifts, cost-of-living pressures, and competition from larger urban centres. These pressures are further compounded by immigration policy volatility, impractical or inaccessible pathways for many employers, slow and fragmented credential recognition, and limited alignment between federal criteria and regional labour market realities, alongside broader community constraints related to housing, transportation, rural recruitment, and reliance on IRCC rules in sectors such as tourism and hospitality. Together, these findings point to the need for clearer system navigation, earlier alignment between talent and roles, streamlined credential recognition, modernized recruitment and onboarding practices, and stronger cross-sector collaboration to support more sustainable attraction, integration, and retention of talent.

Good to know

A total of 25 participants attended the session, with baseline insights collected from 18 attendees.

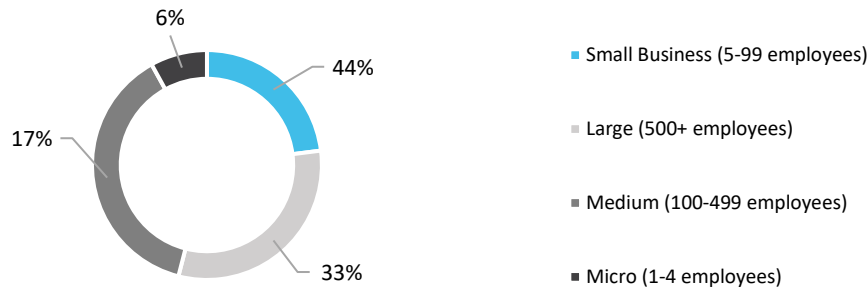
Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



What are the industries represented?

Participants were primarily from the **health care and social assistance, educational services, accommodation and food services, and information and communications technology sectors.**

How were businesses of different sizes represented?



Employer Insights on Immigration, Hiring, and Inclusion

33% reported being **somewhat familiar** with the immigration and settlement systems.

67% responded that **it's somewhat or very important** to use inclusive hiring processes in your workplace.

56% said their organization **adopted inclusive hiring practices** to support the recruitment or retention of internationally trained talent.

89% saw that the **immigration system was somewhat unaligned** with their labour market needs.

Nearly 40% participants

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

Non-Employer Perspectives and System Challenges

- Employer needs are **slightly considered** in immigration selection policies.
- Employers are **slightly invested** in hiring newcomers.
- Employers are **slightly 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](#).



Skills and Talent

Improving Job Readiness and Alignment Between Talent and Employer Needs

Across the discussion, workforce challenges were framed less by a lack of applicants and more by gaps in job readiness, expectation-setting, and effective talent matching.

Key themes include:

- **Quality of fit over quantity of applicants:** Applicant volumes remain high, but employers continue to face challenges related to quality of fit. While technical skills can often be developed on the job, persistent gaps remain in communication skills, professionalism, understanding of workplace norms, conflict resolution, and collaboration and relationship-building.
- **Mismatch between expectations and realistic entry points:** Newcomers often pursue roles that do not reflect realistic entry-level pathways within sectors. There is a broader misalignment between candidates' experience and the roles they seek, alongside unclear communication of expectations and long-term career goals, which can create challenges after hiring.
- **Concerns around commitment and retention:** Questions remain around whether some roles represent long-term career choices or temporary stepping stones toward permanent residency. This concern was particularly evident in pathways such as early childhood education and support-worker roles, where candidates may exit positions shortly after obtaining PR.
- **Sector-specific operational strain:** Shift-based and 24-hour industries face additional pressures when student availability changes unexpectedly, creating instability in scheduling and workforce planning.
- **Competition from larger urban centres:** Recruitment challenges are compounded by ongoing competition from larger urban centres such as Vancouver, Kelowna, and Toronto. Employers reported repeated hiring cycles over several years, followed by talent loss once workers gain initial Canadian experience.
- **Wage pressure and cost-of-living constraints:** Workforce oversaturation in some sectors continues to suppress wages, while the cost of living remains high. In Kamloops, the estimated living wage is approximately \$24 per hour, making long-term retention increasingly difficult.
- **Ineffective talent matching despite available workforce:** Despite an estimated 7,000 qualified and talented individuals in Kamloops, employers continue to struggle with effectively matching

available talent to open positions, highlighting alignment challenges rather than workforce shortages.

Navigating Generational Shifts and Evolving Workforce Expectations

As new generations enter the workforce, employers are navigating added complexity shaped by shifting expectations, values, and definitions of work. These changes are influencing recruitment, retention, and day-to-day workforce management across sectors.

