

SUPPORT NETWORK FOR RURAL NEWCOMERS

MEETING #2 BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT NOTICE 1

INTRODUCTION..... 2

KEY THEMES FROM MUNICIPALITIES..... 3

Housing challenges 3

Rural Renewal Stream..... 3

SECTOR RESOURCES 4

NEXT STEPS..... 4

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The content of this document is protected by Copyright © 2023 Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA). All Rights Reserved. No part of this document including, but not limited to, the text, graphics, images, logos may be modified, reproduced, transmitted, distributed, publicly displayed or utilized for any commercial purpose, in any form, by any means, in whole or in part, without AAISA’s specific written permission. This Copyright Notice is an integral part of this document and shall not be removed or altered.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AAISA acknowledges Treaty 7 territory—the traditional and ancestral territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika as well as the Tsuu T’ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

INTRODUCTION

The second session hosted for the *Support Network for Rural Newcomers Meetings* was held on February 9, 2023. The insights identified in this meeting will be used to create 5 tools to support the participants of the network. These tools will be informed by the support network participants needs through a series of polls. Table 1 outlines the results of a needs assessment poll the determine the tools that would be most beneficial for support network participants in increasing their capacity to serve newcomer clients.

Table 1. Results from the Needs Assessment poll of 17 participants analyzing resources that municipal representatives would utilize in their communities to assist newcomers.

Resource	Total Response (%)
Tools to educate employers and landlords	71
Template for newcomer welcome package	57
Improved outreach/collaboration tools	57

This series of meetings is also to develop rural specific professional development courses for the participants. The objective of these courses is to offer free professional development training courses for participants to better understand the unique needs of newcomers in their communities and in turn increase their capacity to serve newcomers. Table 2 displays the results of the needs assessment poll conducted during the meeting. The results from the poll directly guide the development of the 5 professional development courses being developed in alignment with this project.

Table 2. Results from a needs assessment poll of 17 participants to determine what professional development course content would be most useful in welcoming newcomers to rural municipalities.

Course	Total Response (%)
<p>Rural immigration logistics and mechanics’ course</p> <p><i>Some participants of the Support Network are new to the immigration sector and may have little understanding of existing immigration application streams as well as the administrative processes that will need to be undertaken. This course can vary from base-level to advanced understanding.</i></p>	57
<p>Sourcing for settlement funding</p> <p><i>This course may overview grant applications, identifying main funders of newcomer services, as well as what the opportunities and limitations are in terms of accessible funding.</i></p>	57

<p>Building capacity to support employment for newcomers course</p> <p><i>This course may provide resources and guidelines to form partnerships with local employers, as well as addressing barriers to employment for newcomers.</i></p>	29
<p>Newcomer orientation course</p> <p><i>This course may outline:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How to create a welcoming community, where newcomers feel easily oriented</i> - <i>What resources newcomers might need in the first 3,6, 12 months of arrivals</i> - <i>How to promote existing services in your community that can be beneficial for newcomers</i> - <i>Tips on improving outreach to newcomers who may be difficult to reach (Examples: Temporary Foreign Workers, newcomers who arrive on long-term caregiver visas, etc.)</i> 	29
Other (please type in chat)	14

KEY THEMES FROM MUNICIPALITIES

HOUSING CHALLENGES

Participants of the support network continue to face on-going housing challenges with virtually no rental vacancies. Municipalities plan to attend the Economic Development Alberta Association (EDA) event to explore potential solutions.

Some employers have stepped in by purchasing homes and temporarily renting them to newcomer employees to address the housing shortages. Another suggested solution to the housing shortage is to encourage employers to hire newcomer workers who have existing family or friends in the area who can provide housing.

RURAL RENEWAL STREAM

Engagement

Some communities are increase methods of engagement by launching local programs that introduce newcomers to community welcoming services such as Out of School Care, Youth Centres, Community Dinners, Seniors' Support Services, and Transit System Navigation. These welcoming programs aim to focus on newcomer orientation and exploring ways to help

newcomers get their credentials recognized, work towards professional certifications, and create business opportunities for themselves.

Application

Several participants have indicated that they are currently undergoing the application process to become Rural Renewal Designated communities. One of the participants is already a designated Rural Entrepreneur Designate with interested newcomer candidates.

Ukrainian Evacuees

Ukrainian evacuees are a growing population that are entering the rural centres, seeking to gain permanent residency through the Rural Renewal Stream. They are prominent throughout the province and municipalities have limited resources to provide Ukrainian-specific assistance. Municipalities are seeking to increase welcoming efforts by promoting community events and engagement initiatives.

SECTOR RESOURCES

SettleNet

AAISA has created a closed group SettleNet account to share resources and tools for all Support network participants. This platform enables participants to create discussion threads, promote events and connect with each other. Please reach out to Crystal Guzmán at cguzman@aaisa.ca to be added to the closed group.

Newcomer Research Library

This library is a centralized research and information centre focused on immigrant and refugee data in Alberta. It includes academic publications, research, and information produced at the community level such as program evaluation reports. The library is designed for useability by community members, service providers, students, evaluation consultants, and academics – all of whom have the ability to contribute to the library.

Rural Development Network Toolkit

The Rural Development Network has created and distributed a free toolkit to assist rural communities with attraction, retention, and settlement of newcomers. This toolkit is available [here](#).

NEXT STEPS

Through the insights discovered in this meeting, AAISA will be developing resources alignment with the results from the needs assessment polls. The first being a Newcomer Welcome Package Template for municipalities to utilize in orienting newcomers to the community. Following this tool will be the virtually facilitated *Immigration: Processes and Mechanics* course, with dates to be announced.

The next meeting will be hosted on April 20, 2023.