

Policy Note (No. 56) | June 2023

# Working towards a Greater Sudbury: Concrete Actions for Knowing and Welcoming Your Community – Survey and Focus Group Findings

By: Karly Mabee and Mercedes Labelle

## Executive Summary

The Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership (SLIP) and Northern Policy Institute (NPI) partnered to measure the effectiveness of the available frontline social services for immigrants and diverse populations in the Greater Sudbury region, including the current assets that help support immigration and retention within the region. In October 2021, NPI and SLIP conducted an asset map survey and followed-up using focus groups during the subsequent months. Sixty-eight organizations responded to the survey, and eight key groups were identified for focus group participation.

Survey respondents indicated the least serviced groups, which included prospective immigrants not yet in Canada, employers, dependents of principal applicants, and youth. The groups most serviced by respondents included Indigenous peoples, the general public, 2SLGBTQIA+, permanent residents, and women. Approximately 76 per cent of the organizations were funded primarily through the various levels of government; 24 per cent received donations and 24 per cent charged a fee for services.

This report was completed through the Northern Analyst Collective (NAC) program in collaboration with the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership. The NAC program is made possible through the support of our project partner, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. Northern Policy Institute expresses great appreciation for the generous support we receive but emphasizes the following: The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Institute, its Board of Directors, partners, or its supporters. Quotation with appropriate credit is permissible.

Author's calculations are based on data available at the time of publication and are therefore subject to change.

Editor: Barry Norris

© 2023 Northern Policy Institute  
Published by Northern Policy Institute  
874 Tungsten St.  
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6T6  
ISBN: 978-1-77868-114-1

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Thirty-six individuals, representing over 20 organizations, participated in the focus groups and spoke to their organization's mandate, challenges, and opportunities, as well as best practices for the provision of services. Findings from the focus groups varied by category of organization, as follows:

- public education providers;
- employers and employment agencies;
- housing services;
- post-secondary institutions;
- youth services;
- public services;
- health services; and
- newcomers.

It is also important to recognize which perspectives are not directly recognized in this work: Indigenous organizations and individuals, many not-for-profit agencies, and municipal officials, to name a few.

SLIP's goal is to build and strengthen relationships with everyone in Sudbury, and building trust takes time. This paper offers strategic recommendations and concrete actions to inform new and existing initiatives in the region within SLIP's capacity. Among these are the following:

1. host information sessions on cultural competency, settlement information for newcomers, understanding immigration streams for employers, networking sessions for newcomers, knowledge exchange gatherings with community partners, cultural festivals in the community, etc.;
2. create a welcome website for newcomers with information on local offerings;
3. encourage welcoming community initiatives wherever possible; and
4. conduct further research on available resources in the community.

These recommendations and strategic actions are ongoing. By combining the information gathered through the asset map survey and the focus groups, greater meaning can be drawn to inform the next steps.

## Introduction

Given the demographic challenges that Greater Sudbury faces – an aging population and not enough working-aged people to replace them – the city is in need of calculated attraction and retention efforts to sustain a robust community. Such efforts, however, are not a solo endeavour meant for one person or organization; rather, they require a support network of community actors collaborating to meet the needs of the whole person. For example, an immigrant moving to Greater Sudbury from the Philippines might need support upon arrival to set up a bank account, learn the language, find housing, register children for school, and do countless other activities. Asset mapping is one tool to identify the resources that make up a network of support, helping individuals to identify whom to go to for specific services, and identifying and addressing gaps to ensure no one is left behind or underserved.

In the fall of 2021, the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership (SLIP) and Northern Policy Institute (NPI) partnered to conduct an online asset map survey to identify community resources and ultimately to uncover gaps in services and opportunities for future improvements. After conducting the survey, it became apparent that more discussion was needed to understand why the gaps existed and how they could be addressed.

Based on the asset map survey results, eight focus groups were established to help identify common services issues that affect newcomers, with the findings used to inform an overall action plan to identify next steps within SLIP's capacity. The goal of the Sudbury LIP is to build and strengthen relationships with everyone in Sudbury and building trust takes time.

The focus groups, which were conducted between March and August 2022, aimed at providing context and perspective to better understand what resources were available in the community and for whom. The eight groups were made up of public education providers, employers and employment agencies, housing services, post-secondary institutions, youth services, public services, health service providers, and newcomers. Although these groups do not represent all aspects of immigrant services in Greater Sudbury, they provide unique insights and perspectives of what is needed in the community to help strengthen settlement, attraction, and retention efforts.

