

February 2022 IRCC Planning Day

Outcomes Report

Ryelle Strategy Group
March 2022

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Land Acknowledgement

Halton and Peel are rich in history of many First Nations and the Metis. From the Anishinaabe, the Attawandaron, the Haudenosaunee and the Metis, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history. As we gather today on these treaty lands, we honour and respect the four directions, the land, water, plants, animals and ancestors that walked before us, and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist. We would like to acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for sharing their traditional territory with us. We also acknowledge the terrible tragedy of the residential schools and as settlers in Canada we take the responsibility of understanding the history of the Indigenous people to ensure nothing like that ever happens again.

Executive Summary

The February 2022 IRCC Planning Days brought together a roundtable of newcomer and settlement support agencies in the Peel and Halton regions, where newcomer populations are rapidly rising. As such, there is a corresponding need to support recent immigrants and refugees arriving in these regions, with a focus on their awareness of available settlement services, language training, labour market integration, and community integration outcomes. Representatives from across the IRCC-funded settlement sector provided key recommendations in line with the above priority areas, broadly situated in a pandemic and post-pandemic context and the current Canadian immigration landscape. These discussions were also held in the context of opportunities for innovation within the sector.

The following report outlines key findings based on immigration trends and settlement experiences, as shared by agency representatives. Overarching recommendations include:

- (1) collaborative resource-sharing among settlement agencies, government agencies, and service delivery partners;
- (2) standardized data collection tools to facilitate consistent service quality and information sharing;
- (3) strengthening staff recruitment, culturally-relevant staff training, retention, and succession planning to ensure newcomers receive high-quality services from qualified staff; and
- (4) innovations on digital access and post-pandemic service delivery to enable successful client outcomes.

These overarching themes are outlined in further detail on page 16 and include recommendations such as enhancing a universal hub/portal for service providers to share resources; increasing funding to promote staff retention and organizational capacity-building; developing training programs; and increasing clients' access to technology.

These key findings and corresponding detailed recommendations are provided for both the IRCC and Executive Council (as a whole and for consideration by members individually and collaboratively). With a solutions-focused mindset, participants look forward to collaborating with the IRCC, across the sector, and the Partnership Tables listed below. Together, positive outcomes for newcomers to Canada, particularly in Peel and Halton, can be achieved, and newcomers empowered to succeed in their new home communities.

Policy Recommendations

Executive Council would like to continue to recommend to IRCC that:

- Program eligibility be reconsidered to include international students and refugee claimants as many become permanent residents.
- Incentives/subsidies for employers and newcomers be provided to support their training, hiring of newcomers, etc.

Overview of Recommendations per Partnership Table/Priority Area:

Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership (IAOP)

Discussion	Possible IRCC Role	Possible EC Role / Collaborative Project
Standardize data collection and needs assessment strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding for in-person services, such as classes, which would benefit low English-level learners • Create a template for a common needs assessment form and registration form that is directly linked to each agency's contribution agreement to create a service standard across all agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and execute a survey for newcomers who have recently migrated to Peel/Halton from other Canadian cities to understand why secondary migration is happening in order to increase knowledge and adapt programming accordingly. • Collaborate with other provinces to learn their best practices, and set up an official referral system to help clients access services • Provide employment-related services in French • Consider intake standardization (e.g. Create an intake template that is linked to agencies' Contribution Agreements, which would help with regional data collection and in standardizing the process for intake)
Understand why secondary migration is happening, and required changes to programming in response		
Strengthen sector-wide collaboration, resource-sharing, and service delivery mechanisms		

Role of IAOP table: Overall, respondents would like to see more data sharing/best practices among agencies and the Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership table may be a place to take this on. The group can continue to consider intake standardization.

Language Training

Discussion	Possible IRCC role	Possible EC Role / Collaborative Project
Increase funding for programs that cater to specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand funding to help extend services to international students and refugee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a study to investigate and understand

disadvantaged populations	<p>claimants, many of whom will become permanent residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in programs that will support parents, particularly women, to support their learning including programs that provide childcare and offer women-only classes Assess opportunities to enhance and merge existing programs and their corresponding funding structure, to maximize benefits to the sector. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combining Avenue and Onyx (Funded by IRCC, Avenue is an online settlement language training solution for adult newcomers and teaching professionals. Onyx is a planning and e-learning platform for the Ontario Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program) Enhancing Tutela (unless it is being replaced by Avenue) Integrating platforms to ensure Avenue and PBLA are online Revise staffing structure to separate assessors from teachers with assessors completing independent assessments and teachers teaching Strengthen the delivery of language training programs with support for digital access and knowledge, such as technology funding. 	<p>the increased client attrition experienced across the sector and leverage findings to refine programming, to strengthen retention and update model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more online LINC classes to northern communities (by allowing them to access southern LINC classes remotely) Explore cross-sectorally opportunities to integrate or facilitate the provision of industry-specific language courses industry-specific language courses which would help clients enter the job market faster, as well as more employment-based learning such as job coaching. For example, offer specialized classes through LINC such as an early childhood educator program, which helps clients to learn the terminology and furthers their careers Improve digital access and knowledge through technology funding to ensure successful delivery of language training programs
Leverage and integrate online platforms for training programs		
Understand and address client attrition		
Strengthen language training programs in line with labour market integration		

Role of Language Training Partnership table: The Language Training Partnership Table could help enhance the accessibility of language training programs for newcomers in line with their labour market integration goals, and ensure sustainability through increased digital access to integrated platforms and staff support.

