

Policy Note #42 | January 2023

Serve it Up: The Roll of French-Serving Service Providers in Creating Welcoming Communities

What Makes a Welcoming Community? (Series)

By: Mercedes Labelle



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Land Acknowledgement

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 Robinson-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.

This report was made possible through the support of our partner, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. Northern Policy Institute expresses great appreciation for their generous support 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 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: Mark Campbell

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Published by Northern Policy Institute

874 Tungsten St.

Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6T6

ISBN: 978-1-77868-042-7

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About the Partner: The City of Greater Sudbury

The City of Greater Sudbury is centrally located in Northeastern Ontario at the convergence of three major highways. It is situated on the Canadian Shield in the Great Lakes Basin and is composed of a rich mix of urban, suburban, rural and wilderness environments. Greater Sudbury is 3,627 square kilometres in area, making it the geographically largest municipality in Ontario and second largest in Canada.

In 2018, Greater Sudbury was home to approximately 166,000 people. It is a multicultural and truly bilingual community. Greater Sudbury is home to the third largest French population outside of Quebec. Approximately 38 per cent of people identify as knowing both official languages. Italian, Finnish, German, Ukrainian and Polish are the top five non official languages spoken in the City. More than six per cent of people living in the City are First Nations.

This research was made possible through the City of Greater Sudbury's workforce and immigration initiatives which are funded by FedNor and focus on increasing workforce and newcomer capacity in the region.

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.



NPI is pleased to have the support of FedNor for this important work to assess the impact of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot in Northern Ontario.

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Executive Summary

This paper presents the findings from the Service Provider Survey for organizations across the North that offer services to Francophones or offer services in French. French-service-providing organizations represent a subgroup of 22 organizations out of a total of 35 organizations that responded to this survey. The purpose of this survey was to assess the capacity of service-providing organizations to contribute to welcoming communities in Ontario's northern regions. This survey is a part of the larger Measurement Month initiative led by Northern Policy Institute, in partnership with organizations across Ontario's northern regions, to collect consistent and comparable community-level data on the themes of attraction, retention, reconciliation, anti-racism, and welcoming in the North.

This paper found that a total of 57 services are offered in the North by French-service-providing organizations, with the most reported service type being education. It also found that these organizations offer a variety of programs and services that help with the integration and retention of newcomers, and that promote community acceptance and welcoming of newcomers; most commonly, by hosting and inviting newcomers to networking events and by offering cross-cultural awareness training, respectfully. In terms of funding and

capacity, this paper found that 55 per cent of French-service-providing organizations feel they have sufficient capacity to meet their mandate. On the other hand, however, about a third of organizations that responded to this survey feel they do not have the capacity to meet their mandate. Moreover, it found a little more than half of French-service-providing organizations had some interactions with their community's RNIP program, while about a quarter actively participated in their community's RNIP program. Finally, 81 per cent of organizations indicated that they have worked in collaboration with other service providers; all of these organizations collaborated through resources sharing.

In consideration with the above findings, this paper recommends that French-service-providing organizations continue to form strategic partnerships to overcome limited resources, that they collaborate in terms of referring clients to the appropriate organization for their needs, and that employers promote diversity training to other employers and employees that are currently not involved in these activities. It is further recommended that there should be continued effort amongst organizations in the North to share, promote, and participate in these surveys to enable informed decision-making in Ontario's northern regions.



Introduction

In February 2022, Northern Policy Institute, in partnership with organizations across Northern Ontario, launched surveys to collect consistent, comparable data for our regions. These surveys were a part of the Measurement Month initiative, which will occur on a yearly basis.

The surveys focused on the themes of attraction, retention, reconciliation, anti-racism, and welcoming, and explored both individual experiences and the capacity of organizations.

In total, 35 organizations responded to the Service Provider Survey, 22 of which provide services to Francophones or offer services in French in Northern Ontario communities.

The purpose of this survey was to assess the capacity of French-serving¹ organizations in Ontario's northern regions based on what they offer, where, and to whom. Additional analysis was done on funding levels, clients served, collaboration, and interaction with the local Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program. There are also reports available that look at the experiences of individuals in Northern Ontario communities, including their access to and satisfaction with services.

