



Settlement Services Standards Framework

June 2025



Contents

Overview and Purpose of Document..... 1

Rationale for Document 6

Guiding Principles for the Settlement Sector 7

Competency Framework for Workers in Settlement Services..... 9

Service Standards for Service Provider Organizations (SPOs).....10

Recommendations for Municipalities.....12

Recommendations for Employers Hiring Newcomers.....14

How the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development
is Bringing the Settlement Standards Framework to Life16

Overview and Purpose of Document



- Settlement services play a key role in assisting newcomers in the pursuit of social, cultural, and economic integration into their settlement communities. However, the absence of coherent guidance, regulation, or legislation governing the settlement service sector may contribute to:

- Inconsistencies or gaps in services;
- Misalignment between settlement sector activities and government priorities; or,
- An unbalanced slate of available services.

Each of these situations undermines the goal of social, cultural and economic integration.

- The purpose of this document is to:
 - provide strategic direction regarding the settlement sector;
 - contribute to meaningful progress in the design, delivery, and evaluation of settlement services in Newfoundland and Labrador;
 - enable the sector to provide comprehensive and appropriate supports for newcomers to the province and enhance their retention;
 - establish a shared frame of reference that ensures that all entities across the sector operate in step with one another.
- First, this document lays out a set of guiding principles for the settlement sector: these are general in their scope and non-prescriptive in their recommendations.

The principles that follow are values-driven and intended to provide common ground from which this document's target audiences may chart a meaningful course of action.

- Second, the document establishes service standards and provides recommendations for the settlement sector.
 - Principles and standards are distinct from one another: the former consists of qualitative, value-driven sentiments where the latter are observable, measurable, and thus amenable to adjustment by evaluation.
- This document addresses five key audiences in its recommendations: individuals working within and across the settlement sector; service provider organizations (SPOs), who provide direct services to newcomers; local governments and communities, including municipalities and local service districts; prospective employers; and officials, including government partners, policymakers, and funding bodies.
- While this document intends to provide guidance and strategic direction to the settlement sector, it is, to be sure, a work in progress. Many players across the settlement sector are essential to its functioning; individuals belonging to any of the above-mentioned audiences should be consulted throughout the development of this document – as should past and current newcomers – to ensure that the recommendations that follow are balanced, practical, and up to date.

Key Terms and Definitions

- **Newcomer:**
 - Newcomer is a term inclusive of permanent residents; refugees – including convention refugees and other protected persons; asylum seekers; nominees under the Provincial Nominee Program and their families; endorsees under the Atlantic Immigration Program and their families; international students, their families, and dependents; and temporary workers¹.
- **Settlement:**
 - Settlement refers to a period of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and their settlement community during which the government – either directly, through its funded partners, or in combination – provides support and services to newcomers².
 - gradual process by which new residents become active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs of a new homeland.
 - Settlement refers not to a specific stage of the immigration process – rather, it takes place across the whole of a newcomer's journey: at the pre-arrival, initial reception, intermediate and long-term stages.
- **Integration:**
 - Integration is a settlement outcome wherein newcomers – and their values – are incorporated into the local social, economic, and cultural contexts.
 - Integration is not the replacement of newcomers' values, beliefs, or preferences with those of their settlement community's; Integration is a two-way process that involves commitment on the part of immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and on the part of Canada to welcome and adapt to new peoples and cultures.³
 - **Economic Integration** occurs wherever newcomers are able to establish strong ties to local, regional, or provincial labour markets that facilitate their ability to remain and thrive in their settlement areas.
 - **Social Integration** is achieved when newcomers are welcomed into their settlement communities by community members, encouraged to participate in social events, and/or are able to become engaged civically, in local politics, committees, or other community-level structures.