Employment

Discussion	Possible IRCC role	Possible EC Role / Collaborative Project
Extend newcomer support to pre-arrival services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a pre-arrival program for newcomers to help them become 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunities for partnership and collaboration

Create a universal employment hub	<p>job-ready that includes occupation-specific language training to fill gaps in ELT and ensure sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance client access to a “service gateway” or digital portal to increase newcomers’ awareness on specialized employment services, such as existing provincial or regional portals, fellow newcomers’ successful journeys, and other relevant resources • Assess current funding structure within employment and consider new or revised opportunities for service provider organizations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment engagement specialists - expanding eligibility criteria to increase number of clients helped - increased funding for staff • At a provincial level, adapt a model across the province similar to YES North Bay, where “champion employers” access a database to find qualified employees 	<p>across industries, sectors, provincial agencies to support client transitions into the job market, discuss market need and how best to position employers to clients. Partnerships may include industry-specific employers, colleges/universities, local government, etc. This will enable service providing organizations to better support their clients and create access to opportunities for learning, job shadowing, apprenticeships, paid employment, etc.</p>
Align funding structures with client needs		
Promote cross-sector collaboration in developing employment pathways		

Role of Labour Market Partnership table: Newcomers’ labour market integration and employment outcomes could be supported by the Table’s leadership in promoting cross-sector collaboration, centralizing access to employment services.

Community Connections

Discussion	Possible IRCC role	Possible EC Role / Collaborative Project
Create opportunity for cross-region or province-wide collaboration to learn about best practices and emerging settlement initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage settlement staff specialists between North regions and Peel/Halton to inform clients about employment opportunities and services • Create a mentoring specialist position to engage volunteers and newcomers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revive networking events that used to be organized for settlement workers across Ontario, because they give staff the opportunity to share best practices, and increase awareness of new organizations and their programs

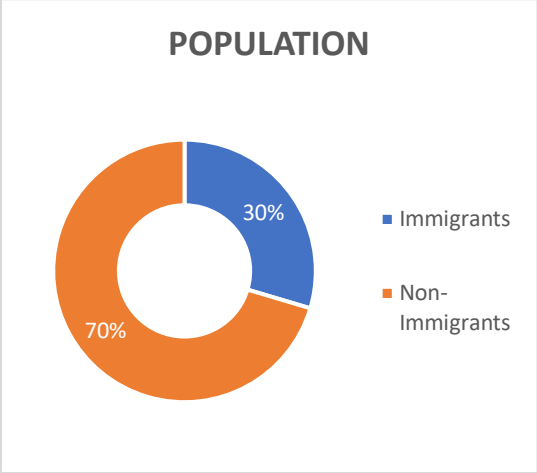
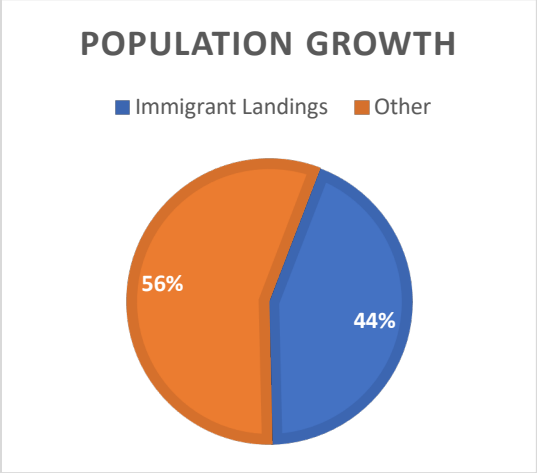
Engage mentors and volunteers to strengthen newcomer supports		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to recruit mentors for newcomers including implementation of networking events or group meetings. A successful example includes PCHS' Newcomer Connections Program
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Role of Community Connections Partnership table: Through this table, agencies can enhance collaborative structures across the sector to support service delivery improvement, and encourage local community involvement in newcomer settlement initiatives.

Current Landscape

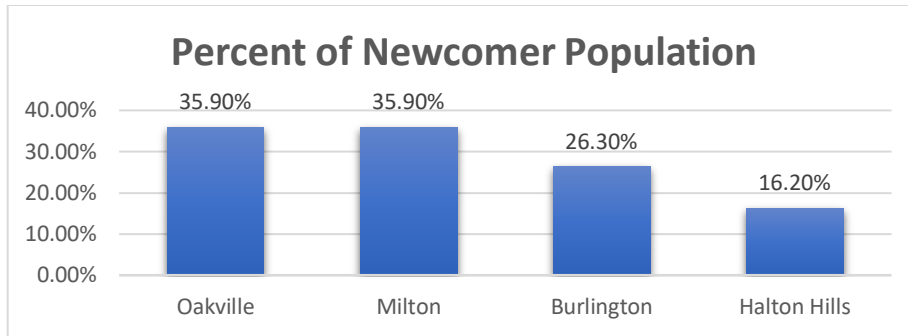
Between 2011 and 2016, Canada welcomed 1.2 million immigrants. Newcomers or recent immigrants made up 3.5% of the country’s total population in 2016. Peel and Halton regions, in particular, have seen similar increases in immigration which is driving growth in their communities. As more newcomers call Peel and Halton home, there have been some interesting trends to note. The following statistics include data from the 2016 census¹.

Halton Region



Between 2011 and 2016 in Halton, the overall population jumped from 501,674 to 548,435 – a 9.3% increase. As the region grew by 46,761 people, 20,485 included new immigrants – meaning that 43.8% of Halton’s growth during this period came directly from immigrant landings, with the most significant population increase in Oakville. In Halton, immigrants represent 29.6% of the overall population, with 3.5% arriving between 2006 and 2010 and 3.6% arriving between 2011 and 2016.

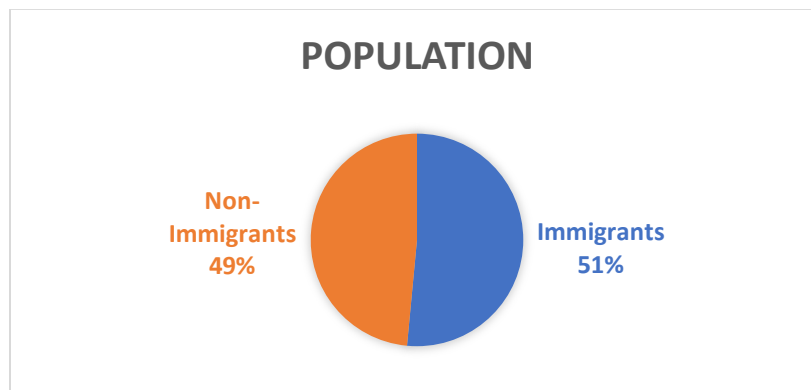
¹ 2021 Census data will not be available until later in 2022, although immigration trends are expected to remain consistent.



