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# Final Report

## Newcomer Integration through Community Engagement in Brandon, Manitoba

### Executive Summary

The "Newcomer Integration through Community Engagement in Brandon" project is a collaborative research initiative between the Rural Development Institute (RDI) and the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership (BLIP) of Westman Immigrant Services (WIS). This research, funded by a SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant. It revisited the newcomer community in Brandon to assess persistent challenges and identify new ones. The primary goal was to engage newcomers directly through Participatory Action Research to prioritize their top challenges and suggest actionable recommendations to enhance integration, and also to create a community data portal that collates and synthesizes available data into one accessible place.

This research was initiated as a follow-up, building on RDI's previous immigration research in Manitoba and the Westman Region, including a 2023 review of 118 articles. Therefore, in 2024, the RDI and BLIP conducted 9 focus groups with 64 participants from over 10 different newcomer communities to gather this information. The participants were asked to prioritize top ten challenges from a pre-defined list, and the research team led discussions based on these choices. The following are identified as top 10 challenges.

1. Lack of suitable job opportunities
2. Challenges in accessing services
3. Housing challenges
4. Discrimination and bias
5. Access to skill services
6. Transportation issues
7. Inadequate information and guidance on available services
8. Language barriers
9. Financial assistance
10. Recreation activities

Lack of suitable jobs was the #1 priority for 6 out of 9 groups. To enhance newcomer integration, workforce agencies should have a clear understanding of employer needs and align the newcomers' skills accordingly or identify newcomers' who have capabilities to work in different sectors and grow in that job itself, streamline credential recognition, and create pathways such as volunteering, shadowing, or apprenticeships for internationally trained professionals to gain relevant experience and employment.

All nine groups have highlighted access to services as one of the top 10, while Indian and Filipinos mentioned as number 1 priority. However it is to be noted that many of these groups cited access to health as major challenge. Long waiting hours and a lack of doctors are a big concern in Brandon.

When it comes to access to other services, immigrants often work long hours or irregular shifts that overlap with the opening hours of most service providers (e.g., clinics, settlement services). As a result, they find it challenging to access healthcare, legal help, career support, or other essential services without risking of losing wages. The participants suggested that evening or flexible online platforms would help them in accessing such services.

All 9 groups identified high rental costs and a lack of affordable housing, combined with low incomes, as major housing issues, along with rental owners requesting unfair documentation. Ukrainians highlighted this as their number 1 challenge. Landlords requesting credit history, references, and financial proof pose challenges in securing housing. Asking newcomers for referrals, credit history and financial documentation within the first few days of landing in Brandon is not possible for newcomers to give.

8 out of 9 groups prioritized discrimination and racial bias as one of the key concerns. The Muslim community and the Nigerian community considered this as their second most important challenge. Participants assume that discrimination based on colour, race, and accent is an underlying factor for unfair hiring practices and social discrimination in community gathering places. Though it is not openly discussed, newcomers observe this as a reason for many interconnected challenges.

8 out of 9 groups recognized skills development as a key challenge. Eritrean and Ethiopian participants considered this as their second most important challenge. Newcomers need to upgrade their skills due to workforce mismatches but face barriers such as limited program awareness, financial constraints, work obligations, and a lack of evening courses. There is a lack of support and guidance for newcomers interested in switching their career path to integrate into existing high-demand jobs. A path should be created for newcomers who are already in Canada and are interested in changing their career pathway, willing to learn, and adapt to labour market demands. Lower-fee short courses, on-the-job training, and evening classes could help newcomers learn new skills.

Lack of frequent, reliable and accessible public transportation was highlighted by 7 out of 9 groups. This includes long waits in harsh weather, limited access to remote jobs, lack of transfer points and difficulty obtaining a car or Class 5F license. To improve accessibility, they recommend increasing bus frequency to every 15 minutes, adding heated shelters, creating a free real-time tracking app, expanding transfer hubs beyond downtown, and redesigning routes for more direct and efficient service.

7 out of 9 groups raised concerns about inadequate information and guidance. There is a lack of a centralized system to help newcomers navigate jobs, financial aid, immigration, healthcare, and other essential services. The support services are available; however, a lack of coordination makes it difficult for newcomers to access them.

Five out of nine groups mentioned language as a barrier, noting the need for interpreters to access services. While few participants required support in basic English communication skills for daily interactions or job interviews, majority of them highlighted challenges related to accents and dialects. In these cases, it is not necessarily a lack of language skills, but rather the need for greater mutual understanding, either through opportunities to practice and refine spoken English or by fostering greater exposure and acceptance of diverse accents within Canadian communities.

5 groups said difficulty in accessing financial assistance is related to business start up capital, entrepreneurship and education.

Youth from 5 of 9 groups said Brandon lacks inclusive, year-round recreational options, especially for those with work obligations. They emphasized that sports and activities can help unite diverse communities. Therefore there is a need for more inclusive recreational activities in Brandon.

Apart from identifying the top 10 challenges in Brandon, participants also identified new emerging challenges related to US tariffs, recent changes in immigration policies and the impact on newcomers, especially Ukrainian refugees, newcomer retirement challenges, and teen mental health.

The detailed insights provided in this report and the actionable recommendations are intended to guide organizations like BLIP and other interested parties in aligning their services with the true needs of immigrants.

Issue	Recommendation	Solutions should be achieved in			Community		Government		Academic
		Short term	Mid term	Long term	CSO/ NSO	City	Provincial	Federal	
Lack of suitable job opportunities	Match newcomer skills to local employer needs	X			X		X		
	Expand volunteering, mentoring, and apprenticeships for internationally trained professionals			X	X	X		X	X
	Streamline credential recognition pathways			X				X	X
Access to services	Extend service hours into evenings and weekends	X			X	X			
	Create flexible online access to critical services		X		X	X			
Housing	Expand affordable housing programs			X		X	X		
	Review landlord requirements for credit/referrals for newcomers		X			X			
	Educate landlords on newcomer realities	X				X			
Discrimination and Bias	Promote anti-racism education in workplaces and community spaces	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Monitor and address unfair hiring practices	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Access to skills development	Offer lower-cost, short-term training aligned with market demands		X		X		X		X
	Provide evening or online learning options		X						X
	Create upskilling pathways for career transitioners		X	X	X		X		X

Issue	Recommendation	Solutions should be achieved in			Community		Government		Academic
		Short term	Mid term	Long term	CSO/ NSO	City	Provincial	Federal	
Transportation	Increase public bus frequency (e.g., every 15 mins)			X		X			
	Add heated shelters and real-time tracking apps			X		X			
	Redesign routes for more direct access		X			X			
Inadequate Information and guidance on available services	Develop a single portal or information access model for newcomer		X	X					X
	Improve coordination across service agencies	X			X	X			
Language Barriers	Provide more interpretation support for services	X			X	X			
	Create conversation circles to improve accents/pronunciation	X			X				X
	Promote cultural awareness of accent diversity	X			X				
Financial Support Services	Improve access to microgrants or startup funds		X		X	X	X		
	Expand newcomer-focused financial literacy programs	X			X				
Recreational Activities	Expand inclusive, affordable, year-round recreational programs	X			X	X			X
	Schedule around work hours to engage newcomer youth and families	X			X	X			X

## 1. Lack of suitable job opportunities

This was identified as the #1 priority by the Ghanaian, Nigerian, Chinese, Muslim, Eritrean/Ethiopian, and Hispanic communities; #2 for the Filipino and Indian communities; and #3 for the Ukrainian community.

