

## Partner Survey 2017

The Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region (IP) is a collective of community partners that collaboratively develop and implement strategies for the successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees. Over 100 community members, organizations, public sector representatives, employers and business associations are engaged to address organizational, systems and policy issues that affect immigrants and refugees in our community.

This report outlines findings from the 2017 IP Partner Survey. This report is part of IP's Evaluation Strategy, which aims to understand the settlement and community integration patterns of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region and how IP is contributing to their success.

### Summary of Findings

- Over 60% of survey participants had been **involved with IP for at least three years**.
- Partners are **highly engaged**: Over 80% had attended IP meetings, had read the IP newsletter, and/or had participated in one or more networking events or forums hosted by IP, with 86% being "A great deal" or "Quite a bit" committed to the work of the Partnership. All had promoted the Immigration Partnership in their networks.
- Partners had **strong knowledge of the Community Action Plan 2017-2019 (CAP)**: Almost 80% had read the CAP and know it well, or are working on one or more strategic directions.
- **Involvement in IP was a source of support for partners and helped improve their work with immigrants and refugees**
  - Nearly 90% indicated that as a result of their involvement in IP they had a better awareness of the services offered in the community, had an increased awareness of newcomer needs and service pathways, and had greater communication about the needs of immigrants and refugees.
  - Over half of participants indicated that they **had made "More" or "A lot more" referrals** to employment and/or skills training programs (60%), interpretation services (57%), settlement services (57%), and other community services (52%).
  - Thirteen participants have **made formal or informal agreements** with other partner organizations to better serve immigrants and refugees.
- More than a third of participants indicated that English language learning programs had "Very much" better met the needs of immigrants in the last 12 months, and that settlement services and interpretation services had better met the needs of refugees over the last 12 months.
- Where there wasn't significant improvement in service provision, participants indicated language barriers (59%) and a lack of coordination between services (50%) as the top reasons.

- The **main solutions** identified by participants to better serve and support immigrants and refugees were: educating employers on the value of hiring newcomers (55%), increased funding (50%), creating a better awareness of racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees (43%), and improving coordination between levels of government (40%)

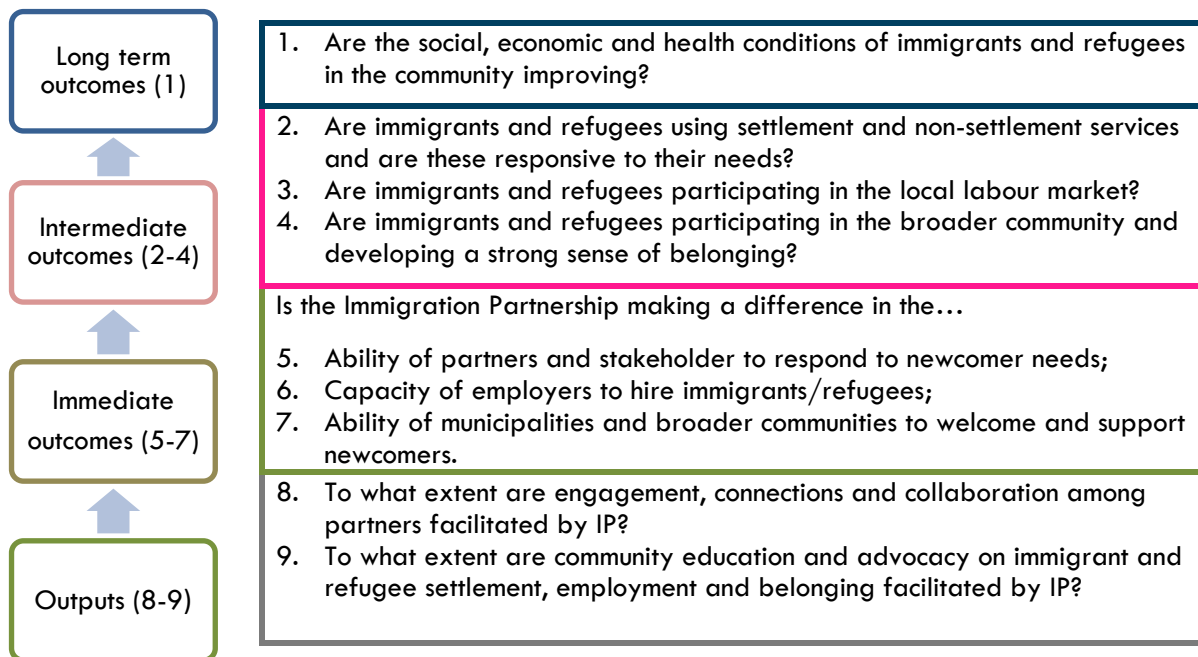
## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Methodology.....   | 3  |
| Survey Findings.....   | 4  |
| Section A: Demographic Overview.....   | 4  |
| Section B: Partner Commitment and Engagement.....                                | 5  |
| Section C: Partner Results.....  | 6  |
| Section D: Referrals and Collaboration.....                                      | 7  |
| Section E: Perceptions of Quality of Service Provision.....                      | 8  |
| Section F: Challenges and Solutions to Better Serve Immigrants and Refugees..... | 9  |
| Section G: Immigrant and Refugee Employment.....                                 | 10 |
| Section G: Overall Themes.....   | 12 |

