

ALBERTA SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SECTOR SURVEY REPORT

2017-2018



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAISA	The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
BVOR	Blended Visa Office- Referred Program
CAMH	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
CLIP	Calgary Local Immigration Partnership
CSHC	Calgary Sexual Health Centre
CYRRC	Children and Youth Refugee Research Coalition
FOIP	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
GAR	Government-Assisted Refugees
IRCC	Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada
LIP	Local Immigration Partnership
NRN	Newcomer Research Network
PSR	Privately-Sponsored Refugees
RAP	Resettlement Assistance Program
SDRC	Survivors of Daesh Response Committee
SPO	Service Provider Organization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AAISA would like to thank the following individuals, organizations and funders for their contributions and support:

Funder

To Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for the financial support of this projects.

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

AAISA Staff

AAISA would like to thank Caroline Hemstock, Daniella Bagmeijer, and Leslie Cramer for the insight, expertise and contribution to this project.

Survey Participants

To the individuals and organizations that shared their time, experiences and expertise with this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the financial support of the Ministry of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), The Alberta Association for Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) undertook a provincial survey from January to February 2018. The survey aimed to examine and understand the priorities, systems-level issues and areas of improvement in settlement and integration, to identify any current systems-level issues that are affecting service provider organizations (SPOs), and to highlight areas of improvement for the next fiscal year. The survey results will inform the development of future services and programs that will provide strategies for AAISA to ensure that SPOs are equipped with the tools to provide high-quality, innovative and adaptable programs and services to newcomers in the province of Alberta.

The results in this report are based on a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative data, which was collected through an online survey targeted at AAISA members and IRCC funded organizations in Alberta. The survey findings indicated that there are three main areas for improvement: professional development and learning opportunities for settlement practitioners, increased research and policy engagement to better inform SPOs, and improved collaboration and information sharing to increase partnerships and networking.

This report includes an *Analysis and Discussion* section which reviews the results and discusses current work being done, and how AAISA will continue moving forward over the next three years to meet the needs of SPOs and improve the experiences of newcomers in the province, along with AAISA's role in meeting the needs and improving the services over the next three years. Lastly, this report is also intended to be a strategic resource for other relevant stakeholders, such as community organizations, funders, and the government.

OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW

AAISA's mandate is to build the capacity of organizations that work with newcomers and refugees in Alberta by providing access to relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities, acting as a liaison with stakeholders, and providing a centre for knowledge, expertise and leadership. As such, it is a top priority for AAISA to understand current challenges, promising practices and possible areas of improvement to enhance our work with organizations in the settlement and integration sector.

The *Alberta Settlement and Integration Sector Survey* was conducted between January and February 2018. Its aim was to understand the changing needs, organizational capacity and priorities of AAISA members and IRCC funded SPOs in order to better support settlement and

integration in Alberta. This survey will be conducted annually to develop a base of information on the experiences of SPOs in Alberta on an ongoing basis.

The sections of this report facilitate the understanding of the current state of the sector, some of the work currently being done, stakeholders best positioned to effectively address these issues, and AAISA's role in improving the settlement and integration system and experience for newcomers to Alberta. These results serve as an evidence base to inform members, SPOs, community leaders, researchers and government officials on how work in this area can be best supported.

As an umbrella organization, AAISA will action the recommendations from this report to enhance service provision to SPOs that provide a range of programs and services, including but not limited to language, employment and social connections that intend to successfully support the settlement and integration of newcomers.

RESULTS

The following results are based on feedback gathered through the *Alberta Settlement and Integration Sector Survey*. The results and analysis of this report are based on a ground-up approach,¹ with results beginning with the micro actors (newcomers) and ending with the macro actors (AAISA, and the federal and provincial government). This approach maintains a client-centered model in which programming and policy are responsive to the needs of newcomers. As a result, this section will be divided into the following four sub-sections: *Client and Service Demographics in Alberta*, *Current Challenges and Priorities in the Sector*, *AAISA's Role*, and *Promising Practices*. Each section will summarize relevant findings, which will be based on a combination of quantitative and quantitative data.

CLIENT AND SERVICE DEMOGRAPHICS IN ALBERTA

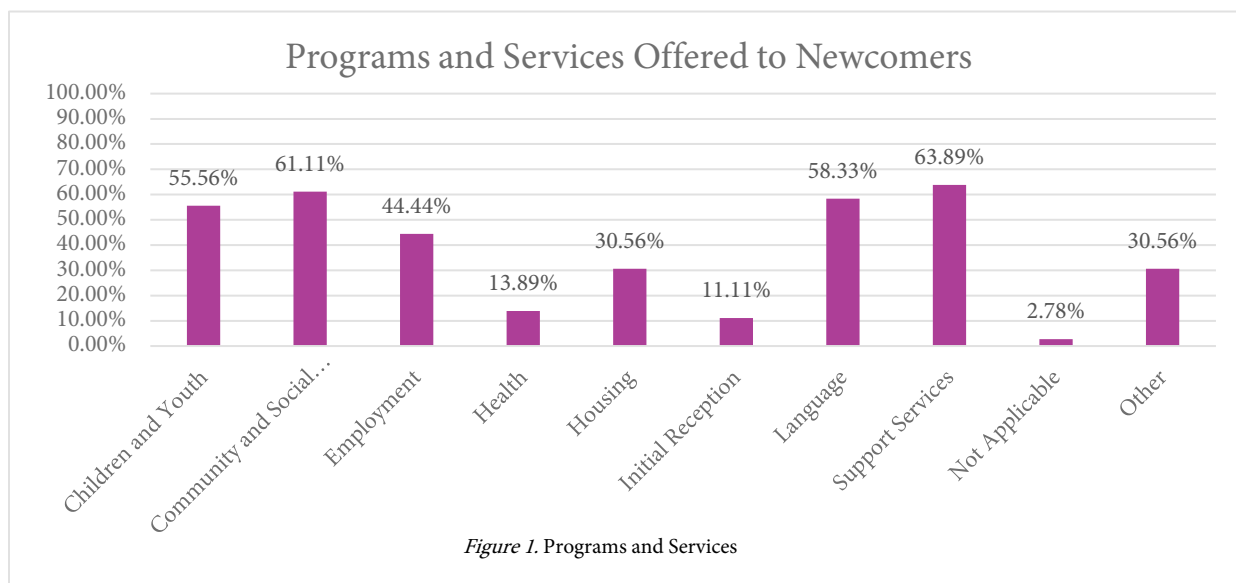
This section aims to evaluate the current state of the sector and analyze if the supply of services provided by aaisa members and ircc funded spos are meeting newcomer and refugees' needs in the province.

Of the various types of organizations that answered the survey, **46% of them represented Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)**, followed by **21% of Educational Institutions**. The majority of survey respondents are located in Central and Southern Alberta, with only 36% of organizations being located in Northern Alberta and rural or remote areas ⁱ.

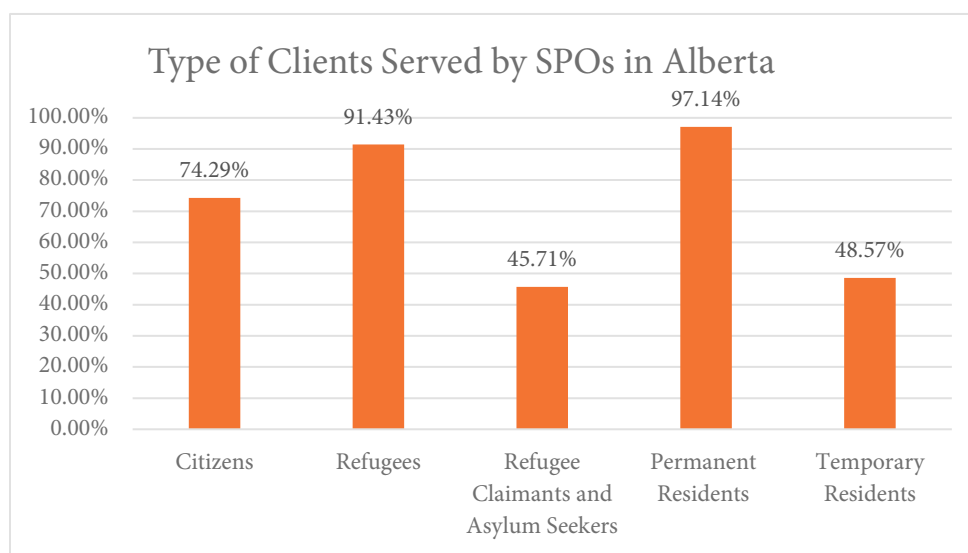
When organizations were asked what types of services they offered, **more than half of the respondents (64%) indicated that they offered Support Services** of some kind. **The second most common type of service provided was Community and Social Connections**, ⁱⁱwhich was offered by 61% of organizations. On the other hand, **the two types of services that were offered by the least amount of organizations were Initial Reception programs (11%) and Health programs (14%)** (Figure 1).

ⁱ The large difference of survey respondents from Southern and Northern Alberta is consistent with statistics and prior findings. 5 out of the 6 official resettlement cities in Alberta are located in Southern and Central Alberta. This indicates that a larger number of refugees have resettled in these regions as opposed to in the North, which also means that far more services and SPOs are available in these areas (www.refugeealberta.ca).

ⁱⁱ A definition of the categories of programs and services offered in the province can be found in the glossary (www.refugeealberta.ca).