### 1.1 Foreign credential recognition

Many highly educated newcomers are forced into survival jobs that erode their professional identity and create financial stress. Credential recognition is often unclear, expensive, and time-consuming.

*"I have a Master's in Epidemiology... I have worked in the field with the World Health Organization and contributed to international efforts. I've gone to countries to help them resolve their health issues, and I get to Canada, and there's no opportunity for me, and I have to work as a cleaner in the hospital". -Ghanaian participant*

Recommendation: Establish a transparent, streamlined, and affordable process for credential recognition, including access to licensure exams and bridging programs.

### 1.2 Lack of Canadian work experience

Newcomers with extensive international experience are often told they lack "Canadian experience," yet few opportunities exist in Brandon for them to gain it.

*"I studied a five-year professional course in urban planning in Nigeria, passed my professional exam, and received my seal as a planner in Nigeria. But coming to Canada, it's tough for me to practice planning. To practice as a registered planner in Canada, I must secure a job in planning. I approached the head office of planning in Winnipeg to inquire about volunteering opportunities. Even getting a volunteer position as a planner is very difficult". -Nigerian participant*

Recommendation: Create professional internships, volunteer or on-the-job training, shadowing programs or apprenticeship programs for newcomers to gain Canadian work experience.

### 1.3 Limited job opportunities in relevant fields

Newcomers with extensive international experience are often told they lack “Canadian experience,” yet few opportunities exist in Brandon for them to gain it.

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**Recommendation:** Create professional internships, volunteer or on-the-job training, shadowing programs or apprenticeship programs for newcomers to gain Canadian work experience.

### 1.4 Bias in Hiring Practices

Several focus groups reported that jobs often go to individuals with insider connections and expressed concern about ethnic or group-based hiring preferences, a lack of interview feedback, and unclear recruitment processes.

*“It seems some organizations select employees from a certain newcomer group, so it's discouraging even to apply. Even if you are qualified, there is discrimination in the opportunity. It's not just positions, but organizations.” -Eritrean/Ethiopian Participant.*

**Recommendation:** Promote transparent, merit-based hiring and diversity training for employers. Encourage interview feedback for candidates. Employment agencies should clearly communicate and share employer expectations with job seekers.

### 1.5 Insufficient Employment Support Services

Some participants felt existing employment supports lacked depth and failed to match skills with real opportunities.

*“I think there's more that the organizations can do, because I know they have this collaboration with other institutions, and they can look at your skills, and try to match you with a job within other organizations”. -Ghanaian participant*

**Recommendation:** Strengthen job-matching efforts with proactive outreach to employers. Offer skills assessments, career fairs, and newcomer-employer networking events. Ensure caseworkers provide ongoing follow-up with clients.

## 1.6 Language, Accent, and Other Systemic Barriers

Language proficiency, unfamiliar accents, and strict job requirements, such as having a full Class 5 driver's license, create additional barriers to employment.

*"Many jobs ask for fluency in English and require a driver's license, further limiting opportunities."-Hispanic participant.*

Recommendation: Create a space at the employment site for informal conversations, allowing newcomers to feel welcome and practice speaking English without fear during their break times. This will help them to improve their speaking and accent. If possible, the local institutions can organize low-cost evening English conversation classes for the newcomers to participate after work. And review strict job criteria related to driving license requirements, unless the job really depends on driving.

## 2. Access to services

The Filipino and Indian groups ranked access to services as their top challenge. It was the second-highest concern for Chinese and Ukrainian communities, and also among the top 10 challenges for the Ghanaian, Nigerian, Eritrean/Ethiopian, Muslim, and Hispanic groups.

### 2.1 Healthcare shortages

All nine groups highlighted the shortage of healthcare professionals, including family doctors, specialists, and nurses, as a critical barrier. Many are forced to wait months or years for care, seek costly alternatives, or travel to Winnipeg, resulting in health risks and emotional distress.

*“My son had to wait for one and a half years for an X-ray exam. And two years later, we got a date, and it was very exciting for us. But on the surgery day, there was a call from the hospital, the nurse said, I’m sorry, your son’s surgery has been cancelled. We couldn’t contact the doctor. The staff stated that the doctor no longer works in their Health Center”. -Chinese participant*

Recommendation: Streamline licensing for internationally trained health professionals already in Brandon to enable them to enter the workforce quickly; expand nurse-practitioner clinics and offer mobile or telehealth services to reduce wait times.

### 2.2 Limited service hours

Many newcomers work shifts that overlap with 9-to-5 office hours, making it costly to miss work for medical, legal, or settlement help, such as language classes.

*“The service providers operate within working hours. For many immigrants, seeking assistance can be difficult because they often work during the service providers’ working hours. So, most of them will choose to work rather than access services because, for them, if there is no work, no pay”. – Filipino participant*

Recommendation: Extend key services into evenings and weekends, pilot on-site clinics, pop-up counters at major employers, or 24-hour online services to get support and advice.

### 2.3 Documentation barriers

Institutions and service providers often reject foreign IDs and licences, forcing newcomers into expensive, repetitive processes.

*“Service providers do not accept documents we bring from our home countries. They don’t accept the documents we have, especially when applying for a driver’s license or SIM card. When getting a SIM card from any service provider, the documents that you have as a newcomer are not accepted”. Eritrean/ Ethiopian participant*

Recommendation: Newcomer-serving organizations or other service providers can provide a standardized provincial list of acceptable foreign documents. Create a centralized one-stop service desk.

## 2.4 Limited access to skills development

Delays in permanent-residency processing limit newcomers' access to courses at colleges and universities. If newcomers or refugees want to learn new skills to integrate into the workforce, they often have to pay international fees, and have to navigate rigid course schedules that don't align with work demands.