## Methodology

Immigration Partnership, through the work of the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC), developed an evaluation strategy and performance measurement framework (PM)<sup>1</sup> in 2017. The evaluation strategy outlines the key research questions for IP.

### Research Questions



The PM framework includes 59 indicators to help IP measure how its work is helping immigrants and refugees successfully integrate in Waterloo Region (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

The current report includes findings from a 2017 Partner Survey conducted by IP.

### Participant recruitment

All participants are members of IP and were recruited through email and/or at IP meetings.

### Data collection tool

A survey questionnaire was designed by an Evaluation Advisory Committee based on the PM indicators.

### Analysis

The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Limitations

The sample is small in the analyses. In these cases, the findings should be interpreted with caution (sample sizes are included throughout).

<sup>1</sup> According to the Centre of Excellence in Evaluation, a PM strategy is a “results-based management tool that is used to guide the selection, development and ongoing use of performance measures”. See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/centre-excellence-evaluation/guide-developing-performance-measurement-strategies.html#OverviewPMS>.

## Survey Findings

In total, 51 out of about 102 active community partners and seven IP staff completed the survey (50% response rate).

### Section A: Demographic Overview

Partners from Council and all steering and action groups are represented in the survey as shown in the figure below. Partners belonging to action groups are included under their respective pillar. Some partners may have indicated some connection to multiple pillars.

Most survey participants (64%) had been involved with IP for at least 3 years (Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Length of Participation in Immigration Partnership**

| Length of Time with IP | # of participants | % of participants |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 5 years or more        | 19                | 33%               |
| 3 to 4 years           | 18                | 31%               |
| 1 to 2 years           | 12                | 21%               |
| Less than 1 year       | 9                 | 16%               |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Most of the Council members and Settle Steering Group partners responded to the survey, and approximately half of participants who are involved of the Work and Belong Steering Groups responded to the survey (Table 2).<sup>3</sup>

**Table 2: Involvement with Immigration Partnership**

| Immigration Partnership Group | # of survey participants | # of active IP community partners |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| IP Council                    | 13                       | 16                                |
| Settle Steering Group         | 22                       | 33                                |
| Work Steering Group           | 13                       | 22                                |
| Belong Steering Group         | 13                       | 31                                |
| IP Staff                      | 7                        |                                   |
| Other                         | 5                        |                                   |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Note: Participants could select more than one group

Most participants (82%) answered the survey as a representative of an organization or business. Almost one quarter self-identified as immigrants (21%) and/or refugees (3%). The majority of participants (60%) are service providers, one third are community members (31%), and one quarter are employers (24%).<sup>4</sup>

One third of participants (33%) represent social services, 19% are community members, 19% represent the settlement sector and 16% represent the health and mental health sectors (Table 3).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Q1. How long have you been involved with the Immigration Partnership?

<sup>3</sup> Q2. What is your involvement with the Immigration Partnership? (Select all that apply)

<sup>4</sup> Q4. Which of the following describes you? (Select all that apply)

<sup>5</sup> Q5. What sector(s) do you represent? (Select all that apply)

**Table 3: Sector Representation**

| Sector                         | # of participants | % of participants |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Social Services</b>         | 19                | 33%               |
| <b>Community member</b>        | 11                | 19%               |
| <b>Settlement</b>              | 11                | 19%               |
| <b>Health/Mental health</b>    | 9                 | 16%               |
| <b>Education</b>               | 8                 | 14%               |
| <b>Employment</b>              | 7                 | 12%               |
| <b>Regional Government</b>     | 6                 | 10%               |
| <b>Municipal Government</b>    | 5                 | 9%                |
| <b>Recreation/Arts/Culture</b> | 5                 | 9%                |
| <b>Business</b>                | 4                 | 7%                |
| <b>Housing</b>                 | 2                 | 3%                |
| <b>Other</b>                   | 4                 | 7%                |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Note: Participants could select more than one sector.