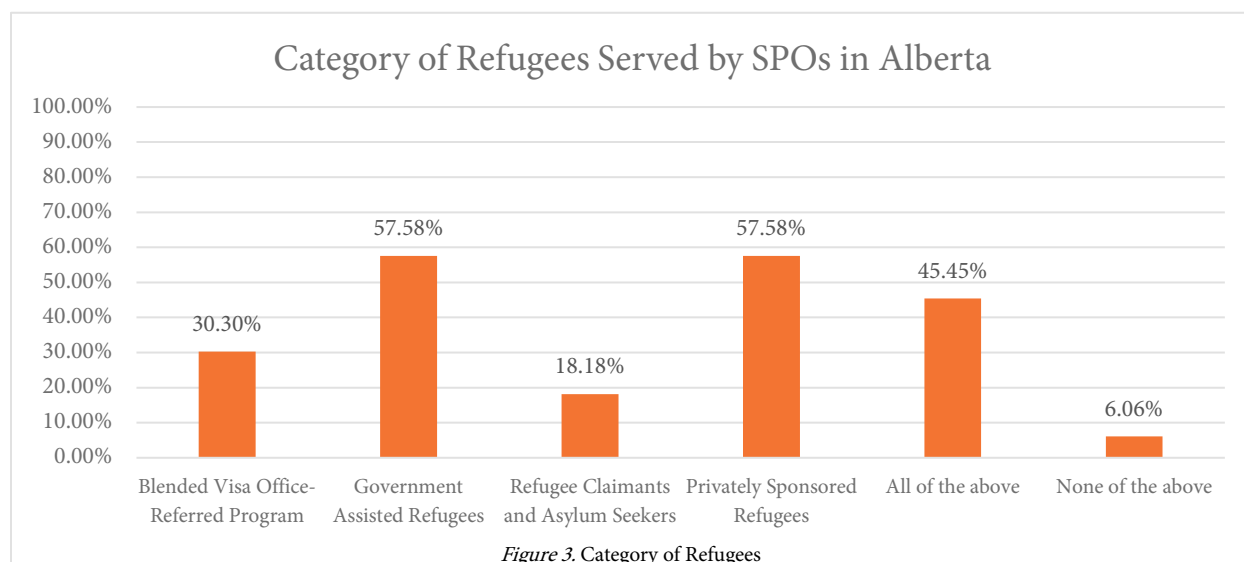


Furthermore, out of the various types of services and programs offered, the results from the survey indicated that 97% of organizations served *Permanent Residents*, 91% of organizations served *Refugees*, and 74% of organizations served *Canadian Citizens* on a regular basis. On the contrary, ***Temporary Residents and Refugee Claimants were being served by 49% and 46% of organizations respectively***, on a regular basis (Figure 2)



In order to gain a deeper understanding of the current situation facing refugees and refugee claimants, the survey asked organizations to indicate the category of refugees that they served the most on a regular basis. As it was expected, responses indicated that ***more than 50% of organizations served Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) and Privately-Sponsored Refugees (PSR)*** (Figure 3). However, on the other hand, ***18% of organizations indicated serving Refugee Claimants and on a regular basis, and 45% of organizations indicated serving refugees***

in all categories. Taking into account the fact, as stated on the IRCC website, “**refugee claimants are not eligible for federal settlement services until they receive a positive refugee determination**”² it is important to recognize the implications that these results may have or are already having on SPOs. These results indicate that IRCC funded organizations are serving *Refugee Claimants* even though they are rarely funded to serve them by the settlement and integration sector’s largest funder, IRCC. Due to the high influx of these refugees, there is currently a large



need to fund these services at a federal level. This will be further discussed in the *Analysis and Discussion* section.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES IN THE SECTOR

To understand current priorities in the sector, AAISA needed to first understand challenges being faced by newcomer clients. The survey findings indicate that **the main challenge affecting newcomers is access to Language Programs**, which the majority of respondents indicated affected their clients *Very Frequently*. When the survey asked participants what the most common barrier that affected individuals’ ability to attend language training the most, **over 70% of respondents indicated Childcare Provision and Availability as an Extreme Barrier**, followed by Transportation (38%), Large Waitlists (38%) and Full-time versus Part-time options (33%) (Figure 4).

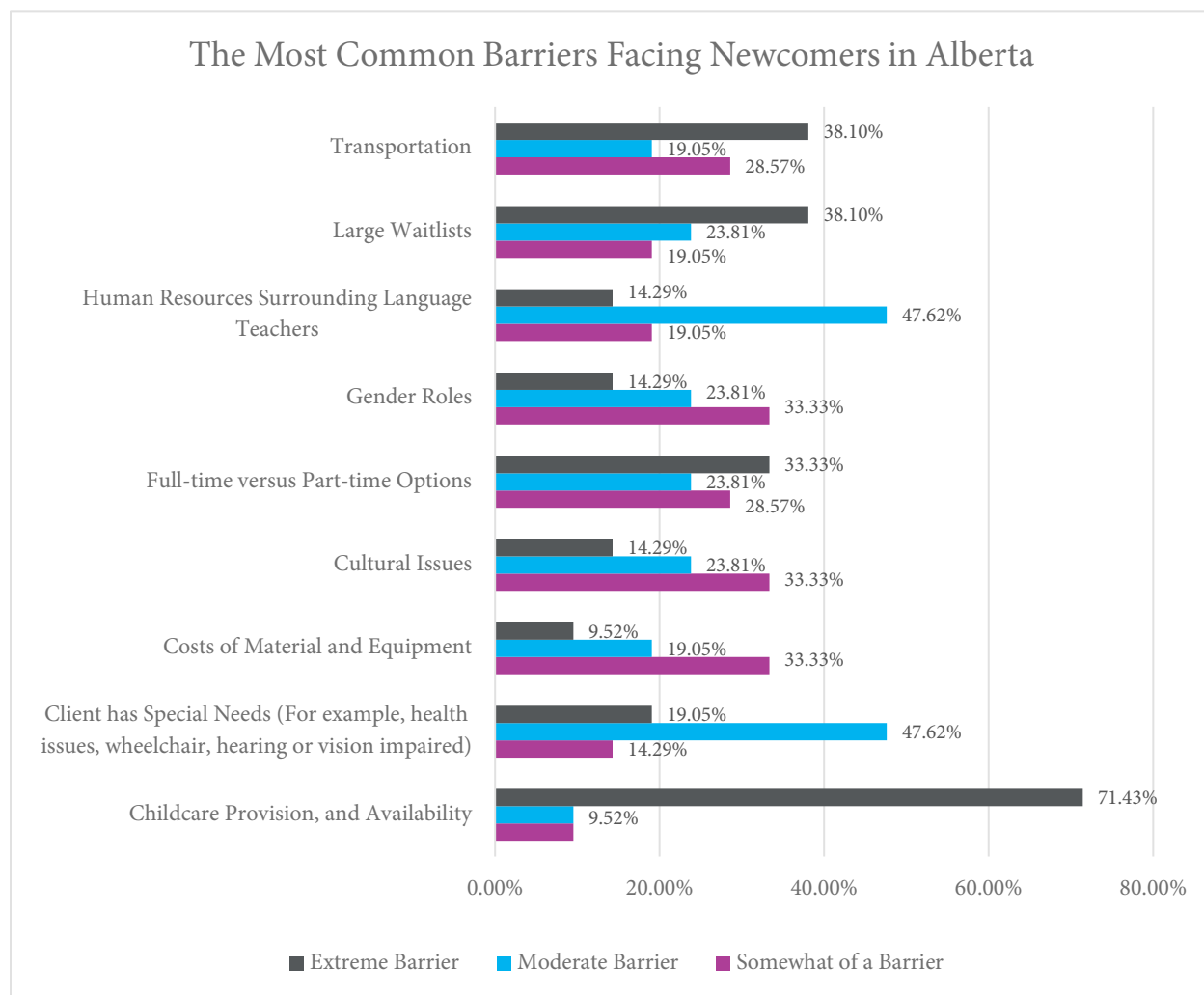


Figure 4. Most Common Barriers

Furthermore, when the survey asked respondents to rate employment and social connection activities in terms of importance, results indicate that **73% of respondents rated *Agency Collaboration with Local Businesses, Community Organizations and Health Services as Very Important***. Consistent with the aforementioned, **68% of respondents indicated *Providing Childcare as a Very Important activity related to Employment and Social Connections*** (Figure 5). This indicates that lack of childcare provision affects newcomers' ability to access not only education (language programs), but also employment and social activities. Although these results are not surprising, because cost and availability of childcare are well-known issues in Canada, a major concern with this is that it continues to disproportionately affect women and their access to services.³

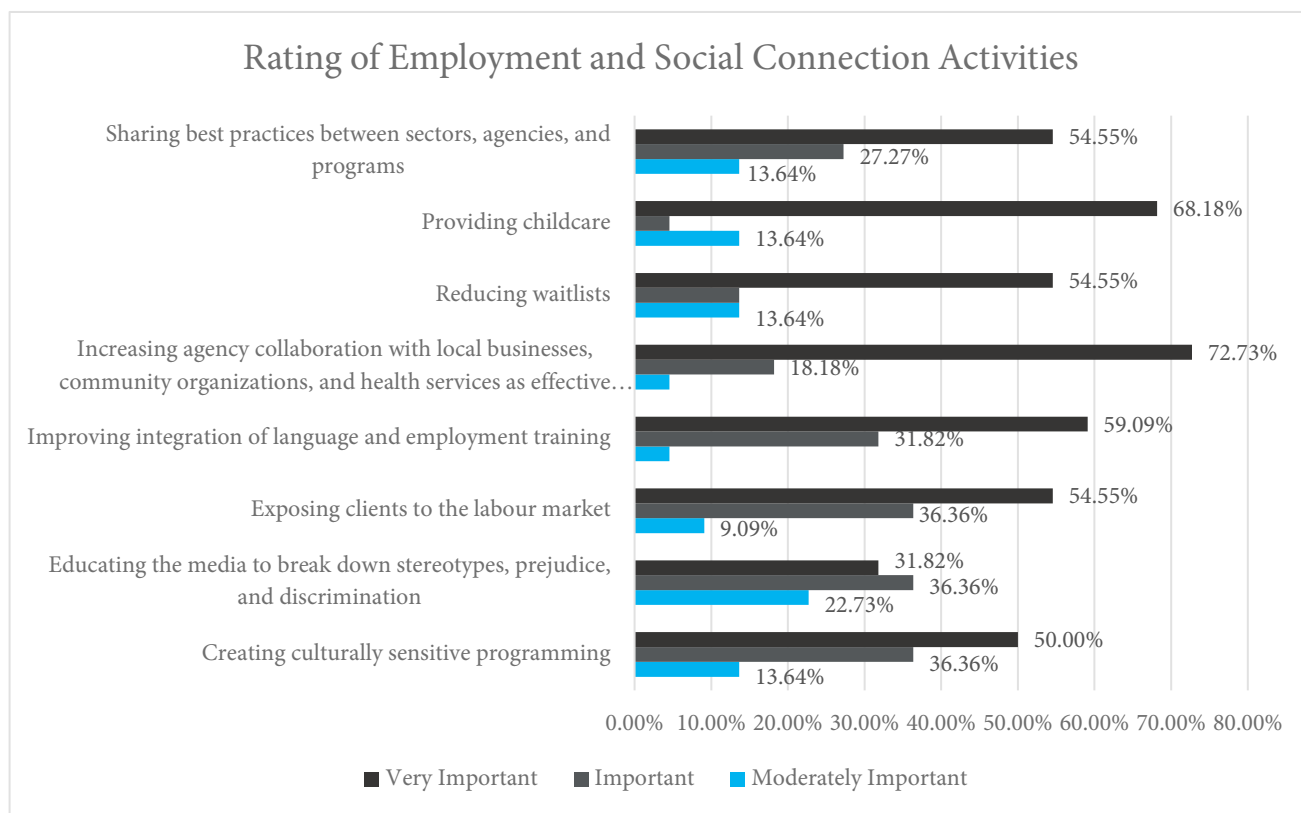


Figure 5. Employment and Social Connection Activities.

