



Supporting Organizations
Supporting Immigrants

Aider les organismes
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REPORT

Atlantic Immigration Program Intercultural Competency Working Group

902-431-3203 • info@araisa.ca • 2132B-6960 Mumford Road, Halifax, NS B3L 4P1

araisa.ca

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INTRODUCTION

1. Mandate of the working group

The mandate of the Intercultural Competency Working Group was to act as an advisory board to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the provincial governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador as they work to design the permanent Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP). In supporting the work of the AIP design, members explored options to better support employers by embedding 'welcoming workplaces' further into the design of the AIP. The exploration of options included members of the working group providing valuable feedback to IRCC and the four Atlantic Provinces on key elements that should be included in an intercultural competency training as part of a permanent AIP program. The member feedback was formulated into five recommendations (see recommendations section) which highlight the preferred core topics, format, duration, and audience, of an intercultural competency training aimed at AIP employers. The recommendations also included feedback on assessing the cultural competency of employers. In addition, members were tasked with identifying areas that may require additional investment such as: gaps in services, modalities of training, and geographic areas that are not currently being served.

2. Participants

The working group was co-chaired by IRCC and the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA), and included participation of representatives from: PEI Association for Newcomers, Société Nationale de l'Acadie, Association for New Canadians NL, YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth, Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area, Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick Multicultural Council. Members from each of the four Atlantic provincial governments were also represented on the working group, as well as several IRCC staff.

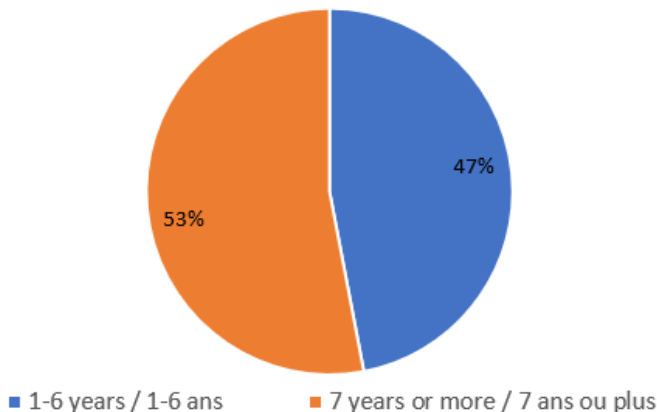
MEETINGS

Five working group meetings were held between April 28th and June 30th, 2021. The first meeting reviewed some of the findings of the AIP evaluation and provided the context for the working group by noting the need to create 'welcoming workplaces' and encourage more employers to access Intercultural Competency Training. The mandate of the working group (noted above) was also established during this first meeting. The second meeting established the scope of the working group which was to discuss and identify core elements of an Intercultural Competency Training (ICT). The third meeting discussed the findings of a survey completed by working group members and other service providers currently offering ICT within the Atlantic region. These findings laid the groundwork for establishing the recommendations which were presented to the working group for feedback during the fourth meeting. In the fifth meeting, a final version of the recommendations was presented to the working group.

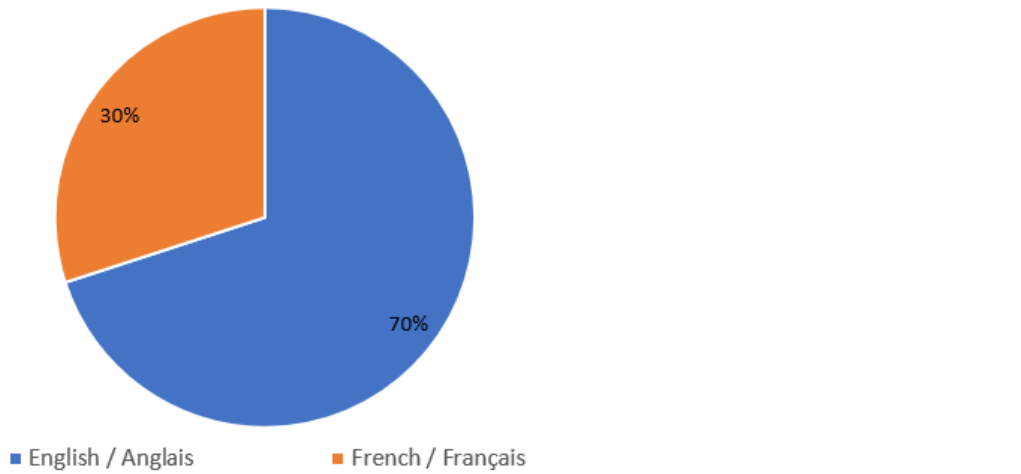
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

