

SMALL CENTRE TOOLKIT

**ASSESSMENT SURVEY
REPORT**

MARCH 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT NOTICE	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
PURPOSE	3
PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY	4
FINDINGS	4
Usage	4
Accessibility and Navigability	6
Utility and Impact.....	7
Further Development.....	9
Additional Information	11
RECOMMENDATIONS	11
CONCLUSION	12
APPENDIX I	14

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The content of this document is protected by Copyright © 2020 Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA). All Rights Reserved. No part of this document including, but not limited to, the text, graphics, images, logos may be modified, reproduced, transmitted, distributed, publicly displayed or utilized for any commercial purpose, in any form, by any means, in whole or in part, without AAISA's specific written permission. This Copyright Notice is an integral part of this document and shall not be removed or altered.

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 those who participated in the *Small Centre Toolkit* assessment survey. 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) works with agencies across the province to build capacity through a variety of engagement, research, and professional development activities. A key strategy guiding the work of AAISA’s Engagement, Research, and Policy department relates to providing supports to agencies in Alberta’s Small Centres to facilitate collaboration and capacity building specific to the needs and context of service delivery in these communities.

As part of the Small Centres portfolio, AAISA developed the online Small Centre Toolkit which was launched in April 2019. This Toolkit was intended to compile resources and tools that would support staff at agencies and fill gaps in available information, training supports, and agency capacity limitations. To ensure that the structure and contents of the Toolkit were aligned with agency needs, AAISA undertook extensive consultation with representatives from agencies through site visits, a survey, and through the quarterly teleconferences AAISA hosts with Small Centre agencies. Having developed resources in alignment with the results of this consultation, AAISA’s launch of the Toolkit with agencies took place through a virtual presentation to support orientation and access.

As a support that was conceptualized as a “living” resource repository that would grow over time, AAISA undertook an assessment of the Toolkit in early 2020, which was funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). This assessment was intended to maintain continuity with the stakeholder-informed process of development and looked to evaluate the Small Centre Toolkit in order to ensure that it was aligned with the needs of Small Centre agencies.

This report outlines the results of the assessment that was carried out in February 2020. It starts by outlining the assessments purpose and methodology, before describing the findings. Its final section outlines key recommendations and next steps for AAISA’s work with the Small Centre Toolkit. This report concludes by finding that there are key aspects of the Toolkit that have provided support to agencies in Alberta’s Small Centres, and that focused attention on bringing about improvements to accessibility, navigability, and developing additional resources can ensure further impact.

PURPOSE

AAISA is committed to ensuring that the *Small Centre Toolkit* is a resource that evolves to reflect the unique suite of needs experienced by Small Centre agencies in Alberta. Furthermore, before developing additional resources to add to the *Small Centre Toolkit*, AAISA conducted an evaluation to better understand agencies’ experiences with it, whether it meets Small Centre needs, and how it could be more impactful. Through the assessment, AAISA looked to understand key aspects of the *Toolkit’s* impact, including its overall usefulness for Small Centre agencies as well as its accessibility and navigability. The assessment further looked to provide

insights that can inform future development of the *Toolkit* and support prioritization for AAISA's investment of future resources.

Through the responses and information gathered through this assessment, AAISA aims to:

- Understand the ability of the *Toolkit* to meet the needs of Small Centre agencies
- Identify any gaps or challenges with the current *Toolkit* platform and the resources available
- Determine what supports may be needed to streamline the *Toolkit's* accessibility
- Prioritize specific areas for future work and tool development

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The *Small Centre Toolkit* assessment was conducted through an online survey. The online survey consisted of 11 questions in total with seven of these questions being multiple-choice, three open-ended questions, and one rating question. This survey was sent out by email to AAISA's main contacts from Small Centre newcomer-serving agencies across the province of Alberta, who work primarily at the management or senior leadership level of the organization. Contacts were also asked to further distribute the survey to relevant staff who had used the *Toolkit*. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and participation was voluntary and could be completed anonymously. For the full questionnaire, please see Appendix I.

FINDINGS

The section outlines the findings of the *Small Centre Toolkit* assessment in relation to its usage, accessibility and navigability, impact on Small Centre agencies' work, and opportunities for further development. The following findings are presented in a way that reflects the questions asked in the survey.