¹ Adapted from the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Memorandum of Understanding with Respect to the Settlement and Integration of Newcomers

² Adapted from IRCC: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/program-terms-conditions/settlement.html>

³ Adapted from IRCC: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/program-terms-conditions/settlement.html>

- **Cultural Integration** takes place wherever newcomers' cultural beliefs are held as equal to or are incorporated with those of their settlement community.
- **Settlement Services:**
 - Settlement services comprise activities and programs that are designed to facilitate the social, cultural, and economic integration of newcomers to Canada as quickly as possible. These services may be accessed by newcomers at any point throughout their settlement journey and work to serve newcomers' pre-arrival, immediate, short- and long-term settlement needs.
 - Settlement and integration services may include (but are not limited to):
 - Information and Orientation services; orientation is the primary mechanism for delivering information - national, regional, or local content that is relevant to one's settlement journey - to newcomers through sessions delivered to individuals, families or groups.
 - Navigation services: those that assist newcomers through official systems and help them attain necessary documentation, such as a driver's license or health card;
 - Adult language training (in either official language);
 - Settlement counselling services;
 - Personal counselling services;
 - Supports for foreign-acquired qualification recognition;
 - Labour market preparation;
 - Supports to encourage financial and technological literacy;
 - Interventions to public services to ease newcomer involvement; or
 - Public engagement initiatives that encourage a better informed and welcoming environment for newcomers to Canada.
 - Settlement services may comprise either:
 - **Direct Services:** direct programming intervention (generally through in-person, group-based, or online programming); or
 - **Indirect Services:** those that enhance the sector's capacity to optimize client outcomes, assisting partners directly or indirectly engaged in the settlement sector, such as SPOs, employers, community organizations, government entities, and public institutions.
 - Settlement services do not include services to the general public that normally fall within the mandate of provincial governments, such as health and education services.
- **Service Provider Organization (SPO):**
 - The settlement sector constitutes a wide variety of organizations that may be general in their focus or work to support a particular aspect or stage of

the settlement process. Broadly, SPOs are designated as one of the following:

- **Universal Organizations**, who provide services to newcomers as well as individuals born in Canada. These organizations support the needs of the entire population; they may offer general services to the public as well as newcomer-specific services;
- **Immigration-Specific SPOs**, who provide direct settlement services for newcomers. These may be single- or multiple-service providers and may originate from a number of shared backgrounds, such as ethno-cultural, linguistic, and faith-based communities;
- **Issue-Based Organizations**, who focus on incorporating newcomers' perspectives as they address a single policy issue, such as newcomer housing, healthcare, or employment;
- **Post-Secondary Institutions**, who provide formal and informal settlement services to international students enrolled with the institution; or
- **Multicultural Non-Government Organizations**, whose focus tends to be broader in scope, involve multiple lines of service, and whose services support the settlement needs of a diverse clientele. These

organizations are often located in smaller population centres, remote communities, and other areas where there is neither substantial need for nor a large enough population to support programs that deliver specialized, targeted services⁴.

- **Settlement Outcome:**

- A Settlement Outcome is a consequence – positive or negative – related to a particular settlement journey. Improved settlement outcomes benefit newcomers, their settlement communities, and the province as a whole. Examples of relevant settlement outcomes include **retention** and **integration**.

- **Retention:**

- Refers to the percentage of newcomers who remain within a geographical region for a certain period of time. This process implies an active effort on the part of both the newcomer and the local community to support the newcomer's integration⁵.

- **Local Community:**

- A group consisting of individuals who share cultural backgrounds, traditions, language, and other distinctive cultural traits.

- **Local Government:**

- The council of a municipality or the board of a regional or local service district.

⁴ Categories adapted from Praznik and Shields (2018): *An Anatomy of Settlement Services in Canada: A Guide*: An-Anatomy-of-Settlement-Services-in-Canada_BMRCIRMU.pdf (yorku.ca)

⁵ Adapted from IRCC's 2024 Call for Proposals: ARCHIVED – Glossary – Funding guidelines for call for proposals (CFP) 2024 - Canada.ca

- **Settlement Sector:**

- The settlement sector describes the network of public and private organizations, institutions, parties, and individuals who hold an interest in or contribute to the successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into the social, economic, cultural and political life of their settlement community.
- While many of those involved in the settlement sector are in receipt of federal or provincial funding to support their efforts, involvement in the settlement sector is not limited to funded organizations.

