

Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women in Canada: What we heard from the stakeholder consultations

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Since its establishment in December 1991, SRDC has conducted over 350 projects and studies for various federal and provincial departments, municipalities, as well as other public and non-profit organizations. SRDC has offices located in Ottawa and Vancouver, and satellite offices in Calgary and Montreal.

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Introduction

Budget 2018 states that employment is key to the successful integration of newcomers to Canada, supporting their financial independence and allowing them to make social connections and build and retain job skills. The Government recognizes that visible minority newcomer women[1] in Canada face significant barriers to finding and keeping good jobs. To help reduce these barriers, in 2018-19 the Government announced a $31.8 million investment, in support of a three-year pilot to provide additional programming to help visible minority newcomer women secure employment. The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) has been commissioned by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to carry out a research project to inform the design of the pilot. The evidence and valuable learnings from the pilot project will help inform a wider implementation of approaches that are found to be efficient in supporting visible minority newcomer women. Moreover, it will support IRCC in building a culture of evidence-informed decision making that will strengthen settlement and integration services and improve outcomes for newcomer women and their families.

As part of the knowledge gathering and development phase of this research project, SRDC held eleven roundtables between December 2018 and January 2019 across Canada with experts and stakeholders in the settlement and integration domain. We encouraged participants to share their experiences and insights. More specifically, we received their input in designing employment services models for visible minority newcomer women, which will help develop a pilot with a better fit and results for newcomer women.

This report summarizes overall key takeaways, comments, inputs and observations from the consultations.

[1] The term "visible minority" is used in the *Employment Equity Act* to define one of four designated groups. The aim of the Act is to achieve workplace equality and to correct employment disadvantages for the four groups. Visible minority persons are identified according to the Employment Equity Act as being non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.

The consultations

Where the consultations took place

SRDC held 11 consultations that brought together a wide range of representatives from immigrant serving organizations, umbrella organizations, employment services providers, immigrant employer councils, academic experts and representatives from federal, provincial and municipal governments. Overall, we consulted with 147 stakeholders from 123 organizations in 10 communities from across the country. Table 1 presents the locations of the 11 consultations, as well as the number of participants and organizations that participated. For a list of organizations, see Appendix A.

Table 1 Consultations held between December 6, 2018 and January 24, 2019

Date	Province	City/town	# of participants[2]	# of organizations
December 6, 2018	British Columbia	Surrey	9	9
December 7, 2018		Vancouver	20	19
December 13, 2018	Ontario	Ottawa	15	13
January 7, 2019	Alberta	Calgary	16	14
January 8, 2019	Nova Scotia	Halifax	16	12
January 9, 2019	Saskatchewan	Regina	9	7
January 10, 2019	New Brunswick	Fredericton	15	10
January 11, 2019	Manitoba	Winnipeg	15	14
January 15, 2019	Ontario	Toronto	18	15
January 16, 2019		London	6	4
January 24, 2019		Toronto	10	6
			147	**123**

[2] Number of participants does not include representatives from IRCC (either national or regional offices) and SRDC team.

Selection of communities

The ten communities for the consultations were selected based on the number of visible minority newcomer women in the community and selected labour force statistics[3] from the 2016 Census data. We took care to select communities from different regions across Canada – Western Canada (Surrey and Vancouver) including the Prairies (Calgary, Regina, and Winnipeg), Central Canada (Ottawa, London, and Toronto), and the Maritimes (Halifax and Fredericton). In addition, we sought to hold consultations in major urban centres as well as smaller centres.

Selection of stakeholders

We aimed to invite 10 to 20 participants to each location from a diverse mix of stakeholder groups including:

- Representatives from immigrant serving organizations
- Representatives from employment services providers with experience delivering employment programs and supports to newcomer women
- Representatives from women organizations
- Workforce development experts
- Employers, immigrant employer councils and sector council representatives who are knowledgeable about integration of newcomers into the workplace
- Academic experts
- Government departments or agencies (e.g., provincial government, federal government, including Status of Women and Employment and Social Development Canada).

Objectives of the roundtable discussions

The purpose of the consultations was threefold:

1. To share what we know from our background research on the integration of visible minority newcomer women into the labour market, including any promising practices in employment services and supports for this group;
2. To gather inputs from stakeholders on presented approaches/practices, including their experience and knowledge of best practices and elements of success in program design and delivery for visible minority newcomer women; and
3. To consult on key components or approaches to support the development of a pilot project.

[3] The number of VMNW in the labour force, employed, unemployed and not in the labour force, as well as the labour market participation rate, employment rate and unemployment rate.

Description of the day

The all-day roundtable discussions began with an introduction from IRCC explaining the background and context for the Government of Canada's Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot. This was followed by an overview from SRDC of findings from the literature review and consultations with visible minority newcomer women. SRDC also introduced a career pathways framework and potential interventions for employment services for visible minority newcomer women.

The second part of the day involved facilitated discussions in small groups with the aim of gathering input from stakeholders on the proposed interventions. Participants were also encouraged to come up with ideas and suggest alternative approaches to be tested in the pilot.

Appendix B presents a generic consultation agenda.

What we heard from stakeholders

This section highlights what we heard in the 11 consultations. In each of the consultations, participants were very engaged; they generously shared their perspectives and experiences on the current landscape of employment-related services for visible minority newcomer women as well as suggestions for moving forward. Participants told us that they appreciated the opportunity to provide input on the design of the upcoming pilot and to meet other organizations working on similar issues.

On the presented findings

As part of the day's discussion, SRDC presented key findings from the literature review and consultations with visible minority newcomer women, as well as selected socioeconomic characteristics for this population.

Target population and barriers to employment

SRDC presented the key characteristics of visible minority newcomer women in Canada and barriers this group may face in entering the labour market. The barriers presented were grouped in the following seven categories: language, Canadian work experience, discrimination, childcare, cultural gender roles, cultural intelligence, and psychological and social factors. Participants were asked to reflect on these barriers and to provide their feedback. Some participants stated that the barriers newcomers face are similar to ones faced by Canadian-born youth, however the intersectionality of barriers faced by this group may make it harder to enter into the labour market. Canadian work experience, discrimination, lack of networks, and childcare were the focus of many discussions. The key points touched on by participants are captured below.

- **Canadian work experience**: Participants were quick to point out that, oftentimes, Canadian experience is cited as the reason for not getting a job, but it encompasses more than actual work experience in Canada. It was mentioned that some groups of newcomers experience this barrier more, depending on the country of origin among other factors. When speaking about Canadian work, participants often raised the issue of foreign credential recognition and the challenges newcomers face in the process of obtaining it.
- **Discrimination**: Participants recognized that discrimination remains a major barrier for newcomers and said that interventions do not often seek to address it because of the complexity of the issue. Participants felt that interventions from this pilot should seek to change attitudes of employers in hiring newcomers. Several participants highlighted the need to use the term racism instead of or in addition to discrimination to clearly label this barrier. Others raised the need to use terms other than visible minority to describe this population, as the expression does not accurately portray the situation (not a minority in some communities).
- **Lack of networks or social capital:** Participants saw this as a major barrier in accessing available job openings as a large proportion of jobs are not posted, and are thus based on connections. This was also seen as a barrier that can affect newcomers' mental health.

