

REPORT

SASKATCHEWAN SMALL CENTRE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2017 – 2018 Fiscal Year



Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

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1. Introduction

The realities to which small centre Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) operate is both unique and dynamic. This report highlights the needs and challenges that are faced by smaller centres service providers in Saskatchewan. Many of the issues identified throughout this report place great emphasis on both organizational and wider community needs.

As per SAISIA's agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), an in-depth consultation with small centre service providers was conducted via site visits and the distribution of a survey. The site visits and survey assessment were conducted with both IRCC and non-IRCC funded service providers. This two-pronged strategy provided effective avenues by which SAISIA could capture the rural perspective. Please note that small centre/rural communities reference all communities outside Saskatchewan's major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon.

Participating Agencies were Categorized as Follows:

1. **Language Service Providers:** Carlton Trail College, North West College, Lloydminster Learning, Council Association, Cumberland College, Parkland College, Southeast College, and Great Plains College.
2. **Regional Newcomer Gateways:** Humboldt Regional Newcomer Centre, Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre, Lloydminster Regional Newcomer Gateway, Northeast Newcomer Services, Prince Albert Regional Newcomer Centre, Yorkton Newcomer Welcome Centre, Southeast Newcomer Services, Moose Jaw Newcomer Welcome Center, Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre.
3. **Other Service Providers:** Prince Albert Multicultural Council, Prince Albert Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), and Moose Jaw Multicultural Council.

Data Collection Tool:

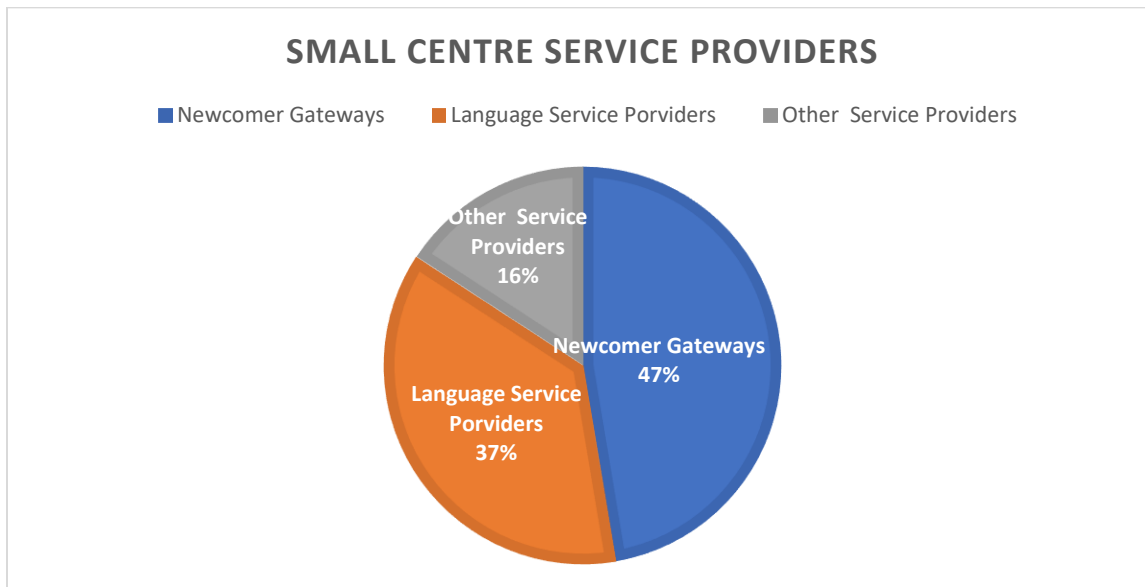
To maximize reporting value, SAISIA made efforts to amalgamate the data that was gathered through the Rural Coordinator's site visits, and the small centre needs assessment survey. An outline illustrating the degree of participation for each tool is as follows:

Site Visits Assessment: Site visits were conducted with all nineteen (19) participating agencies across nine (9) small centres that extend services to several smaller communities.

Survey Assessment: The survey was distributed to a total of 20 agencies, and community-based organizations across rural Saskatchewan. Twelve (12) of the twenty (20) invitees completed the small centre needs assessment survey, which is a response rate of 60%. Of the twelve (12) respondents, five (5) were language service providers, five (5) represented newcomer gateways, and two (2) were categorized as other service providers.

