SAISIA Members Priority-Setting Consultation
March 1, 2023, Edmonton

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Highlights of the Session

These highlights represent issues and needs that were mentioned frequently, but it is not a complete list of needs and priorities, which are contained in the full report.

- The Saskatchewan settlement sector believes
    - Its greatest strength is its willingness and ability to collaborate
    - Its greatest weakness is being overworked, understaffed and underpaid, making it challenging for leadership to focus on higher level and planning duties
    - Its greatest threat is racism
    - Its greatest opportunity is the promise of increased government funding
- The sector is doing very good work with some excellent programming and quality services, but this work is limited by a lack of funding
- The sector was able to identify and prioritize its greatest system-wide needs as well as more specific needs for its rural, Francophone and urban sectors, including
    - The need for a full spectrum of Francophone services (housing, youth, women, mental health, etc.)
    - Better EAL support in rural areas for those under 18; good programs exist but funding is inadequate
    - The sector needs better wages to aid in recruitment and retention, improved professional development, more marketing resources, extended hours, new locations, and support to develop IT solutions and improved cyber security
    - A central database for tracking and reporting of clients for every funder that captures a total picture, including agency program information, all funded activity, student evaluation
- Rural and Francophone providers of settlement services identify the lack of effective transportation services in the province as a significant gap in services that requires greater funding so they can adequately cover travel costs over large geographic areas
- Childcare is insufficient in rural areas, and regulations need to be more flexible to allow for other childminding solutions
- There is a need for greater promotion of SK as a place to settle with affordable housing, plenty of jobs, good schools and Francophone communities
- Funding for "administration" needs to be more flexible and decoupled from programming funds
- It is time to finally fix foreign credential recognition, or the lack thereof

Context

On February 27 and 28, 2023, a Prairie and Northern Territories (PNT) summit was held in Edmonton. It was followed by a one-day session on March 1 for each province/territory. The Saskatchewan session, arranged through the Saskatchewan Association for Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA) and funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), was attended by approximately 50 SAISIA members representing rural and urban regions as well as some Francophones. All of the individuals worked in organizations that provide services for newcomers to Canada. In addition, four SAISIA employees attended the session as well as one individual hired to facilitate the session.

The purpose of the session was to engage in Saskatchewan-wide consultations to assess trends, identify gaps/unmet needs and determine local (urban v. rural) priorities for CFP 2024/2025 process.

The large number of people attending the planning session made it difficult to get through everything, but the group was still able to achieve its goals and identify priorities at the end of the day.

Prioritized Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) List

A SWOT analysis is commonly used in the business and non-profit sectors as a planning tool, and it is often the first stage in a strategic planning process. Strengths and Weaknesses are *internal* factors. Opportunities and Threats are *external* factors. The process is helpful because it identifies external trends that are likely to affect the organization, and it allows the organization to determine if it has strengths it can leverage or weaknesses it will have to address before taking advantage of an opportunity. This can be useful foundational work for setting priorities.

Prior to the session in Edmonton an online survey was sent to attendees for them to complete by entering their choices of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They were able to enter up to seven choices in each category.

Following the completion of the survey, like responses were combined into one. For example, in the Strengths category, the individual responses of "Sector collaboration", "ability to work with other agencies in the sector" and "Incredibly collaborative" were combined under "Sector collaboration". The survey responses were distributed to all attendees two days before the session, and they were asked to review the responses and pick out their own "top ten" in each SWOT category.

At the in-person session on March 1, attendees were given 20 minutes for table discussions about the SWOT lists and which items were most important or least important, and then each table reported back to the large group.

The SWOT lists had been transferred onto flipchart paper, and following the discussion the attendees were allowed to vote on each list. They were given ten votes in each SWOT category, or 40 votes in all, and they could use up to three of their votes on individual items if they thought they were important enough to justify an extra vote or two. Using the lists and the votes, the seven items in each list receiving the most votes were selected for a SWOT Priorities Table below. The full SWOT lists are in Appendix 1.

