

# **INCREASING SUPPORT FOR FRANCOPHONE NEWCOMER SERVING AGENCIES: A STRATEGY FOR AAISA EVALUATION REPORT**

**MARCH 2020**



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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.

AAISA would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the individuals from Francophone newcomer serving agencies who participated in interviews as part of this evaluation. We are grateful for the invaluable information that was provided. AAISA would also like to thank Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for their financial support.

## INTRODUCTION

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) 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. AAISA provides a variety of programs and services, including professional development opportunities, collaborative initiatives, and research, which are driven by the needs of its members across Alberta. In March 2019 AAISA introduced *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomers Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA*. This strategy looked at key activities that AAISA could implement across its business units to ensure that it could better meet the needs of the Francophone newcomer serving sector and provide services that could meaningfully contribute to their ability to support Francophone newcomers in Alberta.

To ensure that this strategy was aligned with the needs of Francophone newcomer serving agencies, AAISA convened focus groups in the fall of 2018 to gather feedback that directly informed the strategy and the different approaches it contained. To continue in alignment with this sector-driven approach, AAISA undertook an evaluation of the strategy in early 2020 to provide feedback on the strategy and give Francophone newcomer serving agencies an opportunity to further influence its contents and implementation. Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, this report outlines the findings of the evaluation of *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomers Serving Agencies* strategy and concludes with key recommendations for its further implementation.

## PURPOSE

AAISA is committed to working to support Francophone newcomer serving agencies in Alberta and to ensure that their perspectives and needs are effectively represented and integrated throughout AAISA's operations. As such, the evaluation of the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies* strategy was intended to provide agencies with an opportunity to indicate their perspectives on the strategy and whether it has the potential to fill some of the gaps and challenges that they are currently experiencing. In addition, the evaluation conducted also aimed to develop a better understanding of how agencies would like AAISA to implement and prioritize different elements of the strategy, as well as key approaches to focus resources on as future funding becomes available.

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was comprised of individual phone interviews with Francophone newcomer serving agencies across the province of Alberta, which they took place between the months of February and March 2020. Interviews were conducted in French and they were between 45 minutes to 1 hour, dependant on the availability and length of answers provided by participants. Interviews were guided by structured questions which ranged from rating scale questions to a variety of open-ended questions. During the interview, participants were asked about the priorities of their respective agency, their perspectives on the strategy, and how the activities

outlined in *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies* strategy could serve each respective agency. For the interview questions, please see Appendix 1.

## FINDINGS

This section outlines the evaluation's main findings in relation to the approaches outlined in the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies* strategy. Following a discussion of interview participants' overall perspectives on the strategy and AAISA's role, the evaluation's findings are then discussed in relation to the specific approaches outlined in the strategy. Quotations included in the English report have been translated from French.

## FINDINGS ON THE STRATEGY AND AAISA'S ROLE

The overall perspectives on the strategy shared by interview participants indicated that they saw AAISA in the position to support increased collaboration and play a leadership role in relation to supporting the Francophone sector. Key themes in relation to AAISA's role and in advancing the strategy included:

- **Value of increased engagement:** It was indicated by some participants that they have welcomed AAISA's increased engagement efforts
- **Further collaborative systems development:** Participants indicated that while initial engagement efforts have been a good start, they would like to see continued development of systems of collaboration with AAISA that can support agencies' capacity development in operations and service delivery to their clients.
- **Potential of collaborative systems:** Collaborative systems were seen to have the potential to provide valuable fora that allow for collective problem-solving, increased information sharing, and improved coordination of services with Francophone agencies
- **AAISA as leaders:** Some interview participants felt strongly that they would like to see AAISA as a leader and facilitator in the development of these collaborative systems
- **Need to understand the needs, challenges, and gaps:** In order to take on this role and before the activities outlined in the strategy can be implemented, interview participants felt that AAISA must firstly clearly understand the needs, challenges, and gaps of service delivery in the Francophone sector

## APPROACHES

### I. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is a key service that AAISA offers to the settlement and integration sector. AAISA has been offering and delivering courses since the early 90s and as the needs and challenges of staff change, so do AAISA's courses and training opportunities. Until recently, AAISA only offered training and certification in English. As part of AAISA's *Increasing Support*

for *Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies* strategy, AAISA began to offer training tailored for Francophone newcomer serving agencies.