## Section B: Partner Commitment and Engagement

Participants were asked questions to indicate how their commitment to IP had influenced their engagement with the Partnership and impacted their organization's work in supporting immigrants and refugees over the past 12 months.<sup>6</sup> A majority of participants (86%) were quite committed to the work of the Immigration Partnership (answering "A great deal" or "Quite a bit") and 82% felt motivated to contribute and follow-through with actions of the Partnership (Table 4).

**Table 4: Partner Commitment**

| Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:                                 | Not really | A little bit | Some what  | Quite a bit | A great deal |
|--|------------|--------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Am committed to the work of the Immigration Partnership</b>                                     | 0%         | 2%           | 12%        | <b>31%</b>  | <b>55%</b>   |
| <b>Have aligned our vision or activities with those of the Immigration Partnership</b>             | 11%        | 0%           | <b>34%</b> | <b>36%</b>  | 19%          |
| <b>Feel motivated to contribute and follow-through with actions of the Immigration Partnership</b> | 0%         | 4%           | 14%        | <b>34%</b>  | <b>48%</b>   |
| <b>Have aligned internal policies with those of the Immigration Partnership</b>                    | 31%        | 2%           | <b>48%</b> | 12%         | 7%           |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Seventy-six percent of partners either had read the Immigration Partnership's Community Action Plan 2017-2019 (CAP) and know it well, or are working on one or more strategic directions.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly all participants indicated that they had attended at least one IP meeting (96%), that they had read the IP newsletter (94%), and that they had participated in one or more networking event or forum hosted by IP (84%; Table 5).

<sup>6</sup> Q7. Please indicate your response to the following statements.

<sup>7</sup> Q6. How familiar are you with IP's 2017-2019 Community Action Plan (CAP)?

**Table 5: Engagement with Immigration Partnership (n=54)**

| In the past 12 months my organization and/or I...   | % of participants |
|---|-------------------|
| Have attended one or more Immigration Partnership meetings  | 96%               |
| Have read Immigration Partnership's newsletter  | 94%               |
| Have participated in one or more networking events or forums hosted by the Immigration Partnership  | 84%               |
| Have read a media release by Immigration Partnership  | 78%               |
| Have participated in a public campaign by Immigration Partnership   | 71%               |
| Have participated in one or more learning events hosted by Immigration Partnership  | 69%               |
| Have supported Immigration Partnership information briefings or meetings with government and community leaders                            | 65%               |
| Have used Waterloo Region's Immigration Portal ( <a href="http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca">www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca</a> ) | 61%               |
| Have used an educational resource by Immigration Partnership  | 60%               |
| Have interacted with the @ImmigrationWR twitter profile   | 52%               |
| Have read an editorial by Immigration Partnership   | 50%               |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Note: The percentages are for those that answered Yes or No to these questions and do not include "Unsure" responses.

## Section C: Partner Results

Survey participants provided input on if and how being an IP partner had directly impacted their work and interaction with immigrants and refugees over the last 12 months.<sup>8</sup>

All participants indicated that they had promoted IP in their networks to some degree.

Most participants had increased knowledge of newcomer needs and service pathways (91% responded "A great deal", "Quite a bit" or "Somewhat") or have an increased awareness of the services offered in the community (89%). Over three-quarters (79%) make more referrals to other organizations (Table 6 **Error! Reference source not found.**).

---

<sup>8</sup> Q10. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements as relates to your work with immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region.