- **Childcare:** The need for childcare was perceived as one of the major reasons for newcomer women not participating in the labour force. It was also raised as an issue hindering access to some programs – a lack of childcare or childminding might make it impossible for women to participate in services and programs. Participants highlighted that this was a systemic issue that affects newcomer and Canadian-born women across the country.
- **Cultural intelligence:** Participants saw this as a barrier, first and foremost, from the employer's perspective. Participants mentioned often that employers needed to be educated and trained to be culturally competent as a way of opening up the labour market to newcomers. Participants also recognized that a lack of cultural intelligence could hinder newcomers in their job search.
- **Language**: Having a minimum level of English and/or French was seen as a key factor in being able to access services and find employment. An add-on to this barrier was noted for Francophone immigrants looking for work in French-language minority communities.
- **Cultural gender roles**: Discussions around cultural gender roles included aspects of the importance of having family support and addressing cultural stereotyping and cultural expectations of the types of jobs women can hold.
- **Psychological and social factors**: Lack of confidence and self-esteem and stress were mentioned as particularly challenging for visible minority newcomer women when looking for work.
- **Other barriers** mentioned included health and mental health, transportation, housing, and labour market conditions. Transportation was seen as especially problematic in smaller centres and rural areas when the opportunities are not easily accessible by public transit.

To nuance the discussions on barriers, participants were quick to point out that visible minority newcomer women are quite a diverse group. Participants recognized that there are many intersecting social factors to the barriers faced and the way newcomer women experience them, as well as services and the integration into the labour market. In addition to the factors introduced by SRDC during the presentation – sex, gender, education, ethnicity, family, geography, income, disability, culture, age, race, religion – participants added other factors more specific to newcomers such as the type of intended occupation, immigration status upon arrival, and the length of time in Canada that would intersect with gender and barriers.

On IRCC employment-related services access and use

SRDC briefly presented selected information on IRCC employment-related services access and use from the ICARE data. Discussions here highlighted that the data presented may not reflect the reality of clients' needs, but more the offer/availability of services, especially in terms of the support services. Participants also talked about the data not reflecting the employment services and support offered and covered through other levels of government and other programs. Although the statistics presented may not provide a complete and accurate picture on how many newcomer women access employment-related services, they do provide a snapshot of support service utilization amongst visible minority newcomer women that access IRCC employment programs.

The percentage of those accessing services may be higher if the information included services beyond those offered by IRCC. Despite this, the need to expand outreach channels to reach newcomers sooner in their settlement process was deemed important by participants.

Eligibility of participants came up often in discussions around access and use of IRCC services. As it stands, IRCC has the mandate to offer services to permanent residents, which means they are no longer eligible for IRCC services once they attain their Canadian citizenship. This might become a barrier for some newcomer women who do not enter the labour force right away because they prioritize other aspects of settlement first, and therefore may no longer be eligible by the time they wish to access services. There were also discussions around the need for services for temporary residents and refugee claimants.

Participants discussed the different realities of smaller centres and rural areas in terms of availability and access to services and the need for different approaches, including offering services online.

On the proposed models

As a way to spur discussion on improving employment services for visible minority newcomer women, SRDC presented three models that could potentially be implemented: the Pipeline model,[4] the Job Development model[4] and the Navigating the Labour Market model.[4]

Overarching comments

Consultation participants raised general themes around employment services for visible minority newcomer women related to the discussion in this section. In no particular order, they are as follows:

Key components of models

- **Links to employers** was highlighted as one of the key gaps in current programming. Diverse ways of helping visible minority newcomer women connect with employers were discussed including job or career fairs, work placements, inviting employers as guest speakers and networking events with employers and job seekers.
- **Child care and transportation** were highlighted as major barriers/needs for many women, especially visible minority newcomer women due to the barriers they may face that arise from the various intersectional factors. Participants discussed the importance of including such supports in programming that target women as a way to support participation.
- **Wage subsidies** were seen as a potential tool to help engage employers in hiring visible minority newcomer women, and in doing so, support participants to gain Canadian work

[4] The models were named by SRDC, and are subject to change.

experience. Many participants mentioned that unpaid work placements may not be viable for some visible minority newcomer women.

- Ensuring that visible minority newcomer women are given the opportunity to find employment in jobs that are **commensurate** with their experience, education, and skills was seen as a key issue for employment services. Discussions emphasized helping the target population find gainful employment based on their assets and needs.
- The notion of cultural intelligence/competency for employers was raised in all consultations. There was a common recognition that addressing employer attitudes towards hiring newcomers needed to be addressed in the proposed interventions.

Delivery

- It might be necessary to expand the **definition of visible minority** to include those newcomer women who self-identify as visible minority but might not fall within the definition currently used.
- **Partnering and collaborating** with other organizations was seen as a way to better serve clients and to address diverse needs. However, participants thought that it might be difficult to do based on current funding models as there is potential competition for clients and dollars.
- Provision of services should be centred on the **family unit**, and not solely on the individual.
- Interventions should be tailored to specifically address the **diversity and intersectionality of barriers** faced by visible minority newcomer women.
- Models should be **flexible** enough to allow for adaptation to local context such as labour market conditions (labour shortage), location (urban/rural), and provincial/regional policies.

Feedback on the Pipeline model

The Pipeline model is a demand-led approach, in that it emphasizes the engagement with a large employer, a group of smaller employers, or a sector to develop, in partnership with a service provider, a milestone approach to employment for the intended population. As we described it, it targets low-skilled newcomers further away from the labour market. It involves customized training both in the classroom and in the workplace, which leads to a long-term work opportunity with the employer(s) if the participant meets expectations. The model also includes retention services for both clients and employers. For details on this model, see slides 35-37 in the Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Roundtable Discussions PowerPoint slides in Appendix C.

Most participants viewed the Pipeline model positively, but suggested a name change for the model. Throughout the discussions, participants highlighted similar existing programs that focused on employer engagement and employment. However, few programs included all the elements raised in the presented model. There was no clear consensus on pay-for-success types of incentives for service providers for each milestone reached – some thought it could work while others were

against the idea and a few even suggested channeling incentives to clients rather than service providers.

The following summarize the key comments made about this model during the consultations:

- **On the key program elements**: Participants recognized the importance of employer engagement, client assessment, and retention services in this model.
    - Participants saw employer engagement as critical, as they expressed that this was an area of great potential but that was currently missing from many of the programs and services being offered. A critical piece of employer engagement for participants was conducting an assessment at the beginning to understand the needs of the employer/sector. Some participants also suggested that the assessment should include looking at the workplace culture and longer-term retention issues.
    - To ensure that the employment opportunities accounted for the skills and needs of newcomers, participants stressed the importance of a client assessment prior to the program. The assessment would ensure that individuals with the right fit would be directed to this program. Participants also suggested including transferable skills or soft skills within the training as a way of supporting newcomers in navigating the ever-evolving labour market. Participants saw a need for a balance between those types of skills and job-specific customized training. Ongoing workplace training by the employer(s) in areas such as language and digital skills was seen as a potential requirement for employers engaged in this model.
    - Retention services, described as ongoing support for both employers and new employees, were seen as an integral part of supporting program participants with the transition to employment. It was also viewed as a potential way to increase the satisfaction of both employers and employees. If the model was implemented as a sector approach instead of working with one large employer, it might include human resource support for small and medium enterprises.
- **On potential add-ons**: Potential add-ons discussed for this model included:
    - A component addressing diversity and cultural intelligence/competency for employers was described as a must in this model to affect long-term change within the organization. It was also suggested that such workshops be offered to all employees and not only to management.
    - Workplace mentorship was raised as an option for this model to support clients in the transition to employment.
    - Peer supports/networking with peers in the cohort was seen as beneficial for newcomer women as part of this model.
    - Wage subsidies were raised as a potential way of engaging and retaining employers in this model. Participants also raised the possibility of stipends to support participants as they go through the training.

  - Partnerships with other service provider organizations (SPOs) – this would allow SPOs to contribute their specialized services, instead of trying to do everything. This means that to provide the whole pathway of milestones, it could involve multiple SPOs in a way that leverages each organization's capacity and expertise.

