



Western NS Local Immigration Partnership

Strategic Plan
2022-2025



Western Regional
Enterprise Network

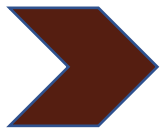
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Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

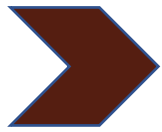
Research shows that many small and rural communities in Canada are struggling to maintain their population numbers due to a variety of reasons such as youth out-migration, declining birth rates, and an aging population. In response to these challenges, attracting new residents to settle in smaller centres can be used as a strategy to revitalize rural areas. Being a welcoming community means focusing on creating connections between newcomers and established community members. This can help in eliminating barriers to social and economic integration and addressing racism and discrimination.

The Western NS Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is one of many LIPs sponsored by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It is a collaborative community initiative designed to strengthen the role of local and regional communities in supporting immigrants. Driven by the Western REN, the LIP's work supports broader economic and business development strategic initiatives in the region



This strategy was developed through engagement with more than 30 different organizations and over 200 individuals across the region and beyond. These organizations included immigrant settlement service providers, government departments, business groups, employers, education and training providers, the health care sector, community groups, ethnocultural associations and places of worship, among others. Valuable input combined with a review of best practices elsewhere directly informed the development of this strategy.

This strategic plan lays out where and how the Western NS LIP should concentrate its efforts to address issues and challenges faced by newcomers to the region. It will guide the direction of the LIP Council for the next three years and is the basis from which the Western NS LIP will develop and implement activities to achieve its vision of a diverse, inclusive, and caring community where all feel welcome.



WHO WE ARE

We greatly appreciate the time and support of all the key players involved in the immigration efforts in the Western Region. We are especially grateful to all our committee members including:

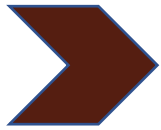
Partnership Council

- **Rick Allwright**, Yarmouth & Area Chamber of Commerce
- **Rob Angove**, NSCC
- **Arlene Barker**, IRCC
- **Charles Batstone**, Nova Scotia Works
- **Victoria Brooks**, Municipality of Yarmouth
- **Kathleen d'Entremont -Mooney**, Western REN
- **Rick Doucette**, Coastal Financial Credit Union
- **Chris Frotten**, Municipality of Barrington
- **Pierre Jacoub**, JACMAR Restaurants Ltd.
- **Nadine Lauren**, YREACH
- **Troy Lawrence**, Honey Bee's Deli & Ice Cream Parlour
- **André LeBlanc**, CDÉNE Entrepreneuriat
- **Angelique LeBlanc**, Western REN
- **Jennifer L'Esperance**, NSLSI
- **Derek Lesser**, TCRCE
- **Shelley Mahen**, TCRCE
- **Earl Mielke**, Housing NS
- **Sandrine Mounier**, CDÉNE Immigration Francophone
- **Alain Muise**, Municipality of Argyle
- **Amy Paradis**, Communauté accueillante de Clare
- **James Rose**, ISANS
- **Rebecca Rose**, Yarmouth Region Medical Professional Recruitment Partnership
- **Natalie Smith**, Town of Yarmouth
- **Allister Surette**, Université Sainte- Anne
- **Brent Surette**, CSAP
- **Marc Surette**, Ocean Pride Fisheries

Immigrant Advisory Committee

- **Hans Pfeil**
- **Charlene Dela Cruz**
- **Dat Tran**
- **Robin Park**
- **Jose Omar Viramontes**
- **Aldo Peter John**
- **Mariama Sene**
- **Jean-Paul Kalwahali**
- **Kristina Nuja**
- **Dolores Atwood**
- **Eko Raharjo**
- **Bida Kristin Viela**
- **Darshini Arogyaswamy**
- **Stacey Choat**
- **Dexter & Jennie Jimenez**
- **Elizabeth Lore**

The Western REN values partner input tremendously and hopes that this research can help other rural regions, as they try to initiate, expand, or sustain their immigrant attraction, integration, and retention efforts.



RESEARCH

As with many rural communities across Canada, the Western Region experiences a shift in demographics that included:

- Declining population
- Outmigration of residents
- Loss of working-aged families; and
- Shortage of workers for businesses across a variety of sectors.

To address these demographic challenges, the Western REN proposed an immigration strategy and coordinated approach to increase immigration to the region. As a result, a funding application was submitted to IRCC in 2019 for the establishment of the LIP. Conditional approval was granted in 2020 with intent to fund based on the results of a feasibility study.