USAGE

After launching the *Small Centre Toolkit* in April 2019, AAISA was interested in determining if the *Toolkit* was being used by Small Centre agencies, and if so, how often it was being used. As illustrated in Figure 1, 84.6% of respondents have used the *Toolkit* a few times, while 7.7% of respondents use the *Toolkit* frequently and another 7.7% had not used it at all.

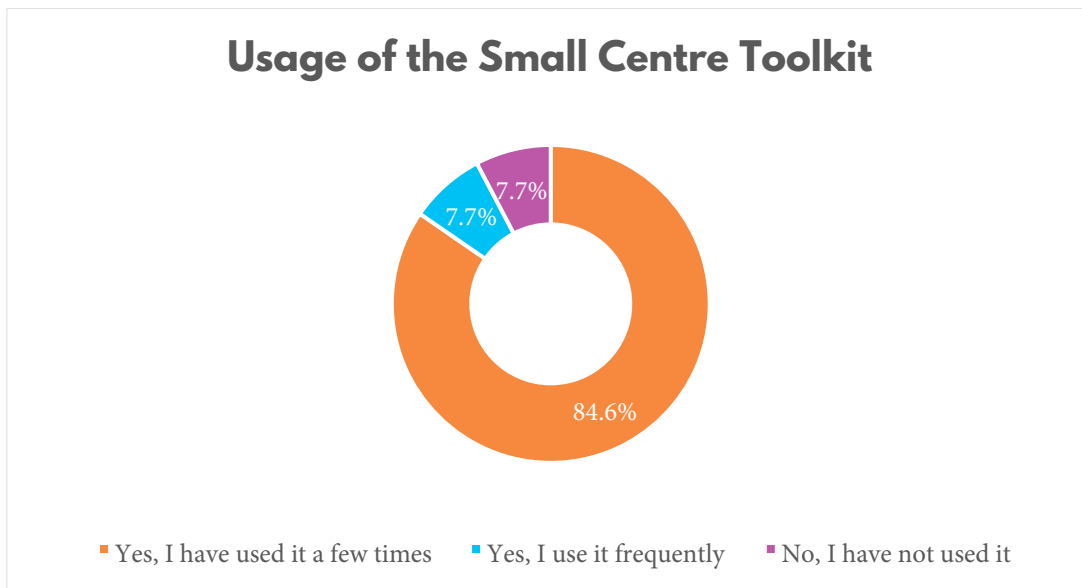


Figure 1: Survey respondents use of the *Small Centre Toolkit*.

AAISA was also interested to know if survey respondents knew if other staff at their agency had used the *Toolkit*. As shown in Figure 2, 53.8% of respondents did not know if other staff at their agencies were using the *Toolkit*. Of those who knew of *Toolkit* usage at their agency, 30.8% of respondents reported that other staff at their agency used the *Toolkit*, while 15.4% of respondents identified that other staff at their agency were not using it.