- **On the target population**: Participants recognized that this model is best suited for lower skilled newcomers because of the types of employment opportunities afforded by this model. This model was discussed as particularly useful for newcomers who are in this category and who do not have Canadian work experience. They also mentioned that one of the strengths of this model is that it does not necessarily require people to have strong language skills right from the beginning since some jobs do not require high levels of English. Consequently, it can help newcomer women with lower language skills find employment.
- **On concerns**: Participants thoughts this model might work best for employment that is specific, tangible, and in which there are many opportunities with the employer(s) or sector. While SRDC reiterated that the goal of this model is to support lower skilled newcomer women's entry into the labour market, something that they may not be able to do on their own, participants frequently raised the concern of the model's potential to lead to 'dead end' jobs – employment opportunities that might not exist in the near future or jobs that may not have opportunities for advancement. Participants talked about the need to take into account the evolving nature of work and to look at labour trends both in the short- and long-term. In line with this issue, another concern raised was around workers' knowledge of workplace rights – this was seen as an issue that was particularly relevant for the types of opportunities offered by this model and as something that needs to be addressed during the training.
- **On delivery**: Participants questioned the level of difficulty in implementing this kind of model because employer engagement takes time and requires ongoing work. Some organizations highlighted that not all SPOs have the capacity or the experience to engage employers in this way. For this model to work, participants saw the SPO(s) and the employer(s) as being partners – meaning that all parties need to work together to develop the milestones and that they all need to be held accountable. Participants also talked about the need to resource such an intervention properly.

  Participants in smaller communities thought that it might be more feasible to implement such a model with a sector-focus (e.g., food handling, construction, manufacturing, caregiving, IT), instead of one large employer. In parts of the country where some industries are seasonal, it was suggested that partnerships between sectors may be able to offer full-time employment.

  To address the diversity of skills and needs of newcomers, some participants suggested looking at different jobs within an employer or sector.

Feedback on the Job Development model

Similar to the Pipeline model, the Job Development model is also demand-led. It involves engaging employers to understand their needs to be able to match them with suitable job seekers. In the way that it was presented, it targets skilled newcomers or those who are closer to the labour market. It

could also accommodate women who are underemployed or employed in precarious work. For additional details on this model see slides 38-39 in the Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Roundtable Discussions PowerPoint slides in Appendix C.

The Job Development model resonated with participants, as they recognized some of the work they have been doing in supporting job seekers to connect with employers. However, there was discussion around understanding what constituted job development; it appears that the term is used in different contexts.

- **On the key program elements**: Participants recognized that building relationships with employers is front and centre of this model. As part of this, participants stressed the importance of including a cultural sensitization/education piece for employers. Retention services for both employees and employers were also seen as an important part of this model.
    - Participants emphasized that this model relies on building relationships with employers and acting as a broker between employers and newcomers who are looking for employment. Relationship building was described as going beyond waiting for employers to contact SPOs as it involves more proactive engagement and recruitment of employers. Part of the role of the job developer is to explain to employers what hiring newcomers means for them in language they understand. One participant described this process as 'finding the hook' with employers. It also means understanding the job requirements. The brokering role was described as one that would show employers that they can have access to pre-screened applicants and that would support the linking between employers and job seekers. This model requires staff who have a strong understanding of the labour market. Participants stated that this model should also provide services for employers beyond just linking them with job seekers.
    - In the spirit of affecting systemic change, participants emphasized that this model should include cultural intelligence training/workshops for employers.
    - Similar to the Pipeline model, transition and retention services were seen as key here – for both employees and employers. For employees, they were described as job coaching and mediation on cultural intelligence issues/support. For employers, participants emphasized support in writing job descriptions that would value newcomer skills, onboarding newcomers into the workplace, and mediation on cultural intelligence. Participants suggested that services should be offered beyond the typical six-to-eight-week window in order to maximize their efficacy.
    - To balance the focus on the demand side, participants highlighted that this model needs to take into account the goals of the job seeker – and should not be matching solely based on the needs of the employer. There was discussion around avoiding mismatches between opportunities and job seekers' career goals.

- **On potential add-ons**: Potential add-ons to strengthen this model included the following:
    - Some participants suggested that workplace mentoring could be included as part of the onboarding of a new employee – the newcomer would be matched with a mentor within the employer organization.
    - Others suggested including wage subsidies as part of the model to incentivize employers to hire newcomers. However, several participants stated that the subsidies should not be seen as replacing strong engagement and relationship building.
    - There was discussion as to whether it would be possible through such a model to cover some basic costs such as safety gear, tools, and basic training if required by the job to ensure that job seekers meet the necessary requirements.
- **On the target population**: There seemed to be a consensus that the model should be targeted to people who are ready to be employed – whether they are low or high skilled. Distance to the labour market and employment readiness seemed to matter more in this model, instead of the level of skills since skills required for a job depend on the employer, level of entry and other factors.
- **On concerns**: One of the biggest hurdles for this model is that job development is complex and requires ongoing commitment and resources to build and maintain relationships with employers. Employers need to buy-in to the intervention. As some participants mentioned, a relationship can be undone by a bad experience and it can have an effect on their willingness to engage with the job developer or hire newcomers. Participants mentioned that there are differences in how to engage small versus large employers because of their differing needs. One SPO mentioned engaging with employers is difficult for them due to their limited experience in this area.

  Another point raised by participants was that this could be seen as a duplication of the work done by placement agencies, and the differences between the two need to be clearly spelled out.
- **On delivery**: It might be difficult to implement such a model in the set timeline of the pilot since it requires a lot of work and time to recruit employers. Participants debated the merit of using wage subsidies as a way of engaging employers to participate. It should be noted that in some communities, job development is carried out by individual organizations and not coordinated.

  As highlighted by participants, the strength of the intervention relies, in part, on the skills of the job developer(s) to be able to engage with employers and to make the business case of hiring visible minority newcomer women to employers. This model was said to work best with a large pool of employers to be able to meet the diverse skills of job seekers.

Feedback on the Navigating the Labour Market model

The Navigating the Labour Market model focuses on the supply side (job seekers) and does not include direct employer engagement. As described by SRDC, this models targets educated newcomers in a broad range of intended occupations and provides targeted training to address the occupation specific skills gaps. One of the two key components of this model is building a portfolio.

The other is the training to address specific skills gaps identified in the portfolio building. For additional details on this model see slides 40-42 in the Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Roundtable Discussions PowerPoint slides in Appendix C.

Participants recognized that many aspects of this model are currently delivered in employment programming. One of the aspects that resonated most with participants was its strength-based focus on assets of job seekers (as opposed to needs/deficiencies). Participants liked that it was structured in a way that empowered job seekers to identify and recognize the skills that they bring to the table. Participants also described the model as hands-on help in navigating the Canadian labour market. However, many participants were quick to point out that the usefulness of this model might be limited without a component that includes connections with employers.