Table 1: SWOT Priorities

	Strengths 1. Sector collaboration 2. Supportive Network 3. Lots of experience 4. Quick access to language services 5. Quality Services 6. Effective programming 7. Accessibility of co-funded programs (ICT and IRCC) in rural centres	Weaknesses 1. Understaffed/overworked 2. Access to services – childcare, transit 3. Foreign credential recognition 4. Competition between other SPOs 5. Staffing and retention 6. Need a better relationship between ICT and IRCC 7. Funding based on numbers not needs
Opportunities 1. More Funding 2. Labor shortages/gaps 3. Strengthen existing relationships (Newcomers, employers, educators) 4. Bridging relationships (Newcomers, indigenous, RCMP) 5. Better communication/involvement from provincial government 6. EAL in elementary and high school 7. Leverage professional development more effectively across sector	Opportunity-Strength (use strengths to take advantage of opportunities) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	Opportunity-Weakness (overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities) 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Threats 1. Racism	Threat-Strength (use strengths to avoid threats) 1. 2.	Threat-Weakness (minimize weaknesses to avoid threats) 1. 2.

2. Systems unable to keep up with increase in newcomer numbers	3.	3.
3. Lack of foreign credential recognition	4.	4.
4. Access to services – mental health, medical, transport	5.	5.
5. Provincial government funding "status quo"	6.	6.
6. Lack of transportation		
7. Wage disparity for similar positions (competition between agencies)		

Gaps and Needs

The group then separated into tables that represented urban, rural and Francophone sectors to discuss and report on their specific needs. That was followed by discussions and reporting of system-wide needs. The group had intended to examine Trends affecting the sector, but the session was falling behind schedule. Since the identification of Opportunities and Threats during the SWOT analysis is a type of Trend analysis, the facilitator suggested to the group that it skip a more in-depth Trend analysis, and there was consensus supporting that idea.

The needs that were identified and prioritized by the various groups are listed below. The full list of needs identified by each table are in Appendix 2.

Francophone Gaps and Needs
- Full spectrum services for Francophones, e.g., housing, mental health, youth
- Systemic collaboration with Anglophone SPOs
- Augmentation of funds for transportation, because we are province-wide
- Communication with pre-arrival services
- Promotion of Saskatchewan as a place to settle
- Need serious funding from province
- Enhanced Francophone pathways

Rural Gaps and Needs
- Better transportation between and within cities
- Similar/same salary grid for urban/rural
- Under 18 language support in EAL
- Digital literacy training for clients
- Recognition that immigration is critical to our social and economic success
- Newcomer employment programming for all smaller centres
- Need LIPs in all areas and they need adequate staff to meet sectoral demands

- More resources in rural areas; demand versus resources is inequitable; larger geographic area but fewer dollars
- Every rural centre should have a RAP funded program
- RNIP needed in small centres with funding
- Mechanism so we all know when and if newcomers are arriving
- Childcare and child-minding funding that is more flexible e.g., money for babysitters; daycares are full, especially in rural areas where childcare can be difficult to deliver
- Greater availability of programs for newcomers
- Student advisors for newcomer kids
- EAL support for post-secondary
- Clear definitions of "youth" across all centres
- National ESL/EAL training for all centres available online
- Language tutors for those who can't access classes and free training for the tutors
- Vulnerability in TFW sector needs to be addressed
- Vulnerability in international student sector needs to be addressed
- Funding to accommodate and pay lived experience experts (e.g., elders) and to recruit for newcomer councils

Urban Gaps and Needs
Note: Many of the needs identified by the urban sector were regarded as being system-wide and are listed under system-wide gaps and needs.
- Increased funding for salaries, professional development, advertising, extended hours, more locations
- Limitation with administrative money; need flexibility; decouple from programming dollars
- More collaboration with LIPs and actively involved in the settlement sector
- Less turnover (staff retention); constant recruitment keeps managers/EDs from higher level and planning duties
- Central database for tracking and reporting. Also for agency program information
- Greater promotion of programs/services
- Information sharing between agencies, but also with all newcomers (information at airports), including economic immigrants, who don't feel like we can help them
- Greater connection to mainstream agencies and government ministries
- Access to qualified interpreters
- Retention of qualified newcomers
- Better transportation within cities and between them