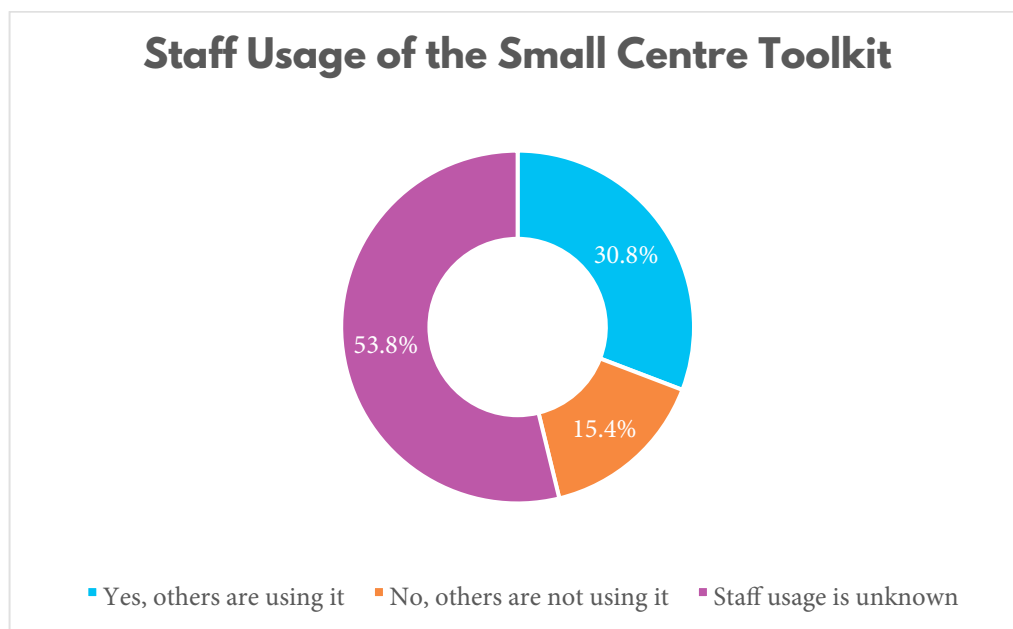


Figure 2: Staff usage of the *Small Centre Toolkit*.

To explore why agencies were not using the *Toolkit*, the survey asked respondents to explain why the *Toolkit* was not being used. Survey respondents highlighted the *Toolkit's* accessibility as a barrier to use, as the online platform is not easy to locate and the required login credentials were often unavailable or created additional steps, making it easier for agency staff to seek alternative resources. Further explanations of infrequent usage pertained to the *Toolkit's* content. For some respondents, the *Toolkit's* content does not support their professional development (PD) or knowledge building, a theme that was especially true for respondents who offer language services. Other respondents attributed their low usage of the *Toolkit* to the numerous links to resources that are either broken or lead to PDF documents that are lengthy and as a result, deter them from using the *Toolkit*. Finally, other respondents shared that they had been unaware of the *Toolkit* and the resources within it or had just recently become aware of it. Specific aspects of these findings on barriers to usage are further explored in the following sections outlining findings related to accessibility and navigability, as well as utility and impact.

ACCESSIBILITY AND NAVIGABILITY

To better understand agencies' experiences using the *Small Centre Toolkit*, the assessment survey asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) how accessible and navigable they felt the *Small Centre Toolkit* was. As presented in Figure 3, 85.0% of respondents rated the *Toolkit's* accessibility and navigability at or above 3, with the remaining 15.0% rating it at 2 or below.

