

# Local Immigration Partnership

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## Community/Stakeholder Consultations Report

April 2016

Prepared by



For



## Acknowledgements

We would like acknowledge the contributions of the community members and stakeholders in Edmonton who took the time to participate in the consultations.

The consultations are part of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative in Edmonton, funded by the Government of Canada through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The following organizations participated in the consultations:

ACFA	Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
Africa Centre	Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
The ASSIST Community Services Centre	Government of Alberta
Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta	Islamic Family and Social Services Association
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Immigrant Access Fund
Brooks Local Immigration Partnership	John Humphreys Centre for Peace and Human Rights
Association canadienne des volontaires unis dans l'action (CANAVUA)	KARA Family Centre
Catholic Social Services	Legal Aid Alberta
Centre for Public Legal Education	MacEwan University
Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta	Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre
City of Edmonton	Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative
Concordia University College	Norquest College
Edmonton Arts Council	RCMP
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce	REACH Edmonton
Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations	Sierra Leone Community Organization
Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues	Solomon College
Edmonton Heritage Council	Somali Canadian Women & Children Association
Edmonton Police Service	Today Centre
Edmonton Public Library	University of Alberta, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
Edmonton Regional Immigrant Employment Council	YMCA

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# Summary of Consultations

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## Process and Key Themes

This report provides a summary of the results from stakeholder consultations conducted in March 2016 for Edmonton's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. Five consultation sessions were held in which 50 individuals from 43 different organizations, representing five sectors, participated in a conversation about the Edmonton LIP initiative.

Each consultation was organized around a sector that is involved in supporting newcomers, and included representatives from settlement agencies, community organizations, those involved in health and wellness services and programs, community safety organizations, and members of the business and education community.

During the consultations, participants were asked to reflect and comment on the outcomes of a LIP that would be a priority for their organizations, governance issues, their organizations' motivation for participating in a LIP, and their vision for a successful partnership.

There was unanimous agreement that the LIP is an important initiative and could substantially improve how newcomers are supported and welcomed into the community. The majority of participants hoped to play a direct role in the LIP, while some saw their involvement being to support the work and to stay connected to the initiative as it unfolds.

Several important themes emerged from the consultations:

1. The LIP must be guided by those who have firsthand experience as newcomers. They are important partners in the LIP, and their stories and wisdom should be used to ground the work.
2. The partnership should build on existing networks and coalitions to support ongoing collaboration and information sharing, which would support informed and coordinated community and municipal planning.
3. Partners in a future LIP wish to improve their capacity to provide accessible services and ensure that they contribute to making their organizations and the city more welcoming.
4. While issues of representation are important in formulating the Council and developing working groups, it was strongly suggested that the knowledge and skills required to participate on the Council be identified and used to guide decisions about membership on the Council.

## Considerations for Future Action

The following is a summary of key considerations for future action:

1. Identify the individuals and organizations that were not able to participate in the consultations and obtain their feedback on the issues discussed.
2. Continue to engage with individuals and organizations that participated in the consultations:
  - i. Share the consultations draft report and request comments and feedback.
  - ii. Identify specific skills, knowledge and expertise that stakeholder organizations can contribute to the LIP and that could be used in the Council selection process.
  - iii. Provide periodic status updates on progress of the initiative to all interested stakeholders.
3. Develop a competencies matrix for LIP Council members that can be used in the selection process to ensure that the required skills and expertise are available on the Council.
4. Determine the sectors that should be represented on the LIP Council.
5. Identify umbrella/representative organizations and other existing informal networks within and across sectors, that would be able to represent their member organizations on the Council.
6. Consult with indigenous communities and organizations to determine how they can best participate in the LIP initiative, by being represented on the Council and in other ways.
7. Rather than form a separate immigrant advisory body, ensure that immigrants are well represented on the LIP Council and in other processes and bodies as they emerge.
  - i. Determine the number of seats to be allocated to immigrants on the Council.
  - ii. Consult with immigrant communities and organizations to obtain their thoughts on the selection process for immigrants on the Council.
  - iii. Develop a plan to elicit ongoing feedback from immigrant communities. Ensure that smaller immigrant communities and organizations are included in this process and that the diversity within communities has been considered.
8. Select and invite members to form the LIP Council.
9. Ensure that the outcomes identified by stakeholders in these consultations are incorporated into the vision, strategic and action plan of the LIP Council.
10. Determine the structure for the LIP Working Groups after the LIP Council has formed and priority areas for action have been determined.