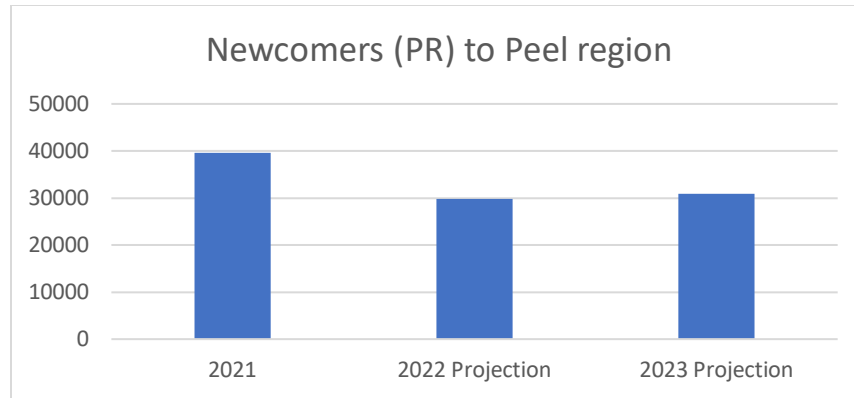
In Oakville, newcomers represent 35.9% of the total population, with 12.7% arriving between 2006 and 2010 and 14.8% arriving between 2011 and 2016. Newcomers in Milton also represent 35.9% of the population, with 5.7% arriving between 2006 and 2010 and 5.7% between 2011 and 2016. In Burlington, newcomers represent 23.6% of the overall population, with 2.6% arriving between 2006 and 2010 and 2.3% between 2011 and 2016. In Halton Hills, newcomers represent 16.2% of the population, with 0.9% arriving in 2006 to 2010 and 0.9% arriving between 2011 and 2016. If immigration levels continue at this rate, the region could see 6,987 more newcomers in 2022 and 7,157 in 2023 – not including secondary migration.

Many of Halton’s newcomers are immigrating from Pakistan, China, India and the Philippines, and primarily land as skilled workers and secondary applicants. Almost three-quarters of newcomers to Oakville are economic immigrants.

Peel Region



Peel Region has the highest proportion of immigrants in its total population. According to data released in 2016, more than half (51.5%) of Peel’s total population were immigrants.



In 2019, Canada accelerated its immigrant admissions and welcomed 341,000 newcomers – of which 39,620 (or 9.8%) settled in Peel Region in 2021 and a projection of 29,870 in 2022, 30,936 in 2023 and 31,209 in 2024.

As a sample year illustrating secondary migration: According to the 2017 IMDB Data from the Community Data Portal, there were 10,200 immigrants who moved directly to Peel and 6,800 were secondary migrants. Also in 2017, the total out-migration of Peel Region was 5,390 – representing a total of 31.7% of in-migration.

Pre-Event Survey

Structure of Survey

To prepare for the IRCC Planning Days, participants were invited to complete a pre-event online survey that was launched on December 20th, 2021 and closed on January 12th, 2022. The data collected from these surveys were critical in informing the agenda for the IRCC Planning Day and breakout sessions. In total, there were 22 responses.

The following information was shared with the IRCC Planning Day participants as part of a pre-event package and represents the aggregated outcomes of the survey data.

Summary of Pre-Event Survey Findings

The survey was built around the following areas of focus as aligned with the Peel/Halton Executive Council and its Partnership Tables:

- Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership
- Language Partnership
- Labour Market Partnership
- Community Connections Partnership

The survey also included sections on:

- Digital Service Delivery
- The Afghan Initiative

The following represent common themes derived from the outcomes of the survey².

Partnerships

- Sharing of information and resources including best practices across the sector, access to data and provision of tools that can support the work
- Collaboration with service delivery partners, government agencies and service providers will be instrumental for service delivery in the sector
- It would be beneficial to see standardization across the sector to increase capacity, promote consistency, and expand supports with resources/templates, data collection and staff training
- The continuation of online/virtual service delivery post-pandemic, such as through webinars and online workshops, one-to-one sessions, service assistance, orientation, classes, and other programming, indicates a need for increased digital access and represents opportunities for innovative service delivery.

Digital Service Delivery

The top two challenges that participants identified were clients' access to technology, as well as clients experiencing digital fatigue. Of the 22 respondents, 67% reported that they intend to continue to rely heavily on digital program delivery.

Afghan Initiative: Government-Assisted Refugee support

Participants also provided feedback on the Afghan Initiative, and the top anticipated organizational need for refugees was language-specific training (93%), followed by staff training (47%). Others would like to see IRCC provide demographic information on the Afghans entering Canada, as well as play a role in helping service provider organizations better understand the unique perspectives and experiences of the Afghan community. Participants also felt there should be trauma-informed and compassion fatigue training for staff, as well as digital tools and supports to assist refugees in the hotels while they try to access virtual services, and more financial resources to serve clients. More than two-thirds (67%) felt that an understanding of Afghan culture and history was the most important professional development need for new staff, and 13% of respondents felt there should be basic social service fundamentals and a digital skills assessment.

IRCC Planning Day: Identifying Issues/Critical Need

Methodology/Approach

On the mornings of February 3rd and 4th, 2022, the IRCC Planning Days brought together representatives from across the sector with a goal to identify innovations, challenges and gaps, discuss solutions, and provide IRCC with an update on the state of the sector. In addition, and with a solutions-focused mindset, participants provided recommendations for both IRCC and the Executive Council, to best address the challenges and gaps moving forward.

² The full survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Format

The event's participants were divided into ten (10) groups and given the opportunity to speak with one another using the breakout group feature in Zoom. In order to maximize conversations, each group had a facilitator who led discussions based on worksheets³ that were created and distributed in advance of the event. Participants were asked to select a scribe to ensure flow of conversation. Scribes were to upload their completed worksheets to a cloud-based program so their input could be fully captured in this report. The large group sessions and breakout rooms were recorded to ensure accuracy.