System-Wide Gaps and Needs
- Accountability - things not getting done in sector, because we are all too busy; no good connections to other sectors/government
- iCare Data does not reflect all work
- User friendly systems, e.g., IRCC call-centre
- Disability supports and help from other sectors with the disabled
- More help from some LIPs to tackle system issues; some LIPs doing good job
- More money for higher wages, professional development and promotion of staff

- More money for marketing & communications
- Promotion of Saskatchewan as a place to settle
- Shortage of qualified staff, e.g., CERTESL-certified and social workers
- Decouple administration from program delivery in IRCC funding
- Staffing shortages and turnovers prevent higher level duties and planning from getting done
- Foreign credential recognition
- Central database for tracking clients for every funder, including student evaluation in database
- Access to qualified interpreters
- Feds and province not providing enough money to support newcomers moving to rural areas
- SAISIA to advocate better for its members
- IRCC/province need to communicate much better
- ICT registration needs to be more accessible, outside provincial working hours
- SWIS branding change, name change would help
- Better recognition from feds and province that we are experts in the field
- Recognition of the great job we are doing
- Recognition that immigration is critical to our social and economic success
- Provincial and federal program officers should advocate more for our centres
- Need LIPs in all areas and they need adequate staff to meet sectoral demands
- Mechanism so we all know when and if newcomers are arriving
- Collaboration in newcomer support needed from other systems than us, IRCC and ICT
- Childcare and child-minding funding that is more flexible e.g., money for babysitters; daycares are full
- Student advisors for newcomer kids
- Simplified written language for newcomers
- Training for sector staff on the national Truth and Reconciliation process
- Agencies and government offices open longer hours, e.g., 8 AM to 8 PM
- Vulnerability in TFW sector needs to be addressed
- SINP is overpromising and under delivering
- More flexibility regarding paying for transportation and childcare and support services, e.g., interpretation
- Funding and support for marginal newcomers who are just left at home by themselves
- Need more funding and support for cyber security
- Do more in sector to address Truth and Reconciliation, building bridges with First Nations Metis. Both the funders and the sector need to take this more seriously

Priorities

The work that had been done throughout the day (SWOT and needs analysis) was then used to inform a selection of priorities for each sector as well as system-wide priorities. The list of the most important priorities is below. The full list of priorities from the discussion are in Appendix 3.

Francophone Priorities

- We need more funding to be able to offer a full spectrum of Francophone services (housing, youth, mental health, women, etc.)
- We need to be taken seriously by the provincial government regarding the size and scope of services to be delivered
- We need an enhanced Francophone pathway in order to build systemic capacity for collaboration with Anglophone partners and Francophone network
- Have a designated national Francophone immigration program in order to select and recruit potential Francophones for Saskatchewan labour market
- Have better promotion and marketing to help attract newcomers to better make informed decisions on why they should choose Saskatchewan to fill labour shortages
- Think differently when it comes to Francophone services. One size does not fit all. We need recognition on the size and distances within the Francophone zone (whole province). Cost of transportation is a major expense

Rural Priorities
Note: The participants from rural areas advanced several priorities for rural areas that also seemed to fit with system-wide priorities. Those have been included in the System-Wide section below, and they all end with "especially in rural areas" to indicate that they are regarded as higher priorities among rural participants.

- Under 18 years old language supports. We have programs that work, but no funding for them
- Provision of programs needs to allow for rural flexibility and less top down from funders
- Transportation for clients. Need advocates, maybe SAISIA
- Provide funding and infrastructure, support services for rural migration and retention. Sector does good work but not funded. Listen to our stories
- Have newcomer employment services/programs that are flexible and locally led housed in all rural SPOs