- **On the key program elements**: Participants recognized the individual assessment done at the beginning, the portfolio building, and workplace culture workshops are the key elements of this model.
    - The portfolio component was described as helping newcomers understand and recognize their assets and skills for the intended occupation. It also gives newcomers the tools to present their skills or competencies to employers instead of their degree/credentials. Many participants mentioned that this could build self-esteem for newcomer women.
    - An individual assessment needs to be completed at the beginning of the program that objectively assesses the skills of newcomer women including essential skills.
    - The lack of knowledge of the Canadian workplace culture was often mentioned by participants as one of the key barriers for newcomer women, and thus, they suggested that training/workshops on this topic should be part of the portfolio building.
- **On potential add-ons**: Potential add-ons included peer support, professional mentorship, and work placements.
    - Peer supports were seen as a component that would be useful for clients. Participants discussed several ways of fostering peer networks such as using a cohort approach and bringing back past clients that were successful to share their experience with the program and job search.
    - Professional mentorship was mentioned as a key add-on that could help mitigate the lack of connections with employers and help visible minority newcomer women engage with the labour market.
    - Work placements – paid or unpaid – were suggested as one of the ways to include a connection to the labour market.
- **On the target population**: Most participants agreed that this intervention would work better for unemployed visible minority newcomer women who have fewer barriers and are closer to the labour market (job ready or almost). Some participants also agreed that this could work for

underemployed women who are looking for better opportunities; however, the program would need to be organized around work schedules.

Participants did not agree on whether this model would work for those newcomers looking to have their foreign credentials recognized. Some argued that bridging models and professional programs already in place would work better for these newcomers. Others argued that this type of model could be used to find alternative careers for those wishing to explore their options beyond the FCR process.

- **On concerns**: The main concern about this model is around the focus on the supply side, and thus, the lack of engagement with employers. Without the connection to employers, participants saw this more as leaning towards information and orientation. Several went as far as stating that without employer engagement, this program would not be effective for visible minority newcomer women. Engaging employers could be done in a number of ways – suggestions included employer presentations, job fairs, or help with finding employment.
- **On delivery**: One of the main issues discussed around the delivery of this model is whether it would be best done with a specific sector focus or for a group of newcomers across a number of sectors/occupations – the model as proposed did not include a sector approach. On one hand participants argued that if it was not sector focused, it might be difficult to providing training for the gaps of a diverse client group – this might be especially true for smaller organizations. For example, one-on-one skills enhancement can be resource-intensive for SPOs. A sector focus could also help clients connect/network with others looking for employment in the same field. On the other hand, clients who do not fall within specific sectors may be excluded despite potential benefits from the program.

  Participants suggested that this model could be delivered online or through distance learning for participants in smaller centres or rural areas. Others suggested including this program as part of pre-arrival services or integrating it as part of job preparation programs.

On new ideas proposed

Participants had the opportunity to share promising interventions or other ideas to improve employment-related services for visible minority newcomer women. They made the following suggestions:

- **Entrepreneurship/self-employment** – Participants saw this as a missing piece from the day's discussions. Many saw it as a valuable source of employment. However, participants did not agree on whether most newcomers take this route because of the lack of other options. During discussions on this topic, participants mentioned that current IRCC programming does not address the needs of newcomers thinking of starting a business/enterprise.
- **Partnerships** beyond immigrant serving agencies – Participants saw collaboration with Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, employers, professional associations and sector councils as a way to better address the needs of clients by providing a wide array of wrap-around supports.

- **Coordination/navigation –** Participants highlighted the need for a more streamlined navigation and service referral system that is customized to the needs of the individual and avoided duplication of services. Discussions on this topic included debate about hub-like centres for visible minority newcomer women – although opinions were mixed on their benefits.
- **More widespread childcare services** – affordable and available childcare offered as part of programs, including longer hours.
- **Other suggestions** included the following:
    - Using social enterprise to obtain Canadian work experience. A social enterprise in Ottawa for newcomer women was given as an example;
    - Using social media to better communicate with newcomers. Participants mentioned that many newcomers have smartphones to stay connected with family/friends back home;
    - Using a practice firm model as a way to provide Canadian work experience;
    - Framing services using the Sustainable Livelihood framework; and
    - Including social procurement policies – for example, if a construction company gets a big infrastructure project, there could be a requirement to hire workers from certain groups.

On outcomes/measurements/evaluation

The pilot aims to build the evidence on what works in terms of employment-related services for visible minority newcomer women, and thus, collecting data on outcomes of the diverse interventions is a key component of the pilot. SRDC introduced the concept of evaluation, and specifically outcomes, and then asked participants for their ideas on what should be measured to determine the effects of the interventions. SRDC highlighted that although employment outcomes are critical due to the pilot's focus on employment, there is an opportunity to measure other important outcomes. Participants' suggestions can be grouped into four categories of outcomes: job seeker, employer, family unit and community. Suggestions can be found below by category:

- **Job seeker (individual) outcomes:** The majority of participants suggested outcomes for the pilot be attached to the individuals participating in the intervention, and most specifically, around employment and social networks.
    - Gainful employment or if not employed, movement towards the labour market (moving along the employment continuum). Other characteristics of employment that might be measured included: opportunities for advancement, stability and quality of positions, alignment with career goals, wages and income, and obtaining Canadian experience in the intended profession
    - Social inclusion, including social network size and quality; and horizontal (peers) and vertical (professional) networks

  - Increased knowledge about the Canadian labour market and getting employed in Canada
  - Community attachment and belonging , and community engagement
  - Development of skills and language in line with employment goals
  - Well-being, including health and mental health
  - Increased confidence, self-esteem, and independence
  - Reduction of barriers to employment.
- **Employer outcomes:** Participants also emphasized the importance of looking at outcomes for employers since they are part and parcel of the problem and solution. These included:
  - Employer buy-in in hiring newcomers, and specifically visible minority newcomer women
  - Retention rate of employees
  - Any changes in employers' attitudes, practices and/or policies
  - Shift in workplace culture (healthy workplace, leave, vacation, stress).
- **Family unit outcomes:** Participants were quick to point out that, although the proposed interventions are targeted to visible minority newcomer women, there might be outcomes to track for the whole family unit. Suggestions included:
  - Impacts of intervention on the family – effects on children, spouse, family back home
  - Well-being indicator that includes household income, food security, health.
- **Community outcomes:** Some participants thought it was important to go beyond the individual and family unit to see if there were any effects on the larger community. These included:
  - Reduction in the wage gap between women and men
  - Greater acceptance of diversity and openness within the community.

Other comments

Included below are topics that were discussed during the consultations that do not easily fit in one of the above sections.

- **On data**: Participants raised a few issues related to data. First, there were discussions on the need to ensure that the evidence and data already collected from programs, past and present, is shared across the different levels of governments and between SPOs. Others argued that there is a need for more evidence to support decision-making on programs that work for newcomer women. Second, participants raised the need for local data to have a better understanding of the needs of their clients. While national data is helpful in painting a general picture, it does not

show regional differences. Third, some participants felt that the data collected by IRCC in ICARE did not reflect the full reality of needs and outcomes. Others raised the desire to have collated and analyzed data shared back with SPOs to further support programming.

- **On the sustainability of programs**: Participants raised issues of the continuity of funding when speaking about the sustainability of programs as well as issues of changing government priorities. They emphasized the need for collaboration between funders including provincial and federal governments and the need to involve other community partners. There was mention that the integration of newcomers into Canadian society is a shared responsibility that needs to be articulated with intentionality.
- **On the changing job market:** In discussions about ways to better serve visible minority newcomer women to enter the labour market, many participants spoke of the changing job market in terms of the types of skills in demand, the ways in which employers are selecting candidates, and the move towards a digital economy. Artificial intelligence was also mentioned as potentially having an impact on the types of jobs available in the future.
- **On the transition from federal to provincial income assistance:** Refugees are eligible to receive Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for up to one year after landing. Many refugees transition to provincial Income Assistance (IA) benefits after the first year. This transition is not always easy since the province requires a focus on employment, and for many refugees, the employment lens and requirements for recipients is challenging. Providers talked about different approaches to address this issue including introducing employment earlier in the resettlement process.

Next steps

SRDC is in the process of designing options for interventions for the upcoming pilot. These are based on our expertise in employment services as well as on the findings from the literature review, environmental scan, the consultations with visible minority newcomer women and the pan-Canadian stakeholder consultations. These interventions will benefit from the various activities completed for the background research and will be designed with both theory and practice in mind.

