

# Evaluation of Language Training Services

Research and Evaluation Branch

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and Citizenship Canada

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## Acronyms

CA	Contribution Agreement
CCLB	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmark
CLIC	Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada
ELBP	Évaluation linguistique basée sur le portfolio
ESL	English as a Second Language
FY	Fiscal Year
FPT	Federal, Provincial, Territorial
FSL	French as a Second Language
G&C	Grants and Contributions
GCMS	Global Case Management System
iCARE	Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment
IMDB	Longitudinal Immigration Database
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
NCLC	Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens
NLAB	Newcomer Language Advisory Body
NLPPG	National Language Placement and Progress Guidelines
PBLA	Portfolio-Based Language Assessment
PD	Professional Development
PT	Provinces and Territories
PR	Permanent Resident
R/W/S/L	Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening
SIP	Settlement and Integration Policy
SIS	Settlement and Integration Sector
SN	Settlement Network
SPO	Service Provider Organization
SRMC	Settlement/Resettlement Management Committee
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TR	Temporary Resident

## Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Language Training Services. The evaluation was conducted to provide an in-depth assessment of this major program and considered issues of program effectiveness, covering the period from 2015 to 2018.

The *Evaluation of the Settlement Program* (2018) highlighted the need to further assess the different success factors and approaches to language learning. While language training is helping newcomers improve their language ability, progression was shown to vary by skill (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking), as well as client characteristics, which pointed to the need for a greater understanding of progression across skills. As such, the evaluation recommended an in-depth examination and thorough analysis to provide fulsome outcomes results and specific recommendations for improvements to the Department with the aim of improving language training effectiveness.

The language learning services have been evaluated, focusing on two key areas. The main focus was to better understand language skills improvement – what works for whom and under what conditions, with a view to determining the specific characteristics that influence language skills improvement. The secondary area of focus was to examine whether the language learning framework is adapted to address newcomers' needs.

## Summary of conclusions and recommendations

Based on the evidence analyzed, it was found that language learning services are designed to be flexible and effective in meeting the diverse needs of newcomers and to support their progression. The findings also show that language progression for newcomers is mostly positive, but there are differences between clients and non-clients with respect to likelihood of progression. While clients were seen to progress at the same pace as non-clients when assessed in the short term, using an objective measure, clients appeared to progress more than their non-client counterparts when assessed on a longer timeframe using a subjective measure. It was also found that some components of language training are associated with a greater likelihood of newcomers improving their language skills, such as full-time language training and multi-level classes, while others lowered chances of progression, such as continuous intake classes.

Furthermore, when assessing other settlement outcomes, the evidence indicated that:

- clients of general formal language training use official languages less frequently than non-clients, while formal language training focused on employment were using it significantly more than non-clients.
- clients of formal language training, and clients who took both formal and informal language training, are more likely to report an increase in the frequency of use of official languages.

Although not a direct objective of language training, employability remains a primary concern for clients. The evaluation carefully analyzed this theme and assessed the impact of language training on various labour market outcomes. Clients of general language training used English or French at work less frequently and were less comfortable using official languages than non-clients, however taking language training focused on employment contributed to making these gaps smaller. Also, clients often had poorer labour market outcomes than non-clients on the short to medium term. The analysis showed that a large part of the difference in employment outcomes between clients and non-clients could be attributed to socio-demographic profiles of individuals

(e.g., education, age, gender, year of admission). This suggests that taking language training is not necessarily a cause of poorer labour market outcomes, but rather that clients and non-clients may have different characteristics that explain their outcomes on the labour market. Furthermore, the evaluation found that employment outcomes of clients do not vary greatly based on how language training is delivered, language training focused on employment generally had a positive impact on employment outcomes, and taking language training during core hours was associated with less favourable results.

While the client progression and their labour market outcomes show mixed results, it should be noted that language learning services correspond to the diversity in clients' need and IRCC-funded language learning services are designed in a manner to be conducive to language improvement for newcomers.

In response to the findings from the evaluation, this report has grouped the recommendations into two main themes. First, the evaluation proposes three recommendations around the topic of outcomes measurement. Second, the evaluation recommends improvements to the program to foster success. To this end, the evaluation proposes seven additional recommendations to further support clients, instructors and program stakeholders.

## Recommendations

### Theme 1: Measuring Outcomes

These recommendations focus on ensuring the objectives and indicators of success for clients in language learning services are clearly outlined. Moreover, these recommendations are made to ensure the department is well-positioned to monitor and report on collected data, and ensure the department has the required tools for measuring desired outcomes.

#### *Objectives of Language Training*

For the newcomer, settlement is a multidimensional route encompassing various outcomes. While the Settlement's Program Performance Information Profile (PIP) outlines both the social and economic outcomes associated to it, it does not identify specifically which outcomes relate to language training, and their associated indicators of success. When it comes to language training, one of the main outcomes that could be derived from this type of settlement service could be seen as language skills progression. However, given the variety of the program offering and goals of learners, multiple outcomes can be associated to language training. In this context, it proved difficult to approach language progression as the outcome on which to base the success of the program and to determine what could be considered as a sufficient level of progression for the program to succeed. As such, the department would benefit from clarifying the primary outcomes associated with language training, as well as defining clear targets for achieving those outcomes.

**Recommendation 1: IRCC should clarify and confirm language training program outcomes to ensure all desired results are defined, monitored, and integrated into the program theory and corresponding documentation.**

#### *Milestones Test*

While the evaluation successfully used the Milestones test as an objective measure of language progression in the short term across the four learning competencies, this tool was expensive to implement, difficult to put in place and significant efforts were required to recruit clients and non-clients for the test. Moreover, the Milestones focuses on assessing language levels of individuals at the CLB 4 to 8, and cannot be used to assess language levels of those at lower or

higher proficiency levels. These limitations are important, and limit the department in assessing the vast majority of its client-base, especially given the focus the department decided to place on delivering language training at CLB 1 to 4. Consequently, before IRCC considers future use of the Milestones, it should examine the appropriateness and consider the limitations of using this test with respect to the populations under study, approach to administration, and cost-benefit balance.

**Recommendation 2: IRCC should consider the appropriateness of the future use of the Milestones Test, including an examination of its value for money and applicability across client groups.**

### *Employment-related data*

The evaluation found a lack of clarity in the administrative data (iCARE) regarding the definition of employment-related language training. This lack of distinction between employment-related language training and general language training with a focus on employment limited the evaluation's capacity to clearly distinguish the outcomes for those two groups. Collecting precise information on the type of language training delivered would allow the department to better monitor and report on the program. Despite difficulties in defining employment-related language services, the evaluation found that clients in employment-focused language training were more likely to progress and use official languages. In addition, this training component was also associated with more positive employment outcomes. Experts also praise employment-based language training, finding it is highly effective in helping newcomers integrate into the labour market. As a result, IRCC should reconfirm the benefits associated with this type of training by using a standardized definition of employment-related language training.

**Recommendation 3: IRCC should develop and implement an approach to better identify employment-related language training in iCARE and monitor its uptake and outcomes.**

## **Theme 2: Program Improvements for Fostering Success**

The evaluation found that overall the program has many design features conducive to clients' language progression and also identified several areas where there is room for improvement. In particular, the evaluation proposes 7 recommendations to further support clients, instructors and program stakeholders.

### *Instructor supports*

It was found that instructors are qualified, well-trained and benefit from many supports. The evaluation however found they would further benefit from:

- more PBLA material which are easily adaptable;
- ensuring instructors' assessments provided as part of PBLA are aligned with CLBs;
- improving navigability of and better vetting of new and existing Tutela content;
- limiting the amount of unpaid work instructors need to perform; and
- more professional development for CLIC instructors.

The evaluation found that the PBLA is widely-implemented and used. Instructors derive value from PBLA and clients feel empowered by this approach, as it shows them their progression. Given PBLA relies on instructors' assessments of artifacts against CLBs, experts felt that it introduces an element of subjectivity. As a result, the experts indicated that PBLA was more useful as a learning tool than as an objective tool for assessing benchmarks. Moreover, instructors felt it requires too much preparation time, specifically in creating and adapting materials. While instructors benefit from PBLA supports and other online resources, there is room for



improvement. Mixed views were provided on Tutela's usefulness, specifically with respect to a need for better vetting online content, and making the website easier for users to navigate. NLAB members and interviews felt more PD is needed for instructors who teach literacy clients, and for CLIC instructors.

**Recommendation 4: IRCC should develop and implement a plan to ensure that LINC and CLIC instructors are adequately resourced.**

### *Literacy*

Literacy needs are present at a broad range of levels (i.e., literacy designations are provided up to CLB 4). Although instructors are well-qualified, and trained, the evaluation found that there is a need to have access to specific materials and professional development to teach to clients with literacy needs. Also, while PBLA is widely-implemented and used, the evaluation found that PBLA may not be helpful for clients at low language levels, especially those with literacy needs.

**Recommendation 5: IRCC should implement a plan to enhance language training provision for clients with literacy needs, namely addressing challenges related to use of PBLA with literacy clients.**

### *Continuous Intake*

The evaluation found that continuous intake helps SPOs meet occupancy levels and ensures that newcomers can enter a class as soon as possible. However, this flexibility can be disruptive for teachers and students and can also add a challenge for new clients who need to catch up the level of the class. This continuous intake was also seen to hinder progression of clients. On the other hand, multi-level classes were also seen as a way to meet the demand for language training with smaller groups of clients and to have a positive impact on language progression. As such, considerations could be given to leveraging multilevel classes and staggering start dates of smaller groups at each CLB, to meet the demand of clients. Experts also suggested the introduction of temporary holding tanks (i.e., temporary classes that include multiple CLB levels until there are available classes) as another mitigation strategy.

**Recommendation 6: IRCC should implement a plan to address the challenges associated with continuous intake for clients and instructors.**

### *Guidelines*

The evaluation found that LINC and CLIC instructors are supported by helpful and up-to-date curriculum guidelines. However, there was a lack of formal guidance for employment-related language instructors. There is a need to develop better guidance (e.g., manuals, policy guidance) to meet the needs of instructors who may not feel supported by the lack of guidance, recognizing that content guidelines for employment-related language training requires flexibility to accommodate different program offerings and client needs and desired objectives.

In addition, informal language services were found best designed for newcomers who feel socially isolated, or who are not comfortable in structured learning environments. The evaluation found that the informal language training is largely supported by volunteers. Having guidelines which are clearly linked to the program's desired outcomes would help support volunteers who might not have the same background as formal training instructors.

**Recommendation 7: IRCC should develop guidelines for employment-related language training and informal language training.**

***Combining formal and informal language training***

While informal language services alone were not associated to a higher likelihood of improvement, the evaluation found that clients who took part in both formal and informal language training had higher chances of language skills progression and often had better employment outcomes than clients who only participated in formal language training.

**Recommendation 8: IRCC should develop a plan to leverage and optimize the benefits of informal language training for formal language training clients.**

***Childcare***

The evaluation highlights a series of barriers to attending language learning services. In particular wait times to access childcare are long, particularly affecting newcomer women, families with multiple children, and single-parent families.

**Recommendation 9: IRCC should examine ways and develop a plan to meet the needs of clients in terms of providing care for children with the view of facilitating access to language training.**

***Coordination/Communication***

While the roles and responsibilities related to the program are generally clear, it was found that NLAB felt that programming changes could be better communicated, and that a feedback loop including Settlement Network would be beneficial. Stakeholders felt that being informed of programming changes and priorities could help them to have more preparation time on calls for proposals.

**Recommendation 10: IRCC should implement a strategy to ensure effective and timely dissemination of information on policy changes and priorities between policy, operations and external stakeholders.**

# Evaluation of Language Training Services: Management Response Action Plan (MRAP)

## Theme 1: Measuring Outcomes

### Objectives of Language Training

For the newcomer, settlement is a multidimensional route encompassing various outcomes. While the Settlement Program Performance Information Profile (PIP) outlines both the social and economic outcomes associated to it, it does not identify specifically which ones relate to language training, and their associated indicators of success. When it comes to language training, one of the main outcomes that could be derived from this type of settlement service could be seen as language skills progression. However, given the variety of the program offering and goals of learners, multiple outcomes can be associated to language training. In this context, it proved difficult to approach language progression as the outcome on which to base the success of the program and to determine what could be considered as a sufficient level of progression for the program to succeed. As such, the department would benefit from clarifying the primary outcomes associated with language training, as well as defining clear targets for achieving those outcomes.

### Recommendation 1

IRCC should clarify and confirm language training program outcomes to ensure all desired results are defined, monitored, and integrated into the program theory and corresponding documentation.

### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department recognizes that settlement language clients have various objectives and learning goals and that services benefit newcomers in many ways.

The Settlement Program's Logic Model and Performance Information Profile establishes multiple immediate and intermediate outcomes for language training. The Department will build on these with the view of clarifying primary and secondary outcomes for the program and what constitutes success.

### Actions

**Action 1a:** Develop a language learning services outcomes framework informed by research and that considers learner goals and other longer term outcomes.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN) and Research and Evaluation (RE)
- Completion date: Q4 2021–2022.

**Action 1b:** Revise logic model and performance information profile, including performance indicators and targets.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN) and Research and Evaluation (RE)
- Completion date: Q1 2022–2023.

### **Milestones Test**

While the evaluation successfully used the Milestones test as an objective measure of language progression in the short term across the four learning competencies, this tool was expensive to implement, difficult to put in place and significant efforts were required to recruit clients and non-clients for the test. Moreover, the Milestones focuses on assessing language levels of individuals at the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 4 to 8, and cannot be used to assess language levels of those at lower or higher proficiency levels. These limitations are important, and limit the department in assessing the vast majority of its client-base, especially given the focus the department decided to place on delivering language training at CLB 1 to 4. Consequently, before IRCC considers future use of the Milestones, it should examine the appropriateness and consider the limitations of using this test with respect to the populations under study, approach to administration, and cost-benefit.

### **Recommendation 2**

IRCC should consider the appropriateness of the future use of the Milestones Test, including an examination of its value for money and applicability across client groups.

#### **Response**

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Milestones test (Batterie de tests de rendement, BTR), were created for the purpose of assessing CLB/NCLC levels 4 to 8 language skills at key achievements of proficiency and provide a benchmark level that could be used as a portable language credential.

The Department acknowledges there are some limitations to administering the Milestones/BTR tests and will advance research on future uses and parameters of the tests, including their value, relevance and appropriateness in comparison to other assessment measures.

#### **Actions**

**Action 2a:** Conduct research on the use of Milestones and BTR as a portable exit credential for academic and workplace purposes and pilot in community college environments.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network and Immigration Branch (IB).
- Completion date: Q2 2022-2023.

**Action 2b:** Contingent on results from the research conducted, develop an action plan for future use and administration of the Milestones/BTR tests by the Department.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network and Immigration Branch (IB)
- Completion date: Q4 2022-2023.

### **Employment**

The evaluation found a lack of clarity in the administrative data (iCARE) regarding the definition of employment-related language training. This lack of distinction between employment-related language training and general language training with a focus on employment limited the evaluation's capacity to clearly distinguish the outcomes for those two groups. Collecting precise information on the type of language training delivered would allow the department to better monitor and report on the program. Despite difficulties in defining employment-related language services, the evaluation found that clients in employment-focused language training were more likely to progress and use official languages. In addition, this training component was also associated with more positive employment outcomes. Experts also praise employment-based language training, finding it is highly effective in helping newcomers integrate into the labour market. As a result, IRCC should reconfirm the benefits associated with this type of training by using a standardized definition of employment-related language training.

### Recommendation 3

IRCC should develop and implement an approach to better identify employment-related language training in iCARE and monitor its uptake and outcomes.

#### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department recognizes that official language skills are critical for newcomers who need help integrating into the labour market or finding jobs commensurate to their education and skills. IRCC supports these services to the extent possible and agrees to continue to build the evidence on employment-related language training offerings. This evidence will inform the need to further expand this programming.

There is a range of employment-related language training programming and the Department has advanced methods to better identify offerings. Some solutions have been implemented to date (e.g. tags in the Grants and Contributions System), and other solutions will be introduced in iCARE.

#### Actions

**Action 3a:** Proceed with label changes in the iCARE system to identify and differentiate employment-related language training.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN), Chief Data Officer (CDO).
- Completion date: Q1 2022-2023.

## Theme 2: Program Improvements for Fostering Success

### Instructor supports

The evaluation examined the impact of program design features on instructors, including Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) and Évaluation linguistique basée sur le portfolio (ELBP), instructor qualifications, curriculum and resources supporting instructors, and Tutela. Overall, instructors were found to be qualified, experienced and supported through professional development, although the Newcomer Language Advisory Body (NLAB) and interviewees agreed more professional development is needed for instructors who teach literacy clients, and for instructors of Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC).

PBLA/ELBP are standardized teaching and assessment methods where teachers and students collaborate on setting language learning goals and compile evidence of acquired language skills in different contexts over time. PBLA /ELBP were introduced to help monitor program performance, measure student progress, and standardize the program across Canada. The evaluation found that PBLA/ELBP are widely-implemented, used, provide value to instructors and empower clients. As PBLA/ELBP relies on instructors' assessments of artifacts against Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), experts felt it introduces subjectivity and that it was more useful as a learning tool than an objective tool for assessing benchmarks. Moreover, instructors felt it requires too much preparation time, specifically in creating and adapting materials. While instructors benefit from PBLA supports and other online resources, the evaluation found room for improvement.

Tutela is an IRCC-funded online repository/community for ESL/FSL professionals, which contains learning activities, worksheets, templates, training resources, curriculum guidelines, policy/management documents, and research. The evaluation found mixed views on Tutela's usefulness, specifically with respect to a need for better vetting its online content, and making the website easier for users to navigate. Moreover, the evaluation noted some instructors need to develop materials and curricula outside of their paid teaching hours.

The evaluation found instructors would benefit from enhancing the following supports:

- more PBLA materials which are easily adaptable;
- ensuring instructors' assessments provided as part of PBLA are aligned with CLBs;
- improving navigability of and better vetting of new and existing Tutela content;
- limiting the amount of unpaid work instructors need to perform; and
- more professional development for CLIC instructors.

#### **Recommendation 4**

IRCC should develop and implement a plan to ensure that LINC and CLIC instructors are adequately resourced.

#### **Response**

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department recognizes the critical role of instructors in the successful delivery of settlement language programming. Providing language professionals with the supports they need remains a priority. Core areas include training on the CLB/NCLC frameworks, PBLA/ELPB, and teaching learners with literacy needs.

IRCC continues to support the face-to-face delivery model enriched by blended and online teaching. The Department is improving infrastructure by advancing new online tools which will be integrated with existing ones (i.e. Tutela, the community of practice and repository of resources for ESL/FSL professionals).

These advancements allowed instructors to shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 situation. IRCC will leverage successful approaches emerging from the pandemic, including alternative service delivery practices.

The Department continues to work with Department of Canadian Heritage and partners to improve the recruitment and resources for the FSL community.

Given that IRCC is not the employer and does not determine compensation or instructor prep time, the Department will collaborate with the sector to find solutions related to unpaid work.

#### **Actions**

**Action 4a:** Develop, in collaboration with the settlement language sector, a national strategy to increase availability and accessibility of training and professional development for both LINC and CLIC instructors.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q1 2022-2023.

**Action 4b:** Develop teaching resources, coaching and mentoring, in particular PBLA/ELPB-aligned online content modules.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2020-2021 and ongoing.

**Action 4c:** Enhance the quality of Tutela by implementing a process to validate resources to ensure alignment with the CLB/NCLC frameworks and PBLA/ELBP and improve the search and navigation functions of the site.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q1 2021-2022 and ongoing.

**Action 4d:** Hold national consultations on the health of the settlement language sector and conduct research on program standards.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2022-2023.

### Literacy

Literacy needs are present at a broad range of levels (i.e., literacy designations are provided up to Canadian Language Benchmark [CLB] 4). Although instructors are well-qualified, and trained, the evaluation found that there is a need to have access to specific materials and professional development to teach to clients with literacy needs. Also, while Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) is widely implemented and used, the evaluation found that PBLA may not be helpful for clients at low language levels, especially those with literacy needs.

### Recommendation 5

IRCC should implement a plan to enhance language training provision for clients with literacy needs, namely addressing challenges related to use of PBLA with literacy clients.

### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department recognizes that there is more to do to understand the learning pathways of clients with ESL/FSL literacy and special needs as well as supporting instructors that have these learners in their classrooms.

The Department has addressed the need for programming to help clients with special and literacy needs and is improving ways to better identify and help learners. The Department supported the development of the English as a Second Language (ESL) for Adult Literacy Learners/Français langue seconde (FLS) pour adultes moins alphabétisés (AMA) frameworks.

The COVID-19 situation has added further barriers for learners who may struggle to access online learning and has shifted the focus of instructors to digital literacy and accessibility.

### Actions

**Action 5a:** Conduct research and consultations with partners to assess appropriateness and efficiencies of approaches, tools and resources for clients with special and literacy needs.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q2 2021-2022.

**Action 5b:** Develop and implement an action plan to create a dedicated pathway for ESL/FSL literacy learners who may have multiple barriers to second language learning, subject to available funding.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q3 2021-2022.

## Continuous Intake

The evaluation found that continuous intake helps SPOs meet occupancy levels and ensures that newcomers can enter a class as soon as possible. However, this flexibility can be disruptive for teachers and students and can also add a challenge for new clients who need to catch up the level of the class. This continuous intake was also seen to hinder progression of clients. On the other hand, multi-level classes were also seen as a way to meet the demand for language training with smaller groups of clients and to have a positive impact on language progression. As such, considerations could be given to leveraging multilevel classes and staggering start dates of smaller groups at each CLB, to meet the demand of clients. Experts also suggested the introduction of temporary holding tanks (i.e., temporary classes that include multiple CLB levels until there are available classes) as another mitigation strategy.

## Recommendation 6

IRCC should implement a plan to address the challenges associated with continuous intake for clients and instructors.

### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department has been examining various program efficiency measures (e.g. occupancy; attendance) of language programming with the view of addressing current challenges (e.g. waitlists) associated with high demand for language training.

This review is also informed by the closure of in-person services and the transition to online delivery during COVID-19 and business resumption. Organizations are piloting different online and remote intake and classroom approaches.

### Actions

**Action 6a:** Develop guidelines to optimize program intake, including alternatives to continuous intake, as part of the broader review of program efficiency measures.

- Accountability: Co-Leads; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP), Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2022-2023.