# 1. Introduction

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This report provides a summary of the results from community and stakeholder consultations conducted in March 2016 for Edmonton's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. The goal of the LIP is to work collaboratively towards the creation of an inclusive and welcoming community, where newcomers to Edmonton are able to thrive in all aspects of the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of civic life. The work of the LIP will be guided by a multi-stakeholder Council which will strive to enhance collaboration, coordination and strategic planning at the community level with the goal of improving settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers.

The Government of Canada, through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funds the LIP initiative. The City of Edmonton holds the funding agreement with IRCC and will provide support for the LIP through the Multicultural Relations Office, which will coordinate the initiative.

The initial work of the partnership began in 2015 with an information forum for stakeholders which was held in October 2015. After the forum, a survey was sent to stakeholders asking them to identify the sector they most closely aligned with and their initial thoughts about the development of an Edmonton LIP Council.

The next step in the initiative was to invite stakeholders to participate in one of five sector-based consultations. The objective of the consultations was to obtain more detailed feedback that would help shape the LIP Council and provide guidance on the next steps of the LIP initiative.

The City of Edmonton contracted Zenev and Associates, Diversity and Inclusion Consultants to facilitate the consultations, report on the key themes that emerged from the consultations, and provide recommendations based on these themes.

The following tasks were undertaken to prepare for the consultations:

- Review of recent initiatives in Edmonton that are related and relevant to LIP
- Review of relevant LIP documents from other partnerships across Canada
- Design of consultation process and questions

## 2. Consultation Process

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The sector-based consultations, held in March 2016, were attended by approximately 50 individuals from 43 different organizations in Edmonton. A complete list of participants is included in Appendix A. The sectors included:

1. Settlement
2. Community organizations
3. Health and wellness
4. Community safety
5. Business, skills training, and education

To begin the conversations, participants were provided with background information on LIPs, outcomes that other partnerships across Canada have achieved and examples of successful projects that have contributed to positive outcomes for newcomers through cross-sectoral stakeholder collaboration.

The following questions were used to guide the consultation conversations:

1. From your organization's perspective, what would be the most important outcomes of a LIP in Edmonton?
2. LIP Governance:
  - a. Who should be represented on the LIP Council and what is an ideal size for a Council? What factors need to be considered when forming a Council?
  - b. What are the merits of creating a separate immigrant advisory body that would represent newcomer perspectives and provide feedback to the LIP Council? What are some disadvantages? What are some factors to consider in the formation of this body?
  - c. What should be the structure and composition of LIP Working Groups?
3. Participation in the LIP initiative:
  - a. Would you or your organization be interested in participating in the LIP initiative, and in what role?
  - b. Why would your organization consider it important to participate in the LIP initiative?
4. What would success look like for an Edmonton LIP?

## 3. Consultation Findings

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### 3.1. LIP Outcomes

Each consultation began with a short presentation of collaborative projects from other partnerships across Canada including outcomes that have been achieved through implementation of these projects. These outcomes fall into three categories<sup>1</sup>:

1. Enhancing capacity and accessibility of services
2. Building welcoming communities
3. Informing community and municipal planning

Participants were asked to identify the outcomes they felt were most important to their organizations. While each of the outcome categories were discussed on their own merit, many participants commented on the connectedness of these three categories, and observed that each contributes in some way to the others. The results are not quantitatively ranked but rather are presented narratively to relate the richness of the conversations.



#### 3.1.1. Enhancing capacity and accessibility of services

##### Organizations need enhanced awareness of and knowledge about services for immigrants

Participants talked about the need for service providers to be better informed about the nature and range of services and programs that directly or indirectly support the settlement and wellbeing of newcomers. According to participating stakeholders, timely and accurate access to this kind of information facilitates appropriate referrals and information sharing with clients. As one participant said, “[we] don't want to make someone's life difficult by making a wrong referral.”

One way to mobilize better access to and dissemination of information would be through the development of a directory that is easily navigated and which reflects a full range of formal and informal programs, organizations, and services relevant to settlement. Such a directory could

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<sup>1</sup> Local Immigration Partnerships: Outcomes 2008-2013  
<http://p2pcanada.ca/files/2014/07/Local-Immigration-Partnerships-Outcomes-2008-2013.pdf>

include not only traditional settlement agencies and programs, but also programs that broadly fall within the category of wellness, recreation, arts, and culture.

### Programs and services need to be adapted to make them more appropriate for and accessible to newcomers

Although there has been a lot of progress in making programs and services more appropriate for newcomers, participants identified this as an ongoing issue, particularly with respect to the location of services. As Edmonton continues to grow and newcomers settle in various parts of the city, services will need to be expanded or relocated to where newcomers live. Further, organizations must continue to develop their capacity to deliver services in a respectful manner that acknowledges the histories and contexts of newcomers.