To aid in both the attraction of migrants and the retention of people already living in our communities, there must be an adequate array of services offered. These services must be available to all diverse populations in a timely manner, and accessible physically, financially, and linguistically.

Methodology

French-serving organizations were selected for subgroup analysis based on both the high prevalence of French speakers in Northern Ontario and the Francophone Welcoming Communities initiative.

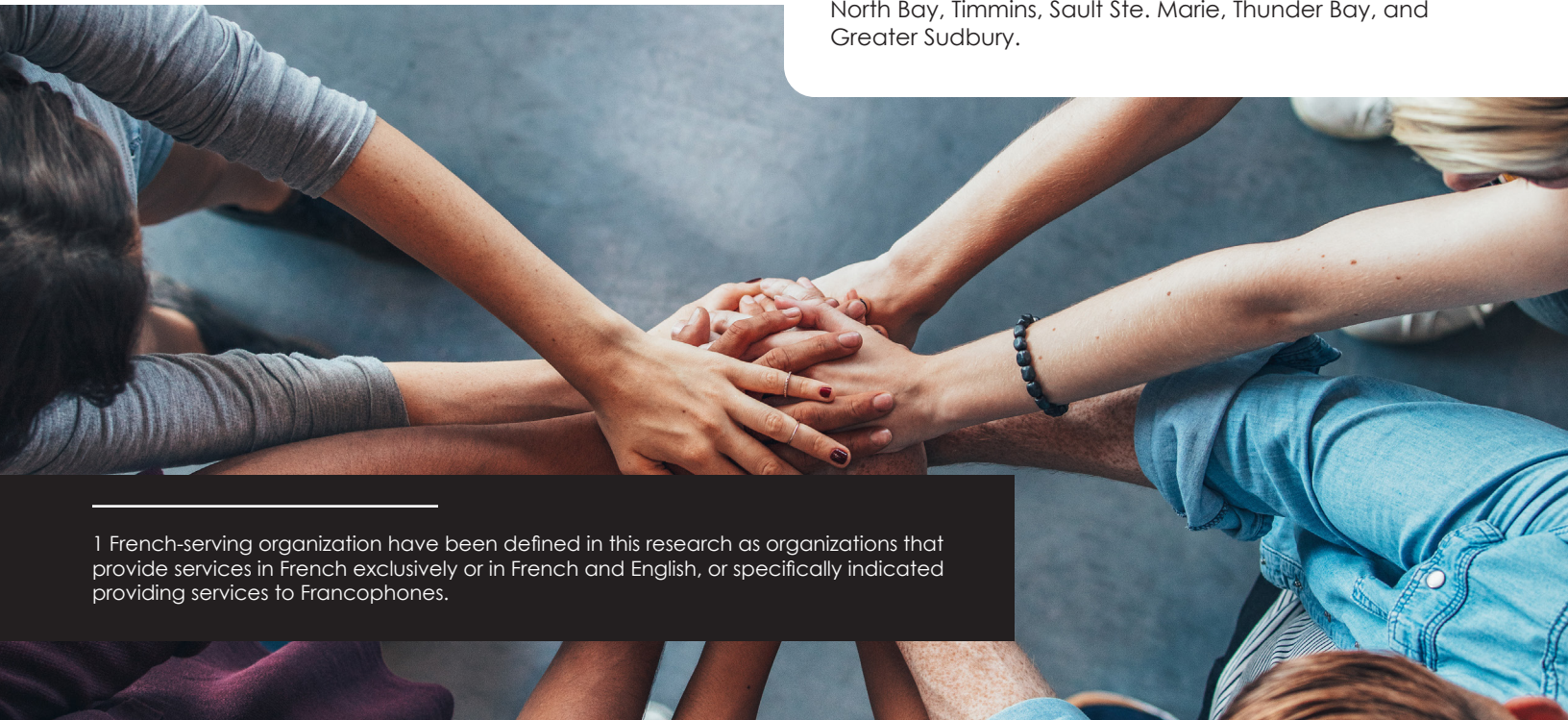
The challenges associated with this undertaking were creating service provider awareness of the survey, encouraging self-recognition among organizations that provide services outside of the traditional sense (e.g., direct Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada-funded settlement services), and securing survey participation. As such, distribution was a collective effort by organizations across Northern Ontario and took the form of targeted social media ads, direct distribution through emails, social media posts, newsletters, and information sessions. Respondents were entered into a draw to win one of two \$100 prepaid Visa gift cards.

