

# PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

## COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1.0 PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

Through the Provincial Engagement Initiative (PEI), the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) will foster meaningful opportunities for agencies to come together regionally to guide and support AAISA's work in service of a provincial vision for newcomer settlement and integration.

The initiative will bring together representatives from newcomer serving agencies in three regional committees, with each serving as a forum to elevate local experiences and perspectives on shared provincial-level issues. In this way, each committee will ensure local context is represented within the projects AAISA undertakes related to broader issues, gaps, and trends in Alberta.

At a provincial level, each committee will:

- Build a shared provincial vision of successful settlement and integration for newcomers in Alberta.
- Engage in discussion on systems-level challenges, gaps, and needs.
- Build and mobilize sector knowledge.
- Inform and support AAISA's activities related to research, policy, and capacity building.
- Provide contextual and evidence-based information to support provincial-level projects.
- Strengthen the sector's collective voice on issues related to newcomers and service delivery.

### 2.0 STRUCTURE

The PEI is composed of three committees, each comprising participants from agencies from specific geographical areas:

- **Calgary Committee:** Open to all AAISA members and IRCC-funded agencies who serve clients within Calgary.
- **Edmonton Committee:** Open to all AAISA members and IRCC-funded agencies who serve clients within Edmonton.
- **Small Centre Committee:** Open to all AAISA members and IRCC-funded agencies who serve clients in small to mid-sized municipalities across Alberta.

In recognition of the need to augment AAISA's representation of Francophone newcomer serving agencies, the **Groupe de Travail Provincial (Francophone Working Group)** serves as a forum to identify Francophone-specific priorities across the province, which will be shared and collaboratively actioned at the committee level. Participation in the working group is open to agencies that serve Francophone clients across the province. Francophone Working group participants are encouraged to participate in all regional committee meetings and facilitate knowledge mobilization sessions. AAISA will continue to strive to further incorporate the Francophone Working Group in all engagement sessions.

The term of the PEI runs from October 1 to September 30 each year.

## 3.0 PARTICIPATION

The terms of committee participation are designed to facilitate consistency and productivity in meeting discussions throughout the participation term, while also ensuring equity amongst agencies. For each committee, participation is subject to the following stipulations:

### 3.1 Eligibility & Committee Participation

- Participation in the PEI is open to newcomer serving agencies in Alberta, who follow the Expression of Interest procedure outlined in Section 3.3.
- Each agency is to assign one primary staff representative and one substitute delegate (per committee when applicable) to participate each term.
  - Should the primary representative be unable to attend a meeting, the substitute delegate may attend in their absence, however both representatives may also attend the meetings concurrently.
  - Should there be a replacement of staff members within the agency, it is the responsibility of the representative to communicate the change of staff with AAISA and file the necessary documents for a substitute representative.
  - Agencies may not extend or share meeting invitations to other individuals who are not the primary or substitute delegate.
  - It is contingent upon the primary delegate to adequately brief the substitute delegate to enable them to fully participate in meeting proceedings.
- Both the primary and substitute delegate should be at the senior management level within an agency.

### 3.2 Committee Composition

- The size of each committee is calculated based on the number of AAISA members who express interest in participating in a regional committee.

- Based on the number of AAISA members who have expressed interest, the proportion of spots allocated for non-members will be capped at 20% of the number of member participants.
- In addition to AAISA members and non-members, participation will be extended to relevant indirect service providers, such as Réseau en Immigration Francophone de l'Alberta (RIFA) and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP).
- AAISA can only guarantee a seat to agencies who are members of AAISA; non-member agencies are invited to apply, but will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Should participation in certain meetings by relevant non-participant stakeholders (such as IRCC, community stakeholders, etc.) be deemed beneficial by the group, AAISA will invite non-participant stakeholders to join certain meetings on an ad hoc basis.

### 3.3 Expression of Interest

- Before a new term begins, AAISA will send a notice inviting all eligible agencies to participate in an applicable committee. In accordance with sections 3.1 and 3.2, each eligible agency that wishes to participate must express interest no later than the deadline determined by AAISA.
  - Agencies that express interest will be considered participants and included in all meetings, correspondence, and related activities of the respective committee for the duration of the full term.
  - Agencies that do not express interest before the deadline will not be included in any meetings, correspondence, and related activities of the committees for the duration of the committees' sitting term.
- In expressing interest, agencies must assign their primary and substitute delegates, include the appropriate contact information for both delegates and formally acknowledge the *Code of Conduct* (see Appendix I) form.
- For each term, all eligible agencies must express interest in committee participation regardless of previous individual or agency participation status.