Participating Agencies

Participant Demographic: All 19 participants were small centre service providers. Of the 19 participants, 9 represented newcomer gateways, 7 language service providers, 3 other service providers.



Note: 74% of total participants are IRCC funded SPOs, 26% are non-IRCC funded SPOs.

2. Small Centre Needs

There are varying factors that affect the successful delivery services that meet local needs by small centre service providers. The distinctive nature of rural communities has directly contributed to the underlying needs and challenges identified. The following analysis will emphasize the more prevalent factors within both assessments.

Priority Needs

As per the survey results, the following needs were ranked by SPOs as the top priority, and are listed in the order of importance:



Funding: The data shows that funding to meet needs and expand services is of the utmost importance. The funding category includes accessing necessary funding to provide additional services, programs, events, etc. to support newcomers in small centres.

Professional Development Training: Refers to training opportunities for staff working directly with newcomers. Professional development opportunities are needed to build competency and help cultivate innovative ideas to implement in programs and service delivery.

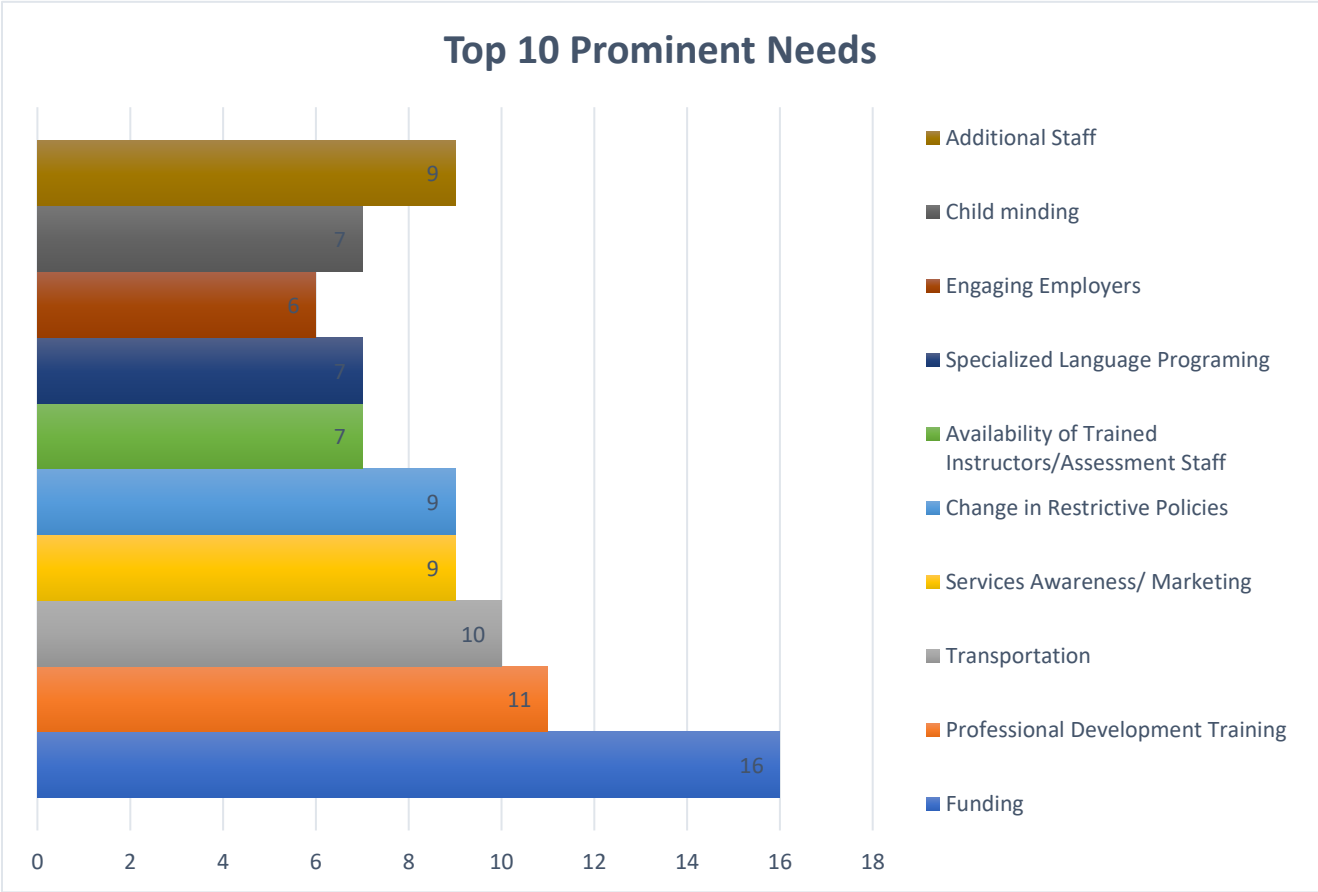
Service Awareness/Marketing: Respondents highlighted the need to create awareness of services and programs to ensure the people in need of the services are aware of the programs. With target audience disperse among a large geographic area conventional methods are severely restricted, which further magnify the need.