## **PARTICIPATION ON AAISA'S FIRST COURSE FOR FRANCOPHONE AGENCIES**

In 2019, AAISA started working on the content for its first course for Francophone settlement practitioners, *Soutien aux conseillers en Établissement de L'Alberta à L'accompagnement Des Nouveaux Arrivants En Santé Mentale*, also known as *Supporting Alberta's Settlement Counsellors with Clients with Mental Health Needs*, which was delivered in early 2020. As the first course tailored to serve Francophone agencies, AAISA was interested in learning about any feedback regarding the course.

The majority of interview participants indicated that they had attended the course or sent another staff member to attend. They shared that the course was attended by counsellors and frontline staff from a variety of different municipalities across Alberta. Participants stated that the course had been very well received and that it was a step in the right direction.

In addition, AAISA was interested in learning why certain agencies had not sent any staff to the training and if there had been any barriers to participation. Interview participants who did not take the training did not highlight any major barriers, but indicated that the topic of mental health was not a priority for their agency and clients at this time, and made suggestions on course offerings that they would find more beneficial (see below).

## **FUTURE COURSE CONTENT PRIORITIZATION**

In regard to future professional development content, the majority of interview participants highlighted the need for more case management training, needs assessment, as well as training on working with client with complex needs. In addition, other agencies also suggested training in areas such as program management, and other courses that align with other services offered outside the settlement and integration sector, such as housing and healthcare. Interview participants indicated this would allow for a better understanding of the overlap of these sectors with immigration and strengthen the overall settlement and integration process of newcomers.

## **II. COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES FOR FRANCOPHONE AGENCIES**

Throughout the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies* strategy, AAISA identified engagement projects and collaborative initiatives as an area where Francophone agencies were underrepresented and where attention should be focused to identify opportunities to increase participation.

In 2019, AAISA launched the Provincial Engagement Initiative (PEI) and the Group de Travail Provincial (GTP), or Francophone Working Group, in alignment with the collaborative initiatives approach of the strategy. With these initiatives in their early stages of implementation, AAISA wanted to understand Francophone agencies' initial experiences and gather feedback on

their potential to fulfil their intended objectives of supporting information sharing, coordination of services, and collaboration. Additionally, interview questions also looked to gather information on how to best support Francophone participation and representation in these initiatives and other collaborative spaces.

## **AWARENESS AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF AAISA'S COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES**

Interview participants were equally aware of AAISA's collaborative initiatives and reported that their initial experiences with PEI and GTP were positive. Interview participants supported their continued development, though the details of their respective objectives were unclear among individual interview participants. Additionally, participants expressed high confidence in the potential of PEI and GTP to support information sharing, encourage unification of Francophone agencies on shared issues, and to identify how Francophone and non-Francophone agencies can coordinate and collaborate to address challenges and gaps in service delivery. Accordingly, participants indicated that these initiatives are unfolding in a positive direction and it was voiced by almost all participants that PEI and GTP held strong potential to support information sharing, which is essential among small centers and for those agencies who operate under limited resources and unique challenges. Additional perspectives shared by interview participants included:

While most interview participants applauded the development of the Francophone-specific spaces within PEI and GTP, some participants shared the following feedback and reservations:

- **Require an element of advocacy:** Some participants strongly expressed that these spaces of engagement and collaboration ultimately need to include an element of advocacy to the provincial and federal government for the unique issues and realities of Francophone agencies and service delivery to newcomers
- **Require adequate resources:** Interview participants expressed that these initiatives need to be bolstered by supporting material, financial, and/or human resources to ensure that they can meet their intended objectives

## **COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE PRIORITIZATION**

As mentioned above, the objectives of AAISA's collaborative initiatives are to support information sharing, coordination of services and collaboration. Therefore, as part of this evaluation, AAISA was interested in learning which one of these objectives was the most important to participants and why.

Interview participants indicated that the wider scale representation and reach that such a group could have was very beneficial, especially when it came to collaboration and referrals. Some interview participants indicated that Francophone agencies in Alberta are generally quite small and being able to collaborate and learn from one another would truly increase their capacity and ultimately their service delivery to newcomers.



## INCREASING FRANCOPHONE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

Ensuring AAISA's different collaborative initiatives allow meaningful engagement of Francophone agencies is a priority for AAISA. Through the evaluation, interview participants were asked how AAISA could best support Francophone participation in these initiatives and projects, and the following ideas were suggested:

- **Providing meeting materials, documents and resources in French:** All interview participants stated that by providing appropriate meeting materials and other necessary resources in French, full Francophone engagement and comprehension would be more attainable. An interview participant shared that, "*Having the documents and materials in French in advance would be an advantage and improve comprehension as so much of [Francophone agencies'] work in is French.*"
- **Opportunities to influence meeting agendas:** One participant suggested that the ability to add to or influence meeting agendas directly would encourage participation as the items that some Francophone agencies want to discuss or bring forward are not chosen or left out of meeting agendas
- **In-person meeting frequency:** One participant suggested increasing the possibility and frequency of in-person meetings between AAISA and other Francophone agencies