## 4.0 PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Within the PEI, committee participants are responsible for bringing information forward and actively participating in discussion and projects, while AAISA staff play a backbone support role responsible for convening, facilitating, and leading provincial-level projects.

To ensure the work of the PEI is effective and impactful, both AAISA staff and participants are expected to uphold the responsibilities specific to their roles.

AAISA staff will:

- Create a meeting space that provides opportunities for equitable participation among participants and upholds the *Code of Conduct* (see Appendix I).
- Work with agencies to build the collective voice of the PEI.
- Steward provincial-level issues in a manner which highlights regional or organizational differences and needs.
- Coordinate annual calls for participation and onboarding for new participants.
- Execute and maintain provincial projects:
  - Based on the guidance of the committees, AAISA will choose to undertake specific provincial projects in accordance with its *Engagement, Research, & Policy Project Process Framework* and based on the following factors:
    1. The projects must fall within AAISA's mandate, capacity, and constraints.
    2. The projects must address key systems gaps and challenges at the provincial level.
    3. The project must align with and support the PEI's work in service of building a shared vision of settlement and integration.
  - Provide progress reports and feedback to the committees on projects, including any barriers, information needs, and outcomes.
- Continuously evaluate the efficacy of the PEI and its committees and working group; adapt and implement improvements based on the results of evaluation.

Committee participants will:

- Participate in a minimum of three meetings per term, representing approximately six to eight hours of engagement.
- Engage in productive dialogue and provide advice on provincial-level projects that address systems gaps, challenges, and needs.
- Actively build a collective voice and advance solutions for shared problems.
- Be active and responsive to communications, in meetings, and information requests or data collection.
- Support provincial-level projects through activities including, information and data sharing, providing advice on specific actions, and reviewing and providing feedback.
- Act as a liaison and communicate committee activities to agencies and other working groups, committees, or stakeholders.
- Arrive at meetings in a timely fashion with adequate preparation.
- Uphold the meeting agenda, allotted timelines, and the *Code of Conduct* (Appendix I).
- Participate in the end of term evaluation.

## 5.0 MEETING DETAILS & PROCESS

All committee meetings are subject to the following process:

- Each committee will meet quarterly, with one or more of these meetings to be held in-person as permitted by public health guidelines, AAISA's policies and budget, and participant budgets.
  - At the start of each term, AAISA will schedule regular meetings for each committee for the full term.
  - All digital meetings will be recorded for minute-taking purposes.
  - For meetings that occur in-person, members must attend in-person and no teleconferencing option will be made available.
  - Should committees need to be convened to discuss the progress of a project, an emergent challenge, or another matter that is deemed to be time sensitive, AAISA will have the purview to schedule ad hoc committee meetings outside of those scheduled at the start of each term.
  - Notice of ad hoc meetings will be provided with as much lead time as possible.
- Meeting logistics:
  - AAISA will seek an appropriate meeting space for in-person meetings.
  - Meetings can be hosted by committee participants should an appropriate venue be available through one's agency.
- Should in-person meetings necessitate intra-provincial travel, AAISA may cover applicable travel expenses for those who are AAISA members, if funds are available.
- Development of the meeting agenda.
  - The meeting agenda will be comprised of four primary sections, though the order of these items may change depending on the context of each meeting:
    1. **Organizational Updates:** Brief organizational updates from AAISA.
    2. **Groupe de Travail Provincial Updates:** Space will be dedicated for a report back on proceedings, updates, and priority issues for Francophone newcomers and agencies, with an emphasis on action and collaboration
    3. **Standing Issue Items:** Over the participation term, the committees will have standing issues on the agenda that represent key systems-level needs, gaps, or challenges experienced across Alberta's settlement and integration sector. Each committee will contribute specific context, guidance, and input on standing items, which will contribute to a nuanced provincial position and relevant actions. Should action items need follow-up or further updates, they will be provided under this section.
    4. **Committee Items:** Two weeks prior to the meeting, AAISA will send committee members a call for additional agenda item requests related to unique systems-level needs, gaps, or challenges not covered by the standing issue items. This section of the agenda will also include a brief roundtable for agencies to share on emergent updates, trends, challenges, request for collaboration, or priorities that they deem of relevance.
  - The final agenda will be sent to committee participants one week prior to the meeting date