## Guidelines

The evaluation found that instructors of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC) are supported by helpful and up-to-date curriculum guidelines. However, there was a lack of formal guidance for employment-related language instructors. There is a need to develop better guidance (e.g., manuals, policy guidance) to meet the needs of instructors who may not feel supported by the lack of guidance, recognizing that content guidelines for employment-related language training requires flexibility to accommodate different program offerings and client needs and desired objectives.

In addition, informal language services were found best designed for newcomers who feel socially isolated, or who are not comfortable in structured learning environments. The evaluation found that the informal language training is largely supported by volunteers. Having guidelines which are clearly linked to the program's desired outcomes would help support volunteers who might not have the same background as formal training instructors.



## Recommendation 7

IRCC should develop guidance for employment-related language training and informal language training.

### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

IRCC works with provincial and territorial partners and undertakes service mapping to inform the design and delivery of employment related language programming; this collaboration will continue to inform work.

The Department acknowledges the need to provide guidance on specific elements of these programs for which language progression is not the primary objective.

#### Employment-related:

While IRCC has funded the development of employment-related language training and curriculum and requires service provider organizations to share resources through the online community of practice (Tutela), the Department recognizes that these practices could be improved.

#### Informal:

IRCC has developed various guidance (e.g. Volunteer Management handbook; guidelines for conversation circles) to support the delivery of informal language training

### Actions

**Action 7a:** Employment-related—Collaborate with provincial and territorial partners through the FPT Language Forum to develop an approach to share employment-related language training resources.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q3 2021-2022.

**Action 7b:** Employment-related—Review and build on results of recommendation 3 and develop appropriate guidance for organizations delivering employment-related language training.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q2 2022-2023.

**Action 7c:** Informal—Review and disseminate existing resources and functional guidance to guide program delivery on informal language training.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2020-2021.

### Combining formal and informal language training

While informal language services alone were not associated to a higher likelihood of improvement, the evaluation found that clients who took part in both formal and informal language training had higher chances of language skills progression and often had better employment outcomes than clients who only participated in formal language training.

### Recommendation 8

IRCC should develop a plan to leverage and optimize the benefits of informal language training for formal language training clients.

#### Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The Department recognizes the importance of opportunities to develop oral communication skills.

Through initiatives such as Service Delivery Improvement (e.g. Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Basics for Volunteers) and the Francophone Integration Pathway, the Department is testing ways to provide clients with various language learning opportunities.

IRCC collaborates with federal departments to leverage other tools (e.g. The Mauril, developed by the Department of Canadian Heritage) that aim to help Canadians learn official languages

#### Actions

**Action 8a:** Issue guidance to promote benefits of informal language opportunities for LINC/CLIC clients and through Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral (NAARS) services, systemically refer clients who do not have primary language learning goals to informal language learning opportunities.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q2 2021-2022.

**Action 8b:** Increase listening and speaking (pragmatics) courses, subject to availability of funding.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2022-2022.

#### Childcare

The evaluation highlights a series of barriers to attending language learning services. In particular, wait times to access childcare are long, particularly affecting newcomer women, families with multiple children, and single-parent families.

### Recommendation 9

IRCC should examine ways and develop a plan to meet the needs of clients in terms of providing care for children with the view of facilitating access to language training.

#### Response

The Department agrees with this recommendation.

The Department acknowledges there is a gap in knowledge about how current funded options for child care affect the ability of service provider organizations to meet child care needs of clients. There is a need to better understand the impacts of the COVID-19 situation and business resumption on this type of service, as well as delivery in rural and small centres.

## Actions

**Action 9a:** Undertake an assessment of current client needs and potential barriers experienced by SPOs in the delivery of current IRCC-funded child care options to meet language training-related child care needs.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement Network (SN). Support; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP).
- Completion date: Q4 2021-2022.

**Action 9b:** Explore alternative methods to facilitate access to language training through innovative child care approaches, and recommend specific approaches for funding through available funds, and the next CFP cycle (2025).

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2022-2023.

## Coordination/Communication

While the roles and responsibilities related to the program are generally clear, it was found that the Newcomer Language Advisory Body felt that programming changes could be better communicated, and that a feedback loop including Settlement Network would be beneficial. Stakeholders felt that being informed of programming changes and priorities could help them to have more preparation time on calls for proposals.

## Recommendation 10

IRCC should implement a strategy to ensure effective and timely dissemination of information on policy changes and priorities between policy, operations and external stakeholders.

## Response

The Department agrees with the recommendation.

Multiple mechanisms and channels are in place to internally and externally engage, and disseminate information on settlement language programming. The Department recognizes that program expansion over the years has led to asymmetries.

IRCC is working with sector officials including Newcomer Language Advisory Body members to improve sector representativeness across the country.

## Actions

**Action 10a:** Establish program management tables (internal and external) to reinforce the language programming accountability regime.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q4 2021-2022.

**Action 10b:** Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy that takes into consideration sector capacity and improved communications.

- Accountability: Lead; Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP). Support; Settlement Network (SN).
- Completion date: Q2 2022-2023.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of evaluation

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Language Training Services. The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the 2016 Treasury Board *Policy on Results*.

The evaluation seeks to respond to findings from IRCC's previous Settlement Evaluation<sup>1</sup> (2018), which highlighted the need to further assess success factors and approaches to language learning. The 2018 evaluation found that while language training helps newcomers improve their language ability, progression varies by skill type (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as client characteristics. As such, the evaluation recommended an in-depth examination of progression across skill types to allow the Department to improve language training effectiveness.

## 1.2 Brief Program Profile

IRCC's Settlement Program supports newcomers' settlement and integration, to ensure newcomers may participate and contribute in various aspects of Canadian life. The program seeks to assist permanent residents (PR) and refugees overcome integration barriers, and also support communities to become more welcoming and inclusive. Services under the Settlement Program adhere to six main streams<sup>2</sup>. The Settlement Program also funds support services to facilitate access to settlement programming, and indirect services<sup>3</sup> so that best-practices can be disseminated among service provider organizations (SPO).

Within IRCC, the Settlement and Integration Sector (SIS) combines the policy development, program policy and operations of the Settlement Sector. IRCC manages the settlement program, through contribution agreements (CAs) mainly with SPOs. SPOs deliver settlement services directly to eligible newcomers under the Terms and Conditions of the Program.

Within SIS, the Settlement Network (SN) is responsible for delivery and management of IRCC's Grants and Contributions (G&C) programs. SN regional and local offices manage CAs for providing services like language training. Local offices also ensure that appropriate services are delivered to meet client needs effectively and efficiently within the parameters of regional and local priorities, as well as national priorities and standards.

The Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (SIP) is the policy lead responsible for developing evidence-based advice and program policy development to facilitate immigrants' settlement and integration. SIP establishes strategic priorities and plans, coordinates the Settlement Program, and ensures alignment with IRCC's objectives and the Government of Canada's priorities. Among other activities<sup>4</sup>, SIP engages with territorial and provincial representatives, federal departments, IRCC Branches, and stakeholders (e.g., civil society, clients) to ensure consistent and responsive program design, and comparable outcomes across jurisdictions.

Since the 1990s, federally-funded settlement programming has included language training. Following the federal repatriation of settlement services from Manitoba (2013) and British

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<sup>1</sup> [Evaluation of the Settlement Program](#)

<sup>2</sup> Needs assessments and Referrals; Information and Orientation; Language Training; Employment-Related Services; Community Connections; and Support Services.

<sup>3</sup> e.g., partnerships, capacity-building exercises, resource and tool development, professional development.

<sup>4</sup> e.g., renewing terms and conditions, developing/allocating funding, reporting on program performance measurement.

Columbia (2014), IRCC has been responsible for managing settlement services in all provinces and territories (PTs) outside Quebec<sup>5</sup>. With respect to language acquisition, SPOs provide services to help improve newcomers' official language abilities and help newcomers acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate into Canadian society. In general, IRCC funds three streams of language learning: formal language training, employment-related language training, and community connections.

### 1.2.1 Streams of language learning activities

**Formal Language Training** has been delivered in English as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and in French as Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC) LINC and CLIC since 1992. Formal language training helps newcomers acquire the official language skills they need to contribute to the Canadian economy and to integrate into their communities. Section 1.2.3 provides a profile of the characteristics of different ways language training is delivered. To be eligible for language training services, prospective learners must be of legal school-leaving age, and either be a PR or a protected person as defined in Section 95 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA). More broadly, internal IRCC guidelines outline seven CA requirements for delivering LINC/CLIC:

1. Instruction and assessment are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) or Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC) framework;

The CLB and NCLC are standards for describing, measuring, and recognizing adult immigrants' language proficiency for life and work in Canada. CLB/NCLC frameworks are descriptive scales of listening, speaking, reading, and writing ability, which are broken down into twelve benchmarks, as well as designations for literacy learners<sup>6</sup>. CLBs/NCLCs stress competencies (i.e., what a learner can do). CLBs/NCLCs are task-based by using real-world language and meaningful tasks (e.g., visiting a doctor, talking to a child's teacher).

2. Clients require a CLB- or NCLC-based placement assessment or an instructor-led in-class assessment prior to assignment to a class;

Qualified assessors use standardized, CLB/NCLC-based tools to determine prospective language training clients' benchmarks. Assessors also determine any literacy needs relevant for placement<sup>7</sup>. After assessing benchmarks, as well as conducting a broader needs assessment, learners receive referrals to appropriate training providers within their community. If spaces are available, learners are eligible to begin immediately, or may enrol in other language learning options until their preferred choice is available, otherwise they are placed on a waitlist until a class becomes available.

3. Placement in a given language training level and progression to the next level is based on the National Language Placement and Progress Guidelines (NLPPG);

Learners are placed or progressed into courses that focus on acquiring the competencies associated with the CLB/NCLC following the level they have already completed (i.e., CLB X + 1). The benchmarks assigned to a learner indicate that a learner has demonstrated a level of communicative ability associated with most or all (traditionally, 70 to 100%) of the descriptors for that benchmark. For learners with irregular profiles<sup>8</sup>, and in cases where skill-

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<sup>5</sup> Under the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, the province of Quebec is responsible for the reception, settlement and integration of immigrants destined to that province. IRCC provides a grant to Quebec to cover these services.

<sup>6</sup> i.e., those with limited ability in reading, writing and numeracy.

<sup>7</sup> e.g., print-rich environment, placement with other literacy learners.

<sup>8</sup> i.e., benchmarks are not the same for reading, writing, listening and speaking.

specific courses are not available, the assessor determines placement holistically, using factors like length of time in Canada, linguistic distance from English or French, confidence and prior education. Assessors may also place more weight on listening and speaking benchmarks. Learners who struggle to speak or listen in class may become frustrated by difficulties understanding the instructor's directions and communicating with classmates. By ensuring that learners can understand instructions and communicate in class, it is expected that they will have greater success in that class. A more narrow range of levels in an integrated class may also be easier to manage by differentiating reading and writing tasks, rather than listening and speaking activities.

4. Instruction and assessment are aligned with the Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) or Évaluation linguistique basée sur le portfolio (ELBP).

The 2010 LINC evaluation highlighted an absence of appropriate tools to measure the impact of LINC on language acquisition. In response to the evaluation recommendations, as well as findings from pivotal studies on language training in Canada<sup>9</sup>, IRCC introduced PBLA for LINC and ELBP for CLIC as approaches/ tools for monitoring program performance, measuring student progress and standardizing the program across Canada. PBLA/ELBP are standardized teaching and assessment methods where teachers and students collaborate on setting language learning goals and compiling evidence of acquired language skills in a variety of contexts over time.

5. Courses are concluded with an evaluation of evidence collected throughout the term to determine the client's progress on the CLB/NCLC scale, as per PBLA protocol.

PBLA/ELBP best practice rules provide parameters for language achievement. For example, it is expected that progression requires a minimum period of 250 hours. Classes may also have work-like attendance policies to ensure learners are participating. Lastly, a learner's final portfolio must include sufficient evidence for an instructor to assign a benchmark<sup>10</sup>.

6. Instruction is guided by LINC/CLIC guidelines, or provincial CLB/NCLC-based curriculum guidelines

LINC/CLIC guidelines were first introduced in 1993 with the intent of helping instructors develop lesson plans tailored to the settlement needs and interests of learners. The guidelines are organized into twelve settlement-related themes<sup>11</sup>, and offer ideas for teaching language in specific communication situations. The guidelines do not prescribe syllabus content or mandatory components. Guidelines are national in scope, and consider foundational frameworks (e.g. CLB/NCLC, essential skills) and best practices.

7. Classes are led by qualified teachers (i.e., trained in Canada—or by a recognized foreign educational institution—to teach English or French as a second language);

IRCC does not have specific policies on teacher qualifications as these are driven by PTs. As teaching English and/or French to adults is a non-regulated profession, PT regulations vary. IRCC's minimum standard is that individuals delivering any training, whether in-person, on-line

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<sup>9</sup> See Makosky (2008) and Nagy and Stewart (2009).

<sup>10</sup> This is operationalized as an "aim" for eight to ten artefacts per skill area. An artefact is primarily a teacher-administered assessment task. After a task is completed, it and any corresponding assessment-based materials are incorporated into a client's portfolio.

<sup>11</sup> At home in our community and the world, community and government services, banking and finance, education, Canada, employment, Canadian culture, family and relationships, Canadian law, health and safety, commercial services and business, and travel and transportation.

or blended<sup>12</sup>, are qualified through training in Canada or by a recognized foreign educational institution<sup>13</sup>, to teach English or French as a second language.

**Employment-related language training** refers to delivering language services that support labour market entry, including occupation or job-specific language training. Like formal language training, employment-related language training targets the development of language skills, but specifically focuses on the communication skills, terminology and cultural skills required in the Canadian workplace. Moreover, employment-related language training may include a focus on employability skills, such as business writing, job search techniques and interview skills. While some employment-related language training may focus on specific occupational sectors (e.g., accounting, engineering), other employment-related language training may be more broad in scope.

**The Community Connections stream** offers informal language learning opportunities alternative to or complementary with, other types of language learning activities (i.e., formal language training, employment-related language training). Informal language learning focuses on helping newcomers to develop their official language skills by working with peers and/or volunteers outside of traditional classroom settings. Unlike formal and employment-related language training, informal language learning is unstructured, and does not feature formal feedback mechanisms like PBLA or language assessments. Rather than being guided by a prescriptive curriculum, informal language learning emphasizes authentic and conversational language over written language ability. Informal language learning activities include but are not limited to, conversation circles, peer support groups, community-based group events, matching of newcomers with Canadians, cultural visits, workshops, mentorships and field trips.

### 1.2.2 Profile of language training clients and non-clients

Of newcomers admitted between 2015 and 2017, who were 18 or older at time of admission<sup>14</sup>, 136,055 had received language assessment services, representing 25% of newcomers admitted. More specifically, 87,140 had received formal language training (16%), and 10,358 had received services that focused on language learning under the Community Connections Stream (2%). The characteristics of clients and non-clients<sup>15</sup> are presented in Table 1.

Overall, certain groups were more or less represented in the client population compared to the overall and the non-client population.

**Gender:** Females represent 62% of the formal and informal language training client population, while accounting for about half of the non-client population.

**Age:** Despite small differences, the age distribution of clients and non-clients was similar. Over 75% of formal and informal language training clients and non-clients are between the ages of 25 and 54.

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<sup>12</sup> i.e., including some classroom and online training components.

<sup>13</sup> For individuals with foreign credentials, IRCC expects recipients to demonstrate how the given instructor's experience and qualifications are equivalent to those of a teacher certified in Canada.

<sup>14</sup> And who were not intending to reside in Quebec.

<sup>15</sup> Non-clients refer to newcomers admitted between 2015 and 2017, who were 18 or older at the time of admission, but who had neither received language training, nor received services with a language focus under the Community Connections stream (i.e., informal language learning services).

**Immigration class:** The largest share of formal language training clients are refugees (39%), followed by family class (31%) and economic immigrants (30%). The majority of informal language training clients are also refugees (53%) followed by economic (27%) and family class immigrants (20%).

While refugees are more represented in the client population, economic immigrants make up more than half of non-clients for formal language training (60%) and informal language training (56%), followed by family class immigrants (32% and 32% respectively) and refugees (7% and 11% respectively).

**Family status:** While most clients and non-clients were principal applicants, they were proportionally less represented in the client groups for formal and informal language training than in the non-client groups. On the contrary, spouses and dependents accounted for a greater share of clients (36% of formal language training clients and 40% of informal clients) than non-clients (28% and 29% for non-clients of formal and informal language training).

**Knowledge of official languages:** Immigrants who reported not knowing either of Canada's official languages upon admission were more represented in the formal (36%) and informal (46%) language training client groups compared to the non-client groups (11% and 14% respectively). The reverse trend was observed for those reporting knowing English only at admission.

**Education qualification:** Immigrants who had a university degree at admission were less represented in the client groups (39% of formal and 34% of informal language training clients) while representing a greater share of the non-client groups (58% and 55% respectively).

**Temporary resident status:** Former temporary residents who had either a former study or work permit were less represented in the client groups and accounted for a greater share of the non-client groups.



**Table 1: Profile of language training clients and non-clients admitted between 2015 and 2017**

Profile		Population	Formal language training		Informal language training	
		All (%) n=539,777	Clients (%) n=87,140	Non-clients (%) n=452,637	Clients (%) n=10,358	Non-clients (%) n=529,419
<b>Year of admission</b>	2015	31.7	32.7	31.5	29.6	31.8
	2016	33.6	40.7	32.2	46.6	33.4
	2017	34.7	26.6	36.2	23.8	34.9
<b>Gender</b>	Female	52.3	61.8	50.4	61.6	52.1
	Male	47.7	38.2	49.6	38.4	47.9
<b>Age at admission</b>	18 to 24 years of age	10.7	13.5	10.2	13.7	10.7
	25 to 34 years of age	45.9	39.1	47.2	33.6	46.1
	35 to 44 years of age	24	27.9	23.2	30.3	23.8
	45 to 54 years of age	8.9	11.1	8.5	12.6	8.9
	55 to 64 years of age	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.7	5.3
	65 years or more	5.1	3.1	5.5	4	5.1
<b>Immigration category</b>	Economic	55	29.5	59.9	27.2	55.6
	Refugees	11.9	38.8	6.7	52.7	11.1
	Sponsored family	31.9	31	32.1	19.9	32.2
	All other immigration	1.1	0.7	1.2	0.3	1.1
<b>Family status</b>	Principal applicant	70.8	64.4	72.1	59.7	71
	Spouse or Dependant	29.2	35.6	27.9	40.3	29
<b>Self-declared knowledge of official languages</b>	English only	80.1	57.8	84.3	47.5	80.7
	French only	0.8	2.1	0.6	2.1	0.8
	English and French	2.7	2.1	2.8	2	2.7
	Neither English or French	14.8	36.2	10.7	46.3	14.2
	Not stated	1.7	1.8	1.6	2.2	1.6
<b>Education qualification</b>	Non-university	45.4	61.2	42.4	65.8	45
	University degree	54.6	38.8	57.6	34.2	55
<b>Country of citizenship</b>	1	India: 19.9	Syria: 17.9	India: 22.2	Syria: 31.4	India: 20.2
	2	Philippines: 17.0	China: 12.3	Philippines: 19.6	China: 9.9	Philippines: 17.3
	3	China: 10.1	India: 8.0	China: 9.7	India: 5.5	China: 10.1
	4	Syria: 4.1	Eritrea: 5.1	Pakistan: 3.9	Eritrea: 5.4	Pakistan: 3.9
	5	Pakistan: 3.9	Iran: 4.7	USA: 3.5	Philippines: 4.4	Syria: 3.6
	Other	Other: 45	Other: 52	Other: 41.1	Other: 43.4	Other: 44.9
<b>Mother tongue</b>	1	Tagalog: 13.5	Arabic: 24.5	Tagalog: 15.6	Arabic: 36.5	Tagalog: 13.7
	2	English: 11.3	Chinese: 13.1	English: 13.2	Chinese: 10.5	English: 11.4
	3	Punjabi: 8.2	Spanish: 5.3	Chinese: 10.6	Spanish: 4.4	Chinese: 11.0
	4	Chinese: 11.0	Punjabi: 3.9	Punjabi: 9.0	Tigrinya: 3.7	Punjabi: 8.3
	5	Arabic: 7.4	Tigrinya: 3.9	Hindi: 4.4	Russian: 3.6	Arabic: 6.8
	Other	Other: 48.6	Other: 49.3	Other: 47.2	Other: 41.3	Other: 48.8
<b>Study permit</b>	Yes	14.9	2.1	17.4	1.7	15.2
	No	85.1	97.9	82.6	98.3	84.8
<b>Work permit</b>	Yes	41.1	14.5	46.2	10.9	41.7
	No	58.9	85.5	53.8	89.1	58.3

Source: Global Case Management System (GCMS) and Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE), 2019

### 1.2.3 Profile of formal language training classes

Over the course of three fiscal years (FY), FY 2015–16 to FY17-18, about 7,000 to 8,000 language training courses were offered across 200 SPOs. Language training classes vary significantly in terms of format, institution type, and class schedule, among other factors.

#### *Profile of formal language training classes offered between fiscal year 2015–16 and 2017–18*

##### Language of Instruction

- 98% of courses were offered in English.
- 2% of courses were offered in French.

##### Format

- The vast majority of classes (93% to 94%) were offered in a classroom setting.
- 2% of the courses were “blended”.
- Other types of training formats (e.g., one-on-one tutoring, online computer learning) each accounted for less than 2% of the training offered each year.

##### Location

- About one third of course offerings were delivered at community organizations.
- Close to a quarter of courses were delivered at a post-secondary institutions.
- About 20% of courses were delivered by schools (including school boards).
- Close to 20% of courses were delivered either at a private service provider location or in other public institutions.

##### Enrollment Style

- Most courses allowed for continuous intake at various frequencies, while about 20% had class enrollment for students only happening at the beginning of the course.
- About 50% of the courses allowed for daily intake of new students.
- Between 15% and 17% of classes allowed weekly intake of new students.
- Between 11% and 14% of classes allowed for monthly intake of new students.

##### Supports Available

- Support services were available for close to two-thirds of the classes.
- Close to half of the classes offered child-minding, while just over 40% provided support for transportation, and about one fifth supports for disability.

##### Class schedule

- Close to 55% of classes were held in the morning, and about 45% of classes were delivered in the afternoon.
- About a quarter of classes were held during the evening.
- Less than 5% of classes were held on weekends.