**Table 6: Impact of Involvement with Immigration Partnership on Partners (n=46)**

| <b>Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements as it relates to your work with immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region.</b> | <b>Not really</b> | <b>A little bit</b> | <b>Some what</b> | <b>Quite a bit</b> | <b>A great deal</b> |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Have promoted the Immigration Partnership in our networks  | 0%                | 5%                  | <b>33%</b>       | 28%                | <b>35%</b>          |
| Have an increased awareness of the services offered in the community   | 7%                | 4%                  | 27%              | <b>44%</b>         | 18%                 |
| Have increased knowledge of newcomer needs and service pathways  | 7%                | 2%                  | <b>33%</b>       | <b>38%</b>         | 20%                 |
| Have greater communication about immigrant/refugee needs and issues  | 7%                | 7%                  | 26%              | <b>42%</b>         | 19%                 |
| Work more collaboratively with other organizations   | 9%                | 4%                  | 31%              | <b>40%</b>         | 16%                 |
| Have implemented specific initiatives to support newcomer welcoming and inclusion  | 10%               | 7%                  | 29%              | <b>36%</b>         | 19%                 |
| Have greater coordination around immigrant/refugee needs and issues  | 10%               | 5%                  | <b>38%</b>       | 30%                | 18%                 |
| Work better with settlement agencies   | 9%                | 6%                  | <b>42%</b>       | 21%                | 21%                 |
| Have acquired stronger abilities and tools for welcoming and responding to newcomer needs  | 13%               | 5%                  | <b>35%</b>       | 28%                | 20%                 |
| Make more referrals to other organizations   | 11%               | 11%                 | <b>34%</b>       | 24%                | 21%                 |
| Have made changes to our organization that are positively impacting the broader community  | 18%               | 3%                  | <b>32%</b>       | 29%                | 18%                 |
| Serve more immigrants and refugees   | 9%                | 13%                 | <b>38%</b>       | 25%                | 16%                 |
| Have made changes to our organization that are positively impacting immigrants and refugees  | 18%               | 3%                  | <b>34%</b>       | 29%                | 16%                 |
| Get better feedback about our services and programs from immigrant and refugee clients   | 24%               | 9%                  | <b>26%</b>       | 24%                | 18%                 |
| Receive more referrals from other organizations  | 18%               | 12%                 | <b>41%</b>       | 18%                | 12%                 |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Participants whose agreement with the above statements was “Not really” or “A little bit” were asked to expand on the reasons for their selection (n=13).<sup>9</sup> Their responses fell into one of the following categories:

- We are already working on these
- We don’t track referrals
- Mandate doesn’t align/we are a funder
- Can’t make organizational changes

## Section D: Referrals and Collaboration

Participants provided input on whether the volume of referrals they made and received had changed over the last 12 months.<sup>10</sup> Depending on the specific service, between 33% and 44% of respondents noted that questions about referrals are not applicable to their context. Among the rest of participants that

<sup>9</sup> Q11. If your answer to any of the above statements was “Not really” or “A little bit”, please explain your answer in the space below

<sup>10</sup> Q12. In the past 12 months, how many referrals have you made on average to the following services compared to the previous year

responded, between one and two thirds indicated that they had made “More” or “A lot more” referrals to all the services listed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Referrals to Other Services in the Past 12 Months**

| Services in the community:                 | Fewer | About the same | More | A lot more |
|--|-------|----------------|------|------------|
| Employment and/or skills training programs | 0%    | 40%            | 35%  | 25%        |
| Interpretation services                    | 10%   | 33%            | 38%  | 19%        |
| Settlement services                        | 0%    | 44%            | 44%  | 13%        |
| Other community services                   | 0%    | 48%            | 33%  | 19%        |
| Education services                         | 0%    | 53%            | 37%  | 11%        |
| Health and mental health services          | 0%    | 56%            | 38%  | 6%         |
| Housing services                           | 0%    | 59%            | 29%  | 12%        |
| English language learning programs         | 0%    | 63%            | 26%  | 11%        |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Participants were asked about any formal or informal agreements they had made with community partners with the aim of better serving immigrants and refugees. Thirteen respondents indicated that they have made formal and/or informal agreements in the following areas:<sup>11</sup>

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Programs and services</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex-ed program for Syrian women</li> <li>• Parenting support for GARs</li> <li>• Literacy and language programs</li> <li>• Mental health programs for youth and adults</li> </ul> |
| <b>Community and other supports</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General settlement and interpretation support</li> <li>• Learning and research</li> <li>• Municipal presentations for newcomers</li> <li>• Facilities and referrals</li> </ul>    |

One example of such agreements included:

We have a formal agreement with the school board to support newcomer students in high school by offering Drop-In sessions which allow us an opportunity to build relationships with youth and help them to become engaged in community programs, and assist with their health, mental health and overall well being.

