

Evaluation of the Immigration to Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) Initiative

Executive Summary

Research and Evaluation

Evaluation Division

July 2017



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

Technical Appendices are available upon request to Research-Recherche@cic.gc.ca.

Ci4-170/2017E-PDF
978-0-660-09308-6

Reference Number: E3-2015

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Purpose of the Evaluation:

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Immigration to Official Language Minority Communities Initiative (hereafter the OLMC Initiative). The evaluation examined relevance and performance, and was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the Treasury Board *Policy on Evaluation* and section 42.1 of the *Financial Administration Act*. Findings also contributed to the Department of Canadian Heritage's (PCH) horizontal evaluation of the *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018: Education, Immigration, Communities* (hereafter the Roadmap 2013-2018).

Overview of the OLMC Initiative:

The OLMC Initiative derives its mandate to support and enhance the development and vitality of OLMCs from the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) and the *Official Languages Act* (OLA), and includes various activities within IRCC to foster the promotion, recruitment and integration of French-speaking immigrants to FMCs outside of Quebec, as well as to further knowledge development and sharing in relation to both FMCs and ESCQ. Allocated \$29.4M in funding over five years (and \$4.5M ongoing), the Initiative is a key commitment under the Immigration pillar of the Roadmap 2013-2018, and is broadly organized into four components:

- Promotion and recruitment activities in Canada and abroad, including Destination Canada;
- Settlement services to French-speaking clients;
- Coordination and consultation with key stakeholders; and
- Strategic data development, research, and knowledge sharing projects for immigration to both FMCs outside of Quebec and English Speaking Communities in Quebec (ESCQ).

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations:

Management and Governance: Overall, the evaluation found that the OLMC Initiative involves numerous activities, embedded in IRCC's immigration and settlement programming, which are not always well aligned and can be overlapping. Management, delivery and accountabilities for these activities are spread across different responsibility areas within the department, with no clear policy lead for the Initiative as a whole. While mechanisms to govern and coordinate the OLMC Initiative are in place, and have improved since the 2012 evaluation, the Initiative still lacks a unified strategy, with focused leadership and overall accountability.

Recommendation 1: IRCC should review and revise the governance and accountability framework supporting the OLMC Initiative. The review should consider roles and responsibilities within IRCC, as well as leadership, and identify a clear policy lead within the department with overall management responsibility and accountability for the Initiative as a whole.

Promotion and Recruitment of French-speaking Immigrants in FMCs: The OLMC Initiative has had some success in raising awareness among French-speaking foreign nationals about the opportunities to live and work in Canada, as well as among employers in Canada about the opportunities and mechanisms to recruit and hire French-speaking immigrants.

However, in spite of these efforts, which have been ongoing since 2003, the relative weight of French-speaking immigrants settling in FMCs remains well below departmental targets. Evidence indicates that the current approach, which has relied mainly on promotional activities as well as options for temporary residence, may not be sufficient to achieve the established targets, and more efforts may be needed if current targets are to be realized.

Settlement and Integration of French-Speaking Newcomers in FMCs: French-speaking newcomers are generally integrating economically at rates that are comparable to other immigrants. They are using both of Canada's official languages in their daily lives, and English language ability is associated with their economic and social integration. There is also an indication that French-speaking newcomers have knowledge about life in Canada and are participating in Canadian society. IRCC supports the integration of French-speaking newcomers in FMCs through its Settlement Program. The goal is for French-speaking newcomers to adopt a "Francophone integration pathway", and IRCC is committed to supporting a "for and by Francophones" approach. However, this approach is not yet well-defined, and the role of non-Francophone organizations to support this work is unclear. Moreover, the lack of supports for temporary residents targeted by the OLMC Initiative, to help them form meaningful links to the Francophone community, is also a challenge.

Partner and Stakeholder Engagement: Considerable effort has gone into engaging partners and stakeholders in Canada and abroad in the activities of the OLMC Initiative. However, the level of engagement of certain partners, such as provincial/territorial governments, who have responsibility for the infrastructure and services required to maintain the vitality of FMCs to attract and retain French-speaking immigrants, has been a challenge.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should develop and implement a unified and horizontal strategy for the OLMC Initiative which should:

- a. Review and revise activities in relation to Francophone immigration to more effectively support the achievement of established targets. Activities should include promotion, as well as tools and mechanisms to facilitate permanent residence and retention.
- b. Advance the "for and by Francophones" approach for the department.
- c. Develop an approach to support the temporary residents targeted by the Initiative in developing links with the FMCs.
- d. Better leverage governmental, non-governmental and employment-related partners in support of FMCs' capacity for attraction, integration and retention of French-speaking newcomers.

Strategic Research, Data Development and Knowledge-Sharing: The OLMC Initiative has facilitated the development of knowledge and the creation of awareness of topics related to immigration to OLMCs, particularly within IRCC. However, ensuring the use of research results to inform policy development and addressing the knowledge needs and priorities of the diverse stakeholders has been a challenge. Progress has been made in terms of performance measurement since the 2012 evaluation. However, as the Initiative continues to evolve, the performance measurement strategy needs to be updated to effectively monitor the activities, outputs and expected outcomes of the Initiative.

Recommendation 3: IRCC should update the performance measurement strategy for the OLMC Initiative to be aligned with the horizontal strategy, as per Recommendation 2, and to address results monitoring and reporting challenges.