*"We're not permanent residents yet, and while we wait for it, we won't be able to access the language training and other programs". – Ukrainian participant*

Recommendation: Colleges and universities can develop certification courses that are relevant to current labour force demand, offered at low fees, open to anyone with a valid study or work permit, and provide hybrid delivery to accommodate shift workers' schedules.

### 3. Affordable Housing

The housing issue was another challenge that all nine groups considered as one of the top ten challenges for them. For the Ukrainian group, this is their number one challenge. For Hispanics, Muslims, Indians, Filipinos, and Eritreans/Ethiopians, housing is one of the top 5 challenges.

#### 3.1 Documentation Barrier

Newcomers struggle to secure rentals because landlords require references, credit history, and proof of steady income, which newcomers have not yet built.

*“Many landlords ask for a credit score immediately upon arrival, which is unreasonable as newcomers need time to build one. Some landlords even require bank documentation proving financial stability, making it difficult for newcomers like me to secure housing.” – Indian participant.*

Recommendation: Universities and colleges could support international students by guiding them to rentals that require minimal documentation and offer low-cost rentals. Newcomer-serving organizations could establish a newcomer rental location, where newcomers who have just arrived in Brandon could rent a room or space for a fair price for less than a month, until they can open a bank account, obtain a SIN, find employment, and secure a place to rent.

#### 3.2 Affordability

Rents often exceed 60% of newcomers' monthly income, and international students with limited working hours are particularly affected.

*“What's the definition of affordable housing? Most of our salaries right now cannot afford housing. And the landlords are aware that there is a shortage of rental properties. So, they raise the prices because they know they're in demand. There's still a need for more housing in Brandon if the city is geared towards its goal. -Filipino participant*

Recommendation: Every year, a considerable number of people come to Brandon and move out. If the City of Brandon has the data, then they can plan housing for newcomers. Provide rental assistance for newcomers, incentivize the construction of affordable units, and align affordable rent caps with local minimum-wage earnings.

### 3.3 Low vacancy rate and high demand

Brandon receives a large number of international students every year. Therefore, finding affordable rentals is a challenge. The tight market leads landlords to raise prices. Brandon's housing supply has not kept pace with the influx of immigration.

*“The government or the concerned body should be proactive. They need to plan. They know they are expecting more newcomers in terms of MPNP, in terms of government-assisted, in terms of family-sponsored. So you don't have to wait until the people arrive here. The schools are already overcrowded. They are using libraries to accommodate students. The focus should be on strategic planning and tactical planning, and then including every stakeholder, and start thinking about it. And when they plan, they have to plan not only for one year, five years, but maybe 10 to 30 years. And then we can do meaningful work.” – Eritrean/ Ethiopian participant*

Recommendation: Adopt a long-term municipal/provincial housing strategy tied to immigration and student-enrollment targets. Make sure there is a cap on the rental increase.

### 3.4 Information Gaps

There is a lack of simplified information on tenant rights, and vacancy lists are often not provided in newcomer-friendly websites, leading to a reliance on informal networks.

*“It would be very helpful if more information were available or if organizations made greater efforts to reach out to newcomers, especially to those considering potential language barriers” -Filipino participant.*

Recommendation: If possible, immigration-serving organizations can create a portal that provides all the details related to housing availability in Brandon, including rental listings, tenant rights, and step-by-step guides.

#### 4. discrimination and Bias

Immigrants in Brandon face discrimination and bias in employment, education, and daily life, leading to social exclusion and economic challenges. Except for the Chinese groups, others have said that discrimination still exists in various forms.

##### 4.1 Discrimination in job recruitment

Many participants reported systemic barriers to employment based on race, immigrant status, or lack of Canadian education or work experience. Even with advanced qualifications, immigrants often found themselves excluded from job opportunities unless they had insider recommendations or shared a similar ethnic background with hiring managers. Participants noted that hiring practices in some organizations favoured certain racial or ethnic groups, creating informal monopolies on positions.

*“My first job as a waitress exposed me to direct discrimination. A couple refused to be served by me, calling me a racial slur. Despite multiple encounters with them, management took little action. My parents have faced even more discrimination, often in ways I was unaware of.” – Hispanic participant*

##### 4.2 Discrimination and bias in the education/ academic sectors

Several participants, particularly from Ghana and Hispanic backgrounds, described racial bias in classrooms and grading. Immigrant credentials and learning needs were often undervalued, and some professors openly questioned the intellectual capacity of Black students.

*“I once heard a professor say, ‘Blacks can’t be smarter than whites,’ and it shows in the marks. No matter how hard you work, you can’t get the top grade.” – Ghanaian participant.*

##### 4.3 Everyday Racism

Participants described frequent micro-aggressions and direct hostility in public spaces on buses, in malls, workplaces and in neighbourhoods.

*“The discrimination is quite crazy. A friend introduced me to his girlfriend, and while I was trying to shake hands with her, she pulled her hoodie sleeves over her hands to cover them before I could shake hers. That incident messed up my day. I stopped working and went home, and I couldn’t go to work for two days.” – Nigerian participant*

**Policy Implication:** These incidents reveal how discrimination undermines economic mobility, academic success, and daily well-being, reinforcing the need for targeted anti-racism policies, inclusive hiring practices, and cultural competency training across Brandon’s workplaces, schools, and service providers. BU Cares from Brandon University has recently released a toolkit on Anti-Racism, which could be used by policymakers to make a change in Brandon.

<https://www.bucares.ca/anti-racism>

## 5. Access to Skills Development

Access to skills development is essential for the economic participation and long-term integration of newcomers. However, many immigrants and international students in Brandon face significant barriers in accessing training and upskilling opportunities. Except for the Ukrainian group, participants from all other focus groups reported issues such as limited awareness, ineligibility due to immigration status, financial constraints, lack of institutional support, and the non-recognition of foreign credentials.

### 5.1 Lack of awareness and information

Participants, especially from the Ghanaian, Nigerian, Indian, and Chinese communities, emphasized that many newcomers are unaware of available skills development programs due to poor publicity or inadequate information sharing.

*“The skills development opportunities may be there, but there's not enough publicity. If you don't approach those organizations, you may not be aware that they are doing something like this. So maybe they should improve on publicity”. – Ghanaian Participant*

Recommendation: Develop a centralized online portal listing all available training programs in Brandon. Improve outreach by partnering with universities, colleges, ethnocultural organizations, faith-based groups, and settlement agencies. Use community radio, WhatsApp groups, social media, and printed materials to share training opportunities. Host community information sessions in collaboration with service providers and employers.

