

MANITOBA RURAL IMMIGRATION TOOLKIT

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Background / Introduction

Why communities choose immigration as a growth strategy

- Many rural areas and smaller centres in Canada have experienced depopulation and a shift of population toward larger urban centres. As a result, communities are looking for ways to reverse this trend to help ensure a vibrant future by exploring economic growth strategies. Immigration is one economic growth strategy that has been used successfully by some communities.
- Manitoba's Economic Growth Action Plan identifies the importance of international immigration as a successful tool in bridging labour market gaps in Manitoba. As a growth strategy, immigration will have a major impact on your community; however, it is only one component. You may also consider other economic strategies such as local retraining, indigenous recruitment, inter-provincial migration and business recruitment, in order to ensure a balanced approach that complements your current population base and community assets.

Where immigrants are settling in Canada

- Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* identifies who may apply to immigrate to Canada under one of three immigrant categories: Family Class, Economic Class and Humanitarian Class. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) plans annual immigration levels in consultation with provinces and territories. Manitoba works closely with federal partners, communities, businesses, service providers and other stakeholders to support a balanced approach to immigration through all categories.
- In 2017, approximately 57% of immigrants arrived in three major cities in Canada: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial immigration ministers are exploring opportunities to spread the benefits of immigration more evenly across Canada, including to smaller and remote communities and regions.

How immigrants come to Manitoba

- Immigration is a shared responsibility of the governments of Canada and Manitoba. Through the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement (CMIA), Manitoba has negotiated an active role in immigrant recruitment and selection through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) to reflect Manitoba's priorities including addressing regional economic and labour market needs.
- The MPNP nominates skilled workers and entrepreneurs who have the training, skills and experience to meet in-demand employment opportunities or invest in value-added

businesses in Manitoba. The program takes into consideration other factors including age, work experience and language requirements in English or French.

- In 2017, over 64% of Manitoba's immigrants came through the MPNP and accounted for over 93.7% of Manitoba's total Economic Class landings. As a significant component of the Economic Class, the MPNP provides smaller communities with the flexibility to respond to local needs and strengthen opportunities for economic growth.
- Employers play a critical role in MB's growth strategy by articulating their labour market needs and working with their communities and the MPNP in attracting foreign talent and investment. Their continued involvement in the front end of the recruitment process demonstrates ongoing need for immigration.

Resources

- [Manitoba Growing Through Immigration](#)
- [Manitoba Immigration Data Portal](#)
- [Manitoba's Economic Growth Action Plan](#)
- [Manitoba Immigration Facts Report 2016](#)
- [Manitoba Immigration, Employer Supports](#)
- [Government of Canada Open Government Portal](#)
- [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration 2018](#)
- [Immigration Strategies for Rural Communities](#)
- [Regionalization of Immigration](#)

Get Started - Immigration as a Community Growth Strategy

1. Explore Community Receptiveness to Immigration

There are a number of questions to consider when thinking about supporting immigration to your community, including asking if the community:

- understands the population realities it faces, including birth and death rates and aging population
- supports expanding the population in the community
- has an existing immigrant population
- has resources/services available to help new families integrate into the community
- has challenges with retention or concerns about out-migration
- has evidence to support the need for immigration vs. local capital
- has a vision for its future

For any community growth strategy to work, there must be a consensus among leaders and decision-makers with significant public support in the community – the community stakeholders. The first step is to identify these individuals.

2. Identify Community Stakeholders

A local stakeholder has an interest in the success of the community. It may be a public sector service agency, a key employer or a local opinion leader.

Once you have identified community stakeholders, informal and formal discussions can begin around immigration as a community growth strategy. These discussions will assist in developing community interest, identifying messengers connected to the greater community and making a shortlist of those to consider for a committee for immigration planning.

When considering community stakeholders it is natural to identify the economic representatives first. However, with any sustainable community development model, identifying and including the social and environmental representatives is equally important.

3. Build Community Support

You have now had informal discussions with your local community stakeholders. Depending on the results of these informal talks, you may choose to explore community immigration prospects

in a more formal manner. A team of interested individuals will need to be brought together for this next stage.

4. Establish an Immigration Committee

The immigration committee should consist of willing stakeholders you have identified as key players, capable of working together to make decisions about community growth. They do not have to be fully supportive of immigration, but rather be willing to contribute their expertise to inform decision-making by the committee. Elected officials can not be part of the immigration committee.

