
ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF IMMIGRANT SERVING
AGENCIES

2024

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



Supporting Alberta's Settlement & Integration sector since 1980.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies would like to sincerely thank our funders, Board of Directors, members, staff, volunteers, and partners. Through your continued support, innovative leadership, and relentless commitment to Alberta's settlement and integration sector, we remain emboldened to tenaciously realize the vision and mission on which AAISA is founded, and for that, we are eternally grateful.

FUNDERS:



AAISA IS A MEMBER OF:



NATIONAL PARTNERS:



COMMUNITY PARTNERS:



REGIONAL PARTNERS:



ABOUT AAISA

OUR VISION

An inclusive, welcoming, and engaged society.

OUR MISSION

Facilitate collaboration and leadership within the settlement and integration-serving sector.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Care for Newcomers
Society

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Portail De L'Immigrant
Association (PIA)

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Director

Centre for
Newcomers

COMMITTEES

- Strategic Stakeholder Engagement
- Governance and Risk Management
- Finance and Audit
- Human Resources Committee

STAFF

Executive Director

Kathryn Friesen

Management

Laura Fryer

Marokh Yousifshahi

General Staff

Abu Yandiev

Aizel Castejon

Amy Trang-Mai

Andrew Lam

Celine Truong

Chloé McBean

Christian Ladores

Cristina Tellez

Crystal Guzman

Elaine Malinis

Heba Younes

Meghan Cunningham

Nimra Lalani

Tino Mungoni

Yujin Lee

WORD FROM THE BOARD

The past year was again an exciting year, with challenges and successes.

After a tumultuous executive leadership period at the beginning of the year, we were blessed to recruit Kathryn Friesen as our Executive Director. Kathryn brings a critical wealth of knowledge and progressive leadership experience in the newcomer settlement sector to our organization.

In the meantime, a highly skilled and passionate team continued to deliver many programs, services, and research projects, all in support of our mission to facilitate collaboration and leadership within the settlement-serving sector.

As part of our mandate, AAISA proactively engaged in many provincial and national initiatives to advocate for our members in their work to provide optimal settlement and integration services in Alberta. These included co-heading the national GBA+ project and provincial support of CUAET visa holders and discussions with IRCC related to the discontinuation of the upward amendments for these same CUAET visa holders.

After several years, the large AAISA conference was held in person again, where an impressive number of frontline staff took the opportunity to learn and interact with others.

As we are heading into IRCC's next five years funding cycle of IRCC and immigration levels expected to increase for healthy socio-economic growth, we are confident that the AAISA organization will be in a solid position to support and advocate for our sector.

We sincerely thank the AAISA staff team, funders, regional, provincial and national partners for a successful year, and look forward to continuing our collaborations in the coming years.

Together, we can make Alberta the place of choice for newcomers.

Board of Directors

AAISA

MESSAGE FROM THE ED

I want to begin by thanking you all for walking with AAISA through this year which has been a year of significant change for AAISA. The year began with two Interim co-Executive Director's who led AAISA while our Board of Directors searched for a new Executive Director. During this time, we also had two managers leave the organization. It took until November for there to be some stability at the leadership level within AAISA when I had the pleasure of joining the agency supported by two strong managers and an incredibly talented team. Throughout this time, AAISA had many projects with demanding deliverables and the AAISA team continued to meet the deliverables of their projects and exceeded the expectations of funders and partners. We are so proud of the work we have done this year and we are pleased to share it with you in this report.

A year of change naturally leads to a significant amount of reflection for an organization. At AAISA, we have been examining where we have been as an organization, where we currently are, and where we hope to go and grow. I was fortunate enough to have been on the AAISA board when they were going through a similar process. This involved

having some of the original board members provide their historical perspectives on AAISA. This was helpful to reinforce how vital a role AAISA can and has played for organizations supporting newcomers arriving in our province.

Currently, AAISA is planning our programs and supports for the next five years and we, as a team, have been imagining where we are going as an organization and this process of imagining can be quite exciting because we can see that AAISA is poised to be a leader of indirect supports in the sector, supporting newcomer serving organizations through improving and building our capacity building and coordination supports. Alberta is seeing record numbers of newcomers arriving in our province and is experiencing record setting growth in our two major cities. The need for newcomer serving agencies to be supported by a strong and thriving umbrella has never been more important and I'm so excited to be able to continue to build and grow AAISA together with our many member organizations.

Kathryn Friesen
Executive Director

OUR COMMUNITY

RETURNING MEMBERS



NEW MEMBERS



ENGAGEMENT

Fostering Collaboration and Alignment

This year, the AAISA Engagement team made significant strides in enhancing collaboration and communication across Alberta's newcomer-serving agencies. Through various engagement meetings, symposia, and toolkits, the department successfully addressed key issues and needs in the sector, ensuring a well-coordinated and effective response to the needs of newcomers.

HIGHLIGHTS



Provincial Engagement Initiative (PEI)

Held in Calgary, Edmonton, small centers, and the Groupe de Travail Provincial, fostering collaboration and communication among **59 service providers**. Post-PEI meeting debriefs, bringing all committees together for a sector-wide connection.



Francophone Sector Engagement

implemented AAISA's Francophone strategy to increase collaboration and communication between Anglophone and Francophone service providers. **5+** engagements with Francophone service providers leading to clearer and inclusive support for Francophone newcomers.



Small Centre Symposium (Airdrie - September 2023)

Promoted collaboration between **40 small center organizations**, sharing work to improve the newcomer sector, with discussions on operations, language demand, housing and transportation, employment, vulnerable newcomers, and funding.



