Strengthening Community Capacity in Rural Communities

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

ASSIST Community Services Centre
www.assistcsc.org

Rural Development Network

A strong, sustainable network that empowers rural communities by facilitating and providing access to trusted rural development expertise, information and services.

Innovative Tools and Resources

Expertise & Capacity building

Help to access funding

Advocacy to amplify the rural voice

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Increase rural communities' capacity to **support the settlement** and **integration** of immigrants and refugees while developing **more welcoming** communities and workplaces.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Rural Community Challenges

Industry-wide labour shortages

High out-migration

Difficulty attracting newcomers

Limited access to funding and development opportunities

Lack of local newcomer settlement services

About the Project

Building rural capacity through training

Establishing partnerships **among** rural communities

Establishing partnerships **between** communities and immigrant-serving agencies

Creating a guide to support the **sustainability** of the project

Project Deliverables

Needs assessment survey to identify existing gaps

Stakeholder Mapping

Capacity-building training for rural service providers

Toolkit with resources and additional learning

Gaps for Newcomers in Rural Communities

1 Language Support

2 Cultural Orientation

3 Employment Support

4 Transportation

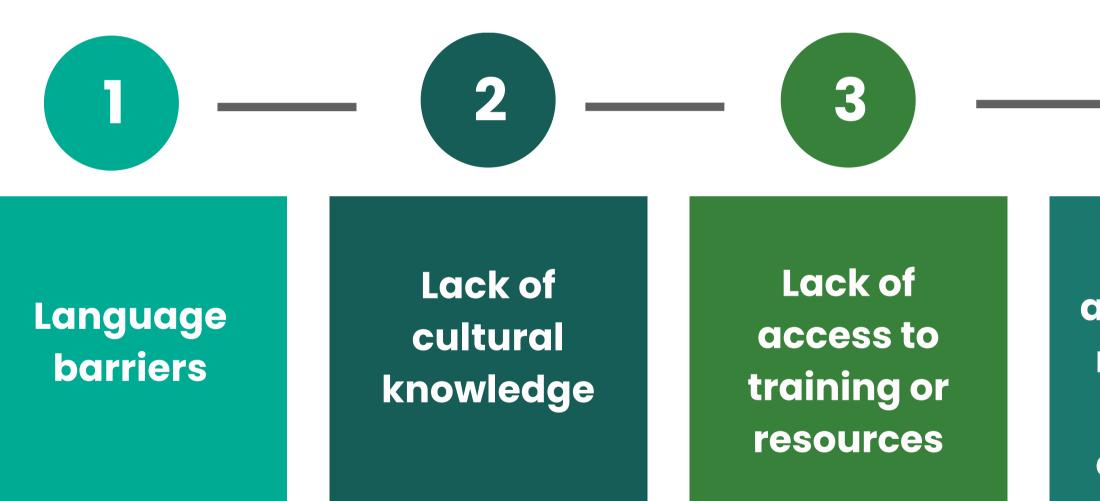**5** Adaptation to Canadian life (diet, weather, social relationships)

Hinton

Wainwright

Sylvan Lake

Kneehill County

Current Gaps in Rural Service Delivery

1 — **2** — **3** — **4** — **5**

Language barriers	Lack of cultural knowledge	Lack of access to training or resources	Lack of awareness of newcomers in the community	Lack of collaboration between organizations

Training Modules

- Understanding the Needs of Newcomers in Rural Communities

- Anti-Discrimination and Barriers to Access

- Intercultural Competency, Power Dynamics & Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

- Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

- Connecting newcomer and Indigenous populations

Project Highlights

- Advisory committee to contribute **facilitator insights**
- **Lived experience** from project team
- **Learning tools** helped promote continual growth of the project
- Request for **re-delivery** among other rural communities
- A participating community was designated under the **Rural Renewal Stream**
- A participating community received funding to support a **settlement worker in their region**
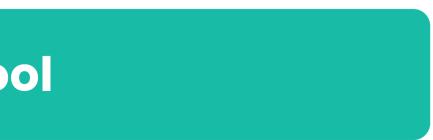
Lessons Learned