It is also important to recognize which perspectives are not directly recognized in this work: Indigenous organizations and individuals, many not-for-profit agencies, and municipal officials, to name a few. Building trust and strengthening relationships with these groups and others is a must.

# Asset Map Survey Findings

The asset map survey found that, of the 68 organizations surveyed, 54 provided services in Greater Sudbury and the surrounding area. The following results reflect the services provided by those organizations to various groups in the Greater Sudbury area. Organizations that participated in the survey varied in size between 25 and 250,000 clients served between August 2020 and August 2021. Some organizations had more funding and more capacity than others. Approximately 76 per cent of the organizations were funded primarily through the various levels of government; 24 per cent received donations and 24 per cent charged a fee for services.

It is important to note that, despite best efforts, not all of the organizations initially contacted answered the asset mapping survey. Accordingly, the results do not completely represent the on-the-ground services provided in the city. Nevertheless, the information collected could be used as a starting point to better understand the provision of services in Greater Sudbury.

Some key findings from the asset mapping survey are as follows.

Groups that are *least* serviced:

- prospective immigrants not yet in Canada;
- employers;
- dependents of principal applicants;
- youth.

Groups that are *most* serviced:

- Indigenous peoples;
- the general public;
- 2SLGBTQ+;
- permanent residents;
- women.

Services that are *least* offered:

- language/educational/credential assessment;
- personal financial services;
- admissibility assessment;
- certified immigration services for advice/instruction on immigration streams/applications/other related services;
- travel arrangements once in Canada or in new community;
- legal services;
- translation.

Services that are *most* offered:

- needs assessment and referrals;
- community connections;
- childcare and family services;
- housing;
- cultural awareness training and action against discrimination.

## Additional Observations

With this summary, a deeper dive into the survey findings can be completed. First, we can look at the services provided to three separate groups: employers, Indigenous peoples, and Francophones.

The services identified as most available to employers were needs assessment and referrals, community connections, and cultural awareness training and action against discrimination.

The services most available to Indigenous peoples were needs assessment and referrals, community connections, education, housing, and cultural awareness training and action against discrimination. The services least available

to Indigenous peoples were personal financial services, translation services, legal services, and entrepreneurial resources.

The services most available to Francophones were needs assessment and referrals, community connections, housing, and cultural awareness training and action against discrimination. The services least available to Francophones were language/educational/credential assessment, personal financial services, admissibility assessment, legal services, translation, and entrepreneurial resources.

# Focus Group Findings

As noted, due to limited responses to the asset mapping survey, preliminary analysis identified the need to collect additional primary data. To gain a deeper understanding of the practicalities of accessing services in Greater Sudbury, the capacity of services-providing organizations, and recommendations for next steps, focus groups were conducted with service-providing organizations in these sectors. Through discussions with key community actors, a number of actions were identified to address the challenges and opportunities outlined by the participants.

As the participants were either professionals in the field or immigrants themselves, they arrived at these actions recognizing both the feasibility and capacity constraints that non-profits face and the needs of the community. It is important to note that, while an attempt was made to involve a wide range of actors in each category, there were limitations in terms of full participation. Thus, the recommendations presented below do not necessarily reflect the views of all the organizations in Greater Sudbury encompassed under each category. Rather, the actions could be used as a starting point, requiring further exploration and consideration.

## Housing

1. Provide workshops for immigrants about how to navigate the housing market and about tenants' rights (i.e., how to purchase tenants' insurance, which deposits can be legally charged in advance of occupancy, lease terms, etc.).
2. Establish connections with local landlords to provide information and clarify expectations for renting to immigrants (i.e., expectation of references, credit history, etc.) and a partnership to direct individuals to landlords who welcome immigrants.
3. Advocate on behalf of immigrants for improved housing standards and availability of housing options in the region.

## Employment

1. Provide cultural competency training to employers.
2. Create partnerships with training providers to offer job-specific training opportunities to promote retention and widen employment opportunities.
3. Host information sessions in which employers can learn about the benefits of hiring newcomers and the potential funding opportunities and immigration streams available to them.