With respect to access, participants stated that there are a significant number of newcomers who cannot access services because of their immigration status. Rigid silos and funding regulations exclude certain newcomers, and a LIP ought to be intentional in addressing this gap through research, advocacy and projects to develop alternatives.

Finally, the inability to access information about services can also be a barrier. This issue was raised by members of Edmonton's Francophone community, who were well represented in the consultation process. Participants from this community identified the need to make information about the LIP available in French.

### Small and medium sized organizations need more funding and increased participation in decision-making

The consultation process drew a wide range of small to medium organizations and community groups who expressed concerns about access to funding and to decision-making forums. Given that these organizations make a significant contribution to newcomers' wellbeing, stakeholders participating in the consultations felt that it is important for the LIP to consider this outcome in any strategic planning.

#### *Funding*

Two primary issues were raised with respect to funding. First, there is a lack of awareness of where to apply for funding. Second, there is lack of capacity to take advantage of funding opportunities. Often applications for funding are a 'side of the desk' activity undertaken by staff that is already overworked. Any activity or process remediation that makes it easier to learn about funding opportunities and how to apply

#### **Terminology**

During the consultations, participants used the term immigrant and newcomer interchangeably, and the terminology in this report reflects that usage. In the context of the consultations, the term immigrant includes permanent residents, refugees and other groups of newcomers such as temporary foreign workers.

will help to create more equity with respect to access to funding.

### *Decision making*

The same kinds of constraints that present challenges to accessing funding also keep small and medium sized organizations from participating in decision-making forums. It was repeatedly emphasized that these organizations must have a place on the LIP Council if their voice, knowledge and experience are to be used to advantage in future planning. With respect to governance (see that section for more details), a legitimate mechanism should be put in place for ensuring the voices of immigrants are used to guide the LIP and to shape its vision and objectives.

### **3.1.2. Building welcoming communities**

In spite of the progress that has been made to make Edmonton a welcoming community, many participants felt that this outcome is still important, and in some ways, the ultimate objective. The following themes emerged within the context of these discussions.

#### Gaps in knowledge related to inclusion and equity

The changing realities of immigration (e.g. new waves of migration, increased numbers of temporary foreign workers, etc.) coupled with ongoing issues of racism and discrimination require knowledge, mobilization and training which were seen, by participants, to be key to developing and implementing inclusive and equitable programs and services. Some key training needs include:

- Supporting front-line staff and immigrants in recognizing and responding to racism.
- Supporting immigrant youth and children to develop skills to safely navigate social media. Youth often arrive with little or no experience in this area and are vulnerable to exploitation and racism on the internet.

As one member of the businesses community remarked “[we] want to help [newcomers], want to be a welcoming community, but can’t be if we are not trained to have the conversations [with newcomers]”.

Finally, an integral part of being a welcoming community is the presence of trust. Building trust between newcomers and the rest of the community is central to newcomers feeling that they are a part of the community. For example, representatives of policing organizations identified building trust as being a key priority for their organizations.

#### Need for enhanced understanding between Indigenous peoples and newcomers

Newcomers would benefit from education about the history of colonialism in Canada. Several newcomers who were part of the conversations expressed concern over the way in which discriminatory ideas about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are subtly communicated to

newcomers. Additionally, it was recommended that newcomers be included in conversations and education opportunities about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One way to enfold this perspective into the LIP would be to have indigenous representation on the LIP Council.

### Need for mechanisms to strengthen new citizens' sense of agency and voice

Supporting newcomers in developing their ability to become active citizens was seen as an important outcome. One stakeholder, who has worked closely with newcomer communities for many decades, called for a reframing of the conversation about objectives to focus more intently on supporting immigrants and refugees to become confident, capable, and active citizens.

One pathway to active citizenship is volunteerism and mentorship. Barriers to volunteerism should be identified and addressed to make it desirable and easier for newcomers to mentor other newcomers or to contribute directly to community building. One organization described their experience as follows: *"Using our relationships with immigrant artists, we have developed a mentor/leader/advisor who understands these issues and can support immigrant communities and artists to access supports and resources to enhance their work."*

### **3.1.3. Informing community planning**

While people are working hard and with the best of intentions and hearts, a more coordinated approach to planning has the potential to maximize resources and improve outcomes. As one participant stated, *"Just because we have an abundance of resources doesn't mean we do it (service) intelligently or well. What are these basic principles we are working towards? What is the consideration of the impact of these processes on people's lives? It's important that [a set of] principles are considered all the time"*.

