




2025 Partner Survey

Summary Report



IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIP
WATERLOO REGION



The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership (IP) is a collaboration of public, private and non-profit partner organizations working together to ensure Waterloo Region is an inclusive community where immigrants thrive and contribute to shared prosperity and growth.

This report outlines findings from the Immigration Partnership's 2025 Partner Survey. The findings from this survey provide insights about changes the Immigration Partnership, its partner organizations, and others should make to be a global leader in the welcoming and inclusion of immigrants.

Summary of Findings

- **The Immigration Partnership brings together diverse people:**
 - We heard from 55 partners in December 2025 – representing IP Council, all three steering groups, staff and others.
 - 35% of partners that responded were immigrants.
 - 33% were racialized, 58% women, 5% 2SLGBTQIA+, and other groups.
- **Partners affirmed Immigration Partnership directions:**
 - Overwhelmingly, partners were convinced that the Immigration Partnership is focused on the critical issues for immigrants in Waterloo Region, is a catalyst for effective change, and that IP is achieving its mission. These indicators were at or near all-time highs.
- **The majority of partners perceived the impact of Immigration Partnership work in a variety of areas:**
 - A large proportion saw broader community impacts of our collective work for immigrants (70%) and the business community (59%).
 - While slightly more than half (54%) felt that immigration and supporting immigrants was clearly an increasing priority across Waterloo Region, only 36% felt that the community had become more welcoming – a reflection of a sharp shift seen on a nation-wide basis.

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- **Partner commitment and engagement is particularly high**
 - Partners remain highly engaged in and committed to the Immigration Partnership, on an individual and organizational level.
 - Partners expressed that positive change and impact is happening from awareness of services, service referrals, knowledge of newcomer needs, to specific initiatives to support newcomers.

 - **Partners reflected on many significant impacts of the Immigration Partnership in the past year:**
 - Respondents mentioned valuable collaboration & connections, leadership & advocacy, programming that positively impacted immigrants, excellent communication and research, and many other individual projects that make an outsized impact.

 - **Looking forward, partners had a range of key suggested directions:**
 - Partners felt the Partnership should focus its attention and resources over the next 1-2 years on: strategic communication & public awareness, continuing to engage the private sector, prioritizing the Partnership's financial support & sustainability, continuing effective coordination & collaboration, belonging & inclusion work, strong research, systems change/policy, focusing on fewer strategic efforts, and key topics/supports such as employment, housing, settlement, language.
 - They felt that the biggest positive differences would come from strategic connections/champions and effective collaboration, shoring up funding/resourcing, and community awareness and communication.

Partner Engagement and Impact

In general, partners were extremely positive about the mission and impact of the IP work. 9 or 10 out of 10 partners rated various performance metrics very highly.

The vast majority (8 or 9 out of 10) were also very engaged and most (6 to 9 out of 10) saw a variety of significant benefits from their participation in the IP.

While there is still a large proportion that saw broader community impacts of our collective work (7 out of 10 for immigrants, 6 out of 10 within the business community), a bit more than half (5 out of 10) felt supporting immigrants was increasingly seen as a priority, and a minority (4 out of 10) strongly felt Waterloo Region was becoming more welcoming toward immigrants in the past year.

Several positive indicators notably increased (by at least 10 percentage points) since 2024. However, a number of them had dropped in 2024 from historical averages and 2025 brought them back up to those historical average levels.

The notable drops from historical averages are:

- Waterloo Region has become more welcoming of immigrants in the past 12 months compared to previous years (Only 36% felt this was quite true, compared to 55-67% in earlier years.)
- Across our community, immigration and engaging/supporting immigrants is increasingly seen as a priority in planning and implementing policies, services and systems (Only 54% felt this was quite true, compared to 71-93% in earlier years.)

The questions below had a 5-option scale including “A great deal”, “Quite a bit”, “Somewhat”, “A little bit” and “Not really”¹. The table below includes responses that more strongly agreed with each statement (“A great deal” and “Quite a bit” responses). The table compares 2025 responses to those from previous Immigration Partnership Partner Surveys, indicating more recent increases or decreases of at least 5 percentage points with a black arrow, and a red arrow for increases or decreases of at least 10 percentage points.