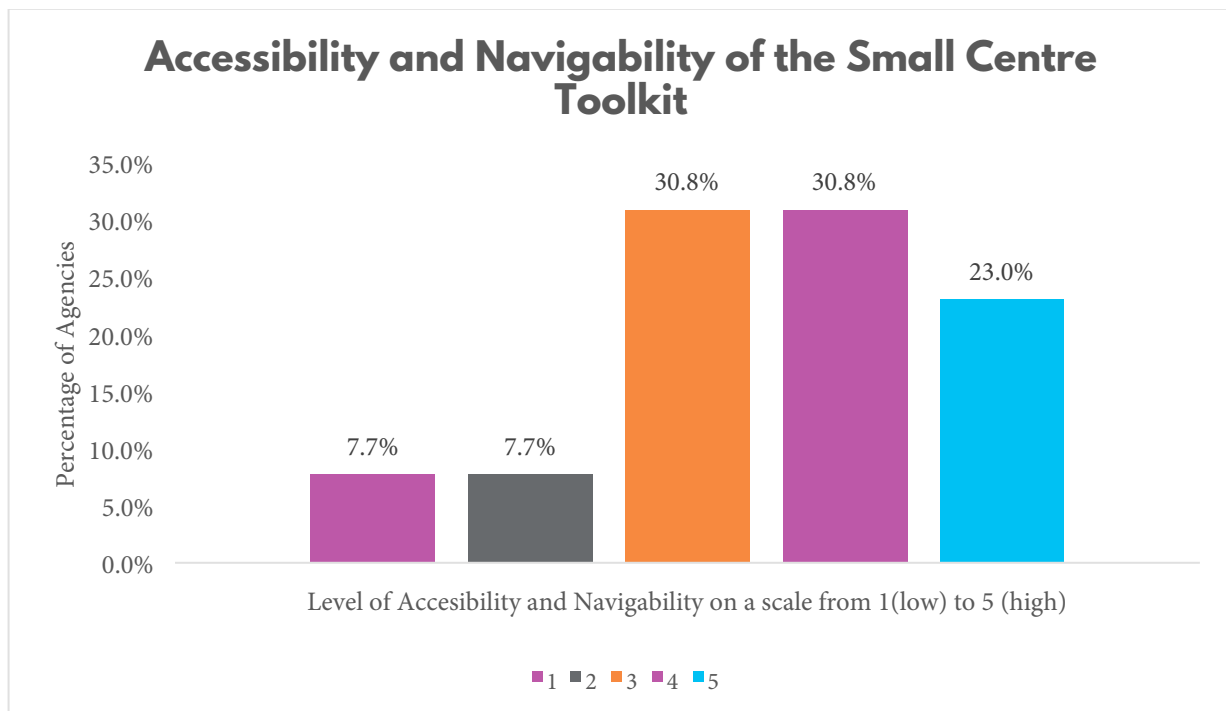


Figure 3: The *Small Center Toolkit's* accessibility and navigability on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

To identify what supports may be needed to improve the *Toolkit's* accessibility and navigability for agencies' staff, the survey asked respondents to choose one out of three options (Figure 4), or to suggest another one.

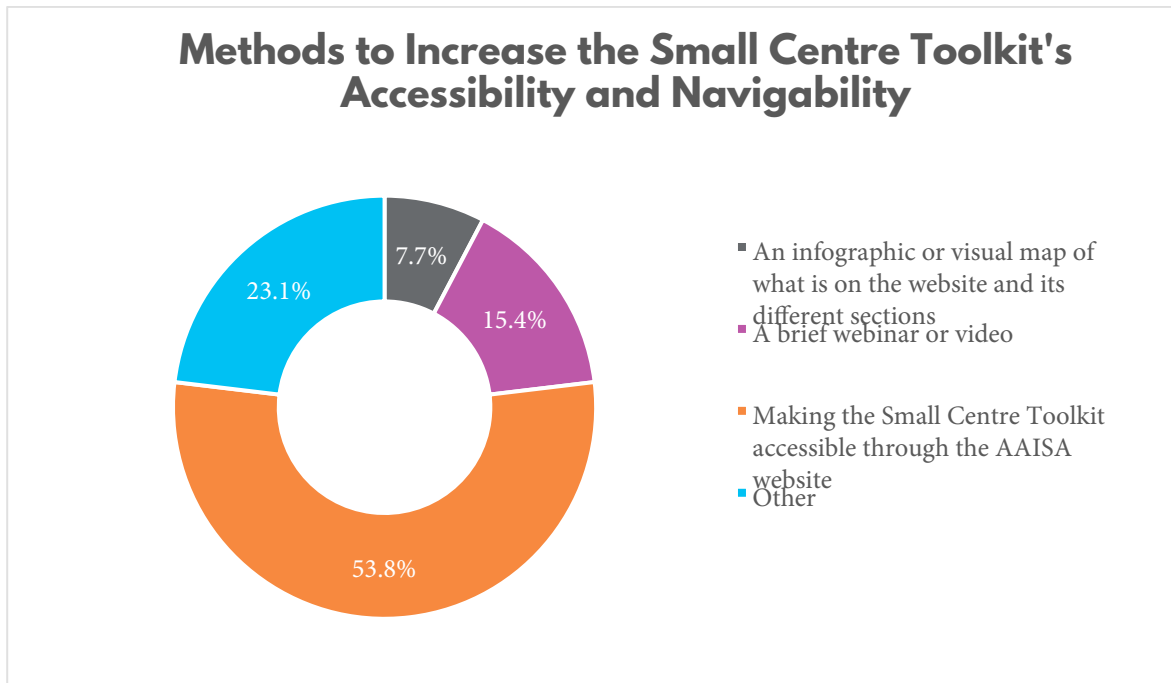


Figure 4: Approaches to increase the *Small Centre Toolkit's* accessibility and navigability.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the most popular suggestion to increase the *Toolkit's* accessibility and navigability was to make the *Toolkit* accessible through AAISA's website, which was indicated by 53.8% of respondents. With 23.1% of respondents, the second most popular suggestion was a collection of alternatives suggested by respondents themselves. For instance, one survey respondent suggested simplifying the *Toolkit* website to increase its accessibility and to make it more navigable, while another respondent suggested encouraging agencies to integrate the *Toolkit* into their onboarding package for new hires. Lastly, a third respondent recommended to upgrade the *Toolkit's* search functions and introduce a filtering option. This respondent further recommended a website called HelpSeeker that the *Toolkit* could be modeled after, which includes extensive filtering options.