The consultations yielded a number of important themes with respect to improving and enriching community planning.

#### Gaps in data

Many participants articulated their concern about gaps in data at many levels and of many types. These gaps negatively affect planning and service provision. Some possible areas for future research includes: identifying newcomer needs, mapping available services (type and location) and identifying promising practices.

One of the more pressing concerns identified by stakeholders is the need to gather a range of information about "newcomers in the shadows". Newcomers in the shadows refers to those immigrants who are either part of small communities or whose histories, experiences and

identities give rise to needs not ordinarily identified as settlement issues. LGBTQ immigrants and refugees, and seniors who visit on super visas are two examples of newcomers whose needs may often be overlooked.

Finally, some additional data collection needs were identified as follows:

- A more complete set of demographic information about immigrants in Edmonton
- A more complete mapping of services and valuations of them
- Testing and refining promising practices

### Lack of shared principles to guide planning

Many participants posed the question: *‘What principles ought to guide our work’?* Participants recommended that the LIP Council devote some time to developing and vetting principles that will shape the work of the LIP and the relationships with the community-at-large and stakeholders.

### Settlement models in use are not adequate

There was some discussion about the need for a broader consideration of migration, settlement and wellness and the need for a new settlement model. The following are some comments related to new and alternative models of settlement:

*“The current approaches do not take into account pre-migration. We are trying to fit newcomers into a settlement model that works for the service providers.”*

*“So if we are looking at these outcomes I’d like to be linking this to broad aspects of health and wellbeing.”*

*“We have been hearing about these issues for 25 years. What are we going to do differently this time?”*

### Lack of information about current initiatives and networks

Edmonton has many ongoing initiatives and networks that are relevant to newcomer needs, but information about these is not always readily available between and amongst the various stakeholders. One strategy for improvement would be to use a mapping exercise to identify the relevant initiatives and networks, find the connections between them and document these on a website.

#### **3.1.4. Additional outcomes**

In addition to the feedback on priority outcomes, participants offered some additional advice to a future LIP.

Many stakeholders participate in umbrella groups and networks in immigration, settlement and related areas. Ongoing communication between these stakeholders would enable them to

exchange information in a timely fashion and to find common ground for collaboration. One participant posed the question: “...how can we ensure that these conversations are not reproduced, but are informing one another effectively and in a timely manner?”

Secondly, it was strongly recommended that the LIP make a commitment to strengthening newcomer citizens’ sense of agency and that their voices infuse the work of the LIP at every level. Participants discussed the need to centre the experiences and voices of newcomers in governance, strategic planning, and action.

Finally, it was recommended that the LIP seek to identify barriers to accessing services that emerge out of other government systems (e.g. provincial, federal) and broaden the conversation to include relevant partners and stakeholders who can affect change in those domains.

### 3.2. Governance

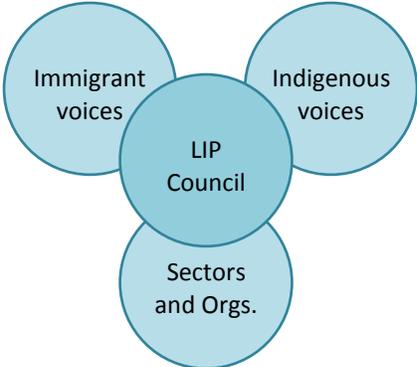
The governance models for LIPs across Canada typically include a multi-stakeholder LIP Council, and LIP Working groups or Project Teams. LIP Councils are responsible for developing strategy and action plans for the partnership, guiding and supporting the implementation of the plan, and addressing issues and challenges as they arise. LIP Working Groups usually focus on specific projects to further the goals outlined in the LIP strategic plan and address the prioritized needs of immigrants. Some partnerships have also chosen to establish an immigrant advisory body that can provide the LIP Council with perspectives on the experiences of newcomers to their region and to ensure that the plans and activities of the LIP Council align with the needs of newcomers.

Consultation participants provided feedback on the structure and composition of the LIP Council, the LIP Working Groups and their thoughts on the merits of an immigrant advisory body.

#### 3.2.1. LIP Council

Participants were asked to provide specific feedback on the following questions:

- Who should be represented on the LIP Council and what factors should be considered when forming a Council?
- What would be an ideal size for the Council?



## Representation

In response to the question about representation on the LIP Council, participants expressed the importance of having immigrant voices represented on the LIP Council. This theme was echoed throughout the consultations. Immigrants are the group that will be most directly impacted by the work of LIP and can best speak to the issues that need to be addressed. Immigrants at the table should include those with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. One suggestion was that 25% of the seats on the Council be reserved for immigrants.

