



# Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP)

## 2018 “Update, Engage and Learn” Community Forum Report

# “UPDATE, ENGAGE AND LEARN”

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“Update, Engage and Learn” Community Forum 2018

## “UPDATE, ENGAGE AND LEARN”

### INTRODUCTION

The Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP) and partner organization, the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) hosted the first annual “Update, Engage and Learn” Community Forum on March 20th, 2018. The two-hour community forum, held at the Core Ritchie Neighborhood Centre, welcomed a total of 61 attendees, which included newcomers, employers and those who facilitate newcomer employment, organizations involved in newcomer settlement and support, engaged citizens and SSCF Board members/staff.

The purpose of the forum was to provide an update regarding RRLIP's past, present and future activities, connect and engage with the newcomer community and those interested in settlement and integration, and take part in meaningful discussions around newcomer employment challenges. SSCF holds **Vital Conversations** which invite community insight and explore a theme area in greater depth. This forum was the platform for a Vital Conversation on Engaging Newcomers.

The community forum commenced with introductions and an **update** from the RRLIP Project describing “**What are LIPs; RRLIP Project Highlights; Examples of how RRLIP Connects, Informs and Supports; How to Become Involved.**”

This was followed by the **engage** portion of the event where attendees were asked to break into groups to discuss what they felt were the major barriers to employment and what they saw as the solutions to overcoming the barriers. Participants then presented their ideas as part of a larger group discussion.

The event concluded with an opportunity to **learn** from the participants. Attendees were asked to participate in a survey that would continue to guide the work of the RRLIP and inform aspects of the development of the 2018 SSCF Vital Signs® report.

### ENGAGE TABLE DISCUSSIONS – OUTCOMES

#### Major Challenges to Employment

Community forum attendees were asked to separate into groups to discuss what they saw as major challenges and barriers to employment that newcomers face.

Through past community engagement opportunities (13 community forums) and RRLIP initiated research, major barriers to employment were identified;

- a. Canadian workplace experience

- b. Canadian workplace culture
- c. English language capability
- d. Transportation and Childcare Opportunities

**Participants were asked to build on the above list of barriers and challenges.**

Several groups mentioned recognition of foreign credentials as a significant barrier to employment, as employers lack the knowledge and understanding of international credentials and work environments.

Another common barrier that groups discussed involved challenges in the promotion and hiring process. Many also felt employers are reluctant to hire newcomers. In addition, staff acceptance of newcomers can create a challenge for both the employer and newcomer hire.

Additionally, it was mentioned that the current labour market does not match the skills of the incoming newcomer labour force. Group discussions indicated that this, along with the other barriers mentioned, can impact how newcomers gain and retain positions that match their skill set.

**Other identified barriers and challenges:**

- employment wages jeopardize family benefits
- language level needed/expected for gaining and retaining employment
- unrealistic expectations of how quickly newcomers can advance in language skills, etc.
- communication barriers – speaking, reading, and writing
- racism
- nepotism
- newcomers experience fear and intimidation
- volunteerism is not recognized by employers
- gender inequality
- provincial mobility seems more difficult for newcomers
- newcomers not knowing employee rights (sick time, WCB, hours) due to lack of training
- financial literacy
- barriers to healthcare (diet, access, where to go), referrals, community agencies, orientations
- small economy, so highly competitive

## Potential Solutions to Employment Barriers

### A. GAINING THE FIRST CANADIAN WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITY

- **Employer Engagement**
  - Provide employer education on newcomers and newcomer culture
  - Develop information packages for employers

- **Create employment exploration programs**
  - Provide coaching, forums, and workshops for newcomers
  - Provide opportunities to network
  - Expand volunteer opportunities
  - Provide professional courses – basic knowledge to perform job
- **Create a database to match employers and newcomer skills**
  - Identify employers' needs and newcomers' skills. Create a resource to identify potential employers matched to a newcomer's experience and credentials
  - Create an inventory of employers to match with available newcomer talent
- **Establish paid work experience programs**
  - Provide work placements for newcomers and refugees
  - Expand employment bridging programs, as there are too few and all have waiting lists (e.g. Regina Immigrant Women Centre)
  - Extend probation for newcomer employees to account for delayed language acquisition
- **Improve hiring processes and practices**
  - Provide employment training orientation
  - Consider newcomer employment experience and other provincial acceptance criteria
  - Provide opportunities for mentorship