Key themes include:

- **Evolving expectations around work and compensation:** Expectations related to wages, career progression, and professional identity are changing and, in some cases, exceed what employers, particularly SMEs, are able to offer within current operational and financial constraints.
- **Rising demand for flexibility and work–life balance:** Greater emphasis is being placed on flexible schedules, work-life balance, and non-traditional working arrangements. In shift-based, customer-facing, and 24-hour industries, these expectations can conflict with operational realities.
- **Shifting definitions of career and commitment:** Traditional long-term, linear career paths are increasingly giving way to more fluid approaches, where roles are viewed as transitional rather than long-term commitments. This shift introduces challenges related to retention, training investment, and succession planning.
- **Communication and cultural differences in the workplace:** Variations in communication styles, feedback expectations, and perceptions of professionalism are contributing to generational friction. Employers are adapting management approaches to bridge these differences while maintaining operational standards.

Adapting Hiring and Recruitment Practices

Hiring and recruitment processes are evolving as employers navigate the widespread use of AI-driven job application tools. Many applications now appear highly standardized, with near-identical cover letters and automated submissions from candidates outside the local community or across multiple roles within the same organization. As a result, individual job postings can generate more than 150 applications, creating a high-volume but low-differentiation applicant pool.

This volume places significant strain on HR teams, as reviewing hundreds of similar applications requires substantial time and resources. These pressures are compounded when retention remains low and hiring cycles must be repeated, contributing to growing frustration and inefficiencies in recruitment efforts.



Integrity of Canada's Immigration System

Aligning Immigration Policy with Workforce Stability and Regional Needs

Immigration policy volatility and systemic misalignment continue to pose significant barriers to workforce stability, retention, and long-term planning.

Key themes include:

- **Immigration system pressure and policy volatility:** Despite sustained efforts to retain talent, frequent policy changes continue to limit workforce stability. Uncertainty around eligibility and pathways contributes to hiring standstills when existing staff are unable to secure permanent residency, particularly in sectors with specialized skill requirements and complex recruitment processes.
- **Limited feasibility of existing pathways:** The Labour Market Impact Assessment process remains impractical for many BC employers, while restrictive policies discourage use of the Temporary Foreign Worker route. These pathways are especially inaccessible to smaller, rural, and hospitality-sector employers, leaving limited options to support workforce continuity.
- **Gaps in communication and employer preparedness:** Policy shifts often outpace employer awareness and readiness. The timing of changes makes workforce planning difficult, with limited clarity around eligibility, timelines, and expected outcomes.
- **Misalignment between federal criteria and regional realities:** French-language requirements within federal immigration programs have limited relevance for most BC employers, highlighting a disconnect between national selection criteria and regional labour-market needs.
- **Outdated and fragmented information systems:** Immigration resources remain dispersed, difficult to navigate, and at times outdated. The lack of centralized, accessible information increases confusion for both employers and newcomers managing complex processes.
- **Unintended consequences of education-linked immigration policies:** Policies that link education to automatic work authorization have shaped labour patterns where certain programs, including Early Childhood Educators and support-worker pathways, are pursued primarily for permanent residency point accumulation rather than skill development. This raises concerns around exploitation and early workforce exit.
- **Financial pressure and distorted incentives:** High tuition costs and student debt intensify pressure to secure immediate employment. These dynamics can distort motivations on both sides, contributing to mismatched expectations between employers and candidates.

- **Structural inequities for SMEs:** Small and medium-sized employers often lack in-house legal or immigration expertise, making work authorization and permanent residency processes costly and time-intensive. Provincial inconsistencies stemming from the absence of a unified federal education system further complicate navigation for employers and newcomers alike.

Reducing Regulatory Barriers and Improving Credential Recognition for Skilled Talent

Regulatory and administrative barriers continue to limit access to internationally trained professionals, particularly in high-demand sectors such as health care. These constraints delay workforce entry, restrict mobility, and slow the integration of skilled talent into roles where shortages persist.

Key themes include:

- **Excessive regulatory burden for skilled roles:** Lengthy licensing and credential recognition processes continue to prevent qualified candidates from entering their professions, even in sectors facing critical shortages. Frequent policy changes further complicate communication and decision-making, increasing uncertainty for employers and candidates alike.
- **Delayed recognition and underemployment:** Internationally trained professionals often face extended timelines to have credentials recognized, leaving many unable to work in their field for prolonged periods. These delays contribute to persistent underemployment despite existing skills and experience.
- **Limited credential transferability across regions:** Credentials are often not portable between provinces or regions, creating additional delays and confusion for both employers and newcomers navigating multiple regulatory systems across Canada.
- **Missed opportunities for equivalency-based streamlining:** Greater recognition of education and training systems that align closely with Canadian standards, such as those in certain source countries, could allow for faster credential assessment. Streamlining or expediting these equivalencies would reduce barriers and enable employers to fill critical skill gaps more efficiently.