Lastly, AAISA asked how to best ensure the specific needs and issues of Francophone agencies are represented in spaces where Francophone and non-Francophone agencies are convened. Interview participant's responses were characterized by the following themes:

- **Bolstering the Francophone sector's voice:** In spaces where there are both Francophone and non-Francophone agencies, the non-Francophone agencies often outnumber the Francophone agencies. Participants conclusively expressed that based on this imbalance of agencies, the voices and needs of Francophone agencies need to be bolstered so that they are heard and addressed
- **Increasing understanding of Francophone context:** To ensure Francophone representation in these spaces, interview participants indicated that there is a need for AAISA to learn each agencies' capacities and limitations in order to best represent their unique context, needs, and challenges. An interview participant stated that, "*AAISA must be fully aware of what is going on with Francophone agencies as some are quite young and small and do not have the time or financial recourses to build their capacity or to grow and establish themselves on all levels such as governance, management, and in delivery of their direct services.*"

## III. ANNUAL SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR SURVEY

The *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* has been released for two consecutive years in both official languages, and it has become a fundamental tool AAISA uses to collect valuable information from newcomer serving agencies across Alberta. The survey has allowed AAISA to



gain a better understanding of the changing needs and priorities of agencies, as well as gather information that informs programming across all AAISA's business units.

During the past two years, AAISA has noticed low participation from Francophone agencies in the survey. For AAISA to better support the sector, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the different contexts in which agencies operate. As a result, AAISA was interested in learning ways in which it could increase engagement and participation of Francophone agencies, as well as areas of interest to be included in future *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Surveys*.

## **INCREASING FRANCOPHONE AGENCY SURVEY PARTICIPATION**

In relation to increasing participation in future surveys, some interview participants indicated a preference to be contacted by phone in order to fill out the survey. This was especially expressed by some participants in small centres, where they indicated that due to small size agencies their time and capacity were limited. In addition, it was mentioned that having access to previous data and reports could increase agencies' interest to participate. Even though previous reports are already available in both official languages on AAISA's website, it was suggested to include them when sending out the invitation for the following survey.

## **AREAS OF INTEREST TO BE INCLUDED IN THE UPCOMING SECTOR SURVEY**

Interview participants indicated that in future sector surveys they would like to see something regarding referrals, not only between Francophone agencies, but also with Anglophone agencies. Other agencies also indicated that there was a need to learn or have a better understanding of the work that other agencies were doing and suggested the idea of a forum or discussion panel for agencies. Other interview participants indicated that there was an interest to learn about clients' needs, clients' location, and what determines a newcomer's willingness to relocate to another city or province. Unfortunately, some of these topics are outside of the scope of AAISA's survey but are topics that could be pursued as research projects or through different collaborative initiatives.

## **IV. DIRECT DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT**

Direct dialogue and engagement activities allow for relationship building with agencies that enables AAISA to gain a stronger understanding of individual agencies and their unique contexts. Such engagement is conducted through a variety of forms, including one-on-one meetings with individual agencies as well as regular teleconferences and in-person meetings with groups of agencies when feasible. Through the strategy evaluation, AAISA was interested in gaining a better understanding of Francophone agencies' preferences on these forms of direct dialogue and engagement.

As part of the evaluation, interview participants were asked to rate these engagement activities from a scale of 1 (low preference) to 5 (high preference). Overall, participants had the strongest preference for regular teleconferences with a rating of 4.4/5. This was followed by in-person

meetings with AAISA and other Francophone agencies, and one-on-one meeting with AAISA staff, with ratings of 4.2/5 and 4/5, respectively (Figure 1).

In addition to rating these engagement activities, interview participants were asked to explain the reasoning behind their preferences. Some participants indicated that although they had ranked teleconferences as the strongest preference, there was a lot of support for in-person and one-on-one meetings if cost was not a limitation. Interview participants indicated that In-person engagement is ideal because leads to stronger relationship building and engagement with both AAISA and other agencies, but that they are also aware of its limitations.