Understand the gaps in your organization and the greater community

Establish strong **referral networks**

Storytelling is a **powerful tool**

Lessons Learned

One-size does not fit all

Provide opportunities for **newcomers and Indigenous communities** to connect

Welcoming and inclusive communities view immigration through a **holistic approach**

Partnership

ASSIST

**Direct settlement
service provider
Subject matter experts**

RDN

**Rural lens
High level
Address social issues**

Maximized efforts to support rural communities

ASSIST Community Services Centre

Core values

Non-profit, charitable organization

Bridge people & communities together

10 ongoing programs

ASSIST Community Services Centre

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Rural Employers' Awareness on Diversity and Inclusion (READI)

Alberta
Government

Rural Employer Challenges
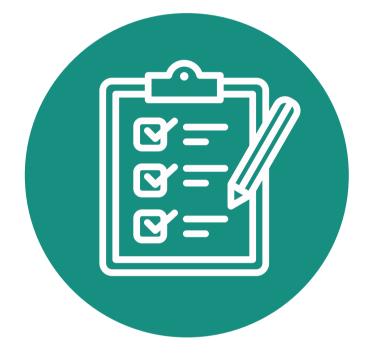
Lack of employer engagement

High turnover rates

Lack of understanding of the Canadian immigration system

Limited access to employer training & support programs

Lack of knowledge on engagement and relationship building

Project Objectives

Address employer needs and challenges

Capacity building for management and hiring teams

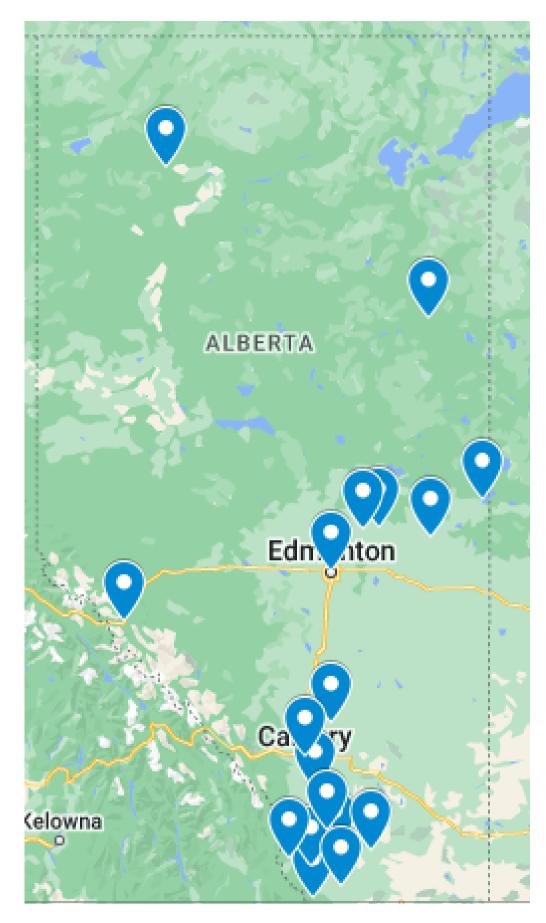**Partnerships between employers & immigrant employment programs**

Establishing partnerships between rural employers and settlement practitioners

Diverse Participation

- **25** rural employers from **small & medium-sized organization**
- Diverse industries, including:
  - **Agriculture**
  - **Hospitality**
  - **Construction**
  - **Manufacturing**
  - **Child care**
  - **Food and packaging**
  - **Health care**
  - **Retail**
  - **Social services**
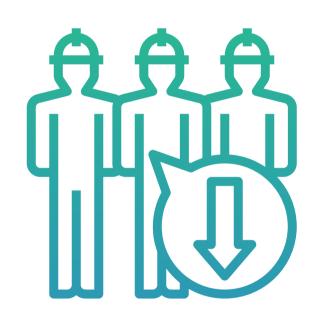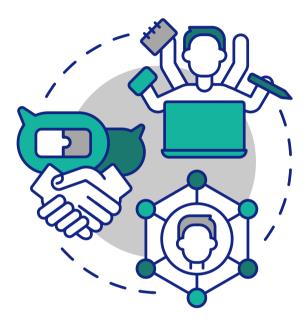- Participation from municipalities