When it comes to challenges faced by organizations, concerns regarding data collection and data management have been expressed on several occasions, as noted in *the Alberta Integration Summit 2017*. In fact, 59% of participants indicated that **Strengthening Data Collection Tools and Organizational Capacity is Very Important** to their organization. This was followed by 45% of respondents indicating **Data Sharing Across Organizations and Systems was also Very Important** (Figure 6). Currently, organizations in Alberta do not have a platform where they can share data between organizations. Currently, there are a variety of service data-driven dashboards being developed in an attempt to give organizations an opportunity to share data. Also, this would allow the sector to be aware of current trends and statistics that can inform program design.

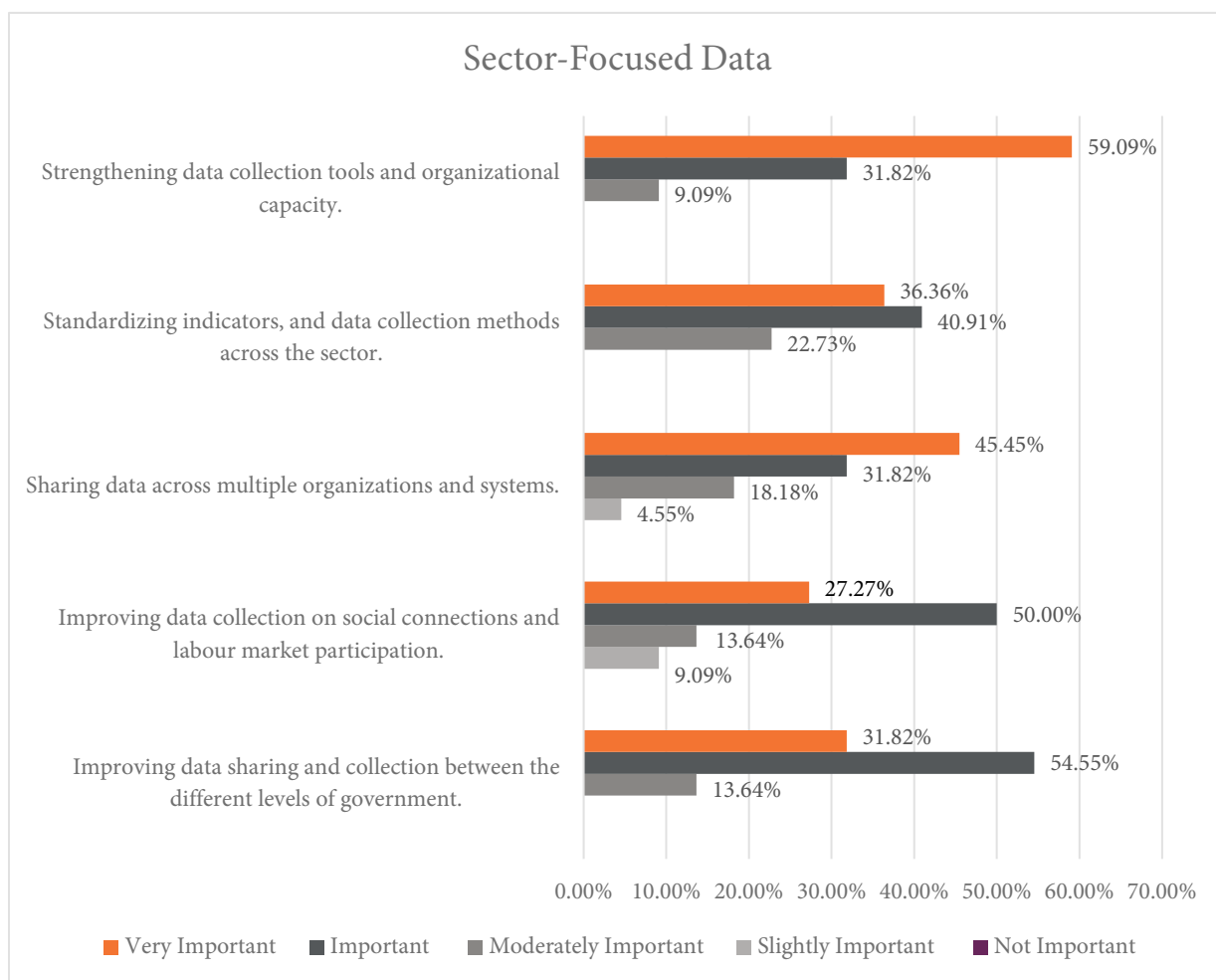


Figure 6. Sector-Focused Data.

As the umbrella organization for SPOs in Alberta, AAISA represents SPOs at the national level. Therefore, the organization was interested in finding out what survey participants thought AAISA should bring forward to the national level. When asked, participants voted **Coordination with Francophone SPOs, which received the highest rating (7.73/10)**, followed by *Targeted Support for Vulnerable Newcomer Populations* and *Data Management and Information Sharing* (Figure 7). In addition, as part of the qualitative portion of the survey, a variety of organizations indicated that additional priorities for them included the need for **Increased Collaboration and Capacity Building, especially for organizations in rural and remote areas of Alberta.**

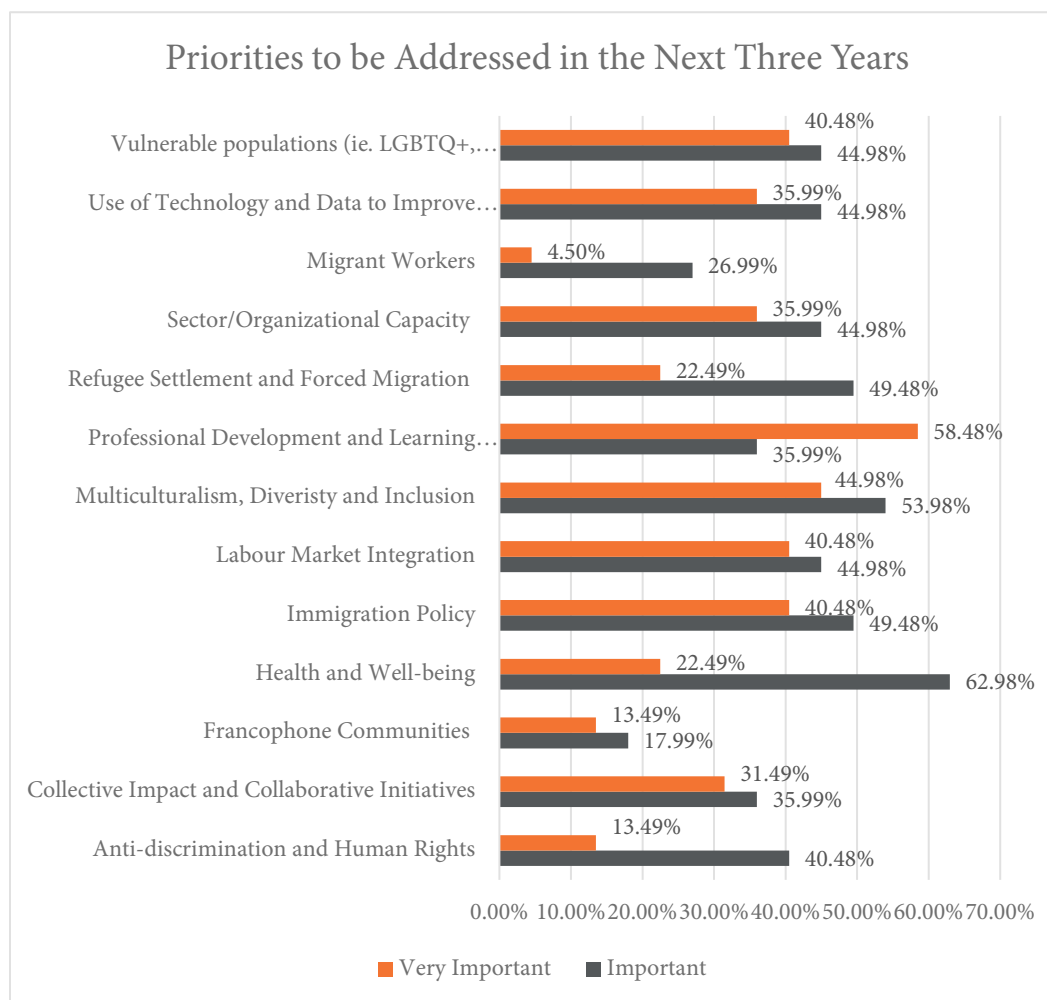


Figure 7. Priorities for the Next Three Years

As a way of understanding how AAISA can better meet organizations' needs through the three-year *Strategic Plan (2018-2020)*, participants were asked to rank a variety of topics depending on the importance of issues to be addressed over the next three years. The findings indicate that **Professional Development and Learning Needs of Staff are a top priority (59%)**, as well as *Multiculturalism, Diversity and Inclusion*, which 45% of organizations rated as *Very Important* (Figure 8).ⁱⁱⁱ These are followed by *Labour Market Integration* (40%), *Immigration Policy* (40%) and *Vulnerable Populations* (40%).