They may be community champions, those responsible for key community resources, such as health, education and business; those with committee and board experience and those with expertise and interest in community development. Not all key players may be available to join at the start. As gaps in representation are identified, and momentum grows, others may be required.

5. Learn From Other Communities

Manitoba has a number of communities that have adopted an immigration strategy as part of their economic growth plans. Their strategies and experiences are as diverse as the communities themselves. A few of the community stories have been captured in case studies available in the resource section below. The community case studies are examples of different approaches. A few community immigration programs have developed informal ways of assisting and sharing ideas. Lessons learned from these case studies may provide ideas for your community planning process.

RESOURCES

- [Hire Immigrants](#)
- [Volunteer Manitoba](#)
- [Voluntary Sector Initiative \(VSI\)](#)
- [Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Parkland Region](#)
- [Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Portage la Prairie Region](#)
- [Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Steinbach Region](#)
- [Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies – Winkler Region](#)
- [Manitoba Education and Training](#)
- [Apprenticeship Branch](#)
- [Manitoba Agriculture](#)

Community Need and Capacity Assessment

What is community need and capacity assessment?

Conducting an internal and external environmental scan means taking a look at your community's resources, strengths and assets in light of trends and influences affecting you. The internal environmental scan takes an inventory of your community resources. For example, these can include the people, health, education, businesses and job opportunities, housing, art and culture, leisure and entertainment and geography. From this snapshot, you can later extract your community's key strengths and develop strategies that support your priorities.

An external environmental scan looks at what is happening outside of your community on a regional, provincial, national and global level that may affect immigration and your community. This would include government policies as well as population, economy and lifestyle trends.

1. Internal Environmental Scan – Assess Community Capacity

The starting point for an environmental scan is developing an inventory of community resources. Assessing community capacity is fundamental for ensuring sustainability of your growth strategy.

This inventory should be exhaustive and include detailed information on each sector of the community. For example, when reviewing the business environment be sure to capture information on:

- The size and type of sectors represented
- How many people they currently employ
- Business expansion initiatives
- Employee shortages
- Skills required
- Business growth opportunities
- Gaps in the communities' business sector

This inventory will provide a wealth of information that can be used for many purposes including developing the community marketing plan, recruitment plans, identifying gaps in community services and leveraging unique community strengths. It will also provide you with an understanding of the resources that will be impacted by immigration, allowing you time to prepare both resource providers and the community at large.

2. External Environmental Scan – Population, Policy and Economy

Your community's population is impacted by what is happening regionally, provincially, nationally, and globally. To truly understand community population you will have to build a population "picture" for your community. This picture consists of:

- Global population trends
- National population trends and immigration policy
- Provincial populations trends and immigration policy
- Local and regional population trends, economic needs

3. Conduct a SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is a framework for analyzing your community's Strengths and Weaknesses, and the Opportunities and Threats. Once you identify your strengths and weaknesses, you can minimize threats, and take advantage of opportunities available to you.

Strengths

- What does your community do well?
- What unique resources do you have?
- What networks exist for newcomers?
- What do others see as your strengths?

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- Where do you have fewer resources than other communities?
- What do others see as your weakness?

Opportunities

- What good opportunities are available to you?
- What trends can you take advantage of?
- How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

Threats

- What trends could affect you negatively?
- What are competing communities doing better?
- How would a weakness be potential threat?

4. Assess the Social Infrastructure

You have now completed your inventory of resources and determined your community's strengths and weaknesses. Take some time and try and view your community from the perspective of an immigrant, someone who is looking to make your community their new home.

Ask yourself:

- Does the community have the resources I need to ensure that my family's settlement experience is simple and positive and that all of our basic needs are met?
- What services do they have and will they be easy for us to access? Who in the community will assist us or answer our questions?
- How can we strengthen English language proficiency in this community?

Your environmental scan will go a long way in providing you with information to answer some of these questions. Health, education and housing are the immediate requirements that come to mind, however within the realm of education it is important to consider language-training opportunities for all ages.

Resources

- [Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations](#)

Develop an Immigration Plan

1. Identify a Community Contact Person for Immigration

Your research and collection of information for your environmental scans is complete:

- You have an external scan taking into account economic, political and social conditions provincially and nationally that will have an impact on your community.
- Your internal scan provides an inventory of the resources your community has along with an identification of gaps.
- Your Immigration Committee is structured.
- Feedback from the community on immigration as a growth strategy is positive.