Appendix A: List of organizations that participated in the consultations

Surrey

- Back in Motion Rehab
- City of Surrey
- DIVERSECity Community Resources Society
- Douglas College
- Langley Community Service Society
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- Progressive Intercultural Community Services
- SUCCESS
- Surrey Board of Trade

Vancouver

- Affiliation of multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC
- B.C Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- BC Federation of Labour
- Decoda Literacy Solutions Society
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Heritage Canada Multicultural Program
- Immigrant Employment Council of BC Society
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services Association
- M.O.S.A.I.C Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities
- North Shore Multicultural Society
- Open Door Group
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

- Vancouver Community College
- Watari counselling and Support Services Society
- Women's Enterprise Centre
- YWCA Metro Vancouver
- YWCA Metro Vancouver

Ottawa

- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
- Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
- In-TAC – International Acquisition Centre
- La Cité
- Metropolis
- Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization
- Ottawa Employment Hub
- Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre
- Société économique de l'Ontario
- Status of Women
- University of Ottawa
- World Skills Employment Centre
- YMCA YWCA of the National Capital Region

Calgary

- Alberta Network of Immigrant Women
- Alberta Women Entrepreneurs
- Bow Valley College
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council
- Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association

- Centre d'Accueil pour Nouveaux Arrivants Francophones de Calgary – CANAF
- Centre for Newcomers Society of Calgary
- Immigrant Services Calgary Society
- Making Changes Employment Association of Alberta
- Portail de l'Immigrant Association de Calgary
- WCG International Consultants Ltd.
- Windmill Microlending

Halifax

- Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA)
- Centre for Employment Innovation
- Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle Écosse
- Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Halifax Partnership
- ISANS
- Job Junction
- Office of Immigration
- Safe Harbour
- Team Work Cooperative
- YMCA
- YWCA Halifax

Regina

- Government of Saskatchewan
- Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc.
- Regina Immigrant Women Centre
- Regina Open Door Society Inc.
- SAISIA – Saskatchewan Association of Immigration, Settlement and Integration Agencies
- Saskatchewan InterCultural Association Inc.
- Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre Inc.

Fredericton

- Centre d'accueil multiculturel et des nouveaux arrivants de Saint John
- Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest
- Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick
- Ignite Fredericton
- Multicultural Association of Carleton County
- Multicultural Association of Fredericton
- Multicultural Association of Greater Moncton Area (MAGMA)
- New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC)
- Prude Inc.
- YMCA of Greater Saint John

Winnipeg

- Altered Minds Inc.
- Direction of the Immigration Partnership Winnipeg
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc.
- Manitoba Starts
- MANSO – EDGE Skills Centre, Inc.
- MOSAIC – Newcomer Family Resource Network INC.
- Newcomers employment & education development services (NEEDS)
- Opportunities for Employment
- Pluri-elles (Manitoba) Inc.
- Success Skills Centre Inc.
- Taking Charge! (TC!)
- University of Manitoba
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Inc.

Toronto

- ACCES Employment
- Brampton Multicultural Community Centre
- Center for Education and Training
- Centre for Community Learning and Development
- COSTI
- Job Skills Employment Centre
- Job Start
- La Passerelle
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- Rexdale Women's Centre
- Ryerson University
- Skills for Change
- South Asian Women's Center
- Times Change Women's Employment Service
- Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)
- Vietnamese Women's Association of Toronto
- Working skills Centre
- YMCA of Greater Toronto
- York University
- YWCA of Greater Toronto

London

- City of London
- ImmEmploy
- London Cross-Cultural Learner Centre
- YMCA of Western Ontario

Appendix B: Consultation agenda

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation | Société de recherche sociale appliquée



Roundtable conversations – Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Research Project

Agenda at a Glance

Venue address

Day, month date, 2019

8:45 – 9:00 am **Arrival Coffee and tea**

9:00 – 11:45 am **Introduction and presentation of findings**

11:45 – 12:30 **Lunch**

12:30 – 3:00 pm **Roundtable discussions**

Contact: Susanna Gurr, sgurr@srdc.org, 778-837-2354

Goals

1- To share what we know so far on the integration of visible minority newcomer women in the labour market, and current state of employment services targeted to this population.

2- To gather inputs from you on presented approaches/practices, including your experience with best practices in program design and delivery and elements of success for visible minority newcomer women.

3- To consult on key components or approaches to support the development of a potential pilot project.

Anticipated outcomes

1- Participants will have shared their perspective on what constitutes the key components of quality employment services targeted to visible minority newcomer women.

2- The research will be strengthened from hearing the perspectives of the diverse stakeholders participating in the day's discussions.

Required preparation for the meeting

- **Read the information provided in this document** – This is required pre-reading for the meeting. It will serve as the point of departure for the day's conversations.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to prepare for the meeting.
We look forward to seeing you!

Context

It is estimated that by 2031, 27.4% of the Canadian female population will be immigrants. Most new immigrants are visible minority – 85% of recent female immigrants in 2016 belonged to the visible minority group. Despite this growth in numbers, female visible minority recent immigrants have consistently low labour force participation and employment rates. Labour participation rate for the female visible minority recent immigrants is 65%, vs. 77.2% for the Canadian born, non-visible minority women, and the unemployment rates for these groups are 14% and 5% respectively.

The recent immigrants' participation rate in settlement and employment related programming is low, with **39%** of newcomers taking advantage of any of the services.

Main barriers to labour market integration

All visible minority immigrants might face certain common barriers, such as lack of **language proficiency**, lack of **Canadian experience,** and **discrimination**.

More recently, **cultural intelligence** has been recognized as a potential barrier to employment. Cultural intelligence encompasses a person's ability to perform effectively in an intercultural environment and is an important issue for both immigrants looking for a job and potential employers.

Women specifically are often seen as primary caregivers, and thus lack of affordable and available **childcare** could be a major barrier to employment. Finally, **cultural gender norms** could prevent women from entering the labour force, or potentially create tensions within the family.

Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Research Project

The Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women Research Project aims to support Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) three-year pilot to enhance existing employment programming for women, engage new partners and test the effectiveness of different interventions and program models.

This pilot project will help visible minority newcomer women find and maintain good jobs. The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) has been commissioned by IRCC to carry out the research component of the project, which will help to inform the design of the pilot, support the implementation and rigorously evaluate its impact on newcomer women's labour market outcomes.

Stakeholder roundtable conversations

As part of the development phase of the research project, SRDC is conducting roundtable discussions across the country with diverse stakeholders – representatives from immigrant service provider organizations, workforce development experts, employers, academic experts and representatives of various levels of government. The purpose of the roundtable conversations are twofold. First SRDC will share current knowledge on integration of visible minority newcomer women into the labour market. We will also present a framework and models based on our knowledge and experience to inspire pilot designs.

You will be invited to provide your perspective on the presented models. We are interested to hear from you about best practices you have encountered in program design and delivery, the success stories as well as approaches that did not work as expected.