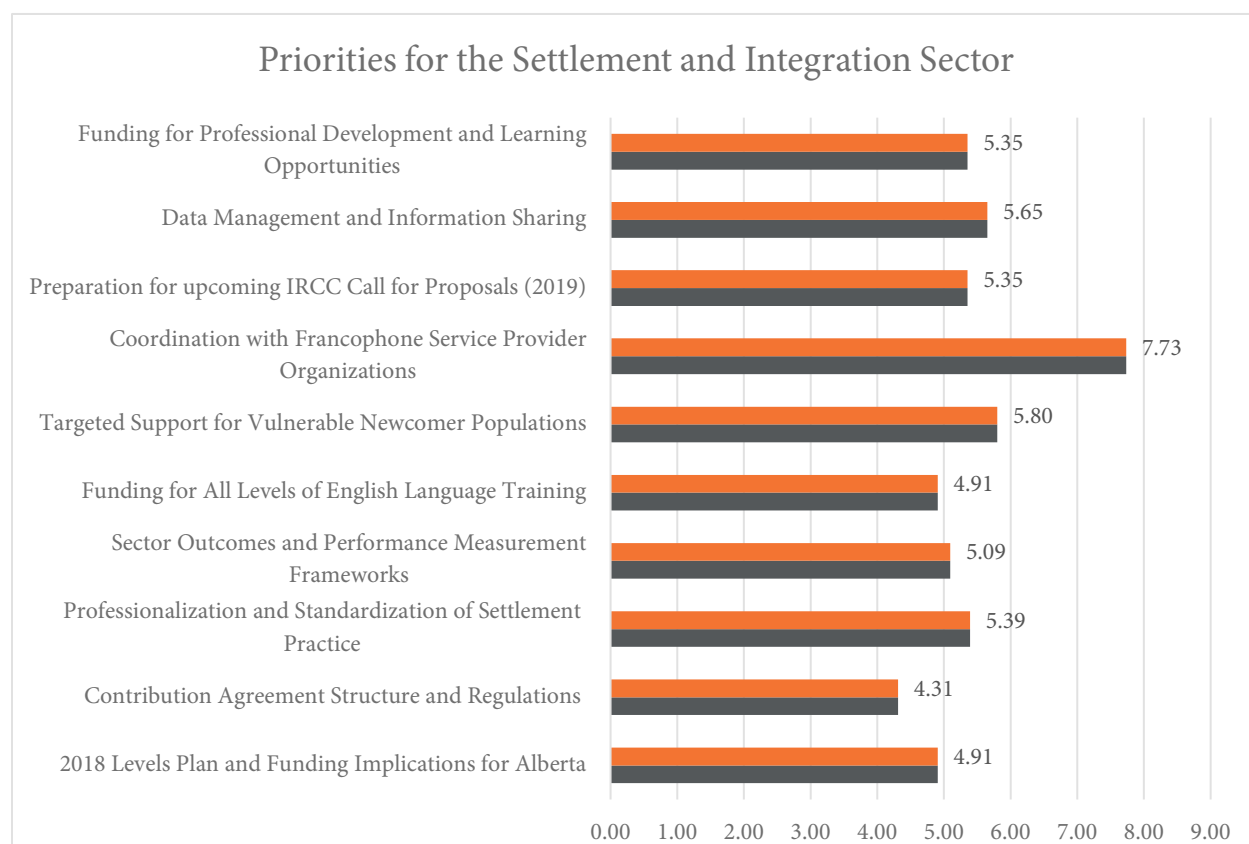


Figure 8. Sector Priorities

ⁱⁱⁱ The other categories of the Figure 9 have been deleted from the graph for simplicity purposes. For a view of the entire graph please see Appendix 2.

AAISA'S ROLE

MEMBERSHIP

AAISA is a membership driven organization. Therefore, performance feedback is highly valued. The following section aims to examine AAISA's impact in the sector, and explore member agencies and IRCC funded SPOs' perception of AAISA membership and how it can be improved.

Currently out of the 39 organizations that responded to the survey, **61% are AAISA members**, **13% are Considering Joining** and the remaining percentage is neither a member nor considering joining.

Of the organizations that are currently members of AAISA, **the majority (59%) were Satisfied with their membership**, 12% were *Very Satisfied* and the remaining 30% of members were *Somewhat Satisfied* with their membership (Figure 9). These results indicate that although the majority of members are satisfied with AAISA's performance, there is opportunity for improvement.

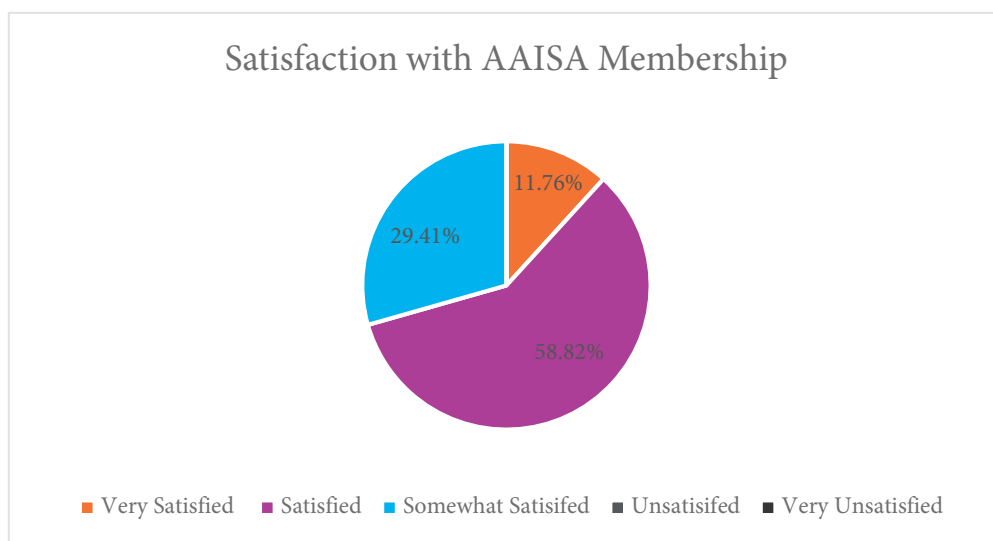


Figure 9. Membership Satisfaction

Moreover, the survey asked participants how often their organization participated in engagement activities. The results indicate that 54% of participants engaged in activities *Often*, while 20% indicated that they *Rarely* or *Never* participated. When organizations were asked how informed they felt about the work of AAISA in regional and national networks, 42% said they felt *Somewhat Informed*, while 32% of organizations felt either *Uninformed* or *Very Uninformed*. In addition, **95% of respondents indicated they were Interested in attending more networking events organized by AAISA**. In addition to networking, survey participants also indicated they would

like to see **an increase in Sector Engagement, especially through large-scale events like summits and conferences— which they voted as the *Most Effective*.**

Regarding areas of improvement, organizations indicated that to better support them in serving newcomer clients and to also improve AAISA’s membership, AAISA could work on **improving *Collaboration and Communication*** in the sector, especially ***Information Sharing and Knowledge Mobilization***, followed by ***Increased Training and Professional Development***. For instance, a survey respondent indicated that: *"AAISA has come a long ways in the past couple of years to make connections and establish networking/information sharing events. AAISA can further develop in this area and ensure communication channels are open between the sector and our funders."*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AAISA offers a spectrum of specialized professional development courses and learning opportunities through multiple formats for settlement practitioners and career practitioners. AAISA’s professional development and learning services or initiatives are specifically designed to enhance the on-the-job competencies needed to effectively support the settlement and integration of newcomers. Therefore, the development of AAISA courses strive to be well aligned with the learning needs identified by the sector, and supported through evidence-based practices.

For this reason, questions in the survey asked respondents what courses already offered by AAISA that they and their staff would be interested in taking. The results indicate that **75% of respondents would be interested in taking courses on *Client Needs Assessment and Action Plans***, as well as **71% that indicated being interested in courses such as, *Basic Counselling Skills in a Cross-Cultural Settings, Crisis Intervention/Conflict Resolution and Building Understanding of Cultural Communities*** (Figure 10).^{iv} In addition, the survey asked participants to indicate if there



Figure 10. Professional Development Priorities

^{iv} All other professional development and learning services available were deleted from Figure 10 for simplicity purposes. For a view of the entire graph, please see Appendix 3.

were other courses that they would be interested in taking that AAISA was not currently offering. Responses show that there is **large interest in courses and workshops around the Mental Health of Refugees**. Overall, respondents indicated that they would like to see **Increased Capacity and Accessibility** to all courses, by increasing the number of spaces available in each course and offering these more frequently.

Furthermore, when participants were asked what they thought were the best tools to professionalize the sector, **40% of respondents indicated that they found In-Person Training and Workshops Very Useful**, followed by **26% which indicated Webinars were also Very Useful**. This is considered positive feedback as AAISA currently offers both. The organization offers In-Person Training and Workshops for those who preferred it, but also Webinars due to their cost effectiveness, and to provide access to those in rural or remote areas. Moreover, the tool the least percentage of respondents (4%) indicated as *Very Useful* was *Self-Paced Online Courses* (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Professionalization of the Sector

RESEARCH

The Research and Policy team at AAISA work with and across all other departments at the organization in order to inform decision-making, design programs according to clients' needs, and collect data. As a result of the important role that research and policy play at AAISA, the organization was interested in finding out how SPOs feel about the work currently being done. The results from the survey indicated that the majority of respondents (54%) used information

provided by AAISA *Sometimes*. In addition, the survey asked participants how their organizations used the research and policy resources available through AAISA, 45% of respondents indicated

that they *Frequently* used information provided by AAISA *To Better Understand the Sector and Immigration Policy*. In addition, 59% of respondents indicated that they also used information *To Better Understand the Needs and Barriers of Newcomers and Communities*, as well, *As a Resource for Clients*. Lastly, **32% of respondents indicated that they Never used information provided by AAISA to neither Inform High-Level Policy Decisions nor As a Resource for Organizational Research and Policy Initiatives** (Figure 12). Lastly, when asking participants what they thought were the best tools to mobilize research and policy information, **30% of respondents thought Participation in Focus Groups or Advisory Panels/Committees was Very Useful**, followed by *Bulletins* which was also chosen by 17% as *Very Useful*. On the other hand, the tools that the findings indicate to be **the least useful for respondents are Briefs and Publication Reports**.

