



CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH THE COVID-19 LENS:

HARNESSING INNOVATION AND MOBILIZING BEST PRACTICES FROM THE PANDEMIC

FOCUS AREA: EMPLOYMENT

IN BRIEF

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for settlement and integration agencies as they seek to deliver employment related services to the newcomers they serve. The transition from in-person to virtual service delivery has removed geographic barriers for connection. The power of networking through the virtual world has allowed newcomers to better connect with mentors, networks, and employment opportunities across the country, rather than being limited by the confinements of their spatial location. Newcomer serving agencies have utilized virtual programming to create more inclusive employment opportunities such as virtual networking fairs, personalized cross-Canadian mentorships, and asynchronous delivery of industry specific skill trainings.

The Capacity Building Through the COVID-19 Lens Project seeks to capture and mobilize these best practices through key focus areas. This brief seeks to summarize the key findings of the two employment focus groups hosted in October 2021, and January 2022.

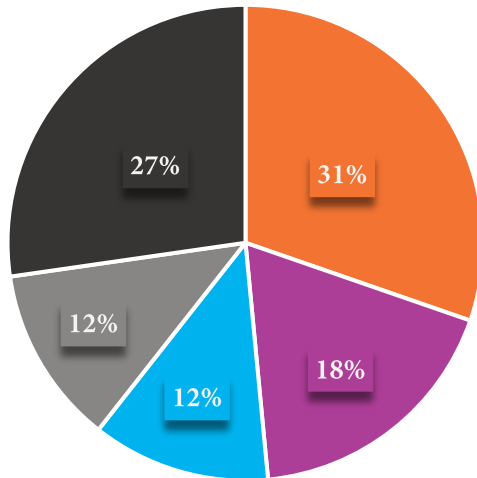
Please note that underlined terms throughout the brief can be found in the **Glossary**.

KEY FINDINGS

BEST PRACTICES

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

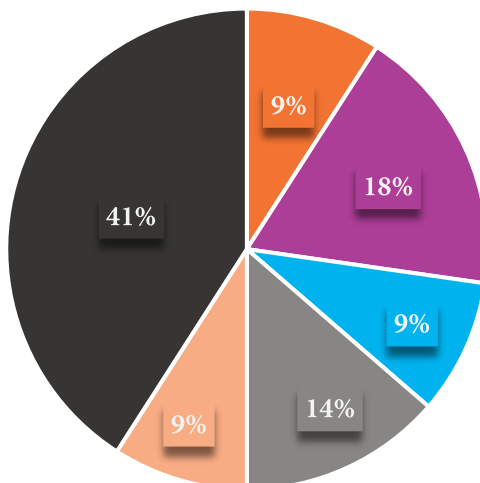
The best practices utilized to **increase relevant work experience** for newcomers include:



- Virtual networking events and virtual job fairs, reaching out to new employers and strengthening existing relationships
- Personalized matching between clients and employers for networking opportunities and mentorship, one-on-one opportunities for mock interviews, and resume personalization
- Mentorship (outside the workplace, intercultural understandings, employment and career guidance)
- Digital literacy courses/resources, hybrid/flexible programming
- Providing virtual experiential opportunities for newcomers (volunteering, on the job skills and experience, practical skill development, paid internships)

LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

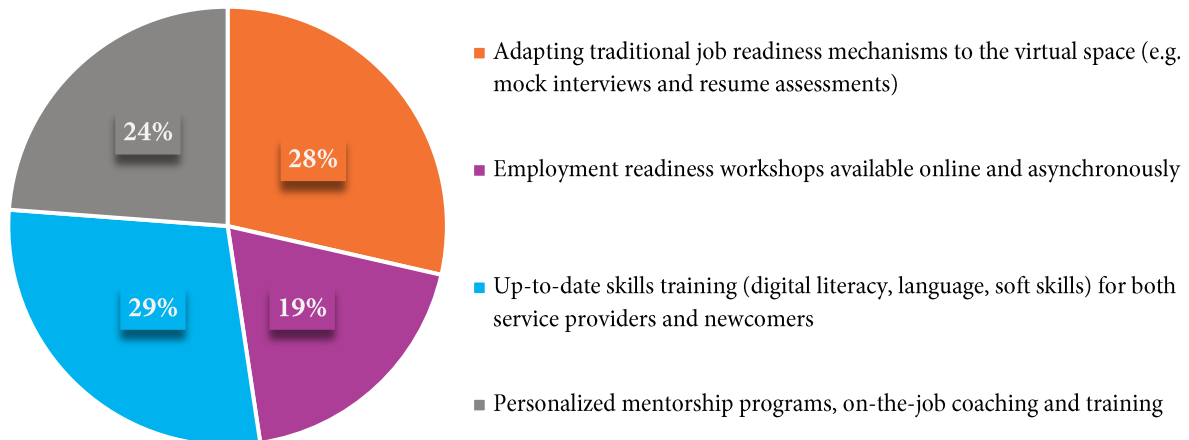
The best practices utilized to **increase labour market integration** for newcomers include:



- Virtual networking opportunities (mentor-mentee meetings, virtual conferences, job fairs)
- In-person and virtual training on software used for virtual service delivery
- Specialized courses designed to be delivered online, and asynchronously
- One-on-one counselling
- Job specific training provided online
- Sitting on advisory committees, engaging in direct information sharing with employers and utilizing formal labour reports to determine the emergent labour market trends

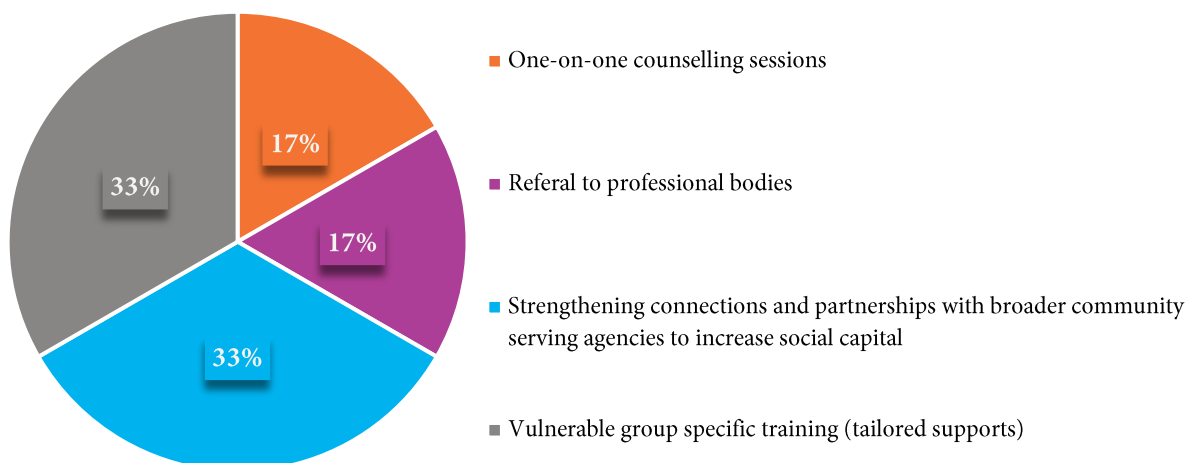
JOB READINESS

The best practices utilized to **increase job readiness** for newcomers include:



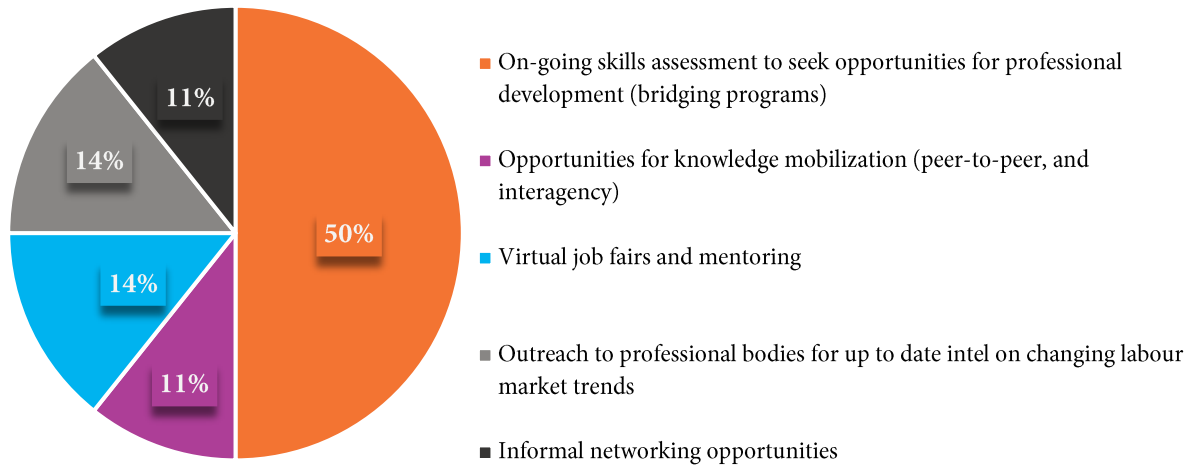
VULNERABLE CLIENTS

Approaches that have been developed to ensure effective employment service delivery to **newcomers with complex needs or those who have traditionally been underserved** such as women, seniors, newcomers with disabilities, newcomers with low English proficiency, temporary foreign workers, newcomers in rural and small centres, newcomers working in precarious industries, etc. include:



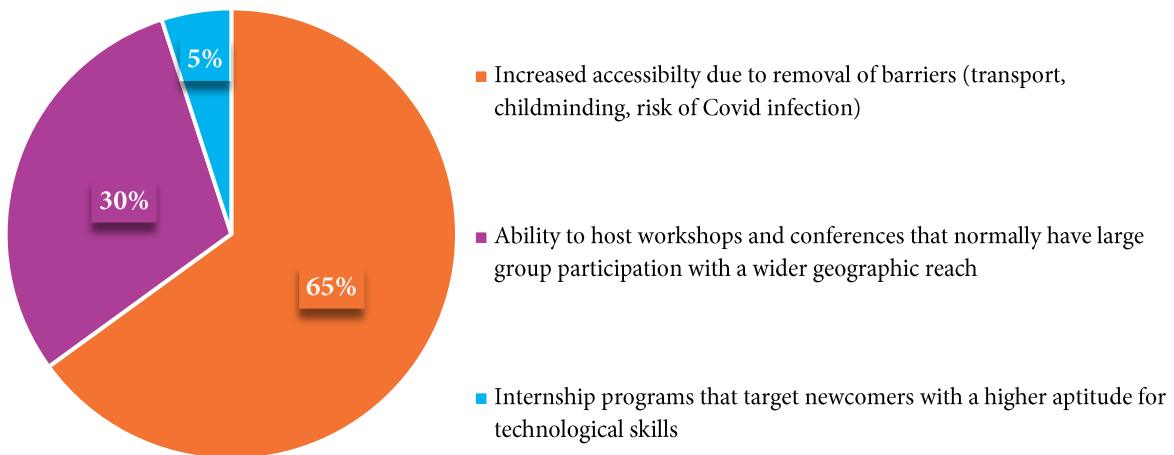
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY PROVIDERS

Emergent needs of employment service delivery providers to support professional development and success of hybrid employment course delivery include:



POSITIVE FEEDBACK REFLECTING THE TRANSITION OF IN PERSON TO VIRTUAL PROGRAM DELIVERY

Benefits of implementing hybrid and online service delivery include:





The positive feedback received from both newcomers and employment service providers include increased satisfaction with **flexibility in employment services and courses**, increased **intercultural understandings**, increased **digital literacy skillsets**, and an **increased demand for tailored programming**. Virtual programming has removed geographic barriers for newcomers, fostering cross-Canadian mentor relationships that have been more readily available and accessible through virtual coffee chats and Zoom meetings rather than in person gatherings. The transition to virtual programming has also created opportunities for newcomers to increase their digital literacy skills that are utilized not only to obtain employment but to transition to employment that takes place online as well. Increase in intercultural understandings are reflected within the soft skills of employment as well, as newcomers their knowledge of Canadian workplace norms as well as their rights as workers.

NEXT STEPS

The findings identified from the two rounds of focus groups will be leveraged to support the creation of multi-media professional development resources for service delivery providers. These resources will include step-by-step guides, infographics, research briefs, as well as a training video for each focus area. The training video will be created in alignment with AAISA's certification program, where service providers can institutionalize these emergent best practices. The development of these resources is created with the intent to capture the innovative practices that have arisen in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that the adaptations created during this time are carried into the post-pandemic world of settlement and integration service delivery.

GLOSSARY

Hybrid courses: Hybrid courses refers to the practice of engaging a mix of both in-person course delivery as well as the use of virtual programming. It is a thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online environments to conduct teaching and learning. It is often used interchangeable with terms such as blended learning, mixed-mode or flexible learning. It is usually based on specific needs, capacities, modalities and pedagogies of a particular institution or sector. This term is synonymously with the term blended learning.

Job readiness: Involves an awareness of one's strengths and areas for growth. This can involve having a working language proficiency and an understanding of work culture to fully participate in employment.

Precarious industries: Precarious work refers to the industries and employment opportunities that have disproportionately high vulnerabilities for newcomers. These vulnerabilities can include increased exposure to contracting COVID-19 and unstable or inconsistent working hours. It is synonymous with the term precarious employment.

Examples: Front line service workers, positions that do not offer Work-From-Home opportunities or employment opportunities that do not allow for paid sick leave

Specific industries observed during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Healthcare, transportation, factory workers, meat packing, agricultural workers, cleaning services

Virtual programming: Virtual programming is a form of distanced learning that is conducted completely over the Internet. It refers to newcomer and direct service agencies participating in courses virtually, through the internet and without the need of attending in-person courses. It can be performed both asynchronously or synchronously, depending on the instructor and/or course. This term can be used synonymously with remote learning.