Participants also felt strongly about including members of indigenous communities. Although the name of the partnership implies that this initiative is targeted for newcomers to Edmonton, indigenous perspectives as first peoples are essential to consider. One participant noted, *“First Nations should be represented; they are part of Edmonton....they would have an important perspective to consider.”*

Similar to other LIP Councils, participants agreed that the Edmonton LIP should try to include representatives from a range of sectors. These could include settlement agencies, educational institutions, business organizations, employers, health service providers, provincial and municipal government, police, ethnocultural and faith based groups, media and social service groups such as community leagues, senior centres and libraries.

Other sectors and organizations that were mentioned were: housing, human services (e.g. charities, nonprofits delivering direct services), arts and recreation, funders, the Syrian refugee stakeholder group, as well as any other sectors or groups that may not typically be at the table (e.g. parks).

To keep the size of the Council manageable, representatives from existing collaborative networks could be selected to represent those networks on the LIP. Members from these kinds of organizations would be able to bring the voice of their sector to the table and contribute a broad perspective from the sector.

The Council should be balanced in relation to gender, age (including both youth and seniors) and religious backgrounds, and should include members of the Francophone community. The Council could also benefit from the lived experiences and wisdom of community elders.

Council members should have a variety of skills sets. Utilizing a competencies matrix when considering potential members would be one way of ensuring that the Council as a whole has the skills required to work effectively. Any gaps in skills could be filled by providing ongoing training to Council members.

Important skills and perspectives that Council members should have include:

- An understanding of cultural diversity and having cultural competencies.
- A mix of front-line and management skills. Front-line staff would have an intimate knowledge of issues faced by the people they serve, whereas those with management skills could provide a strategic perspective.
- An action orientation with experience in grass-roots community activism.
- Strong communication skills.
- Experience working with newcomers.
- An equity and a social justice orientation and the capacity to evaluate programs and plans that use these frameworks.
- Capacity to be advocates for change within their own organizations.
- Knowledge and skills to be participatory, engaged and critical in their work and collaborative processes

Some questions to consider in the selection process for the Council are:

- What would be the process for determining who can best represent an ethnocultural community?
- Who will be responsible for selecting members of the Council?
- If faith based groups are to be included, how would these groups be selected?
- What will be the specific mandate of the Council, and what time commitments will be required of Council members?

### Size

The recommended size of a LIP Council is between 10 and 20 members. Fifteen members would be ideal since groups larger than that tend to have trouble making decisions and moving to action. However, many participants commented on the challenges of achieving fair representation on a Council of this size when there are so many sectors and voices that need to be included.

### **3.2.2. LIP Working Groups (WGs)**

Participants were presented with various options for organizing WGs based on other LIP initiatives. Some LIPs have WGs that focus their work on a specific sector (e.g. employment, housing, etc.), whereas others are organized by the stages of settlement (e.g. settle, work, belong). WGs can be ad hoc to respond to current needs or could be ongoing, standing groups.

Of the participants that provided feedback on how the WGs should be structured, some supported organizing them by sector since issues and concerns within a sector would be similar. Moreover, organizations are knowledgeable about their own sectors and comfortable working

within that sector. Others argued for a blend of standing sector based groups and ad hoc groups that could respond to a current or emerging priority or need.

More important than any specific structure is that the WGs be "*grounded in the current realities of newcomers*" and be flexible enough to respond to their shifting and emerging needs. The arrival of Syrian refugees is one example of a situation where an emerging need may necessitate the formation of a new ad hoc LIP WG. Moreover, the WGs should not be limited to addressing the immediate needs of newcomers but should also consider issues such as their civic and political participation.

Participants also provided the following additional comments on the formation of LIP WGs:

- The WGs should be meaningful and understandable to newcomers themselves.
- Working groups require good facilitation to keep the momentum going.
- Members of WGs groups should be conversant with and knowledgeable about the issues being addressed by the group.

### **3.2.3. Immigrant advisory body**

Participants were asked to provide specific feedback on the following questions:

1. What are the merits of creating a separate immigrant advisory group that would represent newcomer perspectives and provide feedback to the LIP Council?
2. What are some disadvantages?
3. What are some factors to consider in the formation such a body?

The consultations yielded great deal of guidance on this important aspect of any future LIP.

#### Advantages of an immigrant advisory body

The overriding importance and advantage of having an immigrant advisory group, as part of the LIP governance structure, would be to ensure that the lived experiences of newcomers are considered in all aspects of the work of the partnership. Such a group, if invested with the proper authority and relationship to the broader LIP, could provide guidance and feedback on strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects and initiatives. The immigrant advisory body could provide direct feedback rather than through stakeholders. Finally, an immigrant advisory body could be a way for newcomer communities to build solidarity and work together to advocate for their interests.