Identified Priorities

In order to ensure targeted discussions were had throughout the Planning Days, the priorities were mapped against key areas of focus for the settlement sector. This approach allowed the groups to have deeper discussions on pieces that most impact their organizations and the clients they support, creating space to innovate and strategize for the future on opportunities and challenges that can have the biggest influence on their work. The areas of focus were:

- Settlement Services: Information, Awareness and Orientation
- Language Training
- Employment
- Community Connections

Digital engagement spanned across all four focus areas, and needs were identified for digital literacy, access to technology for clients, and technology itself. Participants discussed the opportunity for collaboration in a virtual and digital space among service provider organizations.

The findings that follow are aggregated from discussions held during the Breakout Sessions and are presented by each area of focus. As can be seen from the outcomes of the conversations, many innovative ideas were brainstormed and shared over the course of the two, half day sessions.

Settlement Services: Information, Awareness and Orientation

Staff Training and Capacity-Building

Overall, participants felt that staff training would be the most beneficial, and groups consistently felt that having a standardized or “umbrella” approach to training would be helpful. One group discussed how partners and agencies could collaborate, and share resources and technology, in order to leverage best practices across the sector. Groups also felt that there is a need for mental health training for clients and staff (due to “compassion fatigue”). Participants acknowledged that there are currently courses on compassion fatigue and self-care, and these kinds of trainings are critical to supporting staff. Finally, groups also noted the need to build staff capacity for anti-oppression and anti-racism training in order to serve newcomers in a more culturally appropriate manner.

³ See Appendix B for worksheets.

Standardized Data Collection Tool

Groups also explained that agencies collect data and information from clients in different ways, and that it would be beneficial to have a standardized way of collecting this information – particularly through a common data collection tool. They felt a common data collection tool would help refocus their organization’s programming to respond to the changing needs of each new demographic wave of clients accessing services at their agencies.

Many participants also felt that an overall common needs assessment template implemented by IRCC, and directly linked to each agency’s contribution agreement would help to create a service standard across all agencies, which would lead to consistency – including staff training and data collection. Another common theme among participants was to have a centralized channel for information sharing which would be secure and protect their clients’ privacy.

In addition, it may be helpful to consider integration opportunities for settlement service awareness (e.g. require all newcomers to attend a brief orientation at their neighborhood settlement agency within three months of arriving to Canada)

Collaboration and Resource-Sharing

Participants felt that partnerships were important to leverage in order to foster opportunities for innovation, collaboration and resource sharing across the sector. One participant suggested agencies invite each other to their events as guest speakers to present about their programs and services, which would help agencies have more information about other organizations’ services when referring clients.

Digital Access and Literacy

Participants also felt there are not enough resources available to equip staff and clients with new technology. Technology donated to clients is often dated, and clients need these tools to help improve their digital literacy. There was also a fruitful discussion on the importance of training more staff to work with and understand IT and its various forms (social media, website development, virtual conferencing, etc.). One participant noted that funding for digital training, as well as technology upgrades, are vital because *“some of our technology is old, and we need to upgrade to be able to provide better service for the clients and as well, increase our online presence on social media because nowadays clients are not coming and knocking on our doors. They are looking for information online on social media.”* Overall, respondents would like to see more data sharing/best practices among agencies and would like to see the Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership table take this on.

Language Training

Address Staffing Challenges

For Language Training, the Planning Day groups generally felt that client attrition, internal staff technology needs, e-learning/professional development, staffing challenges and non-classroom based language acquisition strategies were equally important in terms of service delivery gaps and challenges experienced. Generally, staffing challenges were ranked as most problematic as many organizations spoke about the high turnover they continue to experience. One participant felt that staff challenges came to mind as the #1 priority to address which included staff recruitment, retention, and succession planning,

as well as competency with new technologies under this priority. Generally, e-learning and professional development were identified as the second most challenging element of language training, for both staff and newcomers. Groups noted that there are challenges when it comes to blending the digital and in-person classes.

Improving Digital Access for Virtual Learning

Most groups agreed that digital/virtual learning is here to stay and the way of the future, so newcomers and teachers need to be supported in many ways. Participants noted that improving digital knowledge will be a challenge, so learners should be encouraged to connect with each other. Increased funding for technology, equipment and digital access was noted as the most important considerations with respect to needed investments. Groups agreed that in their experience, refugees have limited to no access to devices and technology, and some organizations loan tablets and Chromebooks but clients may not always have the digital knowledge or literacy to use them.

Participants also felt there were opportunities to streamline and share information/resources to support language training delivery, including creating a repository of skills (especially among teachers and other service providers), as well as maximizing opportunities to streamline, share, and collect data through LINC to be shared with other agencies.

One group felt that the Language Training Partnership table could invite new members, possibly teachers who can share their perspectives on effective lesson planning and virtual learning to inform sector-wide service delivery.

Employment

Resources and Training

Within each group, participants discussed what they felt was the most critical opportunity for standardizing and streamlining programs and services, as well as for employment resources and training. Overall, groups felt that collaboration on standardized programs for training/job readiness would be beneficial to newcomers – ensuring continuity across program delivery, as well as giving newcomers realistic expectations and an understanding of the job market in Ontario.

Labour Market-Focused Language Training

Groups were also presented with pre-event survey results which showed that one of the biggest gaps/challenges identified was client job training needs for lower language levels. Participants had a variety of innovative ideas to address this challenge, and identified resources such as digital training/education, resource sharing and succession planning, as requirements in order to successfully execute a solution. One of the most common ideas discussed among the groups was to provide incentives/subsidies for employers and newcomers. Forming partnerships between agencies and specific employers was also discussed as a helpful strategy for supporting this population. For example, one group proposed a work-based language program: an occupation-specific language training funded by the provincial government, that would make language instruction available in the workplace.

Awareness and Education

Groups also identified outstanding gaps that require funding support in this area, as well as factors and guidelines that need to be considered to help ensure funding will lead to effective outcomes. The most common theme among participants was to increase awareness and education for newcomers – for example, investing in an up-to-date video series that can walk clients through the different programs that are available for them, and illustrate successful newcomers’ journeys. Groups also felt more funding is needed for a digital portal to share resources and communicate accessibility. Most participants agreed that digital is here to stay when it comes to the future of employment program delivery. They acknowledged that online workshops have been successful so far, and digital service delivery has its benefits (for example, group workshops worked well online and had better turnouts, hybrid services and webinars online were “extremely successful”, and there was an increase in the number of participants for virtual groups).