### 5.2 Difficulty in accessing due to immigration status or costs

International students, temporary residents or refugees on emergency visas often do not qualify for government-funded training programs. Even when eligible, they need to pay international fees. Many skilled immigrants also struggle to re-enter their professional fields due to a lack of recognition or the high cost of retraining.

*“I've noticed that there is not enough training at the provincial level, and most of the training is geared towards permanent residents and citizens, or international students. When you come in, you're unable to qualify for some of these training courses, and even when you qualify for them, you may not be able to afford them”. - Ghanaian Participant*

Recommendation: Newcomer organizations or employers could offer certification courses that would enhance newcomers' careers. Develop a coordinated local strategy among provincial departments, educational institutions, and service agencies to streamline access and prevent duplication. Ensure that apprenticeship and certification offices provide newcomer-specific guidance beyond online resources.

### 5.3 Language training

Language remains a barrier to skills development, and many newcomers cannot attend full-time courses due to financial obligations and work schedules. Members of the Indian and Chinese groups emphasized the importance of offering free and flexible language classes to accommodate newcomers' work and economic constraints.

*“Free French language courses should be offered, as bilingual skills increase employment opportunities. Many students, however, are unaware of where to access skill development programs. So, I think Assiniboine College should partner with more organizations to provide better access to skill development programs”. – Indian participant*

Recommendation: introduce evening or weekend classes for both languages and vocational training. Offer hybrid, low-cost French and English conversation classes designed to enhance job readiness.

**Policy Implication:** We need to ensure that all newcomers, regardless of their immigration status, background, or financial situation, can participate meaningfully in Brandon labor market, and skill development pathways must be accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the realities of immigrant life in smaller urban centers.

## 6. Transportation Services

In rural cities like Brandon, limited and unreliable transportation infrastructure creates significant barriers to mobility and economic participation. Newcomers face challenges such as unfamiliarity with the transit system, the high cost of vehicle ownership, licensing barriers, and inadequate public transit coverage, especially on weekends and during winter months. While participants from Ghanaian, Eritrean, and Ethiopian groups did not rank transportation as their top concern, they also acknowledged its importance while discussing access to services and integration support. All other groups raised transportation as a critical and one of the top 10 challenges.

### 6.1 No public transportation outside of Brandon

Participants reported a lack of transit options to remote job sites or other towns such as Neepawa and Winnipeg. With limited incomes and no access to a private vehicle, many newcomers are unable to accept employment outside city limits.

*"Transportation is a major issue in Brandon, especially when it comes to travelling beyond the city. The intercity transportation system needs improvement. I'm not sure if the train is operational here, but better city-to-city or town-to-town connections are essential". – Ghanaian participant*

Recommendations: Establish affordable town-to-town transits at least once in the morning and evening so that newcomers can access employment outside of Brandon. Collaborate with employers to provide shared transportation options for employees commuting to remote locations.

### 6.2 Requirement of a Class 5 F driver's license for jobs

Nigerian participants emphasized how the Class 5 full driver's license requirement prevents newcomers from accessing many jobs. The licensing process is lengthy and costly, and car ownership is difficult due to credit history barriers.

*"This driving license requirement for jobs is a big barrier for newcomers. I had no driving experience back home, and now have to wait nine months after the road test to obtain a full license. Without a full Class 5 license, I can't get a professional job even if I'm qualified. It's frustrating because many jobs use that clause to disqualify you." – Nigerian Participant*

Recommendations: Advocate for employers to consider alternative solutions or a grace period to secure a driving license, but not the class 5 F driver's license. Many newcomers come from developing countries, and they may not have the opportunity to own a car or a driver's license.

### 6.3 Brandon transit system

Newcomers expressed difficulties understanding bus schedules and routes. Long wait times, inconsistent service, and limited weekend and evening coverage undermine access to work and services. Winter conditions exacerbate these issues due to a lack of heated shelters and uncleared sidewalks. Besides, the current system is centred around downtown, limiting connectivity. Long detours and few transfer points make public transit inefficient.

*The city should invest more in transport. Most newcomers don't have cars. To get a car, you need a good job, as you will need to pay for insurance and other expenses. So, the City should invest more in transport. The buses should run every 15 minutes, not every half hour, especially in winter. – Filipino participant*

Recommendations: Increase bus frequency to every 15 minutes during peak hours, if possible, and in winter months. Install heated bus shelters at key stops across the city, or at shelters along routes where buses are frequently delayed. Make the app affordable for newcomers. Develop additional transfer hubs across the city to reduce pressure on the downtown terminal.

## 7. Inadequate information and guidance on available services

Access to accurate, timely, and relevant information is crucial for the successful integration of newcomers. Except for participants from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Hispanic groups, other focus groups reported significant difficulties in accessing information related to essential services due to scattered, outdated, or unclear information. Although various support organizations operate in Brandon, many immigrants must rely on informal networks or personal effort to learn about services related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, and settlement. These gaps delay integration, increase stress, and may lead to systemic exclusion.

### 7.1 No public transportation outside of Brandon

Newcomers face difficulties navigating essential services due to the absence of a centralized, reliable information hub. Participants expressed frustration at having to rely on word of mouth to access basic services and benefits. Many websites are outdated, difficult to navigate, or lack localized content.

*"Accessing clear information is a challenge. I didn't know about the Carbon rebate until a co-worker mentioned it and helped me to apply. I had never heard of it anywhere else. There should be a central website where newcomers can easily find information on things like tax, childcare, housing, and employment." – Nigerian participant.*

Recommendation: Develop a centralized online portal that is easily accessible and understandable, listing all essential services for newcomers. Ensure content is regularly updated and adapted to local contexts, including Brandon-specific services. Include contact points for sector-specific guidance (e.g., regulated professions, entrepreneurship, housing). Use multiple outreach channels (social media, posters, service centres, libraries) to increase visibility. Have a shelf at Winnipeg airport with all the necessary information for newcomers coming to Brandon regarding what they should do or whom to meet when they first land in Brandon, and make Brandon a more welcoming destination.

### 7.2 Insufficient guidance from service providers

While newcomer service providers are available in Brandon to help with basic settlement needs, many newcomers feel unsupported when navigating complex systems, such as employment, credential certification, and education. *There is a need for personalized support.*

*"When you go to XXXX organization, they appear to help, but in reality, you're left to figure things out on your own. I never got a job through them, despite multiple visits. They collect our information for their database, but don't follow through. Although they claim to assess your skills and match you with jobs through partnerships, in my experience, they did far less than expected. I found my job on my own." – Ghanaian participant.*

Recommendations: Newcomers require individualized, tailored support from service providers, including addressing their concerns and providing guidance on how to resolve them, as well as follow-up guidance. Service organizations need to build partnerships with employers and institutions to offer sector-specific support (e.g., healthcare, trades).