- **Service Standard:**

- Service standards describe actions that this document's target audience must

take in order to ensure that newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador are able to access a baseline level of settlement services that are delivered fairly, competently, appropriately.

- Standards are measurable and oriented towards achievable goals that, in combination, support cross-sector settlement and integration efforts.
- The standards referenced throughout this document are not meant to be imposing or restrictive and were developed with significant attention paid to their audiences' capacities and practical realities. None of the standards that follow are intended to unduly burden or prohibit those who currently or intend to provide newcomer settlement services.



Rationale for Document

- This section outlines the need for a Settlement Services Standards Framework in Newfoundland and Labrador and describes some of the benefits that may result from its adoption.
- Prior to the publication of this Framework, no official guidance existed for Newfoundland and Labrador's settlement sector. In fact, no other provincial or territorial department responsible for immigration in Canada currently provides this type of guidance in a public-facing document.
- A goal of this Framework is to contribute to improved settlement service delivery across the sector. By providing targeted direction for the settlement sector, this Framework aims to inform a comprehensive suite of settlement services that are delivered with care, consistency, and with newcomers' interests at their core.
- Limited availability of appropriate services is often cited as a factor that contributes negatively to newcomer retention.⁶ Adopting a robust Settlement Service Standards Framework aims to contribute positively to newcomer settlement outcomes, particularly as they relate to socioeconomic integration and regional retention – two salient goals of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Developing, adopting, and publishing the recommendations contained in this document would display an understanding of the settlement sector by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, foregrounding Government's knowledge of the everyday work performed by those in the settlement sector in its recommendations.
- Finally, the Framework reflects priority areas as described in Department's 2023-26 Strategic Plan; officially adopting the Framework would support the Department's efforts in fulfilling its mandate and meeting its strategic goals.

⁶ See IRCC's Settlement Outcomes Report, 2023. Available online: [2023 Settlement outcomes report - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugee-citizenship/services/settlement-services/settlement-outcomes-report-2023.html)

Guiding Principles for the Settlement Sector



- Principles are value-centred, foundational statements that provide fundamental guidance in the setting to which they are applied. The principles set out in this Framework encourage its audience to embody a particular set of values throughout their roles in the settlement process.
- The purpose of establishing a slate of principles is to draw a common thread between players in the settlement sector, joining these audiences together under a common frame of reference that is newcomer-centred, contributes to effective, efficient, and appropriate work, and assists all parties in meeting public priorities.
- The following core principles should guide SPOs, those working in settlement, municipalities, employers, and government officials equally in their pursuit of wholesale, appropriate services for all newcomers.

Guiding Principle #1: Settlement services should be humanitarian in their approach:

Many perspectives and realities must be considered in the development and delivery of settlement services and programs. At a minimum, settlement services should be culturally and linguistically appropriate – as determined by the client rather than the service provider.

Guiding Principle #2: Settlement services should display awareness of local social, political, and economic contexts, as well as of regional capacity.

This principle ensures that settlement service practices reflect local realities and account for regionally specific strengths and weaknesses.

Guiding Principle #3: Clients' needs should be the key point of reference in the development and delivery of settlement services:

A client-centred or person-centred approach is crucial with wrap around supports that can be availed. One-size-fits-all approaches to service delivery invariably fail their clientele, contributing to poorer settlement outcomes that disadvantage both newcomers and the settlement sector.

Guiding Principle #4: Efforts aimed specifically at integration must promote the maintenance of newcomers' held identities, values, and beliefs:

Successful integration does not mean that newcomers shed or abandon the identity and cultural material of their source countries. Any effort toward integration must acknowledge and support cultural diversity.

Those working in settlement need to be able to demonstrate how their services uphold and preserve the cultural values held by their clients.