Access to Research Information: There is limited information available with regards to issues related newcomers and their needs. Access to research information also includes ongoing research in the ever-changing English as a Second Language (ESL) field.

Availability of Trained Instructors/Assessment Staff: Signify the difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified language staff, especially ESL instructors. Recruitment and retention are hindered by the need for completion of CERTESL. The substantial training and costs required to obtain the necessary qualification is further exasperated by the limited available hours.

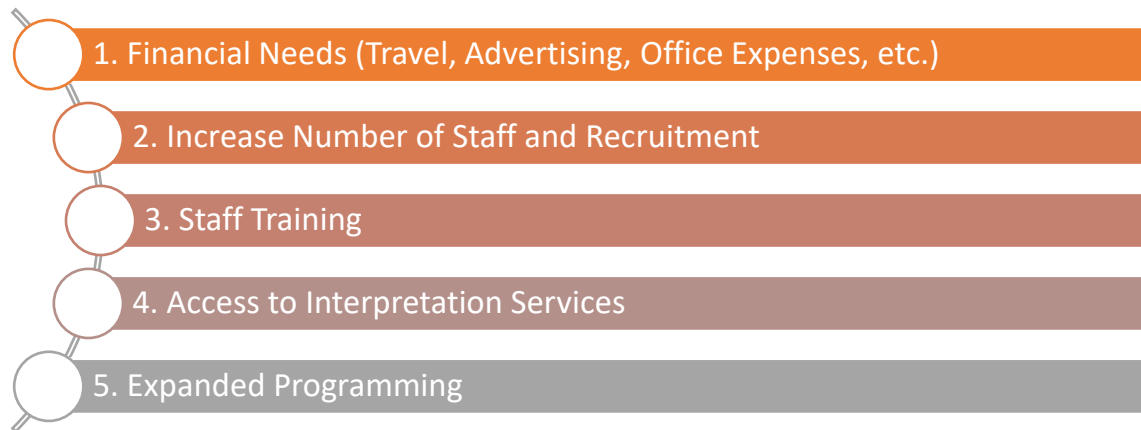
Prominent Needs

To gain a better understanding of the needs of small centre service providers, the survey and site visits' data were merged to delve farther into the areas of needs. The following chart illustrates the top 10 needs among the 19 participants:



Operation Needs to Improve Capacity

The survey provided an opportunity for service providers to identify and rank operational needs required to advance existing capacity. The top 5 operational needs identified are as follows:



Professional Development

The data highlights small centre service providers' interest in the following Professional Development areas:



ESL Training for Unique Needs: This represents training for staff dealing with learners with disabilities and aligning ESL for trades.

Language Training: This area includes Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) and Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Assessor Training, Learn IT2Teach, facilitation of Conversation Circle, etc.

Front-line Staff Engagement

As newcomers and their issues grow more and more dynamic, there is a greater need to train front line staff to be able to best support their needs. Many newcomers become heavily reliant on front-line staff, due to the trust developed, which further shapes a relationship of dependence beyond staff expertise. As a result, front-line staff are forced to play multiple roles and can often time find themselves supporting issues concerning family breakdown and domestic violence, with very little or no training. It is essential for front-line staff to become trained in dealing with newcomers, who may be going through crisis before the successful transfer is made to the appropriate resource. The issue surrounds the fact that front-line staff are often the first point of contact and can be ill-prepared to manage the situation. Often times, clients can be very reluctant to access services outside of the sector and are still dependent on settlement staff support. The issue is further perpetuated by the limited resources within rural Saskatchewan. In addition, a concerning development is the wealth of time devoted by settlement staff through constant communication with social services organizations that are neither equipped with the necessary cultural awareness nor language capacity to support shared clients.

