

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR FRANCOPHONE NEWCOMER SERVING AGENCIES

A STRATEGY FOR AAISA

MARCH 2019



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we collectively strive to understand the historic and ongoing relationship between settlement and the land on which we are located, AAISA respectfully acknowledges that the province of Alberta is comprised of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territories, and is the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.

Increasing Support for Newcomer Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA was developed under the direction of Leslie Cramer and Daniella Bagmeijer. We gratefully acknowledge the expertise of Dr. Suzanne Goopy and Dr. Anusha Kassan, as well as Wedded Sakhri for their contributions to this project.

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ACRONYMS

AAISA	Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
FMC	Francophone Minority Communities
IRCC	Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
NSC	National Settlement Council
OLAP	Official Languages Action Plan
RIFA	Réseau en Immigration Francophone de l'Alberta
SPO	Service Provider Organizations

INTRODUCTION

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies is an umbrella organization working to build capacity, foster collaboration, and provide effective representation to support agencies in their work to effectively settle and integrate newcomers in the province. In the period of 2015 to 2018, AAISA underwent an expansion of program offerings alongside the evaluation of existing programs and services and the implementation of a new strategic plan. During this time, AAISA worked to grow its capacity to engage with member agencies, provide meaningful support, and gather feedback on sector needs. While these activities have progressed, it has become apparent that there are gaps for Francophone newcomer serving agencies in Alberta. Based on these agencies' unique needs and challenges, service improvements and expanded Francophone-specific supports are a pressing need at AAISA. To guide activities to better support Francophone newcomer serving agencies in alignment with their needs, AAISA has developed its *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA*.

More broadly, addressing issues experienced by Francophone communities in Alberta is a priority for both federal and provincial governments. The Government of Canada's *Action Plan for Official Languages, 2018-2023 Investing in Our Future* represents its commitment to addressing official language issues in Canada and guides ministerial priorities related to services and investments (Government of Canada, 2018). Similarly, the Government of Alberta's *French Policy 2018-21 Action Plan* identifies specific activities that will advance its 2017 French Policy, which was the first of its kind in the province (Francophone Secretariat, 2018). An increased focus on activities that address historic inequities for Francophone communities across Canada also highlights the need to ensure that Francophone newcomers have access to the same level of services and opportunities as their Anglophone counterparts.

In Alberta, Francophone newcomers play a crucial role in contributing to the social, cultural, and economic development of Francophone Minority Communities (FMCs) and to the province. It is well known that there are gaps in services available in French across sectors, however, the challenges faced by French-speaking newcomers are exacerbated due to a lack of knowledge in the wider community on available Francophone settlement and integration services. Ultimately, to effectively welcome and support Francophone newcomers, policies and collaborative efforts between all relevant stakeholders are required.

In addition to Francophone direct service providers, there are a variety of stakeholders involved and committed to creating a more equitable and welcoming environment for Francophone newcomers in the province of Alberta, including:

Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

With the development of the *Official Languages Action Plan 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future* (OLAP), the Canadian Government announced \$36.6 million in funds dedicated to supporting the implementation of the Francophone Integration Pathway. The vision of the Francophone Integration Pathway is to ensure that “newcomers have the opportunity to settle and flourish in French and contribute positively to Canadian society and the vitality of Francophone communities.” Furthermore, this vision is to be “supported by a Francophone Integration Pathway that starts before arrival and continues until citizenship is obtained.” (IRCC Presentation RIFA Summit, 2018)

For this vision to be implemented, IRCC has developed three measures:

1. *Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative*: This measure will focus on introducing a new community-based funding model rather than client-volume funding, to reduce disadvantages to small service providers, such as those in FMCs.
2. *Building the capacity of the Francophone settlement sector*: This measure focuses on supporting the capacities of direct service providers, RIFs across Canada, and providing access to professional development in French.
3. *Language training tailored to the needs of French-speaking newcomers*: This measure is intended to increase the supply and access of services available in French, while adapting to the realities of Francophone communities.

Government of Alberta

The provincial government developed a French Policy in 2017, which applies to all departments, agencies, boards, and commissions of the Government of Alberta. The main aim of the policy is to facilitate increases in government services and programs incrementally provided in French as well as to see that Albertans have the option to learn, speak, and thrive in French. The approach by the provincial government is focused on recognition and promotion of the Francophonie, increased service delivery, development considering Francophone perspectives, and improved communication and collaboration.