Guiding Principle #5: Settlement services should be accessible, irrespective of the stage of a client's settlement journey or residency status:

Barrier reduction should be a priority at all levels of the settlement sector. Efforts to support settlement prior to arrival in Canada should be made, where possible, if the journey to Canada is planned by the newcomer.

Acknowledging that federal funding guidelines present challenges to the settlement sector in the provision of services for Temporary Residents, among others, those working in the sector must take steps to ensure that all newcomers are supported through their settlement journeys.

Guiding Principle #6: Settlement services should be needs-adaptive and self-reflective:

A focus on quality of life should be the dominant focus in the development, delivery, and evaluation of settlement services. This focus should entail regular audits and adjustments, ensuring that specific sectoral and client needs are met through thoughtfully and effectively.

Guiding Principle #7: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion- Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate (EDI-ARAH) principles should inform the whole of the settlement sector:

Newcomers can possess multiple categorical identities at once; efforts should be made to ensure that identity-focused inequalities do not compound as newcomers interact with and pass through multiple structures and organizations.

Racism can exist in institutions, policies, and practices as well as in community. The principles of anti-racism can be applied to all forms of discrimination, including Islamophobia and Antisemitism.

The settlement sector should be dedicated to newcomer advocacy and committed to public engagement on newcomer issues.

Competency Framework for Workers in Settlement Services



- This Framework outlines the core competencies of individuals working in the settlement sector, in an effort to support professional development and in recognition of their contributions.
- The nature of the day-to-day work within the settlement sector is not especially general. Those who possess one or more of the following core competencies are well positioned to deliver settlement services that support the Framework's guiding principles. The core competencies described in this section aim to provide guidance for:
 - Employers as they evaluate candidates, prepare job ads, or develop hiring strategies;
 - Prospective employees interested in becoming involved with or employed within the settlement sector; and
 - Those currently employed in the settlement sector who may wish to engage in professional development initiatives or self-evaluation.
- Some suggested core competencies of workers in the settlement sector are:
 - Ability to discern newcomer strengths and identify areas of need;
 - Knowledge of legal and social systems as they relate to the newcomer experience, both at the local and national levels;
 - The ability to nurture a sense of belonging in support of newcomers' social, cultural, and economic integration to the province;
 - Advocacy skills, both within official systems and as an interface with the public;
 - Attentiveness to the integrity of settlement pathways and programs;
 - A critical eye towards service improvement, inclusive of design, delivery, and evaluation; and,
 - Interest in continuous improvement through training and professional development programs to ensure that service delivery standards are up to date and relevant.
- The above-listed competencies can be achieved through a combination of many pathways, including (but not limited to) professional, academic, and lived experiences.

Service Standards for Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)



- SPOs – in the description of their programming, funding requests, and internal reviews – must be able to describe how they contribute to the social, cultural, and economic integration of newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development uses these standards to assess funding proposals for settlement services. These standards, however, have broader applicability: they may be used by any public or private organization, including municipalities, the health system, and post-secondary sector, when making investments in services for newcomers.

Standard #1: Support for Integration

SPOs should make every effort not to mistake practices associated with assimilation for those that support integration, maintaining respect for newcomers' origins, held beliefs, and traditions. Newcomer identities must be protected and respected by SPOs throughout the settlement process.

Standard #2: Avoid Duplication, Pursue Partnership and Participate in an Overall Settlement Ecosystem

When developing or delivering settlement service programs, SPOs should take other organizations into account and pursue efforts to avoid service duplication and siloing.

SPOs should be able to report the number of community connections and referrals they have made.

Regular meetings with community partners should occur and the outcomes of those discussions should be documented.

Where applicable, SPOs should collaborate on journey maps: documents that outline how a newcomer may smoothly navigate the services of multiple organizations. Ease of navigation between organizations should be a priority for everyone in the sector.