Language service providers held similar perspective on the need for further engagement with front-line staff. Assessors, facilitators, and instructors are in need of more robust training to build capacity. Some of the suggested avenues include ongoing PBLA lesson planning training, leadership and facilitation training, developing advance assessment, integrating digital literacy within an ESL classroom, ESL for employment, opportunities to collaborate with other small centre multi-level instructors, etc.

Please note that a recurring issue highlighted by managers relates to P.D opportunities being geared to managers and supervisors, and not front-line staff (settlement and language). Improvement is needed regarding the strategic development of front-line staff across the various service streams.

Employee Wellbeing and Skill-Task Alignment

Regarding the measuring and evaluation of employee wellbeing and skill task alignment, many respondents highlighted various informal procedures by which they assess employees. The evaluation methods used by SPOs vary from meetings, discussions, observations, staff celebrations, etc.; annual review and feedback forms; development of common protocols; training; built-in indirect benefits, etc. As per the survey result, many agencies are not using any tool by which to measure or evaluated employee's wellbeing and skill task alignment.

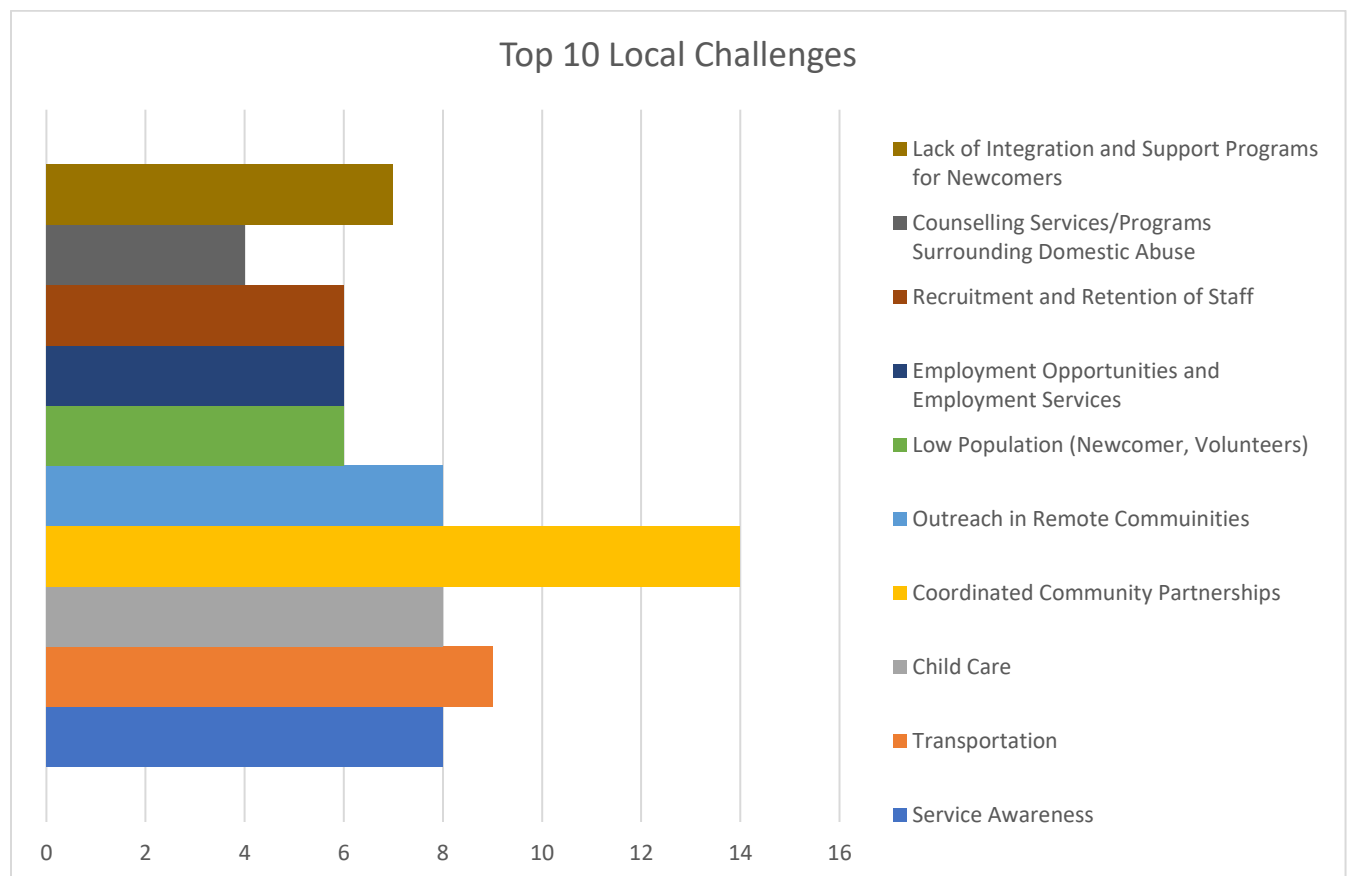
Childminding

According to the needs assessment, another challenge faced by small centre service providers is closely connected to childminding services and the Childminding Monitoring, Advisory and Support (CMAS) regulations. Language service providers have recognized the value of being able to provide childcare services to its students. CMAS regulations firmly limit service providers' ability to find viable solutions to offering childminding. Many service providers highlight the importance of exempting the part-time program from CMAS regulations and aligning with the provincial guidelines. In finding a solution to provide childminding for ESL students, there is a need for co-funding initiative to ensure both permanent residents and temporary residents can access services.

In addition, the lack of childcare restricts parents' ability to attend ESL classes, especially mothers. Newcomers frequently site the expensive cost associated with childcare services which further restrict students from finding a feasible alternative. The aforementioned has been to the disadvantage of the learners and ESL programs.

3. Local Challenges

There are intricacies with regards to local challenges and how they impact SPOs service delivery and their ability to adequately assist newcomers. The graph below highlights the top 10 local challenges identified by participating SPOs.



Remote Community Outreach

Throughout the site visits, outreach to newcomers residing in remote communities were identified as a significant challenge to SPOs. The survey results provided insight into support needed to help service providers connect with newcomers scattered throughout rural Saskatchewan. Most believed an increase in travel budget will allow for further engagement with newcomers in those isolated communities. Many also believed greater collaboration with both federal and provincial governments could have sustained positive impact. SPOs recommend coordinating an avenue by which service providers are made aware of newcomers landing in each community and or requiring newcomers to contact their respective gateway.