Partners that strongly agree that in the past 12 months, as a result of their connection or collective work through the Immigration Partnership, they...		2025
<i>Question 7</i>		
Am committed to the success of the Immigration Partnership		↓ 92%
Have aligned our vision or activities with those of the Immigration Partnership		↑ 78%
Feel motivated to contribute and follow-through with actions of the Immigration Partnership		↑ 95%
Have an increased awareness of the services offered in the community		85%
Have increased knowledge of newcomer needs		83%
Have improved service referrals		64%
Have developed new (formal or informal) partnerships to better serve immigrants		67%
Have implemented specific initiatives to support newcomer welcoming and inclusion		67%
Work more collaboratively with other organizations		↑ 86%
Have acquired stronger abilities and tools for welcoming and responding to newcomer needs		↓ 67%
The Immigration Partnership is focused on the critical issues for immigrants in our community		↑ 96%
The Immigration Partnership is a catalyst for effective changes that help immigrants reach their full potential and help create and sustain a thriving community for everyone		↑ 94%
Overall, we are achieving the IP Mission (“We work together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community.”)		↑ 94%
In general, services are meeting the needs of immigrants better, compared to previous year.		70%
In general, the business community is better supported to leverage the talents of immigrants, compared to previous years		59%
Waterloo Region has become more welcoming of immigrants in the past 12 months compared to previous years		36%
Across our community, immigration and engaging/supporting immigrants is increasingly seen as a priority in planning and implementing policies, services and systems.		54%

¹ See Appendix A for detailed responses to questions 1 and 2.

Emerging Issues, Challenges and Solutions

Partners were asked about the greatest Impact of the Immigration Partnership. They shared wide variety of impacts within a specific pillar or across the whole Partnership or related to the experiences of individual immigrants or for respondents, their organization, systems or the community overall. Partners highlighted:

- Collaboration & connections (23 comments)
- Leadership & advocacy (11 comments)
- Individual projects/events (11 comments)
- Programming & impact on immigrants (7 comments)
- Outreach, communications & awareness (6 comments)
- Evidence, data & research (3 comments)
- Other (2 comments)

When asked where the Partnership should focus its attention and resources over the next 1-2 years, partners emphasized a wide variety of areas across all the current areas of involvement, in particular:

- Communication & public awareness (10 comments)
- Engaging private sector (10 comments)
- Financial support & sustainability (for IP & broader work) (8 comments)
- Coordination & Collaboration (7 comments)
- Belonging & inclusion (5 comments)
- Research, data & knowledge mobilization (4 comments)
- Systems change and policy (4 comments)
- Focus on fewer and most impactful areas (2 comments)
- Other specific services/supports – employment, housing, settlement, language (18 comments)

Partners also highlighted several changes that would make the biggest positive difference to the Partnership's effectiveness:

- Strategic connections, champions & leadership (10 comments)
- IP partner connections & collaboration (10 comments)
- Resourcing & core support (7 comments)
- Community Awareness & communications (3 comments)
- Other (9 comments)

Partners were asked about...

What have been the greatest impacts of the Immigration Partnership in the past year? This could be within a specific pillar or across the whole Partnership, or it could relate to the experiences of individual immigrants or for you, your organization, systems or the community overall.

“IP is increasingly seen as the source for related data, research, partnerships/connections, and advocacy about immigration and settlement.”


Coordinated Response to Record Newcomer Arrivals Last year, Waterloo Region welcomed more than 10,000 newcomers, the highest number the region has seen to date. The Immigration Partnership played a central role in coordinating local partners across sectors (settlement services, employers, community agencies, municipal staff, etc.) to respond to this influx and support successful integration.

“This year, Immigration Partnership has acted as a stabilizing backbone at a time when needs are rising and the system is stretched. ...it has meant more coordinated supports for individuals and families, stronger cross-sector/agency relationships, and a clearer sense of collective responsibility for newcomer wellbeing.”


“I think many of the initiatives we lead at IP are valuable, but the Food Bank pilot program stood out for me. It is an initiative with a meaningful impact on new residents and the broader community by supporting the Food Bank’s work. It also brought key stakeholders together and serves as a strong example of collaboration, teamwork, and empathy. Beyond the numbers, the pilot reinforced the importance of creating accessible and dignified support spaces for people arriving in the region and helping them integrate into the community.”