Réseau en Immigration Francophone de l’Alberta (RIFA)

The Réseau en Immigration Francophone de l’Alberta is one of the 13 Francophone Immigration Networks across Canada. RIFs are provincial in scope and play a key role in “attracting, recruiting, welcoming and integrating French-speaking [newcomers] in Canada’s Francophone and Acadian communities”.

The goal of RIFs across Canada is to “enlist the expertise and resources of a variety of actors and sectors in order to better support [newcomers] and their families and the communities that help them.” RIFs work closely with Francophone agencies, school boards, economic development organizations, universities, health care services, cultural and employment services, and all levels of government.

Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

As an umbrella organization, AAISA represents newcomer-serving agencies across Alberta. AAISA’s mandate is to build sector capacity to better serve newcomers by providing meaningful professional development opportunities, undertaking stakeholder-informed research and policy work, fostering collaboration, and advancing standards of excellence in professional settlement practice. While AAISA works with stakeholders across sectors, AAISA’s activities primarily focus on the settlement and integration sector as a system and the organizations and staff that comprise it. AAISA is structured in three organizational units, each responsible for a different portfolio of activities and agency support.

Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy is designed to complement and further support the work that has been undertaken by agencies themselves, RIFA, and different levels of government, to make Alberta a welcoming community where Francophone newcomers and their families have an equal opportunity to thrive. Through this strategy, AAISA acknowledges the need to understand the unique context in which Francophone agencies work in, to be able to better represent them. AAISA recognizes that it has not historically had strong, collaborative relationships with the Francophone sector. As such, relationship building, open communication, and continual learning are required and represent primary objectives of this strategy. Over time, this strategy and the activities stemming from it will be continually informed by the Francophone sector to ensure applicability, effectiveness, and impact.

As an umbrella organization, AAISA relies on the expertise and feedback of its member agencies to guide its work. To ensure this strategy aligns with the needs of the Francophone sector, a variety of different methods were used to gather information on the challenges that Francophone agencies face and the areas where AAISA could provide meaningful support. In the Fall of 2018, AAISA undertook an environmental scan¹ to first understand the current state of the Francophone sector and the challenges, gaps, and priorities unique to Francophone SPOs in Alberta. The feedback

¹ This environmental scan was conducted by a third party and it is available upon request.

collected from this environmental scan provided the foundation for the development of this strategy.

PURPOSE

This *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy* is intended to build AAISA's ability to effectively support Francophone agencies serving newcomers. The strategy includes key activities intended to increase AAISA's capacity to support and represent Francophone agencies and develop a nuanced understanding of their contexts and needs. It is structured in a way that enables development and evaluation over time, as improved engagement will ensure that Francophone agencies have influence in both the overarching strategy and the activities within it. Furthermore, the strategy is intended to build AAISA's capacity to support these agencies in a manner that results in positive outcomes for both agencies and the newcomers they serve. This, in turn, will strengthen Alberta's settlement sector as a whole.

OBJECTIVES

Collaborative system development, representation, and capacity building are hallmarks of AAISA's organizational mandate and are subsequently tied to the foundational objectives in the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy*.

Briefly, with this strategy AAISA aims to:

- Strengthen its understanding of the context of Francophone newcomer serving agencies
- Identify emerging needs, gaps, and challenges Francophone agencies face in service delivery
- Improve its relationship, communication, and engagement with Francophone agencies in Alberta
- Offer increased support and capacity building for Francophone agencies
- Increase overall representation of the Francophone agencies provincially, regionally, and nationally
- Foster collaboration across Francophone and Anglophone service providers in Alberta
- Achieve increased participation of Francophone agencies in issue-based initiatives and strategies alongside Anglophone agencies

AAISA's work on collaborative system development looks to build connections and partnership among organizations and institutions responsible for the successful settlement and integration of

newcomers. As such, this strategy aims to provide platforms for collaboration and to build collective capacity to address Francophone SPOs' unique challenges.