Several SPOs emphasized limitations with mainstream advertising coupled with limited budget specific to advertising/marketing. One of the reported gaps encompasses the need for greater collaboration between service providers and employers who bring newcomers for work. Developing a large-scale strategy to address better partnerships could bare significant benefits with regards to identification of new residents and access to service.

The LIP program and to a lesser extent SWIS have been identified as possible solutions to help facilitate a closer collaborative community focus on settlement and integration. Language service providers have also commented on the need for flexible parameters that will allow ESL staff to provide direct language support to individuals or small groups in remote areas. Not all newcomers have access or the necessary language levels to participate in online English programs. It is important to understand the limitations with regards to newcomers traveling to larger communities to participate in language programs. SPOs have also referenced the need for technology support to meet the demands of newcomers in outlying communities.

Community Collaborations

Many service providers believe their overall collaboration with other community organization remains positive. There have been many successful partnerships that supported the settlement, adaptation, and integration of newcomers in respective communities. Service providers have given significant effort to make sure they are represented at interagency meetings, in the few communities where they exist.

Over time, there are various challenges and gaps identified with regards to collaboration within rural communities:

- Numerous language service providers express concerns that their collaborations are limited to ESL classes and the Newcomer Welcome Centres
- Funding guidelines often restrict collaborations not directly related to language program outcomes
- Insufficient support from the business community, especially those that recruit newcomers
- A challenge that was emphasized is that the community seems to work in little small groups, rather than a collective approach between all stakeholders
- Duplication of services can be directly attributed to the aforementioned issue regarding fragmented partnerships
- networking and developing partnerships within remote communities
- Lack of partnerships between Agencies and School Divisions; current efforts are in early stages

- The lack of interpretation services within rural areas have led to unrealistic expectations of SPOs
- Lack of medical specialists and issues surrounding access to mental health services
- Limited availability of counselling services, especially with regards to dealing with domestic abuse
- Attracting partnerships with organizations in Urban centres for high-level presentations for newcomers
- Developing partnerships to build relationships between newcomers and Aboriginal peoples