IP 2017 Partner Survey Participant

## Section E: Perceptions of Quality of Service Provision

In response to questions about whether services were better meeting the needs of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region over the past 12 months compared to previous years, 24 survey participants provided input.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Q13. Tell us about any new formal or informal agreements you have made with community partners to serve immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region



Overall, interpretation, settlement, English language learning, and other community services were seen as most likely to have better met the needs of immigrants. For refugees, settlement, interpretation, and English language learning services were perceived as more likely to have better met their needs.

In contrast, health and mental health, education services, and employment and/or skills training programs were perceived to be less likely to have better met the needs of immigrants and refugees (Table 8).

**Table 8: Perception of Whether Services in Waterloo Region are Better Meeting the Needs of Immigrants and Refugees (n=24)**

| Are the needs of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region being met better in the past 12 months compared to previous years, in each of the areas below? | Not at all | Somewhat | Very much so |
|--|------------|----------|--------------|
| <b>Immigrants</b>  |            |          |              |
| Settlement services  | 0%         | 53%      | 27%          |
| Interpretation services  | 0%         | 44%      | 31%          |
| English language learning programs   | 9%         | 27%      | 36%          |
| Other community services   | 8%         | 38%      | 31%          |
| Housing services   | 0%         | 40%      | 20%          |
| Employment and/or skills training programs   | 8%         | 62%      | 8%           |
| Education services   | 8%         | 42%      | 17%          |
| Health and mental health services  | 7%         | 43%      | 14%          |
| <b>Refugees</b>  |            |          |              |
| Settlement services  | 5%         | 37%      | 42%          |
| Interpretation services  | 5%         | 42%      | 37%          |
| English language learning programs   | 6%         | 56%      | 25%          |
| Other community services   | 6%         | 56%      | 13%          |
| Housing services   | 12%        | 59%      | 12%          |
| Employment and/or skills training programs   | 19%        | 56%      | 6%           |
| Education services   | 11%        | 56%      | 11%          |
| Health and mental health services  | 11%        | 61%      | 11%          |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

Twenty-two participants provided information as to why they believed some service areas were not better meeting the needs of immigrants and refugees compared to previous years. They indicated language barriers (59%) and a lack of coordination between services (50%) as the two main influencing factors, followed by long wait times (41%), cultural barriers (41%), low accessibility (36%), high cost of services (23%), unfriendly staff (9%), and other various reasons (23%).<sup>13</sup>

## Section F: Challenges and Solutions to Better Serve Immigrants and Refugees

Participants provided input on what they perceived to be their biggest challenge in serving immigrants and refugees and how to address these challenges.<sup>14</sup> The top three challenges to serving immigrants and

<sup>12</sup> Q14. Are the needs of immigrants and/or refugees in Waterloo Region being met better in the past 12 months compared to previous years in each of the areas below?

<sup>13</sup> Q15. If you responded that the needs of immigrants and refugees are somewhat or not at all being met, is this due to... (Select all that apply)

<sup>14</sup> Q16. What is your biggest challenge in serving immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region?

refugees identified by survey participants were systems issues (59%), language barriers (51%) and lack of funding (46%).

Participants identified several important changes that would make serving immigrants and refugees easier.<sup>15</sup> The most frequently proposed changes were to educate employers on the value of hiring newcomers (55%), more funding (50%), increasing awareness of racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees (43%) and improving coordination between levels of government (40%; Table 9).

**Table 9: Perception of Biggest Challenges and Solutions to Better Serving Immigrants and Refugees**

| <b>Biggest Challenges</b> (% of participants, n=41)     | <b>Most Important Change/Solution</b> (% of participants, n=42)   |
|---|---|
| <b>System issues (59%)</b>                              | <b>Improve coordination between levels of government (40%)</b>  |
| <b>Language barriers (51%)</b>                          | <b>More ESL opportunities to help improve English skills (33%)</b><br><b>Funding for interpretation and translation (24%)</b>                               |
| <b>Lack of funding (46%)</b>                            | <b>More funding (50%)</b>   |
| Racism/discrimination towards immigrants/refugees (32%) | <b>Create better awareness of racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees (43%)</b>   |
| Cultural barriers (22%)                                 | Community agencies, governments, having a deeper appreciation for the needs and benefits of serving newcomers as part of a diverse client base (2 partners) |
| Lack of collaboration between agencies (15%)            | Better collaboration between agencies (26%)   |
| Lack of coordination between agencies (15%)             | <b>Better coordination between agencies (36%)</b>   |
|   | <b>Educate employers on the value of hiring newcomers (55%)</b>   |
|   | <b>Provide services and programs for newcomers to find work (38%)</b>   |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