Time	Details
8:45 – 9:00 am	Arrival
9 – 9:30	Welcome and introductions (Group activity)
9:30 – 9:45	Why are we here? ▪ Objectives of the roundtable (SRDC) ▪ Project Background (IRCC)
9:45 – 9:50	Outline for our time together
9:50 – 10:20	Findings on visible minority newcomer women ▪ Group activity ▪ Key characteristics ▪ Labour market participation ▪ Challenges to labour market participation ▪ Gender-plus identities (group activity)
10:20 – 10:35	Data on IRCC employment related service use
10:35 – 10:50 am	Break
10:50 – 11:05	What do we know? ▪ What works ▪ What still needs improvement
11:05 – 11:45	Introducing a framework for the pilot ▪ Design principles ▪ Overarching approach ▪ Examples of models
11:45 – 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 – 2:00	Quick recap of models + small group discussions on the three models presented (includes group report back)
2:00 – 2:35	Navigation and other challenges – brainstorming session
2:35 – 2:45	Measuring what matters — What are the key outcomes for the pilot (include IRCC outcomes in accordance with its logic model)?
2:45 – 3:00	Wrap up and next steps

Appendix C: Consultation slides



CAREER PATHWAYS FOR VISIBLE MINORITY NEWCOMER WOMEN

Roundtable discussion



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Welcome

Please introduce yourself:

- Name
- Organization
- What pronouns do you use?



BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION FROM IRCC

Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot

Consultation Workshops

Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada
Settlement and Integration Policy
December 2018 & January 2019

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada | Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

Newcomers in Canada

- In the next decade, newcomers will account for the entire net increase in the labour force.
- Ensuring immigrants fully participate in Canada's economy and society is key to Canada's ongoing prosperity and nation building.
- While we have a rich history of welcoming newcomers to Canada, many still face barriers that delay or limit integration.



2

The Settlement Program

- Canada's National Settlement Program is delivered through partnerships with over 500 third party organizations.
- Federal investments in the Settlement Program, which operates in all provinces and territories outside of Quebec, total more than $714M annually.
- In 2017-18, more than 458,000 clients accessed at least one settlement service.

3

Visible Minority Newcomer Women in the Labour Market

Visible minority newcomer women often face intersecting barriers: gender- and race- based discrimination, precarious or low income employment, lack of affordable childcare and housing, lower language and literacy levels, weak social supports.

- Almost 83% of newcomer women are also members of a visible minority.*
- Visible minority newcomer women have lower labour market outcomes:

Census 2016	Visible Minority Newcomer Women	Non Visible Minority Newcomer Women	Visible Minority Newcomer Men	Non Visible Minority Newcomer Men
Median Employment Income	$26,624	$30,074	$35,574	$42,591

*Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, data table: 98-400-X2016191

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Visible Minority Newcomer Women pilot

Budget 2018: "The Government will launch a three-year pilot to support programming for newcomer women who are also members of visible minorities and provide $31.8M over three years starting in 2018-19."

- The Visible Minority Newcomer Women pilot has three main components:
  1. Additional funding will be provided to a select number of existing IRCC-funded SPOs offering women-centered employment programming;
  2. Establish new partnerships with non-traditional partners through an expression of interest (EOI) process; and
  3. Testing and evaluating the effectiveness of different employment-related interventions and program models to determine what kinds of supports work best.

5

Consultation Workshops



You are the experts! We are seeking your help…

- Provide your feedback, thoughts and ideas on the different models, and help to design your own promising approach for the pilot.
- Share best practices in program design and delivery and elements of success for visible minority newcomer women.
- Discuss new interventions to help visible minority newcomer women gain access to, and excel within, the Canadian labour market.

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Framework for the pilot: development, implementation, evaluation and usabiity

Development: lit review, environmental scan, consultations

Design of a 3 year pilot

Evaluation alongside the pilots

Implementation of the pilot projects

Support learning among partners and program **improvements**

Use lessons to inform **policy development** and wider implementation and

Participants **benefit** from better programming

PROJECT BACKGROUND

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Objectives of the roundtable discussion

- Share findings, lessons and knowledge
- Gather your input, insights and best practices
- Inform design of 3-year pilot



PROJECT BACKGROUND

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What does our day look like?

- Presentation of the background information
  - Findings on visible minority newcomer women – selected characteristics and labour market participation
  - Challenges to labour market participation
  - IRCC service use
  - What does the research tell us?
    - What works
    - What still needs improvement
- Introducing a framework for the pilot
  - Examples of models
- Discussion
  - On models presented
  - Brainstorming your own model
  - Measurement
- Wrap-up



PROJECT BACKGROUND

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FINDINGS ON VISIBLE MINORITY NEWCOMER WOMEN

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Group activity



Key characteristics of newcomer women



Visible minority



Live in urban centres



Many are highly skilled



Admitted under economic or family class

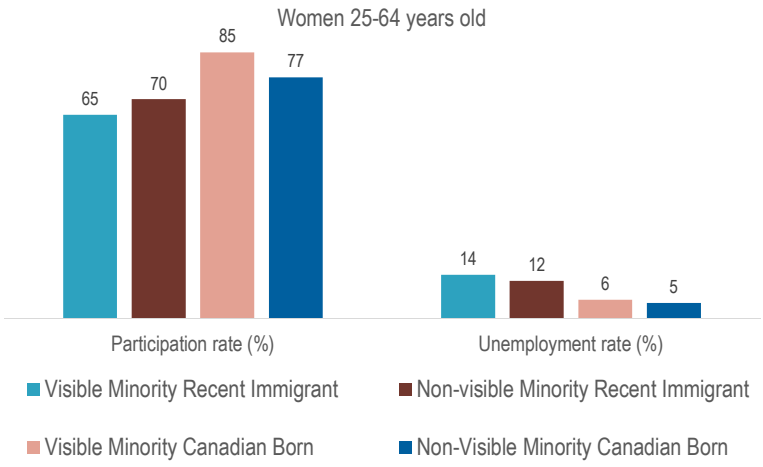


More likely to have children



Low number of social connections

Labour market participation



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 98-400-X2016286.

VISIBLE MINORITY NEWCOMER WOMEN

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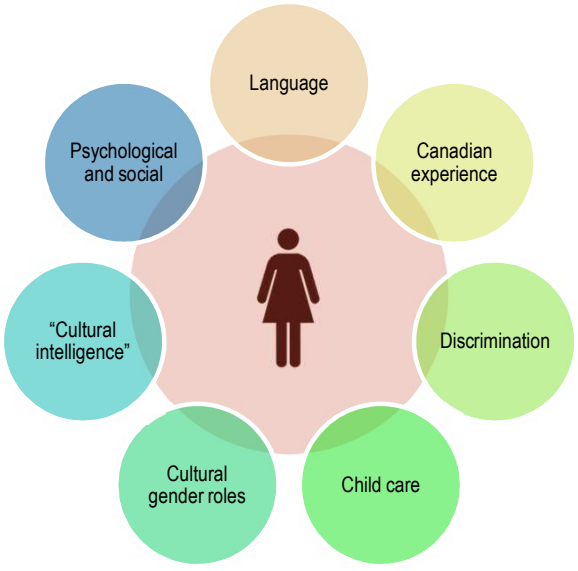
Barriers to labour market participation



VISIBLE MINORITY NEWCOMER WOMEN

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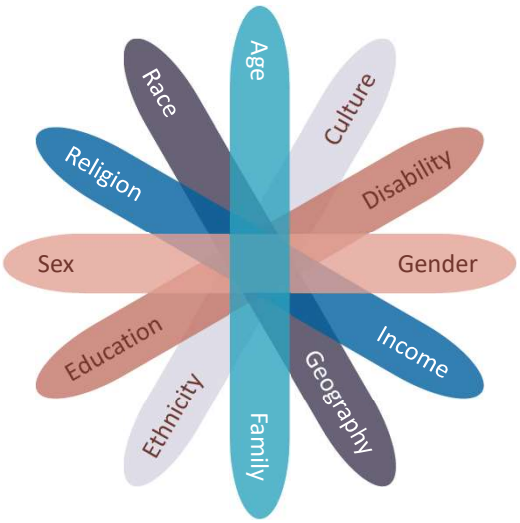
Gender Based Analysis+



VISIBLE MINORITY NEWCOMER WOMEN

DATA ON IRCC EMPLOYMENT RELATED SERVICE USE

Accessibility and needs

- **39%** of newcomers used IRCC's services – what about the other 61%?
- Taking both IRCC-funded language training and employment related services had a **greater positive impact** on language skills and knowledge about working in Canada than employment related services or language training alone.