Participants indicated that teleconferences were often preferred due to its high feasibility and low cost and indicated ways to make teleconferences more beneficial for Francophone agencies. For instance, one interview participants stated that *“Teleconferences are essential to our work but they are always in English. It would be very beneficial if AAISA extended its bilingual teleconference capacity as the information shared is relevant to all organizations in the settlement and integration sector. This type of engagement would allow us to speak and communicate in French and it is the most important for us.”*

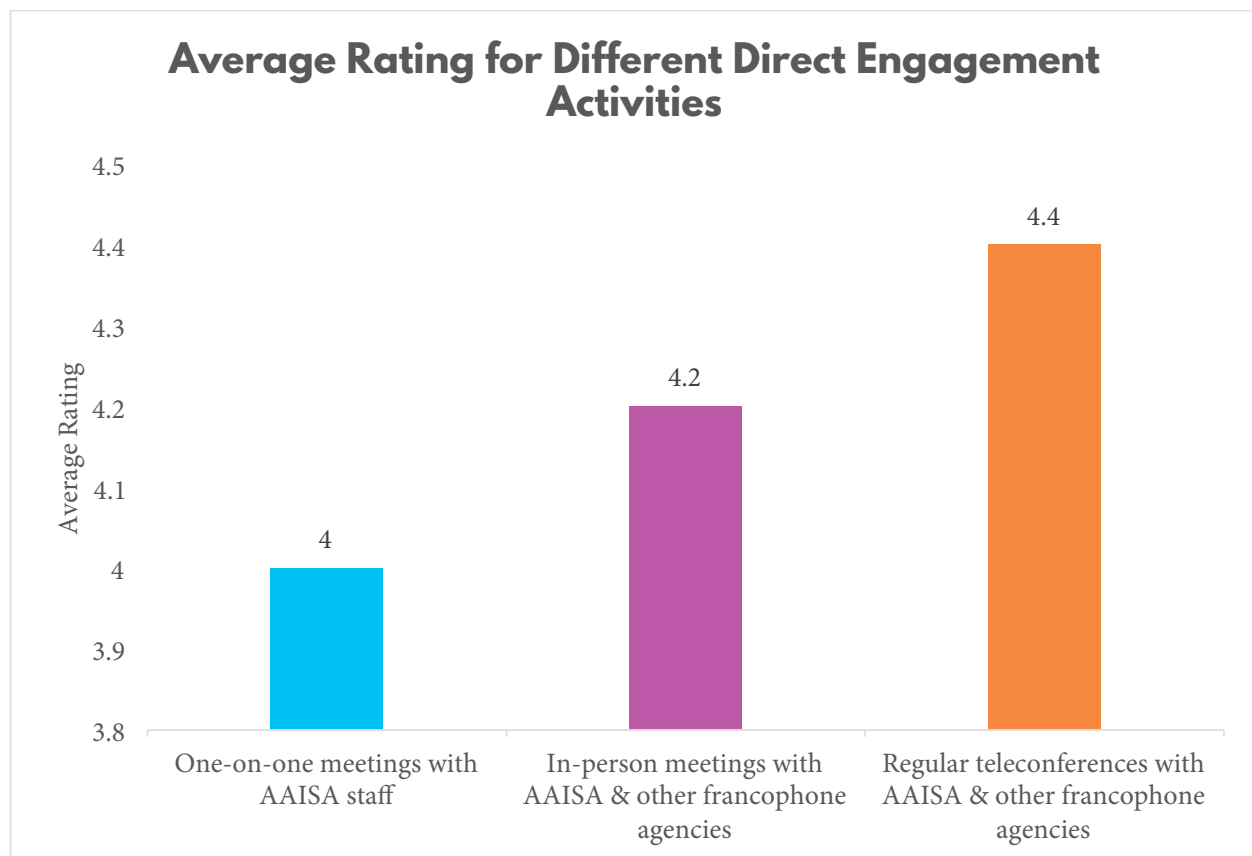


Figure 1.1. Average rating preference for different direct engagement activities.

## **V. SECTOR PROTOCOLS**

An area of work AAISA previously explored as part of its efforts to support agency capacity development, focused on creating template protocols, policies, and procedures that agencies could adapt and implement to their context. Such protocols are intended to add capacity to smaller agencies and those in small centres, where limitations in time and resources may be an issue. While development in this area was halted in 2019, AAISA was interested in knowing if sector protocols was an aspect of the strategy that Francophone agencies had interest in seeing AAISA continue to explore in the future, and/or include it to the already existing Small Centre Toolkit.

The majority of agencies were strongly interested in the possibility of the development of sector protocols. Interview participants shared that they saw these tools as a support that would contribute to the professionalization and improved efficiency of the sector, and that this would allow Francophone agencies to dedicate more time and resources to service delivery and achieving improvements in this area. Other participants indicated that they were unsure what this would look like exactly, but highlighted that even learning from the best practices of larger agencies or being able to see samples on how to conduct things such as needs assessments, would be very helpful. Some of the agencies that did not feel this was a priority at the time, stated that it could potentially increase their capacity but that investing time and efforts in professional development would have a greater impact. In regard to including sector protocols in the existing Small Centre Toolkit, half of the participants seemed very interest and the remaining participants indicated they were not familiar with this tool and preferred not to comment.