### 7.3 Barriers in navigating employment pathways

Participants reported significant gaps in their understanding of how to transition into the Canadian workforce, particularly in regulated professions. Many lacked information on credential recognition, bridging programs, and exams.

*"Job postings list the requirements clearly, I applied, and I felt I was a good fit, but I was still rejected, like when I applied for four jobs at XXXX and wasn't successful. Many foreign workers, like my husband, face the same issue. We're qualified in our home countries, but it's hard to understand what's missing here. Brandon has some services, but we often don't know about them. It feels like there's a door to opportunities, but we can't open it because we don't even know it exists." – Chinese participant.*

Recommendations: Provide orientation, mentorship and guidance on how to navigate regulated and high-demand professions. Employment agencies can connect with employers to learn the kind of employees they are expecting, based on which they can train newcomers to prepare for interviews.

### 7.4 Lack of Information on Rights and Responsibilities

Participants also pointed out educational gaps about their rights and responsibilities as newcomers. Issues such as credit card misuse, confusion over health card applications, and the ineligibility of certain documents for official identification highlighted a lack of clarity around rules and consequences. Without adequate guidance, newcomers are vulnerable to financial pitfalls and legal complications.

*"Brandon has many services, but they're often hard to access, which can discourage newcomers. Whether it's housing or healthcare, the information exists but isn't presented in a newcomer-friendly way. This makes it difficult for people to get the help they need. I've also noticed a lack of clear guidance on credit cards; people don't always understand the risks and end up in debt. There needs to be better, more accessible information that explains both the benefits and drawbacks of services.*

*There's still a lot of room for improvement. Another issue is that the visa paper PR holders receive, which includes their photo and date of birth, isn't accepted as a valid photo ID. Newcomers often can't access services like liquor stores because they don't yet have a PR card or driver's license, which are hard to obtain right away. As a result, the only ID they have isn't accepted, creating unnecessary barriers"- Eritrean and Ethiopian participants*

Recommendations: Develop plain-language guides on key topics, such as financial literacy, healthcare, tenancy, and ID requirements. Offer orientation sessions on rights and responsibilities tied to immigration status.

Advocate for broader recognition of temporary identification documents during settlement periods.

## 8. Language Barriers

Many newcomers, including temporary foreign workers, refugees, dependents, and those working in Maple Leaf, face significant challenges in communication due to language barriers, which affect their ability to access services, secure meaningful employment, and build social connections. The Nigerian, Chinese, Ukrainian, Muslim, and Hispanic communities mentioned that their difficulties in understanding, speaking, or being understood in English can lead to exclusion, underemployment, and, in turn, reduce their confidence. These challenges are further complicated by accent discrimination, limited awareness of language support services, and the emotional impact of being unable to communicate effectively in everyday situations.

### 8.1 Accent based discrimination

Participants reported being denied job opportunities or treated differently due to their accent, despite performing well in interviews, reflecting an unspoken bias toward non-native English speakers; as a result, limited English proficiency and accent often confines newcomers to low-skilled or language-light jobs, with a Ukrainian participant noting that many who work in factories may do so because they lack the English skills needed for other opportunities.

Cultural differences in English terminologies can lead to misunderstandings, reinforcing the perception that newcomers lack language skills.

*“Some employers will not want to employ you because of your accent. But they won't tell you, but you know from the way they smile. You know, you did well in the interview, but they will never want to employ you because of your accent.” –*

*Nigerian participant*

Recommendations: Provide employer training on accent bias and inclusive hiring practices. Employers should hire newcomers based on merit rather than on accent, race or colour. It is essential to understand that English is not a native language for many newcomers, and accent variation is to be expected. However, as long as they are clearly expressing what they want to say, it's okay.

### 8.2 Lack of confidence and speaking opportunities

Many newcomers felt shy or hesitant to speak English due to a lack of confidence. Limited opportunities to practice speaking contributed to this insecurity, affecting their ability to participate in conversations and integrate socially.

*“Opportunities like language workshops or conversation sessions would help newcomers. The more we practice speaking English, the more confident we become. Many of us feel shy or hesitant because we're not used to speaking English regularly.*

*Structured programs to build language skills would make it easier for us to integrate into Canadian society.” – Filipino participant*

Recommendations: Organize regular, informal English conversation circles in community spaces where they have an opportunity to communicate with host communities.

### 8.3 Access to Language Support Services

While some participants took advantage of services like English classes at Westman Immigrant Services, not all are aware of the resources available to help them improve their language skills. Others mentioned that interpreter services, such as for medical appointments, were not widely known among newcomers.

*I don't talk much at work unless colleagues speak very slowly. I'm good at listening but struggle to speak English fluently. As a carpenter, I don't use much English on the job, but the language barrier still affects my ability to settle in. I used to take English classes at WIS; they helped me with the basics. I'm taking online courses now." – Chinese participant*

Recommendations: Language programs and interpreter services are available in multiple languages for newcomers; however, many newcomers are not aware of these services. Integrate language support awareness into orientation sessions for all newcomers.

### 8.4 Language and mental health

Language barriers also affected access to mental health and trauma-related services. Hispanic participants pointed out that cultural and language differences make it harder to seek help, compounding the emotional burden faced by many immigrants.

*"Issues such as trauma and mental health become even more challenging to address when access to services is limited due to language barriers and cultural differences". – Hispanic participant*

**Policy Implications:** Addressing language barriers requires a multiple-action-based approach that combines language training, public awareness, service coordination, and inclusive practices. Tailored support for various immigration statuses and industries will enable newcomers in Brandon to access opportunities, services, and social life more fully, ultimately leading to better integration outcomes.

## 9. Financial Assistance

Access to financial assistance remains a critical and under-addressed barrier for many newcomers seeking to establish themselves in Brandon. Whether striving to launch a business, pursue higher education, or build financial stability, immigrants often face systemic challenges, including restrictive eligibility criteria, a lack of guidance, and limited funding opportunities. Participants from Nigerian, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, and Hispanic communities emphasized that financial aid is essential for integration, but difficult to access due to information gaps and institutional constraints.

### 9.1 Barriers to entrepreneurship

For many immigrants with entrepreneurial aspirations, the inability to access start-up funding is a significant barrier. Participants shared how these financial gaps discourage even the most motivated individuals, especially in communities where informal or daily income-based work is preferred over formal employment. When opportunities to launch small businesses are stifled by restrictive funding processes, a sense of lack of interest and defeat sets in.