Benefits for Employers

Increased attraction & retention of immigrant employees

Meet other employers with similar concerns

Address labour shortages

Newcomers bring valuable skills to the workforce

Greater awareness of resources, services & programs

Potential Training Topics

- **Understanding the Canadian immigration/work permit system**

- **Preparing your workplace to integrate newcomers, and bridging the gap between newcomers and local workers**

- **Best practices for hiring and training newcomers**

- **Developing a foreign worker/immigrant policy within your organization**

- **Collaborating with community partners & municipalities on newcomer integration strategies**

- **Other topics suggested by project participants**

What we hope to achieve for rural communities

1 **System improvement and capacity building in the employment sector**

2 **Support the diversification of rural workforces**

3 **Facilitate the successful integration of immigrants into rural workforces and communities**

4 **Promote collaboration among rural communities**

Urban Rural Settlement Divide

The Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) defines rural Alberta communities as any community outside of Edmonton and Calgary with a population of less than **100,000.**

The Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP) has two new streams – the **Rural Renewal Stream and the Rural Entrepreneurship Stream** that support the attraction and retention of newcomers to rural Alberta.

Understanding Settlement Services Mapping

Tier 1

Smaller communities

Population up to 10,000
20+landings *

Tier 2

Small cities

Population 10,000 to 35,000
50+landings*

Tier 3

Medium sized cities

Population 35,000 to 150,000
200+landings*

Tier 4

Major urban Cities

Population over 150,000
1000+landings*

*(*iCare for 2019/2020)*

(IRCC - Settlement Serviced Mapping, Alberta, 2020-2025)