##### Hours of training per week

- About a third of classes delivered less than 10 hours of training per week.
- Close to 50% of classes offered between 10 and 24 hours of training per week.
- About one fifth of classes were full-time, with 25 hours or more of training offered per week.

##### Class size

- Class size decreased between 2015–16 and 2017–18.
- The share of classes with 15 students or less increased from 22% to 31%, and the share of classes with 16 to 20 students increased from 36% to 43%.
- The share of classes with 21 to 25 students decreased from 27% to 19%. Similarly, the share of classes with more than 25 students decreased from 15% to 8%.
- Over 90% of the courses were entirely funded by IRCC, while less than 10% of classes had spots that were not IRCC-funded (e.g., PT funded).

##### Course dominant focus

- Over 90% of classes focused on daily life and basic needs or were general in nature.
- A little over 5% of the classes were occupation specific, and about 1% of classes focused on academic preparation and on citizenship preparation.

#### Populations Targeted

- A little over 10% of classes targeted a specific group, such as refugees, youth, seniors, or a specific gender.

#### PBLA

- The share of courses which reported using PBLA material increased from 40% to 64% over time.

#### Skills Targeted

- Most courses (93%) focused on all 4 competencies (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- Some courses were targeted to certain competencies.

#### CLB level of classes

- Over time, classes shifted to focus on lower CLB levels (i.e., CLB 1 to 4). For example:
- The share of classes covering CLB 1 increased (26 to 27%), as did class covering CLB 2 (28 to 30%).
- The share of classes covering CLB 3 and 4 also increased (30% to 33%), depending on the language skill taught.
- Classes covering CLB 5 decreased (25% to 26%), as did CLB 6 (21% to 23%), CLB 7 (15% to 16%) and classes covering CLB 8 (10% to 11%), depending on the language skill taught.
- Few classes focused on CLBs above 8, with about 2% of classes covering CLB 9 and CLB 10.

#### Literacy

- The proportion of courses targeting literacy training increased from 10% to 15%.

#### Number of CLB covered in a class

- For listening and speaking skills, around 45% of classes focused on one CLB level, while one third targeted 2 CLB levels, and 11% targeted 3 CLB levels or more.
- For reading and writing skills, about 40% of classes focused on one CLB level, while one third targeted 2 CLB levels, 12% to 13% included teaching 3 CLB levels, and 12% to 14% included more than 3 CLB levels, depending on the year.

Note: Statistics presented in this profile vary based on fiscal year

Source: iCARE

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Questions and scope

The evaluation scope and approach were determined during the evaluation planning phase, in consultation with IRCC stakeholders involved in the design, management and delivery of language learning services. The evaluation assessed issues of program effectiveness for the period of 2015 to 2018, and was guided by evaluation questions, presented below, as well as an evaluation matrix (Appendix A), that outlines the performance indicators for the evaluation. Data collection for this evaluation preceded the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. To what extent have clients improved their official language skills?
2. To what extent have clients improved their employment-related language skills?
3. To what extent are the services implemented as designed?
4. To what extent are clients able to use official languages to function in Canadian society?
5. To what extent has IRCC designed language learning services that best support newcomers' language improvement?
6. To what extent are the different language learning approaches effectively meeting newcomers' needs?
7. Are language learning services effectively managed?
8. To what extent are clients receiving consistent and appropriate language assessments and referrals across the country?
9. To what extent are clients receiving appropriate placements?
10. To what extent have language learning services contributed to clients participating in the Canadian labor market?

### 2.2 Data collection methods

Data collection and analysis took place from April 2018 to March 2020. The evaluation included collection of qualitative and quantitative data from a wide range of perspectives, including IRCC, SPOs, and language training clients. The evaluation was conducted internally by IRCC evaluation division staff<sup>16</sup>. Descriptions for the lines of evidence are presented:

**Document Review:** The document review was comprised of foundational documents (e.g., terms and conditions, policies), reports and presentations (e.g., dashboards, consultations), manuals (e.g., negotiation guidelines, guidelines) and other relevant documents. Document review was used to gather contextual information about the program, as well as to assess program performance.

**Interviews:** 14 interviews were conducted with a range of key informants, including IRCC program staff and senior management, service provider organizations, and external stakeholders. Interviews were crucial for assessing program implementation and operation, and to explore interviewees' perceptions of language learning successes and challenges.

**Panel of Independent Experts:** A panel of experts was conducted to assess program design, as well as the availability and appropriateness of language tools. The panel consisted of six experts from across Canada with highly specialized backgrounds, decades of experience teaching newcomers and training instructors, and administering large LINC and English as a second language (ESL) programs. To reduce the possibility of conflicts of interest, no panelists were currently funded by IRCC. With respect to panelists' roles, they were asked to review program

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<sup>16</sup> Two lines of evidence, the panel of independent experts and the client/non-client survey, were facilitated via R.A. Malatest Ltd.

documents, perform direct observation of language learning activities, and participate in a focus group to share their views on the design of IRCC’s language learning services.

**Administrative Data:** GCMS admission data and data from the iCARE system were used to develop client and service profiles and to assess language skills progression, as well as to develop profiles of non-clients. Non-clients refer to newcomers admitted between 2015 and 2017, who were 18 or older at the time of admission, but who had neither received language training, nor received services with a language focus under the Community Connections stream (i.e., informal language learning services).

GCMS and iCARE data were linked to the client/non-client survey and Milestones test data (described later in this section) in order to conduct detailed analyses of clients and non-clients language progression, based on their socio-demographic characteristics at admission and type of services they have received.

**Survey of Language Learning Clients and Non-Clients:** A mixed-mode survey (i.e., online and telephone) of language learning clients and non-clients was conducted to provide a better understanding of performance outcomes, relative their demographic characteristics, settlement needs, motivations and language services received. The survey also examined the success factors and challenges of language training, as well as progress towards other settlement outcomes<sup>17</sup>. The survey was available in both official languages, as well as six additional languages<sup>18</sup>, based on known population characteristics.

Newcomers who had not participated in IRCC-funded language training were surveyed as a benchmark of comparison to clients (i.e., control group). In total, 8,140 responses were received, from 5,589 clients and 2,551 non-clients. Targeted phone surveys were conducted with underrepresented respondent groups to ensure that the profile of respondents was weighted to be representative of the characteristics of the population of clients and non-clients.

**Survey of Language Training Instructors:** A survey was conducted with instructors (LINC, CLIC and Employment-related) who deliver IRCC-funded language training as well as managers of informal language learning. The survey focused on questions of overall program performance, as well as the quality of language assessments and placements. Overall, 1,308 responses were received across 206<sup>19</sup> of the 290 SPOs contacted (71%).

**Case Studies:** Case studies were employed to provide detailed information on targeted client groups<sup>20</sup>. The case studies used multiple lines of evidence (i.e., interviews, focus groups, document review) to acquire in-depth information on program performance from SPO stakeholders and language learners. To ensure geographical representation, seven SPOs were visited in cities across Canada<sup>21</sup>.

**Milestones Test:** In 2010–11, IRCC entered into contribution agreements with the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) to design, validate and pilot an objective, standardized test of language progression. This “Milestones Test” was employed in the current evaluation to objectively assess the progress of LINC<sup>22</sup> clients and non-clients, beyond what can be done using

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<sup>17</sup> e.g., knowledge of Canada.

<sup>18</sup> Tagalog, Punjabi (Gurmukhi script), Mandarin (Simplified script), Arabic, Hindi, and Urdu.

<sup>19</sup> Some respondents preferred not to disclose the organization for which they worked; consequently 206 is the minimum possible number of SPOs from which at least one response was received.

<sup>20</sup> Client groups of interest included LINC/CLIC clients, literacy clients, employment-related clients, conversation circle participants, seniors, refugees, and women.

<sup>21</sup> Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax.

<sup>22</sup> The BTR [Batterie de test de rendement] is the CLIC equivalent of the Milestones. Based on the small number of CLIC clients overall, it was not operationally feasible to perform this test as part of the Evaluation.

administrative data. The Milestones is a standardized language test that provides objective CLB levels of individuals. Using the Milestones at two points in time (i.e. pre/post testing) allows for an objective examination of language progression for clients, which can further be compared to the progression of non-clients. Test intervals ranged from 12 to 30 weeks. Clients from 10 SPOs across Canada participated in the testing. Overall, 627 clients participated in both the pre- and post-test. Additionally, non-clients were identified to act as a benchmark against which to compare clients; 740 non-clients in Toronto and Vancouver participated in the pre- and post-test<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.3 Limitations and considerations

Overall, the evaluation design employed numerous qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The different lines of evidence were used to reduce information gaps, and generally, to converge towards common, integrated findings. Nevertheless, there were some limitations of note.

The Milestones Test is validated for CLB levels 4 to 8. In other words, individuals with a CLB lower than 4 or higher than 8 cannot be distinguished (e.g., CLB 2 or CLB 3; CLB 9 or 10). As a result, individuals of these levels<sup>24</sup>, were excluded from the analysis. To mitigate this limitation, progression was also measured using the administrative and survey data available for all CLB levels.

IRCC does not presently collect population-level data on instructors. Consequently, a convenience sample of instructors was employed for the instructor survey. Results of surveys that use convenience samples cannot be generalized to a greater population (i.e., all IRCC-funded instructors) because the characteristics of that population are not known. To moderate this type of bias, findings related to instructors were triangulated with other lines of evidence, such as the interviews with language instructors and the observations of expert panel members.

Some administrative data fields were not completed for clients who engaged in a language learning service. For example, some language learning clients who may have had some formal education did not have a listed educational credential in the GCMS database, and some clients did not have a training location listed. Although data was missing for only a small number of cases overall, unknown values can adversely impact the ability to conduct meaningful regression. A variety of methods were used to deal with missing data (e.g., imputing values based on logic, excluding clients). These methods were decided on an ad hoc basis, through consultations with program stakeholders.

Lastly, the distinction between employment-related language training and general language training with a focus on employment was not always evident. Administrative data did not contain information to easily distinguish between formal language training and employment-related language training, which made it harder to examine their respective impact on client's outcomes. In addition, over the course of the evaluation, it became clear that clients themselves are not always able to distinguish which type of language training they participate in, and that data on course focus may not always reflect the realities of the course. The evaluation relied on triangulating evidence across research methods (e.g., administrative data, survey data, focus group responses) to mitigate this confusion.

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<sup>23</sup> Not all clients and non-clients who were supposed to participate in the test did so. While 1,785 clients and 1,125 non-clients were targeted to participate, 1,329 clients and 986 non-clients participated in the pre-test. Only 627 clients and 740 non-clients participated in the post-test, for a retention rate of 35% for clients and 65% for non-clients.

<sup>24</sup> By skill type.

## 3 Key findings

The following section presents the key findings of the Evaluation of Language Training Services.

### 3.1 Design of language learning services

Language learning services are intended to improve newcomers' official language skills. In addition, language learning services are designed to be flexible in order to meet the diverse needs of newcomers. Section 3.1.1 covers the extent to which IRCC has designed language learning services (e.g., delivery formats, supporting materials) that best support newcomers' language improvement, and Section 3.1.2 covers the extent to which different language learning approaches are effectively meeting newcomers' needs. Broadly, the expert panel emphasized that classes that meet newcomers' specific needs also contribute to better language outcomes overall.

#### 3.1.1 Design for language improvement

IRCC-funded language learning services incorporate evidence-base from pedagogues, research, and best-practice consultations. Interviewees noted the program is implemented as intended, and that the program undergoes constant vetting through language experts, such as the Newcomer Language Advisory Body (NLAB). Moreover, classroom learning emphasizes real-world tasks (e.g., grocery shopping, talking to a doctor) as opposed to artificial situations (e.g., grammar, syntax), to enable clients to transfer learned skills to their everyday lives. Furthermore, interviewees and expert panelists highlighted that language training is based on rigorously validated CLBs/NCLCs, to ensure improvement can be measured, and measurement is standardized across Canada.

##### 3.1.1.1 Language learning approaches and improvement

**Finding:** Through including a variety of approaches and delivery formats, IRCC-funded language learning services are designed in a manner conducive to language improvement for newcomers

Interviewees and experts agreed that the overall program design of IRCC-funded language learning services is conducive to language learning for newcomers. The experts noted that formal, employment-related and informal approaches are comprehensive, appropriate and complementary. Experts and interviewees noted different factors motivate clients to improve their language, for example:

- Formal language training clients often want to enhance their professional communication skills, or to better navigate in Canadian society;
- Employment-related language training clients want to enter the Canadian labour market or have specific sector-based goals (e.g., accreditation); and
- Informal language learners feel socially isolated, or are not comfortable in structured learning environments.

The client survey asked about motivations to improve their English skills since arriving in Canada. The most common response was to improve English for daily life (78%), followed by to help get a job (67%), to better communicate at work (61%), to learn about Canada (58%) and to meet people (53%).

Respondents to the instructor survey were asked about the extent to which different approaches improve desired outcomes of language training<sup>25</sup>. Perspectives were largely positive with full results available in Appendix B. In general:

- formal instructors felt clients improve knowledge of life in Canada and language skills overall;
- employment-related instructors felt clients improve their knowledge of work in Canada and employment-related language skills; and
- informal language learning managers felt clients improve daily life skills and language skills overall.

Overall, 98% of surveyed instructors felt that the different approaches to delivering language learning are at least somewhat appropriate to facilitate language improvement, with more than two thirds (68%) reporting the approaches are appropriate “to a great extent”.

With respect to areas for improvement, expert panelists felt there were not enough available spaces in employment-related language training to meet the demand. Interviewees noted employment-based language is an area of ongoing change; for example, IRCC was working with Employment and Social Development Canada to integrate language into “soft-skill” employment training, and exploring avenues for having language-knowledgeable employment counsellors available at SPOs.

#### **3.1.1.2 Delivery Formats**

As noted in 1.2.3, most IRCC-funded language training is delivered in-class, although there are also options for blended learning, itinerant teaching, one-on-one tutoring, distance learning, workplace learning and online learning.

The survey asked clients about the delivery format for their training<sup>26</sup>. The large majority of client survey respondents (92%) reported their class was in a classroom at a SPO with a teacher and other students, 16% of the clients took their language training online and 7% were one-on-one in-person training with a teacher. 8% reported taking their training at their place of employment.

Expert panelists felt that offering different class formats (i.e., in-class, blended learning, itinerant teaching, one-on-one tutoring, distance learning, workplace learning and online learning) shows IRCC’s approach is client-focused. Instructors and administrators interviewed as a part of site visits expressed that in-class instructors are best positioned to motivate their clients, thus formal language instruction is appropriate for learning and improvement. On-line learning was seen to be a preferred option for highly-motivated, technology-savvy<sup>27</sup> clientele, although as clients reached higher levels, on-line was seen as less beneficial than in class. On-line courses were perceived as beneficial for developing clients' receptive skills, but less effective for oral skills. Some interviewees also noted that in rural areas especially, technology hardware and connectivity is lacking, which limits access to courses that require an internet connection.

Of LINC/CLIC instructor survey respondents, most reported teaching in-class (89%), followed by blended (22%) and online (11%). In-class delivery was seen as the most appropriate delivery mode by instructors with 95% of respondents feeling it was “a great deal” appropriate, however no delivery modes were seen as “not at all appropriate”.

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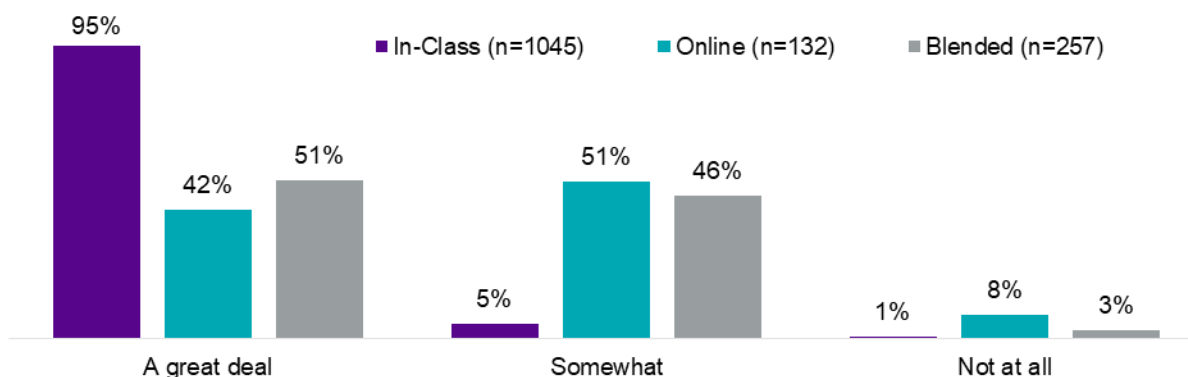
<sup>25</sup> Specifically, improvement in daily life, academic-related and employment-related skills, knowledge of work and life in Canada, citizenship preparation, and language skills overall.

<sup>26</sup> Clients were able to 'select all that apply', for example if they participated in classes that took place both in a classroom and online.

<sup>27</sup> Anecdotally, instructors and SPO administrators felt that older clients (e.g., seniors) benefit less from on-line learning.



**Figure 1: Extent to which different delivery modes are appropriate for newcomers to Canada**



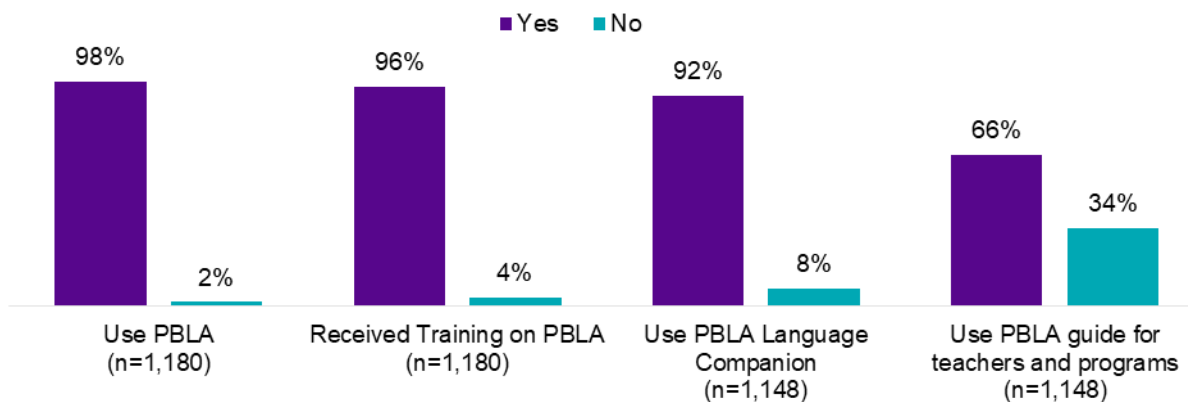
Source: Instructor Survey, 2019

### 3.1.1.3 Portfolio-based language assessment

**Finding:** PBLA is a widely-implemented tool which empowers clients with their own learning. While instructors derive value from PBLA, it can be time-consuming to implement, subjective, and may not be helpful for clients at low language levels, especially those with literacy needs.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment is a standard feature of all IRCC-funded language training. Nearly all LINC/CLIC instructors who responded to the survey reported using PBLA (98%). Most respondents (91%) had received PBLA training<sup>28</sup>, including nearly all LINC instructors (96%). Most LINC/CLIC instructors who used PBLA had access to PBLA Language Companions (92%), the PBLA Guide for Teachers and Programs (66%) or other PBLA guidance<sup>29</sup>.

**Figure 2: LINC/CLIC instructors' experiences with PBLA use, training and materials**



Source: Instructor survey, 2019

Program stakeholders held generally positive views on PBLA. Focus group participants found PBLA empowered them for their own learning, and interviewees praised PBLA for including artefacts over time as opposed to the previous high-stakes assessment tasks where one day of good (or bad) performance could impact progression.

The client survey showed that clients generally hold positive views towards PBLA. About two thirds (68%) reported PBLA was helpful in encouraging them to learn more, that in-class

<sup>28</sup> PBLA training was generally well-received with 53% reporting it was “very useful” and 40% reported it was “somewhat useful”.

<sup>29</sup> In-house guidance (44%); guidance developed by other organizations (37%).

assessments and PBLA were useful in demonstrating that they are learning (and showing what they still need to learn; 64%), and that the frequency of in-class assessments was just about right (67%).

With respect to areas where PBLA could be improved, interviewees noted that PBLA is expensive<sup>30</sup> and time-consuming to implement both for SPOs and teachers (e.g., extra grading, creating activities). Some expressed difficulties in adapting PBLA for online courses, implementing PBLA in continuous intake-based and multi-level classes<sup>31</sup>, and using PBLA with literacy clients. Of those LINC/CLIC instructors who did not find PBLA helpful<sup>32</sup>, most felt that it needs too much preparation (88%) or classroom time (80%), and that learners may not be comfortable with or understand the goal-setting (76%)<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, instructors interviewed in site visits felt that PBLA can be disruptive for classes, and is not helpful at low language levels, especially if clients also have literacy needs, or cognitive disabilities.

While expert panelists recognized the value of PBLA, they felt the PBLA process was subjective. Panelists felt instructors must make judgments on student progression despite unclear links between PBLA and the CLB guidelines. The panelists explained that a student may improve significantly relative to when they began language training but may not have improved following the CLB guidelines. Some panelists felt that this unclear link may cause instructors to develop and use their own progression guidelines. The panelists felt that the PBLA may be useful “as a learning tool”, but “not as an assessment tool”. Expert panelists also felt that PBLA is time consuming, and that training for PBLA is in high demand.

#### 3.1.1.4 *Continuous Intake*

**Finding:** While continuous intake ensures newcomers can enter a class as soon as possible, it can be disruptive for teachers and students who are already enrolled, and also introduces challenges for new clients to catch up to the PBLA process, and the level of the class.

Continuous intake refers to an enrolment method used in the majority of IRCC-funded language classes<sup>34</sup> where learners join a class in-progress, as opposed to on the first day of a semester. Continuous intake is implemented on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, depending on the SPO and class<sup>35</sup>. Although continuous intake allows learners to enter a class as soon as possible, it also presents a range of challenges to instructors and clients; new learners need to be brought into the classroom community, and instructors need to balance existing classroom needs with determining the abilities of these new learners. Of note, expert panelists noted continuous intake is also used to help SPOs meet 80% occupancy levels<sup>36</sup>.