## Section G: Immigrant and Refugee Employment

Of the 19 partners that provided information about how many immigrants or refugees they hired in the last 12 months:<sup>16</sup>

- 16 partners (84%) had hired at least one newcomer
- One partner had hired 30+ newcomers

Participants who self-identified as employers provided input on the impact of Immigration Partnership on their ability to hire immigrants and refugees.<sup>17</sup> Employer participants (n=17) indicated that as a result of their involvement with IP, they had gained a better knowledge of the benefits of hiring immigrants and refugees (82%) and a stronger awareness of resources available to hire immigrants and refugees (82%). A further 71% indicated that they had acquired stronger skills and tools for hiring immigrants and refugees.

<sup>15</sup> Q17. What is the most important change that could be made to make serving immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region easier?

<sup>16</sup> Q21. Approximately how many immigrants/refugees have you hired in the past 12 months?

<sup>17</sup> Q20. In the past 12 months, as a result of our work through the Immigration Partnership my organization or I ...

Employer survey participants (n=17) identified the challenges they experience in hiring immigrants and refugees.<sup>18</sup>

Over half perceived the top challenges to hiring immigrants and refugees to include language barriers (53%), followed by finding immigrants and refugees to hire (41%). Other challenges included training needs, hiring bias, lack of onboarding support, a mismatch between skills needed and available talent, and cultural barriers. (Table 10)

**Table 10: Challenges in Employing Immigrants and Refugees**

| Challenges in hiring immigrants and refugees             | # of participants | % of participants |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Language barriers  | 9                 | 53%               |
| Finding immigrants and refugees to hire                  | 7                 | 41%               |
| Lack of soft skills                                      | 3                 | 18%               |
| Lack of Canadian work experience                         | 2                 | 12%               |
| Lack of knowledge on how to hire immigrants and refugees | 1                 | 6%                |
| Other  | 7                 | 41%               |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

The top solutions proposed by employer participants to make employing immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region easier were: Networking events to connect with immigrants and refugees (39%), learning more about the benefits of hiring immigrants and refugees (32%), and connecting with employment service providers (Table 11).<sup>19</sup> Other suggestions on how to better support employers in hiring immigrants and refugees included:

- More knowledge support for employers on best practices
- More knowledge support for immigrants/refugees on workplace practices
- More volunteering opportunities as part of ESL curriculum

**Table 11: Solutions to Employing Immigrants and Refugees**

| Solutions to hiring immigrants and refugees                   | # of participants | % of participants |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Networking events to connect with immigrants and refugees     | 11                | 52%               |
| Learning about the benefits of hiring immigrants and refugees | 9                 | 43%               |
| Connecting with employment service providers                  | 7                 | 33%               |
| Other   | 4                 | 19%               |

Source: IP 2017 Community Survey

<sup>18</sup> Q22. What is your biggest challenge in employing immigrants and refugees?

<sup>19</sup> Q23. What is the most important change that could be made to make employing immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region easier?

## Section G: Overall Themes

Several themes can be pulled out of the findings of Immigration Partnership's partner survey:

- Partners are highly engaged in and committed to the Immigration Partnership and their involvement in IP was a source of support and helped improve their work with immigrants and refugees
- There was significant collaboration occurring. In the last year, many participants had made "More" or "A lot more" referrals – particularly to employment and/or skills training programs, interpretation services, settlement services, and other community services.
- The vast majority of partners felt that the needs of immigrants and refugees have been better met in the last year than previously – across all service areas. However, they were somewhat less likely to suggest that the needs of refugees specifically were better met in the areas of Employment and/or skills training programs, housing services, education services, and health and mental health services.
- The top challenges to serving immigrants and refugees were: Systems issues, language barriers and lack of funding.
- The solutions suggested to be most likely to make serving immigrants and refugees easier were: To educate employers on the value of hiring newcomers, more funding, increasing awareness of racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees, and improving coordination between levels of government.