### B. AN UNDERSTANDING OF CANADIAN WORKPLACE CULTURE

- **Define Canadian workplace culture and Canadian culture**
  - Clarify what Canadian and workplace culture mean
  - Establish a Canadian 'culture' translator to support newcomers
  - Connect newcomers and Canadian-born employees with same cultural background
- **Prepare employers for integrating newcomers into workplace**
  - Educate employers to the benefits of having newcomers as volunteers or staff
  - Combine education with cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication training
  - Train young Canadian employees to be understanding

### C. ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAPABILITY

- **Job specific English training internships**
  - Provide work buddy, mentor and/or social ambassador opportunities
  - Integrate practical work situations into language programs
  - Offer specialized language training, specific to the job

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- **Settlement and orientation should be realistic about language requirements for employment**
  - Provide specialized language training for various professions
- **Professional and Personal Language Socialization**
  - Use potlucks and food to teach English, Canadian culture and other cultures
  - Use holidays to begin conversations
  - Have a culture committee in the workplace
  - Invite newcomers to your home; include newcomer co-workers in activities
  - Engage in conversation circles to further language acquisition
- **More accessible language classes and training**
  - Provide transportation to language classes
  - Develop flexible/accessible language training schedules to match a newcomer’s work and personal responsibilities

### D. TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide more affordable and available childcare spots in accessible locations
- Implement childcare facilities at work
- Subsidize childcare for all
- Develop car-pool networks
- Offer driver training in other languages
- Provide more reliable and convenient bus service for newcomers
- Learn how to use public transit
- Form volunteer groups to show newcomers bus routes for first month
- Improve overall transportation services

### E. ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATION AND FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

- Offer employer training on the topic of international credentials
- Develop effective system to recognize newcomer qualifications
- Offer standardized professional exams to determine equivalency

## LEARN SURVEY - RESULTS

A total of 51 community forum attendees participated in the 2018 “Update, Engage and Learn” Community Forum Survey. Attendee responses were divided into two distinct groups; foreign-born and Canadian-born individuals. Of the total number of respondents, 20 participants identified as foreign-born and the remaining 31 participants identified as Canadian-born, 39% and 61%, respectively.

## Identifying Helpful Newcomer Supports

### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

Survey respondents were asked to name **two helpful newcomer supports** they have received in Regina. The top response among newcomers was the Regina Open Door Society, with 60% of respondents naming this support as the most helpful. Language training programs and courses (20%), employment services and programs and faith-based organizations (combined 20%), were the following top responses.

**Other helpful newcomer supports identified were;** Regina Immigrant Women's Centre, volunteering with local organizations, post-secondary education, Catholic Family Services, ACERT, ACF, library, family, friends, and country organizations. Of the newcomer respondents, 15% indicated that they did not receive any helpful newcomer supports.

### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

Canadian-born participants identified the Regina Open Doors Society (58.06%) and the Regina Public Library (32.26%) as the top two helpful newcomer supports. Respondents also identified Regina Immigrant Women's Centre (22.58%) and Catholic Family Services (12.90%) as the following top responses. 16.13% of respondents named post-secondary institutions as helpful newcomer supports; and 9.68% named RRLIP as a helpful newcomer support.

Other newcomer supports identified were; Service Canada, Arrive Group, public parks, Newcomer Welcome Centre, ESL Classes, Skills Training to Advance Immigrant Youth (STAIY) Program, Welcome Wagon, Language Assessment and Referral Centre (LARC), YMCA, and Dewdney East Community Association.