Social Cohesion

Beyond skills and recruitment, broader economic, policy, and community factors continue to affect workforce stability across sectors:

- **Economic conditions:** Economic slowdowns, particularly in sectors such as trucking, continue to directly influence hiring demand and overall workforce stability.

- **Expanded employer responsibilities:** Employers are increasingly expected to take on responsibilities beyond traditional employment, including housing support, transportation assistance, and extended onboarding. This growing burden points to the need for more centralized and connected resources across educational institutions, community partners, agencies, and employers to better share responsibility and simplify access to supports.
- **Rural and Northern BC recruitment barriers:** Recruitment in rural and Northern BC remains challenging. In smaller communities such as Smithers and Terrace, candidates are often hesitant to relocate due to limited housing availability, transportation barriers, and concerns about community connection.
- **Challenges in community-facing roles:** While many employers hire international students, some individuals are not yet deeply connected to the local community. This creates added difficulty in filling community-facing roles, despite strong economic potential and workforce development opportunities in Northern BC.
- **Impact of IRCC rules on tourism and hospitality:** Approximately 80% of the tourism and hospitality workforce relies on IRCC regulations. Student work-hour limits continue to create operational challenges, particularly for seasonal businesses.
- **Increased scheduling and staffing complexity:** The temporary 2022–2023 period allowing full-time student work led to notable improvements in staffing stability. With restrictions reinstated, managers must closely monitor allowable work hours and often hire additional staff simply to meet operational needs.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

Clear, Centralized Immigration Guidance

- Create a centralized, user-friendly immigration resource hub serving both employers and workers.
- Provide plain-language, up-to-date information with clear pathways by worker type and region.
- Incorporate dropdown menus, FAQs, and responsible AI-enabled navigation or decision-support tools to reduce confusion and misinformation.

Early Alignment Through Pre-Arrival Supports

- Implement pre-arrival or early-arrival interviews and screening to advise newcomers on suitable occupations, regions, and entry-level pathways.
- Provide education on the current job market and realistic career progression to reduce mismatch between expectations and available roles.

Kamloops as a Talent Attraction and Retention Hub

- Position Kamloops as a destination for global talent by highlighting its family-friendly environment, outdoor lifestyle, shorter commutes, and quality of life.
- Integrate lifestyle and community benefits more intentionally into recruitment and retention strategies.

Targeted Onboarding and Workplace Integration

- Develop tailored onboarding models or buddy systems that respond to generational differences and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Clarify role expectations, workplace norms, and communication standards from the outset to support retention.

Upskilling and Workforce Readiness Programs

- Offer short-term, sector-specific training focused on communication, soft skills, customer service, and workplace readiness.
- Provide application and interview preparation supports to help newcomers better articulate their skills and experience in the Canadian context.

Credential Recognition and Skill Transfer

- Streamline or fast-track credential recognition for internationally trained professionals, particularly from countries with proven educational equivalencies.
- Create clearer pathways for recognizing international experience and enabling faster progression into skilled roles.

Modernized Recruitment and Screening Practices

- Shift from volume-based recruiting toward locally focused, fit-based hiring approaches.
- Expand regional job platforms, campus partnerships, co-ops, and work-integrated learning opportunities.
- Use technology strategically to manage AI-generated applications and improve screening efficiency.

Stronger Employer-Community Collaboration

- Strengthen partnerships between employers, post-secondary institutions, service providers, chambers of commerce, and community organizations.
- Coordinate recruitment, onboarding, and settlement supports to reduce duplication and improve outcomes.

Retention-Focused Employment Practices

- Create roles with clear growth pathways and professional development opportunities.
- Introduce proactive retention tools such as stay interviews and structured career conversations to reduce turnover.

Region-Specific and Sector-Responsive Strategies

- Develop tailored attraction and retention strategies for rural and smaller communities, including support related to housing, transportation, and community connection.
- Advocate for immigration policies that better reflect regional labour market needs and employer realities.



The impact is clear.

Follow-up insights were collected from 12 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.

75%

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

82%

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

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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