Urban Priorities
- Funding for higher wages, professional development, staff advancement, service advertising, IT and cyber security, and all of us come together to fight for it
- Engaging and partnership building with other multi-sectoral systems to make newcomers their priority
- Removal of red tape and systemic inefficiencies, e.g., IRCC call centre
- Prioritize and be intentional about effective recruiting practices
- Staff retention strategies with creation of urban working group
- Strategies to reach newcomers who aren't accessing services or are not aware
- More flexibility and consistency from IRCC regarding services, programs, program delivery, etc.; different program officers give different answers

System-Wide Priorities
- Stronger cross-sectoral referrals and information sharing, e.g., collaborative funding
- Shared database for client information, and ease of reporting, e.g., like SHA
- Common sector salary grid, perhaps review and recommendations from a third-party

- Staff, wages, expectations/excessive workloads need to be dealt with by flexible funding and participatory funding processes. Acknowledge competitiveness of labour market and make our sector competitive because we are a key puzzle piece in dealing with labor shortages, especially in rural areas
- Province/municipalities should engage respectfully and effectively with the settlement sector and IRCC to together address big issues. SAISIA to facilitate process. Province needs to respect and acknowledge our expertise and agree to learn from us
- Impact wide-ranging systemic change by resourcing/leveraging our LIPs adequately to offload the multi-sectoral burdens from the direct settlement serving sector (racism, childcare, transportation, etc.), especially in rural areas
- Cultural education awareness for our SPOs, especially in rural areas
- Foreign credential recognition programs, and bridging programs with micro credentials, especially in rural areas
- Targeted funding for Truth and Reconciliation training in the sector, especially in rural areas

Appendix 1 – Full List of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats prior to Discussion and Prioritization

<u>Strengths</u>
Sector collaboration
Access & availability of services
Community focused
Well-developed supportive networks
Passion for newcomers
Lots of experience
Cheaper housing
Smaller communities
Inclusive Youth Services – SWIS
Quick access to language services for all
Wide variety of service providers
Quality services
Fast referrals
Effective programming
Innovative programming
Via SAISA - interaction with both IRCC and Sask Ministry of Immigration and Career Training
Creative
Advocacy
Reliability
Resiliency
Diverse experience
Quick to adapt to newcomer changes & needs
Growing immigrant community
Programs to attract newcomer families
Lower cost of living
Easy to find employment
Lots of PD Opportunities

<u>Weaknesses</u>
Understaffed, overworked and under paid
Access to services - transportation, childcare especially in rural areas
Rural and urban have different needs and challenges
Access to in-person translation and interpretation in rural areas
ICT registration process
Need a better relationship between ICT and IRCC
Foreign professional credentials difficult to get recognized
Pulled in too many directions
EAL in schools, especially rural ones
Not the favorite or final destination for many newcomer families
Less services in rural areas; have to do everything

Large physical distance covered by rural agencies
Collaboration between stakeholders
Competition between other settlement organizations
Lack of standardization across the sector
Vulnerable population groups
Multiple organizations have different training support access
Leaving community for new work experiences
Funding based on numbers not needs
Funding for newcomer post-secondary education
Lack of financial support and assistance from large businesses
Retention for student success
General education about settlement and newcomers for the general population
Budgetary constraints as compared to other provinces
Difficulty retaining experienced staff; knowledge loss
Contact time
Availability
Lack of communication between SPOs
Not all programs are available throughout the sector e.g., Driver Training
Lack of partnerships with First Nations
Temporary Foreign Workers lack proper supports

Opportunities
Housing development programs
Labour gaps, job opportunities, and more funding in health care will lead to more immigration
More funding for programs
Safe spaces for marginalized individuals and groups
Anti-racism education
Leverage professional development more effectively across the sector
Strengthening existing relationships - Newcomers, employers, educators
Bridging relationships - Newcomers, Indigenous people, RCMP
Building client capacity
Immigration trends
Higher numbers of refugees arriving
Overall immigration policy means more newcomers
Opportunities for transportation services
Better communication and involvement from provincial government
Post-secondary bridging programs
Community support
Micro Credential programs for industry
Having SWIS workers that work at a max of 2-3 schools almost 100% of their time
EAL in elementary and high schools
Skills testing at jobs interviews
Opportunity to practice & innovate multi sectoral approach
War in Ukraine leading to more immigration