Through collaborative activities, AAISA will seek to facilitate the formation of collective voice on shared issues, better represent the Francophone sector provincially and nationally, and elevate Francophone agencies' access to such forums and opportunities.

In addition to providing support specifically to Francophone agencies, this strategy also identifies the role AAISA can play in stewarding collaboration between Francophone and Anglophone service providers. This work supports SPOs to overcome barriers to referral and foster an integrated network of service delivery in Alberta.

Capacity building activities for both agencies and their staff is a primary activity at AAISA and a mechanism through which it can support professionalization and impact in Alberta's settlement and integration sector. This strategy looks at how this area of work can better identify and serve Francophone newcomer serving agencies.

Ultimately, through the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy*, the activities associated are intended to address the barriers affecting the ability of Francophone agencies to achieve positive outcomes for the newcomers they serve.

This strategy looks to achieve the following long-term outcomes:

- Agencies have greater capacity in operations and service delivery
- A body of research exists on the Francophone newcomer serving sector in Alberta and service delivery to Francophone newcomers
- A collaborative system of service providers addresses shared issues collectively, mobilizes knowledge, and coordinates service delivery
- The professional development and skills training needs of Francophone agency are met
- The network of services in Alberta provides newcomers with seamless service delivery and referral to appropriate services based on client needs regardless of language spoken
- Important resources and research are available for Francophone agencies in French

APPROACH

To achieve the stated purpose and objectives of this strategy, the following activities have been identified. Based on consultations with Francophone agencies and the scope of AAISA's mandate, these activities involve all business units within the organization. This cross-organizational action will support AAISA to support agencies at the individual, organizational, and systems level.

I. FRANCOPHONE STAFF

An additional staff position at AAISA is essential to the success of this strategy. For a staff person to effectively steward the strategy and build strong relationships with agencies, French language fluency and an understanding of the complexities of the Francophone newcomer community are required. Beyond this, full-time staff capacity is a requisite for AAISA to undertake the activities outlined below. In addition to directly leading specific activities, this position would be responsible for ensuring that the needs of the Francophone sector are well represented in the programs and initiatives across all AAISA's business units.

While engagement work generally does not require significant material resources, in terms of staff resources it is highly intensive and demanding. This is both apparent in activities related to relationship building with individual agencies as well as the numerous collaborative initiatives that engagement staff lead, each resulting in an extensive range activities and tasks. Given AAISA's current engagement project load, without additional staff resources the effectiveness of both existing projects and new Francophone-specific activities would be diluted.

Pending the success of proposals AAISA submitted to different funders in early 2019, AAISA will hire a Francophone staff position. This position will be placed in the Engagement, Research, and Policy unit and will work closely with all other units at AAISA. In addition to advancing the activities outlines in this strategy, this position would also play a vital role in ensuring greater representation of the Francophone sector in all facets of AAISA's engagement, research, and policy work. In this way, the role would facilitate bridging between Francophone and Anglophone agencies. AAISA's experience implementing the *Small Centre Engagement Strategy* in 2018-2019 demonstrates the value of focused staff resources that support both stakeholder-specific needs, enhanced representation, and enables bridging with different stakeholder groups. The approach undertaken in the Small Centre portfolio provides a model that can support the success of a new Francophone staff position.

ACTIVITIES

The activities that the Francophone AAISA staff position will engage in, are the following:

- **Collaborative initiatives:** This position would be responsible for leading collaborative initiatives for Francophone agencies and other provincial level initiatives, including bridging Francophone representations to these spaces (*Activity II*).
- **Direct dialogue and engagement:** Activities related to direct dialogue and engagement with agencies, through agency visits and regular communications (*Activity III*).
- **Identifying research priorities:** Through working with agencies, the Francophone position will work to identify research needs and work with Engagement, Research, and Policy unit to fill gaps (*Activity VI* and *Activity VII*).
- **Representation of the Francophone sector voice in work planning:** Work to ensure the Francophone sector is well represented within AAISA's programmatic work and overall

organizational direction. The position would also work closely with AAISA's Programs and Services unit to ensure that Francophone sector needs inform professional development offering and the sector protocols project (*Activity IV* and *Activity VI*).

- **Partnership building:** Building relationships and advancing partnership with key stakeholders and actors in the Francophone sector (*Activity IX*).

