

## Government of Alberta Settlement & Integration Program: Funding Model Engagement Session Summary

February 2018

### Background

The Ministry of Labour held a half-day stakeholder engagement session on January 30, 2018 with members of the Alberta settlement sector to set priorities for the 2018/19 call for proposals. The following summarizes key points from the sessions, highlighting both the government's priorities for funding, and the key points brought forward by the Alberta settlement sector. The session included members from the provincial government's Ministry of Labour who facilitated six round tables. The round tables included directors from the various agencies throughout Alberta.

### Alberta's Settlement and Integration Program Guidelines 2018/2019

#### Funding Objectives

- Fund services that do not duplicate existing resources provided by federal or other provincial programming
- Promote innovation
- Effective distribution of services across the province
- Fund projects for up to two years

#### Areas of Focus for Funding

- Improve settlement accessibility
- Build communities' capacity to better serve newcomer needs
- Respond to emerging needs and under-served clients
- Support initiatives that will result in improved newcomers' labour market integration outcomes

### Funding Model Information Session Summary

During this session, service providers participated in group discussions on questions from the Government of Alberta, intended to inform their focus for funding. Some of the key points raised by participants are included below:

**Question 1: What are the emerging or urgent needs related to immigrants, refugees, naturalized Canadian citizens, as well as foreign workers and international students on a pathway to permanent residence?**

- Finding a place in the labour market for highly educated immigrants
- Increasing and improving employment opportunities and bridging programs
- Need for language training, especially stage 2 (Canadian Language Benchmark Level 5 or higher)

- Increased awareness of available resources, tools and services for newcomers (recommendation of a 1-stop-shop idea for newcomer clients)
- Support newcomers with disabilities and trauma – it is important to recognize and work within the intersectional needs of newcomers
- Addressing mental health and support for PTSD
- Focus and emphasis on reunification for refugees and temporary foreign workers
- Focus on addressing discrimination and racism through education and engagement with communities
- Language and employment services with childcare and transportation supports

**Question 2: Given the areas of focus established by Alberta's Settlement and Integration Program, what do you see as the most important area to address through a Call for Proposals in 2018-19?**

- **Build communities receptive capacity to better serve newcomers needs**
  - Systemic Issue/Gap being addressed: help develop communities' capacity to support newcomers by investing and strengthening service organizations to encourage organizations to build collaborative partnerships to address common issues.
- **Respond to emerging needs and underserved clients**
  - Systemic Issue/Gap being addressed: support different immigrant groups including those in remote and rural regions that require unique or additional support.
- **Support initiatives that will result in improved newcomers' labour market integration outcomes**
  - Systemic Issue/Gap being addressed: improve information sharing to employers and organizations (third party and government organizations), connect newcomers to programs and services, and support workplace integration. (Still need clarification on what 'information sharing' entails).
- **Improve Settlement Accessibility**
  - Systemic Issue/Gap being addressed: help provide timely access to settlement information needs of newcomers and address gaps in settlement information.

**Question 3: How are you currently collaborating with partners and with whom are you collaborating? How can you inspire each other to collaborate or expand on existing collaborations?**

- Participants all discussed the variety of partnerships/collaborations they currently work with and the benefit of partnerships with mainstream organizations (e.g. school boards, libraries).
- Expand collaborative efforts through the development new partnerships outside of the settlement sector (e.g. with employers, communities).

- Share best practices (e.g. client-centred approach) and outcomes to inspire and collaborate
- Recommendation to collaborate even though relationship building is very resource intensive and this would include support for evaluation, time, sharing responsibility.
- Reminder to agencies that even if they have differing objectives partnerships are essential and agencies can support each other through resources or in-kind support (i.e. conference room space, admin staff time etc.).
- Recommendation that Alberta Labour provides support to the sector to develop partnerships outside of this CFP

#### Question 4: What did you like about the process for the Call for Proposals in 2017-18 and what would you improve about the process in 2018-19?

- Following the 2017/18 CFP, unsuccessful applicants could request feedback on their proposal. Participants appreciated this feedback but recommend that it be provided without having to request it.
- The CFP needs to step outside of the heavy focus on 'labour market integration' – recommend they work with other ministries that support newcomers in different ways.
- Recommendations for this year:
  - Multi-year funding
  - Provide clear criteria for evaluation and review
  - Expression of Interest (EOI) first, then full proposal to allow time for partnership development
  - No deadlines over the summer
  - Share CFP more broadly, engage with employers and encourage them to consider applying
  - Have a contact in Alberta Labour during the proposal process so that applicants can ask questions for clarification.

#### Gaps and Observations

- Although one area of focus is 'underserved clients' their eligibility criteria excludes refugee claimants and undocumented persons who are generally the most underserved.
- The focus of this funding cycle is on newcomers in the application process for permanent residency which may restrict services for others - for example, TFWs who have not applied for PR status may not be eligible - more clarification is required on who is eligible, what does 'path to permanent residency' include.
- Participants emphasized the need for ongoing support for newcomers after the initial three years (e.g. naturalized citizens).
- Other areas to focus on for sector improvement include:
  - Increased engagement with employers to enhance opportunities for newcomers to find jobs

- Alberta government should be involved in supporting community engagement and partnership development
- Discrimination and racism are still issues in society and funding needs to be provided to address this.