SK has a pre-existing Ukrainian community for newcomers
Easy to learn Canadian culture and find community members who welcome newcomers
Diversity
Inclusion

Threats
Racism
Systems not being able to keep up with increase of arrivals (health, schools, housing, etc.)
People unhappy with current government – change of leadership that is pro-immigration
Lack of information and poor communication
Lack of foreign recognition credentials process
Wage disparity for similar positions (competition between agencies)
Some people feel threatened by too many newcomers
Access to appropriate services – mental health, medical transportation
Need support services in place for newcomers
Need adequate available housing in place
Political parties
Municipalities
Employers
Education
Change in government immigration policies
Change in government funding priorities
Immigration influx outpacing sector capacity
Provincial vs. Federal funding and worker retention in each program
Provincial Government funding 'status quo'
Lack of funding / decrease in funding
Lack of basic work skills
Lack of knowledge (work, and education)
Lack of transportation
Lack of language/translation services
Lack of culturally diverse people in professions such as counselling/ crisis support
Competition with other provinces for newcomers
Territorial problems

Appendix 2 – Lists from Tables in Discussions of Rural, Urban and Francophone Needs/Gaps

Francophone – First Table
- Full spectrum of services (youth housing, mental health, etc.)
- Systemic capacity building for collaboration with Anglophone partners
- Recognition of the size and distances within the Francophone zone. Cost of transport. Augmentation of funds for transport
- Communication with pre-arrival services and related funding
- Better promotion so that they can make an informed decision to choose Saskatchewan
- Attraction and retention
- People don't realize that there is a dynamic Francophone community in Saskatchewan
- Increased funding
- Enhance Francophone pathway
- To be taken seriously by the provincial government (Immigration system)
- Most people don't understand that the Francophone situation is different comparatively to the Anglophone sector, but also compared to other Francophone sectors from other provinces

Rural – First Table
- Better engagement between IRCC and province
- Transportation
- Childcare/child-minding
- Simplified language
- Qualified instructors
- Availability of programming
- Cultural awareness
- Communication with all stakeholders/employers
- Recognition and support for part-time instructors
- Student advisors for newcomer kids
- Translation services
- More affordable housing to rent
- Streamline, credential recognition
- Mental health support for newcomers and service providers
- EAL support for post-secondary, secondary and younger students
- Clear definitions on what is a "youth"
- Lack of settlement services in really small centres.
- More staff
- An all-in-one database with services availability
- A process on temporary foreign workers, where are they, where they're going, educating them
- National ESL asynchronous program online
- Language tutors for people who can't access language classes
- Standardized training

Rural – Second Table
- Collaboration and communication between funders and SPOs
- Cultural awareness education for service providers
- Education for other sectors on settlement issues and concerns
- Staffing retention through salary parity, PD training and education
- Foreign credentials recognition and bridging micro credentials
- Flexibility for transportation and childcare child-minding services
- Client-centred program delivery with funding, resources and flexibility
- TRC training and awareness within the sector. Targeted funding
- System-wide training and resources and opportunities for service providers and clients, e.g., digital literacy

Rural – Third Table
- Staff salary, retention
- Employment coordinator
- Similar salary. Grid for urban and rural
- Stage two classes in person: ELB 5-8
- Under 18 language support
- Develop a system that can be used settlement wide
- Client database
- Services to stay as local as possible in rural areas
- Digital literacy training for clients
- Provincial public transportation
- Feds and provincial government to provide support for newcomer retention
- SAISIA advocacy for members, information, meetings
- Funding increase in rural areas where high numbers of newcomers are landing, increase to meet the demand in a timely manner
- Communication with province is unclear; differs from other centres; inconsistency
- IRCC and provincial government need to TALK and COMMUNICATE
- ICT registration nightmare
- We are the experts; listen to us
- Reevaluate formula for staffing in rural areas and acknowledge the large geographical area
- Funding for all newcomers student (international students, those born in Canada)
- Branding - change name of SWIS
- Same services offered in rural as in urban areas; same needs identified in a larger geographical area
- Design app that each settlement organization can access
- Referral system (one for all)
- In-house counselors
- Database system
- iCare does not capture service accurately.
- Cultural, bridging (postsecondary, workplace, schools, community)
- Using newcomers to fill entry-level position
- Need to regulate international credentials