All surveys and promotional materials were available in French and English.

In total, 22 unique organizations that provide services to Francophones and/or provide services in French responded to the Service Provider Survey. Ten of the respondents provide services in the Northeast and 15 provide services in the Northwest, as some organizations provide services to both regions.

Due to the respondent size, analysis is not available at the community or economic region-level, and thus is done cumulatively for the French-serving organizations in Northern Ontario. A broader analysis is conducted in a sister paper that looks at all organizations that provide services to the Big 5 communities in Northern Ontario—North Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, and Greater Sudbury.

¹ French-serving organization have been defined in this research as organizations that provide services in French exclusively or in French and English, or specifically indicated providing services to Francophones.

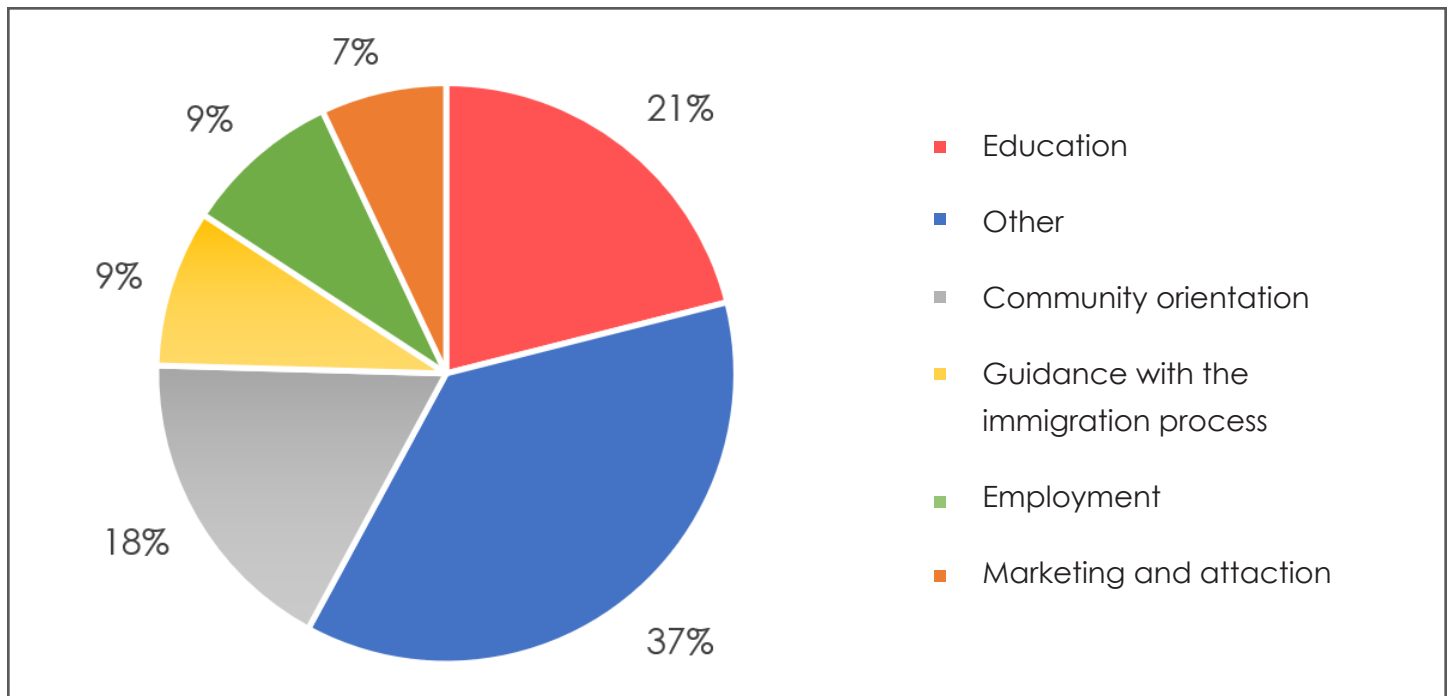


Services Available – By Type and Group

This survey was distributed across networks and targeted at any organization that provides services to French speakers, such as health, municipal, legal, settlement, or employment. Given that most service providers offer more than one service, there were 57 service offerings identified in total, provided by 22 organizations. For example, an organization that provides settlement services to newcomers may provide guidance with the immigration process, education in the form of language training, and employment in the form of resume building. This organization in the example would therefore provide three unique services even though they are only one entity.