Respondents to the instructor survey reported mixed to negative views of continuous intake. While more than half (56%) found continuous intake to be ‘somewhat appropriate’, more instructors felt it was ‘not at all appropriate’ (27%) than felt it was ‘very appropriate’ (17%). For

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<sup>30</sup> A variety of expenses for implementing PBLA were directly or indirectly noted in interviews, including opportunity cost (i.e., costs of less time-consuming teaching methods), creating new PBLA materials, sending instructors for PBLA professional development and backfilling teachers' time.

<sup>31</sup> For continuous intake, see Section 3.1.1.4. For multilevel classes, see Section 3.1.1.5.

<sup>32</sup> Just over a third of LINC/CLIC instructors who use PBLA reported that it was not helpful (35%).

<sup>33</sup> Particularly for clients of non-Western cultures.

<sup>34</sup> As noted in Table 2, just under four-fifths of classes (79%) featured daily, weekly or monthly enrolment, as opposed to “semester” based.

<sup>35</sup> For a full breakdown of continuous intake classes, please see Section 1.2.3.

<sup>36</sup> As per the negotiation guidelines, “Recipients will strive to maintain a monthly class occupancy level of 100%. The Department will reserve the right to cease funding classes with an occupancy level below 80%.”

the most part, instructors who felt continuous intake was ‘not at all appropriate’ indicated challenges both for the instructor and for the learner.

**Instructors’ views on why continuous intake is ‘not at all appropriate:**

**‘Of instructors who felt continuous intake was ‘not at all appropriate’ (n=306), the reason(s) given included:’**

- Continuous intake makes it harder for the learner to catch up to the level of the class—92%
- Continuous intake makes it harder for the learner to catch up to the PBLA process—83%
- Continuous intake is disruptive for the class—82%
- Continuous intake is demanding for the teacher—81%
- Other reasons continuous intake is ‘not at all appropriate’—19%

Source: *Instructor survey, 2019*

Similarly, site visit interviews found evidence that continuous intake may be disruptive for learners already in class.

To mitigate challenges with continuous intake, teachers use best-practice resources, such as the *PBLA Guide for Teachers and Programs*<sup>37</sup>. The panelists felt these resources are insufficient, as continuous intake is too disruptive for learners already in class. Experts felt that “intact” classes allow instructors to form better bonds with learners, and foster trust between learners. When classroom trust is elevated, experts found confidence and interaction in classes is fostered, which promotes learning. The expert panelists recommended that classes should use less continuous intake when possible and further recommended using standalone drop-in classes, multilevel classes, or on-line classes where appropriate.

### 3.1.1.5 Multilevel classes

**Finding:** Instructors of multilevel classes felt that classes with fewer CLBs are more appropriate for newcomer language learning.

Multilevel classes exist to help deliver language learning services when the pool of clients at individual CLBs is limited. The *PBLA Guide for Teachers and Programs* suggests that PBLA is most successful in programs that minimize multilevel classes, and the *PBLA Practice Review Framework* suggests that programs not cover a range of more than 2 benchmark levels where possible, with teachers not expected to assess a range of more than 3 CLB levels. Despite these concerns, the expert panel and some interviewees felt that trained/experienced teachers are capable of handling diverse classroom levels, and further noted that multilevel classes are sometimes the only option (e.g., rural situations, when there is not a pool of clients large enough to warrant a smaller range of CLBs), and help maintain occupancy levels.

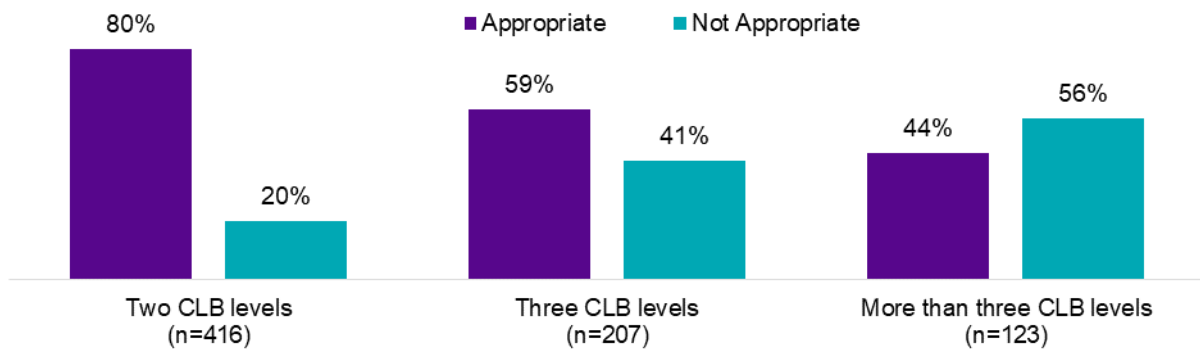
Moreover, focus groups conducted as part of the case studies indicated that clients found multilevel classes more difficult than when all students were at the same level. For example, some clients were concerned about seeing material that was intended for higher CLB levels.

In terms of class composition, most LINC/CLIC instructors surveyed (76%) reported an appropriate range of CLB/NCLC levels in the classes they teach. Overall, about two thirds (65%) reported teaching a multilevel class. Of these instructors, most taught classes with two (56%) or three benchmarks (27%) and 17% taught classes with three or more. Survey analysis showed that as the number of benchmarks in a class increases (e.g., CLB 3, CLB 4 and CLB 5), instructors rated the class composition as less appropriate.

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<sup>37</sup> For example, the guide advises reviewing new learners’ existing portfolios for proficiency, strengths and weaknesses, partnering new learners with experienced ones, and recruiting volunteers for classroom orientation.

**Figure 3: Multilevel LINC/CLIC instructors ratings of classroom composition appropriateness, by number of CLBS/NCLCS taught**



Source: Instructor survey, 2019

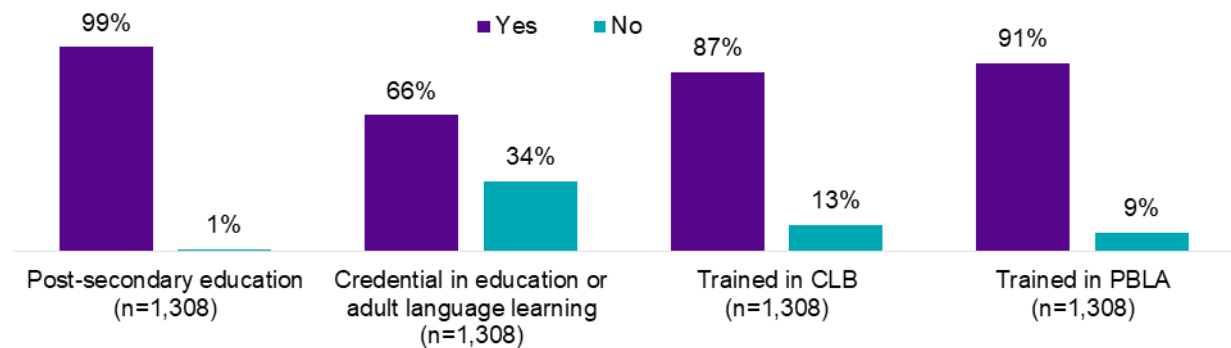
Less than half of LINC/CLIC instructors with more than three benchmarks in their classes (44%) agreed there was an appropriate range of benchmarks in their class, compared to instructors with two (80%) or three benchmarks (59%).

### 3.1.1.6 Instructor quality

**Finding:** Instructors are qualified, experienced and supported through professional development. There is demand for additional professional development opportunities, especially for CLIC instructors, and for those teaching clients with literacy needs.

As mentioned in Section 1.2.1, IRCC does not prescribe specific instructor qualifications as these are driven by PT regulations. The expert panel concluded that the lack of standardized national instructor qualifications can negatively impact student outcomes, and suggested that IRCC should require instructors to participate in a qualified instructor training program (e.g., TESL). Of instructors and informal language learning managers who responded to the survey, nearly all were qualified in terms of possessing post-secondary education, and many had education credentials relevant in the field of education or adult language learning. Most respondents also reported training in CLB/NCLC and/or PBLA<sup>38</sup>.

**Figure 4: Instructor qualifications**



Source: Instructor survey, 2019

<sup>38</sup> Of note, a higher proportion of instructors (i.e., LINC, CLIC, Employment-related) were CLB/NCLC and PBLA trained compared to informal language learning managers. For more on training see Appendix B.

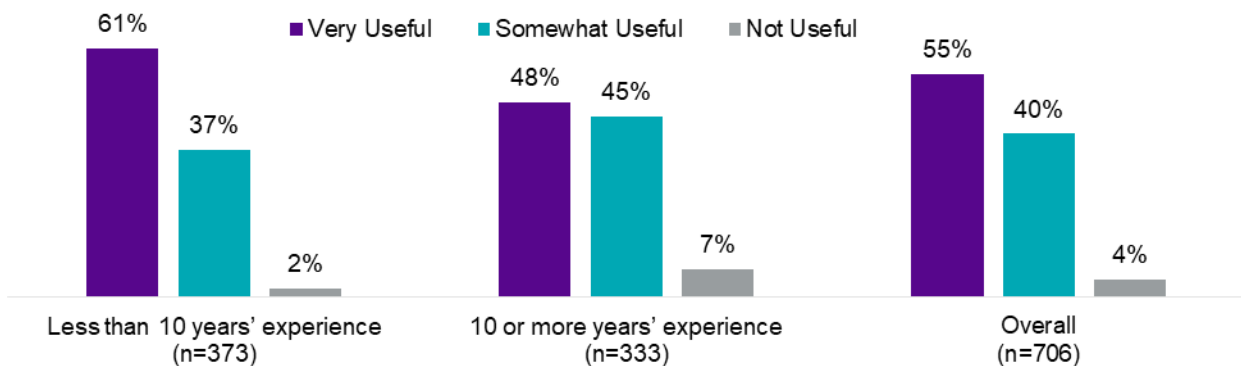
While evidence from site visits suggested LINC teachers are qualified and certified, it was also noted that qualifications of CLIC instructors and availability of training for CLIC were less positive. For example, while CLIC instructors may have university degrees, they less frequently had degrees specific to teaching.

In addition to high qualifications, instructors generally had extensive teaching experience. Survey respondents were most experienced in LINC (9.1 years), followed by CLIC (8.5 years), informal (7.5 years) and Employment-related (4.9 years). More broadly, over two thirds of respondents (69%) had previous experience teaching non-IRCC funded ESL classes; comparably, less than a fifth of CLIC instructors (16%) had previous experience teaching non-IRCC funded FSL classes.

Interviewees reported that instructors were professional, well-trained, and qualified. Further, language training clients in focus groups provided only positive comments about their instructors and facilitators. Similarly, the client survey found that 79% of clients were satisfied with the teacher’s ability to teach them, and 73% were satisfied with the overall quality of their training.

The instructor survey found that 87% of respondents had received training on CLB/NCLC. Moreover, the training was relatively recent, with 78% of respondents noting they had received the training within the last eight years. The expert panel stressed the importance of recalibration for instructors (i.e., training to ensure maintained understanding of CLB/NCLC levels), as it ensures instructors can determine whether learners are in appropriate classes for their levels. Although the panelists expressed concerns that SPOs may lack the capacity to conduct recalibration, the survey of instructors found 65% of the instructors who received CLB/NCLC training had also received recalibration training. Most recalibration was recent, having taken place within the preceding 18 months (77%). The survey also found that a higher proportion of instructors who had 10 years or more of teaching experience (73%) had received recalibration compared to their less experienced counterparts (58%), suggesting that recalibration comes with time. Moreover, nearly all those who participated in recalibration found it at least ‘somewhat’ useful.

**Figure 5: Instructors ratings of recalibration usefulness, by years of experience**



Source: Instructor survey, 2019

The panelists highlighted the importance of instructors participating in other professional development (PD) to ensure standardization and consistency across the country, while also ensuring instructors have the necessary curriculum supports to facilitate dynamic, interactive learning. Correspondingly:

- 83% of instructor survey respondents had participated in some form of PD within the last year;
- Of those who had participated in PD, the subject matter was commonly PBLA (97%), CLB/NCLC (95%), and teacher's conferences (91%)<sup>39</sup>; and
- 13% of instructors reported they were not offered the opportunity to participate in PD;

A focus group with NLAB conducted revealed there may be regional differences in PD availability; however this finding was not supported by the instructor survey<sup>40</sup>. NLAB members noted, among other interviewees, that there may be insufficient PD for instructors teaching learners with literacy needs, as well as for CLIC instructors more generally. Teaching literacy learners was considered a special skill set, and especially necessary in response to high literacy needs and low benchmarks observed in response to the Syria initiative. Notably, while 80% of instructor respondents to the survey reported having taught clients with literacy needs, just 57% of instructors reported PD in this area.

### **3.1.1.7 Curriculum and resources supporting instructors**

**Finding:** LINC and CLIC instructors are supported by clear curriculum guidelines. However, there is a need for informal and employment-related guidelines.

#### **Curriculum guidelines**

As noted in 1.2.1, instruction should be guided by LINC/CLIC curriculum guidelines, or provincial CLB/NCLC-based guidelines. Guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive of syllabus content or mandatory classroom components. Instead, they are designed to guide instructors in developing lesson plans tailored to settlement needs and interests of clients, in a manner that is task-based and learner-centred. Broadly, curriculum guidelines are organized into twelve settlement-related themes<sup>41</sup>. Program stakeholders and site visit interviewees felt the guidelines are being implemented as intended. Specifically:

- Placement and progression is based on the NLPPG;
- LINC/CLIC is based on the CLB/NCLC framework via benchmarks and curriculum guidelines;
- Assessment centres are well-qualified and trained to conduct assessments; and
- Instruction and assessment are increasingly based on PBLA.

<sup>39</sup> In addition, more than half of instructors also reported participating in PD related to Tutela (80%), Placement/Assessment (74%), Learn IT 2 Teach (68%), and Literacy Skills (66%).

<sup>40</sup> No regions (i.e., British Columbia/Yukon, Prairie/Northwest Territories, Ontario, and Atlantic) reported being offered PD at a rate less than 3% of the national average (87.5%).

<sup>41</sup> i.e., at home in our community and the world, community and government services, banking and finance, education, Canada, employment, Canadian culture, family and relationships, Canadian law, health and safety, commercial services and business, and travel and transportation.

**Figure 6: Awareness of curriculum guidelines by instructor type**



Source: Instructor Survey, 2019

As noted in Figure 6, nearly all LINC/CLIC instructors who responded to the survey were aware of guidelines, and 95% of those aware of the guidelines reported that they used the guidelines. LINC/CLIC instructors felt the guidelines were at least “somewhat” helpful (98%)<sup>42</sup>, and most also felt the guidelines were at least “somewhat” up-to-date (86%)<sup>43</sup>.

The evaluation’s document review and interviews did not find any IRCC-based guidelines (e.g., program delivery instructions, manuals for teachers/volunteers/employers) for employment-related language training or informal language learning. Figure 6 showed the majority of employment-related instructors and informal language learning managers were not aware of any guidelines they could use. Interviewees in site visits noted that both employment-related language learning and informal language learning would benefit from developing some form of guidelines. Some interviewees agreed there was a need to develop guidelines and descriptions for what informal and employment-related language learning could look like and further expressed a need to outline desired outcomes. For example, interviewees noted that outcomes for informal clients are not measured.

Interviewees noted that content in employment-related language learning is often less formal and more tailored to specific jobs, thus requiring more field trips, on-site work, and work-related training (e.g., occupational health and safety). According to interviewees, employment-related language training more often involves mother-tongue languages, and technical language as required. Consequently it was considered harder to generalize to everyday life, but more acceptable for those with specific employment goals, as opposed to language goals.

In terms of how informal language learning differs from formal, “instructors” are not always qualified. Site visits and interviews found informal leaders range from former instructors to untrained volunteers. This potential lack of experience highlights the importance of better equipping informal language “instructors”. Some interviewees noted that resources have improved over time, and best-practices from site visits found some SPOs are using volunteer coordinators to keep volunteer facilitators well-informed. Additionally, all regions reported having similar informal language learning activities, such as conversation circles, one on one matching and volunteer tutoring available.

Expert panelists felt the lack of a national competency-based curriculum and accompanying curriculum supports for instructors has contributed to inconsistent program delivery across Canada. The panelists felt resources are vetted by only a handful of experts, and that Tutela does

<sup>42</sup> 43% felt the guidelines were “a great deal” helpful.

<sup>43</sup> 23% found the guidelines “a great deal” up to date.

not have sufficient independently peer-reviewed materials<sup>44</sup>. The experts felt that other experts, academics, PT stakeholders and SPOs should all be consulted on curriculum framework, and that curriculum should emphasize content that addresses settlement, content important for the workplace, and content for literacy learners.

The panelists also felt it is not reasonable to expect instructors to have a dual role as curriculum developers, noting that many instructors are required to develop curricula outside of teaching hours, without pay. In addition, the survey found that in terms of preparation time, 84% of LINC/CLIC respondents were paid for less than thirty minutes per teaching hour, despite 63% reporting it taking them more than thirty minutes to prepare for class, per teaching hour.

Site visits found some SPOs have dealt with insufficient resources for instructors by hiring curriculum designers to support development of materials. Of LINC/CLIC instructors surveyed, 18% reported that their SPO had a curriculum designer. Of respondents who had a curriculum designer, more than half felt the designer was “a great deal” helpful in supporting their instruction. Sixty five percent of those who did not have a curriculum designer, reported that having one would support their instruction “a great deal”.

**Finding:** Existing classroom materials are appropriate to facilitate language improvement. There is a need for more materials for clients at low language levels (including literacy), clients with disabilities, and clients with no access to technology.

### **Materials and resources**

The vast majority of LINC/CLIC instructors (96%) and most employment-related instructors (85%) surveyed reported they need to make their own materials for instruction. LINC/CLIC instructors held mixed reviews with respect how supported they were in terms of resources and materials, with 57% being “somewhat” supported, and 39% feeling “a great deal” supported. More than four fifths of employment-related instructors (84%) and LINC/CLIC instructors (83%) felt that the materials they use are appropriate for newcomers.

Interviewees felt that supporting materials for employment-related language training and informal language learning were less available than for LINC/CLIC. Moreover, interviewees highlighted a lack of available materials for clients with disabilities, literacy needs, and no access to technology (e.g., rural).

One key resource for classroom learning is the PBLA Companion<sup>45</sup>. The panelists found that the Companion is “Ontario-centric”, and lacks an official, independent review process. They reported that the companion is not sufficiently accessible for different language levels (e.g., at the beginning and end of the Stage I band), and impractically large for clients to bring back and forth to class. They argued that the Companion could be improved by creating a digital version (e.g., via smartphone), which would be more accessible, and would allow for a more dynamic/interactive class.

Since 2012, IRCC has required that funding recipients issue certificates to students. The certificates include results based on completed CLB/NCLC benchmarks, indicating a clients’ four skill competencies. The client survey found 87% were receiving certificates upon completion,

<sup>44</sup> i.e., from reviewers composed of national membership.

<sup>45</sup> The PBLA companion is intended to support and encourage students in their classes and homes. The Companion contains descriptive statements based on language levels in the four skill groups, online resources, dictionary resources, Canadiana facts, information on housing, employment, Service Canada and healthcare, legal and tax resources, and other commonly-used information. The companion has different versions (i.e., ESL Literacy, CLB Stage I, CLB Stage II) to account for language levels.



and 44% reported having used their certificate as a proof in the citizenship application. Interviews conducted during site visits also revealed that many students are proud of their certificates, and that it provides an added motivation; however, some confusion arose from the implementation of certificates as some SPOs had been previously giving out non-official certificates of CLB/NCLC level completion.

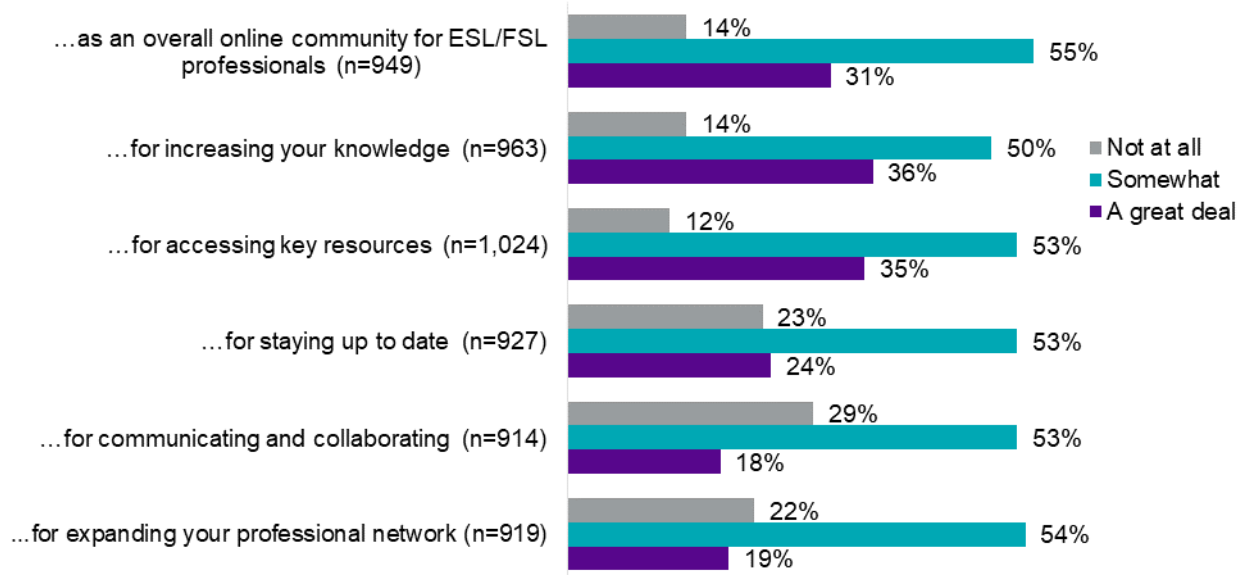
### 3.1.1.9 Tutela

**Finding:** Tutela supports instructors in terms of providing access to resources, increasing knowledge, and fostering an online community of ESL/FSL professionals. Tutela could be more useful with better vetting of its content, and by making it easier for users to navigate.

One additional way IRCC provides supports for instructors is through Tutela. Tutela is an IRCC-funded online repository and community for ESL/FSL professionals. Tutela contains learning activities, worksheets, templates, teacher training resources, curriculum guidelines, policy and management documents, and research papers. As a community, it offers interactive technologies to support ongoing collaboration and sharing among ESL/FSL professionals and builds community through special interest groups, events, surveys, career development opportunities, wikis and news feeds. Members are able to use Tutela to access resources, connect and collaborate, and expand their Personal Learning Networks through public forums and special interest groups.