Settlement Services by Community Size

Tier 1

↓

Minimal settlement services

Population up to 10,000

Tier 2

↓

Basic settlement services

Population 10,000 to 35,000

Tier 3

↓

Full suite of settlement services

Population 35,000 to 150,000

Tier 4

↓

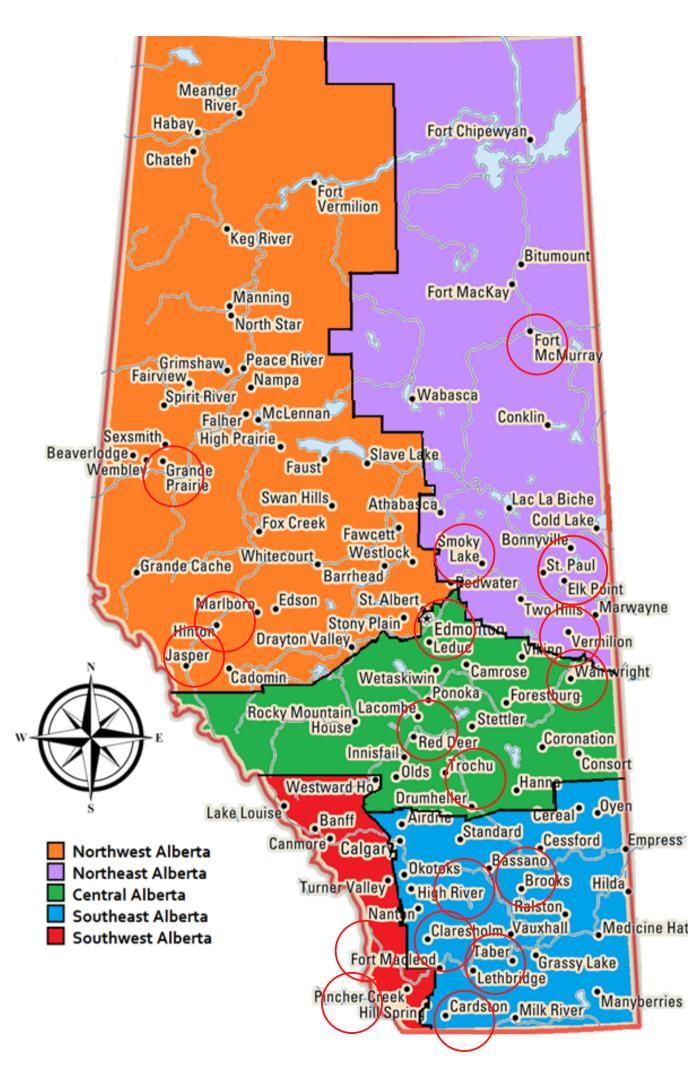**Complex** settlement ecosystem

Population over 150,000

(IRCC - Settlement Serviced Mapping, Alberta, 2020-2025)
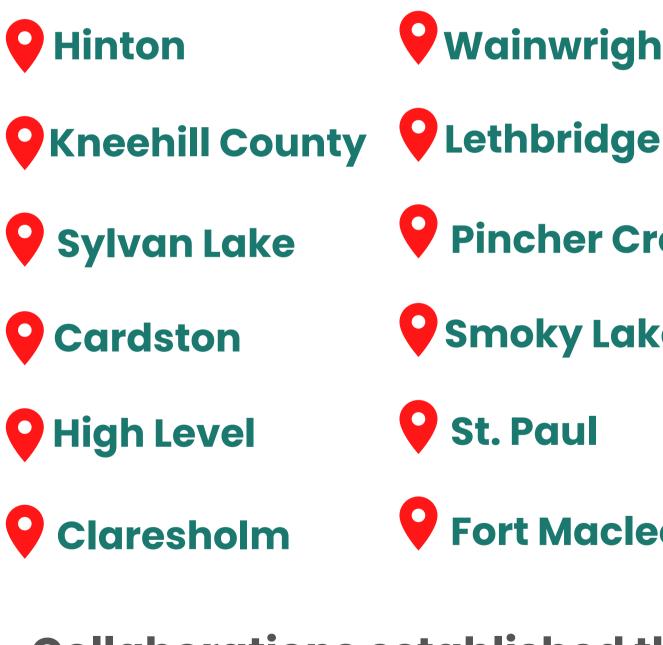
Settlement Services Available in Urban Centres

- **Needs Assessment and asset referrals(NAARS)**
- **Information and orientation**
- **Language training**
- **Employment related services**
- **Community connections**
- **Support services**
- **Indirect services**

Specialized Services responding to emerging or specific client needs

Alberta Rural Communities Overview

📍 Hinton   📍 Wainwright   📍 Fort McMurray

📍 Kneehill County   📍 Lethbridge   📍 Jasper

📍 Sylvan Lake   📍 Pincher Creek   📍 Waterton

📍 Cardston   📍 Smoky Lake   📍 Vermillion

📍 High Level   📍 St. Paul   📍 Grande Prairie

📍 Claresholm   📍 Fort Macleod   📍 Brooks

Collaborations established through the capacity building projects

The <u>Gap</u> Between Rural-Urban Services

- Lack of diversity
- Culture: knowledge-awareness-sensitivity- competency
- Inconsistent and insufficient accessible information and services
- Lacking long-term policy and sufficient resources to support capacity building
- Lack of knowledge and opportunity to connect
- Bringing more newcomers without proper support system widens the gap further

Needs and Benefits of Rural-Urban Partnership

1 Address the emergent and changing needs of service provision in small communities

2 Opportunities for knowledge and resource sharing

3 Sustainability of services

Key Takeaways

- **Community readiness** - it will take time to build capacity and advocate

- **Inter-sectoral collaborations** will bring strength to the community

- **Employer engagement** can increase **community retention**

- Success of the community **=** success of businesses and vice versa

- Rural communities should **support each other**

Thank you!

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