Out of the 57 services provided to Francophones, the most reported services were education (21 per cent), community orientation (18 per cent), guidance with the immigration process (nine per cent), employment (nine per cent), and marketing and attraction (seven per cent). Conversely, services offered fewer than five per cent of the time were compiled into the 'other' category which includes justice services, food services, financial services, violence counselling, non-violence counselling, health services, visa/work permit applications, and other respondent identified services. Once combined, these services represent 37 per cent of the various services available.

Figure 1: Division of services available to Francophones in Northern Ontario, 2022



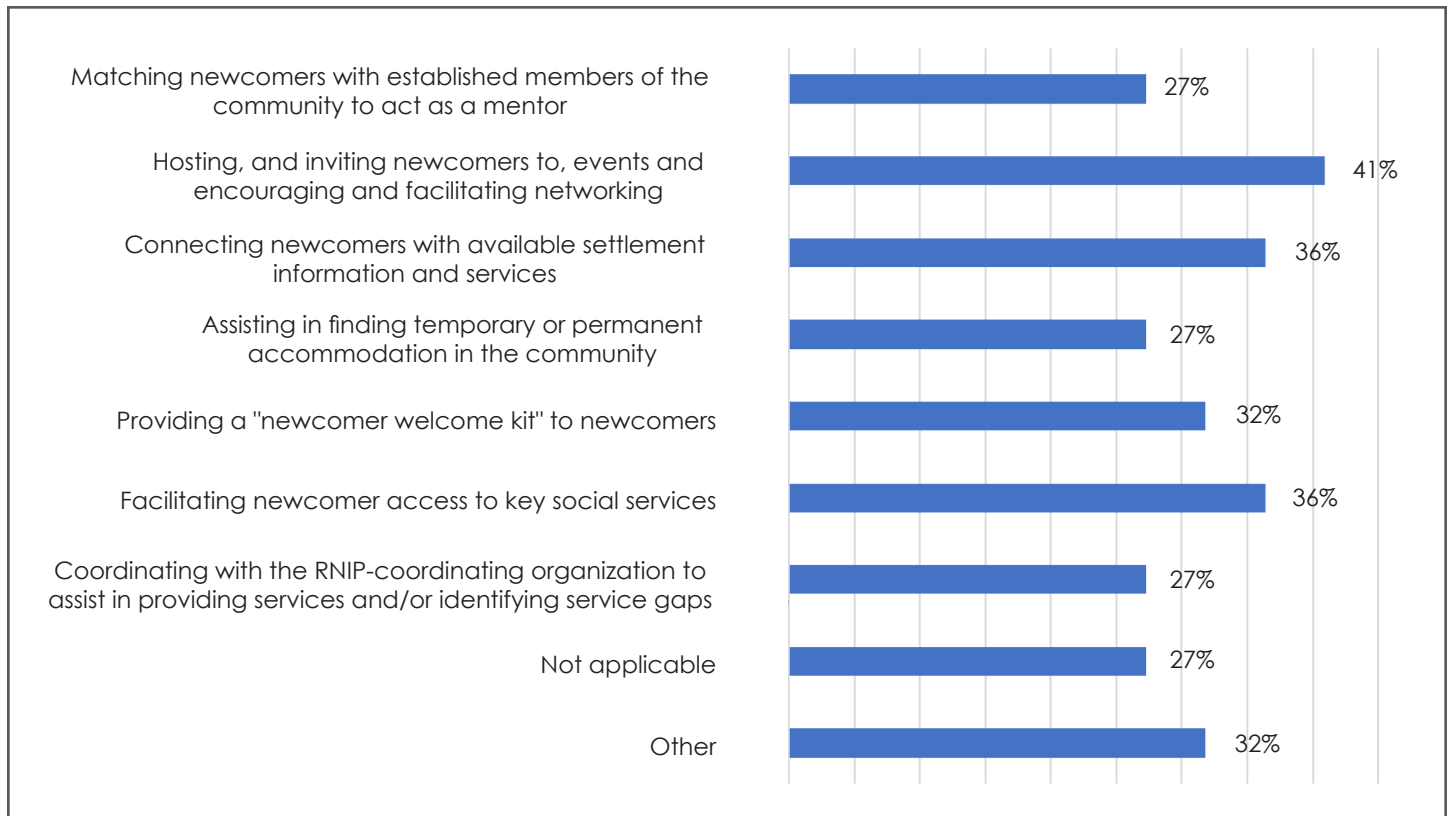
Although services might be available in a community, it does not necessarily mean all residents are aware of or eligible to access them. Services are geared most towards permanent residents, the general public, employers, women, people of colour, and youth. Many services funded by IRCC are not available to temporary residents which is evident given that out of the 22 French-servicing organizations, 68 per cent provide services to permanent residents, while 41 per cent provide services to temporary residents.