Interviewees generally gave positive reviews of Tutela. Nearly all LINC/CLIC instructors surveyed were aware of Tutela (98%), and those who used Tutela<sup>46</sup> provided positive views with respect to Tutela’s function of accessing key resources and expanding overall knowledge. Views were less positive with respect to Tutela’s capacity to expand professional networks, and to help communicate and collaborate.

**Figure 7: LINC/CLIC instructors’ views on the extent to which Tutela is useful...**



Source: Instructor Survey, 2019

<sup>46</sup> A third of those who were aware of Tutela did not report using Tutela. For potential reasons as to why some did not use Tutela, see evidence from site visits and the expert panel in 3.1.1.9.

Many instructors in site visits felt Tutela was not user-friendly, in particular for navigating the website to find materials. Instructors noted that uploaded material is not sufficiently vetted, resulting in lengthy searches for appropriate materials matched to client needs<sup>47</sup>. Consequently, many reported making their own materials instead. It did not seem that these negative feelings held for all web-based resources, as instructors at multiple sites referenced other websites they use<sup>48</sup>. Some instructors felt that Tutela would be easier to navigate if the search function allowed for filtering by CLB/NCLC level and by theme.

Expert panelists provided negative views on Tutela. Their most salient objection was that Tutela is not sufficiently vetted, resulting in inappropriate documents being added and feasibly used. The panelists felt the volume of sub-par materials available on Tutela created a generalized mistrust of Tutela. The experts found Tutela is not user-friendly, nor intuitive to navigate, and that other existing platforms (e.g. EduLINC) are free and more user-friendly. The experts recommended materials uploaded to Tutela should be vetted by independent experts in second language acquisition and teaching.

### 3.1.2 Design for meeting newcomers' needs

**Finding:** The variety of formal and informal and employment-related approaches used in IRCC-funded language learning services are meeting the diverse needs of newcomers.

Learners' needs are intended to be considered at every step of the language learning continuum, starting with initial assessment for placement<sup>49</sup>. Assessment centres provide clients SPO and course options. If a learner's preferred referral option is full, but there are equivalent courses available, an assessor can encourage the learner to enrol, but the learner has the final say on whether they would rather be placed on a waitlist for their preferred option. The majority of instructors who responded to the survey felt that language learners receive appropriate referrals for their specific needs (86%), and timely referrals (85%).

After a learner has been placed in a class, their needs are assessed continuously as a guiding CLB/NCLC principle. Needs assessments are incorporated into the program design so that learners are able to reflect on their language learning goals and input on what they want taught in the classroom. Ongoing needs assessments are also an opportunity for instructors to better understand client needs (e.g., topics of interest, time spent per topic). While the majority of LINC/CLIC instructors who responded to the survey felt that their clients' placements were appropriate with respect to their identified needs (73%), about a fifth of instructors reported that they did not know the needs of their clients (19%). This disparity suggests room for improvement with respect to ongoing needs assessment.

#### 3.1.2.1 Formality and needs

The panel found that language learning services are adapted for newcomers who require structured learning environments (i.e., LINC/CLIC), as well as those who would like to increase their knowledge of official languages in less formal environments (i.e., informal language services). The panel emphasized that formal learning environments draw clients who are looking to enhance their academic and professional communication skills, but also incorporate information for navigating Canadian society. Other clients prefer more social learning

<sup>47</sup> Instructors in site visits found resources for students with literacy needs and at low benchmark levels were particular areas of need.

<sup>48</sup> Example website is [Real World Tasks](http://www.realworldtasks.ca) (at [www.realworldtasks.ca](http://www.realworldtasks.ca))

<sup>49</sup> For more on language assessment, see Section 3.2.1.

environments, to help prevent feelings of isolation; for example, experts lauded conversation circles for seniors who generally prefer less structure.

Panelists also highlighted how employment-related language learning is adapted to the unique goals of clients. For instance, there are classes tailored to sector-based needs (e.g., classes specific to engineering, healthcare, hospitality), and there are different options available for newcomers with high language proficiency and low language proficiency. Finally, LINC/CLIC classes can include specific targeted groups (e.g. seniors, women) or mixed groups.

From the perspective of surveyed clients, about a quarter (24%) felt their classes could be improved by having more time with their instructors. More than two thirds (69%) were satisfied with what the program taught them, and almost three quarters (74%) were satisfied with the overall language training quality. Nearly two thirds (63%) of clients preferred to have training in a classroom, with a small proportion (17%) preferring a mix of online and classroom. Almost half (45%) wanted a combination of formal courses focused on the language skills required for everyday life in Canada and the skills required to work in Canada. Clients also wanted informal opportunities to practice their language skills with other newcomers.

### **3.1.2.2 Class time and schedule**

**Finding:** Language learning services offer a range of class schedules and hours of training per week, which corresponds to the diversity in clients' needs.

Class offerings are flexible with respect to time of day. Administrative data revealed most classes are offered in the morning (about 54%), followed by the afternoon (about 45%), evening (about 25%)<sup>50</sup>. Some classes are offered on weekends (about 4%), and there are also courses, such as online courses, that are offered at any time of day (about 1%).

The expert panel felt that flexibility in attending morning, afternoon and evening classes is crucial for newcomers who have competing priorities (e.g., dropping children at school in the morning). For the most part, these types of offerings seem to coincide with preferences expressed in the client survey, as 53% preferred weekday courses (i.e., morning/afternoon), and 24% preferred evening. A higher proportion of clients preferred weekend courses (16%) than is currently offered.

Between 2015–16 and 2017–18, 75% of courses were offered part-time, with the remaining 25% offered full-time. The expert panel emphasized the importance of offering full and part-time classes, as newcomers require a work-life balance as they settle in Canada. Notably, the client survey found 50% of clients were currently working, with 63% of this group reporting they worked full-time at 35 or more hours per week.

### **3.1.2.3 Barriers to accessing and attending class, and reasons for leaving the program**

**Finding:** While not all clients face barriers to attending language learning services, the need for access to childcare, and the need to work are barriers.

Newcomers face significant barriers in accessing and attending classes. Barriers may occur during registration or placement, once an individual is already enrolled, and also after completing a class. The document review revealed a variety of common barriers, including long waitlists, past trauma, physical injuries and disabilities, mental health issues, lack of access to support

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<sup>50</sup> This varies by fiscal year.

services, other competing needs (e.g., caring for family members, finding suitable housing/employment, appointments) and the need to work.

To address barriers to attendance, IRCC funds SPOs to provide support services. Support services are designed to ensure equitable, barrier-free access to all IRCC settlement services, including language learning services. Support services offered by IRCC include client transportation, translation and interpretation services, crisis counselling, child care, and provisions for clients with disabilities (e.g., mobility limitations).

Interviewees commonly noted childcare was a crucial support service<sup>51</sup>. However, newcomers and SPO staff in focus groups reported that the wait times for childcare availability could be significant even if it was available for some. Access to childcare most often and most acutely affected women<sup>52</sup>, families with multiple children, and single-parent families. Panelists agreed that childcare is an essential service, and felt that newcomer women who require childcare likely progress slower than others. Accordingly, lack of available childcare was the second most prevalent barrier to attendance noted by employment-related instructors (56%) and LINC/CLIC instructors (61%) who responded to the survey.

Another frequently noted barrier to attendance was the need to work. Need to work was the most prevalent barrier noted by employment-related instructors (72%), and even more commonly noted by LINC/CLIC instructors (82%). Focus group participants felt that employment is a major issue, particularly for refugees and even more so for refugees who are sponsoring their family members. Some participants noted that they would take any available job in order to have sufficient money to sponsor their family members, and that even with the flexibility of evening and weekend classes, they are often too tired to attend. Others noted that when working hours and language training hours overlap, clients prioritize work over language training.

Findings from the client survey were relatively positive, as no single challenges were mentioned by more than a third of clients, and 29% reported that they face no challenges in attending language training. For those who experienced challenges, the most common were not attending due to bad weather (34%), not being sufficiently motivated to attend (26%), finding transportation (23%), getting time off work (20%) and finding somebody for childcare (19%). Of the non-clients surveyed, more than half (55%) chose not to participate in formal language training because they felt their language skills were already good. Less than one-quarter (21%) mentioned that they simply did not have the time to take courses. Only (6%) mentioned that the course schedule was not convenient for them. Of note, 6% of non-clients surveyed mentioned that access to babysitting was a barrier to accessing language classes.

The panelists noted that social capital<sup>53</sup> can help moderate the negative effects of health and social barriers. For instance, learners who have social capital in the form of family members, friends, or other individuals in their community to help with child minding or transportation are more likely to be able to attend class on a regular basis. The experts stressed it is important for SPOs to engage learners with low social capital not only with language training, but also through other settlement services as needed.

Internal policy documentation at IRCC suggests that as many as half of all LINC students discontinue after completing one level, however little is known on whether this is because clients have simply improved to their satisfaction, or if other factors led them to “drop-out”. LINC/CLIC

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<sup>51</sup> Administrative data showed between FY 2015-16 and FY 2017-18, 48% of language training courses offered some form of childminding service.

<sup>52</sup> SPO staff and focus group participants commonly reported that women are often primary caregivers.

<sup>53</sup> i.e., the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a society.

instructors who responded to the survey commonly cited the need to take on a survival job (76%), having children (51%) and a changing work schedule (46%). The most commonly cited reasons employment-related instructors had clients leave language training were survival jobs (76%), finding employment commensurate to their skills (52%) and changing work schedules (47%). General childcare was also noted by about a third of LINC/CLIC instructors (33%) and about two-fifths of employment-related instructors (38%).

Of clients surveyed who completed their training, 63% indicated that additional training was available when they completed their level. Of this group, 59% did not take the additional training offered. Of clients who either didn't take additional offered training, or would not have taken additional training if it had been available, 32% indicated it was because the additional training did not respond to some of their needs (i.e., location, schedule, level, childcare availability and/or quality of the training). Additionally, 45% reported having to work and 40% not having enough time.

When asked why they stopped language training, 36% said they had found a job, while 19% mentioned that their working hours have changed, 15% had or their family members had health issues, 14% had to take care of their children and finally, 13% had a baby.

#### **3.1.2.4 Needs-based learning material**

**Finding:** Classroom materials are adapted to meet diverse newcomers' needs. There is a need for additional needs-based materials for clients in employment-related language training and informal language learning.

Another way that language learning services may meet clients' needs is by tailoring the information they learn in class to their specific interests. CLB/NCLC-based materials are intended to meet these needs in emphasizing skill competencies (i.e., specific to listening, speaking, reading or writing), being learner-centred (i.e., reflecting real-life communication situations faced by newcomers), and being task-based (i.e., performing a task start to finish, or breaking a task into component portions).

Most LINC/CLIC instructors (87%) and employment-related instructors (89%) who responded to the survey reported that the materials they used in language training are adapted to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada. However, as noted in Section 3.1.1.7, interviewees felt that supporting materials for employment-related language training and informal language learning were less available than for LINC/CLIC.

Clients surveyed noted room for classes to improve in relation to their needs. For example, 53% felt they would benefit from having more opportunities to speak with native Canadians, and 33% would prefer more chances to speak in class. With respect to class focus, 29% were seeking more content on employment, and 28% felt they would benefit from more material about Canada. Moreover, instructors and clients interviewed as a part of focus groups noted that classroom subject matter was often tailored to their needs/wants via a group-based needs assessments, completed at the outset of a class.

The experts stressed the importance of specific components of language training needed to facilitate cultural, civic, workplace and citizenship learning. Specifically, they felt training must emphasize content on diverse sexual orientations; racial, gender and sexual identity issues; "ableism" (discrimination against disability); acceptance of differences in religious observances; and Indigenous peoples in Canada. Some panelists felt instructors may avoid culturally sensitive topics (e.g. homosexuality and abortion) in fear of offending learners, even though newcomers

may feel empowered by this learning. Panelists felt empowerment and personal agency to navigate life in Canada were key indicators of a newcomer's transition towards social and cultural integration, at the workplace, and in Canadian society overall. Experts argued that while mandatory curriculum content is crucial, it must be supported with authentic material. Authentic content was seen as particularly important for the workplace, but also for day-to-day interactions more generally<sup>54</sup>. Experts felt that authentic content is more common in employment-related language training (e.g., trade-specific content) than in LINC courses.

## 3.2 Language assessments and placements

**Finding:** The assessment and referral processes are working well overall, with clients receiving timely and appropriate assessments and referrals that reflect the language needs and levels of learners. However, referrals are not always consistent between assessment centres.

### 3.2.1 Language assessments

Formal assessments for placement purposes<sup>55</sup> are conducted at an assessment centre, by a certified language assessor, using one of many CLB/NCLC based assessment tools<sup>56</sup>. These formal assessments measure all language competencies (i.e., reading, speaking, listening, and writing). As a general rule, the benchmarks assigned to a learner mean that the learner has demonstrated the level of communicative ability associated with most or all<sup>57</sup> of the descriptors for the benchmarks assigned. In the case of learners with irregular skill profiles, and where skill-specific courses are not available, the language assessor makes a holistic evaluation when determining where to place a learner<sup>58</sup>. Assessment tools often come with rubrics, checklists, and rating scales to help guide the assessor, and standardize assessments.

The product of a language assessment is a referral to language programs and classes, or sometimes other settlement services or community services. Interviewees noted that tools are available across Canada, with some exceptions for those in rural areas, or with no access to technology. The panelists noted that the CLBs/NCLCs were developed to standardize language assessments and referrals across the country, (i.e., ensuring that a learners with the same language level receive the same CLB/NCLC benchmarks regardless of region of assessment).

Panelists found that clients were generally assessed at the right level. Respondents to the instructor survey reported that language learners receive appropriate referrals to their needs (86%), but were less positive with respect to the appropriateness of referrals with respect to language level (61%). While instructors more often than not felt referrals are consistent within assessment centres (61%), only half of instructors felt that referrals were consistent between assessment centres (50%). Broadly, 68% of instructors felt the assessment process was working

<sup>54</sup> e.g., finding expiry dates on food, reading street signs, reading prescriptions, product instructions.

<sup>55</sup> Prior to a formal assessment, clients may conduct an online self-assessment which measures receptive competencies (i.e., reading and listening) in English or French. This self-assessment provides an unofficial CLB/NCLC benchmark range, and provides links to settlement resources and other relevant information. In contrast, formal assessments are conducted to ensure clients are placed properly if they wish to enter language training under the Settlement Program.

<sup>56</sup> Including but not limited to the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test, Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment, Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Placement tool, Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment and Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Assessment.

<sup>57</sup> Traditionally 70% to 100%.

<sup>58</sup> The NLPPG suggest an assessor may consider, among other factors, learner's prior learning, learner goals, length of time in Canada, linguistic distance, level of confidence, class curricula, and program organization. The NLPPG also notes it may be beneficial to the learner for L/S benchmarks to be given more weight during the placement or progression decision for an integrated course, as learners who struggle to speak or listen in class may become frustrated for having difficulty understanding the instructor's directions and communicating with classmates.

well overall, and 77% felt the referral process is working well overall. Moreover, instructors generally felt that referrals were timely (85%), and interviewees noted that despite inconsistencies across regions referrals were high quality. Interviewees also noted that some of the disparities in referral are not under the control of IRCC, for example based on regional differences in assessment centres (e.g., centralized versus multi-SPO approach), and regional availability of remote/itinerant assessment services.

With respect to instructors' capacity to assess language benchmarks, nearly all instructors reported training in CLB/NCLCs (87%) and Section 3.1.1.6 provides information on the extent to which instructors receive recalibration to benchmarks. To summarize, instructors are well equipped, trained, and retrained in assessing benchmarks. While expert panelists agreed that assessors also receive ongoing recalibration and are well trained, they noted that some assessors are hired only as contractors and thus do not receive this recalibration.

### 3.2.2 Language placements

**Finding:** Clients are receiving appropriate placements for their language levels, and class size is appropriate.

In most cases, learners should be placed in courses at the benchmark following the level they completed (or achieved via assessment). According to surveyed LINC/CLIC instructors, assessments are accurate. The majority (71%) estimated that less than 5% of learners in their classes are switched to a different CLB/NCLC class within two weeks of starting a new class<sup>59</sup>.

Surveyed clients gave mostly positive reviews of their experiences with the ease/difficulty of their language training. 45% reported their overall experience with language training was about right given their knowledge of English/French, and just 9% felt that their language training was “too difficult” or “too easy to learn much”.

#### Client's views on the ease/difficulty of their language training class

- Difficult—4%
- Difficult, but I learned—30%
- About right given my knowledge of English/French—45%
- Easy, but I was able to practice my English/French—16%
- Too easy to learn much—5%

*Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019*

Nevertheless, 19% of clients surveyed reported changing classes at the onset of their language training. Of these, 32% did so in the first month and 58% did so to go to a class to a higher level. As noted in Section 3.1.2.1, from the perspective of clients surveyed, 24% felt their training could be improved by having more time with their teachers.

Most LINC/CLIC instructors (86%) felt there was an appropriate number of clients in their classes. Average class size reported by instructors was 18, with an average attendance of 80%. This aligns with the profile of courses provided in Section 1.2.3. With respect to classroom composition, PBLA Guidelines<sup>60</sup> suggest maximum class size of:

- 8 to 10 learners in literacy classes;
- 20 learners in CLB/NCLC 1 to 4 classes; and
- 25 to 30 learners in CLB/NCLC 5 or greater.

<sup>59</sup> The average estimate overall was 6% of learners.

<sup>60</sup> See PBLA Practice Review Framework: Standards for Use in Program Mentoring.

While program stakeholders and instructors in site visits generally found that placements are fast, many clients surveyed reported that their language training would be improved if there were more available classes (35%). About a quarter of clients felt that classes were not offered at the CLB levels they wanted, with 26% feeling there need to be more CLB 5-8 courses, and 22% feeling they need more courses at the CLB 9 or higher.

Site visit interviews confirmed that placements are often fast, with the exception when childcare is required. Interviewees from the program and site visits also noted difficulties placing low level literacy clients, as the most basic courses are often too difficult.

As noted in the program profile, PBLA was implemented partially in response to recommendations from the previous LINC evaluation, which highlighted an absence of appropriate tools to measure the impact of LINC on language acquisition (i.e., progression). Specifically, PBLA could help instructors with assessment of progression following taking a class, for placement to the next CLB level. While interviewees provided favourable reviews of PBLA, and most instructors reported that it improves their ability to analyze individual performance (82%) and report on individual performance (80%), expert panelists provided held less favourable opinions. PBLA is covered in Section 3.1.1.3.

### 3.3 Language progression and use

Improving clients' official language skills and enhancing newcomers' use of official languages to function in Canadian society are key outcomes for language learning services. Section 3.3.1.1 addresses language progression, comparing newcomer clients and non-clients and exploring modalities of language training related to progression. Section 3.3.1.2 discusses the use of official languages in other contexts.

#### 3.3.1 Language progression

##### 3.3.1.1 *Impact of language training: clients versus non-clients*

**Finding:** In the short term, using an objective measure of progression, at least one third of clients improved their language skills, although improvement varied by competency. Over a longer term, using a subjective measure of progression, a majority of clients reported progressing.

**Finding:** In the short term, using an objective measure of progression, there were little differences between clients and non-clients with respect to likelihood of progression. Over a longer term, using a subjective measure of progression, clients had a greater likelihood of progression, especially if their language training focused on employment or a combination of formal and informal language training.

The evaluation assessed language progression using a short-term<sup>61</sup> objective measure (the Milestones Test) and using a medium-term<sup>62</sup> subjective measure (self-declared competency in official languages). Overall, as shown in Figure 8, a third or more of clients who participated in the Milestones improved their competencies by at least one CLB level, with the lowest share of client improvement found for listening (33%), and the highest for speaking (49%). Comparatively, 24% (for writing skills) to 45% (for speaking skills) of non-LINC clients improved their competencies by at least one CLB level.

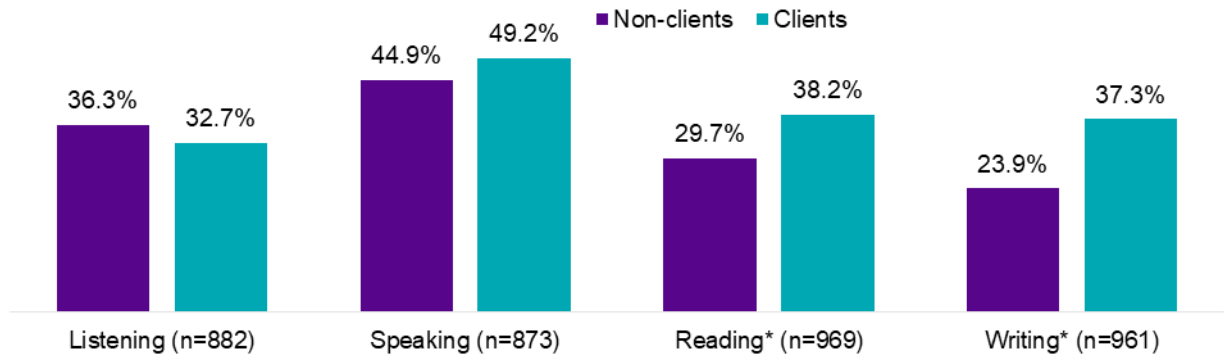
<sup>61</sup> The Milestones Test is described in detail in Section 2.2. It used an interval of 12 to 30 weeks, separating the pre-test from the post-test, depending on the site tested.

<sup>62</sup> The survey compared language proficiency of newcomers when they first arrived to their proficiency at time of the survey. As immigrants admitted between 2015 and 2017 were surveyed in 2019, this provides a measure of progression over the course of about 2 to 4 years.



Statistically significant differences were found in terms of reading and writing skills, with a greater share of clients improving by at least one CLB level. In terms of reading skills, 38% of clients improved their reading skills by at least one CLB level, which is about 9 percentage points more than non-clients. For writing skills, 24% of non-clients and 37% of clients improved by at least one CLB, representing a 13 percentage point difference between the two groups.

**Figure 8: Milestones test participants that improved English/French language skills, by competency**



\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Milestones test, 2019

Clients and non-clients have a different profile in terms of human capital, and potentially in terms of language skills, barriers faced, and opportunities. Regressions were conducted to isolate the impact of taking language training from other characteristics<sup>63</sup>. Once controlling for the socio-demographic profile of individuals, regression results indicated no statistically significant differences in likelihood of improvement between clients and non-clients in listening, reading and writing skills. Moreover, the regressions showed clients are less likely to improve their speaking skills compared to non-clients. Results also showed that having a higher CLB level at the onset of testing, lowers the chance of progression. In addition, results for some language competencies suggest that progression is associated with education, knowledge of official languages, and to a lesser extent, age and immigration category<sup>64</sup>.