- Joint funding between mains

Urban – First Table
- More money for wages, professional development promotions
- Finding correct staff – not enough available staff – CERTESL/social worker
- Limitation with administrative money, flexibility
- More collaboration with LIPs and actively involved in the settlement sector
- Burden on EDs and management due to staff turnovers

Urban – Second Table
- Money for more staff programming, locations, extended hours
- Qualified staff
- Less turnover (staff retention)
- Credential recognition
- Central database for tracking and reporting. Also for agency program information
- Greater promotion of programs/services
- Information sharing between agencies, but also with all newcomers (information at airports), including economic immigrants, who don't feel like we can help them
- Employment, connections for everyone, higher and lower language levels
- Greater connection to mainstream agencies and government ministries
- Access to qualified interpreters
- Retention of qualified newcomers
- Better transportation within cities and between them

Appendix 3 – Lists from Tables in Discussions of Rural, Urban and Francophone Priorities

Francophone
Note: Since there was only one Francophone table, its table priorities were identical to the priorities list in the main section of the report and has not been repeated here.

Rural - Table 1
- Under 18 language supports. Strengthen partnership between settlement sector and language providers. Prove that it works and, therefore, needs to be funded
- Provision of programs. Creativity in program delivery. Allow rural sector to deliver the programs as they see fit and fund it
- Transportation for clients. Collective advocacy. SAISIA to better advocate for this need
- Salary grid across the sector. Third-party provider to review the salary scales and provide recommendations
- Providing funding, infrastructure, and support services for rural migration and retention. Sector already doing the work, but need recognition and funding. Listen to our stories— reporting on what is expected and not expected not captured on iCARE.

Rural - Table 2
- Funding in categories that matter, e.g., all staffing in salary except outsourcing
- Decouple administration from program delivery
- More staff
- Rural is pricier than larger centres
- Labour needs are solved through immigration. Recognition of settlement services must be given and as a key piece to meeting these economic needs; wages must reflect such
- Employment programming/services (flexible and locally led at all rural SSPOs)
- Program officers who advocate for centre needs
- LIPs in all areas!!! LIPs need to be adequately resourced (staffed) to meet the complex inter-sectoral demands
- Larger centres have more resources in general, therefore, demand versus resource equation is inequitable
- Reporting and evaluation – make this less onerous
- Meetings – let's see movement forward/decisions made. No meetings just to meet
- RAP program
- Please have budget reflect number of immigrants sent out to rural areas
- Rural and northern immigration pilot and or municipal immigration program – strengthen
- Mechanism so settlement agencies have more awareness who is arriving and when (not just GARs)
- Federal, provincial and municipal government fund collaboration backbone support to address the complex needs affecting newcomers/settlement/integration/inclusion. (This could be done through LIPs.) Why does settlement sector/IRCC/ICT seem to be the only ones addressing all these issues that aren't technically theirs (e.g., transport, housing, employment, labour market)? All players need to be brought together to collaborate and solve
- Participatory funding process, especially provincially

Urban - Table 1
- Adequate funding and resources – staff, less turnover, IT and cyber security, professional development, and training for staff
- Staffing capacity – qualified staff, qualified newcomers staying in Saskatchewan, credential recognition
- Stronger partnerships with other sectors (government, businesses, mainstream indigenous organizations)
- Reaching newcomers who are not accessing/not aware of services
- Stronger cross-sectoral referrals and information sharing, specialization recognition, and additional collaborative funding (hub)
- Shared database for client information and ease of reporting
- Flexibility in program delivery

Urban - Table 2
- Provincewide/PNT negotiations with funders to increase budget for staff, wages, professional development and program advertising
- Prioritize effective recruiting practices (social work/CERTESL)
- Staff retention strategy. Create an urban working group to develop this together