Transportation

Participants identified transportation as an important area that is severely lacking within rural Saskatchewan. Transportation issues can be categorized by the lack of available transportation services within rural communities and the lack of public transportation between small centers and large centers. The main challenges identified were summarized as follows:

- Absence of public transportation in many communities
- Lack of public transportation
- Unreliable transportation services; limitation with bus routes, frequency and operational hours
- High cost related to taxi services

Newcomers residing in remote areas are further negatively affected by the issues listed above. These challenges firmly impact service delivery and newcomers' ability to access or participate in English classes, programs, events, services, etc. There is also a clear need to prioritize rural mobility and connecting rural communities with larger centres.

4. Best Practices

Settlement and integration service providers recognized the need for increased sharing of best practices across program and service streams to improve standards. Small centre service providers listed various best practices including, program and service delivery, practices and collaborations. Below is a list of best practices communicated through the site visits and survey to variant degrees:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Drivers Education Program | 12. ESL Student Choir |
| 2. Needs Assessment/Orientation & Case Management | 13. Staff Recruitment & Performance Management |
| 3. Lesson Planning & Assessor Training | 14. Marketing & Outreach |
| 4. Technology | 15. Mentorship and Life Skills Program |
| 5. Indigenous Partnerships | 16. Team Cohesion |
| 6. Community Partnerships | 17. Accessibility of Services (Centralize) |
| 7. Volunteering & Other Integration Program | 18. Cultural & Food/Cooking Program |
| 8. In-house Notary | 19. Immigration Clinic |
| 9. Community Volunteer Income Tax Program | 20. Language Program (conversation circles, Family Literacy, IT2Teach, etc.) |
| 10. Identification Clinic | 21. Foreign Credential Recognition Program |
| 11. Communication and Information Sharing | |

5. Potential New Initiative

An important component of small centre needs assessment, is that respondents were given the opportunity to provide information on programs and initiatives they would like to offer that they do not currently provide. The followings were listed as key programs and services that SPOs would like to offer:

- Trainings for Newcomers on Temporary Status
- Blanket Exercise (Aboriginal History)
- Youth Centre for Newcomer Youths
- Computer Literacy and Job Search Skills Training
- SWIS
- Drivers Education Program
- Educating Employers Regarding Multiculturalism
- Trauma Counselling Services
- Programming for Women and Children
- On-line CLBPT/Literacy CLBPT
- Outreach Language Services
- Language Training (Bridging Post-secondary & Employment)
- Family Literacy
- Language Program with Childcare
- Academic English Courses
- Essential Skills/Work Placement/Mentorship programs
- Programming for Male Youths
- Programming for Seniors
- Volunteer and Interpreter Training
- Citizenship/IELTS Preparation
- General Educational Development (GED)
- Conversation Circles in Smaller Communities
- Blended Learning

