

Overview of CIC Discussion Paper
- Benefits, Opportunities & Recommendations –

*The Role of Immigrant and Refugee Serving Agency
Umbrella Organizations in Settlement and Integration*
CIC Discussion Paper – February 6, 2014

Given that the immigrant pathway is significantly influenced by provincial service mandates, structures and approaches, the umbrella organizations provide a venue for the expression of distinct immigration trends, settlement patterns and service environments within each province.

This paper was undertaken to provide context and suggestions for discussions with CIC about the role and funding of provincial, regional and national umbrella associations.

Umbrella organizations are at different stages of their history and have variances in size, service mandate and activity.

Value & Benefits of Umbrella Organizations:

1. Facilitating Communications between Governments and the Immigrant and Refugee Serving Sector
 - a. Can convene within and across the sector to discuss settlement issues and impact of government policy and programs on newcomers.
 - b. Identify cross-cutting issues and communicate with government and inform strategy
2. Professionalization and Standards
 - a. Supports both small and large orgs and brings economy of scale professional development
 - b. Can coordinate and share professional development across provinces and nationally, within and beyond the settlement sector
3. Organizational and Sector Capacity Building
 - a. Can engage sector as a whole
 - b. Promote consistent and standardized practices
4. Research
 - a. Can research and address province-wide trends
 - b. Support the sector to be responsive to emerging needs of immigrants.
 - c. With ending of Metropolis Program, umbrella orgs are brokering strategic alliances with research networks
5. Sharing Expertise on Best Practices
 - a. Disseminate knowledge and enhance services within and beyond sector
 - b. Can engage provincial leaders/staff

6. Contributing to Canada's Competitive Advantage in Attracting Immigrants
 - a. provide a structure that supports the immigrant settlement and integration sector to effectively respond to changing immigrant demographics, needs and expectations.
 - b. So, contribute to Canada's competitive advantage in the global marketplace by creating an attractive environment
 - c. Another report (Labour Market Information for Employers...) noted the sector is critical in working with SME's
7. Fostering Welcoming Communities
 - a. Help different levels of government and other public services (school boards, police) attract and retain immigrants – respond to unique needs
 - b. E.g. LIP's and BC's Safe Harbour Program
8. Policy Development and Policy Advocacy
 - a. Umbrella orgs work effectively with all levels of government to influence the development of progressive public policy.
 - b. As conveners of the sector in each province, the umbrella organizations are uniquely positioned to gather and analyze the experience and insights of service providers in many different communities

Opportunities to Enhance Value & Benefit:

1. Strategic Planning
 - a. multi-year strategic and operational plan for a national immigrant settlement and integration program
2. Accountability Framework
 - a. engage with different levels of government to develop performance indicators and measures
3. Standards
 - a. Promote national standards
4. Professional Development
 - a. Incorporate national core competencies on key sector positions and training mechanisms
5. Coordinating Communications and Stakeholder Engagement
 - a. Within an ever-changing and complex environment, umbrella organizations support service delivery continuity and the effective implementation of government priorities and programs at the CIC Regional, provincial and local (municipal) level.
 - b. Can strengthen role as consulting body and "go-to people"
6. Employer Relations
 - a. Work more closely with employers and employment service orgs
 - b. Create formal linkages with employer networks and industry associations

7. Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)
 - a. Umbrella orgs can capitalize on existing sector relationships
 - b. support the LIPs to identify shared priorities and develop collaborative cross-sectoral solutions and cross cutting issues requiring community strategies
8. Providing Expert Advice and Facilitating Inter and Cross Governmental Relations
 - a. Ability to bridge the silos that separate different levels of government, ministries or departments.
 - b. Well positioned to convene policy makers to explore complex and cross-sectoral policy issues
9. Policy Development and Policy Advocacy
 - a. Umbrella organizations can strengthen their influence and role in policy development.
 - b. Will require umbrella organizations to enhance their knowledge of the policy development process, including the planning and budgeting cycles, and to engage in research that can provide evidence for business cases and briefing notes

Recommendations, as summarized below, were proposed:

1. CIC enter into discussions with umbrella groups, using ideas presented in Blue Ribbon Panel etc.
2. That CIC enter into funding agreements with the umbrella organizations to carry out fundamental activities where organizations have the mandate, capacity and willingness to provide them
 - Convene local and provincial planning to advance National Settlement Program
 - Promote continue quality improvement and develop/articulate program outcomes
 - Provide CIC with consultation and advice on the development of national standards that can promote consistent and seamless settlement service delivery