The evaluation also assessed language progression using a medium-term<sup>65</sup> subjective measure (self-declared competency in official languages). Clients and non-clients rated their English and French abilities in each of the four competencies for when they first arrived in Canada, and at the time of the survey. A measure of improvement in each competency was derived by comparing ratings provided at the two points in time<sup>66</sup>. Results showed that the vast majority of clients improved their language skills between time of admission and time of survey. The majority of clients indicated improving their writing skills (85%), reading skills (87%), and listening and speaking skills (93% each). Comparatively, a significantly lower proportion of non-clients reported improvements in each of the four competencies, representing a gap of 10 to 15 percentage point between clients and non-clients depending on the competency.

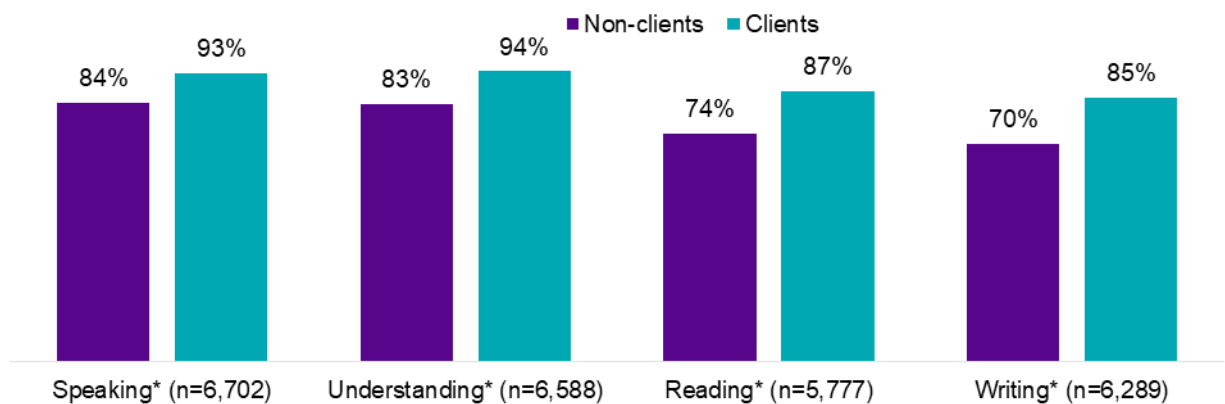
<sup>63</sup> Technical appendices on regression results are available upon request.

<sup>64</sup> Depending on the language skill assessed, individuals with Master's degrees or Ph.D. were more likely to progress than those with secondary or less education, or those with a one or two year post-secondary degree. Similarly, those with knowledge of English at admission were more likely to progress than newcomers who reported not knowing either of Canada's official languages at admission.

<sup>65</sup> As immigrants admitted between 2015 and 2017 were surveyed in 2019, this provides a measure of progression over 2 to 4 years.

<sup>66</sup> Excluding those who scored themselves at the top of the scale for when they first arrived (i.e., those who said they spoke English or French '5- very well', on a 5 points scale), as there was no room for improvement for these individuals.

**Figure 9: Survey respondents that reported improving their English/French language skills, by competency**



\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: *Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019*

Regression analyses were also conducted to see the extent to which differences between clients and non-clients were due to the training they received. In general, the regression of survey data found clients were more likely to indicate progression. Specifically, clients who took formal language training that was general in nature (i.e., not focused on employment) more often reported improving their listening, reading and writing language skills. Similarly, formal language training clients who took training that focused on employment had a higher likelihood of reporting an improvement in across competencies. Informal language services alone were not associated with a higher likelihood of improving language skills compared to non-clients, however, formal language training paired with informal language learning activities further increased chances of clients reporting improving their skills.

Some socio-demographic characteristics were associated with likelihood of reporting an improvement in language skills, both for clients and non-clients, including year of admission, age, knowledge of English at admission, mother tongue and to a lesser extent some education and immigration categories<sup>67</sup>. The likelihood of improving language skills was also positively associated with the number of languages spoken. Likelihood of improving language skills was negatively associated with having a physical or health condition, or being in classes focused on employment, daily life and to some extent academics or citizenship. Similar to the results of the Milestones test, the likelihood of improvement was negatively associated with self-reported ability level in each of the four competencies at admission.

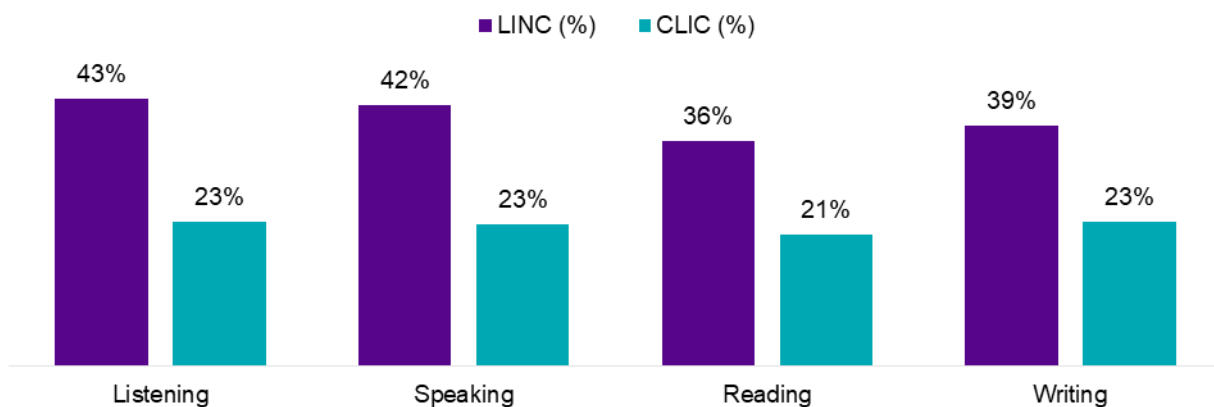
<sup>67</sup> Chances of reporting an improvement in language skills generally decreased with age. Those who indicated knowing English at admission were more likely to report improving that those who indicated not knowing Canada's official languages at admission. In addition, length of time in Canada was also associated with likelihood of progression, with the more recent arrival cohort (i.e., those admitted in 2017) being less likely to report an improvement than those who have been in Canada for a longer period of time (i.e., those admitted in 2015). Depending on the language skill assessed, refugees and spouses and dependents from the economic class appeared more likely to improve than economic principal applicants. Newcomers with secondary or less education also were less likely to improve when compared to their more educated counterparts (i.e., those with a Master's degree or a Ph.D).

### 3.3.1.2 Client progression and characteristics of language training

**Finding:** Taking full-time language training, training that is delivered on a weekday during daytime and at a school or post-secondary institution, participating in multi-level classes and language training focusing on employment increased the likelihood of progression, while participating in classes with continuous intake was associated with a lower likelihood of progression. Clients at higher CLB levels were also less likely to progress.

The evaluation also sought to better understand which aspects of language training, if any, are associated with progressing. In other words, the evaluation assessed what works for whom, and under what conditions. To do so, the evaluation used iCARE data to assess progression of clients admitted between 2015 and 2017, from the first language service they received to the end of 2018. Figure 10 shows that 43% of LINC clients had improved their listening skills, and 42% their speaking skills, by at least one CLB level. A little less had improved their reading skills (36%) and their writing skills (39%).

**Figure 10: Share of iCARE clients that improved their language skills by at least one CLB level**



Source: iCARE

Regression was conducted to see which individual characteristics and training modalities were associated with progression of LINC clients. The results showed while progression is associated with the individual profile of clients, some modalities had an impact on the likelihood of progression. These effects were found to be constant across competencies and were as follows:

- The higher the initial CLB of the client the less likely they were to progress by at least one CLB.
- Clients that obtained training on all four competencies were more likely to have improved each individual language skill by at least one CLB.
- The likelihood of improving language skills increased with the amount of time in training.
- Clients who took training at schools, post-secondary institutions or various training locations<sup>68</sup> were more likely to improve their language skills by at least one CLB, compared to individuals who attended community organizations, private service providers or other providers.
- Clients who took classes where continuous intake was used had lower chances of improving by at least one CLB.

<sup>68</sup> i.e., training taken at more than one type of institution (e.g., both a school and a community organization).

- Clients who took language training that was provided during daytime on weekdays (morning and or afternoon) had more chances of improving their language skills.
- Full-time language training was associated with a greater likelihood of improvement.
- Multi-level classes were associated with greater likelihood of improving language skills.
- Clients who took language training focused on employment had more chances of improving their language skills than those who took training that was general or focused on daily life.
- Progression was also associated with year of admission, gender, age, level of education, knowledge of official languages, immigration category, and mother tongue<sup>69</sup>.

A separate analysis was conducted to understand to progression of CLIC clients. As indicated in Figure 10, 23% of CLIC clients improved their listening, speaking and writing skills, while 21% improved their reading skills. Regression analyses on the likelihood of progression for CLIC clients indicated that, while the various training modalities often only had an impact for selected language skills, when statistically significant, results were generally consistent with what was obtained for LINC clients. As such, the likelihood of progression was inversely related to the CLB level at the beginning of the training, while weeks of language training was positively associated with the likelihood of progression (except for clients who had more than a year to two years or less since the beginning of their training compared to those who had over 2 years where no significant differences were noted). When statistically significant, full-time language training, multilevel classes and language focused on employment were associated with a higher likelihood of progression, while continuous intake was associated with a lower likelihood of progression.

Results from the Milestones test were also used to explore whether the characteristics of the classes clients took had an impact on their likelihood of progression. Similarly to what was found in the iCARE data analysis, regression results using the Milestones indicated that clients taking multilevel classes were more likely to improve their speaking, reading and writing skills by at least one CLB. Clients who have taken full time classes were also more likely to improve their listening and reading skills than those who taking part-time language training.

Clients who were in a class with continuous intake were less likely to improve their listening skills than those who have not. CLB level at the pre-test was also inversely associated with the likelihood of progression. Contrary to iCARE data analysis, Milestones results on the impact of hours of training on likelihood of progression show that clients who have taken more than 300 hours of language training were less likely to improve their language skills by one CLB compared to those with less time in language training<sup>70</sup>.

Contrary to what was found when analysing iCARE and the Milestones test data, regression analysis using survey data indicated that few language training components had a significant impact on their likelihood of progression. This is likely due to the low variability among clients (i.e., nearly all reported improving their language skills)<sup>71</sup>. Among the few training components that had a statistically significant impact, having taken formal language training that focused on employment increased chances of improvement, while having taken CLIC decreased them.

<sup>69</sup> More specifically, individuals who had been in Canada longer had more chances of progression than the more recent arrival cohorts. Females were also more likely to progress compared to their male counterparts. Immigrants' chances to progress in each skills also increased with their level of education, and those reporting knowledge of one or both official languages at admissions were also more likely to progress. Compared to economic principal applicants, refugees, family class immigrants and spouses and dependents from the economic class had more chances of progression.

<sup>70</sup> This is likely due to the long timeframe over which improvements were measured.

<sup>71</sup> Aside from language training components, the Milestones test analysis on clients' progression suggested that few socio-demographic characteristics are associated with the likelihood of progression.

Having taken informal language training in addition to formal language training also increased chances of clients improving their speaking and reading skills. Aside from language training components, other aspects that influence progression include the number of languages spoken, motivation to improve language skills<sup>72</sup> and self-reported official language proficiency at admission that were positively associated with likelihood of progression, as well as having a physical or medical condition that was negatively associated with likelihood of progression.

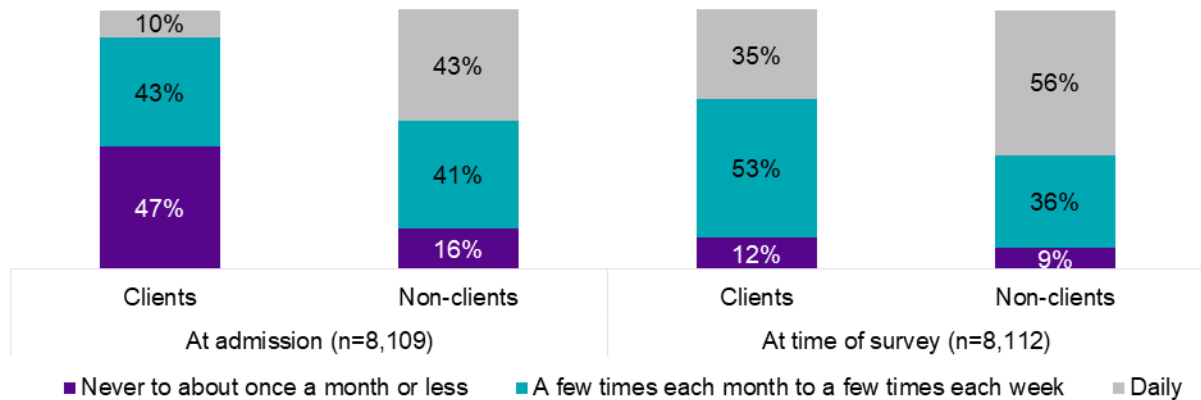
### 3.3.2 Official language usage

**Finding:** While non-clients use official languages more frequently than clients and are more comfortable doing so, more clients reported increasing their comfort and frequency of use of official languages over time.

The evaluation examined the use of official languages to function in the Canadian society and relied on the survey of clients and non-clients to assess their use of official languages. Respondents to the survey were asked about whether they had improved capacity to use official languages in several routine activities<sup>73</sup> that pertained to the four competencies (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Overall, when aggregating their responses, a greater proportion of non-clients reported using official languages on a daily basis when they arrived in Canada (43%) and at the time of the survey (56%), compared to clients for whom 10% reported using it on a daily basis when they arrived to Canada and 35% at the time of the survey.

**Figure 11: Frequency of use of official languages in routine activities**



\* Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019

Further regression analysis was done to see whether the differences between clients and non-clients remained once controlling for the differences in profile of individuals. Results indicate that clients of formal language training that is general in nature use official languages less frequently than non-clients, while formal language training clients whose training focused on employment were using it significantly more than non-clients. There were however no differences in terms of frequency of use of official languages between non-client, and informal

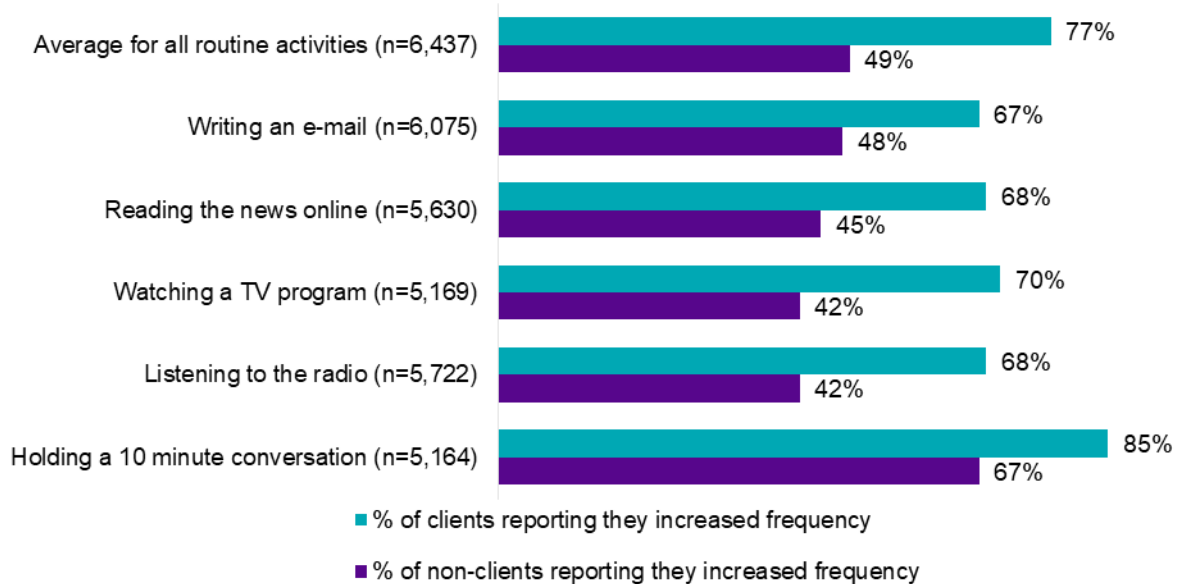
<sup>72</sup> This includes motivations related to employment, daily life, citizenship and academic reasons.

<sup>73</sup> Clients were asked about the frequency at which they were doing the following activities: holding a 10 minute conversation, listening to the radio, watching a TV program, reading the news online and writing an e-mail.

language training clients, or clients that took both informal and formal language training, which indicates that they were using official languages as frequently as non-clients.

When assessing whether clients are using more frequently English or French in their routine activities over time, clients were shown to have the greatest improvement, with 77% of clients reporting using English or French more frequently than when they first arrived to Canada, compared for 49% of the non-clients (see figure 12).<sup>74</sup> This was confirmed by regression analysis which indicated that clients of formal language training, and clients who took both formal and informal language training are more likely to report an increase in the frequency of use of official languages, between when they first arrived to Canada and the time of the survey.

**Figure 12: Survey respondents' increase in the frequency at which they use English/French in routine activities**



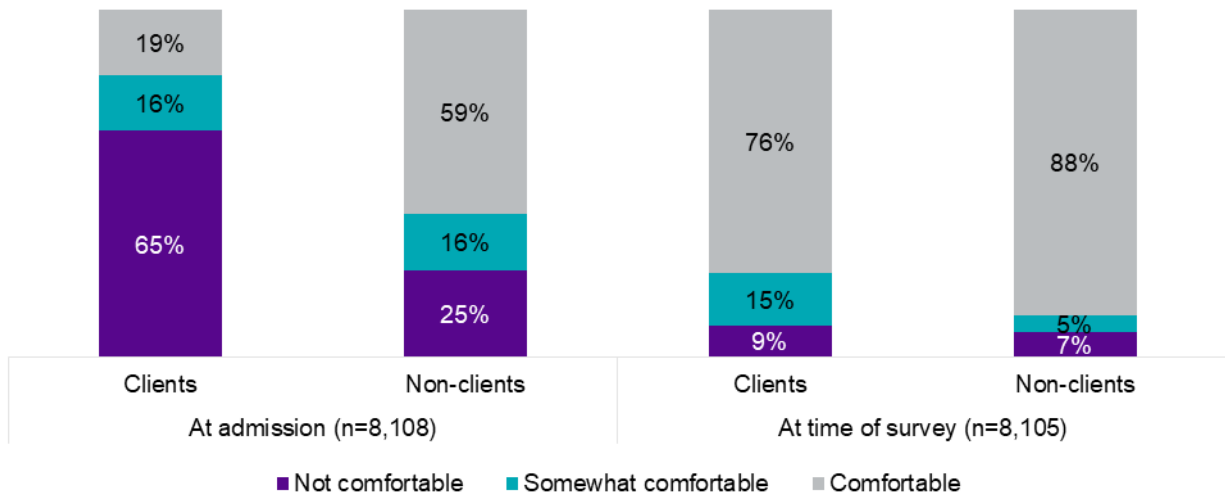
\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019

Interviewees mentioned various factors that influence using official languages outside their homes and noted that such use is necessary for successful communication, friend/family dynamics, and working situations. Interviewees also noted that newcomers with children need these skills especially in order to be involved in their kids' school lives.

The evaluation also looked at clients' level of comfort using official languages outside the home. Survey results show that non-clients have a higher level of comfort using English or French in social situations. On average, 88% of non-clients reported being comfortable in using English or French at the time of survey, compared to 76% of the clients.

<sup>74</sup> A measure of increase in frequency of use was derived by comparing the frequency of use at admission to frequency of use declared at time of survey. The analysis excluded those who indicated using English or French on a daily basis, as they could not increase their frequency of use.

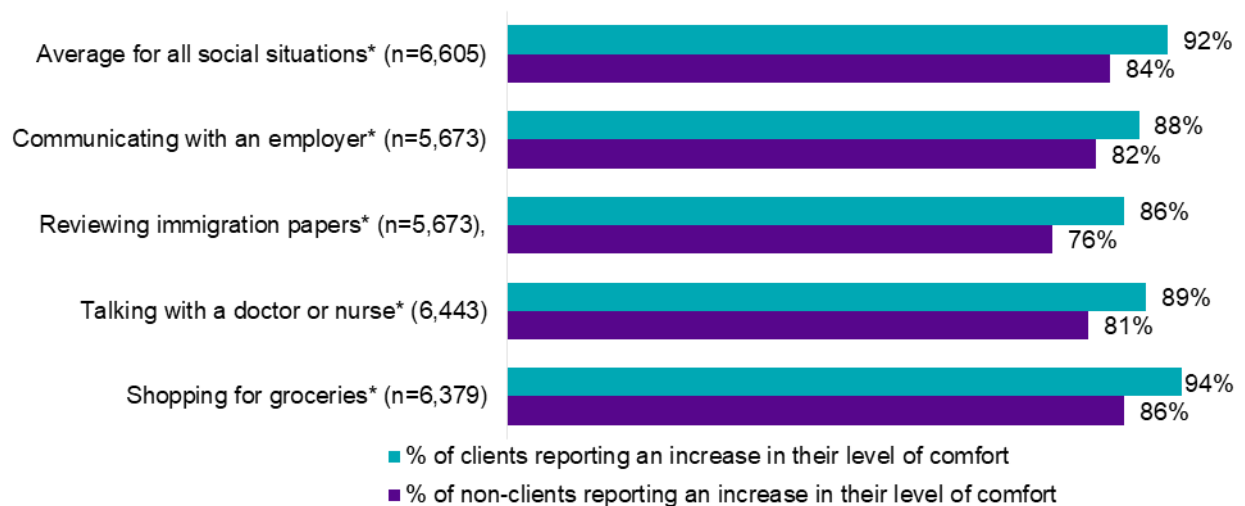
**Figure 13: Level of comfort using official languages in social situations**



\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019

While clients were less comfortable using English or French than clients, they are more to report an improvement in their level of comfort between the time of admission and survey administration.<sup>75</sup> Overall, 92% of clients reported an improvement in their level of comfort, compared to 84% of the non-clients.