UTILITY AND IMPACT

While the previous findings explored how agencies have experienced the *Small Centre Toolkit* at a more general level, this section describes respondents’ experiences with the contents of the *Toolkit* and the whether they had any impact on agencies. The *Toolkit* is categorized into six different sections, with resources populating each section correspondingly. The assessment survey asked respondents which sections of the *Toolkit* they found to be most useful, and their responses are represented in Figure 5. Of the sections of the *Toolkit*, the *Categories of Classification* was reported as the most useful by 33.3% of survey respondents. The *Access to Services* was rated most useful by 25.0% respondents. The sections for *Terms and Definitions*, *Diversity and Inclusion*, and the *Service Map* each received 8.3% of respondents selecting them as the most useful sections.

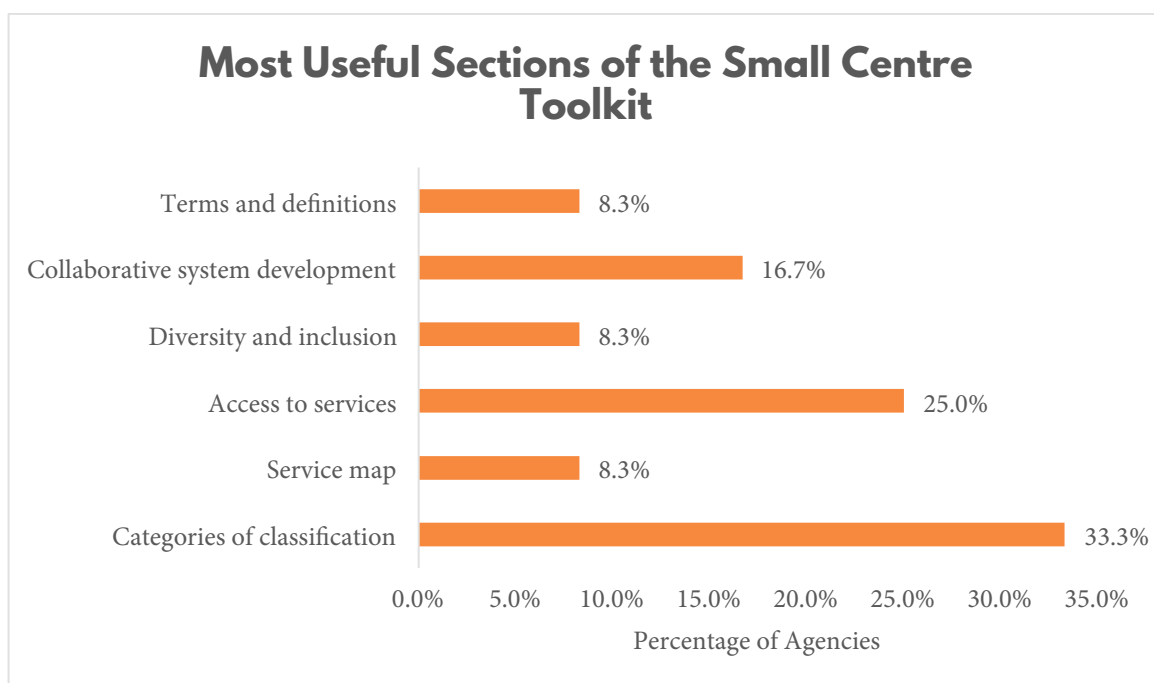


Figure 5: Usefulness of the different sections of the *Small Centre Toolkit*.

To assess the impact of the *Toolkit* and the resources developed to date, the assessment survey asked what impact the *Toolkit* or any of its resources had on respondents’ work. Figure 6 demonstrates that 30.8% of participating agencies said the *Toolkit* had a positive impact on their work, 46.2% said that it had somewhat of a positive impact on their work, and finally, 23.0% of respondents said that the *Toolkit* has had no impact on their work. As reflected in Figure 6, there were twice as many respondents who said that the *Toolkit* had somewhat of a positive impact (46.2%) than those who said it had no impact on their work (23.0%).