An environmental scan consisting of a survey of settlement service providing organizations was conducted to inform and support the recommendations of the working group. The survey was sent to 30 service providers within the Atlantic region who provide ICT, and of those, 21 of them provided responses. The following are some of the highlights of the survey results:

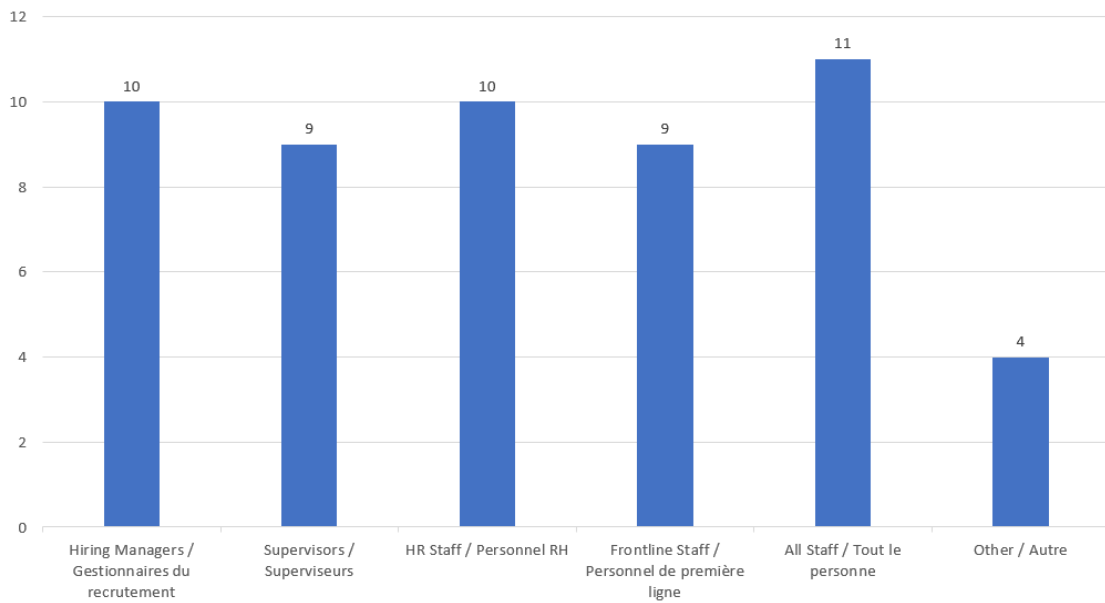
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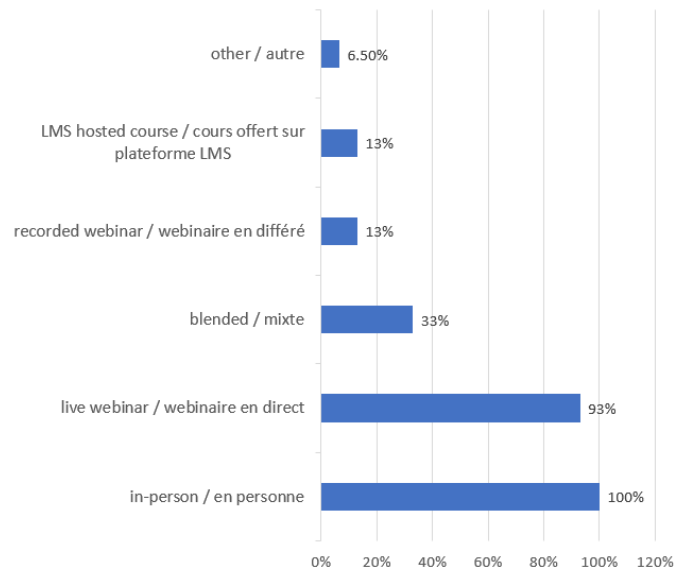
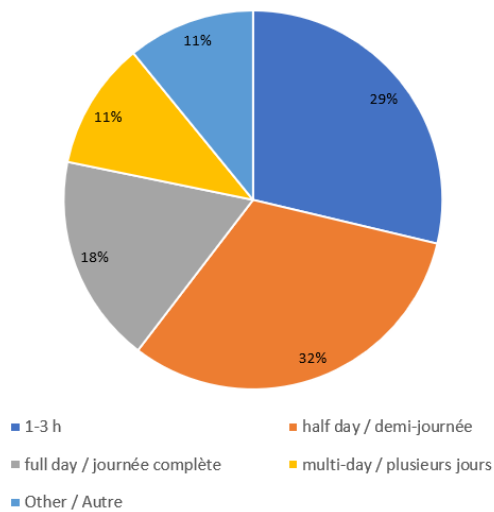
What is the language of training delivery? / Dans quelle langue se donne la formation?