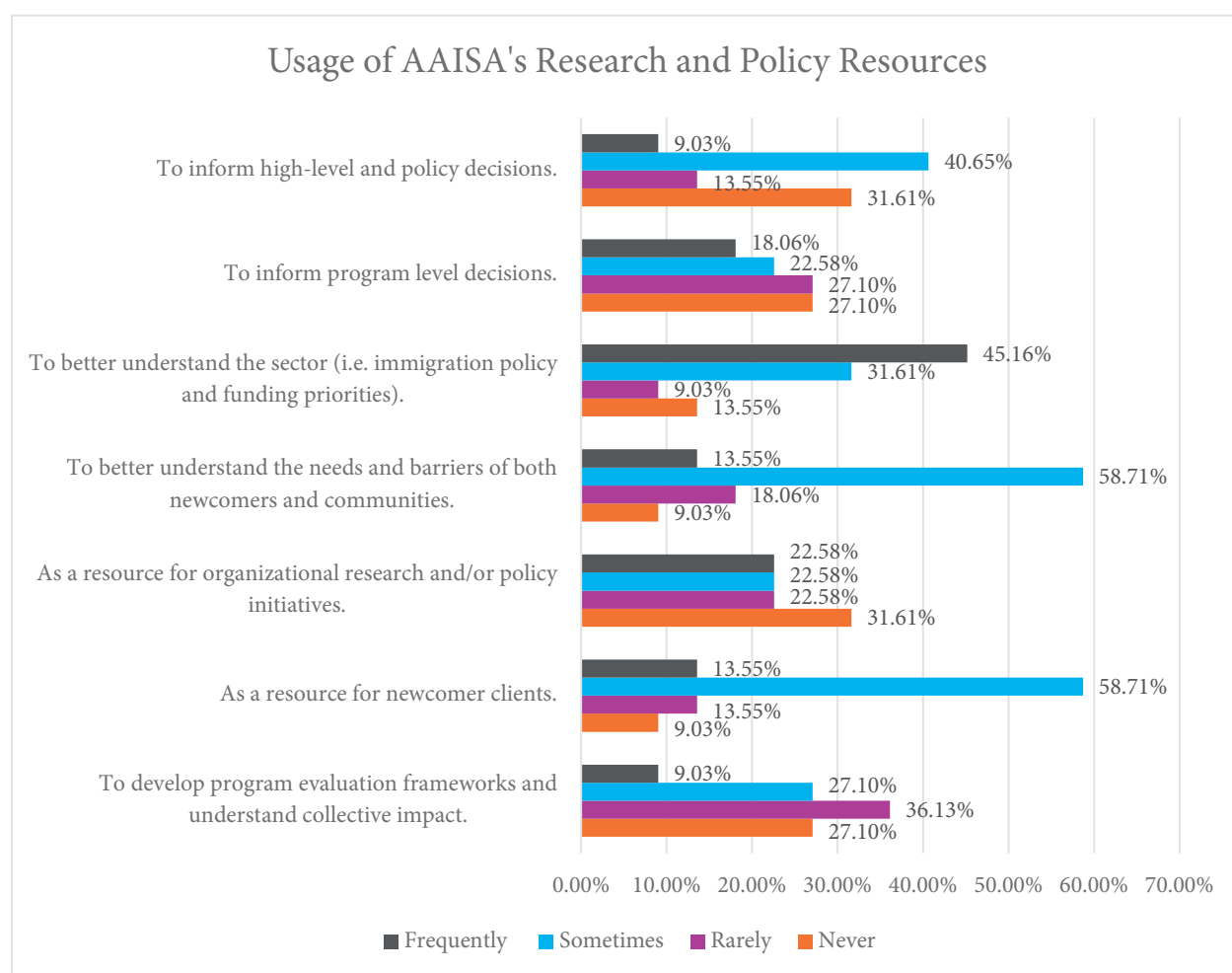


Figure 12. Usage of AAISA's Resources

PROMISING PRACTICES

COLLABORATION

This section of the survey was dedicated to learning about promising practices currently being implemented in the sector and to understand how other organizations are dealing with current challenges and problem-solving to improve the settlement and integration experience for newcomers.

When the survey asked participants about promising practices that they thought were successfully supporting newcomers in Alberta, responses focused on two themes, *Standardization and Coordination*,^v and *Client-Centered Approaches*.^{vi}

The survey asked participants about the kind of collaboration that they would like to see in the sector and several participants indicated that *Increased Collaboration, and Resource and Information Sharing* was something they would highly benefit from. For instance, one survey response indicated that: "Opportunities for settlement practitioners to stay abreast of new trends. Cross-agency (and sector) collaboration through meaningful partnerships and engagement opportunities."

To determine what organizations thought would be effective tools to enable this, the survey asked participants to rate a variety of tools. Respondents rated *Municipal Settlement Sector Caucuses (4.63/10)* and *Online Communities of Practice or Collaboration Spaces as Discussion Boards (4.33/10)*, as the most effective tools. Some of these are currently being implemented. For instance, there is the Calgary Caucus which meets on a quarterly basis, the Edmonton Caucus which meets on a monthly basis, and small centres which have a quarterly teleconference.

INFORMATION AND DATA SHARING

In order to understand ways in which AAISA can improve data sharing and communication in the sector, the survey asked participants a variety of questions regarding what they thought were the best or most appropriate tools.

Participants were invited to rank the kind of tools they thought worked best within their organization for sharing data, the majority of respondents indicated that they found simpler tools, such as Excel and Google docs, the most useful. Data management and sharing are complex and appropriate training is required. In addition to data sharing, participants indicated that some of the methods they found most useful and/or effective for informing the sector were *E-mail Communication, which was voted as either Effective or Very Effective by more than 70% of respondents, followed by In-Person Communication* (Figure 13). AAISA considers this positive

^v This refers to practices which improve performance. For instance, standardization of data management and reporting tools has often been mentioned.

^{vi} This approach is characterized by programs and services which are designed based on clients' needs.

feedback as currently *In-Person* and *E-mail* are its main channels of communication with members and other organizations.

In terms of sector engagement, the findings indicate that **the majority (59%) of respondents were not engaged with or around Indigenous initiatives related to settlement and integration practice**. However, respondents indicated that **they would like to see AAISA more involved around these initiatives in forms of partnerships or events that are led by Indigenous academics or experts**. One survey respondent provided some ideas by saying: *“our friendship center welcomes newcomers, we have elders come and smudge and share their stories, travel to reserves, encouragement to read about our indigenous populations, art work, circle sharing, thanking treaty 8 land prior to the beginning of our sessions”*.

On a more general note, respondents also indicated that **to increase Sector Engagement, they think large-scale events such as summits and conferences are the most effective**, followed by small-scale events such as roundtables and focus groups.

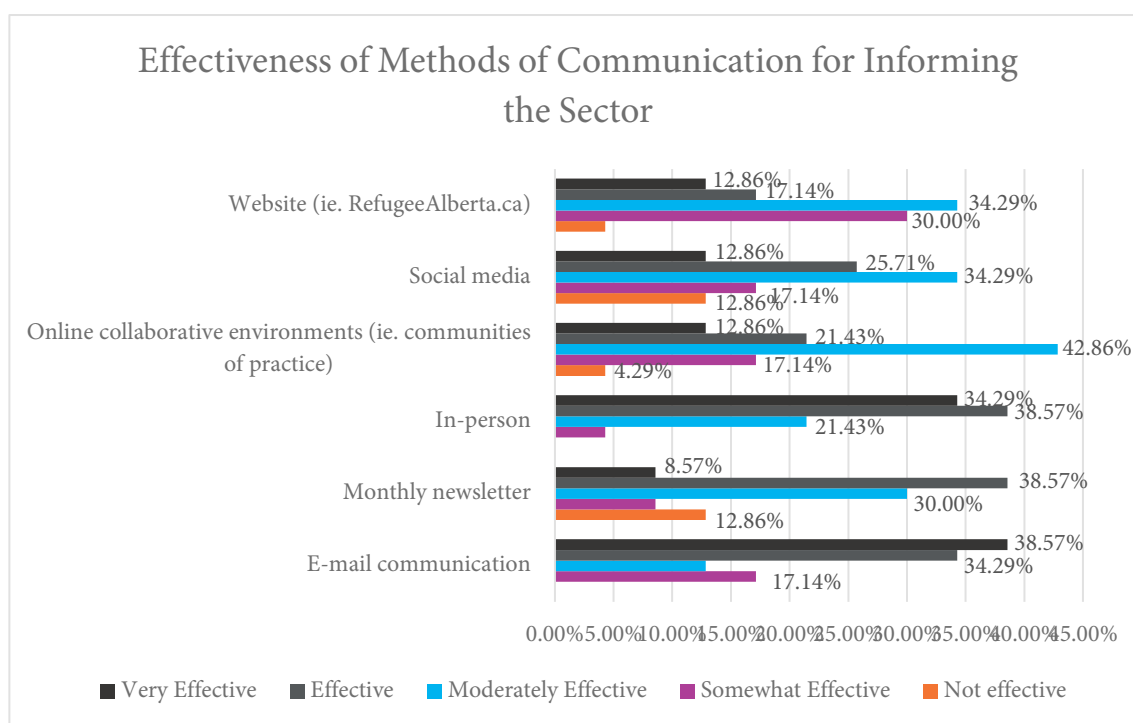


Figure 13. Methods of communication

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Moving forward into the next fiscal year, the results from the survey will guide the next steps for AAISA, and provide valuable information for the settlement and integration sector. This section aims to analyze the survey results and compare them with AAISA's current actions and projects, as well as the priorities outlined in AAISA's *Strategic Plan* for the next three years (2018-2020). As part of the analysis, each of the following sections will provide a brief plan of action from a three-level analysis, including stakeholders at all levels (macro, meso and micro) of the settlement and integration system (Figure 14).