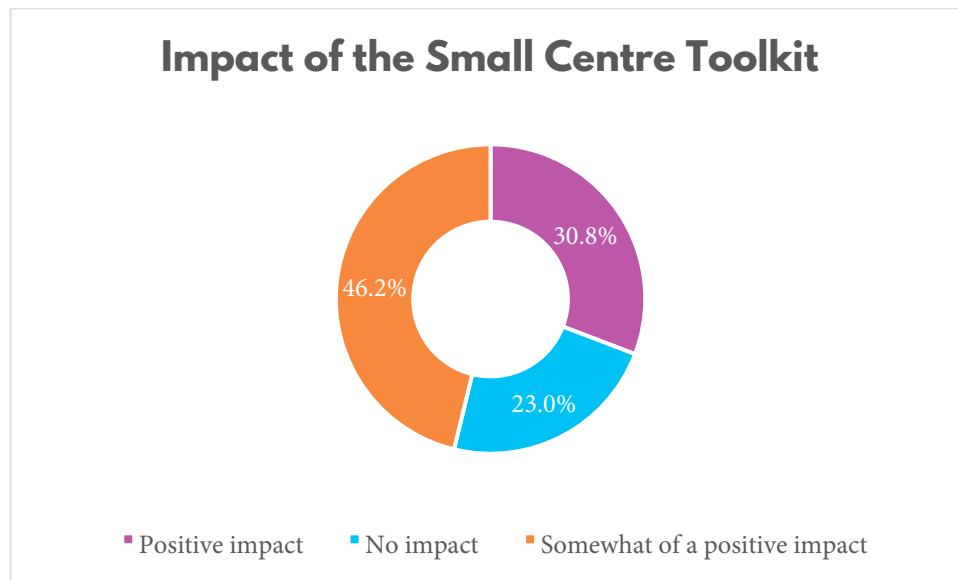


Figure 6: Impact of the *Small Centre Toolkit* and its resources on respondents’ work.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

As the *Small Centre Toolkit* was developed with the intention of being a growing resource repository, AAISA was interested in getting feedback from assessment survey respondents that could be used to inform future resource development. To this end, survey respondents were asked to choose a section of the Toolkit to be prioritized for further development and were provided space to explain their selection. They were further asked about different topics that they would prioritize for resource development (Figure 7).

Toolkit section preferences for further development

The section of the *Toolkit* that was selected the most among survey respondents was the *Service Map*. To further develop and improve upon the *Service Map*’s utility, respondents suggested that the description and instructions found on the website be clarified. Respondents also suggested to place the *Service Map* as the centerpiece of the *Toolkit* to bolster its accessibility and utility.

The *Collaborative Systems Development* section of the *Toolkit* was selected as the second highest priority for further development. Respondents shared that this section could be further enhanced by adding more resources for front-line staff, such as settlement counsellors, as well as resources targeted at management. Additionally, a respondent communicated that some of the *Toolkit*’s resources from the *Collaborative Systems Development* section are currently being used to supplement presentation materials for newcomers. The *Diversity and Inclusion* section of the *Toolkit* was also listed as the second choice for further development among respondents, however, no additional information was shared on how respondents wished to see this section expanded.

The *Categories of Classification* and *Terms and Definitions* sections of the *Toolkit* were marked as the third area of priority for further development by respondents. One survey respondent proposed that AAISA extend the *Toolkit's* content to the whole settlement and integration sector instead of just Small Centre agencies. Additionally, respondents also indicated that the *Categories and Classification* section could be built out to further specificity that is tailored to different categories of newcomers. Another respondent suggested that the *Terms and Definitions* section is overwhelming due to the volume of acronyms and that caused confusion, especially among new staff. They recommended that further development of this section should prioritize streamlining and simplifying the content.

Finally, while 25.0% of respondents indicated the *Access to Services* section as the most useful sections of the *Toolkit* (Figure 5), no respondents selected this section as a priority for further development.

Resource topic preferences for future development

To identify future topic areas to prioritize for development, respondents were asked to select the resource topic that would be most useful for their agency. The topics that were provided in the survey were those topics that were shared by small centres agencies in an early survey that was used to guide the sections and resources developed in the *Toolkit*.