OUTCOMES

- **Improved communication:** A Francophone staff member will allow AAISA and Francophone agencies to improve overall communication. Agencies will be able to effectively communicate in the language they are most comfortable in, both orally (direct dialogue when visiting agencies) and written (email, reports, surveys, etc.)
- **Increased understanding of context:** Having regular communication in French will enable AAISA to better understand the context of agencies and FMCs across Alberta and therefore, be more effective when responding to needs and gaps of agencies. This outcome has been demonstrated with the AAISA position focused on Small Centre agencies
- **Improved representation of agencies:**
 - Internally: AAISA's Francophone staff member will be able to communicate agencies' needs and feedback with all AAISA units, ensuring the agency is inclusive and responsive.
 - Externally: AAISA's Francophone staff member will be able to attend and effectively participate in external meetings (i.e. research, community events, consultations, etc.).
- **Increased accountability:** Having a designated Francophone staff person creates a more direct accountability system for agencies, with a specialized position holding responsibility for projects and activities relating to Francophone agencies.
- **Increased initiative and leadership:** Having a designated person engaging with the Francophone sector will allow for the initiatives and projects that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the communities Francophone agencies work in.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration among agencies across the province is effectively supported by a focused position holding responsibility for convening and facilitation, while working with agencies to understand what conditions enable active participation.

II. COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES FOR FRANCOPHONE AGENCIES

AAISA's Engagement, Research, and Policy unit leads a variety of collaborative initiatives with specific groups of stakeholders or on issue-based topics. Through these initiatives, AAISA engages

with different groups to support the sharing of information, to develop collective voice on shared issues, and to identify collaborative solutions to address challenges and gaps in service delivery. These initiatives also act as fora where AAISA can gather valuable feedback on work. Currently, Francophone agencies are underrepresented in AAISA's active initiatives and Francophone agency-specific activities are limited to the Annual Integration Summit. Through this strategy, AAISA plans to create specific engagement spaces for Francophone agencies as well as identify how to increase participation in provincial level initiatives.

ACTIVITIES

- **National Settlement Council (NSC) member engagement:** Previously, AAISA has only been able to conduct priority setting consultations and debriefing with members in English. With an additional Francophone staff position, AAISA will add consultation and debriefing specific to Francophone member agencies. Through the information gathered during each consultation, a briefing document on Francophone agency priorities will be prepared for AAISA's NSC delegates.
- **Recurring Francophone sector teleconferences/meetings:** Similar to AAISA's recurring meetings with Small Centre agencies and caucus meetings in Edmonton and Calgary, AAISA will host recurring teleconference meetings with Francophone agencies across the province. As with the Small Centre Engagement Strategy, an annual in-person meeting for agencies would also be valuable for this group of agencies. Recurring meetings in these formats will provide a Francophone-specific space for discussing issues and challenges specific to these agencies.
- **Engagement projects and collaborative initiatives:** In addition to creating specific space for engagement with Francophone agencies, there are existing initiatives where AAISA would benefit from greater participation from Francophone agencies. Work to assess the needs and experiences of Francophone agencies (*Activity III*), will allow AAISA to analyze current initiatives and understand barriers to participation and potential solutions to address them. The Francophone sector lens will be used during annual work planning for initiatives and when new ones may be developed.
- **Annual Integration Summit and other events:** Ensuring space for Francophone plenaries and breakout sessions is a priority for the Annual Integration Summit and is a model that will be applied to other events hosted by AAISA.

OUTCOMES

- **Consistency:** Collaborative initiatives have been beneficial for Anglophone agencies and adapting the approach to better serve Francophone agencies will ensure greater consistency and equity across the sector as a whole.

- **Information sharing and knowledge mobilization:** Collaborative initiatives provide a platform to share information, research, and best practices among agencies, which can be leveraged to support capacity building and service improvements.
- **System coordination:** Through facilitated discussion, participants build an understanding the role different agencies play and can coordinate to overcome gaps and strengthen the network of services.
- **Collective problem solving:** When a particular issue affects multiple agencies, collaborative initiatives provide a platform to build off different agencies' experiences to identify solutions and build collective voice.