Group ATN Consulting Inc. was contracted to complete the study. **Their final report indicated a strong business case for advancing the Western NS LIP.**

Part of their process included doing two dozen interviews with local stakeholders which resulted in the following **SWOT analysis.**

Strengths

- Quality of life
- A largely bilingual population
- Employer leadership and commitment to immigration
- Robust immigration ecosystem
- Success stories in immigration attraction and retention
- Affordable housing
- Increased emphasis on smart community approach
- IRCC and NSOI program collaboration

Weaknesses

- Housing availability
- Immigrant retention
- Community integration
- Language training
- Transportation
- Availability of culturally relevant amenities
- Appeal of larger urban centres
- Work for spouse
- Seasonality
- Onerous immigration process
- Geography
- Immigrant ecosystem coordination
- Immigration metrics

Opportunities

- Collective impact
- Holistic approach to immigration
- Community navigation
- Build on past success
- Collaborative housing initiative
- Increased IRCC program flexibility

Weaknesses

- COVID-19
- Attitudes
- Community unrest
- Openness to innovation
- Labour shortages

Surveys

In addition to the feasibility study, additional research, interviews, and collaboration with other LIP Coordinators across Canada was carried out by the LIP Coordinator. In October and November of 2021, three surveys were delivered to the following groups: Employers, Community and Newcomers.

Infographic and Summary reports are available at <https://westernren.ca/localimmigrationpartnership/>

Employer Survey

Goal- To get region specific data about the extent of labour shortages as well as assess the willingness of employers to consider immigration as a solution and identify what (if any) barriers to or concerns with hiring international candidates.

Results- 149 survey responses were received indicating that the labour shortage is extreme and impacting businesses in many sectors. It also highlighted a strong openness to hiring immigrants to help solve labour shortages. It also identified many reasons why employers were not already hiring internationally.

Challenges identified by employers:

- Difficulty navigating immigration processes/programs- no local resource person (i.e., IRCC or NS Immigration)
- Not having enough in-house staff or expertise to manage the immigration process
- Labour shortage was acute - employees required right away
- Employee retention
- Language barriers
- Lack of affordable or appropriate housing
- Limited access to public transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Finding work/connections for spouses
- Facilitating social connections for immigrants and families
- Not knowing what services were available in the region to help their employees
- Diversity/sensitivity training requirements
- Challenges to getting educational equivalencies and credential evaluation assistance



Community Survey

Goal- To learn about community priorities, concerns, and attitudes regarding immigration.

Results- 111 survey responses were received indicating that there is opportunity and work to be done for our region to become more welcoming to newcomers. Participants also stressed the importance of education in the community regarding immigration and the value of connecting with immigrants. Community members were interested in further opportunities where they could meet and get to know newcomers. Discrimination needs to be addressed in various locations/organizations.

Issues identified by the community:

- Lack of knowledge on what is being done to support immigrants and refugees (not being aware of what is available)
- Few opportunities identified for interaction with immigrants- challenges to forming friendships
- Are unsure if immigrants connecting with other residents
- Discrimination regarding ethnicity/culture and language/ accent is being witnessed, primarily in work settings
- Communities would like to become more welcoming to immigrants
- Lack of immigration metrics- currently no way to identify who is new to the region
- No designated person/organization focusing on immigration in the region
- No central “hub” where all providers bring their services together
- Lack of local drop in structured social interaction spaces during evenings or weekends



Immigrant Survey *(was available in English, French and Spanish)*

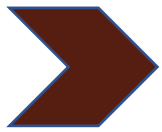
Goal- To get region specific feedback to help form a data baseline and guide how more than 20 organizations work together to improve services and living experiences for immigrants in the Western Region.

Results- 36 responses were received. This was the lowest response rate of all three surveys despite broad distribution in various channels. The issue of no “one stop shop” for immigration resources may be a contributing factor.

The following were challenges identified by immigrants:

- Making new friends and social connections
- Few pre-arrival services or information available
- No “one stop shop” location in the region to receive information
- Halifax-centric immigrant services
- Finding suitable and affordable housing
- Lack of transportation
- Difficulty accessing health care
- Access to language training
- Experiencing discrimination
- Underemployment
- Seeking online resources and not finding enough
- Lack of childcare and /or activities for children
- Difficulty finding information about “everyday life” (how to find a plumber, deal with garbage etc.)
- Accessing educational equivalency and credential evaluation assistance





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The research and surveys, interviews/consultations as well as a literature review have resulted in the Western NS LIP establishing the following three strategic priorities:

1. **Attracting talent to our communities**
2. **Employer outreach and support**
3. **Fostering welcoming communities**