You are ready to define goals and objectives specific to immigration. It is natural for your committee and others to want immediate results from immigration activities. However, immigration is a long-term process requiring a multi-year plan for positive sustainable results for all your partners.

Taking into consideration what you have learned from the internal and external environmental scans here are some questions to consider:

- What is your community's target number of immigrant arrivals?
- How much time will it take before immigrants begin to arrive taking into consideration the time required for the immigration application process?
- Does the community have a marketing plan?
- Is there a community immigration contact person?
- What do we need to do to ensure successful settlement and retention?
- Can we describe the profile of the immigrant that would settle most quickly and successfully here?
- How do we recruit? Who is able to recruit?
- What countries and skills/talents should we target?

2. Identify a Community Contact Person for Immigration

Before immigrants start to arrive, the community needs to identify the key contact person for immigrants, the community and the media. This could mean a person at the town/city hall or economic development office, chamber of commerce, or any number of other options, depending on what is right for your community.

The key contact person provides the community, media, government and immigrants with a centralized point from which requests for information can be coordinated and directed to

appropriate community resources. The key contact will need to be knowledgeable, informed and well acquainted with community services and resources immigrants will need in the settlement process. As well, the key contact plays an important role in keeping the community informed about activities, assessing needs, coordinating and planning for services.

There are other resources in the community that are key to the settlement process and you would have identified them in your community environmental scan. For example, 'Welcome Wagon', schools, language training programs and medical clinics. Volunteers are also instrumental in supporting and welcoming immigrants to the community.

3. Design a Community Marketing Plan

Why a Marketing Plan is Important

A community marketing plan is an important tool that will provide direction for advertising and promotion that your community undertakes. It will assist in identifying recruitment opportunities and ensure a consistent community message.

Your community has something different and special to offer. It is important to be able to articulate the characteristics that set you apart from others. Once articulated you will have a better understanding of the type of families, and perhaps cultures, that may find your community attractive. Identifying these values and characteristics will help you with your recruitment plan and aid in settlement and retention.

Source Information Required to Design a Marketing Plan

A lot of the information you need to create a marketing plan will be available in your environmental scans. Key information from the environmental scans is information from local businesses (skills needed, employment opportunities), entrepreneurial opportunities (what businesses are for sale, what businesses are needed) and farms for sale.

Assess Advertising and Promotional Tools

As a community you will have a number of advertising and promotional tools that you use for other initiatives. These tools can be expanded to include content about your community's significant immigration advantages. Some tools have proven to be highly effective for increasing awareness about immigration destinations including:

- Community website
- Community orientation guide for immigrants
- Immigrant settlement services brochures
- Advertisements for placement in local and international magazines and newspapers

4. Design a Recruitment Strategy

A community has several different options for recruiting such as recruiting immigrants directly from overseas, temporary foreign workers, international students, recruiting newcomers/immigrants from larger centers and attracting migrants from other parts of Manitoba and Canada. The MPNP's Business Entrepreneur and Farm Investor Pathways are also an opportunity for rural communities to recruit experienced entrepreneurs and farmers from overseas. Your recruitment plan may include all or one of these potential opportunities.

Communities involved in the recruitment process can plan, prepare and be in direct contact with the immigrant. You will know who is arriving and their anticipated date of arrival. Establishing a relationship with prospective immigrants will help in the exchange of information about arrivals.

In some cases, individual immigrant applicants have chosen to work with an immigration consultant or representative. This is an applicant's own decision. If applicants wish to use the services of an immigration representative or recruiter, note that Manitoba will only recognize or release information to paid immigration representatives who:

- are members in good standing of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants or a law society within Canada; and
- have signed and complied to the Manitoba [Code of Conduct for immigration representatives](#) and are named by the applicant and/or employer in a signed [Information Release form](#).

5. Plan for Successful Settlement and Retention

Your objective is to build a "Welcoming Community" that will ensure the successful settlement and retention of the immigrants you attract. A Welcoming Community is identified as one that:

- Respects diversity
- Has accessible public services
- Has a range of education opportunities
- Promotes health and wellness for all
- Is safe
- Invites people new to the community to share leisure time activities
- Respects faith and spirituality
- Prepares for the short and long term challenges of newcomer integration towards full participation in community life

It is important to ask a lot of questions about the points above such as: How would you assess your community on these points? How might your community need to change or adapt to be more welcoming?