III. DIRECT DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

Within AAISA's Small Centre Engagement Strategy and Membership Strategy, agency visits (also referred to as site visits) have been a valuable tactic for relationship building and gaining an understanding of agencies and their contexts. Based on the benefit of these agency visits for other areas of AAISA's work, this is an essential component of effective work with Francophone agencies.

Within the context of this strategy, these visits will ensure AAISA can obtain a better understanding of Francophone service providers, their needs, and dynamics across the province. Agency visits allow AAISA to better understand the issues facing Francophone newcomers who settle in Alberta and challenges in service delivery. As a result, these opportunities for direct engagement strengthen a nuanced understanding of the issues faced by Francophone agencies, gaps in services, and innovative practices, while also complementing the information received through the *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey (Activity VII)*. Lastly, agency visits will also provide space to evaluate AAISA's overall engagement strategies with Francophone agencies in terms of relationships, membership (recruitment and retention), and current projects and initiatives.

Based on the importance of building relationships and developing an understanding of needs and context, agency visits will be one of the first activities a Francophone staff person undertakes. Knowledge gathered will be used to inform the other activities in this strategy, to ensure they are effective and tied to agency needs.

ACTIVITIES

- **Annual visits:** AAISA's Francophone staff will schedule annual visit with Francophone member agencies in the province, as well as connect with non-members.

- **Strategy and activity evaluation:** Agency visits will provide an opportunity to evaluate specific activities and the overarching strategy, as well as identify agency needs and opportunities for increased support and capacity building.
- **Partnership development with key stakeholders:** Building partnerships with key stakeholders leading projects or playing important roles in relation to the settlement and integration of Francophone newcomers.
- **Event attendance:** The Francophone staff position will be responsible for attending relevant events in the province, such as conferences, meetings, and networking events.

OUTCOMES

- **Improved understanding:** Regular meetings with agencies will provide a better understanding of the context, challenges, and needs of agencies working with Francophone newcomers.
- **Relationship building:** Creating channels of constant communication and engagement will allow for strong working relationships and trust to be developed over time, which will facilitate future work with Francophone agencies.
- **Responsiveness to needs in programming:** Through increased dialogue, AAISA will gather feedback that will be incorporated into its programming and activities across business units.
- **Increased collaboration:** Through having consistent communication with Francophone agencies, AAISA can identify areas for effective collaboration with Francophone agencies, Francophone and Anglophone agencies, as well as Francophone agencies and AAISA.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Currently AAISA is the only umbrella organization to offer professional development for settlement practitioners in Western Canada. After a pilot project in 2017, AAISA started offering professional development in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in addition to Alberta. Currently AAISA's professional development courses are not offered in French, despite the need for existing courses to be offered in French and for course development specific to the professional development needs within Francophone agencies.

The Programs & Services unit at AAISA is currently working on creating self-paced content out of existing course modules, which will include self-paced modules available in French. Additionally,

work has been initiated on a Labour Market Project which would include the development of face-to-face and self-paced courses. As the content is developed by a contracted subject matter expert, translation will be built into the workplan.

With the success of a funding proposal in early 2019 with Alberta's Ministry of Labour, AAISA has secured funding to develop its first French course specifically designed in response to needs of the Francophone sector. Furthermore, in 2019, the results from the *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* will be used to identify additional professional development needs specific to Francophone agencies and guide the translation and development of relevant courses. As the *Sector Survey* is conducted annually, needs assessments for courses will be conducted at regular intervals. Post-course evaluations will also support understanding of the effectiveness of courses for Francophone learners and identify priorities for future course offerings.

ACTIVITIES

- **Course development:** AAISA is currently in the process of developing its first course on mental health in French, which should be delivered by the fall of 2019 (*see Timeline section below*). In future years additional courses will be developed.
- **Bilingual certificates:** AAISA is making certificates for all course to be bilingual.
- **Francophone Committee representation:** Ensuring representation of Francophone agencies on the regional and provincial committees guiding AAISA's professional development work.