Service Standard #3: Adopt a Mindset of Continuous Improvement

SPOs must be willing and able to recognize and address shortcomings or gaps as they relate to organizational capacity, taking proactive steps to address these gaps wherever possible.

Where an SPO cannot assist a newcomer with a particular service or complex case, organizations must establish a referral system with other SPOs who provide services outside of their scope.

Service Standard #4: Operate in a Manner that Considers Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, - Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate

SPOs should demonstrate a working knowledge of EDI, Anti-Racism, Anti-Hate and Gender-Based Analysis+ principles and provide a clear plan that outlines how they will be incorporated into their programming.

Services should be attendant to social inequality. SPOs should acknowledge and describe the inequalities they seek to address, the lines along which they occur, and their strategies of action.

Services should seek to identify and remove embedded discriminatory policies and practices.

Service Standard #5: Ensure Robust Data Collection and Measurement of Key Performance Indicators

SPOs should be required to commit to a robust data collection system that is consistent across the sector so that they, in addition to governments and other funding bodies, may analyze, evaluate, and adjust their programming with increased regularity.

SPOs should adhere to strict requirements related to collection, storage, and disposal of sensitive and personal data, and should abide by confidentiality standards.

Service Standard #6: Conduct Public Engagement

SPOs must commit to public engagement in their practice. Communication with the public is a key means of combatting misinformation and addressing intolerance toward newcomers.

SPOs should develop and enact public engagement strategies, where their capacity allows, in order to contribute to positive dialogue within public discourse on immigration.

Where appropriate, SPOs should maintain a visible, active, public-facing presence, such as a social media page, so that they may interface with community members and engage in promotional activities that increase their reach, to both potential clients and non-clients.

Recommendations for Municipalities



- While the screening, selection, and admission of newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador is the shared responsibility of the provincial and federal governments, municipal governments are integral in promoting or enabling positive settlement outcomes.
- Immigration to rural, remote, and northern areas is an area of focus for the federal and provincial governments. The negative impacts associated with population decline are felt across the province; this phenomenon deeply affects smaller communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Immigration continues to contribute to positive population growth in the province and presents smaller population centres and municipalities with an opportunity to reverse long-standing demographic trends and address local-level labour market needs.
- The following recommendations provide guidance to municipal governments that, if implemented, would positively contribute to improved settlement and long-term retention outside of the St. John's CMA.

Recommendation #1: Adopt a newcomer lens in the development and evaluation of local policies and regulations, particularly as they relate to key needs-areas for newcomers.

Incorporating newcomer perspectives necessitates involving newcomers in the policy development process, which would enable newcomers' civic engagement and increase their activity in local government.

- Greater civic participation may improve retention outcomes by establishing strong ties for newcomers to the operations of a given municipality.

Adopting a newcomer lens would increase the presence and influence of multiple perspectives within municipal policy frameworks, allowing municipalities to more fully incorporate EDI-ARAH principles into their work.

Recommendation #2: Identify ways to engage horizontally – with other regions and municipalities across provinces and territories – and vertically, across all levels of government, in support of improved settlement outcomes for newcomers.

Collaboration between governments works to ensure that the newcomer experience does not vary based on regional red tape or misaligned priorities between levels.

Recommendation #3: Regularly perform audits that assess regional capacity to support newcomers, addressing gaps proactively and with newcomers in mind.

Newcomer settlement should not outpace the development of appropriate resources and infrastructure. However, newcomers and their needs should be considered as infrastructural issues are addressed by municipalities.

The results of these audits should be shared with the provincial government in order to promote settlement more effectively in regions where capacity allows.

Recommendation #4: Become familiar and competent with provincial immigration programs, recognizing the potential for these programs to assist municipalities to address local population and labour market concerns.

Recommendation #5: Establish local/regional immigration partnerships to support community involvement throughout the settlement process.

Municipal governments are uniquely positioned to incorporate local knowledge into the settlement process and may be able to engage community members more directly and effectively than can other levels of government.