## Suggestions to Improve Newcomer Supports

### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked **how newcomer supports can be more helpful or improved**, 25% of newcomer respondents suggested learning about newcomer culture, providing orientation to newcomers, and increasing awareness of available newcomer support groups. Education and providing more opportunities for gathering information about newcomers (i.e. surveys) and sharing newcomer experiences in forums, were also noted as suggested improvements. Providing the opportunity to work one-on-one with newcomers to identify needs and provide mentorship, following a similar business model as Big Brothers of Regina, was noted as beneficial from 10% of newcomer respondents.

**Newcomer respondents suggested the following additional programming and service changes to improve current newcomer supports:**

- Provide more employment programs, work placement, and volunteer programs

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- Offer program funding for work experience
- Offer more programs for women and parents with children
- Provide foreign language help services
- Improve public transportation routes, times and locations
- Improve bridging initiatives between employers and newcomers
- Hire newcomers for public service job positions to help communication with newcomer clients
- Conduct regular and continuous check-in by the university's International Office
- Provide information to newcomers on the importance of English for life in Canada
- Offer local multicultural education to reduce stigma toward immigration in Saskatchewan

### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked how newcomer supports can be more helpful or improved, 32.26% of Canadian-born responses indicated improvements for employers hiring newcomers were necessary. Respondents indicated that having more service providers who are multi-lingual will help newcomers better access and utilize services. Additionally, more supports are needed for employers and supervisors, such as training for employers, incentives for hiring newcomers, and better ways for newcomers to connect with employers. Training, such as educating employers on cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity were also noted as solutions to improving newcomer supports.

Approximately 30% of responses indicated changes to current services, such as consistent staffing, increasing service hours, available parking, and contact information. 16.13% of Canadian-born respondents believe program accessibility for newcomers must be improved through better marketing, advertising, and communication of existing services.

22.58% of respondents commented on the need for more community engagement to encourage Canadians and newcomers to connect. Providing more community forums on varying topics, welcoming Canadians into newcomer support programs (i.e. Conversation Circles) and educating the public about the newcomer experience and how they can provide support, were solutions to connecting Canadians with newcomers. Encouraging volunteerism and setting up mentorship systems, with newcomers mentoring newcomers, were ideas to increase community engagement.

16.13% of responses indicated transportation must be improved. More accessible transportation, increased times and route frequency were noted as suggested changes. 9.68% of comments suggested changes for daycare providers, such as

more access to daycare and the lack of childcare services at employment services.

Responses indicated a need to improve the availability and access to language training for newcomers, as well as more widely available interpretation services for families.

### Non-Existing but Needed Newcomer Supports

#### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked **what newcomer supports don't exist but are needed**, newcomer respondents indicated a need for programs and supports related to credential recognition, language, mentorship, and employment.

- **Credential Recognition:**
  - Create a professional system that transfers education, skills and experience
  - Educate newcomers on how to transfer their education, skills, and knowledge
- **Language:**
  - Educate newcomers on the importance of English training and its impact on life in Canada.
- **Mentorship Programs:**
  - Provide newcomers with orientation and mentoring
  - Develop a mentorship program, which models Big Brothers and Sisters, to assist newcomer families in integrating and experiencing the Canadian way of living
- **Employment Programs:**
  - Provide direction to find employment and employment information, to assist newcomers in moving beyond survival jobs
  - Provide programs that bridge/align foreign skills and background to the labour market
  - Develop efficient workplace programs tailored for newcomers with limited English skills
  - Provide employment supports for international students and graduates
  - Encourage employers to hire newcomers and create human resource policies that require newcomer applicant feedback (e.g. why an applicant was not successful).
- **Other needed newcomer supports:**
  - transportation

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- workforce and family literacy programs
- tax training and the importance of why to file with zero income
- low level English and low literacy workforce training
- sensitivity training for Canadians and newcomers
- more playgrounds for families and children to gather and play
- more agencies that provide **on-going** assistance to newcomers

### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked what newcomer supports don't exist but are needed, Canadian-born respondents indicated a need for programs and supports related to employment, community engagement, language, mentorship, credential recognition, healthcare, and childcare.