OUTCOMES

- **Professionalism and standardization:** Training of a professionalized workforce creates consistency and efficiency in service delivery across the province. Training assures that agencies across the province have staff able to offer high quality and knowledgeable services contributing to positive outcomes for newcomers.
- **Increased capacity building:** Ensure that all staff can effectively respond to clients' needs, as well as ensure they are receiving up-to-date training to be able to keep up with the ever-changing trends in the sector.
- **Professional recognition:** An increase in relevant courses aimed at Francophone practitioners in the province will result in increased opportunities for broader professional recognition through certification.

V. SECTOR PROTOCOLS

In 2018, AAISA initiated the development of a strategy on how it can address the need in the sector for standardized organizational protocols and related resources and templates. This work stemmed from needs expressed in the sector, particularly from smaller agencies, and was confirmed by IRCC as a priority area. AAISA believes access to protocol template and resources will support agencies to develop organizational capacity and advance professionalization within the sector, key factors contributing to the achievement of positive outcomes for newcomers.

Based on the understanding that Francophone agencies operate in a unique context and experience distinct organizational and service delivery challenges, specific consideration to Francophone agencies' needs will be given when determining the set of protocols and resources that will be sourced and/or developed through this strategy. Protocols will look to incorporate a Francophone lens and will be available in both French and English.

ACTIVITIES

- **Needs assessment:** Through direct engagement and the *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey*, AAISA will identify the specific protocol needs of Francophone newcomer serving agencies and prioritize these needs for the development of resources and templates annually.
- **Implementation activities:** The *Sector Protocols Strategy* identifies the need for training and support to agencies as necessary to ensure that effective implementation of specific protocols; such training will be available in French.

OUTCOMES

- **Professionalism and standardization:** As with professional development, the development of sector protocols will support professionalization in the settlement and integration sector by ensuring high organizational standards and consistency across the province.
- **Increased organizational capacity:** By having access to protocols and supporting resources, agencies will be able to overcome organizational challenges in a manner that is not resource intensive.
- **Increased efficiency:** Creating one set of protocols will eliminate the need for each agency to create their own, therefore eliminating the chances of redundant efforts to develop similar protocols.

VI. RESEARCH

As part of AAISA's effort to better engage and collaborate with the Francophone sector in the province of Alberta, AAISA will undertake different research projects through a Francophone lens as priorities arise from direct engagement activities and surveys.

ACTIVITIES

- **Service mapping tool:** In 2019-2020, AAISA will conduct province-wide service mapping to display the services available to Francophone newcomers to Alberta. The tool will reflect both fulltime and itinerant services and be compared to the distribution for Francophone newcomers across the province. This will help identify FMCs where expanded newcomer services are required.

OUTCOMES

- **Inventory of services:** This tool will provide a comprehensive inventory of services currently available for Francophone newcomers in the province of Alberta and highlight strengths, weaknesses, and gaps to be worked on over the following years.
- **Improved ability to address gaps:** Having a better understanding of the gaps currently faced by Francophone SPOs will allow both AAISA and agencies to be able to more effectively address them. This could potentially result in partnerships and collaboration with other agencies.
- **Improved service access and referrals:** By providing agencies and clients with a tool that provides a list of all services, SPOs will be able to better navigate the system and more effectively assist clients accessing the services they need.

VII. ANNUAL SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR SURVEY

The *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* was first designed at the end of 2017 and conducted at the beginning of 2018. The survey was developed with the aim to have a systematic method of collecting information from Alberta's settlement and integration sector, and to better understand the changing needs and organizational capacity of agencies. The results of this survey have enabled AAISA to better represent and support the work agencies do, as well as creating an improved understanding of the settlement and integration sector as a whole.

The *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* was released in both in English and French in 2018, and AAISA will continue to do so each year. Moving forward AAISA will also use the survey to better understand the specific needs of Francophone service providers. This is a key part in improving representation of Francophone agencies at a provincial and national level.

ACTIVITIES

- **Informing AAISA's work annually:** The information gathered in the sector survey is used to inform programmatic planning across AAISA's business unit. It supports the identification of priorities for research and course offerings, as well as the format and structure of different engagement activities.