**Figure 14: Survey respondents' increase in the level of comfort using English/French in social situations**



\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019

Focus groups conducted as a part of site visits found clients in language learning activities felt more confident as a result of taking classes. For example, clients felt better able to help their children with school-tasks, shop (e.g., groceries, clothes), and work (e.g., e-mail). Focus group participants felt they would benefit from improvement in talking to doctors and teachers, filling out forms, and speaking on the phone.

<sup>75</sup> A measure of increase in level of comfort was derived by comparing the level of comfort in using English or French at admission to the level of comfort expressed at time of survey. The analysis excluded those who indicated being very comfortable using English or French, as they could not increase their level of comfort.

## 3.4 Employment-related language skills and labour market outcomes

Section 3.4.1 provides a client and non-client comparison of working improvements in English and French and Section 3.4.2 covers broader labour market outcomes. Analyses considered either current job, or if unemployed, the latest job respondents occupied.

### 3.4.1 Improvement of employment-related language skills

**Finding:** Clients of general language training used English or French at work less frequently and were less comfortable using official languages than non-clients, however taking language training focused on employment contributed to making these gaps smaller.

The survey of clients and non-clients, the expert panel and the site visits provided evidence on the impact of language training on clients' and non-clients' language abilities in the work place.

Survey results indicated a higher proportion of non-clients 'always' interact in English or French with their supervisors, co-workers or customers, compared to clients in general language training, or language training with an employment-related focus. A greater share of clients in employment-focused language training reported 'always' using official languages with their supervisor, co-workers and customers compared to clients taking language training that was general in nature. In general, both non-clients and clients reported a higher use of oral official than written.

**Table 2: Share of survey respondents reporting always using official languages at work**

Interaction type	Skill type	General clients	Employment clients	Non-clients
Interactions with supervisor	Reading and Writing* (n=5,327)	46%	55%	79%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,312)	70%	80%	88%
Interactions with co-workers	Reading and Writing* (n=5,336)	42%	53%	77%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,332)	68%	79%	87%
Interactions with customers	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,347)	36%	44%	68%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,345)	58%	67%	76%

\*Statistically significant differences between the groups,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019

The survey also inquired about respondents' level of comfort in using official languages at work. Similar to the frequency of use of official languages at work, non-clients were found to be the most comfortable using English or French across work situations. Despite being significantly less comfortable than non-clients, clients of employment-focused language training were slightly more comfortable in using official languages at work than clients of general language training.

**Table 3: Share of survey respondents reporting being comfortable in using official languages at work**

Interaction type	Skill type	General clients	Employment clients	Non-clients
Interactions with supervisor	Reading and Writing* (n=4,693)	51%	56%	80%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,067)	54%	61%	81%
Interactions with co-workers	Reading and Writing* (n=4,502)	53%	56%	82%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=5,078)	54%	62%	82%
Interactions with customers	Reading and Writing* (n=4,260)	52%	55%	80%
	Listening and Speaking* (n=4,816)	52%	58%	81%

\*Statistically significant differences between the groups,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019



Site visits corroborated that clients of language training focused on employment are more comfortable using official languages. Clients who took employment-related language training reported that their use of English or French in the workplace increased as a result of taking the training, for the most part in their speaking and listening skills.

Expert panelists felt employment-related language training was beneficial for newcomers entering specific employment sectors (e.g. engineering, healthcare, service industry, hospitality industry). The experts noted while professional language development programs such as those offered in the field of engineering and healthcare are more suitable to those with higher language proficiency, there was an increasing need to provide more employment-related language preparation for lower proficiency levels.

Experts viewed employment-related language training as a highly effective method to help newcomers integrate into the Canadian job market. They agreed that more needed to be done to increase access to employment-related language training (e.g., decreasing the waitlist). To do this, the experts recommended a “staggered” intake approach (i.e., a balance between single and continuous intake).

### 3.4.2 Impact of language training on labour market outcomes

The evaluation examined the extent to which language learning services contribute to clients’ participation in the Canadian labour market. Information from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) and the survey of clients and non-clients was used to determine the impact of formal and informal language training on incidence of employment, earnings, and other subjective and objective measures of the quality of employment. This section provides the results from a comparison of employment outcomes for clients and non-clients, and also describes the impact of the characteristics of language training received on clients’ employment outcomes.

#### 3.4.2.1 Language training and employment outcomes: clients versus non-clients

**Finding:** While differences in employment outcomes between clients and non-clients can largely be attributed to socio-demographic profiles, clients often have poorer labour market outcomes than non-clients on the short to medium term.

#### Employment situation in 2017

Using the IMDB, the evaluation assessed the impact of language training on incidence of employment and employment income in 2017<sup>76</sup>. Descriptive analysis indicated that non-clients of formal and informal language training have higher incidence of employment than those who were taking language training in 2017, and of former clients. Similarly, average employment income was higher for non-clients, and lowest for current clients, while former clients stood in the middle.

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<sup>76</sup> Through the IMDB analysis, employment outcomes of non-clients were compared to those of clients who took language training in 2017, and of former clients (i.e., clients who last received language training in 2015 or in 2016).

**Table 4: Incidence of employment and average employment income in 2017, by client type, 2015–16 admissions**

Training type	Client type	Incidence of employment	Average employment income
Formal language training	Non-clients	75%	\$40,700
	Former clients (2015)	69%	\$28,500
	Former clients (2016)	67%	\$25,000
	Current clients (2017)	46%	\$19,200
Informal language training	Non-clients	72%	\$38,400
	Former clients (2015)	68%	\$24,600
	Former clients (2016)	50%	\$20,900
	Current clients (2017)	39%	\$17,100

Source: IMDB, 2017

Regression analyses were conducted to better understand the impact of language training on incidence of employment and employment income. In both cases, regression results indicated that the differences between clients and non-clients can largely be attributed to the differences in profile between the client and non-client groups, and that once the profile of individuals is taken into account the gap between clients and non-clients diminishes considerably. In other words, poorer labour market outcomes of clients are more so a reflection of differences in the socio-demographic profiles of clients and non-clients, rather than a reflection of participation in language training.

More specifically, the regression results on the incidence of employment indicated that those who took formal language training in 2017 were less likely than non-clients to be employed (in 2017). Former formal language training clients were however more likely to be employed in 2017, compared to non-clients. The same differences between clients, non-clients and former clients were found for informal language learning services.

In terms of employment earnings, formal language training clients earned less than non-clients, even after controlling for the profile of individuals in the client and non-client groups. Current clients faced the biggest earnings disadvantage (earning 32% less than non-clients), followed by the 2016 formal language training cohort (who earned 11% less than non-clients), and the 2015 formal language training cohort, (who earned 7% less than non-clients). While the 2015 cohort of informal language training clients did not have significantly lower earnings compared to non-clients of informal language training, those who were taking informal language training in 2017 earned 23% less, and those who last took informal language training in 2016 earned 6% less.

In addition to the client type, other socio-demographic characteristics were significantly associated with incidence of employment and earnings, including gender, age, education, immigration category, knowledge of official languages, mother tongue, previous Temporary Resident (TR) experience and PT of residence.

### **Employment situation in 2019**

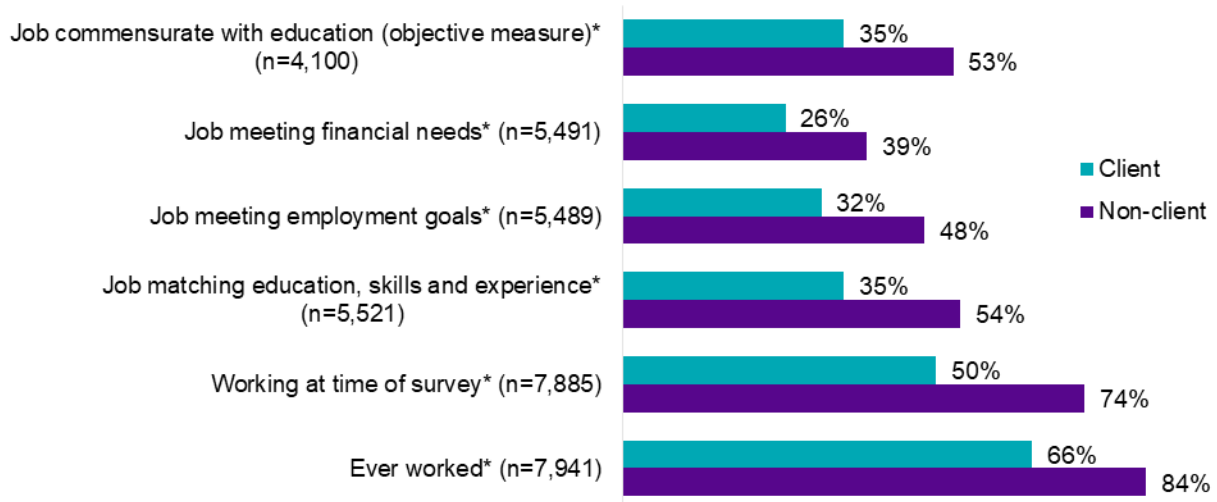
In addition to examining whether respondents ever worked and/or were working at the time of the survey, the survey also provided respondents' perceptions of the extent to which the job they had in Canada<sup>77</sup> matched their education, skills and experience, as well as perceptions on meeting

<sup>77</sup> The analysis considered either the current job, or if unemployed, the latest job respondents occupied.

their employment goals and financial needs. The survey also provided an objective measure of whether respondents' jobs were commensurate with their level of education<sup>78</sup>.

Similar to results from the IMDB, survey results showed a greater share of non-clients had worked in Canada (84%) and were working at the time of the survey (74%), compared to clients (66% and 50% respectively). In addition, fewer clients reported that the job they had matched their education, skills and experience (36%), met their employment goals (32%), and met their financial needs (26%) 'a lot', compared to non-clients (respectively 54%, 48% and 39%). Using an objective measure to assess employment situation, clients were also less likely to be in jobs that require at least the level of education they had (35%), compared to non-clients (53%).

**Figure 15: Share of clients and non-clients by employment situation**



\*Statistically significant differences between the client and non-client group,  $p < 0.05$   
 Source: Language training client and non-client survey

Regression analyses were also conducted to isolate the impact of language training from differences in the profile of individuals. Similar to results for incidence of employment and earnings in 2017, the regression found that respondents in language training were less likely to have a favourable employment situation<sup>79</sup>, than those who were not in language training. Formal language training clients that received general language training were also less likely to be in favourable employment situations than non-clients, based on the six indicators assessed. Formal language training clients whose training focused on employment were also less likely than non-clients to be working at the time of the survey and less likely to have had a job that met their employment goals. Respondents that took both formal and informal language training were also less likely than non-clients to have had a job that matched their education, skills and experience, and their employment goals 'a lot'.

Other socio-demographic characteristics had an impact on the likelihood of being in a favourable employment situation, including year of admission, gender, age, immigration category, mother tongue, being able to speak multiple languages, having a physical or health condition and motivations for wanting to improve language skills. To a lesser extent education, knowledge of

<sup>78</sup> The analysis considered either the current job, or if unemployed, the latest job respondents occupied. Based on National Occupational Classification coding, the level of education usually required for the job was compared to the level of education possessed by the respondent at time of admission. For the purpose of the analysis those with secondary education or less were excluded.

<sup>79</sup> i.e., having ever worked, to be working at the time of the survey, to have had a job that matched their education skills and experience that met their employment goals and financial needs.

official languages at admission, and self-assessed ability to speak in English or French at the time of the survey also had an impact on the employment situation.

#### 3.4.2.2 *Clients' employment outcomes and modalities of language training*

**Finding:** Employment outcomes of clients do not vary greatly based on how language training is delivered. Language training focused on employment generally had a positive impact on employment outcomes, while taking language training during core hours was associated with less favourable results.

Further analyses were conducted to better understand whether characteristics of language training had an impact on clients' employment situation. Regression results using IMDB data on the employment situation in 2017 indicated that hours of language training, and CLB are positively associated with incidence of employment as well as earnings. In addition, those who took training in a post-secondary institution (compared to a community organization) and or took an employment-focused class that is employment-focused were more likely to be employed. Individuals who have taken classes focused on employment also had significantly higher earnings than their counterparts. The regression also showed that taking language training on weekdays, and taking CLIC (as opposed to LINC) had a negative impact on incidence of employment and earnings.

Survey data was also analyzed to examine the impact of training components on employment outcomes for former language training clients. Few training components had a significant impact on employment outcomes. Of note, language delivered during daytime on a weekday (as opposed to during the evenings or weekends) reduced the likelihood of being in a favourable employment situation, while language training that focused on employment (either identified by SPOs, or by the respondent), as well as having taken CLIC generally led to better employment outcomes.

When significant, other socio-demographic characteristics<sup>80</sup> mostly had an impact on the likelihood of having ever worked in Canada and of working at the time of the survey. Self-assessed ability to communicate in official languages was mostly associated with quality of employment indicators.

### 3.5 Program management

#### 3.5.1 Roles and responsibilities

**Finding:** Overall, while program roles and responsibilities were generally clear among all stakeholders, and coordination and communication was considered effective, programming changes and priorities could be better communicated within the department and with stakeholders.

Interviewees rated the clarity of roles and responsibilities within IRCC, between IRCC and PTs, between IRCC and SPOs, and between IRCC and other stakeholders<sup>81</sup> (e.g., CCLB, NLAB). Overall, interviewees felt that roles and responsibilities were generally clear.

Within IRCC, interviewees noted that clarity is established through a Program Management Continuum, a joint-management table, sector meetings, and a national language working group. SN is responsible for negotiating and implementing contribution agreements, functional guidance and responses to operational issues, and policy development is SIP's responsibility. With respect

<sup>80</sup> This was the case for year of admission, gender, age, knowledge of official languages, immigration class, number of languages spoken, having a physical or health condition, and motivation for improving language skills.

<sup>81</sup> Figures for interviewee ratings are available upon request.

to clarity of roles and responsibilities between IRCC and SPOs, IRCC releases a national call for proposals that identifies key funding priorities and assesses proposals based on transparent criteria. Guidance is also provided to all funding recipients. Interviewees largely felt this relationship was clear.

Roles and responsibilities between PTs and IRCC are articulated through a series of agreements, and are discussed at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) language forum, a body of the Forum for Ministers Responsible for Immigration and the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) language forum. Interviewees felt that FPT roles and responsibilities were clear, noting there eligibility criteria are articulated for federally-funded language learning<sup>82</sup>. IRCC involvement in employment language learning was seen as limited because such training is often conducted provincially at higher CLB/NCLC levels than IRCC normally offers, and also may involve PT-based regulations. Interviewees noted service duplication, although this varied by PT<sup>83, 84</sup>. Duplication was not always viewed negatively, as client profiles may not match, or there may be enough demand for services to require both IRCC and PT delivery roles<sup>85</sup>. Nevertheless, many interviewees noted ongoing efforts to address duplication through FPT service-mapping exercises and the Pan-Canadian language strategy<sup>86</sup>.

The NLAB and the CCLB were commonly identified as key stakeholders with roles in IRCC's language learning services. While the role of CCLB<sup>87</sup> was seen as relatively clear, interviewees held mixed views with respect to the clarity of NLAB's role. While NLAB's role is to discuss evidence-based ideas, and provide independent advice and feedback to IRCC on settlement language policies and programming, some interviewees criticized the potential for bias in NLAB membership (i.e., representing the interests of a single SPO as opposed to the larger SPO community). NLAB members felt that IRCC does not always action their feedback, or take it into account. NLAB members recommended that IRCC provide feedback on what feedback is implemented, and, for instances where feedback is not taken into account, reasons why it is not actioned. Lastly, some SN interviewees felt that SN should be made directly aware of operational issues raised by NLAB, as there is currently insufficient interaction between these groups.

### 3.5.2 Coordination and Communication

Interviewees rated the effectiveness of coordination and communication within IRCC, between IRCC and PTs, between IRCC and SPOs, and between IRCC and stakeholders<sup>88</sup> (e.g., CCLB, NLAB). Interviewees felt that coordination and communication was adequate, noting many areas for improvement.

Document review and interviewees highlighted various coordination and communication mechanisms. Within IRCC, there is Settlement/Resettlement Management Committee (SRMC)<sup>89</sup>,

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<sup>82</sup> i.e., temporary residents and citizens of Canada are not eligible for language training services under the Settlement Program.

<sup>83</sup> For example, the [Annual Report 2017](#) of the Ontario Auditor General found the majority of language training clients in provincially-based programs were eligible to participate in federally-funded language training. The total cost of duplicated services was estimated at thirty million dollars. website [www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arbyyear/ar2017.html](http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arbyyear/ar2017.html), last accessed February 25, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> One interviewee noted that language training funded by the province of British Columbia focuses on high CLB levels and job-specific classes.

<sup>85</sup> e.g., in situations where waitlists are lengthy.

<sup>86</sup> 2016 marked the launch of a Pan-Canadian language strategy as part of the *FTP Vision Action Plan for 2016-2019*.

<sup>87</sup> The CCLB is the national standard setting body for the CLB and NCLC.

<sup>88</sup> Figures for interviewee ratings are available upon request.

<sup>89</sup> In terms of membership, SRMC is chaired by the director of Strategic Management and Coordination within SN, and includes director-level membership from SIP and SN, among many other branches at IRCC. In particular the SRMC's mandate seeks to improve coordination by ensuring new and emerging initiatives are consistent with departmental objectives, that relationships are managed transparently and fairly, and that IRCC staff have the necessary tools and supports to implement programs effectively and efficiently.

Language Working Group<sup>90</sup> and Sector Meetings formally, as well as ad hoc informal communication. Between IRCC and PTs there is a shared vision achieved through the Pan-Canadian Language Strategy, in addition to formal assemblies<sup>91</sup>, agreements<sup>92</sup> and ad hoc working groups. While SPO-level communication is largely conducted through meetings with SN-based program officers, there are also mechanisms such as NLAB<sup>93</sup>, which provides input from the perspective of language experts and the National Settlement and Integration Council which provides input on behalf of SPOs, as well as newsletters sent from SIS to SPOs to inform on current practices and upcoming changes.

While perspectives on coordination and communication of IRCC's language learning services were more positive than negative, interviewees presented various challenges in effectively managing the program. One prominent example was IRCC's adaptation to changing language needs in the wake of the Syrian initiative. Some interviewees viewed IRCC's coordination as a success, as SPOs were able to quickly raise operationally-focused issues and needs; other interviewees viewed the implementation of changes as inconsistent nationally, noting that different regions interpreted instructions to focus on lower language levels different ways. Interviewees also noted coordination could be improved with respect to complementarity of services with PTs, better ensuring SN is aware of the coordination/communication activities in which they do not hold membership<sup>94</sup> and providing more feedback to NLAB on issues raised at NLAB meetings<sup>95</sup>. Evidence from interviews and site visits also suggested SPOs would benefit from more time to respond to calls for proposals.

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<sup>90</sup> The membership of the National language working group is working level; the group reports to the SRMC.

<sup>91</sup> e.g., FPT Settlement Working Group, FPT language forum.

<sup>92</sup> e.g., PT based Memoranda of Understanding.

<sup>93</sup> As NLAB members may also be representatives of SPOs, it was noted that it can be difficult to distinguish between their different roles (i.e., employee of a SPO versus language expert) when providing advice.

<sup>94</sup> e.g., NLAB meetings.

<sup>95</sup> Namely NLAB felt that when the issues they raised were sometimes actioned and sometimes not actioned. NLAB felt that reason why some issues were not actioned were never provided, which led to the same issues being raised over the years to little or no progress. Similarly, when issues were being actioned, not all NLAB members were made aware.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusion

The following section summarizes the conclusions from the evaluation and puts forward ten recommendations.

The main focus of this evaluation was to better understand language skills improvement – what works for whom and under what conditions, with a view of determining the specific characteristics that influence language skills improvement. The secondary area of focus was to examine whether the language learning framework is adapted to address newcomers' needs.

In light of the evidence analyzed, it was found that language learning services are designed to be flexible in order to meet the diverse needs of newcomers and to support their progression. The findings also show that language progression for newcomers is mostly positive, but there is differences between clients and non-clients with respect to likelihood of progression. While clients were seen to progress at the same pace as non-clients when assessed on the short term, using an objective measure, clients appeared to progress more than their non-client counterparts when assessed on a longer time frame using a subjective measure. It was also found that some components of language training are associated with a greater likelihood of newcomers' improving their language skills, such as full-time language training and multi-level classes, while others lowered chances of progression, such as continuous intake classes.

Furthermore, when assessing other settlement outcomes, the evidence indicated that clients of general formal language training use official languages less frequently than non-clients, while formal language training focused on employment were using it significantly more than non-clients. The evidence confirmed that clients of formal language training, and clients who took both formal and informal language training are more likely to report an increase in the frequency of use of official languages.

Although not a direct objective of language training, employability remains a primary concern for clients. The evaluation carefully analyzed this theme and assessed the impact of language training on various labour market outcomes. Clients of general language training used English or French at work less frequently and were less comfortable using official languages than non-clients, however taking language training focused on employment contributed to making these gaps smaller. Also, clients often had poorer labour market outcomes than non-clients on the short to medium term. The analysis showed that a large part of the difference in employment outcomes between clients and non-clients could be attributed to socio-demographic profiles of individuals (e.g., education, age, gender, year of admission). This suggest that taking language training is not necessarily a cause of poorer labour market outcomes, but rather that clients and non-clients may have different characteristics that explain their outcomes on the labour market. Furthermore, the evaluation found that employment outcomes of clients do not vary greatly based on how language training is delivered, language training focused on employment generally had a positive impact on employment outcomes, and taking language training during core hours was associated with less favourable results.

While the client progression and their labour market outcomes give mixed results, it should be noted that language learning services corresponds to the diversity in clients' need and IRCC-funded language learning services are designed in a manner to be conducive to language improvement for newcomers.

In response to the findings from the evaluation, this report proposes two groupings to structure the recommendations. First, the evaluation proposes three recommendations on the topic of outcomes measurement. Second, the evaluation recommends improvements to the program to foster success. To this end, the evaluation proposes seven recommendations to further support clients, instructors and program stakeholders.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Theme 1: Measuring Outcomes

These recommendations focus on ensuring the objectives and indicators of success for clients in language learning services are clearly outlined. Moreover, these recommendations are made to ensure the department is well-positioned to monitor and report on collected data, and ensure the department has the required tools for measuring desired outcomes.