## Post-secondary Institutions

1. Establish welcome services for international students and support for their initial transition into the community.
2. Advocate for reduced cost barriers for international students in the community, both through bursary programs and with Health Sciences North to reduce the cost of care, given limited access to health plans.
3. Establish regular discussion opportunities for all post-secondary institutions in the region to connect and share best practices and work collaboratively to address the challenges international students experience.

## Newcomers

1. Develop relationships with employers to share information about managing expectations of hiring newcomers, who might not have references, prior Canadian work experience, or interview experience, and who might experience language difficulties, etc.
2. Promote the creation of a social support network that connects all resources and community engagement opportunities in a central location.
3. Information sessions for newcomers regarding basic skills and employment preparedness could be included in a welcome webpage.

## Education

1. Provide resources to school boards for immigrant children and families to connect them to appropriate community services to aid in the referral process.
2. Provide cultural competency training to educators and other school board staff to better understand cultural differences.

## Health Care

1. Create an asset map to act as a reference tool for service providers and community members alike, to find accurate and timely information about the location of services and support and how to access them, both to save time and to increase efficiency.
2. Increase the capacity for diversity and inclusion services, especially for health care workers who work directly with newcomers and/or diverse groups.
3. Create a "community liaison" position – a social navigator to help connect community members with the plethora of services, supports, and tools available.

### Youth

1. Conduct roundtable discussions led by youth and informed by the initiatives that directly affect them – particularly those pertaining to community connection programs that increase youths' sense of belonging to the community.
2. Provide education to community members and raise awareness of issues such as racism and discrimination.
3. Promote collaboration and communication among service providers in sharing information and resources, with the goal of highlighting efficiencies and reducing duplication of effort.

### Public Services

1. Focus on gathering the voices of newcomers and diverse groups, acknowledging the role these groups play in the future of the Greater Sudbury community.
2. Continue to raise awareness of the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership and the resources and information it provides.
3. Ensure information about programs and services is available and accessible to all community members, including newcomers and diverse groups.

## Proposed Action Items for SLIP

With a great deal of qualitative data collected from organizations and newcomers throughout Greater Sudbury, the next step was to use this information to inform new and/or ongoing initiatives within the capacity of the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership.

To identify such actions, past initiatives hosted by SLIP were examined, together with activities carried out by other LIPs (City of Windsor 2021; Lanark and Renfrew Local Immigration Partnership 2021; Niagara Local Immigration Partnership 2022; Paraco 2021). The list of proposed actions provides many opportunities for potential programming, though it is not necessary that all tasks be carried out immediately. In addition, the Sudbury LIP has work underway that encompasses some of the actions below. When this is the case, the recommended actions should continue, as suggested by the findings of the survey and focus groups. The proposals are as follows:

1. Host information sessions on cultural competency, settlement information for newcomers, understanding immigration streams for employers, etc.
2. Create a welcome package or webpage for newcomers that includes local resources, information on local businesses, arts and cultural activities, and contact information for immigrant services in the community.
3. Conduct employer training sessions and provide informational materials related to cultural competency and equitable hiring practices.
4. Include newcomers and diverse groups in the decisionmaking process when discussing issues and initiatives that directly or indirectly affect them.
5. Participate in "lunch and learn" sessions with community partners to explore topics related to settlement in the community and to discuss future opportunities.
6. Collaborate on networking socials and/or job fairs to connect immigrants with service provider organizations and employers.
7. Support cultural festivals in the community to give individuals a chance to share information about their culture through food, music, and activities.
8. Encourage welcoming community initiatives.
9. Promote alternative information sources, such as the Welcome to My Canada Podcast by the YMCA, to promote information sharing and storytelling.
10. Conduct further research on available resources in the community and initiatives that could be implemented to increase communication among the various partners.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

The key action items identified above are intended to guide the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership in its decisionmaking regarding its future action plan. Combining the information gathered through both the asset map survey and the focus groups allows us to suggest certain next steps. Our recommendations are intended to help SLIP build on its past successes and achieve short-, medium-, and long-term goals towards which it can work in addressing the challenges newcomers experience in the community.

## Short-term goal:

- Establish subject matter working groups to create an open dialogue with organizations in the community to strengthen connections and promote resource sharing and referrals to improve holistic support for immigrants.
- Rationale: Coordinating resources and the delivery of services for newcomers could relieve some of the burden placed on existing resources by reducing duplicated efforts.