Overall, participants wanted to see the Labour Partnership table provide more education on different programs, resources, and training opportunities that are available in the sector. In turn, they would educate their staff on how to map out the most important areas where they need education and training, and educate clients on the different options in terms of programs and services that are available for them not only in Ontario but other provinces as well.

Community Connections

Resource-Sharing and Capacity Building

Overall, participants felt they would like to see more sharing of resources and collaboration to improve and tailor programs and services, resources, and training within Community Connections. They suggested holding workshops (monthly or quarterly) to exchange ideas and further improve this area. Participants also felt that overall, more staff are needed to help successfully deliver Community Connections programming. Participants suggested that there should be more incentives for staff to remain in their jobs - such as personal development initiatives, and certificates that acknowledge them as specialists. Groups overall felt that funding should be used to hire more employees, invest in staff training and retention. They discussed how employee turnover is an issue, and there is a constant need to train and onboard new staff which sets back the organization’s ability to meet objectives.

Hybrid Service Delivery

Groups felt that a hybrid model is the future of program delivery, especially because it ensures flexibility. One group said *“the future is hybrid service delivery – technology becomes an important piece and having the right tools to deliver is key. Flexibility of the digital service model offers up lots of opportunities for people with mobility issues and mothers of young children.”*

Participants most commonly said they would like the Community Connections Partnership table to invite others to the table to share information and collaborate – and look at how a coordinated information sharing effort can be established.

System-Wide Solutions: Recommendations/Opportunities

The two half-day virtual sessions saw engaging discussions within each breakout room. These discussions led to innovative ideas and opportunities that will strengthen the sector and help support clients as they adjust to their new life in Canada. Participants were asked to identify their top two suggestions under each priority area that they would like to see happen within the next year, and what they feel would help bring success to the sector.

The following recommendations have been identified as an outcome to the discussions held during the Planning Day. Recommendations that would impact two or more priority areas have been aggregated and presented directly below. Lastly, the recommendations are broken out by IRCC and Executive Council, to identify clear recommendations for each.

Common Recommendations Across all Priority Areas

IRCC

- Create and/or strengthen a universal hub/portal at a regional network or provincial level that can be leveraged by service providers that offers a pool of resources to support employees and organization's alike in their work. This tool will increase collaboration and resource sharing among service providers. Resources may include:
 - Best practices by priority area for service delivery and support
 - Partnership opportunities across agencies to make best use of guest speakers, share events, information on programs and services
 - Centralized referral system
 - Development and access to toolkits that language teachers can utilize
 - Resources that can be given directly to clients such as a document that helps to shape expectations and contextualize the landscape of the job market, a video series that highlights different programs available, and past client success stories,
 - Access to collected data and analysis that can be used across organizations
- Increase funding to build staff capacity and foster employee retention by increasing the salaries of frontline workers.
- Increase number of employees who can provide service to clients in each priority area. In addition, increase professional development initiatives and implement a recognition program that acknowledges staff as specialists in the settlement field
- Establish centralized resource-sharing mechanisms for service providing organizations to alleviate pressure on their budget, and ensure consistency across the sector. Suggestions include:
 - Hiring IT professional(s) to support agencies with their technology and training needs
 - Hiring communication experts who can provide strategic support and advice for service providing organizations as they create targeted marketing products (traditional and digital)
 - Develop a common platform/portal for resource-sharing across the sector
 - Connecting clients with shared employment counselors who could complete a skills analysis
- Develop a consistent, universal data collection and community needs assessment strategy to strive for a fulsome understanding of the landscape including:

- Creating a mechanism to access comprehensive pre-arrival data on newcomer work experience prior to coming to Canada
- Barriers and gaps faced by various newcomer groups in accessing required services for adjusting to the Canadian context, such as mental health support for newcomer youth

Executive Council

There are opportunities to apply resources collaboratively, such as:

- Conduct a study to investigate and understand the increased client attrition experienced across the sector and leverage outcomes of the study to refine programming, strengthen retention and make any necessary updates to the program
- Develop and deliver training across all priority areas to build capacity, offer professional development opportunities and strengthen the sector as a whole. Areas of consideration include:
 - Crisis supports and services
 - Mental health and trauma
 - Equity, diversity and inclusion
 - Technology – specifically for service providers and clients (a “How-to” guide)
 - Presentation delivery for employees
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Canadian culture employment workshops
 - Curriculum development and delivery for language training, including appropriate language and terminology to use in the classroom
 - Industry-specific language courses to help clients enter the job market faster
- Consider current role and capacity of each Partnership Table:
 - Explore opportunities to invite individuals and organizations with different expertise to inform each table’s work.
 - Continue training for members of each Partnership Table to ensure alignment and understanding across all agencies

IRCC

Settlement Services

- Consider intake standardization (e.g. Create an intake template that is linked to agencies’ Contribution Agreements, which would help with regional data collection and in standardizing the process for intake)
- Provide funding for in-person services, such as classes, which would benefit low English-level learners
- Create a template for a common needs assessment form and registration form that is directly linked to each agency's contribution agreement to create a service standard across all agencies.
 - For example: build on existing intake forms across organizations to begin (e.g. Compass to Connect)

Language Training

- Invest in programs that will support parents, particularly women, to support their learning including programs that provide childcare and offer women-only classes
- Assess opportunities to enhance and merge existing programs and their corresponding funding structure, to maximize benefits to the sector. Examples include:
 - Combining [Avenue](#) and [Onyx](#) (Funded by IRCC, Avenue is an online settlement language training solution for adult newcomers and teaching professionals. Onyx is a planning and e-learning platform for the Ontario Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program)
 - Enhance [Tutela \(unless it is being replaced by Avenue\)](#)
 - Integrating platforms to ensure Avenue and PBLA are online
- Revise staffing structure to separate assessors from teachers with assessors completing independent assessments and teachers teaching
- Strengthen the delivery of language training programs with support for digital access and knowledge, such as technology funding