*“The Igbos are very business-oriented and prefer daily income over office jobs. But in a community like this, where getting a grant is difficult, people feel frustrated and abandon their business ideas because they can’t access the loans needed to start.”*  
– Nigerian participant.

Recommendations: Develop newcomer-focused micro-loan and grant programs to support small business start-ups regardless of their residency status. Otherwise, newcomer-serving organizations can encourage community initiatives where newcomers can come together and support one another through informal savings and initiatives that promote newcomer business support. There are many examples from developing countries on how rural communities support each other, and this could be applied by newcomers to improve their lives by themselves.

### 9.2 Navigating financial aid and assistance

Many newcomers face complex eligibility requirements and inconsistent guidance when applying for financial assistance such as Employment Insurance (EI). Even when newcomers contribute financially, they are often excluded due to regulations that do not align with their immigration status or work limitations.

*“I lost my job after moving from Winnipeg to Brandon and tried to claim employment insurance, which I had paid into from every paycheck. But my claim was denied because, as an international student, I’m only allowed to work up to 24 hours a week. EI requires claimants to be available for 35 to 40 hours of full-time work. So, even though I contributed, I wasn’t eligible due to a regulatory conflict. That was unfair.”* – Indian participant.

Recommendations: Review and revise federal and provincial financial assistance policies to reflect the realities of newcomers with temporary or student status.

### 9.3 First-Generation Students and Financial Literacy

Newcomer youth, particularly first-generation students, often lack familial support in navigating financial aid systems. This results in stress, limited access to scholarships, and added vulnerability during their education journey.

*“As a first-generation university student, my parents could not help me navigate financial aid. At 17, I had to figure out scholarships and funding opportunities on my own. I didn’t have anyone to support me.” Hispanic Participant*

Recommendations: Develop financial literacy workshops targeted at newcomer youth and their families. Establish school-based mentorship programs to guide students through scholarships and funding applications.

### 9.4 Limited financial support for career training pathways

Co-op and work-integrated learning programs often lack paid placements, making it difficult for newcomer students to gain experience without facing financial hardship. Institutions share job postings but do not actively support the creation of paid opportunities or adjust academic requirements for unpaid placements.

*“Many companies won’t offer paid co-op positions, even when they have openings. Assiniboine College shares links but doesn’t help negotiate paid roles, and if we don’t secure a co-op, our attendance is still penalized; it feels unfair.” – Indian participant.*

Recommendations: Advocate for funding incentives for employers who offer paid co-op placements to newcomers and international students. Encourage academic institutions to develop co-op policies that reflect the financial challenges of newcomer students.

## 10. Recreation Activities

Recreational activities play a crucial role in promoting social integration, mental well-being, and overall quality of life for newcomers. However, many immigrant communities in Brandon face significant barriers in accessing and participating in such activities. These challenges are rooted in systemic gaps, such as poor communication about available programs, seasonal limitations, cultural disconnects, and a lack of inclusive, gender-sensitive spaces. Ghanaian, Filipino, Chinese, Indian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Muslim communities have said that limited recreational opportunities hinder their social connection, personal development, and sense of belonging in the community.

### 10.1 Lack of information

Despite the existence of recreational programs and facilities, many newcomers are unaware of them due to poor outreach and limited communication through channels commonly used by immigrant communities.

*"I don't know how many programs the city offers for recreation, but there definitely should be more. From what I can tell, the city already has a lot of infrastructure, fields, and equipment, but it doesn't seem to be used effectively to offer programs that would include newcomers". -Chinese participant*

*However, some participants expressed appreciation for the recreational activities available in Brandon.*

*"I was trying to find places where we could go and have fun, and we had a lot of places, so I don't think the issue is with the recreational center". – Ghanaian participant*

*"Recreation is such a great way to build up your social network. When doing something together, like sports or board games, it's much easier to connect with people without the pressure of job searching. Playing football helped me make friends who could have referred me to jobs or volunteer opportunities. Activities like that can help newcomers integrate and feel part of the community". - Chinese participant*

Recommendations: Use social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp groups) to promote recreational opportunities among newcomers. Include recreational programming in orientation materials for new arrivals.

### 10.2 Cost and scheduling barriers

High costs and inflexible schedules prevent students and low-income families from participating in recreational programs.

*"Limited recreational facilities and scheduling conflicts make it hard for students to participate. We need flexible sports facilities (e.g., extended hours for badminton courts). Affordable ice skate rentals, like what's available in Winnipeg could be promoted here". – Indian participant*

Recommendations: Offer subsidized or free passes for low-income newcomers and students. Extend facility hours on evenings and weekends to accommodate shift workers and students. Introduce flexible booking and drop-in systems for activities like badminton, skating, and fitness classes.

### 10.3 Barriers to accessing recreational activities

Even when facilities are available, the programming may not feel inclusive, welcoming, or culturally relevant. Newcomers often feel isolated or excluded when long-time residents dominate existing spaces or when there's a lack of representation. Besides, long winters and harsh weather limit outdoor activities, which also makes it difficult for newcomers to access recreational activities. Newcomers also identify a lack of affordable indoor recreational options, especially during winter. Women, especially from Eritrean and Ethiopian communities, lack access to culturally appropriate and safe recreational spaces. Gender norms and limited social connections prevent participation.

*“There should be many indoor activities, especially during winter, because winter is 6 months long. I think they should add more indoor activities to use, not just games and hangout places. Those are the primary things”. – Filipino Participant*

Recommendations: Design culturally inclusive recreational programs with input from immigrant communities. Offer multicultural and intergenerational sports and hobby groups. Expand access to public indoor spaces such as gyms, community centres, and libraries during the winter months. Offer winter activity introduction sessions (e.g., skating, snowshoeing) tailored to newcomers. Develop women-only recreational hours or programming to ensure safe, welcoming spaces.

## New emerging challenges

### US – Canada tariff and fear of anti-immigrant sentiment

Fear of the US tariff situation and how this can impact Brandon and immigrants: There's a concern that economic anxieties, possibly influenced by trends in the US, could spill over into Canadian towns like Brandon. The participant fears that immigrants might be blamed for broader issues, such as housing and job shortages. This sentiment is heightened by a sense of vulnerability felt by immigrants, especially those waiting for permanent residency and citizenship, who fear changes in immigration policy could jeopardize their future in Canada (e.g., strict citizenship requirements or PR revocation)

*"With what's happening in the U.S., I fear similar issues will surface here in Brandon, immigrants being blamed for housing and job shortages. As a permanent resident, there's uncertainty about future policies, like citizenship requirements or even losing status, which makes us feel vulnerable." – Filipino participant.*

### Inconsistent Immigration pathways and new changes in immigration policies

Most participants are concerned that the current Canadian immigration changes are unfair to those already in Canada (temporary visa holders, international students). Participants expressed strong concerns about shifting immigration pathways. Students and temporary workers who were already in Canada and who followed previous immigration rules were now faced with uncertainty. There is a call for fairness, with policy changes applying to new applicants going forward, rather than those already in Canada admitted through a fair process.