OUTCOMES

- **Consistency:** Having an annual method of data collection allows AAISA to collect consistent data on Francophone agency priorities and provincial activities, as well as see trends on agencies' sizes, the clients they serve, and their needs and capacity over time in the sector.
- **Increase response rate from Francophone agencies:** AAISA has found that greater engagement and relationship building with different agency cohorts has had a positive correlation with increasing participation in surveys and information requests. As such, building relationships and advancing Francophone agency-specific activities will result in an increased response rate from these agencies and therefore greater input on programmatic direction.
- **Elevated representation:** With a greater number of Francophone survey respondents, programmatic activities will be increasingly representative of the needs of these agencies.
- **Evidence-based actions:** Collecting annual data will allow AAISA to make decisions on projects, needs and priorities based on evidence and information provided by agencies.

VIII. BILINGUAL RESOURCES

Through its work, AAISA produces a significant number of resources, including reports, briefing documents, surveys, tools, and other documents. AAISA began working in 2018 to ensure all tools and resources developed were available in both official languages. AAISA aims to continue to ensure equitable access to all resources for agencies across the province.

In 2018 to March 2019, AAISA had the support of a contracted translator to for this activity. In addition to supporting with document translation, this contractor supported AAISA to send communication to agencies in both official languages. This translation support has been instrumental in assisting AAISA staff to communicate with the Francophone sector. However, the funding used for this contract has run out and its absence will pose a challenge to the translation of documents in the 2019/20 fiscal year. AAISA is currently exploring possible solutions, as the use of traditional translation vendor is costly based on the volume of documents and number of words.

While the Francophone staff position mentioned in *Activity I* can support strong communications in French as well as the production of documents in French, the translation of all AAISA documents requires additional translation support. Due to the specific expertise needed for translation and the workload associated with each position, there would be significant constraints if these two roles were combined.

ACTIVITIES

- **Translation of documents and resources:** AAISA documents and resources will be available in both official languages
- **Enhanced communication in French:** Communication in French with Francophone agencies will be expanded

OUTCOMES

- **Increased inclusiveness:** As an umbrella organization, it is AAISA's responsibility to equally support all member organizations regardless of official language spoken. Increasing AAISA's capacity to offer all resources in both official languages will ensure inclusion and effective representation.
- **Consistency in communication:** By being able to communicate with agencies in both official languages, AAISA can guarantee consistent communication and equal information being delivered to all agencies.

TIMELINE

		2018	2019												2020			
		Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Activities	I & II				1													
						2												
							3											
	VII		4															
					5													
							6											
	III & IX						7											
								8										
	IV & V				9													
						10												
							11											
						12												
											13							
													14					
	VII							15										
											16							
														17				
	VIII & III									18								
										19								

<i>Activities I & II</i>	1	Submission of AAISA's <i>Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy</i>
	2	2019 work planning and structuring AAISA's Engagement, Research, and Policy Unit; developing a job description for the Francophone AAISA staff member; and developing meeting schedule, terms of reference, and other supporting documents
	3	Interviewing and hiring process
<i>Activity VII</i>	4	Editing and translation for 2019 <i>Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey</i>
	5	<i>Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey</i> release and data collection
	6	<i>Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey</i> data analysis, report writing, and translation

Activity III	7	Hiring and onboarding of Francophone staff member
	8	Relationship building between Francophone AAISA staff member and the Francophone settlement and integration sector in Alberta, through agency visits across the province and meeting planning.
Activities IV & V	9	French certificates available, interviewing and hiring of AAISA's Learning and Professional Development Lead ² , and sector protocols strategy due to be handed in to IRCC.
	10	Request for Proposals to be developed and posted for the subject matter expert for the Francophone mental health course.
	11	Needs assessment and initial implementation of the sector protocols project
	12	Interviewing and selection of the subject matter expert for the development and delivery of the Francophone mental health course.
	13	Delivery of the Francophone mental health course. ³
	14	Protocol dissemination, training, and initial evaluation
Activity VI	15	Service mapping tool form developed
	16	Data collection for the service mapping tool
	17	Completed tool and inventory of Francophone services available in the province of Alberta
Activity VIII & III	18	Translation of documents and resources ongoing
	19	Collaborative initiative activities are ongoing

EVALUATION

AAISA Engagement, Research, and Policy team applies a developmental evaluation approach to its engagement initiatives and collaborative projects which supports adaptation based on the dynamics, changes, and complexities found within the settlement and integration sector. This framework allows projects and initiatives to be responsive to member needs, develop approaches to emergent problems, and support ongoing adaptation and development. A developmental evaluation process will guide the AAISA's work to implement the *Increasing Support for*

² The learning and Professional Development Lead will coordinate the development and delivery of the Francophone mental health course.