When asked if any of the programs and/or services offered were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, 50 per cent of respondents indicated yes. Most organizations indicated that operations and delivery had to be shifted to a virtual format, and in-person activities and events were cancelled.

Programs and Services

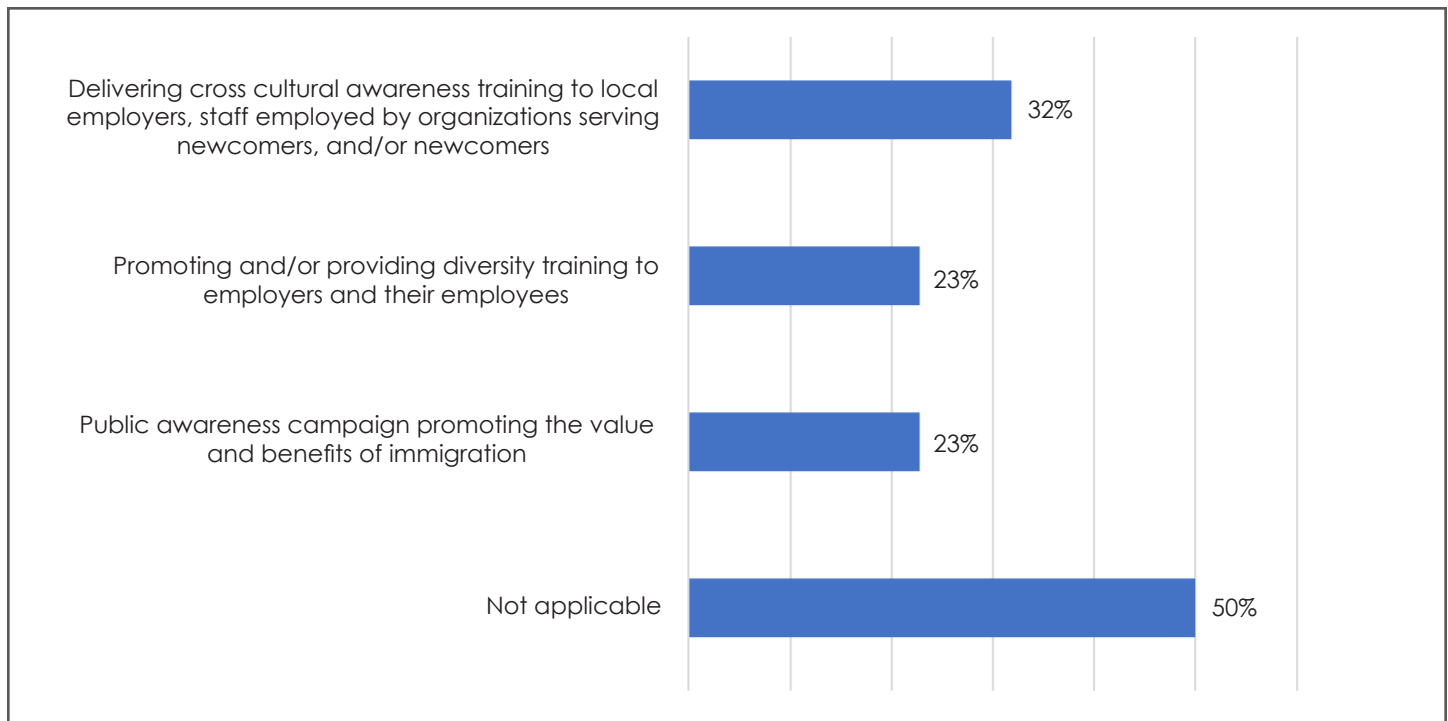
Organizations that responded to the survey offer a variety of programs and services to help with the integration and retention of newcomers. The most common are hosting and inviting newcomers to events and networking (41 per cent), connecting newcomers with settlement information and services (36 per cent), and facilitating newcomer access to key social services (36 per cent). Approximately 27 per cent of respondents do not provide programs and/or services to help with the integration and retention of newcomers.