Needs identified by newcomer women service users:

- 60% - knowledge of community and government services
- 43% - connection of access to local community services
- 37% - knowledge of life in Canada
- 35% - knowledge of education in Canada
- 33% - improve language skills
- 28% - knowledge of working in Canada
- 22% - improve other skills
- 20% - find employment

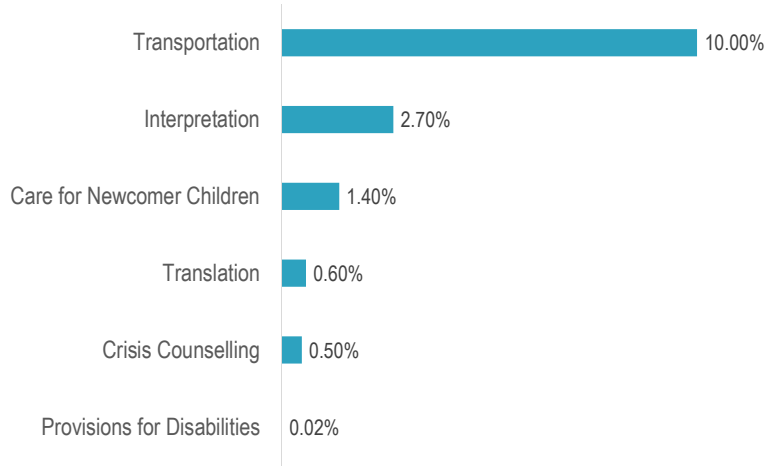
Demographics of the employment services users

- **53% of immigrant employment services users are women.**

- IRCC provided employment services to 23,600 newcomer women in 2017-18.
  - Estimated 20,000 in 2017-18 were visible minority.

DATA ON IRCC EMPLOYMENT RELATED SERVICE USE

Most utilized support services (by female clients)



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WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

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What works?



Barrier	Best Practices
Canadian work experience	Job development Hiring incentives Internships Volunteering Career fairs, employer information sessions
Cultural Intelligence and knowledge of Canada	Pre-arrival and post-arrival workshops Mentorship
Childcare and other financial barriers	Wrap around supports, information
Social barriers	Peer networks, mentorship
Language	Customized language training with employment or workplace specific language

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How could services be improved?



- The existing barriers are alleviated by some of the practices, but some still need work. Example: employer engagement, more needs to be done effectively.
- Evaluation and measurement of current local initiatives, in order to scale them up and implement the best practices on a wider scale.
- Streamlining of services, ease of navigation (coordination and integration).
- Customized, client-centered approach.
- Addressing the skill gaps.

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PILOT FRAMEWORK

Guiding principles

- Addresses gaps in services and existing knowledge base
- Uses evidence to improve policy, programs and practices
- Evaluated rigorously and preferably using a random control trial design

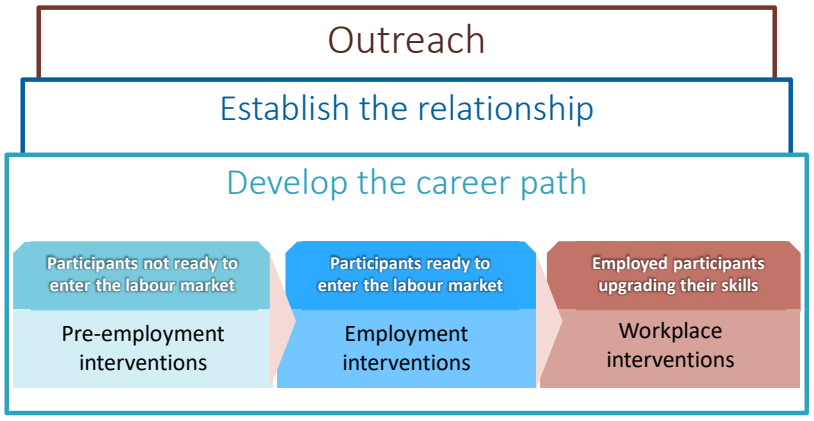


- Be client-focused – recognize unique individual needs
- Alignment of service to the needs of both clients and employers
- Holistic and strength-based



- Avoid redundancy – leverage existing capacity
- Establish partnerships/collaborations

Proposed framework



FRAMEWORK

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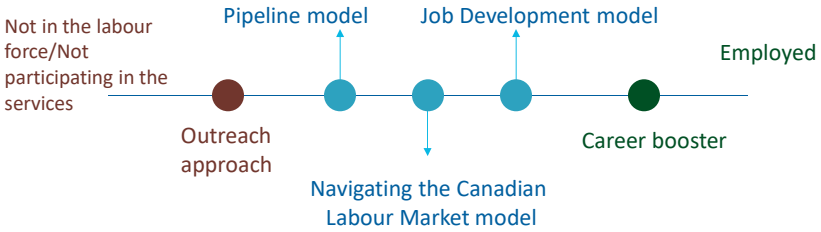
MODELS IN THE WORKS

Lessons on what works, from SRDC projects targeting employment services

- Initial assessment of learners' needs and skills and needs of employers
  - Allows for development of targeted action plan to address both sets of needs, close the gaps and ease the transition to employment/improvements of outcomes.
- Customized training
  - Targeting skills that learners will be able to apply in the workplace
  - Career adaptability – providing job seekers with tools to adapt to the new labour market.
- Showing concrete evidence of effectiveness
  - Measuring outcomes and evaluation of the project allows us to learn about what worked, what did not, and helps in scaling up the projects in the future.
- Building a pathway to sustainable employment
  - Incorporating short and medium-term indicators of success (milestones).

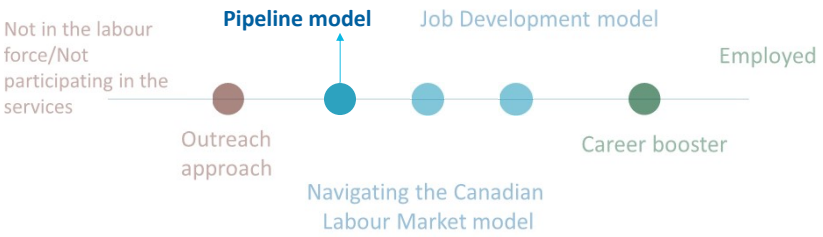
Target participants



- Presenting three models that have been tested and shown to work for immigrants in general, and for women specifically
- General models – your role is to add the specifics related to this population
- Models are not mutually exclusive



Pipeline model – target participants



Pipeline model:

- Targeting low skilled newcomers further away from the labour market
- Demand led customized training
- Heavy intervention

MODELS

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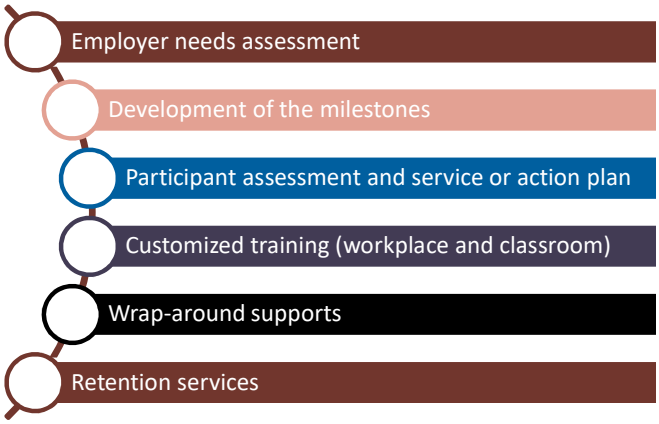
Pipeline model – key components