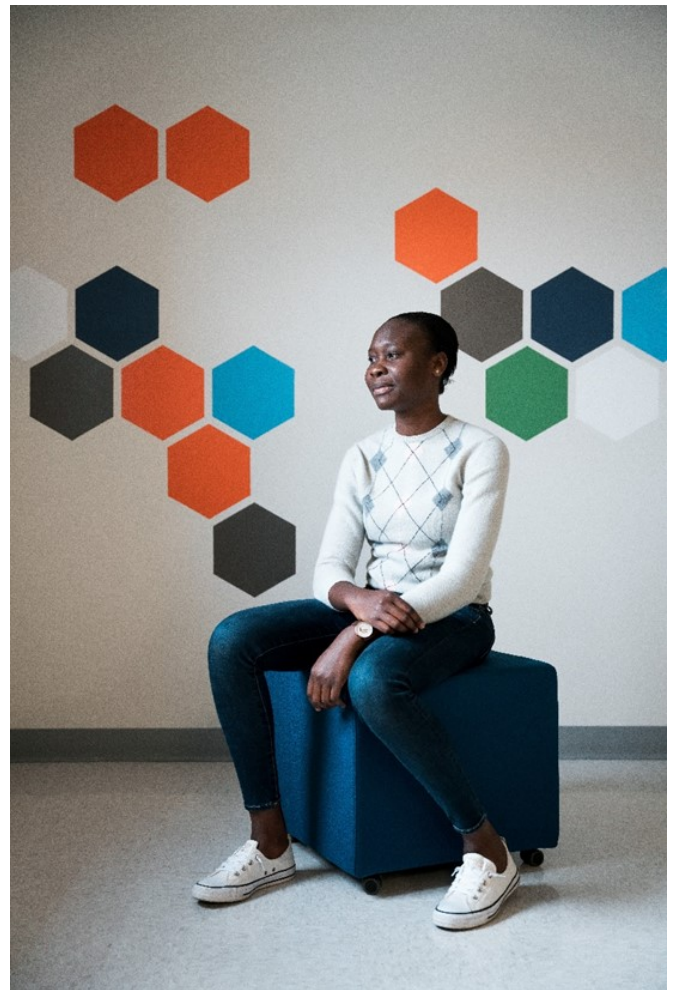
In recognition of the opportunities available and importance of IRCC's Francophone Immigration Strategy, we will be collaborating with all organizations to try to ensure that newcomers will be able to access services in the Canadian official language of their choice- French or English.

Attracting Talent to Our Communities

Strengthen alignment of immigrant attraction efforts to labour market demand, Western NS realities, language needs and economic opportunities.

The Western NS LIP will accomplish this by:

- Delivering an upcoming international graduate “Hire Me” event.
- Creation of a regionally branded bilingual “Making Western NS Home” online resource which would include prearrival and arrival services information.
- Supporting Nova Scotia Community College and Université Sainte Anne with their recruitment efforts and needs.
- Encouraging local immigrants to promote local employment opportunities to qualified family members and friends who may want to immigrate to the region.
- Collaborating on a virtual job fair for local companies who may be interested in connecting with international contacts of current immigrants.



Employer Outreach & Support

Proactive approaches to ensure that employers are supported in their recruitment, integration, and retention efforts.

The Western NS LIP will accomplish this by:

- Providing employers with Welcome Packages for new employees.
- Coordinating the delivery of Canadian workplace culture info and diversity training sessions.
- Examining foreign credential recognition processes and sharing relevant information with employers.
- Hosting an Immigration resource expo for employers and newcomer.
- Building on the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, work with local employers and the community to welcome skilled refugees to fill labour shortages in high-demand sectors.
- Piloting English and/or French Second Language (ESL) training for local immigrants who are eligible for Permanent Residency (PR) application (e.g., temporary foreign workers).
- Collaborating with regional partners to support a pilot for the upcoming Federal Municipal Nominee Program.
- Continuing to monitor changes to federal and provincial immigration programs and ensuring that local employers are made aware and participate when applicable.
- Collaborating with our provincial partners to establish a regional immigration presence.



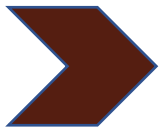
Fostering Welcoming Communities

Encourage the Western Region’s communities to appreciate diversity and recognize barriers faced by immigrants. Support settlement and integration of immigrants into local communities.

The Western NS LIP will accomplish this by:

- Hosting an annual September Welcome event for all newcomers and international students.
- Promoting regional volunteer opportunities for immigrants.
- Ensuring there are formal “Welcoming Groups” in key communities.
- Delivering a campaign to “Invite a Newcomer” to community events/groups and social gatherings.
- Establishing Peer support welcoming – current immigrants matched with newcomers.
- Launching a campaign encouraging employers, public institutions, and local government to promote their services for newcomers throughout region.
- Providing partners with multi-cultural calendar information.
- Creating a “Dispelling common immigration myths” campaign.
- Showcasing local immigrant success stories.
- Encourage addition of newcomer categories be added to municipal volunteer recognition and chamber award events





LOOKING FORWARD

The Western NS LIP's Strategic Plan provides an exciting blueprint to guide its work from 2022 through to 2025. Over the next three years, LIP members will continue to raise awareness on available resources funded by IRCC and others; highlight supports and enhance coordination among service providers and engage additional groups, businesses, residents, and cultural groups in the process. The Western NS LIP will continue to bring stakeholders and communities together to address the identified priorities and find local solutions as a community

Annual action plans will be developed to move the Strategic Plan forward and help us achieve goals. Working groups will be established which will include Partnership Council and Immigrant Advisory Committee members as well as other community members.

This strategy sets the stage for working together – government, newcomers, service providers, employers, and the community.

Year over year, through the Western NS LIP, our members will endeavour to co-create a prosperous and welcoming Western Region, where everybody belongs, moving beyond settlement to inclusion.



The Western REN recognizes that immigration will continue to play a key role in the economic future of the Western Region. To support better immigration outcomes, the Western REN is pleased to administer and support the Western NS LIP.



