

Western Region Strategic Directions

December 2014

Western Region Working Group

Introduction

Umbrella organizations provide expertise in the field of settlement and integration to all levels of governments, public and private institutions. Umbrella organizations also play a leadership role in their respective jurisdiction to facilitate integration of newcomers in society throughout the Western Region. Through facilitating communication between various actors in settlement, promoting the standardization and professionalization of the sector, and creating evidence-based research, umbrella organizations help inform government policies as well as strengthen settlement agencies in providing relevant and impactful services. Through the continued support of umbrella organizations, umbrella organizations will be able to apply their services to the commonly-identified priority areas across the region. These areas were identified through an analysis of the findings from the summit reports of the Western Region and are as follows: collaboration and standardization, partnerships, and pre-arrival services. The table below examines the priority areas, role of umbrella organizations in addressing those priorities and recommendations for future action.

Priorities, Role of Umbrella Organizations, and Recommendations

Priority Area	Role of Umbrella Organizations	Recommendations
<p>Collaboration and Standardization</p> <p>Collaboration and standardization were issues that were raised throughout the Region across all areas of settlement, due to overlapping services, competition among agencies, and lack of consistency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration With their provincial lens and their capacity for research and evaluation, umbrella organizations can gather and analyze existing services and identify gaps in services across their jurisdiction. As a result, umbrella organizations are able to support the continual collaborative effort among settlement agencies through conducting research projects such as an environmental scan and a database of services. Standardization Umbrella organizations can assess a multitude of services that develop and maintain the standardization of the sector. Services such as training and professional development, certifying practitioners, and mapping and assessing competency are provided across the designated jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By sharing information and adopting a strengths-based approach, the settlement sector will be able to provide improved services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Scan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through conducting an environmental scan of existing services, it will be possible to identify overlapping services and where services can be bundled. Database of Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a directory that maps and describes available services, as well as lists all service providers in their jurisdiction would be useful to facilitate the referral process. Standardization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement professionals can implement standardized practices and services through training, professional development and certification offered through umbrella organizations. This in turn will benefit the sector as a whole by promoting consistency and coordination among services across the designated jurisdiction.

<p>Pre-Arrival Services</p> <p>The benefits of pre-arrival services were most strongly emphasized in the area of providing labour market integration information.</p>	<p>Through their capacity to conduct evidence-based research, umbrella organizations can gather labour market information throughout the jurisdiction and coordinate the process of preparing pre-arrival labour market material for newcomers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Market Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing the following information online prior to arrival, in plain language or various languages, would improve newcomer economic integration and outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local labour market information • Alternative career pathways • Employment standards • Worker's rights • Foreign Qualification Recognition skill transfer process and timelines
<p>Partnerships</p> <p>Summit participants across the Region noted the need for increased partnerships with all actors in settlement.</p>	<p>Umbrella organizations promote information exchange between the settlement sector and the various actors in settlement. Examples of these actors include: the different levels of government, the community, employers, and schools. Not only do umbrella organizations represent a unified voice of the settlement sector to the government, but they also have the capacity to represent the sector to the community at large. This makes umbrella organizations well equipped to build partnerships with all actors in settlement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By engaging all actors involved in settlement and integration, such as the community, employers, governments, and the settlement agencies, will bridge gaps in service delivery and create relevant programming. Continuing to develop LIPs in both rural and urban locations was seen as a great benefit across the Region. • Language Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the availability of language programs with occupation-specific language training was an issue highlighted throughout the Region. Umbrella organizations can help coordinate the process of establishing standards for occupation-specific language training by facilitating partnerships between the private, academic and settlement sectors. • Employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the region, summit participants noted that there is a need to engage employers and raise awareness on the benefits of welcoming newcomers to the workplace. By acting as a provincial representative of the settlement sector to employers, with capacity for strong evidence-based research, umbrella organizations can build connections with employers in the sharing of knowledge such as immigrant needs and benefits of hiring newcomers. Through collaboration with the settlement sector, umbrella organizations can also coordinate the design and distribution of cultural diversity training.

Conclusion

Collaboration, standardization, pre-arrival services, and partnerships were all highlighted as priority areas in settlement and integration across the Western Region. To address these gaps, several strategic directions have been recommended. Settlement agencies do not always have the resources or lens to address these issues themselves; however, these priorities can be addressed through the capacity of umbrella organizations. Umbrella organizations provide many invaluable services such as: producing evidence-based research, training and professional development, and fostering relationships and knowledge sharing between the various actors in the settlement landscape, which can be used to encourage collaboration, promote standards, coordinate pre-arrival services, and build partnerships.

References

All of the information was compiled from the following reports:

1. Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC. (December 2014). 4. Overall Impressions.
2. Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies. (August 2014). CIC's Vision 2020: Summary of Provincial Policy Recommendations.
3. Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies. (September 2014). Saskatchewan Settlement and Immigration Summit: Final Report.
4. Manitoba Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Sector Association Inc. (November 2014). Manitoba Nunavut Settlement and Integration Summit: Final Report.
5. Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies. (December 2014). Alberta Integration Summit.
6. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants & Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance. (February 2014). The Role of Immigrant and Refugee Serving Agency Umbrella Organizations in Settlement and Integration: CIC Discussion Paper.