³ Course content development takes on average of three months.

Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy and ensure that its members' feedback is represented in its progress over time.

The activities outlined in this strategy support evaluation in real-time through direct engagement activities (*Activity II*) and collaborative initiatives (*Activity III*). These spaces enable AAISA staff to ask questions on the effectiveness of specific activities and to understand changes in the context in which agencies work. This information can result in immediate changes to tactics and approach, or in the goals or structure of the strategy itself.

The strategy also includes activities that allow for understanding systems level changes and the broader context. Activities such as the *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey (Activity IV)* and regular research, including environmental scans, (*Activity VI*) produce understanding of the context, gaps and needs in service delivery, and the effectiveness of AAISA's different programmatic activities, including this strategy. These activities will also support analysis of different changes over time as well as the assessment of the impact and outcomes of the strategy for service providers.

CHALLENGES AND RISK

Throughout the implementation of this strategy, AAISA recognizes that it will face a variety of challenges and barriers. Therefore, this section aims to highlight some of the risks AAISA anticipates.

Financial challenges will play a major role in the timely and effective development of this strategy. One of the main risks from budget constraints will be AAISA's ability and capacity to translate documents in a timely manner. As previously mentioned, in the past AAISA has relied on a contract position to translate all documents, reports, infographics, and emails. It is important to clarify that AAISA's Francophone staff member (*Activity I*) will not be acting as a full-time translator, and instead will be needing translation support to effectively dedicate their time to all other activities outlined above.

There is a tendency to think of risks and challenges mainly in financial terms. However, due to the complexity and sensitivity of this strategy it is important to consider many other aspects that may affect its implementation. One of the most important aspects to consider is the lack of trust in AAISA by many Francophone agencies due to previous exclusion and lack of engagement. AAISA has not historically had strong relationships with the Francophone sector in Alberta. Due to programmatic gaps, lack of knowledge, and communication issues, AAISA is expecting that some lack of trust will have implications for the activities outlined in this strategy, especially at its outset. Based on this context, relationship building may take time and may affect other activities and outcomes. However, AAISA is committed to overcoming differences and proving its willingness

to develop long-term partnerships based on accountability, trust, and openness. In this regard, AAISA has prioritized already prioritized this over the last half of the 2018/19 fiscal year.

Recruitment of a staff member that will adequately represent Francophone agencies in the settlement and integration sector is critical to the success of this strategy. Challenges that can be anticipated for a new staff member in the position are related to trust issues, the complexity of the sector, scale of the workload, competing interests of stakeholders, and high expectations of membership and AAISA. In AAISA's experience, these challenges are often exacerbated in new projects and when working with under-served groups. Staff turnover resulting from these challenges is a risk for the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies Strategy*, as turnover could stall or offset progress on different activities and cause disruptions to relationship building.

Identifying potential risks and challenges related to this strategy supports AAISA to imbed tactics to mitigate them within the next stage of implementation planning.

This strategy is based on AAISA's current understanding of activities that it can undertake to better service Francophone newcomer serving agencies in Alberta. As this work develops, a nuanced understanding will develop, and the strategy can be adapted accordingly.

CONCLUSION

To better support Francophone newcomer serving agencies in Alberta, AAISA has identified service improvement strategies to be carried out across its business units. This will ensure that Francophone agencies can benefit from AAISA's work at individual service provider, organizational, and systems levels. This strategy, the activities within it, and AAISA's work more broadly are intended to develop over time, through the feedback and context shared by participating agencies.

Central to this strategy is the importance of relationship building and understanding the unique contexts in which Francophone newcomer serving agencies work in. A dedicated strategy and dedicated staffing are the starting point on which collaborative initiatives, capacity building, and representation of agency needs, and interests can be developed. Ultimately, the services AAISA provides are intended to support Francophone newcomer serving agencies in their work to achieve positive outcomes to Francophone newcomers in Alberta.

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