#### *Objectives of Language Training*

For the newcomer, settlement is a multidimensional route encompassing various outcomes. While the Settlement's Program Performance Information Profile (PIP) outlines both the social and economic outcomes associated to it, it does not identify specifically which outcomes relate to language training, and their associated indicators of success. When it comes to language training, one of the main outcomes that could be derived from this type of settlement service could be seen as language skills progression. However, given the variety of the program offering and goals of learners, multiple outcomes can be associated to language training. In this context, it proved difficult to approach language progression as the outcome on which to base the success of the program and to determine what could be considered as a sufficient level of progression for the program to succeed. As such, the department would benefit from clarifying the primary outcomes associated with language training, as well as defining clear targets for achieving those outcomes.

**Recommendation 1: IRCC should clarify and confirm language training program outcomes to ensure all desired results are defined, monitored, and integrated into the program theory and corresponding documentation.**

#### *Milestones Test*

While the evaluation successfully used the Milestones test as an objective measure of language progression in the short term across the four learning competencies, this tool was expensive to implement, difficult to put in place and significant efforts were required to recruit clients and non-clients for the test. Moreover, the Milestones focuses on assessing language levels of individuals at the CLB 4 to 8, and cannot be used to assess language levels of those at lower or higher proficiency levels. These limitations are important, and limit the department in assessing the vast majority of its client-base, especially given the focus the department decided to place on delivering language training at CLB 1 to 4. Consequently, before IRCC considers future use of the Milestones, it should examine the appropriateness and consider the limitations of using this test with respect to the populations under study, approach to administration, and cost-benefit balance.

**Recommendation 2: IRCC should consider the appropriateness of the future use of the Milestones Test, including an examination of its' value for money and applicability across client groups.**



## **Employment**

The evaluation found a lack of clarity in the administrative data (iCARE) regarding the definition of employment-related language training. This lack of distinction between employment-related language training and general language training with a focus on employment limited the evaluation's capacity to clearly distinguish the outcomes for those two groups. Collecting precise information on the type of language training delivered would allow the department to better monitor and report on the program. Despite difficulties in defining employment-related language services, the evaluation found that clients in employment-focused language training were more likely to progress and use official languages. In addition, this training component was also associated with more positive employment outcomes. Experts also praise employment-based language training, finding it is highly effective in helping newcomers integrate into the labour market. As a result, IRCC should reconfirm the benefits associated with this type of training by using a standardized definition of employment-related language training.

**Recommendation 3: IRCC should develop and implement an approach to better identify employment-related language training in iCARE and monitor its uptake and outcomes.**

## **Theme 2: Program Improvements for Fostering Success**

The evaluation found that overall the program has many design features conducive to clients' language progression and also identified several areas where there is room for improvement. In particular, the evaluation proposes seven recommendations to further support clients, instructors and program stakeholders.

### **Instructor supports**

It was found that instructors are qualified, well-trained and benefit from many supports. The evaluation however found they would further benefit from:

- more PBLA material which are easily adaptable;
- ensuring instructors' assessments provided as part of PBLA are aligned with CLBs;
- improving navigability of and better vetting of new and existing Tutela content;
- limiting the amount of unpaid work instructors need to perform; and
- more professional development for CLIC instructors.

The evaluation found that the PBLA is widely-implemented and used. Instructors derive value from PBLA and clients feel empowered by this approach, as it shows them their progression. Given PBLA relies on instructors' assessments of artifacts against CLBs, experts felt that it introduces an element of subjectivity. As a result, the experts indicated that PBLA was more useful as a learning tool than as an objective tool for assessing benchmarks. Moreover, instructors felt it requires too much preparation time, specifically in creating and adapting materials. While instructors benefit from PBLA supports and other online resources, there is room for improvement. Mixed views were provided on Tutela's usefulness, specifically with respect to a need for better vetting online content, and making the website easier for users to navigate. NLAB members and interviews felt more PD is needed for instructors who teach literacy clients, and for CLIC instructors.

**Recommendation 4: IRCC should develop and implement a plan to ensure that LINC and CLIC instructors are adequately resourced.**

## *Literacy*

Literacy needs are present at a broad range of levels (i.e., literacy designations are provided up to CLB 4). Although instructors are well-qualified, and trained, the evaluation found that there is a need to have access to specific materials and professional development to teach to clients with literacy needs. Also, while PBLA is widely-implemented and used, the evaluation found that PBLA may not be helpful for clients at low language levels, especially those with literacy needs.

**Recommendation 5: IRCC should implement a plan to enhance language training provision for clients with literacy needs, namely addressing challenges related to use of PBLA with literacy clients.**

## *Continuous Intake*

The evaluation found that continuous intake helps SPOs meet occupancy levels and ensures that newcomers can enter a class as soon as possible. However, this flexibility can be disruptive for teachers and students and can also add a challenge for new clients who need to catch up the level of the class. This continuous intake was also seen to hinder progression of clients. On the other hand, multi-level classes were also seen as a way to meet the demand for language training with smaller groups of clients and to have a positive impact on language progression. As such, considerations could be given to leveraging multilevel classes and staggering start dates of smaller groups at each CLB, to meet the demand of clients. Experts also suggested the introduction of temporary holding tanks (i.e., temporary classes that include multiple CLB levels until there are available classes) as another mitigation strategy.

**Recommendation 6: IRCC should implement a plan to address the challenges associated with continuous intake for clients and instructors.**

## *Guidelines*

The evaluation found that LINC and CLIC instructors are supported by helpful and up-to-date curriculum guidelines. However, there was a lack of formal guidance for employment-related language instructors. There is a need to develop better guidance (e.g., manuals, policy guidance) to meet the needs of instructors who may not feel supported by the lack of guidance, recognizing that content guidelines for employment-related language training requires flexibility to accommodate different program offerings and client needs and desired objectives.

In addition, informal language services were found best designed for newcomers who feel socially isolated, or who are not comfortable in structured learning environments. The evaluation found that the informal language training is largely supported by volunteers. Having guidelines which are clearly linked to the program's desired outcomes would help support volunteers who might not have the same background as formal training instructors.

**Recommendation 7: IRCC should develop guidelines for employment-related language training and informal language training.**

### ***Combining formal and informal language training***

While informal language services alone were not associated to a higher likelihood of improvement, the evaluation found that clients who took part in both formal and informal language training had higher chances of language skills progression and often had better employment outcomes than clients who only participated in formal language training.

**Recommendation 8: IRCC should develop a plan to leverage and optimize the benefits of informal language training for formal language training clients.**

### ***Childcare***

The evaluation highlights a series of barriers to attending language learning services. In particular, wait times to access childcare are long, particularly affecting newcomer women, families with multiple children, and single-parent families.

**Recommendation 9: IRCC should examine ways and develop a plan to meet the needs of clients in terms of providing care for children with the view of facilitating access to language training.**

### ***Coordination/Communication***

While the roles and responsibilities related to the program are generally clear, it was found that NLAB felt that programming changes could be better communicated, and that a feedback loop including Settlement Network would be beneficial. Stakeholders felt that being informed of programming changes and priorities could help them to have more preparation time on calls for proposals.

**Recommendation 10: IRCC should implement a strategy to ensure effective and timely dissemination of information on policy changes and priorities between policy, operations and external stakeholders.**

# Appendix A: The Evaluation Matrix

## Language Training Evaluation

**Program Profile (Evaluation scope includes last five years of services [i.e., 2013 to 2017])**

The program profile will provide a description of the clients receiving language learning services in English and French, and a description of SPOs who deliver IRCC-funded language learning services.

**Indicators:**

- Number and profile of language learning clients by type of training (conversation circle, employment specific, formal LT) and demographic information (including age, gender, level of education, province, city size)
- Number and profile of service provider organization and language learning services delivered by type of training (including type of SPO, SPO size, support services offering, modes of training delivery, full-time/part-time, time of day classes are offered, types of language training (focus of classes), number of clients served and number of training sessions offered)

**Methodology:**

- Administrative Data Review (ADR)
- Instructor survey

**Primary area of focus: understanding language skills improvement and use**

**Evaluation issue #1: To what extent have clients improved their official language skills? (including conversational skills)**

**Indicators:**

- # / % of clients who start formal language training and complete training (i.e., increase by at least one level) by CLB levels (iCARE), socio-demographic and programming characteristics
- # / % of formal language training clients who improved their language abilities compared to level at assessment (i.e., based on CLBs/NCLCs levels), and compared to non-language training clients (i.e., using Milestone test)
- # / % of clients (formal and informal) who self-reported improving in language abilities since their arrival in Canada compared to non-clients
- Factors influencing/impacting clients' and non-clients' official language skills<sup>96</sup>
- Number of hours to complete a level (i.e., increase by at least one level)
- Level of comfort communicating in official languages in different tasks

**Methodology:**

- Document Review
- KII
- ADR
- Instructor survey
- Case Studies
- Client Survey
- Milestone Test

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<sup>96</sup> By socio-demographic information, immigration information, language services information (e.g., number of hours of language training; language training status [i.e., completed, in progress, withdrawn], type of training, reasons for taking training, modality of language training).

## Evaluation issue #2: To what extent have clients improved their employment-related language skills?

### Indicators:

- Stakeholders' views on the extent to which clients have increased their employment-related language skills
- # / % of clients who start employment-related language training and complete the training, by CLB levels
- # / % of employment-related clients who self-reported improving their language abilities<sup>97</sup> since their arrival in Canada<sup>98</sup>
- Number of hours to complete a CLB level (i.e., increase by at least one level) (where applicable)

### Methodology:

- Document Review
- KII
- ADR
- Instructor survey
- Client Survey

## Evaluation issue #3: To what extent are the services implemented as designed?

### Indicators:

#### Formal

- Evidence that language training is aligned with curriculum and guidelines<sup>99</sup> (including section 8.3.1 of the negotiation guidelines 7 Criteria<sup>100</sup>)
- Evidence that LINC/CLIC clients are issued a language certificate that includes results based on the CLB/NCLC scale

#### Employment-related

- Evidence that language learning with employment focus is aligned with IRCC guidelines (where applicable)

#### Informal (e.g., Conversation Circles, One-on-one Tutoring)

- Evidence that informal language learning is aligned with IRCC guidelines (where applicable)
- Evidence that informal language learning is aligned with programming descriptions (where applicable)

### Methodology:

- Document Review
- KII
- ADR
- Instructor Survey
- Case Study
- Client Survey

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<sup>97</sup> Including ability to communicate in looking for relevant jobs, at job interviews, etc.

<sup>98</sup> By number of hours of language training, language training status (i.e., completed, in-progress, withdrawn), type of training, reasons for taking training, modality of training).

<sup>99</sup> Given the lack of an overarching formal curriculum, "Curriculum and guidelines" refers to the multiple LINC/CLIC guidelines for in class course work.

<sup>100</sup> Includes evidence that clients are assessed prior to assignment to a CLB or NCLC, or instructor-led in-class assessment (C1); evidence that placement in a given level or progression to the next level is based on National Language Placement and Progression Guidelines (C2); evidence that language instruction is based on CLB or NCLC framework (C3); evidence that progress assessments are aligned with PBLAs (C4); evidence that language training is led by a qualified instructor, and that instructors are supported through professional development (C5); evidence that language training is guided by LINC, CLIC or provincial CLB/NCLC-based curriculum guidelines (C6); and evidence that courses are conducted with an evaluation of evidence collected throughout the term, to determine a clients' progress on the CLB/NCLC scale (as per the PBLA protocol, and not applicable to online or distance language training) (C7).

**Evaluation issue #4: To what extent are clients able to use official languages to function in Canadian Society?**

**Indicators:**

- # / % of clients and non-clients who are comfortable using English/French outside of their homes
- # / % of clients and non-clients who use English/French outside of their homes
- # / % of clients and non-clients who have increased their English/French usage outside their homes since arriving in Canada
- Situational use of English/French
- Factors influencing/impacting official languages usage outside clients and non-clients' homes
- Factors influencing/impacting increase in official languages usage outside clients and non-clients' homes since arriving in Canada

**Methodology:**

- KII
- ADR
- Case Study
- Client Survey

**Secondary area of focus: language learning framework is adapted to address newcomers' needs**

**Evaluation issue #5: To what extent has IRCC designed language learning services that best support newcomers' language improvement? (including the formal, informal and employment specific language training)**

**Indicators:**

Design

- Stakeholders and independent experts consider appropriateness of program designs
- Program design is evidence-based, supported by research
- Different approaches to the delivery of language learning services are appropriate for newcomers (e.g., formal vs. informal, on-line, on site, on-the-job, flexible, continuous intake)
- Evidence that resources to support language instructors are available<sup>101</sup>
- Evidence that IRCC-approved language learning material<sup>102</sup> is appropriate to facilitate language improvement of newcomers
- Evidence of program design being implemented as intended

**Methodology:**

- Document Review
- KII
- Panel of independent experts

**Evaluation issue #6: To what extent are the different language learning approaches effectively meeting newcomer's needs?**

**Indicators:**

- Evidence that different approaches and supporting material are available and adapted to the needs of newcomers
- Number of training spaces offered through alternative modes of delivery (e.g., online, blended, distance education) in relation to the total number of spaces
- Number of training spaces available outside the core hours (e.g., evenings, weekends, part time) in relation to the total number of spaces
- % of newcomers with identified language training needs who have accessed language learning services at their assessed level +1
- Alignment between language needs identified in the language assessment and language learning services received
- Evidence of barriers to attendance
- # / % of learners leaving the program and related reasons
- Stakeholders views' on newcomers' needs being met
- Challenges and successes associated with language learning services

<sup>101</sup> e.g., curriculum guidelines, classroom activities, assessment tasks.

<sup>102</sup> e.g., PBLA language companion; CLB: English as a Second Language for Adults; CLB Can Do Statements, CLB: ESL for Adult Literacy Learners, CLB: ESL for ALL Support Kit; Citizenship Resource (CLB 1-8).

**Methodology:**

- Document review
- KII
- Panel of independent experts
- ADR
- Instructor Survey
- Case Study
- Client Survey
- Milestone Test

**Questions helping understand the context in which language learning takes place****Evaluation issue #7: Are language learning services effectively managed?****Indicators:**

- Evidence of clear roles and responsibilities within IRCC and between IRCC, partners and stakeholders
- Communications and coordination are effective within IRCC
- Communications and coordination are effective between IRCC, partners and stakeholders
- Evidence that internal and external partners and stakeholders have the tools, training and support they need to deliver the programs

**Methodology:**

- Document Review
- Key Informant Interviews (KII)
- Panel of independent experts

**Evaluation issue #8: To what extent are clients receiving consistent and appropriate language assessments and referrals across the country?<sup>103</sup>****Indicators:****Assessment**

- Language assessors identify ESL literacy learners and use the appropriate assessment tools<sup>104</sup>
- Instructors' views on the extent to which participants with similar language skills are rated/assessed at the same CLB level
- Language assessment tools are available and applied consistently
- Evidence that language assessments<sup>105</sup> are based on CLB or NCLC framework
- Stakeholders and independent experts' views on the extent to which assessment tools provide consistent assessment results
- Evidence that assessors are trained/retrained (i.e., recalibration)
- Frequency and type of recalibration of assessors – interpretation of benchmark
- # / % of instructors who believe that participant's assessment level is appropriate
- # / % of participants who indicate that their class level is appropriate for them
- # / % of participants required to change a level within two weeks of starting language training

**Referrals**

- Extent to which referrals are taking place in a consistent way across the country (language training options are discussed with clients - best SPO and course options are identified)

**Methodology:**

- Document Review
- KII
- Panel of independent experts
- ADR
- Instructor Survey
- Case Study
- Client Survey

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<sup>103</sup> This refers to the initial assessment and referral for LINC/CLIC, not progression assessed during the class.

<sup>104</sup> i.e., CLBA-LL, CLB-LPT and BTC-NCLC

<sup>105</sup> i.e., CLBA, CLBA-LL, CLB-LPT, CLBPT, ELTPA, BTC-NCLC, NCLC-OCA

**Evaluation issue #9: To what extent are clients receiving appropriate placements? (this refers to progression assessed during the class)**

**Indicators:**

SPO management of the intake

- Evidence that assessment and class level are aligned (at the individual level)
- Evidence of the appropriateness of CLB class composition<sup>106</sup>
- Time elapsed between referral and registration in a course
- Evidence of other barriers to registration/placement

Placement/progression (during the class)

- # / % of instructors who believe that participants' placement is appropriate, with respect to their language levels
- # / % of instructors who believe that participants' placement is appropriate with respect to their identified needs
- # / % of participants who indicate that their class level is appropriate for them
- Evidence that assessments and placements are aligned (at the individual level)
- Stakeholders and independent experts' views on the extent to which PBLA improves ability to analyze and report on program performance

**Methodology:**

- Document Review
- KII
- ADR
- Instructor Survey
- Case Study
- Client Survey

**Evaluation issue \$10: To what extent have language learning services contributed to clients participating in the Canadian labour market?**

**Indicators:**

- # / % of clients and non-clients looking for employment who applied and found a job
- # / % of clients and non-clients who were searching for a job who meet their employment goal
- Factors influencing/impacting finding employment
- Factors influencing/impacting achieving client and non-clients' employment goals

**Methodology:**

- KII
- ADR
- Case Study
- Client Survey

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<sup>106</sup> e.g., levels of participants, number of participants, range of levels.



## Appendix B: Instructor Survey Findings

**Table 5: CLB/NCLC training by instructor type**

Have you ever received CLB/NCLC training to teach language skills?

	LINC (n=1161)	CLIC (n=86)	Employment-related (n=136)	Informal (n=346)	Overall (n=1308)
<b>Yes</b>	90.2%	93.0%	89.0%	80.3%	86.7%
<b>No</b>	9.8%	7.0%	11.0%	19.7%	13.3%

**Table 6: PBLA training by instructor type**

Have you ever received PBLA training?

	LINC (n=1161)	CLIC (n=86)	Employment-related (n=136)	Informal (n=346)	Overall (n=1308)
<b>Yes</b>	96.1%	87.2%	80.1%	79.5%	90.6%
<b>No</b>	3.9%	12.8%	19.9%	20.5%	9.4%

**Table 7: Extent to which language learning activities improve a client's language skills by instructor type<sup>107</sup>**

Extent to which a client's overall language skills are improved

	LINC/CLIC instructors (n=1173)	Employment-related instructors (n=135)	Informal language learning managers (n=323)
<b>A great deal</b>	77%	77%	67%
<b>Somewhat</b>	22%	22%	33%
<b>Not at all</b>	1%	1%	1%

Extent to which a client's daily life skills are improved

	LINC/CLIC instructors (n=1167)	Employment-related instructors (n=133)	Informal language learning managers (n=322)
<b>A great deal</b>	75%	66%	69%
<b>Somewhat</b>	24%	31%	30%
<b>Not at all</b>	1%	3%	1%

Extent to which a client's academic-related skills are improved

	LINC/CLIC instructors (n=1136)	Employment-related instructors (n=129)	Informal language learning managers (n=322)
<b>A great deal</b>	38%	39%	24%
<b>Somewhat</b>	54%	48%	57%
<b>Not at all</b>	8%	12%	20%

Extent to which a client's is better prepared for citizenship requirements

	LINC/CLIC instructors (n=1148)	Employment-related instructors (n=124)	Informal language learning managers (n=323)
<b>A great deal</b>	55%	27%	36%
<b>Somewhat</b>	42%	52%	56%
<b>Not at all</b>	3%	19%	8%

<sup>107</sup> Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the analysis.

Extent to which a client's employment-related language skills are improved

	LINC/CLIC instructors (n=1116)	Employment-related instructors (n=135)	Informal language learning managers (n=323)
<b>A great deal</b>	40%	80%	42%
<b>Somewhat</b>	53%	20%	33%
<b>Not at all</b>	7%	0%	1%

**Table 8: Extent to which language learning activities improve a client's knowledge of life in Canada and knowledge of work in Canada**

Extent to which a client's knowledge about life in Canada is improved

	LINC/CLIC Instructors (n=1173)	Employment-related Instructors (n=135)
<b>A great deal</b>	84%	71%
<b>Somewhat</b>	15%	28%
<b>Not at all</b>	0%	2%

Extent to which a client's knowledge about work in Canada is improved

	LINC/CLIC Instructors (n=1153)	Employment-related Instructors (n=134)
<b>A great deal</b>	63%	84%
<b>Somewhat</b>	36%	16%
<b>Not at all</b>	1%	0%

## Appendix C: Working situations

**Table 9: Frequency of use of and level of comfort in using official languages, by interaction type, skill type and client type**

Interaction	Skill Type	Client Type	Frequency of Use			Level of Comfort		
			Never	Some-times	Always	Not comfortable	Fairly comfortable	Comfort-able
Interactions with supervisors	Reading and Writing	Clients – General	21%	34%	46%	15%	34%	51%
		Clients – Employment-related	12%	32%	55%	13%	32%	56%
		Non-clients	7%	14%	79%	5%	16%	80%
	Listening and Speaking	Clients – General	9%	22%	70%	13%	33%	54%
		Clients – Employment-related	4%	16%	80%	10%	29%	61%
		Non-clients	5%	7%	88%	4%	15%	81%
Interactions with coworkers	Reading and Writing	Clients – General	27%	31%	42%	16%	31%	53%
		Clients – Employment-related	17%	31%	53%	12%	32%	56%
		Non-clients	9%	14%	77%	3%	15%	82%
	Listening and Speaking	Clients – General	8%	24%	68%	12%	33%	54%
		Clients – Employment-related	5%	16%	79%	10%	28%	62%
		Non-clients	5%	9%	87%	3%	15%	82%
Interactions with customers or general public	Reading and Writing	Clients – General	31%	36%	36%	16%	33%	52%
		Clients – Employment-related	21%	35%	44%	14%	32%	55%
		Non-clients	14%	18%	68%	4%	16%	80%
	Listening and Speaking	Clients – General	14%	28%	58%	14%	34%	52%
		Clients – Employment-related	9%	24%	67%	11%	31%	58%
		Non-clients	10%	14%	76%	4%	16%	81%
Overall	Reading and Writing	Clients – General	26%	33%	41%	16%	32%	52%
		Clients – Employment-related	17%	33%	51%	13%	32%	55%
		Non-clients	10%	15%	75%	4%	16%	81%
	Listening and Speaking	Clients – General	10%	25%	65%	13%	34%	53%
		Clients – Employment-related	6%	19%	75%	10%	29%	60%
		Non-clients	7%	10%	83%	4%	15%	81%

Significant differences were found between the non-clients, clients-general and employment-related group,  $p < .05$

Source: Survey on Newcomers' Language Acquisition in Canada, 2019