Employment

- Have a pre-arrival program for newcomers to help them become job-ready that includes occupation-specific language training to fill gaps in ELT and ensure sustainability⁴
- Offer clients a “service gateway” or digital portal to increase newcomers’ awareness on specialized employment services, fellow newcomers’ successful journeys, and other relevant resources
- Assess current funding structure within employment and consider new or revised opportunities for service provider organizations such as:
 - Employment engagement specialists
 - Expanding eligibility criteria to increase number of clients helped
 - Provide incentives/subsidies for employers and newcomers. For example, in Australia stipends are given to people so they have time to learn skills and receive language training
- Adapt a model across the province similar to [YES North Bay](#), where “champion employers” access a database to find qualified employees

Community Connections

- Engage settlement staff specialists between North regions and Peel/Halton to inform clients about employment opportunities and services
- Create a mentoring specialist position to engage volunteers and newcomers

Digital Engagement

- Consider the development of a hybrid language assessment tool, and begin business planning around a potential IRCC-endorsed (or supported) hybrid delivery model

⁴ ELT is currently funded by the IRCC, but there is no additional support available when clients have completed the program.

Executive Council

Settlement Services

- Develop and execute a survey for newcomers who have recently migrated to Peel/Halton from other Canadian cities to understand why secondary migration is happening in order to increase knowledge and adapt programming accordingly
- Collaborate with other provinces to learn their best practices, and set up an official referral system to help clients access services
- Provide employment-related services in French

Language Training

- Provide more online LINC classes to northern communities
- Provide industry-specific language courses which would help clients enter the job market faster, as well as more employment-based learning such as job coaching. For example, offer specialized classes through LINC such as an early childhood educator program, which helps clients to learn the terminology and furthers their careers
- Improve digital access and knowledge through technology funding to ensure successful delivery of language training programs

Employment

- Create opportunities for partnership and collaboration across industries, sectors and provincial agencies to support client transitions into the job market, discuss market need and how best to position employers to clients. Partnerships may include industry-specific employers, Colleges/Universities, local government, etc. This will enable service providing organizations to better support their clients and create access to opportunities for learning, job shadowing, apprenticeships, paid employment, etc.

Community Connections

- Revive networking events that used to be organized for settlement workers across Ontario, because they give staff the opportunity to share best practices, and increase awareness of new organizations and their programs
- Identify ways to recruit mentors for newcomers including implementation of networking events or group meetings. A successful example includes [PCHS' Newcomer Connections Program](#)

Digital Engagement

- Prioritize privacy, confidentiality and security across digital platforms when sharing data between agencies via the development and implementation of a data security policy to be adopted by all

service providing organizations. The policy should enable the successful use of shared programs and streamline the client experience (EG: intake, referrals, program/community information, etc.)

- Increase hybrid models for digital service delivery, whether it's for Community Connections or language classes. These models are helpful for newcomers who may have trouble leaving their homes (for instance, if they have mobility issues or have young children who cannot afford childcare).

Digital Engagement

Provide clients with more access to technology; upgrade currently outdated technology used by clients and staff in addition to hiring a tech-savvy staff to support clients and staff with use.

Afghan Initiative

The federal government has set a target to welcome 40,000 Afghan refugees and their families to Canada. The country will welcome these newcomers over time, unlike the Syrian initiative which welcomed 25,000 refugees in 100 days⁵. Afghan refugees are facing struggles that are different from Syrians, owing to a longer history of conflict and displacement spanning 40 years⁶, although the Syrian Civil War has produced the world's largest refugee crisis⁷. Moreover, the Afghan refugee crisis has resulted in disproportionate gendered impact, with 80 per cent of the newly displaced population beginning in 2021 being women and children⁸.

Considering these challenges, participants discussed how to transition these individuals and families to the Peel and Halton regions:

- Invest in mental health supports for these newcomers
 - Keeping in mind that mental health can be a stigma and taboo for these newcomers, it would be helpful to have mental health support presented as a support group where feasible (i.e., similar cultural backgrounds and challenges faced). These groups could bring Afghan newcomers together and give them a safe space to speak about the issues they are facing (perhaps guest speakers can be brought in). This way, they can still receive mental health support in a safe space without feeling ashamed.
- Provide language classes for Afghan newcomers to strengthen their English language competency and improve employment outcomes
- Provide staff training on Afghan culture:
 - Provide Afghan specific cultural competency training for frontline staff who will serve this population
 - When families go to different regions, it would be beneficial if agencies can reach out to families as soon as possible to support newcomers after a referral from RAP is made.

⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees.html>

⁶ UNCHR, "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained", August 16, 2022,

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/#Why%20have%20people%20from%20Afghanistan%20been%20forced%20to%20flee?>

⁷ UNCHR, "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained", February 5, 2021, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/#What%20are%20Syrian%E2%80%99s%20greatest%20challenges?>

⁸ UNCHR, "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained", August 16, 2022,

<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/#Why%20have%20people%20from%20Afghanistan%20been%20forced%20to%20flee?>

- Create spaces for Afghan refugees to connect with each other
 - Many Afghan newcomers worry their children will lose their culture and language when they start school and giving them a space to connect to other Afghan families helps them feel that their language and culture will not be lost. In order to successfully build and launch this support program, it is important to increase the number of staff within the Community Connections stream
 - Create a space for Afghan refugees, and refugees from other countries of origin, to connect to Syrian refugees. These relationships will help them to understand that they can maintain their culture and language while still being Canadian.
- Continue to provide children with access to computers and school supplies, such as backpacks once they have registered for school, and work with school boards to give new families an orientation to their child’s school environment. This reinforces the need to provide staff and clients with training and upskilling opportunities in technology, digital programming.

Conclusion and next steps

The 2022 virtual IRCC Planning Days proved to be a successful event filled with fruitful conversations. Those involved in the sector shared ideas and stories that will further improve the experience of newcomers to Canada, and will help the sector provide excellent client service to those they support.

There was consistency among participants across all priority areas, most commonly among digital/technology, hybrid service delivery, collaboration/resource sharing and capacity building.