When immigrants first arrive in your community the most pressing and important questions they will have are related to housing, employment, school, health, EAL, and social services. Responding to these immediate needs is the first step in delivering settlement services.

Other important considerations are:

- **Community Outreach (prepare the community)**
How will the immigration plan be promoted in the community to ensure strong, ongoing support and participation?
- **A Volunteer Network**
Can you identify volunteers who can be a part of the “support system” for the new immigrants when they move to the area?
- **An Employer Support System**
Have you developed information for potential employers on cultural diversity, EAL classes in the workplace, Employment Standards, and other settlement issues that can influence retention of workers?

6. Finalize the Immigration Plan

Your community’s groundwork is now completed and your plan is almost ready for implementation. The plan has been shared with all community stakeholders and Manitoba Immigration and Economic Opportunities.

Resources

- [Immigration Supports Manitoba Businesses](#)
- [Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations](#)
- [TrieC Learning](#)
- [Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants](#)

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

Share and Promote the Plan in the Community

The plan is being implemented and recruitment to your community has begun. It is important at this point to manage community expectations. It is not unusual for people to think that immigrants will begin arriving weeks after your plan has been implemented. However, the reality is that immigration is a long-term process.

Once you have begun implementing your plan, it is likely that it will take a year before immigrants begin to arrive. However, this time is necessary for the community to continue to prepare.

An example of preparation might include enhancing multiculturalism and diversity training in schools, churches, service clubs and businesses, supported by the local media. This will give the community an opportunity to think about cultural diversity.

Coordinate Promotional Activities

Several different promotional activities may be underway including advertising, recruitment shows and community tours. Monitoring, measuring and building tracking mechanisms into these activities will help identify what is working, what needs enhancement and what needs to be changed.

Prepare to Deliver Settlement Services

Connection and communication with immigrant families prior to arrival is important. It helps the community to develop a greater connection and it also sends the message to the newcomer family that their arrival is anticipated and welcomed. Knowing exactly when the families are scheduled to arrive will allow you to extend a personal welcome and make transportation arrangements for them. As well, community service providers will have time to prepare and put the finishing touches on programs or changes they may be preparing to implement.

Assess Your Plan - Build On What You Have Learned

Moving Forward - The Evolving Community Immigration Strategy

Flexibility is an important aspect of your immigration plan. Expect to make modifications to your plan in order to continue to attract immigrants to your community and retain those that have arrived. Retention occurs when the immigrant is no longer an immigrant but a member of your community. Focusing on this transition helps families get the supports they need. These will change as time goes on.

Keeping in touch with various segments of the community including the immigrants and asking for their feedback will allow you to gauge if change is needed.

- Make sure that immigrants have access to the same services as the rest of community and check to determine if language is an access barrier
- Encourage the participation of local church groups and community groups to help with the transition
- Ask a local ministry for spiritual support, if appropriate and where needed

Goals, objectives and measurements are all included in your plan. It is important to take the time to assess what has been achieved, incorporate changes for the next cycle, and celebrate your successes as a community.

Manage the Cycle of Community Growth

Your plan has been assessed and perhaps some changes have been made. As your community moves forward and builds on its immigration strategy, challenges will continue to arise but well planned gradual growth will allow you time to make the necessary adjustments, develop additional community resources and identify future needs.

The cycle of immigration recruitment is never complete and builds momentum over time. Word of mouth among new immigrants with happy and successful experiences often form the basis of new waves of immigration of friends and family in the future.

Along with growing pains, a number of community-specific lessons are usually learned, to influence the next year's plan. Throughout the process feedback is received from the community, service providers, immigrants and other stakeholders. Some challenges can be addressed immediately and others may require more effort and resources.

Pressure points that communities can experience are within schools, health facilities and housing. Constant monitoring and open communication of the challenges will allow the community to be able to assist in finding solutions. Communities that develop manageable growth strategies are able to successfully address the challenges that occur with any type of growth or change.

Revisit your internal and external environmental scans, analyse the composition of your Immigration Committee and determine if the committee mandate needs to be revised. Take the pulse of the community to determine how it is feeling about the changes brought through immigration. Determine if new or different programs or training are required.

Resources

- [Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations](#)
- [Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations – Regional Community Coordinator](#)