

Enhancing Settlement Sector Capacity: A Project of the National Task Force on Professionalization in the Settlement Sector

Immigration has been one of the building blocks of Canadian society. Today, Canada continues to rely on immigration for demographic sustainability and labour force growth. Both newcomers (immigrants and refugees alike) and receiving society gain from immigration to the extent that they mutually adjust, a sign of successful integration. As intermediaries between newcomers and local communities, settlement service agencies have played a vital role in this process since the early 20th century.

Yet, even after decades of growth in terms of client population, organizational capacity, and knowledge base, the Canadian settlement sector still lacks national professional standards. Recognizing this need, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) and provincial and regional settlement umbrella organizations formed a National Task Force on Professionalization in the Settlement Sector in 2005.

Who We Are

Coordinated by CCR, the Task Force is a partnership with provincial and regional settlement umbrella organizations, aiming to promote the professionalization of both settlement practitioners and settlement service agencies. The following provincial and regional organizations are members of the Task Force:

- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia
- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
- Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
- Manitoba Immigrant Settlement Sector Association
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies
- Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (as observer)

Professionalization

By professionalization in the settlement sector, we mean a process of setting and applying objective standards for

- a) the training, accreditation, job performance, and compensation of settlement practitioners; and ultimately
- b) the accreditation and operation of settlement service agencies themselves.

Our Vision

We envision a settlement sector where practitioners, trained and employed according to inter-provincially compatible professional standards,

- a) provide high-quality services to newcomers wherever they are in Canada; and
- b) help receiving communities adapt to newcomers.

Outcomes

- Settlement practitioners are trained, certified, and qualified to serve newcomers and to support receiving communities in the adaptation process.
- In the context of a demanding human service environment, practitioners are adequately protected and compensated for their work.
- Settlement agencies are optimally resourced to do their work.
- Newcomers are thus well-informed and well-served to settle, adapt, and integrate into their local Canadian communities.
- Communities are, in turn, prepared to share their resources and responsibilities with their new members.
- Settlement work, involving both newcomers and receiving communities, is nationally recognized and valued.

Our Approach

This national project will use a step-by-step approach, starting with the professionalization of settlement practitioners and then moving to the agency level. The first phase will include four steps:

- 1) Identifying national occupational competencies
- 2) Outlining a procedure for practitioners to achieve these competencies, ensuring the assessment and recognition of previous, as well as on-the-job, learning
- 3) Establishing salary scales for trained and accredited settlement practitioners
- 4) Establishing an accreditation process and body

The second phase will involve setting and implementing standards at the agency level.

For more information on the Task Force, please contact the Settlement Policy Director at CCR by e-mail: ccr2@web.ca or by phone: 514-277-7223, ext. 5.