- **Employment:**
  - Provide internships in specific professions, pairing newcomers with organizations to aid in gaining employment, and bridging programs to help newcomers re-enter previous occupations
  - Provide more work placement opportunities
  - Support workplace interpretation services
  - Share the benefits of hiring newcomer talent with employers
- **Community Engagement:**
  - Encourage community engagement with newcomers, opportunities for citizens to interact with newcomers and learn from each other
  - Promote community awareness and acceptance
  - Promote connections between First Nations and newcomer populations
  - Create a network of homework helpers to assist newcomer children/families in their homes
- **Language Supports:**
  - Subsidized language education and language support
- **Mentorship:**
  - Develop mentorship programs which match local citizens with newcomers to share information and experiences
  - Create mentorship opportunities with “successful” newcomers to assist other newcomers in learning useful strategies
  - Encourage employer support of other staff members to mentor newcomers
- **Credential Recognition:**
  - Provide easy access to credential assessment and accreditation

- **Healthcare:**
  - Provide healthcare information for refugees such as birth control information, and mental health support for coping with stress (e.g. job hunting)
- **Child care:**
  - Provide programs which assist with understanding laws and interactions with justice system
  - Provide more recreational activities for children and childcare programs
- **Other needed newcomer supports:**
  - safety programs
  - multi-language driver training
  - education about worker rights in Canada
  - transportation around the city on arrival
  - enhanced social programs and inclusion in physical activity programs to promote
  - central organization for newcomers who are then able to direct other newcomers to the services they need
  - handouts or brochures about Canadian culture and life in Canada

### Major Challenges Facing Newcomers

#### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

Survey respondents were asked to identify **the biggest challenge that newcomers face**. Newcomer survey respondents identified difficulty finding employment within their preferred field (45%), language barriers (35%), and culture (15%) as the biggest challenges newcomers face. Accreditation of education and work experience, housing accommodations, climate, transportation, not knowing where and how to access social services, and mental health issues (loneliness and adjusting to a new life), were also identified as challenges newcomers face.

#### Another major challenge:

- Integration into society (35%)
- being able to secure employment (25%)
- language (20%)
- weather (15%)
- transportation (10%)

Financial literacy, access to healthcare, loneliness, psychological effects of mental health, and education credentials were also selected as **other major challenges** newcomers face.

### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

Canadian-born survey respondents identified language barriers (41.94%), difficulty finding employment within their preferred field (16.13%), and discrimination by Canadians (16.13%) as the biggest challenges newcomers face. Other identified challenges included mental health issues and the lack of available settlement service information.

#### Another major challenge:

- meaningful employment (45.16%)
- overcoming prejudice (32.26%)
- discrimination during internal hiring and promotion
- affordable and safe housing
- childcare
- accreditation process
- access to post-secondary training

### Community Activities

#### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

Newcomer participants identified faith-based groups (40%) and culturally-based groups (40%) as the top community groups they participate in (e.g. Regina Ethiopian Community, Black History Month, Intercultural Events, Yoruba Community in Regina, country independence celebrations, University of Regina International Night, and the New Canadian Integration Society).

35% of newcomers indicated community events, such as community fairs and festivals, are the community activities they participate in to experience new places, meet people from their country of origin, and to meet people of different cultures. Recreation and sports (35%) and volunteering (30%) with various community-based organizations (e.g. Mosaic Festival and Big Brothers of Regina) were other activities newcomers participate in.

When asked **how these activities make them feel**, 60% of newcomer respondents stated community activities help them to meet people, build a social network of likeminded people (15%), create opportunities to socialize and integrate (25%), and help to forge new friendships (20%). 15% of newcomer respondents believe community activities provide an opportunity to socialize with people from their own culture and learn about different cultures. 20% of newcomer respondents stated community activities provide them with knowledge and information about different agencies and activities, and allow them to engage, discuss and share ideas.

### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked what community activities they participate in, Canadian-born participants identified sports and exercise (45.16%) and arts and culture (38.71%) as the top community activities they participate in. Recreational and leisure activities (48.39%) such as boating, camping, fishing, travel, participating in book clubs, attending library programming, walking, arts and crafts, knitting, cooking classes, and community gardening were other activities the respondents participate in.

Approximately 35% of Canadian-born respondents indicated community events such as fundraisers, concerts, garage sales, car shows, diversity events, sporting events, and festivals as community activities they participate in.

Faith-based groups (25.81%), volunteering (22.58%), and spending time with friends and family (12.90%), were also recorded activities.

When asked how these activities make them feel, Canadian-born respondents stated community activities help them to meet people of the same culture and interests, develop relationships, and feel connected to their community.

### Childcare Services

#### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

Survey results indicated that 15% of the newcomer respondents use childcare services in Regina. When asked **what they would like daycare providers to know**, newcomers responded with; awareness and education of newcomer cultures and the impact of long wait lists and lack of affordability.

#### CANADIAN-BORN RESPONSES

Only 6.45% of Canadian-born respondents indicated they use child care services in Regina and they provided these comments when asked about what they would like daycare providers to know; awareness of cultural customs and holidays, and culturally appropriate meals and care.

**Overall results** indicated that daycare providers need to know what conditions newcomer children come from (war, discipline, etc.) to better understand newcomer challenges. Implementing communication strategies for multi-languages and assisting newcomers with subsidy forms, understanding policies and routines, were noted as practices daycare providers should adopt. Regarding improvements to daycare services, survey respondents indicated access to quality environments, changes to drop-off and pick-up times, and greater dietary inclusion as important changes to consider.

## Most Helpful Settlement Resource

### FOREIGN-BORN RESPONSES

When asked **where they have received the most settlement help from**, newcomer respondents ranked family as the most helpful resource, settlement agencies as the second most helpful, and faith and cultural groups as the third most helpful resource.

	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
<b>Family members</b>	46.67% 7	33.33% 5	13.33% 2	6.67% 1	15	<b>1.80</b>
<b>Settlement Agencies</b>	41.67% 5	33.33% 4	8.33% 1	16.67% 2	12	<b>2.00</b>
<b>Faith or Cultural Groups</b>	30.77% 4	30.77% 4	23.08% 3	15.38% 2	13	<b>2.23</b>
<b>Other</b>	18.75% 3	31.25% 5	31.25% 5	18.75% 3	16	<b>2.50</b>

Newcomers also commented that friends, co-workers, community members, host families, libraries, sponsorship group, and the internet as other helpful settlement supports.

## Awareness of RRLIP and SSCF

The survey results indicated that approximately 75% of total survey respondents were aware of RRLIP and its role within the community, with approximately 37% of respondents aware of SSCF and their role in the community.

## Learning Outcomes

Survey respondents were asked to identify new information they learned during the community forum. **Forum attendees identified learning outcomes in four main categories;** RRLIP’s role within the community, newcomer challenges, barriers and solutions, available newcomer services, and employment.

Approximately, 35% of participants identified learning and understanding RRLIP’s role within the community as a vital learning outcome. The results indicated that participants were better able to distinguish the difference between Regina Open Doors Society and the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership, through learning the RRLIPs mandate and project initiatives. Several respondents identified

the RRLIP resources, such as the Conversation Circles, Employment Infographic and Ethnic Grocery Store List, as useful.

Approximately 19% of participants found discussing newcomer challenges to be beneficial. Educating newcomers on the importance of learning English as a key to employment in Canada, ideas on how to gain Canadian experience, as well as the overall discussion on overcoming barriers to employment for newcomers, were outlined as key takeaways. Several participants found the overall discussion regarding the solutions to resolving the barriers newcomers face to be extremely helpful. Key messages such as, connections to newcomers, credential accreditation, cultural awareness, workplace culture, and the Canadian lifestyle were noted as solutions to newcomer challenges and barriers.

