

A Newcomer Employment Resilience Network NL (NERN NL) – Optimizing Connections; Making the Match



PARTNERS

Association for New Canadians



LOCATIONS

Newfoundland and Labrador



INVESTMENT

\$270,420



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☰ Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic meant there were less networking opportunities and increased challenges for professionals who were newly arrived in Newfoundland. The Association for New Canadians (ANC) created the Newcomer Employment Resilience Network (NERN) to address these challenges and gaps in support for newcomers experiencing workforce disruptions and employers who were forced to change how they operate.

Over a two-year period from 2021 to 2023, the ANC team engaged 167 newcomers and 115 local employers and businesses in 36 sector-specific sessions and workshops and connected 49 newcomer professionals to mentors in relevant sectors. Overall, 87% of mentees felt the program met or exceeded their expectations including improved job search skills and knowledge of Canadian workplace culture. For local employers and businesses, 90% said they became more aware of and better understood newcomer professionals and their skills. However, only 30% said hiring skilled newcomer professionals was a significant outcome of participating in the program.

The project demonstrated how sector-specific networks can improve job prospects for newcomers and foster collaboration among local employers and businesses. The initiative also showed the value of tailored mentoring and involving community agencies to better integrate newcomers into the job market.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** Sector-specific mentorship programs give newcomers valuable opportunities to expand their network, better understand the skills and experience needed to get work in their desired sector, and explore pathways to employment.
- 2** Collaborative networks can mobilize knowledge and ways for workers to learn new skills and upgrade their existing ones when the labour market changes, especially when they are able to effectively engage employers.

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Community agencies can help local labour market participation through collaborative initiatives that make local employers more aware of the skills and expertise newcomers offer.

▶ The Issue

Professional networking was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it especially difficult for newcomers and international graduates to “get their foot in the door.” The absence of in-person events and closures of physical workplaces made it hard for job seekers to connect with recruiters, employers and industry experts. This situation exacerbated common challenges recent immigrants already face such as layoffs, underemployment, social isolation, sense of hopelessness and loss of skills.



🔧 What We Investigated

During the early stages of the pandemic, the ANC team saw many impacts of COVID-19 on the labour market for highly skilled newcomers in professions like IT, research, oil and gas and finance. Seeing a gap in support for newcomers who were experiencing workforce disruptions and employers who were forced to change how they operated, the ANC team proposed the development of a Newcomer Employment Resilience Network (NERN).

NERN tested whether it was possible to improve employment opportunities for newcomers while helping local businesses adapt to changing conditions through collaboration and knowledge sharing. Network activities included 36 sector-specific sessions and workshops, as well as a mentorship program that connected 49 newcomers to mentors in relevant careers.

✔ What We're Learning

This project engaged and supported roughly 300 people in network building, skills development and knowledge sharing activities, which included 36 sector-specific sessions and workshops. In total, 167 newcomer professionals and 115 local employers, businesses and industry experts from 65 companies across three sectors (IT, resources and finance) participated between March 5, 2021, and March 31, 2023.

From this group, 49 newcomers were matched with 49 mentors for three months, all of whom either completed the three-month mentorship, or got a job ahead of the match ending. 87% of newcomer respondents said the program met or exceeded their expectations. The benefits they experienced included knowing more about job searching techniques, Canadian workplace culture and upskilling opportunities. For some respondents, the mentorship program supported them in securing interviews and jobs.

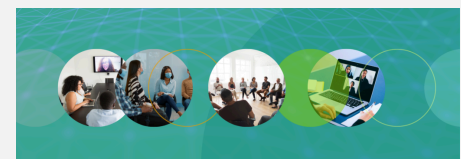
For key local employers and businesses who participated in the network, 90% felt their awareness and understanding of newcomer professionals and their skills improved. However, only 30% said identifying and hiring skilled newcomer professionals was an important network outcome for them.

Key factors that contributed to NERN's success included the quality of employment supports and programs offered by ANC as well as the significant time and effort invested by the project team in building and nurturing relationships with local employers and businesses.

★ Why It Matters

Newcomers face significant challenges when entering the Canadian job market, challenges that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This project shows that a sector-specific network approach to connecting newcomer professionals with relevant employers can improve their job prospects.

This project also shows that while it is challenging to engage employers, it is worth the time and effort to develop and nurture strong relationships to foster better collaboration and knowledge sharing activities in response to local labour market challenges, as well as better employment outcomes for target populations.



Blog: The Power of Networks in Fostering Newcomer Resilience and Boosting the Local Economy

The wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 on immigrant employment required innovative approaches to re-engage both these workers and businesses to increase labour market resiliency and re-establish effective professional networks.

[Read the blog](#)

► What's Next

With the infrastructure and partnerships from the NERN project in place, the ANC team is primed to continue its work with existing collaborators and also attract new ones — with this project potentially informing all future employer engagement efforts in the organization. Currently, their plan is to incorporate the network approach and learnings into ANC's long-term strategic plan.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

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