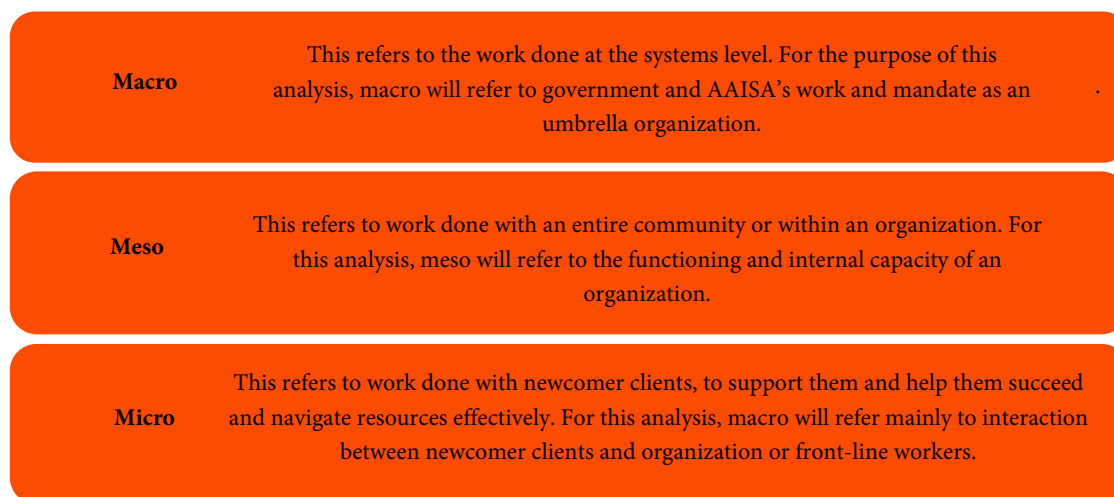


Figure 14. Three-Level Analysis.

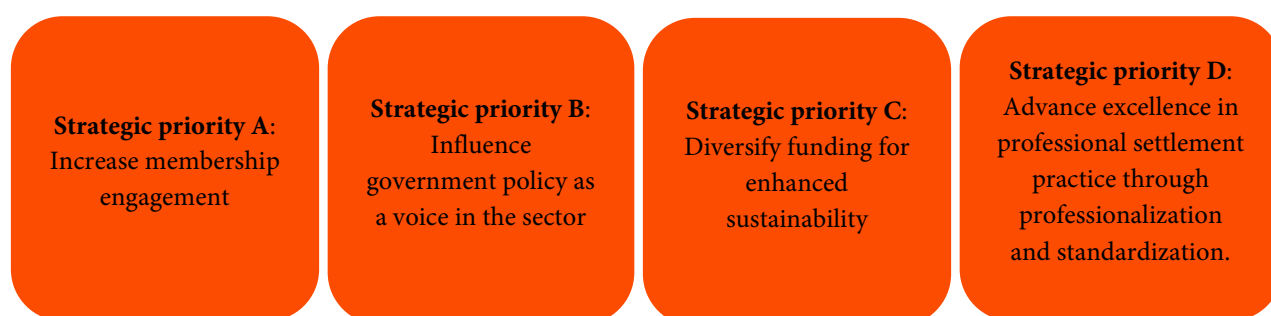


Figure 15. Strategic Plan 2018-2020.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Guided by the survey results, AAISA can expect to see a **higher demand of courses such as *Needs Assessments and Actions Plans, Basic Counselling Skills in Cross-Cultural Settings, Crisis Intervention and Conflict Resolution, and Building Understanding of Cultural Communities***. Currently, **AAISA is working on developing three more online courses** to be available in the next fiscal year. In addition, **one of AAISA's strategic priorities for the next three years is to diversify funding** (Figure 15). This would allow AAISA to have increased funding to develop a wider variety of online, in-person and self-paced courses, as well as to increase both frequency and capacity to meet the sector's professional development needs.

In addition, according to the qualitative data from the survey, courses on ***Mental Health*** were one of the courses respondents indicated they were interested in taking, but AAISA did not offer. This is a highly relevant course— as different refugee populations have unique needs. For instance, the sector has seen an increase in the mental health needs of refugees, especially of the survivors of Daesh, and settlement practitioners may not have the necessary training to help clients deal with trauma. Furthermore, the need for such training has been discussed in separate occasions, such as in the Survivors of Daesh Response Committee (SDRC) and Helping Immigrants Succeed (HIS) meetings and discussion groups. Currently, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Ontario is managing the Refugee Mental Health Project through which they offer courses on immigrant and refugee mental health. This is an organization that has the mandate, capacity and knowledge to carry out such a course. While there is a lack of locally based training support in this area, SPOs did also suggest a lack of awareness regarding training opportunities available outside of the province. **Therefore, improving communication in the sector and creating awareness about these types of partnerships and programs, would potentially help meet this need** (Figure 16 offers a brief plan of action for professional development for stakeholders at different levels).

Since the beginning of this fiscal year (2018-2019) AAISA has provided two highly requested courses, *Professional Roles and Ethics for Settlement Practitioners* (April-May, 2018) and *Settlement and Transition Processes* (May-June, 2018), which was offered to Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA) and Manitoba Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (MANISO) members. In addition to offering courses to the prairies, AAISA has also expanded its reach by designing a *Professional Roles and Ethics Course for Career Practitioners*. Although the course has been developed, its delivery date is pending and dependant on funding. Also, in the late summer (August- September, 2018), AAISA will offer a *Conflict Transformation Training* course which will be an improved and updated version of the previous *Crisis Intervention and Conflict Resolution Training* course.

Additional courses and training opportunities that will be available this fiscal year will be an LGBTQ+ organizational audit and training (pilot project currently only in Edmonton) which is part of the second phase of *Courage to Begin* project by the Centre for Sexuality, previously known

as Calgary Sexual Health Centre (CSHC), as well as an Anti-discrimination project which focuses on providing training to organizations in the sector. Lastly, AAISA will continue working on other potential courses that meet some of the needs in the sector, such as courses tailored specifically to small centres, training on bridging Indigenous and newcomer communities, and mental health and trauma informed practices.

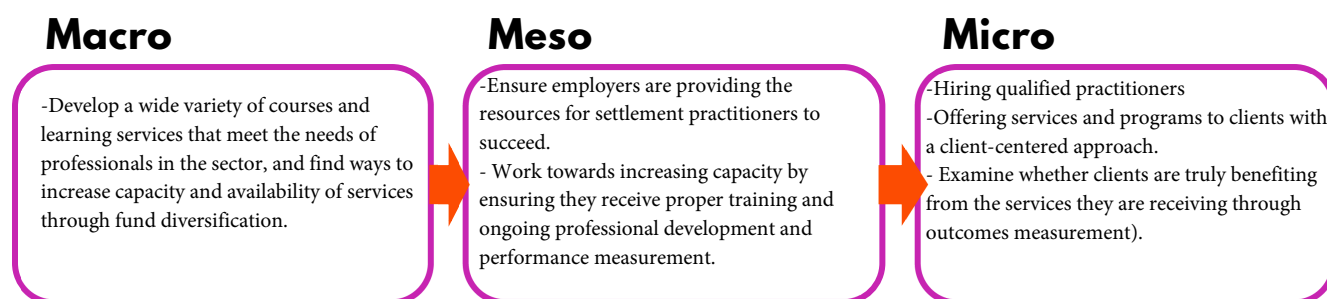


Figure 16. Professional Development Plan of Action.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

As one of the objectives of the survey, AAISA wanted to determine the impact and influence that the organization has on settlement practices, policy change and funding models. The survey results indicate that **AAISA's research and policy resources are not being used to a large extent.** Therefore, increased efforts should be focused on facilitating the strategic use and impact of stakeholder-informed research on policy decisions across a range of SPOs, members and funders. Currently, AAISA is involved in a variety of research networks, coalitions and projects at both the provincial and national level such as the Newcomer Research Network (NRN) and the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC). In addition to collaborating in various research projects, AAISA aims to facilitate knowledge mobilization and information sharing across the sector.

Furthermore, as part of AAISA's *Strategic Plan* for the next three years, **AAISA would like to have a larger impact on government policy decisions, and effectively communicate the needs of SPOs to government officials and all other relevant stakeholders.** As a result, this fiscal year AAISA is working towards connecting with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Calgary as a way to share information on current needs and challenges of the sector and how they can play a role. In addition, one of the challenges faced when trying to have a larger impact on policy decisions is data-related constraints. In order to advocate and make evidence-based decisions, it is crucial to have the relevant information to support it.

In an effort **to address the data collection and management issues facing organizations, AAISA is currently undertaking a research project around this topic.** The aim is to obtain a deeper understanding of the challenges organizations are facing and leverage promising practices that can

be scaled across the province, where appropriate, in order to build service provider's capacity in this area. The results of this project will be shared in the fall of 2018 and will guide efforts to improve overall data collection, as well as research and policy interventions around data management and data sharing (Figure 17).

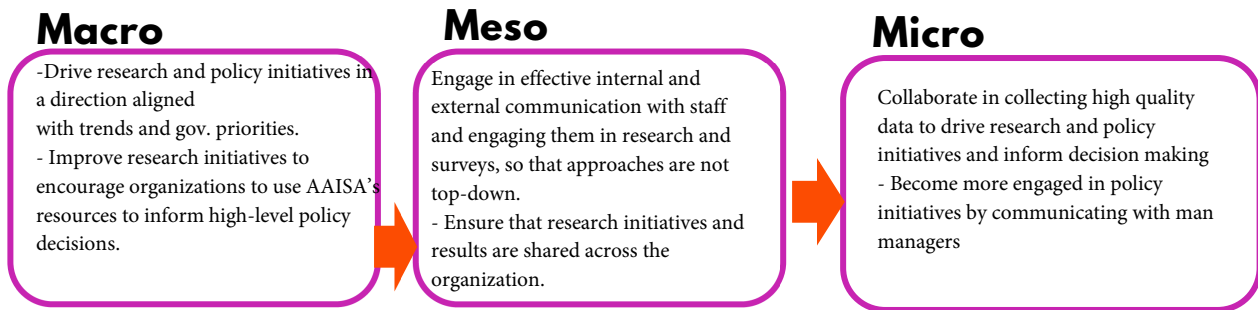


Figure 17. Research and Policy Plan of Action.

COLLABORATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

Collaboration and information sharing are strongly connected to improve data collection and information sharing in the sector. These were themes that were brought up by survey respondents on several occasions, as they have been and continue to be a challenge for organizations in the settlement and integration sector. The results of the survey found that **increased resource and information sharing are needed to improve overall performance and service delivery**. For instance, survey participants indicated that they wanted the Alberta Resettlement Dashboard to be shared more widely and expanded, as they see this as a way to learn updates and trends in the sector. As a response to the need in resource and information sharing, there is currently an Alberta Settlement Dashboard being piloted, as well as Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) –which are multi-sectoral partnerships that are designed to help improve the integration of immigrants and address the needs of newcomers. LIPs are also developing a dashboard to share information relevant to the sector. The project in Alberta is being led by the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP).

Overall, AAISA participates in a variety of projects throughout the year. However, the survey results indicate that respondents feel that they are not aware of research projects and events AAISA participates in. Therefore, in the following fiscal year, **AAISA will increase its effort to communicate effectively— not only with members— but all SPOs, funders and relevant stakeholders to improve policy decisions and practices in the sector**.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that the majority of respondents are not currently engaged with or around Indigenous initiatives regarding settlement. Similar to the learnings from the

Alberta Integration Summit 2017, participants would like to see AAISA allocate more efforts to increase sector engagement around Indigenous initiatives. As stated in the *Truth and Reconciliation Report*,⁴ newcomers need to be aware of Canadian history, its diversity and its Aboriginal people. SPOs are a great channel to promote this initiative and as a result, **AAISA is offering a workshop at the Alberta Integration Summit 2018 dedicated to discussing this topic and offering ways in which AAISA can promote inter-culturalism and increase collaboration with indigenous communities.**



Figure 19. Collaboration and information sharing plan of action.

CONCLUSION

Understanding settlement and integration practices is becoming more important than ever before due to the increase in migration worldwide. An exploration and analysis of current challenges faced by the settlement and integration sector, newcomers, national priorities and promising practices have been established in this report through a mixed methods approach. While there is evidence that a lot of effort has been made to improve settlement and integration practices, there is a lot of work that remains to be done. Currently the main barrier affecting newcomers is access to language programs. For SPOs the main challenge relates to professional development and learning opportunities, including mental health. Learning opportunities improves competencies needed to better support newcomers in their settlement and integration journey.

Furthermore, at a larger scale, there is need for increased collaboration and information sharing in the sector to improve overall service delivery. The results of this survey highlighted the importance of sharing both challenges and current practices in order to avoid overlap of services, and to enhance or compliment each others' work. In addition, by sharing valuable information with umbrella organizations such as AAISA, umbrella organizations can better support the needs of the sector, such as the need to federally fund programs targeted to refugees and asylum seekers.

This report provides an evidence base to inform service providers, community leaders, researchers, funders, and government officials on how work in this area is best supported. However, continued research is needed to understand the changing needs of the different newcomer clients, and to continue improving practices and immigration policy not only in Alberta, but across Canada.

As an umbrella organization, AAISA will utilize this report to determine how best to work with funders and policymakers, serve members' service provision, as well as to design programming, improve and increase membership, and develop future funding applications over the next fiscal year.

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GLOSSARY

Capacity: is defined as the ability of an organization or system to fulfill its goals. Capacity can be expressed in terms of its human, physical and material resources, financial, information, and intellectual resources.

Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition: an alliance of scholars, community partners and government agencies committed to promoting the successful integration of refugee children and youth in Canada.

Community and Social Connections: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these types of programs provide orientation to public services, connect individuals to broader community supports, newcomer information and civic engagement.

Data Sharing: implies that data is stored in a software or network where multiple applications or users can access it.

Employment: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these types of services provide career planning, knowledge of the Canadian labour market, technical skills training, foreign qualification recognition, job search and job training, and job retention.

Engagement: the investment of time, money, attention, and participation, by both the association and its members, to provide meaningful, long-term, mutually beneficial experiences and relationships that advance the profession and the sector.

Government Assisted Refugees: are Convention Refugees Abroad whose initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada or Quebec. This support is delivered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) supported non-governmental agencies such as Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), Catholic Social Services (CSS), Saamis Immigration Services Association, and Lethbridge Family Services-Immigrant Services. Support can last up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada, or until the refugee is able to support himself or herself, whichever happens first. This support may include: accommodation, clothing, food, employment, and other resettlement assistance services.

Health Services: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these types of services provide primary health care screening and referral to refugee health clinics and community health organizations. Also, these program support access to health services such as immunization, physician appointments and introduction to mental health and well-being.

Helping Immigrants Succeed: the Helping Immigrants Succeed Initiative convenes service providers working in the areas of language, employment, and social connections to build collective capacity and to address barriers to service delivery in a solutions-focused approach.

Housing: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these types of program help individuals find and secure permanent accommodation and move to their neighbourhood, as well as providing individuals with basic household items and furniture.

Initial Reception: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these types of services include airport reception, assistance with immigration processes, distribution of winter clothing, orientation services, temporary accommodation and initial needs assessment.

Language: as defined by Refugee Alberta, language services include language assessment, language training to help newcomers learn Canada's official languages and bridging to employment.

Newcomer Research Network: the Newcomer Research Network offers a collaborative platform for both researchers and community members to work together to understand and address the needs of newcomer Canadians, including immigrants, refugees and international students.

Sector Engagement: the Strategic Engagement unit works on the development and implementation of an integrated systems model for the settlement and integration sector, guided by the principles of collaboration and collective impact. The work involves strategic analysis and planning in order to coordinate the sector around a common agenda and the continuous improvement of service delivery.

Settlement and Integration Sector: those agencies whose mandate is to provide diverse and specialized services to assist immigrants and refugees settling in Canada.

Standardization and Coordination: in regards to qualitative data, this category referred to the need to increase the organization of different elements in the sector, to enable organizations to work together more effectively and efficiently.

Survivors of Daesh Response Committee: a committee designed to bring together relevant stakeholders to share best practices, discuss emerging needs, and build collective capacity to ensure an appropriate systems response for Yazidi newcomers. Committee members include representatives from service providers, relevant institutions, municipal government, IRCC, and any other relevant stakeholders affiliated with Yazidi settlement and integration.

Support Services: as defined by Refugee Alberta, these include additional services such as, transportation, crisis counselling, provisions for disabilities and loans and grants for newcomers.

Promising Practices: programs and strategies that have some scientific research or data showing positive outcomes in delaying an untoward outcome, but do not have enough evidence to support generalizable conclusions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Methodology

The methodology of this research project included the design, implementation and analysis of a survey on current trends, challenges and promising practices within the settlement and integration sector in the province of Alberta.

An online survey was the method chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The target respondent was management level staff at member agencies and IRCC funded organizations in the settlement and integration sector. Respondents were asked to answer forty-nine (49) questions which were divided into five themes which assessed: client and service demographics, national priorities, promising practices and AAISA's role and assessment of the Helping Immigrants Succeed (HIS) initiative/priorities within the sector. The type of questions in the survey included close-ended questions, rating scales, multiple choice, dichotomous and open-ended questions. For the purpose of the survey, a purposive sampling method was used.^{vii} Overall, 39 organizations^{viii} responded to the survey which equals a response rate of 37%.

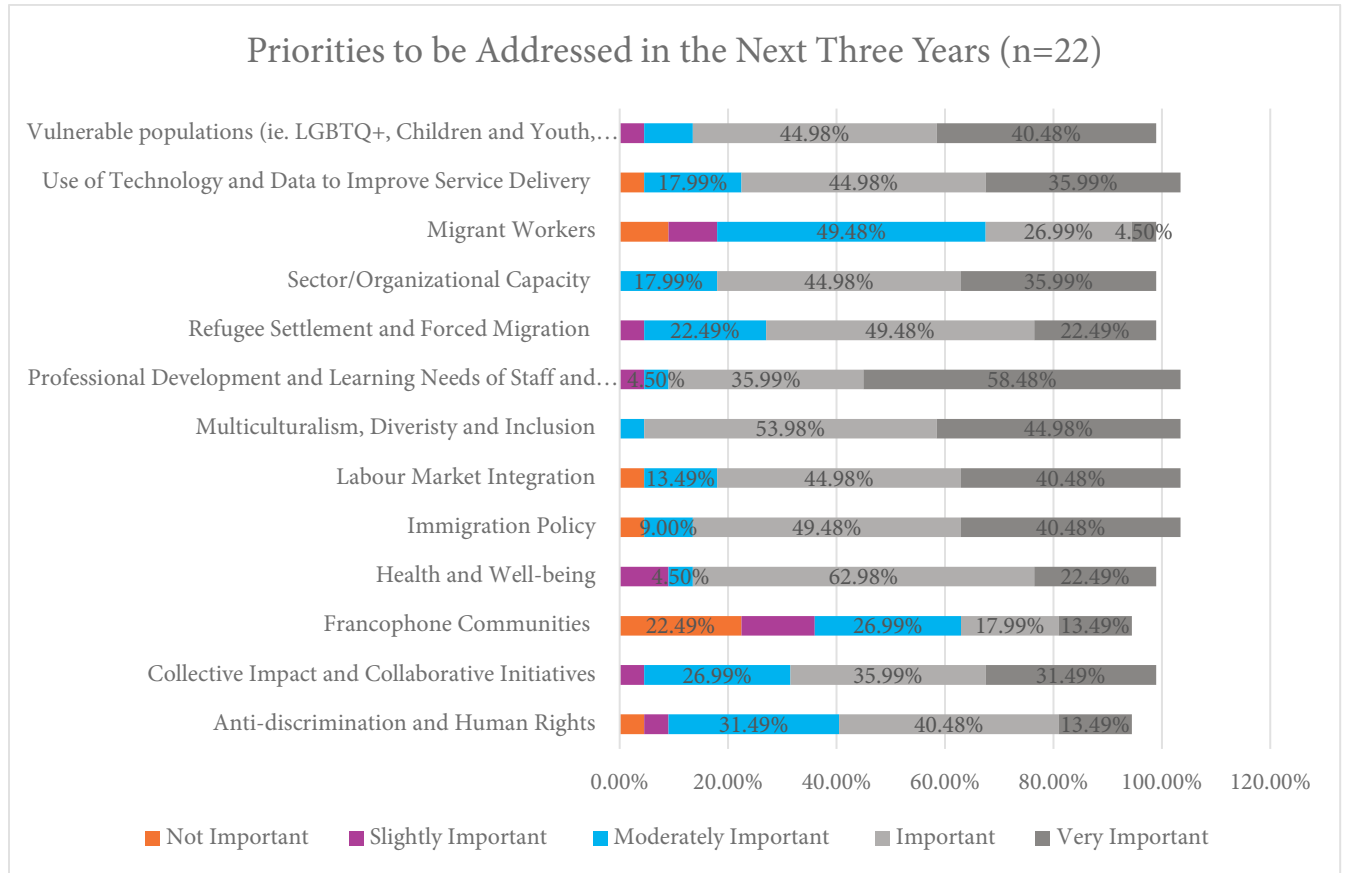
The findings reflect a mixed methods approach to the analysis of data collected during the survey, and the analysis of the qualitative data is aligned with the grounded theory approach. This approach is best understood as a method for analysis in which data collection, analysis and theory are closely related. That is, conclusions are grounded in data and the approach is iterative, which means data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and refer to each other.