As represented in Figure 7, the topic of *Legal Resources in the Province* was the top choice among respondents, with 30.8% selecting this response as their priority for resource development. The selection that received the second highest number of responses was *Other*, where 23.0% of respondents suggested additional topics of interest, which included: *Homelessness and Domestic Violence*, *Resources for Refugee Claimants*, and *Post-Secondary Options for Language Learners*.

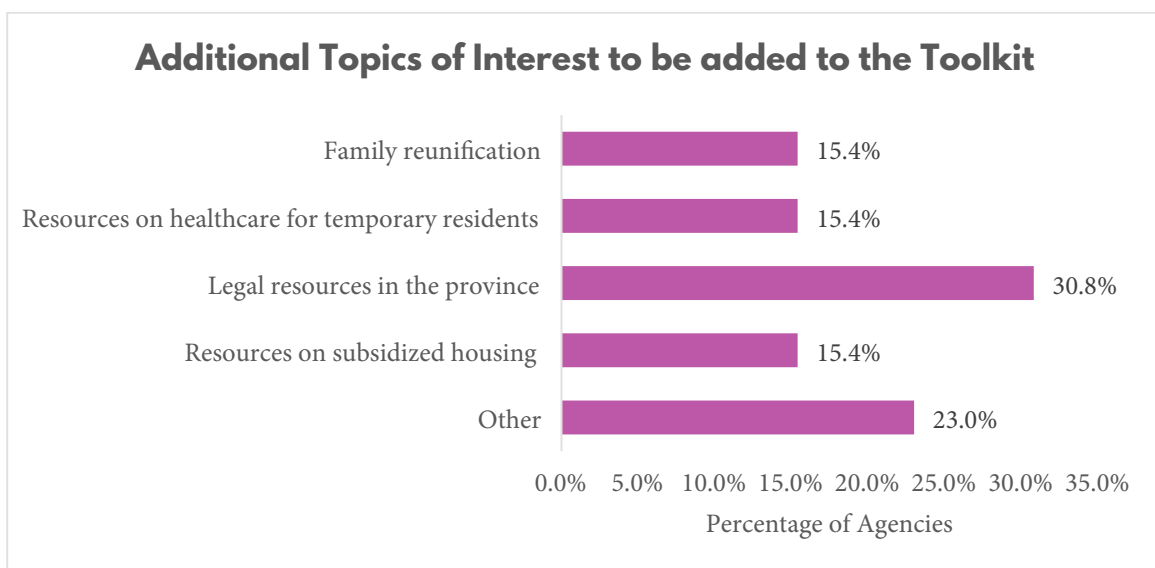


Figure 7: Potential topics of interest to be added to the *Small Centre Toolkit*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Respondents were also given an opportunity to share any thoughts and feedback on the *Small Centre Toolkit* in an open-ended question. The information provided by respondents was correlated with the following two themes:

- **Increasing the *Toolkit's* accessibility:** Respondents stressed the need to increase the *Toolkit's* accessibility by linking it through AAISA's website. Respondents also suggested the removal of login credentials necessary to gain access as the additional steps this creates is a barrier to use of the *Toolkit*.
- **Moving the *Toolkit* towards more interactive opportunities:** One respondent shared their interest in seeing the *Toolkit* offer collaborative opportunities between agencies by introducing an interactive element to the *Toolkit*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the intention of further developing the *Small Centre Toolkit*, the following section synthesizes the information gathered through the assessment to outline recommendations on key activities that AAISA can undertake to advance the *Toolkit's* accessibility, navigability, use, and impact and continue its development in alignment of the needs of Small Centre agencies.