New Toolkit Resources

10+ curated resources added to AAISA's toolkit including winter preparedness info, tax resources, and a refugee claimants resource list.



October 2023 PNT Virtual Summit

Engaged in discussions and collaborations on various topics impacting the newcomer sector, like Ukrainian settlement, retainment and rural development.

UKRAINIAN SETTLEMENT

Responding to Acute Crisis

AAISA continues to play a pivotal role in responding to the Ukrainian crisis, supporting the sector while approximately 62,000 displaced Ukrainians arrive in Alberta. Through provincial tables, engagement initiatives, and effective donation distribution, the department ensured a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of Ukrainian newcomers.

HIGHLIGHTS



Provincial Coordination and Tables

Hosted and facilitated **27 Southern Alberta meetings** and **21 Rural Alberta meetings** designed to support service providing organizations, stakeholders and grassroots organizations to discuss and support the evolving needs of displaced Ukrainians through sharing resources and updates.



Telegram Channel and Provincial Communication

Launched and maintained a Ukrainian-designated Telegram channel to help coordinate and provide accurate and interpreted information directly to **~3,000** arrived or arriving displaced Ukrainians.



Donations Coordination and Distribution

In collaboration with Operation Ukraine Safe Haven (OUSH) and the national table, AAISA distributed **31 Flair Airline vouchers for domestic flights**, **646 Canadian Gift cards**, **426 Tim Hortons Gift Cards**, and **484 Canada Goose Jackets** to settlement agencies and grass roots agencies.



Research and Reporting

Conducted **regular collections and visualizations** to help the sector and stakeholders understand the arrival patterns of displaced Ukrainians and **published reports highlighting the sector's efforts** in assisting arrivals.



Hosting Coordination

Supporting provincial hosting for displaced Ukrainians through the development and execution of a **virtual training program**.

RESEARCH

Advancing Knowledge and Best Practices

Through various research projects, summits, and the development of tools and resources, AAISA made substantial contributions to understanding and supporting Albertan settlement. Special focus was given to rural and urban communities to address the needs of newcomers.

HIGHLIGHTS



Rural Renewal Summit

Convened 59 participants to discuss common challenges, best practices, and collaboration opportunities.



Rural Support Network Meetings, Briefs and Tools

Facilitated 5 meetings with 48 participants from 26 rural and remote municipalities. Produced 7 briefs reflecting findings from quarterly meetings. Developed and delivered 5 tools to support rural practitioners.



LIP/ZIP/RIF 101 Webinar

Brought together LIP/ZIP/RIF coordinators and managers to explore potential collaborations.



Knowledge Mobilization, Promotion and Presentations

Collected and disseminated knowledge of the sector with an emphasis on rural immigration, newcomer mental health and gender-based analysis plus research. Delivered 9 presentations at national conferences and 2 presentations at provincial conferences.



Annual Sector Survey

Published the 5th annual survey highlighting perspectives on aid, research priorities, and emerging issues.



Gender-Based Analysis Plus Project

Conducted 27 interviews and developed 17 GBA+ tools to enhance capacity for implementing GBA+ and EDI policies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Supporting Professionalism & Skill Development

The Professional Development team continues to surpass its programming goals. Adopting a holistic and cross-sectional approach in consultation with AAISA's Professional Development Committee, we have achieved the highest participant and training numbers to date. This continues to add to our goal to support the professionalism, quality and skills of Alberta's settlement sector.

HIGHLIGHTS



Training Sessions

Conducted 44 training sessions with 1137 participants from over 75 agencies.



Diverse Modalities

Provided training through various formats, including 19 self-paced, 24 facilitated, and 1 in-person training.



Specialized & Collaborative Training Opportunities

Partnered with Canadian Mental Health Association Edmonton, Distress Centre, and 211 Alberta to offer specialized courses for practitioners working with newcomers, focusing on mental health supports, resources, and tools.



Francophone Specific Trainings

Increased engagement by offering courses in French, such as the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence course.

"I became more confident being part of this course and thank you to the instructor and AAISA team for making me part of this valuable course that enhanced my learning in the field of immigration and mechanics."

"This course was a really good level of informative on many different things about settlement work and I really feel like I have an upper hand of knowledge on my peers who have not taken this course. Extremely useful and just overall really great. More time overall would be good."

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, ADMIN AND OUTREACH

Growing the Sector

The Business Development, Administration, and Outreach team achieved significant milestones in expanding membership, enhancing visibility, and supporting AAISA's administrative needs. The department's efforts have strengthened the organization's capacity to support newcomers and enhance community engagement.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Members and a Growing Network

Welcomed three new agencies to Umbrella membership.



Community Engagement and Communication

Achieved 1150+ LinkedIn connections, 1500+ newsletter subscribers, and 1500+ followers on X (formerly Twitter). Launched the AAISA newsletter in French, which is released on a bi-weekly basis.



AAISA Settlement and Integration Conference, 2024

Held a successful two-day in-person conference with 330+ attendees, 3 plenaries, and 30+ breakout sessions, raising \$3000+ in sponsorships.



Website Redesign and Update

Designed and updated the AAISA website to be launched in July 2024 to facilitate easy access to new and relevant information for Umbrella members and external stakeholders. Added and established a specialized PHAC portal to develop the sector's infrastructure to support mental health.



Hiring and Onboarding

Hired and onboarded 14 staff, contractors, and SMEs, including the Executive Director and Human Resources Consultant.



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