Figure 2: French programs and/or services to help with the integration and retention of newcomers, 2022



Organizations that responded to the survey also provide programs and/or services to promote community acceptance and welcoming of newcomers. The most reported is cross-cultural awareness training for local employers, staff employed by organizations serving newcomers, and/or newcomers themselves (32 per cent). Fifty per cent of organizations that responded do not provide such programs or services.

Figure 3: French programs and/or services to promote community welcomeness and acceptance of newcomers, 2022



Capacity and funding

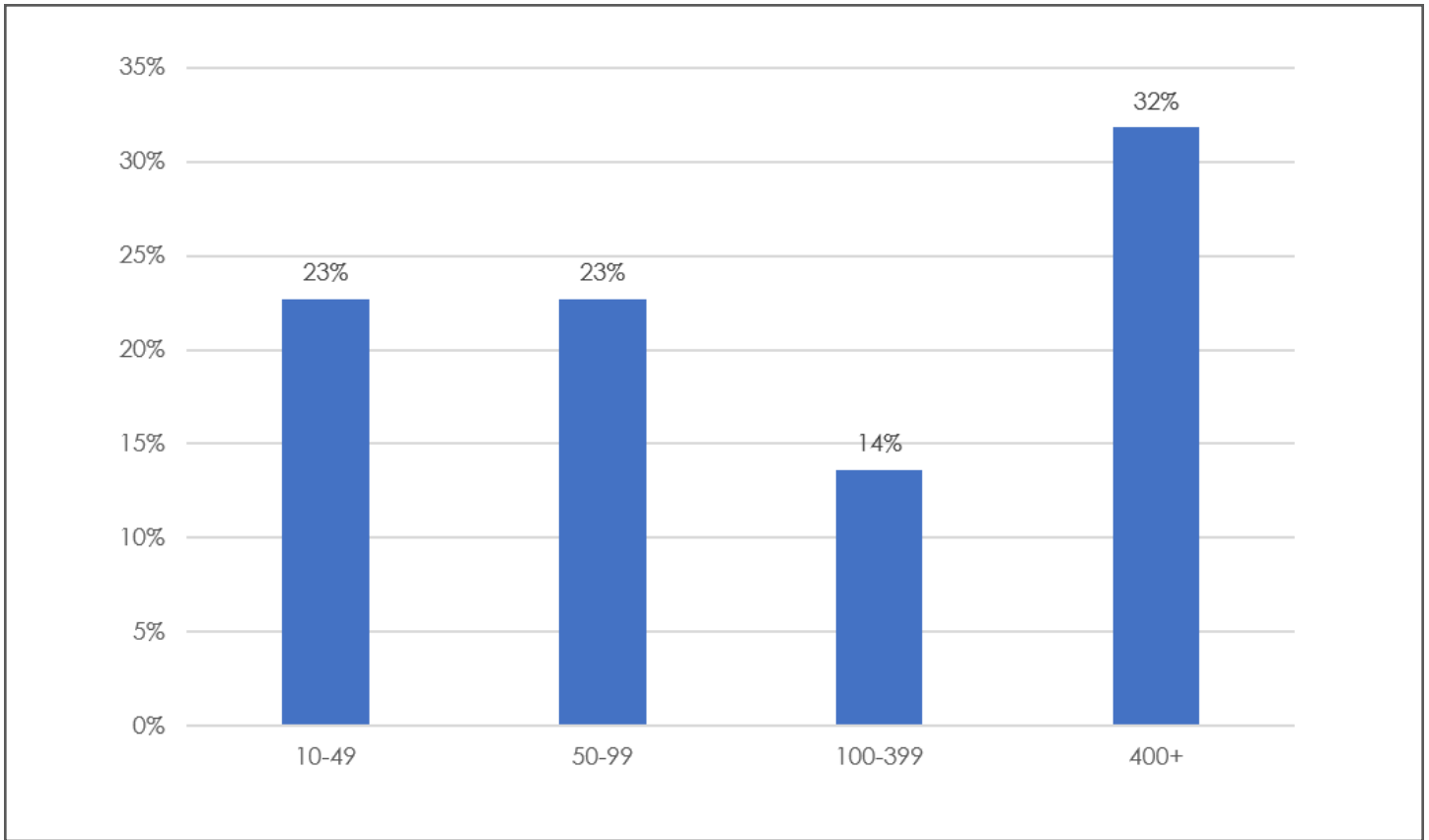
Among the French-service-providing organizations that responded to the survey, 55 per cent indicated having sufficient capacity to meet their mandate. Of these organizations, 42 per cent receive funding from the federal and provincial governments. None of these organizations stated that they receive donations.