This is a source of significant stress, especially for those already invested in settling down. Some students are concerned about Assiniboine College reducing course offerings and the lack of Co-Op programs for courses like cookery, which limits their ability to graduate and can restrict their pathway to permanent residence.

*"Securing work permits and transitioning to permanent residency is becoming harder, creating stress and uncertainty, especially for students who arrived under earlier rules. Policy changes should have clear start dates and not affect those already here. Some students are moving to smaller cities for better PR chances, but discontinued programs at places like ACC limit their options". – Indian participant*

### Middle-aged immigrants and the impact of retirement plans

Aging immigrants, especially those who arrived in Canada during mid-life, are unlikely to qualify for full pensions. Concerns were raised about long-term financial insecurity and old-age poverty. Participants emphasized that planning for retirement in Canada is essential. This issue is pressing as the early wave of immigrants now reaches retirement age (50–60 years), raising alarm about systemic gaps in support.

*"Many immigrants arrived in Canada middle-aged, so they may not qualify for full pensions. As they age, there's a real risk of old-age poverty. Newcomers must plan for retirement here, not just send money back home, because their life is now in Canada". – Filipino participant*

### Teen mental health concerns of immigrant children

Teenagers and young immigrant children often face mental health struggles, especially when families are isolated without extended support systems. Parents are typically overwhelmed with work and resettlement responsibilities, leaving teens without adequate guidance or care. In Brandon, there is a significant lack of youth-focused programs or affordable extracurricular opportunities.

## New emerging challenges

*“In bigger cities, there are more affordable youth programs run by nonprofits after-school, weekend, and summer activities. In Brandon, there’s a huge gap. YMCA is one option, but it’s expensive and not accessible to all newcomer families”. – Eritrean/ Ethiopian participant*

*“Parents focus on education, but kids also need social, mental, and physical development. More opportunities and youth-focused programs are needed to support their growth”. – Eritrean/ Ethiopian participant*

*“Westman Immigration Services is trying to support youth, but it lacks stakeholder support and funding. In comparison, services in Winnipeg and Saskatchewan for youth and kids are much better”. – Eritrean/ Ethiopian participant*

## Visa Uncertainty and Family Separation for Ukrainians

There is ongoing distress over emergency visa renewals. Some Ukrainians are forced to travel to Europe to renew their visas or their children's. It is an expensive and bureaucratically uncertain process. While some recent measures have extended temporary permissions, many Ukrainians are still at risk. They are concerned and stressed about being sent back to Ukraine with no homes, schools, or safe places to return to. Deportation means being "sent to the streets." The community expects consistent legal pathways to continue living and working in Canada. However, the Government of Canada has recently taken short-term initiatives to address this issue

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2025/02/canada-extends-some-temporary-measures-for-ukrainians.html>.

*“Some of our visas are expiring, and people are going to the European border authorities to renew them, but border authorities can be uncooperative. This leaves individuals stranded and unable to return to Canada, while bills and credit card payments continue”. – Ukrainian participant*

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## Appendix

## Appendix 1: Informed Consent

## LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dr. Wayne Kelly, Rural Development Institute, Primary Investigator  
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A research team from the Rural Development Institute are conducting a research project called “Newcomer Integration through Community Engagement in Brandon”. This research project is conducted in partnership with Brandon Local Immigration Partnerships (BLIP). This research is funded by Partnership Engage Grant, Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

**Purpose of Study:**

The purpose of this research is to collect responses to these questions:

- a) What are the needs and challenges of newcomers and immigrants in Brandon?
- b) What are the proposed solutions to enhance the integration of immigrants and newcomers in Brandon?
- c) What services are available in Brandon for newcomers and immigrants?
- d) Are the services provided by immigration service organizations in Brandon aligned with the needs and challenges of newcomers and immigrants?

**About the Focus Group Discussion**

Thank you for your participation in this Focus Group Discussion. This discussion will last about 60 minutes to 90 minutes. An assessment tool will be shared with you about immigrants' existing challenges and needs in Brandon and rural Manitoba. This list of challenges and needs is prepared based on the previous research findings. As a participant in this discussion, you will be asked to prioritize five challenges out of the listed ones. Based on this exercise, the research team will lead the discussion. You will be asked to identify any new challenges other than the given one. Based on that, as a group, you will come up with possible solutions to address the prioritized challenges.

**Benefits of this Focus Group Discussion**

This discussion will help BLIP and interested organizations to ensure their services are aligned with the newcomers' needs and challenges in Brandon.

As participants, you will gain awareness of the services and supports available in Brandon. This Focus Group Discussion is a platform for you to prioritize your needs and challenges and gain knowledge on accessing services for your integration in Brandon. This discussion is strictly intended for research purposes, and there is no intention to provide any financial support to cushion your needs and challenges.

**Taking Notes, Photographs and Audio Recording**

The research team will take handwritten notes and use an audio recorder to record your answers to make sure we do not miss any aspect of your response. We will transcribe the recording. You are not required to answer all the questions if you feel uncomfortable. You are encouraged to openly share your opinions. Please respect others' opinions. Please refrain from using words that may be hurtful to others. The participants are expected to make sure the information shared here stays within the room. Pictures will be taken with your permission to use in the presentation, report, and thesis. Based on the consent you have given in the checklist below, we will either blur or obscure your face when using the pictures

**Risks and Discomforts:**

While sharing your experiences and challenges, you may feel uncomfortable. However, this information is crucial for us to understand the challenges and needs of immigrants, and you have every right to choose not to answer any questions you find difficult.

**Confidentiality:**

All the information that you share will be kept confidential, including hard copies, recordings, and pictures. The information will be safely stored in locked containers and all digital information will be kept in the password-locked computer at RDI. Only the two researchers and the Director, Dr Wayne Kelly from the Rural Development Institute will have access to the information. No names will be used, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone unless you provide consent. To safeguard your name and contact information, the researcher will assign codes to each participant.

The interpreters and Brandon Local Immigration Partnerships have signed confidentiality agreements to ensure your information is not exposed outside of this room.

Five years after completing the research, we will destroy all the information, including any personal information that could identify participants. The data analysis will be securely kept at the Rural Development Institute.