## Medium-term goal:

- Collaborate on information sessions for immigrants about how to navigate the housing market and tenants' rights.
- Rationale: Since newcomers express challenges in finding appropriate housing and legal resources, this information is needed within the community.

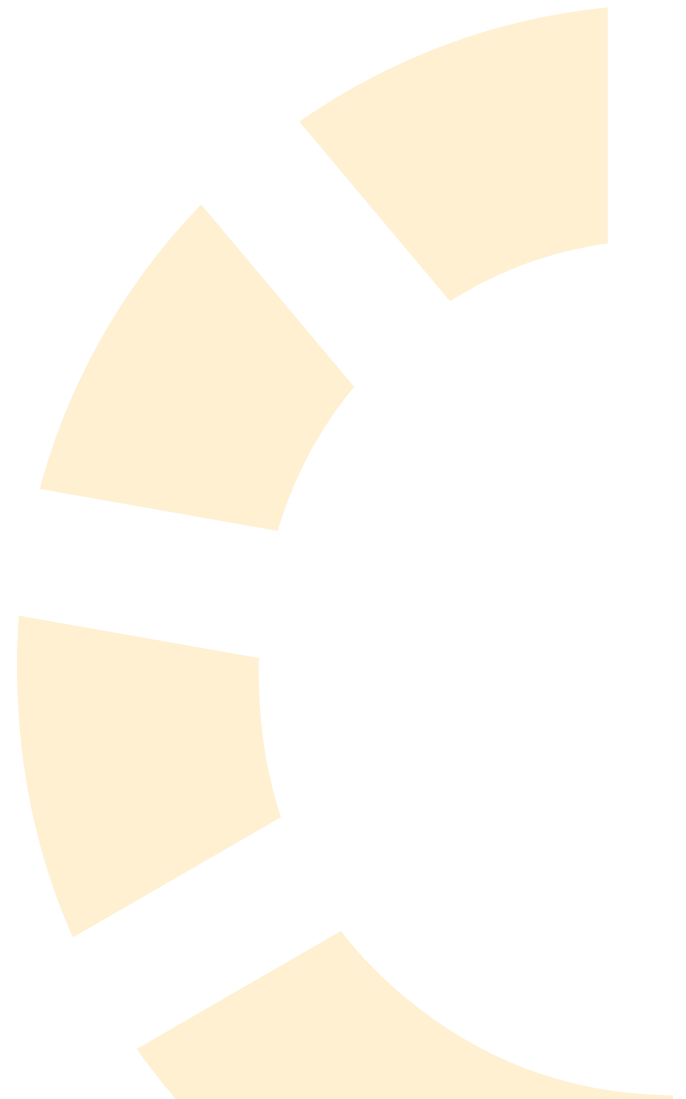
## Long-term goal:

- Host information sessions in which employers can learn about the benefits associated with hiring newcomers and the potential funding opportunities and immigration streams available to them.
- Rationale: Given that services are least available to employers and employment is an important indicator of success for immigrants' satisfaction in a community, further investment in employer relationships could promote retention.

Once again, it is important to note that settlement, attraction, and retention are not solo endeavours meant for one person or organization. The more community organizations feel supported and part of this iterative process, the more likely is success in creating welcoming communities. Meeting the needs of newcomers and other individuals in the community requires a support network of all community actors. The Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership should continue to work with these groups to ensure the success of the shared goal of welcoming.

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## About the Northern Analyst Collective:

The Northern Analyst Collective, a project of Northern Policy Institute, will allow members to “time share” a professional policy analyst. By merging our collective resources we can ensure that the smallest municipality or local charity can access high-end skills at an affordable price. The expert’s salary and benefits are covered in part by NPI/IPN and our sponsors, and in part through the membership fees paid by participating organizations. The end result is members are able to secure the skills they need when needed.

### Land Acknowledgment

NPI would like to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. NPI is grateful for the opportunity to have our offices located on these lands and thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land.

#### Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.
- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapiitae First Nation.
- Kirkland Lake is on the Robison-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples, as well as Beaverhouse First Nation.
- Each community is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous peoples have to these territories. We support their efforts to sustain and grow their nations. We also recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening local communities, the province, and Canada.

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