## **VI. BILINGUAL RESOURCES**

As an umbrella organization, AAISA's work to build capacity among agencies who provide services to newcomers often results in the production of numerous resources, including reports, briefing documents, surveys, tools, and other documents. While AAISA works to ensure equal access to all resources in both official languages, capacity limitations entail that prioritization between resources must occur. Through the evaluation, AAISA gathered information to understand which types of resources should be prioritized for translation.

### **PRIORITIES FOR BILINGUAL RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

Interview participants identified those resources that increase Francophone comprehension, encourage the improvement and expansion of services, and foster improved Francophone accommodation and inclusivity within AAISA activities as priorities for translation.

Interview participants equally stressed the need to create the same level of available English resources in French as well. To better accommodate Francophone agencies in meetings and other styles of engagement, interview participants suggested that core documents, meeting materials, and meeting minutes should be especially prioritized to ensure all parties are equally benefiting from and contributing to these spaces. Additionally, some interview participants proposed the

translation of existing professional development course content, which they highlighted as highly beneficial.

## TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As a part of the services that AAISA offers to its members, AAISA conducts several member-driven research projects. To ensure that a Francophone sector lens is represented through these research projects, AAISA was interested in gathering feedback on potential topics for future research projects. Participating Francophone agencies proposed the following topics:

**Best practices and improved service delivery:** Some interview participants indicated that they would benefit from learning about best practices with clients and resources in French regarding needs assessment and case management. Other participants indicated that resources on employment and labour market integration for newcomer in small centres would be very beneficial, as small agencies often do not have the resources to develop anything on their own and sometimes there are not any places to refer clients to.

**Virtual service delivery:** Another participant suggested that as their agency is looking for ways to extent their ability to provide services through new channels and extend their reach, they would be interested to see AAISA approach a research project on the topic of delivering tools and services at-a-distance or virtually to newcomers.

**Language requirements:** It was mentioned that some Francophone agencies struggle to approach newcomers who are outside of eligibility for IRCC funded language classes. An interview participant suggested that a research project based on navigating barriers to obtaining language requirements could support Francophone agencies' ability to advise vulnerable clients in these cases.

## VII. FRANCOPHONE STAFF

In the original consultation to develop the strategy, focus group participants emphasized the importance of having a dedicated staff to build relationships with Francophone agencies and to advance activities specific to the Francophone sector. Having implemented certain activities to date without an existing Francophone staff person, the evaluation looked to garner further understanding about the degree to which such a position was required to ensure the success of the activities outlined in the strategy.

### FRANCOPHONE STAFF POSITION PRIORITY AND APPROACH

In relation to having a Francophone staff position at AAISA, interview participants indicated they perceived such a position as fundamental to engage and support Francophone agencies in the long-term. When asked to rate the importance of such a position to the success of engagement with the Francophone sector and the success of the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomers Serving Agencies* strategy, there was an average rating of 4.8/5. In terms of necessary requirements to fulfill this staff position, interview participants shared conflicting opinions. Some participants indicated that this staff position could be held by a bilingual person

who could improve communication lines between all parties and aid in the facilitation of necessary collaborative spaces in both languages. Contrastingly, a differing participant stated that such a position should be held by a Francophone person who was able to communicate effectively in both languages and culturally understand how Francophone agencies conduct and approach their work in the sector.

Participants highlighted that the strategy was designed to enhance support for Francophone agencies and as such, this position was perceived as necessary to fully realize its objective, to improve understanding of the Francophone context, and to facilitate the development of collaborative systems of service providers in a meaningful way. Additionally, interview participants felt that it was necessary for clarity and full comprehension, as often, the information, resources, collaborative efforts, and project details shared through meetings and teleconferences is not fully understood or absorbed by Francophone agencies who predominately work and speak in French. In this way, such a position is then essential to improving communication across the Francophone sector.