Expanded promotion and awareness

- There is a need for AAISA to develop a knowledge mobilization strategy for the *Toolkit*, to increase awareness among agencies and to further engage management positions to support promotion among staff
- Additional knowledge mobilization take place through meetings, presentations, a communications campaign, and promotional materials

Implement improvements to the *Small Centre Toolkit* website structure and accessibility

- Difficulties locating the *Toolkit* platform constrain accessibility and can be addressed by linking directly through AAISA's website and promoting the URL www.aaisa.ca/smallcentretoolkit more broadly
- AAISA recently removed the login credentials needed for the *Toolkit*, and this change should be communicated widely to agencies in the sector through the knowledge mobilization strategy above mentioned
- Improvements should be made to simplify navigation through the different sections on the *Toolkit* website

Resource improvements, maintenance, and future development

- AAISA should continuously check on the links and resources provided on the *Toolkit* to ensure they are still available and accessible, though limitations in staff capacity and the number of links in resources likely entail that this undertaken only annually
- The PDF templates of resources should be simplified, and future development should maintain focus on ensuring information is presented simply and concisely
- Make the *Service Map* a central point of the *Toolkit* platform and clarify its descriptions and instructions of use
- Key sections to explore further resource development include: *Collaborative System Development* and *Diversity and Inclusion*
- A specific topic to further explore for resource development is *Legal Resources in the Province*, while the other suggestions shared described by respondents require further exploration and vetting to prioritize their focus

Next steps and continued assessment

AAISA will make an annual workplan that will outline and schedule platform improvements, the resources that will be developed, updates of existing resources, as well as its plan for knowledge mobilization

- AAISA will continue to gauge the accessibility, use, and impact of the *Toolkit*, as well as emerging needs for resource development through collaborative initiatives, teleconferences, and site visits

CONCLUSION

The assessment of the *Small Centre Toolkit* provided a valuable opportunity for AAISA to gather information on its utility and efficacy following its initial implementation. The assessment also identified key areas for improvement to the online platform and resources it contains. The finding that 66% of survey respondents reported that the *Toolkit* had a somewhat positive or positive impact on their work indicates that improvements to access, navigability, and resources have the potential to extend impact.

In alignment with the results of this assessment, AAISA's efforts will focus on implementing changes to the *Small Centre Toolkit* platform that simplify navigability, promote access, and maintain resources. Future resource development will look to develop content that meets a wider range of agency needs over time, such as with those specific to language services. Additionally, efforts to provide resources and translate the website content into both of Canada's Official Languages are underway. Recognizing the unique context of Francophone newcomer serving agencies, future resource development will also require consultation with these agencies to ensure alignment with their needs. While aspects of improvement are easier for AAISA to implement in the short-term, continuing to expand content and build out different resources will be an ongoing process, based on the breadth of needs and service types in Alberta's Small Centres.

Ultimately, the *Toolkit* aims to provide resources that support agencies to expand their capacity and enhances their ability to serve newcomers. To this end, this assessment report has provided key actions that support AAISA to ensure that the *Small Centre Toolkit* is able to develop in alignment of this goal over time.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE SMALL CENTRE TOOLKIT ASSESSMENT SURVEY:

1. What agency are you with?
2. Have you used the Toolkit?
 - a. Yes, I have used it a few times
 - b. Yes, I use it frequently
 - c. No
3. Have other staff within your organization been using the Toolkit?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
4. If you do not use the Toolkit or use it infrequently, please tell us why (comment box)
5. Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5, how accessible and navigable do you think the Toolkit is?
6. Which of the following would you find the most useful to increase accessibility and make the Toolkit more navigable for you?
 - a. An infographic or visual map of what is on the website and its different sections
 - b. A brief webinar or video
 - c. Making the Small Centre Toolkit accessible through the AAISA website
 - d. Other
7. What sections of the Toolkit are most useful?
 - a. Categories of classification
 - b. Service map
 - c. Access to services
 - d. Diversity and inclusion
 - e. Collaborative system development
 - f. Terms and definitions

8. Has the Toolkit or any of its resources had a positive impact on your work?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Somewhat

9. Which section of the Toolkit would you most like to see further developed? Please explain.
 - a. Categories of classification
 - b. Service map
 - c. Access to services
 - d. Diversity and inclusion
 - e. Collaborative system development
 - f. Terms and definitions

10. Would any of the following topics be of interest to your agency to add to the Toolkit? Please choose one (the topics presented below are ideas brought forward in a previous small center survey).
 - a. Family reunification
 - b. Legal resources in the province
 - c. Resources on subsidized housing
 - d. Resources on healthcare for temporary residents (TFWs, international students, etc.)
 - e. Other

11. Is there anything else you would like to share?