Participants



Duration & Format



Additionally, survey respondents noted that feedback from employers indicated that they valued the flexibility of program delivery as well as varied methods of delivery that allowed them to access the training on their devices. As well, employers stated that they appreciated the interactive and practical aspect of the training along with hearing newcomer perspectives.

Some survey respondents shared occasional challenges in ICT delivery to employers, noting that at times employers did not seem very engaged in the training and were even resistant to participating in it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a culmination of working group discussions, member feedback, and survey results, five recommendations were made by the working group regarding ICT options that would be most suitable for AIP employers.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the following 3 core topics to be covered in the delivery of all Intercultural Competency Training provided by service provider organizations:

Creating welcoming and culturally inclusive workplaces:

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Effective teamwork within a culturally diverse workplace

Understanding newcomer experiences:

- Journey (highlight various: GARs, Economic, etc.)
- Settlement needs
- Culture shock
- Systemic barriers and challenges

Understanding culture:

- Awareness of one's own culture, values, biases and ethnocentricity
- Understanding cultural variations (e.g., individual vs. collective, hierarchical vs. egalitarian, difference in leadership/teamwork styles)
- Culturally appropriate communication (e.g., providing feedback, resolving conflict)

Recommendation #2

Method / Format

Working Group members indicate that ICT training is most effective when the delivery method allows for interactive and participatory activities. A survey of SPOs also noted the importance of participant engagement in the training for it to be most beneficial. As a result of these findings, the working group recommends that the mandatory ICT training ideally be provided in-person. A live webinar format should also be available for instances when in-person training is not feasible.

The working group also notes that there would be considerable benefit to providing a supplemental self-paced online training option to employers. Such an option would allow more employees to benefit from the training, particularly in cases where there are scheduling and time constraints. This recommendation is meant to be considered as a potential future optional offering to employers which would not be part of the mandatory ICT requirement.

Recommendation #3

Duration

Based on responses in the survey regarding the duration of Intercultural Competency Trainings, as well as feedback from working group members, we recommend that the duration for basic Intercultural Competency Training be a half day (3-4 hours).

Recommendation #4

Audience

We recognize that while training as many AIP employer staff as possible in Intercultural Competence would be beneficial, it is not feasible under the scope of this project. As such, we recommend that trainings be directed at staff in managerial or higher-level leadership positions.

Recommendation #5

Assessing Cultural Competency of Employers

Members did not feel there were easily measured criteria or methods to assess employer competency, and employer self-assessment was seen as problematic. While no consensus was reached on this point, it was noted that no matter what level of competence an employer thinks they may already have, taking ICT would still be a benefit to them, their employees, and their company.

NEXT STEPS

In order to ensure that all SPOs who will be delivering Intercultural Competency Training to AIP employers have access to common resources for use or incorporation into existing training materials, ARAISA will hire a consultant to develop a curriculum based on the above recommendations. As such, it is anticipated the curriculum will cover core topics such as: Creating welcoming and culturally inclusive workplaces, understanding newcomer experiences, and developing cultural understanding and awareness. In following with the recommendations, the curriculum will also be developed to be delivered either in-person or live webinar to management level participants during a half-day session. In conjunction with developing curriculum materials, the consultant will also develop and deliver a Train the Trainer course for SPO staff in the Atlantic region who may benefit from additional support to deliver training specific to AIP-designated employers.

CONCLUSION

The working group set out to explore options to make 'welcoming workplaces' a feature of the AIP design. Members provided valuable feedback on Intercultural Competency Training during meeting discussions and through a survey. The information members provided formed the foundation of four recommendations to be included in an ICT for AIP employers. Once these recommendations are applied through the development of a curriculum and a Train the Trainer course, the ICT training will become more readily accessible for employers and should ultimately result in employers creating more 'welcoming workplaces' for all their employees.

We would like to thank all working group members for their active participation and thoughtful feedback.