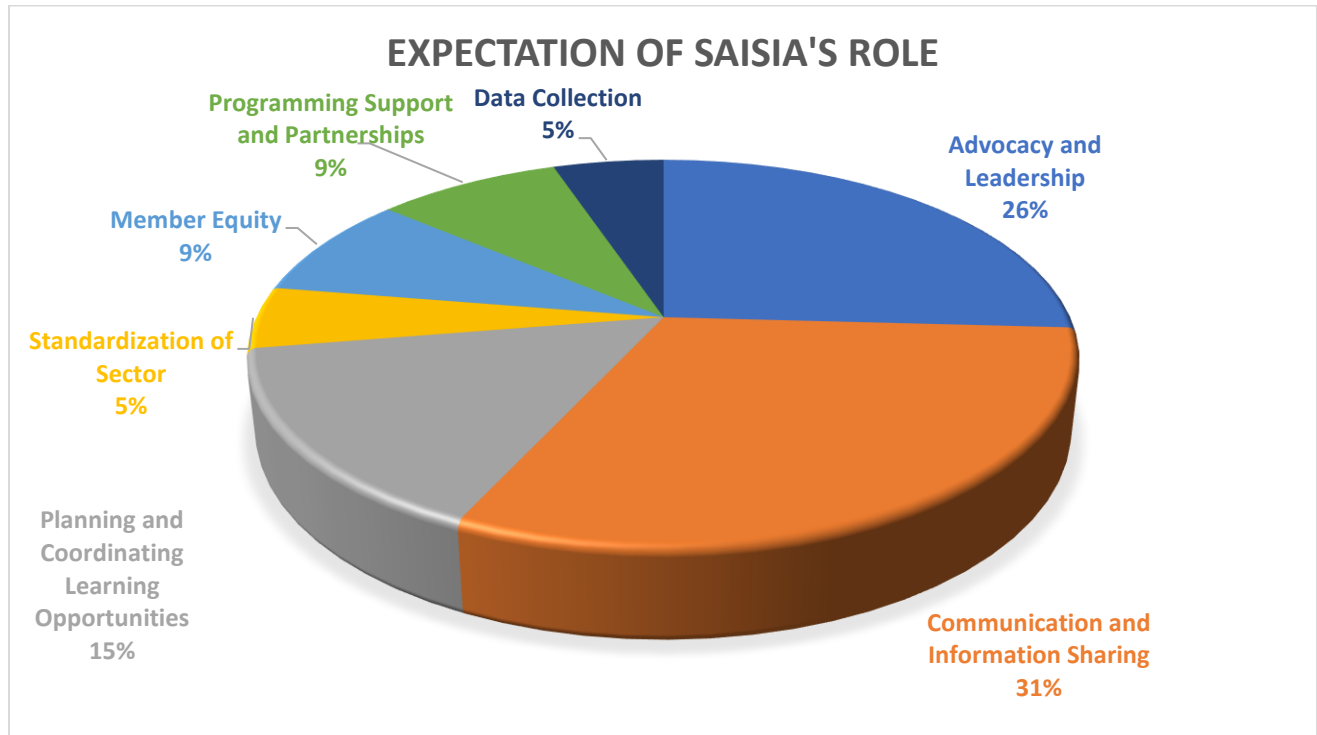
6. Training Manual

Service providers displayed considerable interest in the development of a Saskatchewan small centre training manual that can help support the knowledge and education of new and current staff. However, there were concerns shared as to the applicability of a training manual that could encompass both settlement and language needs. An underlined importance was placed on the need to direct the training manual to support front-line staff, especially of organizations which offer settlement, resettlement and integration services. Service providers also emphasized the need for the document to be constantly updated to ensure its relevance. Please see below participants' feedback that was used to support the design of the manual's template:

- Saskatchewan Service Map
- Sample Forms and Documents
- Glossary of Settlement Terms and Definitions
- Best Practices across Settlement Sector
- Professional Guidelines and Procedures
- Reporting
- Immigration Information/Training
- Grants and other Funding Opportunities
- Staff Directory of Agencies (Fundors, Government, etc.)
- Available Learning Opportunities (Annual Conferences, P.D, Working Groups, etc.)
- Communication/Cultural Understanding
- Partnership Building
- Role of Settlement Workers

7. SAISIA's Role

Service providers were given the opportunity provide feedback on SAISIA's role and ways SAISIA can support organizations from small centres. The following chart illustrates the 7 categories under which inputs were compiled:



Government and Sector Engagement

An important aspect of the needs assessment is that it provided participants an opportunity to input their expectation of SAISIA's role and providing recommendations. Almost all service providers identified the need for SAISIA to be responsible for facilitation of greater communication and information sharing amongst service providers. There was also comprehensive agreement that advocacy and leadership should be another priority focus of SAISIA. Participants' perspective on SAISIA's role in regards to engaging the governments and settlement sector follows:

Government Engagement

- SAISIA to facilitate better communication and act as mediator between SPOs and the government
- SAISIA to advocate for small centre issues that are not prioritized
- Facilitate improve representation of small centre perspective at government discussion table
- Address the disconnect between Provincial and Federal Programs to facilitate further blended funding
- Orchestrate valuable presentations for newcomers (Employment Standards/SINP)