“Over the past year, the Immigration Partnership has strengthened collaboration among organizations and improved coordination of services for newcomers. This has helped reduce service gaps, increased access to information and referrals, and supported more inclusive and responsive programming. For immigrants, it has meant smoother settlement experiences and stronger connections to the community. For our organization, the Partnership enhanced collaboration, knowledge sharing, and our ability to contribute to collective community solutions.”

“The immigration Partnership continues to be an excellent resource for the direction and integration of newcomers in our communities. I frequently use their website and resources as a tool to connect better with the newcomer community, and to be more aware of the significant changes that occur within.”



Please share one or two stories that highlights the impact of your involvement with the Immigration Partnership in the last 12 months. This will allow us to share stories to show the impact of our collective work.



“IP is the reason why the Newcomer Work Experience Program exists. The program is going strong and truly making impacts on newcomers' journey and settlement in the community all thanks to IP.”

“Over the past year, our involvement with the Immigration Partnership helped us support a newly arrived refugee family who was struggling to navigate housing, healthcare, and school registration. Through connections made within the Partnership, we were able to quickly refer them to appropriate services, secure timely support, and reduce their stress during the critical first months of settlement.”

“One of the most meaningful impacts of the Immigration Partnership this past year has been its role in bringing together historically IRCC-funded organizations and grassroots ethno-cultural groups who have long been doing settlement work without the same recognition or resources. Through the Partnership table, these groups were able to connect, build relationships, and better understand each other's roles and strengths. For SCAWR, this collaboration created space to demonstrate the depth and impact of the work we have been doing within the African and Black newcomer community for years. Being part of these conversations helped bridge trust between funders, established service providers, and grassroots organizations. As a direct result, SCAWR was able to strengthen its organizational capacity and has since successfully acquired IRCC funding. This has allowed us to expand our reach, stabilize services, and better support African and Black newcomers with culturally responsive settlement supports. This outcome reflects the value of the Immigration Partnership in breaking down silos and creating more equitable pathways for community-led organizations to be recognized and resourced for the work they are already doing.”

“A client family had to stop attending LINC classes due to family circumstances. After several months, they wanted to return to class. They asked me to contact the service provider on their behalf, which I did. It took some time to get a response. At a meeting organized by the IP, I met with the service provider's staff to discuss my communication regarding the clients. She took note and promised to contact the clients and help them re-enter the classes as soon as possible, which she did. I therefore understand that the IP gave me the opportunity to meet with the staff and allowed me to ensure that the clients were being cared for appropriately and in a timely manner.”

Where should the Partnership focus its attention and resources over the next 1-2 years?

“Financial sustainability. Address anti-immigrant sentiment. Private sector engagement. Policy, investment and system influence. Support local settlement system coordination.”


“In the coming year, the Immigration Partnership should continue to focus on shaping public opinion by strengthening collaboration with community partners, service providers, employers, and local institutions. By working collectively, the Partnership can further guide conversations about immigration away from fear and misinformation and toward understanding, shared responsibility, and the benefits immigrants bring to the community.”

“Over the next 1–2 years, the Partnership should focus on engaging a broader range of sectors—especially business and industry leaders—not only to champion immigration as an economic and community asset but also to help shape a positive, accurate public narrative about newcomers. Strengthening these cross-sector relationships while improving navigation, housing access, and belonging supports will help the region attract, retain, and fully include the immigrants who sustain our workforce and communities.”

“Affordable and Sustainable Housing. Housing remains one of the biggest challenges for newcomers. Advocate for more affordable housing units, partner with landlords, and explore transitional housing programs. Employment: Stable employment is critical for self-sufficiency. Develop job readiness programs, connect newcomers with local employers.”

“Ensuring they have ongoing funding to continue the good work.”

“Improve Navigation of Settlement and Community Services As the system becomes more complex, newcomers need clearer pathways. The Partnership could focus on: Enhancing coordinated system navigation tools. Developing multilingual, digital, and community-based outreach. Strengthening cross-agency referral systems to reduce duplication and gaps.”



What change would make the biggest positive difference to the Partnership's effectiveness?

- Strategic connections, champions & leadership (10 comments)
- IP partner connections & collaboration (10 comments)
- Resourcing & core support (7 comments)
- Community Awareness & communications (3 comments)
- Other (9 comments)



Building community through immigration

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