## **PERCEPTIONS ON A PART-TIME STAFFING SOLUTION**

Interview participants were asked whether they thought a part-time Francophone staff position at AAISA could fulfill the activities of the strategy. It was strongly expressed that a part-time Francophone staff position would be insufficient and that a part-time position would not be able to effectively implement the strategy, based on their limited availability. It was further expressed that a part-time position could be helpful to support certain activities within the strategy, such as with translation support for key documents and meeting materials, however, participating agencies expressed that a part-time staff position was not ideal.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In efforts to best advance the strategy and the activities within it, the following section outlines ways in which to address the recommendations and feedback highlighted by interview participants. Implementation of these recommendations, as well as specific approaches in the strategy will develop over time, and will require AAISA to further develop resources and expand its capacity in French. As such, this section of the evaluation report highlights some of the areas where implementation will be challenged, as well as where AAISA can focus its efforts in the short to medium term. To this end, it concludes with key next steps for AAISA's focused efforts.

### **I. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- There is a need for AAISA to offer Francophone professional development content, especially regarding case management and needs assessment. These are courses that AAISA has offered in the past, but they have only been offered in English and therefore, there is a need for the content to be recreated, updated, and translated for delivery to Francophone agencies.

Create training and/or identify alternative opportunities for agencies to learn about the services outside of the settlement and integration sector, such as housing and healthcare.

Whether this would look like a regular professional development course or not, is something to be explored. Interview participants indicated that something of this nature would increase their knowledge and capacity, as well as ability to refer clients.

Continue to use the *Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* to inform future professional development content, to further encourage Francophone agencies to participate. This is in addition to the other recommendations made to increase participation in the Annual Settlement and Integration Sector Survey, outlined in the subsection below.

Moreover, AAISA should also use other channels such as one-on-one meetings and teleconferences, to gather information on professional development needs of Francophone agencies, as these can often change quickly, and the sector survey may not capture these changes based on its annual delivery.

## **II. COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES FOR FRANCOPHONE AGENCIES**

- Continue to work on developing collaborative initiatives and spaces such as GTP for Francophone agencies to communicate, share information, and share their priorities with AAISA. These collaborative initiatives provide opportunities for agencies to increase knowledge on each agency's work and therefore, increase the potential for referrals, which interview participants indicated as a high priority.
- AAISA should aim to offer meeting agendas and minutes in French when possible to allow for greater collaboration with Francophone agencies. However, this is dependent on AAISA having a Francophone staff member, an in-house translator, or another viable solution, based on the number and frequency of meetings.

## **III. ANNUAL SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR SURVEY**

- AAISA should engage with Francophone agencies through phone calls to remind them of the sector survey, or potentially allow individuals to conduct the survey through the phone, to increase participation. Similarly, another option would be to allow some agencies to conduct the survey during one-on-one meetings with AAISA staff. Such options would largely depend on AAISA's staff capacity and the timing of the survey release.
- AAISA should include the previous year's sector survey infographics when sending out the invitation to fill out the new survey. This would show agencies how the information and data collected are being used, which can encourage them to participate.
- During the interviews, there seemed to be a lack of awareness regarding the sector survey. Therefore, AAISA should find different channels to mobilize knowledge and the information gathered through the survey so as to reach more agencies.



## **IV. DIRECT DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT**

- AAISA should provide opportunities for Francophone agencies to have regular teleconferences, to build relationships between agencies and with AAISA, to support information sharing, and to foster collaboration. Ideally, teleconferences should be in French and, when not possible, AAISA should aim to provide meeting agendas and minutes in French.
- AAISA should continue to provide opportunities for direct dialogue and engagement through one-on-one meetings in French whenever possible, as this develops a clear understanding of each agency's context.

## **V. SECTOR PROTOCOLS**

- A strategy that could advance this approach would be to explore the possibility of gathering protocols and samples on best practices and larger agencies to share with the wider sector before developing new ones, as currently, there was no specific protocol highlighted by interview participants as needed.
- If AAISA collected a variety of protocols and samples to share with the wider sector, this could be done through the Small Centre Toolkit. However, AAISA would need to improve its knowledge mobilization plan and share the Toolkit through different channels and mechanisms to reach a larger audience and to increase awareness and access.

## **VI. BILINGUAL RESOURCES**

- AAISA should provide meeting agendas and minutes in French, to ensure all important information and details are effectively communicated and completely understood by all involved parties in collaborative spaces. However, this is dependent on AAISA having a Francophone staff member, an in-house translator, or another viable solution, based on the number and frequency of meetings.
- Continue to offer translation of reports, documents, and materials that AAISA develops.

## **VII. FRANCOPHONE STAFF**

- Having a dedicated position for executing key approaches in the strategy, such as collaborative initiatives and direct dialogue and engagement, is critical to its success. As such, AAISA should prioritize fund development efforts and for expanding French language capacity when hiring.