The overall purpose of this methodological approach was to generate information that is descriptive of current trends and challenges in the sector, but also yet widely applicable to organizations that support settlement, resettlement and integration of newcomers. The qualitative data obtained in this research was interpreted through thematic analysis using a coding framework. The qualitative coding was done manually, without the aid of statistical software. On the other hand, the quantitative portion of this research was assessed through descriptive statistics, with the purpose to provide easy to understand summaries of the quantitative information obtained in the survey.

^{vii} This method entails selecting a sample based on characteristics of the population and the objective of the study.

^{viii} Of the 39 organization that responded to the survey, 16 were AAISA members and funded by IRCC, 12 were not AAISA members but they were funded by IRCC, 9 were neither and 2 were unknown.

Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Appendix 4

Limitations of the Project

- This provincial survey was sent to managers and executive directors at service provider organizations and IRCC funded organizations. Therefore, the approach of the survey is top-down and it is unclear whether other staff within the organization had any input. Therefore, for future reference or as a complimentary portion of this survey, AAISA could design a survey with a bottom-up approach by asking other staff within the organization or asking newcomer clients what their perspective and experiences are on the programs and services they are receiving.
- The design of the survey allowed respondents to view all questions and start answering and finish at a later point in time. However, this created a variety of challenges in terms of data quality and data cleaning. For instance, a few participants entered the survey to view the questions and not answer any. Also, other participants had entered the survey several times and responded to survey questions several times which resulted in duplicate answers. For future reference, the survey could be designed in a way that requires participants to answer questions systematically, before continuing onto the next question.
- More so than a limitation of the survey itself, this is a limitation of the results and analysis portion of this report. The lack of data currently available on the exact number of refugees per city makes it very difficult to determine if the current supply of services is appropriate or not. Further research is needed to determine causation.
- In an attempt to obtain depth on the topic, it is likely AAISA lost survey respondents. The tradeoff between depth and breadth is a common limitation with surveys. For future surveys, a different design/length could potentially increase the number of respondents. However, questions would need to be carefully worded not to lose too much depth and insight into the topic.

Appendix 5

Question and answer form summary:

1. What was the objective of the survey? The main objective of the survey was to understand the current state of the settlement and integration sector in Alberta in terms of service provision and internal capacity, and learn ways in which AAISA can improve its role as an umbrella organization.
2. Who did the survey go to? The survey went to all member agencies and IRCC funded organizations in Alberta.
3. How many organizations answered the survey? A total of 39 organizations answered the survey which resulted in a response rate of 37%.
4. What are the most common type of services currently offered according to survey responses? The majority of survey respondents offer *Language Programs, Support Services, Community and Social Connections, and Children and Youth Programs*.
5. What programs are offered by the least amount of organizations? *Health Programs* (14%) and *Initial Reception* programs (11%).
6. What category of newcomer clients do survey respondents serve the most on a regular basis? Permanent Residents (97%), Refugees (91%), and Canadian Citizens (74%).
7. What category of refugees do organizations serve the most on a regular basis? *Government-Assisted Refugees* (58%) and *Privately-Sponsored Refugees* (58%).
8. What is the main barrier affecting newcomer clients in Alberta and why? The most common barrier facing newcomers is *Access to Language Programs* and the major barrier to accessing language programs is *Lack of Childcare Provision and Availability*.
9. What was the most important employment and social connection activity according to survey respondents? *Agency Collaboration with Local Businesses, Community Organizations and Health Services* was voted by 73% of organizations as *Very Important*, followed by *Childcare Provision* (68%).

10. What was the most important strategic activity according to survey respondents? *Sharing Expertise and Best Practices* was rated by 61% of respondents as *Very Important*. This was followed by *Providing Expert Advice and Consultation to Governments*, and *Facilitating Organization and Sector-Wide Capacity Building*.
11. What are priorities in the sector that AAISA should bring forward to the national level? *Coordination with Francophone SPOs*, followed by *Targeted Support for Vulnerable Newcomer Populations*, *Data management and Information Sharing*, and *Increased Collaboration and Capacity Building*.
12. What are the three priorities that should be addressed in the next three years? *Professional Development and Learning Needs of Staff*, followed by *Multiculturalism, Diversity and Inclusion*, and *Labour Market Integration*.
13. How many of the survey respondents are AAISA members? 61% are *AAISA members*, 13% are *Considering Joining* and the remaining 26% are *Neither Members nor Considering Joining*.
14. What are the current satisfaction levels with AAISA's membership? 59% were *Satisfied* with their membership, 12% were *Very Satisfied* with their membership and 30% of members were *Somewhat Satisfied* with their membership.
15. How often do organization participate in engagement activities? 54% of survey respondents indicated participating *Often*, while 20% indicated they *Rarely or Never* participated in engagement activities.
16. How informed do organizations feel about AAISA's work? 42% said they felt *Somewhat Informed*, while another 32% said they felt either *Uninformed or Very Uninformed*.
17. Do organizations want to attend more networking events? 95% of survey respondents indicated they were interested in attending more networking events organized by AAISA.
18. How could AAISA improve membership and help organizations better support organizations in serving clients? Improve collaboration and communication in the sector, increase information sharing and knowledge mobilization and increased training and learning opportunities for staff.
19. What professional development courses did survey respondents indicate as being interested in taking over the next year? *Basic Counselling Skills in a Cross-Cultural Setting*, *Crisis Intervention/Conflict Resolution*, *Building an Understanding of Cultural communities and Mental Health of Refugees*.

20. What type of delivery method do organizations prefer when it comes to professional development? *In-Person Workshops and Training* was voted by 40% of survey respondents as *Very Useful*, followed by *Webinars* (26%).
21. What was the delivery method that respondents indicated liking the least when it came to professional development? *Self-Paced Online Courses*.
22. How often do organizations use information provided by AAISA? 54% of survey respondent indicated *Sometimes*.
23. How do organizations use the information provided by AAISA? *To Better Understand the Sector, To Better Understand the Needs of Newcomers and Communities, and As a Resource for Clients*.
24. What do organizations never use information provided by AAISA for? *Neither to Inform High-level Policy Decisions nor As a Resource for Organizational Research and Policy Initiatives*.
25. What are the best tools to mobilize research and policy information? 30% of participants indicated *Focus Groups* or *Advisory Panels* were *Very Useful*, followed by *Bulletins* (17%).
26. What are the least useful tools to mobilize research and policy information? Briefs and Publication Reports.
27. What kind of collaboration do organizations want to see in the sector and what would be effective tools to enable this? Survey respondents would like to see increased collaboration and information sharing. *Municipal Sector Caucuses* (4.63/10) and *Online Communities of Practice or Collaboration Spaces/Discussion Boards* (4.33/10) were rated the highest.
28. How many organizations use the Alberta Resettlement Dashboard? Only 19% of survey respondents indicated using or providing information for the Alberta Resettlement Dashboard.
29. How can the Resettlement Dashboard be improved? Survey participants would like to see the Dashboard shared with a broader audience, and expanded to include more meaningful indicators that are able to demonstrate both the long and short-term outcomes of the sector.
30. What do organizations find the most useful method when it comes to informing the sector? *E-mail Communication* was voted by 70% of participants as either *Effective* or *Very Effective*, followed by *In-person Communication*.
31. Are organizations in the settlement and integration sector currently engaged with or around Indigenous initiatives? 59% of survey respondents indicated that they were not

engaged with or around Indigenous initiatives but indicated that they would like to be and they would like to see AAISA more involved and facilitating partnerships and events.

- 32.** What methods do participants find the most useful to engage the sector? The preferred method of sector engagement is large scale events such as summits and conferences, followed by small scale events such as roundtables and focus groups.

¹ United Nations, *Migration for Development: A Bottom-Up Approach*, publication, Joint Migration and Development Initiative, United Nations.

² Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, "Claiming Asylum in Canada – What Happens?" Canada.ca, January 18, 2018, accessed April 06, 2018, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2017/03/claiming_asylum_incanadawhathappens.html.

³ Kendra Milne, *High Stakes: The Impact of Childcare on the Human Rights of Women and Children*, report, July 2016, , <http://www.westcoastleaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/High-Stakes-low-res-for-web.pdf>.

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