Conversely, 32 per cent of respondents indicated that they did not have sufficient capacity to meet their mandate. The most common sources of funding for these organizations include federal and provincial governments and donations. Some organizations that do not have sufficient capacity to meet their mandate had to alter their operations because of COVID-19.

A sizeable number of respondents indicated that they serve over 400 clients annually (32 per cent). On the other hand, 14 per cent indicated that they serve between 100 and 399 clients, while 46 per cent serve fewer than 100 clients. Thirty-six per cent of respondents reported an increase in client numbers in the past 12 months and 41 per cent indicated no change during that time.²

² The remaining per cent of respondents either did not provide a valid response, or reported a decrease in clients.



Figure 4: Clients served, February 2021 to February 2022

Involvement with the RNIP

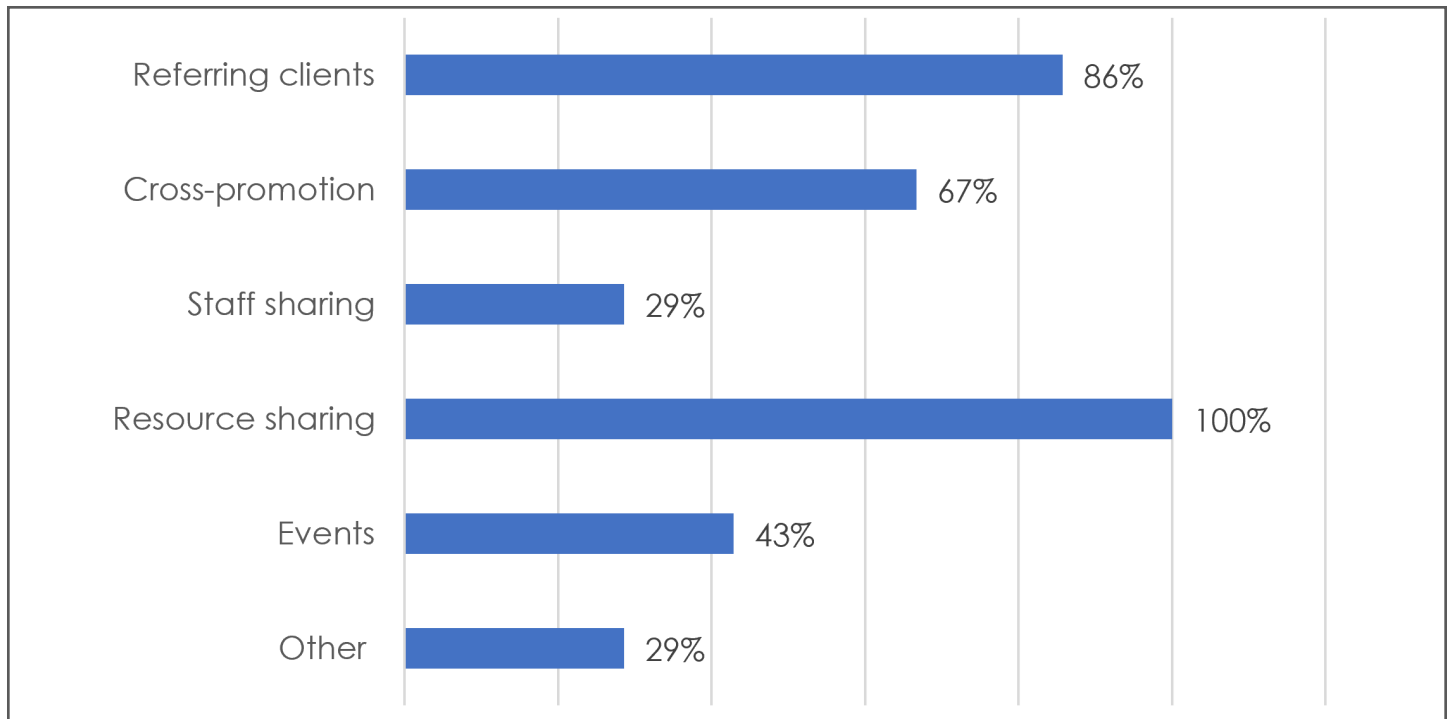
Among respondents, 23 per cent indicated that their organization has aided in the reporting activities, outputs, and/or outcomes of their community's RNIP program. Twenty-three per cent were unsure and 50 per cent did not aid in RNIP reporting activities, outputs, and/or outcomes.

Furthermore, 50 per cent of respondents indicated they had interacted in some way with their local community's RNIP program. Twenty-seven per cent indicated no interaction with the RNIP program.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

Eighty-two per cent of respondents indicated that their organization has worked in collaboration and/or partnership with other service providers. The most common types of collaboration include resource sharing (68 per cent), referring clients (59 per cent), and cross-promotion (55 per cent). When asked about willingness to collaborate with organizations doing similar work, most respondents were very willing (73 per cent).

Figure 5: Collaboration with other agencies, by type of collaboration, 2022



Conclusion and Recommendations

Community-level data availability is crucial in making informed decisions. Thus, there should be continued effort to share, promote, and participate in these surveys across Northern Ontario. With granular data, there is the opportunity for comparability across regions, allowing for the identification of best practices and areas for improvement.