Of the approaches outlined in the strategy, the evaluation found that interview participants prioritized the acquisition of a Francophone staff person, the provision of collaborative initiatives in French, and increased availability of professional development in French. When asked whether there were any pertinent approaches that were missing from the strategy, it was



emphasized that rather than adding any additional elements, the priority was for AAISA to continue to develop and implement those approaches that already exist within the strategy. Based on the limitations in capacity and the more gradual progress that has been made in implementing the strategy's approaches to date, this is valuable guidance that will influence AAISA's next steps in both the short- and medium-term.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- AAISA will prioritize the acquisition of French language capacity through fund development efforts and hiring; this will look to fill a position to advance key approaches within the strategy as well as to expand capacity in existing positions
- In alignment with the needs expressed for support in relation to information on the broader network of services, such as with health care and housing, AAISA will be releasing resources in French on these topics that will be made available in the Small Centres Toolkit in April 2020
- AAISA will explore strategies and approaches to meet translation needs, such as exploring freelance translation option for meeting materials, resources, and materials for self-paced professional development course content
- AAISA will work to develop definitions of AAISA's frequently used terms and develop shared vocabulary to enhance mutual understanding where possible. For example, when AAISA refers to coordination of services, its definition includes aspects of Francophone agency's priority related to enhancing referrals
- AAISA will undertake an assessment of calendar details, agendas, minutes, and other meeting materials to determine where standard French language meeting resources can be developed, particularly in relation to regularly recurring teleconferences

## CONCLUSION

The evaluation of *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomers Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA* provided an opportunity to garner insight into the strategy, its approaches, and key considerations for its future implementation. It also served as an opportunity for AAISA to hear from interview participants on their experiences with the implementation of aspects of the strategy thus far. Additionally, the evaluation provided information that supports AAISA's ability to make strategic decisions related to the investment of resources and areas to focus and prioritize. In a context of limited resource and staff capacity, this additional insight is essential to ensure that AAISA's efforts best meet the needs of the sector amidst capacity limitations.

The interviews conducted through this evaluation reflected that despite limitations in capacity and in implementation of the strategy's approaches, positive progress had been made since its release in March 2019. Interview participants expressed acknowledgement of AAISA's effort to further engage with Francophone sector and these efforts were positively received by their respective agencies. Along with this acknowledgement of this initial progress, the evaluation of the *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomers Serving Agencies* has provided AAISA with

enhanced understanding of agencies perspectives and concrete recommendations on which to build further momentum and progress.

# APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have any questions before we get started?
2. What are your general/overall thoughts on the strategy?

## APPROACHES IN-PROGRESS:

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)

3. AAISA recently developed a course for Francophone agencies on mental health. This course is currently in progress.
  - a) Is there someone from your agency who is participating?
    1. If yes, what level of staff are attending? Management or other?
    2. If not, why? What barriers do you or your staff face when seeking AAISA certification or registering in courses?
  - b) In terms of future course creation, what content would you and your agency like to see AAISA prioritize?

## COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES FOR FRANCOPHONE AGENCIES

4. AAISA's collaborative initiatives convene stakeholders **with the purposes of information sharing, coordination of services, and collaboration on shared issues.** In the fall and early winter of 2019, AAISA launched the PEI (Provincial Engagement Initiative) and the GTP (Group de Travail Provincial) in alignment with the 'collaborative initiatives' activities in the strategy; they are in early stages.
  - a) Are you familiar with these initiatives?
  - b) Do you think that these initiatives have the potential to support information sharing, coordination of services, and collaboration on shared issues?
  - c) Of these purposes, which is most important to your agency and why?
  - d) Through PEI and GTP, AAISA aims to create Francophone specific spaces and adapt approaches to support increased Francophone agency participation more broadly. To what degree do you think these initiatives have the potential to meet these objectives?
  - e) In addition to French facilitation capacity and meeting materials, what processes and facilitation techniques would best support your participation in these initiatives and other AAISA initiatives and projects?
  - f) In spaces convening Francophone and non-Francophone agencies, how can AAISA best ensure the needs and issues of Francophone agencies are represented?

## ANNUAL SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR SURVEY

9. The Annual Sector Survey is a tool that allows AAISA to track trends across the province and informs programming across all AAISA's business units. It supports the identification of priorities for research and course offerings. The survey has been released twice, in both French and English. In the past, the participation rate among Francophone agencies in the Annual Sector Survey has been low.
- a) With the next Sector Survey approaching in April, how can we increase Francophone participation?
- b) Is there anything specific that you would like AAISA to include in the upcoming survey?