This report provides a detailed summary of discussions that took place throughout the planning days. Some recommendations that emerged from the discussions can be achieved in the short term to build additional capacity in the sector, such as:

- 1) Creating a universal hub/portal that can provide a central space for employees and organizations to share resources and improve collaboration among service providers, which will help organizations deliver excellent client service and ensure consistency across the sector.
- 2) Promoting staff retention by increasing the salaries of frontline staff.
- 3) Developing training programs across all priority areas to build capacity and offer professional development opportunities which will strengthen the sector as a whole.
- 4) Providing clients with more access to technology - including updated technology as well as hiring tech-savvy staff to help support clients and newcomers with its use.

There is a role for the Partnership tables to take on some of this work, and create pathways for collaboration among IRCC, service providing organizations and the sector as whole. We recommend a quarterly touch base between the Executive Council and IRCC to walk through recommendations and progress on the recommendations laid out in this report, and to prioritize recommendations based on urgency and risk as well as capacity of stakeholders to execute.

Appendix A: Pre-Event Survey Questions and Summary Results

Survey Questions:

- 1) If you are comfortable, please share your name and organization
- 2) What is your primary role at the organization?
 - a. Executive Director/CEO
 - b. Director
 - c. Manager
 - d. Frontline
 - e. Other (please specify)
- 3) How long have you been working in the settlement sector?
 - a. Less than one year
 - b. 1 – 3 years
 - c. 4 – 6 years
 - d. 7 – 10 years
 - e. More than 10 years
- 4) Are you, or any of your colleagues, involved in any of the Executive Council Partnership Tables?
Please check all that apply
 - a. Language Partnership
 - b. Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership
 - c. Labour Market Partnership
 - d. Community Connections Partnership
 - e. No, myself nor my colleagues are involved in an Executive Council Partnership Table
- 5) What innovations, in the area of settlement service information/awareness/orientation, have you implemented in your organization over the last 2 years that could be replicated or refined to continue supporting the community? Please describe.
- 6) Do you see an opportunity to create or expand consistency among settlement agencies delivering settlement services?
- 7) What opportunities do you see? How might this be implemented?
- 8) What service delivery gaps or challenges would you highlight in the area of information/awareness/orientation of settlement services? Please check all that apply.
 - a. Outreach challenges in a virtual or hybrid context
 - b. Outreach to diverse linguistics communities
 - c. Training for new settlement staff
 - d. Staffing challenges for settlement (hiring, etc.)
 - e. Other (please specify)

- 9) Is there a role that the Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership table could play in innovating or streamlining service delivery?
- 10) If yes, please describe what role the Information, Awareness and Orientation Partnership table could play.
- 11) Does your organization's service offerings currently include Language Training? Please note: if your service offerings do not include Language Training, you will be directed to the next section of the survey.
- 12) What innovations in language training have you implemented in your organization over the last 2 years that could be replicated or refined to continue supporting the community? Please describe.
- 13) Do you see an opportunity to create or expand consistency among settlement agencies delivering services within Language Training service offerings?
- 14) What opportunities do you see? How might they be implemented?
- 15) What service delivery gaps or concerns would you highlight in language training? Please check all that apply.
 - a. Client attrition (drop-out) through LINC class levels
 - b. Internal staff technology support needs
 - c. E-learning professional development
 - d. Staffing challenges (hiring, etc.)
 - e. Other (please specify)
- 16) Do you feel there is a role that the Language Partnership table could play in innovating or streamlining service delivery?
- 17) If you selected yes, please describe the role the Language Partnership table could play
- 18) Does your organization's service delivery currently include employment? Please note: if your service offerings do not include employment, you will be directed to the next section of the survey.
- 19) What innovations in the area of employment have you implemented in your organization over the last 2 years that could be replicated or refined to continue supporting the community? Please describe.
- 20) Do you see an opportunity to create or expand consistency among settlement agencies delivering Employment services?
- 21) What opportunities do you see? How might they be implemented?
- 22) What service delivery gaps or concerns would you highlight within employment services?

- 23) Do you feel there is a role that the Labour Market Partnership table could play in innovating or streamlining service delivery?
- 24) If you selected yes, please describe the role the Labour Market Partnership table could play:
- 25) Does your organization's service offerings currently include Community Connections? Please note: if your service offerings do not include Community Connections, you will be directed to the next section of the survey.
- 26) What innovations, in the area of community connections, have you implemented in your organization over the last 2 years that could be replicated or refined to continue supporting the community? Please describe.
- 27) Do you see an opportunity to create or expand consistency among settlement agencies delivering services in Community Connections?
- 28) What opportunities do you see? How might these be implemented?
- 29) What service delivery gaps or concerns would you highlight within Community Connections? Please check all that apply.
- a. Virtual options
 - b. Staff training
 - c. Staffing challenges (e.g. hiring)
 - d. Other (please specify)
- 30) Do you feel there is a role that the Community Connections Partnership table could play in innovating or streamlining service delivery?
- 31) If you selected yes, please describe the role the Community Connections Partnership table could play
- 32) Thinking about digital service delivery, what are the current challenges you are experiencing? Please select all that apply:
- a. None of the above
 - b. Clients do not have access to technology required to participate
 - c. Staff require training to use technology
 - d. Clients are experiencing feelings of 'digital fatigue' (E.g.: too much screen time)
 - e. Seeing a decrease in program participation
 - f. Other (please specify)
- 33) Do you anticipate that your organization will continue to rely heavily on delivering programs in a virtual environment?
- 34) Are there anticipated organizational needs to help serve refugees, particularly for the Afghan Initiative?
- a. Staff training
 - b. Language-specific staffing
 - c. Other (please specify)

35) Do you anticipate any professional development needs for new staff serving refugees for the Afghan Initiative

- a. Basic social service fundamentals
- b. Understanding Afghan culture and history
- c. Digital skills assessment
- d. Other (please specify)

36) Is there anything else you would like to share?

37) As part of the IRCC Planning Days on February 3rd and 4th, participants will be divided into breakout groups. To ensure robust discussions take place, we are looking for individuals who may be interested in acting as a facilitator in each breakout session. Would you be interested in this role? Note: facilitators will be provided with a list of questions to support the conversation

38) Please provide your name and email address so we can follow up with you.