Regardless, valuable information about the responding organizations has been gathered through this survey, notably:

- There is a high willingness to collaborate with other organizations doing similar work. In fact, all respondents that indicated they collaborate with other organizations do so through resource sharing. Continuing to form strategic partnerships might address feelings of 'not having enough capacity to meet our mandate.'
- Collaboration in terms of referring clients, which many organizations already do, will help promote a 'no-wrong-door approach,' ensuring that people seeking services are directed to the correct organization based on their situation. Additionally, continuing to communicate services that are available will help raise the profile and use of these services among those already in the community and those looking to migrate.
- There are services available to help with the integration and retention of newcomers, and to promote community welcomeness and acceptance of newcomers. But there are still organizations who do not offer or partake in these activities. As a starting point, employers can work to promote and/or provide diversity training to other employers and their employees (note that service providers are also employers). This is particularly important when working with/providing services to newcomers and/or groups that identify as marginalized.



About Northern Policy Institute

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities based in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Our permanent offices are in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. During the summer months we have satellite offices in other regions of Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.

Related Research

**Magnetic North Conference Report,
February 2022**
Mercedes Labelle

**Serve it Up: The Roll of Service Providers
in Creating Welcoming Communities,
January 2023**
Mercedes Labelle

**Come North 2020 Conference Report,
December 2020**
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