## NON-IMPLEMENTED APPROACHES:

### DIRECT DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

10. Please rate the value of the following activities from **1 to 5**, with **1 being of low value and 5 being highly valuable**:
- i. One on one meetings with AAISA staff
  - ii. In person meetings with AAISA and other Francophone agencies
  - iii. Regular teleconferences with AAISA and other Francophone agencies
11. Out of these engagement activities, which would be your highest priority and why?

### SECTOR PROTOCOLS

This approach essentially refers to template protocols, policies, or procedures that agencies can then adapt to their unique context and implement. These are intended to add capacity to organizations who have limited time and resources.

12. At this moment, development has been cancelled as this project was defunded. However, AAISA is interested in knowing if sector protocols are something that your agency would still like to see eventually come to fruition.
- a) Is this something that your agency would like to see AAISA continue to explore?

### BILINGUAL RESOURCES

13. What types of existing resources would be most useful for AAISA to prioritize for translation?
- a) Are there currently any AAISA resources that you would like to access but are not available in French? Which ones?
14. Are there currently any research priorities or projects that you would like to see AAISA pursue over the next year, that would be of benefit to your agency? If so, how?

### FRANCOPHONE STAFF

15. On a scale from 1 to 5, how important is Francophone staff person to the success of the strategy and why?
16. How well could a part-time Francophone staff fulfil the activities of the strategy?

## **CLOSING QUESTIONS**

17. Overall, which activities in the strategy are your agency's highest priorities?
18. In your perspective, are there elements that are missing in the strategy?
19. Is there anything else you would like to share?

## **APPENDIX II: STRATEGY SUMMARY**

### **SUMMARY OF INCREASING SUPPORT FOR FRANCOPHONE NEWCOMER SERVING AGENCIES: A STRATEGY FOR AAISA**

#### **PURPOSE**

*Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA* was designed to complement and further support the work that has been undertaken by newcomer-serving agencies themselves, RIFA, and different levels of government, to make Alberta a welcoming community.

This Strategy is intended to build AAISA's ability to effectively support Francophone newcomer serving agencies serving newcomers. The activities within the strategy are intended to build AAISA's capacity to support Francophone agencies in a manner that results in positive outcomes for both agencies and the newcomers they serve.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

Collaborative system development, representation, and capacity building are hallmarks of AAISA's organizational mandate and are subsequently tied to the foundational objectives in this strategy.

Briefly, with this strategy AAISA aims to:

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

#### **APPROACH**

To achieve the stated purpose and objectives of this strategy, the following activities have been identified. Developed based on consultations with Francophone agencies and the scope of AAISA's mandate, these activities involve all business units within the organization.

## I. FRANCOPHONE STAFF

AAISA strongly believes a Francophone staff position is essential to the success of this strategy. The position would be responsible for understanding the complexities of the Francophone newcomer community and ensuring that the needs of the Francophone sector are well represented in the programs and initiatives across all AAISA's business units.

### ACTIVITIES

The activities that the Francophone 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.
- **Direct dialogue and engagement:** Activities related to direct dialogue and engagement with agencies, through agency visits and regular communications.
- **Identifying research priorities:** Through working with agencies, the Francophone position will work to identify research needs and work with the Engagement, Research, and Policy unit to fill gaps.
- **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.
- **Partnership building:** Building relationships and advancing partnership with key stakeholders and actors in the Francophone sector.

## 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. 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 and Integration Council (NSIC) 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. In advance of the National Settlement and Integration Council meetings, AAISA provides briefing materials to delegates, including a briefing document specific to the priorities of the Francophone sector. 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**
- **Engagement projects and collaborative initiatives**
- **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.

### 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. These visits will ensure AAISA can obtain a better understanding of Francophone service providers, their needs, and dynamics across the province.

#### 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.

### IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Currently AAISA's professional development courses are most often not offered in French, and there is 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. With the success of a funding proposal in early 2019 with Alberta's Ministry of Labour, AAISA has secured funding to develop and deliver its first French course specifically designed in response to needs of the Francophone sector.

#### ACTIVITIES

- **Course development:** AAISA is currently in the process of developing is delivering its first course on mental health in French, which should be delivered by the fall of 2019. 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.

## V. SECTOR PROTOCOLS

This project was intended to support organizational capacity development through the development of different protocol and policy resources, that agencies could adapt and implement in their context. While the project was defunded in 2019, AAISA is exploring opportunities to support resource development in alignment with sector needs.

### 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.

## 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 the Annual Sector Survey.

### ACTIVITIES

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

## 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.

### 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 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.

#### 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.

The full report of *Increasing Support for Francophone Newcomer Serving Agencies: A Strategy for AAISA* can be accessed at <https://aaisa.ca/research/aaisa-francophone-engagement-strategy-2019/>