#### *Size and representation*

The ideal size for an immigrant advisory body is between 8 and 15 members. This body should include representation from youth and seniors and attend to gender balance. Similar to recommendations about the LIP Council, this group could seek representation from umbrella

immigrant associations. Participants made it very clear that only those who have lived experience as immigrants should be a part of this group.

### Disadvantages of an immigrant advisory body

If there was one constant theme that wound its way throughout the consultations, it was participants' advice to ensure that at every stage of the process and embedded in all aspects of governance and planning, the voices of the community are not only heard, but that the wisdom of their lived experiences shape and guide the Edmonton LIP. However, this priority did not preclude the expression of strong cautions against the establishment of a separate body to represent immigrant and refugee interests. In fact, it was identified as having the potential to be counterproductive in this regard.

The following drawbacks and concerns regarding the proposed formation of an immigrant advisory body were raised and corroborated at every consultation:

1. Unless the immigrant advisory body is fairly large, potentially making it an unwieldy size, it will be impossible to ensure fair and proper representation of the various immigrant communities.
2. The many differences within communities also presents great difficulties with regard to ensuring appropriate and fair representation. Indeed, representation is far more complex and sensitive than recruiting one or two members to sit on a committee. This approach runs the risk of alienating those who are not represented on such a body.
3. An unwieldy advisory body may become marginalized within an initiative that is action oriented. Even if the roles of the Council and the advisory body are very clear, and there is a mandate that gives the advisory body decision-making authority, the large size of the body would make it less likely to be able to respond quickly to emerging issues.
4. In addition to the risk of marginalizing newcomers' voices and experiences, a single body with limited representation tends to universalize and homogenize the immigrant and refugee story. This is of particular concern when it comes to 'immigrants in the shadows', a term used by some of the participants to describe small, vulnerable and often overlooked groups or subgroups of newcomers.

### Alternatives to an immigrant advisory body

Participants identified a number of alternatives that could appropriately and meaningfully incorporate immigrant voices into the LIP. The ideal way to ensure that the Edmonton LIP is guided by, and attends to the voices of the community is to establish a set of accountability processes. One participant put it this way, "*I would rather have the lived experience at every table.*" And, as two other participants who work closely with the communities said:

*“Everything should begin with the real stories... begin with the stories as if you would begin with a prayer.”*

*“A story telling process could be built into the governance structure... ongoing gathering of stories to stay with the current realities.”*

According to consultation participants, this ongoing gathering of intelligence from immigrants is important because it enables planners and providers to hear about not only what works, but also what is going wrong. It also prevents the development of a ‘universal story’ of the immigrant and contextualizes the experiences of newcomers and the concordant provision of programs and services that match those experiences. Another advantage is the creation of social capital with and for newcomers as stories are shared and relationships built with the LIP and, by extension, the broader community.

There was a caution issued to a future LIP Council to ensure the gravity, validity, and relevance of the ‘stories’ is understood by those hearing the stories and who are charged with acting upon this knowledge and experience.

The crux of this aspect of the LIP is a principled commitment to the voice of the community being at the centre of the process and indeed, the entire initiative. The stakeholders see this principled positioning as an important factor in ensuring the successful involvement of the community.

### **3.3. Participation in the LIP Initiative**

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the following questions:

- Would you or your organization be interested in participating in the LIP initiative, and in what role?
- Why would your organization consider it important to participate in the LIP initiative?

Almost all participants reported that their organizations would be interested in participating in the initiative in some capacity. Their role in the initiative could be determined later by their organization, as well as what the initiative needed and asked of them. Two participants mentioned that since the LIP initiative was new to them, they would have to take this question back to their organizations for a decision.

The reasons for wanting to participate in the initiative included being better able to respond to the needs of newcomers, to connect and collaborate with other organizations, to have a voice at the partnership table and to support their own organizational mandate.

## Respond to the needs of newcomers

The most prevalent reason for wanting to participate in the partnership was participants' desire to improve programs and services accessed by newcomers. The LIP initiative would help them better determine the changing needs of newcomers, respond to these needs, and address gaps in services.

The initiative could support this goal by raising awareness about the experiences of newcomers and by advocating for them. Advocacy is especially important for underserved communities like the Francophone community or for refugees with experiences of trauma. Organizations and individuals that have specific expertise in an area could also contribute their knowledge and skills to the initiative to better support all newcomers. Examples of these are skills and knowledge in areas like health, such as mental health and immunology, or process skills like governance and organizational capacity building.