Recommendations for Employers Hiring Newcomers



- Newcomers' successful integration into the labour market is a key means of promoting the economic stability required to achieve long-term retention. For employers, hiring newcomers is a means of addressing labour market shortages, skills gaps, and other labour-related challenges that cannot be adequately met through local pathways.
- The following recommendations look to provide prospective employers with the guidance necessary to ensure that newcomer applicants are treated with fairness and equity throughout their recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and long-term employment.

Recommendation #1: Take part in intercultural competency training across all levels of the organization, including at the executive level.

Recommendation #2: Adopt a formal EDI-ARAH policy that explicitly extends protection from workplace discrimination to newcomers.

Employers should work to ensure that newcomers' status/identity does not negatively impact their opportunities, earnings, or job security through introduction of formal protections.

Employers should take meaningful action against discrimination in the workplace.

Recommendation #3: Focus on providing newcomers with transferable skills that enable their potential for mobility within the labour market.

Newcomers should receive training that increases their ability to be competitive in the job market rather than limits their future prospects.

Ensure that newcomers are considered equally for merit-based promotions.

Recommendation #4: Ensure that occupation- or industry-specific language supports are available to newcomers to ease their transition into their roles.

This is especially important in industries with highly regulated, technical processes and in cases where job duties require a level of competency with safe workplace practices.

Newcomers should be made aware of any work-related tasks for whose outcomes they may be legally responsible; this information should be available in the language of the newcomer's preference.

Recommendation #5: Provide orientation to Canadian workplace culture, including local norms at the firm and community levels.


Recommendation #6: Ensure that human resources staff and those involved in the hiring process are sensitive to cultural differences in the evaluation of applications or performance reviews.

Note that signs of professionalism and respect vary across cultures and avoid cultural biases in the evaluation of qualified candidates.

Recommendation #7: Engage multiple members of the organization in onboarding and training for newcomers, promoting social integration and increasing likelihood of long-term employment.



How the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development is Bringing the Settlement Standards Framework to Life



Action #1: Formalize and incorporate the above standards, practices, and principles into future funding agreements and calls for proposals for project-based funding.

Action #2: Make government immigration priorities known and publicly available so that SPOs may reference them in their programming and funding proposal.

While already publicly available, these policies are written in technical language. Efforts to improve plain language understanding of immigration policies would allow SPOs to develop fine-grained, targeted programming that more closely aligns with government priorities.

Action #3: Commit to continued public engagement on newcomer issues.

This commitment ensures that the Department is taking a proactive and leading role in combatting misinformation, increasing awareness of settlement supports available and navigating newcomers as they move through their settlement journey.

Action #4: Develop, support, and enforce evaluation, monitoring, and accountability measures, especially for funded partners in the settlement sector.

By mandating that actors across the settlement sector adhere to a consistent, government-designed reporting and evaluation framework, comparative analysis and improvement initiatives for the sector would be better facilitated; analysis of current programming could be eased through the adoption of a universal system.

Action #5: Develop a system to analyze regional capacity that is reflexive and responsive to changing conditions and contexts.

Absorptive capacity describes a community's potential as a site for newcomer settlement.

Though no established means of measuring absorptive capacity exists at any level of government, it can be roughly calculated as a function of a community's available resources as they relate to housing, transportation, healthcare, education, childcare, and other social or economic needs.

- For newcomers, the availability of settlement services factors into the calculation of regional absorptive capacity.

A model of measurement that considers regional variations would assist Newfoundland and Labrador in its goal to advance and support regional settlement.

Action #6: Develop a segmented funding model wherein funding is earmarked for specific initiatives, populations, or in support of specific government goals and priorities.

Funding streams could be segmented to:

- provide supports specific to newcomers from particular backgrounds;
- to increase settlement supports for temporary residents and others who fall outside of federally funded programs eligibility;
- to stimulate capacity-building initiatives for SPOs, workers, municipalities, or employers;
- to engage in large-scale, long-term research initiatives; or
- to consider long term funding models for proponents with a track record of successful program delivery.