Survey Results

Please click image to review summary slides:



Pre-Event Survey Results

Appendix B: Breakout group discussion worksheets

IRCC Planning Day 2022 – Breakout Session Format

Structure:

- Breakout groups will be pre-populated with 8 - 10 participants
- Participants from the same organization will be placed into different groups
- Each group will have a facilitator; a notetaker, also responsible for the report back, will be assigned in each group by the facilitator
- Notetaker will record group observations in response to questions listed on provided discussion questions and **upload at the link below** to ensure all responses and feedback are received:
 - <https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day-2022>

Areas of Focus for breakout discussions for the 2022 Planning Day:

- Settlement Services: Information, Awareness & Orientation
- Language Training
- Employment
- Community Connections

Day 1: Breakout Session 1 Discussion Questions:

Thursday February 3, 2022: 9:30am – 10:15am

Settlement Services: Information, Awareness & Orientation

1. Thinking about opportunities for sharing across agencies and increasing consistent quality within the Settlement Services sector, which of the following would be most beneficial and why?
 - a. Staff training
 - b. Template development (EG: sharing best practices, document templates, etc.)
 - c. Common Needs Assessment
 - d. Data collection
 - e. Service delivery
2. In your opinion, what would be needed to foster opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing across the sector?
3. How might funding help in this area for implementation? Are there any outstanding gaps in general for settlement information, awareness and orientation that require funding support? Are there factors or guidelines you feel need to be considered to help ensure funding will lead to effective outcomes?

4. Building and leveraging capacity to support digital service delivery has been critical over the last two years. What does the future of program delivery look like for you? Are there any **critical** gaps that need to be addressed?
5. What role would you like to see the Information, Awareness & Orientation Partnership table play? What is the first thing you would like to see them take on?

Report Back: Share the **top two** insights **from the discussion**

Notetakers: Please upload your completed discussion questions here:

<https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day-2022>

Day 1: Breakout Session 2 Discussion Questions:

Thursday February 3rd, 2022: 10:25am – 11:10am

Language Training

1. Thinking about the service delivery gaps and challenges experienced in language training, how would you rank them and why? (1 being most challenging and 4 being least challenging)
 - a. Client attrition
 - b. Internal staff technology support needs
 - c. E-learning/professional development
 - d. Staffing challenges
 - e. Non-classroom based language acquisition strategies (e.g. employment based learning)
2. Taking into consideration your responses above, what do you propose as the most promising and innovative solution to address these challenges/gaps?
3. How might funding help in this area for implementation? Are there any outstanding gaps that require funding support? Are there factors or guidelines you feel need to be considered to help ensure funding will lead to effective outcomes?
4. Building and leveraging capacity to support digital service delivery has been critical over the last two years. What does the future of program delivery look like for you? Are there any **critical** gaps that need to be addressed?
5. In your opinion, are there opportunities to streamline and share information/resources, to support language training delivery?
6. What role would you like to see the Language Training Partnership table play? What is the first thing you would like to see them take on?

Report Back: Share the **top two** insights **from the discussion**.

Notetakers: Please upload your completed discussion questions here:

<https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day-2022>

Day 2 Breakout Session Discussion Questions:

Friday February 4, 2022: 8:50am – 10:20am

Employment

1. There are many opportunities to standardize and streamline programs & services, resources and training within employment. In your opinion, what is the most critical opportunity to look at first? What is your desired outcome?
2. One of the biggest gaps/challenges identified in the pre-event survey was 'client job training needs for lower language levels'. What do you feel is an innovative approach to addressing this challenge? What resources are required in order to successfully execute a solution?
3. How might funding help in this area for implementation? Are there any outstanding gaps that require funding support? Are there factors or guidelines you feel need to be considered to help ensure funding will lead to effective outcomes?
4. Building and leveraging capacity to support digital service delivery has been critical over the last two years. What does the future of program delivery look like for you? Are there any **critical** gaps that need to be addressed?
5. What role would you like to see the Labour Partnership table play? What is the first thing you would like to see them take on?

Report Back: Share the **top two** insights **from the discussion**.

Notetakers: Please upload your completed discussion questions here:

<https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day-2022>

Community Connections

1. There are many opportunities to improve and tailor programs & services, resources and training within community connections. In your opinion, what is the most critical opportunity to look at first? What is your desired outcome?
2. What types of resources would be most beneficial to you/your organization to successfully deliver community connections programming? Where are there gaps?

3. How might funding help in this area for implementation? Are there any outstanding gaps that require funding support? Are there factors or guidelines you feel need to be considered to help ensure funding will lead to effective outcomes?
4. Building and leveraging capacity to support digital service delivery has been critical over the last two years. What does the future of program delivery look like for you? Are there any **critical** gaps that need to be addressed?
5. What role would you like to see the Community Connections Partnership table play? What is the first thing you would like to see them take on?

Report Back: Share the **top two** insights **from the discussion**

Notetakers: Please upload your completed discussion questions here:

<https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day-2022>

Appendix C: List of participating organizations

Acces Employment
Achèv
Afghan Women's Organization
Big Brothers Big Sisters Of Peel
Brampton Multicultural Community Centre / Muslim Community Services
Caledon Community Services
Canadian Hearing Services
Catholic Crosscultural Services
Centre For Skills Development
Centre Francophone Du Grand Toronto – Conseil Scolaire Viamonde
Chinese Association Of Mississauga
Collège Boréal
Connecture Canada
Conseil Scolaire Catholique Mon Avenir
Costi Immigrant Services
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Halton Catholic District School Board
Halton Newcomer Strategy
HMC Connections
Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
Indus Community Services
Malton Neighbourhood Services
Moyo Health & Community Services
Newcomer Centre Of Peel
Oakville Public Library Board
Peel Career Assessment Services Inc.
Peel District School Board
Peel Multicultural Council
Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Polycultural Immigrant And Community Services
Punjabi Community Health Services
Ryelle Strategy Group
Sault Ste. Marie & Area Local Immigration Partnership, City Of Sault Ste. Marie
Syrian Canadian Foundation
The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association
Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
Vietnamese Community Center Of Mississauga
Yes Employment Services Inc. (Nipissing)
YMCA Of Greater Toronto