Respond to the needs of newcomers

Connect and collaborate

Have a voice at the table

Support organization's mandate

## Connect and collaborate

The initiative can also provide a mechanism for organizations to better connect and collaborate. Members could:

- Exchange information about the services they offer (which would enable a better referral process)
- Share best practices about creating welcoming communities
- Engage in collaborative and creative problem solving
- Break down silos between sectors and build better partnerships between organizations
- Politically respond as a group to issues and problems that emerge
- Create mechanisms to inform provincial and federal policies and planning related to immigrants

## Have a voice at the partnership table

Organizations would also like to have a voice at the partnership table to be able to represent the perspectives of the specific communities they serve. This is especially important to smaller organizations that do not often have an opportunity to participate in collaborative groups but are willing to contribute their knowledge and creativity. Participants also spoke about wanting to influence the conversation about newcomer needs in order to create meaningful change and to contribute to a collaborative and participatory process that are *"grounded in the realities, hopes, and aspirations of the people at the grassroots level"*.

## Support organization's mandate.

The goals and objectives of LIP overlap with those of many organizations. Participating in the LIP initiative would enable these organizations to work towards and fulfill their own mandates.

### 3.4. Stakeholder Vision for LIP

To close the consultations, participants were asked the question: What would success look like for an Edmonton LIP? Participants provided specific responses to this question, but comments about the vision for LIP were also articulated at various other points in the consultations.

In response to this question, four themes emerged from the consultations. These have been crafted into summary vision statements with supporting quotes for each statement.

**1**

**The Edmonton LIP is connected to and directed by grassroots communities. Immigrants will have opportunities to contribute to the initiative's process and outcomes and will be full participants in decision-making processes.**

- *"Everybody [should be] at the table – including those who are experiencing the effects of migration."*
- *"LIP must capture the voice of the people"*
- *"Those who are being helped become advisors and contributors to this process – pass on experience and knowledge."*
- *"We need to change the conversation and change can only come when we change who is participating in the conversation."*
- *"Strengthening newcomer citizens' sense of agency and voice – reframing the objectives to focus on this."*

**2**

**The Edmonton LIP is oriented towards action and sustainable outcomes. Success will be reflected in the measurable improvement in the lives of immigrants.**

- *"Moving the initiative forward is a success."*
- *"Sustainability and continuity."*
- *"Implementation of the recommendations of the Council – that would be success."*

### 3

**The Edmonton LIP strengthens relationships across sectors to maximize existing resources and enhance collaboration. This focus on relationship building and collaboration extends to newcomer communities to help them identify shared concerns, build networks and share knowledge and resources.**

- *"Orchestrate the working together of the various organizations."*
- *"All stakeholders know about and reach out to the right expertise"*
- *"Integrate French and English services – stop the isolation of each."*
- *"Coordination of holistic services for youth."*
- *"LIPs, to me, imply better coordination and better communication to better implement and impact that vision. And we'd like to be involved."*
- *"All agencies are on board so we can provide better services."*

### 4

**The Edmonton LIP identifies systemic barriers to access of services, advocates for and works collaboratively to change systems.**

- *"How can we see and change the systemic barriers newcomers face."*
- *"Stakeholders and funders to understand the needs ...tweak the system to meet the needs of those who fall through the cracks."*
- *"Advocacy and education for funders/levels of government."*
- *"What are we going to do different this time? There is a lot of suffering."*
- *"Needs should be addressed through a backdrop of equity – it is not about deficiency in the newcomer."*

## 4. Considerations for Future Action

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This section presents suggestions for future action for the LIP initiative and is based on the feedback provided in the consultations.

### 4.1. Continue to Engage with Stakeholder Organizations

Almost all the participants that attended the consultations expressed their enthusiasm and willingness to participate in and contribute to the partnership. To maintain this high level of interest and engagement:

1. Identify the individuals and organizations that were not able to participate in the consultations and obtain their feedback on the issues discussed.
2. Continue to engage with individuals and organizations that participated in the consultations:
  - i. Share the consultations draft report and request comments and feedback.
  - ii. Identify specific skills, knowledge and expertise that stakeholder organizations can contribute to LIP and that could be used in the Council selection process.
  - iii. Create a distribution list and provide periodic status updates on progress of the initiative to all interested stakeholders.