Example

MODELS

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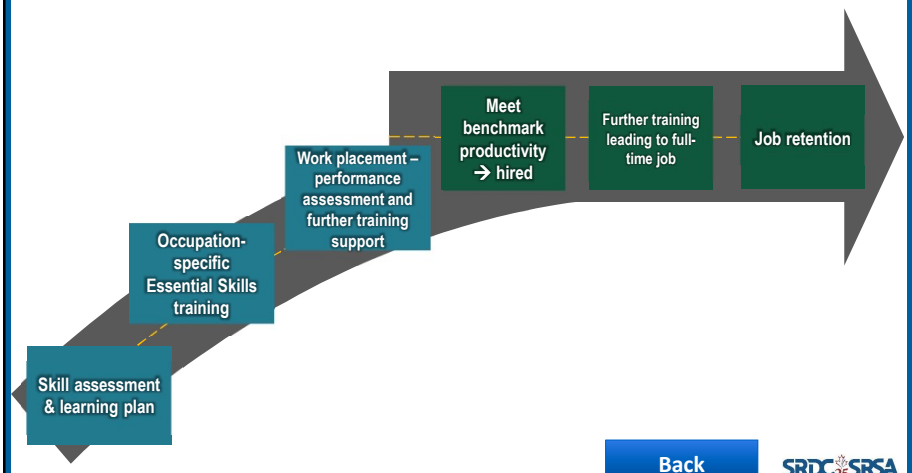
Pipeline model example: “building an on-ramp”



Back

MODELS

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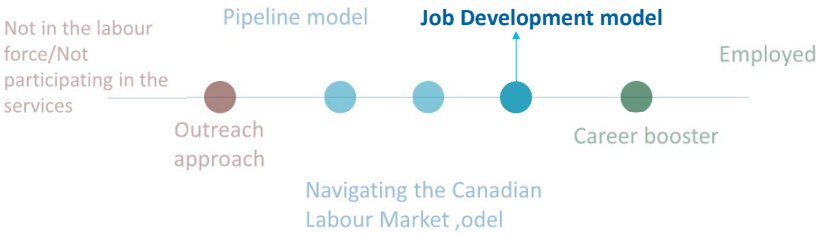
Job development model – target participants



Job development model:

- Targeting skilled newcomers close to the labour market
- Light intervention: matching job seeker skills with employer needs
- Could accommodate underemployed women as well

MODELS

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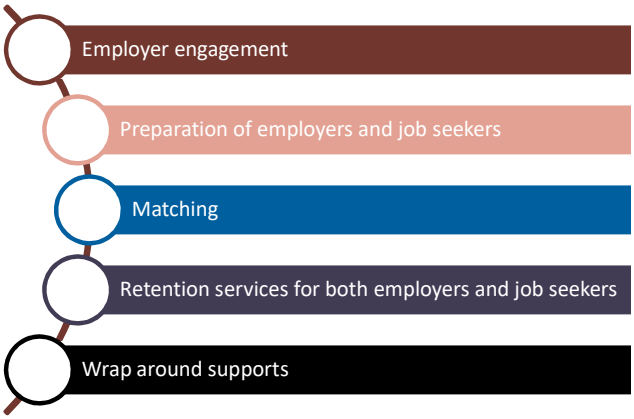
Job development model – key components



MODELS

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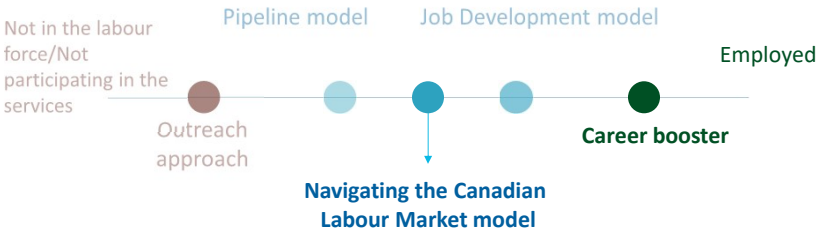
Navigating the Canadian Labour Market model – target participants



Navigating the Canadian Labour Market model:

- Targeting educated newcomers in a broad range of intended occupations.
- Provides targeted training to address the occupation specific skills gaps.
- No direct employer engagement.
- Medium intervention

MODELS

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Navigating the Canadian Labour Market model – key components



Example

MODELS

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Foundations Program: Navigating the Canadian Labour Market model example

1. Portfolio	2. Skill Enhancement
Clients identify, understand & document their essential skills	Focus on only the skills needed for the client's chosen occupation - Individual Learning Plans
Research occupational skill requirements (ES Profiles)	Use Essential Skills Framework to ladder learning
Build a realistic career action plan based on assessed skills & requirements of chosen occupation	Self-paced, mixed delivery: Face to face & self-directed

Back

PROGRAM MODEL

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Models comparison

- Models have many components in common, but are targeted to different populations

	Pipeline	Job Development	Navigating the LM
Employer engagement	✓	✓	
Employer needs assessment	✓	✓	
Development of the milestones	✓		
Participant assessment and service or action plan	✓	✓	✓
Customized training (workplace and classroom)	✓		✓
Wrap-around supports/peer supports	✓	✓	✓
Retention services	✓	✓	✓
Matching		✓	

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Small group discussions

MODELS

Guiding questions

- What do you think of the proposed model ?
- Which component(s) do you see as being the most important?
- Are there components missing?
- What would this model look like in your context?
- Who would this model work best for?



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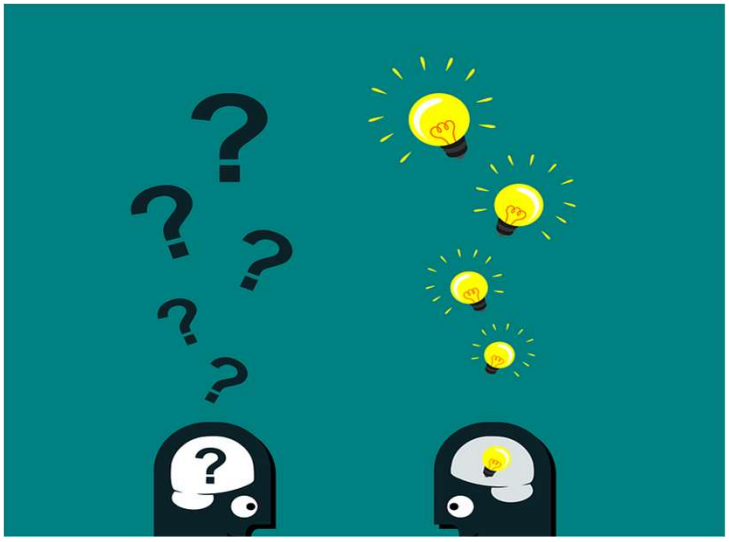
Brainstorming: navigation and more





Measurement/outcomes for the visible minority newcomer women pilot

- Gainful employment outcomes – mandatory for pilot

What other outcomes do you think are important to measure?

- Intermediary outcomes showing progress toward employment outcomes
  - Education and training
  - Skill development
  - Self-efficacy
  - Career adaptability
  - Acculturation (connections and belonging)
- Health outcomes
- Quality of life (work life balance, family, satisfaction, hope)

Advice and questions





SOURCE: https://s3.amazonaws.com/tinycards/image/9ce494b89784112e2ce9fa34e7e60d07

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