- Meeting Facilitation:
  - As meeting facilitators, AAISA will ensure that the meeting is conducted on time, follows the agenda, and that participants abide by the *Code of Conduct* (Appendix I).
- Meeting Minutes will:
  - provide a record of discussions, decisions, and considerations made by the PEI committee.
  - not include the names of agencies apart from Roundtable Discussions.
  - be sent to participants two weeks after the PEI committee meeting.
  - include any resources or documents shared, along with a follow-up of action items.
  - be available in both French and English.
- Aggregate Briefs:
  - Once all the provincial committees have met, a brief will be compiled by AAISA staff, which will summarize high-level trends across the committees and research and literature that support those trends. The brief will serve to mobilize key knowledge with agencies/stakeholders. The final brief of the term will include recommendations and actions to support PEI agencies. The brief will be available in both French and English.
- Between meetings, AAISA staff will undertake work based on the information provided by the committees and may require participant submissions and feedback.

## 6.0 EVALUATION & AMENDEMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

To ensure the PEI is an effective model of engagement that contributes to the impact of AAISA's research, policy, and capacity building projects, AAISA staff will maintain a practice of evaluating its structure, process, and impact.

Participant feedback will be gathered at the end of each term, which will be analyzed and assessed for potential changes to implement in the next term of the initiative.

Amendments to the *Terms of Reference* will take place as follows:

- Suggested amendments may be brought forth by a specific committee or by AAISA.
- Amendments will be reviewed during the evaluation period at the end of each term.
- The suggested amendment will be evaluated by AAISA, taking into account whether it is congruent with AAISA's mandate, capacity, and obligations to funders.

## APPENDIX I - CODE OF CONDUCT

All meetings are subject to the *Code of Conduct*. All committee participants, guests, and AAISA staff are subject to upholding the *Code of Conduct* in all meetings, both in-person and over a digital platform, as well as in all committee correspondence. The *Code of Conduct* will act to foster a safe space for all participants and will also ensure that committee work is optimized for impact.

### **The following outlines are the key values of the *Code of Conduct*:**

- Through an anti-oppressive approach, uphold equity and respect each person, regardless of how they identify, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, religion, beliefs, etc.
- Allow space for all perspectives, actively listen, and refrain from interrupting others.
- Be mindful of tone and how much time and space one takes up in discussions.
- Replace criticism with questions, constructive feedback, and encouragement.
- Use “I” statements (“I feel,” “I think,” “I wonder,” etc.).
- Actively engage in correspondence and partake in activities promptly and productively.

### **The following conduct will not be tolerated:**

- Demeaning, discriminatory, intimidating, violent behaviour, and/or harassment.
- Sexual harassment of any sort, including verbal, physical, digital, and/or any other form.
- Repeated or egregious violations of the *Code of Conduct* or policies of AAISA.

Harassment of any sort will not be tolerated, and is not acceptable, within any spaces, digital communications, or meetings hosted by AAISA. Inappropriate conduct or harassment should be brought to the attention of AAISA staff or management should any participant not feel comfortable to voice their concerns to the wider committee. Any issues related to harassment or behaviour should be kept confidential within the committee.

To ensure that the *Code of Conduct* is effective and respected, a warning will be issued following any violation of the *Code of Conduct*. If the behaviour continues, the participant’s agency will be requested to nominate a replacement to represent their agency. Based on the severity of an offense, a participant may be disqualified from future participation. All participants on the committees are expected to support AAISA staff in creating a supportive and respectful culture within the committees by speaking up in a situation of inappropriate behaviour or conduct.

Any guests, external presenters, or other stakeholders invited to attend a committee meeting will be informed of the Code of Conduct in advance. All guests will be held to the same standard as committee participants and afforded the same respect and opportunity to contribute positively. Upon joining an AAISA committee, all participants will be required to provide a signed copy of the *Code of Conduct*, to indicate they have read and understand its contents.