Sector Engagement

- Advance collaboration with government and non-government agencies across Saskatchewan
- Facilitate better communication and information sharing between small centre service providers
- Organize regular meetings between service providers
- Improve leadership and presence within rural Saskatchewan
- Help support consistency amongst service providers
- Act as a central hub for sharing information and best practices of Saskatchewan agencies
- Act as the representative voice for rural Saskatchewan in addressing needs and challenges that are specific to rural communities
- Help to standardize service delivery across the sector to develop greater consistency
- Annual meeting to share information
- Provide professional development and networking opportunities and ensuring part-time staff are taken into consideration to maximize participation
- Conduct research on newcomer needs to supports service providers and develop service mapping
- Provide support to implement SWIS; help overcome resistance
- Creating equality between agencies and sharing the rural perspective
- Provide boardroom for meetings
- Taking the lead on sectorial discussions and bringing relevant people to the discussion tables
- Provide greater transparency with regards to data collection and its use
- Consolidate reporting by having SAISIA collect reports and disseminate to the relevant funding agency
- Be the coordinating body for a more databased focused provincial data-tracking system
- Managing data collection and management framework
- Advise and assist with funding opportunities and applications
- Partner with service providers on different proposals and initiatives and promote multiple organization applications
- Support small centres through the role of the Rural Coordinator
- Develop strategy to engage agencies outside the settlement sector to help them understanding settlement and gaps
- Develop strategy on how to improve service awareness across rural communities
- Collaborate with service providers to lead campaigns for greater understanding of newcomers and their issues; lead fundraising campaigns to address certain causes, for example, the international day for the elimination of discrimination or racism
- Develop presentations for staff regarding volunteerism, community involvement, and similar topics
- Develop Provincial Volunteer Training Program to support the training of volunteers
- Ensure training manual is a living document, updated and maintained on a regular basis; develop a video component to support the content and context of the training manual
- Compile and translate resources in several languages that can be shared amongst service providers
- Coordinate collective employee benefit plan for small centre service providers
- Developing tools to evaluate employee competency and wellbeing

8. Recommendations for Other Major Stakeholders

The small centre needs assessment provided an opportunity for service providers to make recommendations to SAISIA, IRCC, and the provincial government. These recommendations are as follows:

IRCC

- Provide greater access to over the phone interpretation
- Implement a more robust response to refunding transportation costs for medical appointments to larger centres
- Standardize orientation materials delivered to new arrivals to ensure a level of consistency
- Funding for more opportunities to network with different service providers across Saskatchewan
- Increase transportation budget for SWIS workers to allow for more travel to rural communities
- Policy change to facilitate SWIS to assist non-permanent residents living in rural communities
- Amend policy with regards to part-time childminding services. Allow service providers to defer to the provincial legislation rather than CMAS guidelines

Government of Saskatchewan

- Three-year contracts with the Ministry of Economy just as with IRCC would improve long-term planning
- Important that our province look at expanding capacity for ESL and grow our own economy vs employing out of province staff to provide service to SK Learners. (LINC Home Study/Online English)
- Implement clear procedures regarding intake process and data collection across newcomer gateways
- Help with building capacity in Saskatchewan trained instructor pool. Make changes to the qualification requirements of rural ESL instructors as the current criteria restrict recruiting. An additional alternative could be in the form of offering compensation for training or setting more realistic standards for rural instructors (i.e. Bachelor of Education with some professional development specific to needs rather than requiring the entire CERTESL)

All Stakeholders (IRCC, Government of Saskatchewan & SAISIA)

- Improve communication between Umbrella, Province and IRCC
- Adopt global governance approach to settlement, involving more community stakeholders
- Provide adequate professional development opportunities for front line staff
- Increase PD opportunity for training related to technology in the classroom
- Enhance the availability of language translation and interpretation services
- Developing a database of professional translators
- More coordination between the sector and social services
- Recognition and improve funding in CLB 1-8 to offer learners additional language support
- Promote best practices and consistency for delivering ESL programs
- Assist sector in creating a realistic path for newcomers to have their foreign credential recognize to continue their profession
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify what services are available, who funds it and are there any overlaps to identify if we are meeting the needs of newcomers.

- Potential research initiatives to advance SPO's knowledge base, which can support service delivery and community outreach:
 - ✓ Research project on whether newcomers integrate faster in urban as opposed to rural communities
 - ✓ Data on the number of newcomers residing in rural communities; remote communities
 - ✓ Identifying gaps within the settlement sector in rural communities
 - ✓ Identify the priority needs of newcomers living in rural communities

9. Rural Coordinator's Note

SAISIA is implementing strategies to address many of the identified actions, as outlined in our Annual Integration Summit Report and Settlement Sector Engagement Annual Survey Report. Information gathered through the site visits and survey will be used to collaboratively develop further strategies with the sector to support small centre service providers and the settlement sector as a whole.