### 4.2. Establish the LIP Governance Model and Structure

#### 4.2.1. Governance planning

3. Develop a competencies matrix for LIP Council members that can be used in the selection process to ensure that the required skills and expertise are available on the Council.
4. Determine the sectors that should be represented on the LIP Council.
5. Identify umbrella/representative organizations and other existing informal networks within and across sectors that would be able to represent their member organizations on the Council.
6. Consult with indigenous communities and organizations to determine how they can best participate in the LIP initiative, by being represented on the Council and in other ways.

#### 4.2.2. Representation

7. Rather than form a separate immigrant advisory body, ensure that immigrants are well represented on the LIP Council and in other processes and bodies as they emerge.
  - i. Determine the number of seats to be allocated to immigrants on the Council.

- ii. Consult with immigrant communities and organizations to obtain their thoughts on the selection process for immigrants on the Council.
  - a. Identify the existing individuals and groups that have connections to immigrant communities, including connections with key contacts within the communities (e.g. respected elders, faith group leaders, community workers, health and cultural brokers).
  - b. Identify strategies and best practices that have successfully been used by other LIPs to connect with immigrant communities and select the ones that are appropriate for the Edmonton context.
- iii. Develop a plan to elicit ongoing feedback from immigrant communities. Ensure that smaller immigrant communities and organizations are included in this process and that the diversity within communities has been considered.

#### **4.2.3. Council formation**

- 8. Select and invite members to form the LIP Council.

#### **4.2.4. Next steps for the Council**

- 9. Ensure that the outcomes identified by stakeholders in these consultations are incorporated into the vision, strategic and action plan of the LIP Council.
- 10. Determine the structure for the LIP WGs after the LIP Council has formed and priority areas for action have been determined.

## Appendix A

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The following table lists the individuals who attended the consultations.

Organization	Name	Session attended
ACFA	Ida Kamariza	Community
Africa Centre	Tesfaye Ayalew	Settlement
The ASSIST Community Services Centre	Janet Kan	Community
The ASSIST Community Services Centre	Janet Awawias	Settlement
Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET)	Mat Steppan	Employment and Skills Training
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Sandra Prefontaine	Community Safety
Brooks Local Immigration Partnership	Shannyn Creary	Health and Community Wellness
Association canadienne des volontaires unis dans l'action (CANAVUA)	Dicky Dikamba	Community
Catholic Social Services	Sharon Yeo	Settlement
Centre for Public Legal Education	Lesley Conley	Community Safety
Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta (CPA Alberta)	Maggie Knight	Employment and Skills Training
Concordia University College	Barbara van Ingen	Employment and Skills Training
Edmonton Arts Council	Kristina de Guzman	Health and Community Wellness
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce	Warren Sing	Employment and Skills Training
Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO)	Alain Bertrand	Community
Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues	Habib Fatmi	Community
Edmonton Heritage Council	David Ridley	Health and Community Wellness
Edmonton Police Service	Chelsea Hawrelak	Community Safety
Edmonton Public Library	Pamela Fong	Employment and Skills Training
Edmonton Regional Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC)	Doug Piquette	Employment and Skills Training
Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA)	Oliver Kamau	Settlement
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for	Suzanne Gross	Community

Organization	Name	Session attended
Newcomers (EMCN)		
Government of Alberta	Henan Elsharbini	Employment and Skills Training
Government of Alberta	Snedra Vargas	Employment and Skills Training
Government of Alberta	Mykola Soroka	Employment and Skills Training
Government of Alberta - Parks	Kevin Cantelon	Health and Community Wellness
Government of Alberta - Parks	Leah Arnason	Health and Community Wellness
Government of Alberta - Solicitor General	Lorraine Javos	Community Safety
Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA)	Ghada Ageel	Settlement
Immigrant Access Fund	Cathy Ito	Employment and Skills Training
John Humphreys Centre for Peace and Human Rights	Tisha Raj	Community
KARA Family Centre	Rose Yoki	Health and Community Wellness
Legal Aid Alberta	Ruth Williams	Community Safety
MacEwan University	Victoria Rissling	Employment and Skills Training
Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre	Marvin Tully	Community Safety
Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MCHB)	Tigist Dafla	Community
Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MCHB)	Yvonne Chiu	Health and Community Wellness
Norquest College	Lisa Rochman	Employment and Skills Training
RCMP	Mark Osedowski	Community Safety
REACH Edmonton	Helen Rusich	Community Safety
Sierra Leone Community Organization	Kemoh Mansaray	Community
Solomon College	PingPing Lee	Settlement
Somali Canadian Women & Children Association	Sahra Hashi	Community
Today Centre	Debbie Clark	Community Safety
University of Alberta, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry	Stan Houston	Health and Community Wellness
YMCA	Joan Baker	Health and Community Wellness