**Usage of data for future research**

The data you provide during this study may be used by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) for future research projects focused on assessing the needs and challenges of newcomers and immigrants in Brandon, within the next five years following the completion of this study.

**Participation in the Ongoing Debrief Sessions**

Following the focus group discussion, you may be invited to join an optional debriefing session. During this session, we will share the summarised version of the research findings and the inputs from organizations. You will have the opportunity to meet all the service organizations serving newcomers in Brandon during the round-table discussion. Your opinion and feedback on the findings will help shape the final report. If you choose to participate, your comments will be considered in the final report. Your participation in the round-table discussion is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. If you withdraw, any information you provided during the discussion will be destroyed upon your request.

**Payment for participation:**

We understand that your time is valuable, and while we cannot offer financial compensation, we will provide snacks/refreshments as a token of our appreciation for your participation in and contribution to this important research.

**There is no commercialization of this research findings:**

Your research data will not be used for commercial purposes. Additionally, there are no conflicts of interest with the researchers, BLIP, Rural Development Institute, and Brandon University. However, if you are interested in accessing support from service organizations and provide consent, I will share the contact details with BLIP. We may also share a summarized research report with other service organizations focused on supporting newcomers in Brandon.

**Permission to quote:**

We may want to use some quotes from your interview to share valuable insights in research reports, presentations, or publications. While your anonymity will always be protected, you have the choice to decide how your words are used.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study:**

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from participating in the study at any time. However, the data can be withdrawn by the participants within two months of participation from the initial focus group discussion. Any information or data collected up to your withdrawal will be destroyed at that time. You may ask as many questions as you need.

Please state your name and speak every time you want to state your answers or views. This way we will be able to remove any statements which you don't want us to include in the research.

**Questions:**

If any questions come up during or after the study, you are free to contact Shirlyn on her mobile number +1 (204) 720-3500, Felix +1 (431) 541-3727.

**Certification:**

The Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) has reviewed and approved this research project. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Brandon University Research Ethics Officer at (204) 727-9712 [burec@brandonu.ca](mailto:burec@brandonu.ca) who will direct you to the Chair of BUREC.

If you do not mark X, it will be considered a sign that you are not consenting.

I allow my discussion to be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

I agree to allow the researcher to take photographs during the focus group discussion and during on ongoing discussion.

I agree to allow audio/video clips, digital images, or photographs in which I appear to be used in teaching, scientific presentations and/or publications with the understanding that I will not be identified by name.

I agree to allow audio/video clips, digital images, or photographs in which I appear to be blurred/ obscured and used in teaching, scientific presentations and/or publications with the understanding that I will not be identified by name.

I agree to give my consent to use my statements as quotations in the thesis or publication that comes from this research as

\_\_\_\_\_ direct quotation with real name

\_\_\_\_\_ anonymous quotation

\_\_\_\_\_ quotation with a nickname

(Please mark "X" to your preference)

I agree to give my consent to the researcher to use the data and information I shared for further research by RDI.

I give my consent on the \_\_\_\_\_(date) of \_\_\_\_\_(month), 2025 in Brandon, Manitoba, to participate in the focus group discussion.

I give my consent on the \_\_\_\_\_(date) of \_\_\_\_\_(month), 2025 in Brandon, Manitoba, to participate in the ongoing debrief discussions and reviews to provide feedback on the researcher's findings and recommendations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix 2: Need Assessment tool

**Need Assessment Tool: Prioritizing newcomer and immigrant challenges and needs.**

(Please vote for ten prioritized challenges/needs based on your experience. The handout given to you has a description of each challenge/need).

No	Immigrant and Newcomer Challenges and Needs	Please paste your stickers below against your five priorities	Total
1	Access to Services		
2	Discrimination and Biases		
3	Trauma and Mental Health		
4	Lack of Suitable Job Opportunities		
5	Inadequate Integration Support		
6	Language Barriers		
7	Inadequate Information and guidance on available services		
8	Access to Skills Development		
9	Social Support Networks		
10	Financial Assistance		
11	Transportation Services		
12	Recreation Activities		
13	Housing Issues		
14	Social Integration		
15	Cultural Barriers		
16	Family Separation		
17	Childcare		

## Appendix 3: Handout: The description of immigrant Challenges and Needs

## The description of immigrant Challenges and Needs

(This sheet includes a detailed description of each challenge and need that the immigrants and newcomers faced in Brandon and Rural Manitoba. This information was gathered from previous RDI research and publications. This handout will be given to each participant before they start prioritizing their most important five challenges/needs.)  
 oritized challenges/needs based on your experience. The handout given to you has a description of each challenge/need.)

No	Immigrants' needs and challenges	Explanation
1	Access to Services	Difficulty in accessing essential settlement services such as language training, childcare, social support, health, employment assistance, and housing support.
2	Discrimination and Biases	Unfair treatment due to ethnicity, gender, age, race, cultural and religious practices. This includes biases that hinder access to employment, housing, and services.
3	Trauma and Mental Health	Emotional and psychological distress due to separation from family, exposure to war or violence, language barriers, and legal status issues impact mental and physical well-being.
4	Lack of Suitable Job Opportunities	There are challenges in finding job opportunities that match skills and experiences due to the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and difficulties in gaining Canadian experience and language fluency.
5	Inadequate Integration Support	Integration support refers to rural communities' preparedness to welcome newcomers to their communities.
6	Language Barriers	Communication difficulties that affect access to services, employment, and general integration into host communities.
7	Inadequate Information and guidance to available services	Insufficient information and guidance on how to access services.
8	Access to Skills Development	Need for language training, apprenticeship programs, and short courses tailored to Canadian job market requirements
9	Social Support Networks	Social support network refers to community-based groups that provide emotional, practical, and physical support during times of need. This can be families or community groups. Do you have social networks within your communities? Also Rural communities have close-knit communities where social networks already exist, and it is difficult for newcomers to break. This led newcomers to feel unwelcomed and integrating into the community.

10	Financial Assistance	Need for support to overcome financial barriers that prevent access to essential services, including healthcare, entrepreneurship assistance, and housing.
11	Transportation Services	Lack of reliable transportation options to facilitate access to services and appointments.
12	Recreation Activities	Limited opportunities for newcomers to engage in community life through sports, clubs, and other activities that foster inclusion.
13	Housing Issues	Challenges related to finding affordable and suitable housing.
14	Social Integration	Sometimes, integrating into the host communities is difficult due to cultural differences, language barriers, prejudice, and discrimination.
15	Cultural Barriers	Challenges in navigating cultural differences and potential discrimination.
16	Family Separation	Emotional toll and issues related to family reunification.
17	Childcare	Difficulty in finding suitable and affordable childcare options for working parents.