Approximately 24% of survey respondents found information on newcomer statistics and available services to be useful. Results indicated that meaningful newcomer information was discussed and gathered during the group discussions. Topic points, such as, financial literacy, newcomer education statistics, and information shared from the employer survey and the community survey, were noted as valued information. Survey participants noted a better understanding of the breadth and variety of organizations and community groups that work with newcomers.

Approximately 12% of responses were targeted to gaining Canadian employment experience. Participants noted the importance of gaining Canadian experience and the challenges of volunteering (no financial gain and often doesn't lead to employment), as key messages regarding the employment of newcomers.

### **Future Topics and Learning**

#### **CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION**

Several participants identified learning more about RRLIP's strategic plan, how to volunteer and partner with the RRLIP, and how to connect with the Immigrant Advisory Table as information they would like to learn.

Other noted topics for future discussions included more information about mental health, education, childcare, and everyday living.

Extending the time for the community forum and providing presentations from newcomers' perspectives were also noted as improvements to consider for future community forums.

#### **STATISTICS**

Survey respondents identified interest in learning about the annual statistics of newcomers coming to Canada and their demographic information (country of

origin, age, level of education, etc.). Additionally, discussing employer statistics, such as how many newcomers are hired annually, and the benefits to the employer and newcomer, were cited as key information to learn.

### EMPLOYERS AND NEWCOMER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Newcomer survey comments identified interest in learning about employment help, employment opportunities, and the employer’s perspective regarding hiring immigrants. Survey participants also indicated they’d appreciate information about employer experiences with newcomer hires.

Canadian participants noted an interest in learning which local employers stand out for their commitment to hiring newcomers and provide mentorship programs for newcomers. Information on supports available for employers who want to hire newcomers, government subsidies available for work placements for newcomers, supports for newcomers (translators, orientation, etc.) within the workplace, and receiving information on services to support agency or service employees working with newcomers, were also reported.

### ACCESSING NEWCOMERS SUPPORTS

Newcomers expressed interest in learning how to access newcomer supports to deal with specific challenges, such as; how to get references, Canadian experience, learn about the Canadian workforce and culture, how to communicate with school and teachers, etc.

- **Community Groups and Activities:** In addition, several newcomer comments indicated information regarding how to participate in community and social activities, types of multicultural family friendly activities, culture education programs, and other activities and groups available to newcomers would be useful.
- **Credential Recognition:** Several comments suggest clarification and information on available accreditation and credential recognition is necessary as many attendees were unaware of existing available supports. Participants noted this information should be readily available and clear to assist newcomers in getting their education and credentials recognized.

### CONNECTING WITH NEWCOMERS

Several participants expressed interest and value in having more opportunities to connect with newcomers and ways to support them in learning about Regina and in language development.

APPENDIX 1: FORUM SURVEY

1. Are you foreign-born?

Yes  No

2. Name two helpful newcomer supports you have experienced in Regina?

3. How could newcomer supports be more helpful or improved?

4. What newcomer supports don't exist but you think are needed?

5. What major challenges do newcomers face?

Biggest challenge: Another major challenge:

6. a. What community activities do you participate in?

b. How do these activities help you feel welcomed and make friends?

7. Do you use childcare services in Regina?

Yes  No

If so, what would you like daycare providers to know?

8. Where have you received the most settlement help from? Please number 1 to 4; Most helpful is 1.

Family members

Settlement agencies

Faith and/or Cultural Groups

Other people or places (please describe below)

(for example: sponsorship group, libraries, employers, neighbours or friends, etc.)

9. Before today, were you aware of SSCF and RRLIP and their roles in the community?

RRLIP  Yes  No

SSCF  Yes  No

10. What new information did you learn today?

11. What further information would you like to learn?

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**Thank you to our project partners**



**RHSP**  
Regina Human  
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