Evaluation of the Local and Zonal Immigration Partnerships Program



Evaluation Division

Audit and Evaluation and Branch

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Executive summary

Background

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of local and zonal immigration partnerships (LIPs and ZIPs). The evaluation was conducted in accordance to the Treasury Board *Policy on Results* (2016). Need for the evaluation was confirmed in the 2024-25 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Departmental Evaluation Plan.

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the relevance and performance of LIPs and ZIPs. The evaluation sought to provide evidence and strategic recommendations to inform future directions of the partnerships, as well as support broader policy in relation to IRCC-funded indirect services with local and community focus.

The evaluation covered the period between 2019 and 2024, up to the most current information available at the time of data collection, including the most recent Call for Proposals (CFP 2024). The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, including document and literature review, key informant interviews, case studies of three LIPs, a survey of LIP council members, and data from the Annual Performance Report for Community Partnerships (APRCP).

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The evaluation found that there is a continued need for LIPs to facilitate collaboration between settlement and non-settlement partners, connecting diverse stakeholders to support newcomer integration. LIPs have been effective in building community capacity through knowledge sharing, training, and resource development, and they collaborate with local partners to identify newcomer needs and develop tailored strategic plans. LIPs also organize activities that foster welcoming communities and support integration, although measuring the full impact of these activities remains challenging. Their ability to achieve objectives is constrained by limitations in funding agreements and difficulties in securing external funding. The evaluation also found that the National LIP Secretariat (NLS) plays an important role in networking, resource development, and connecting LIPs to IRCC.

Overall, the evaluation highlights that LIPs are a critical mechanism for fostering collaboration and inclusion at the community level, but that there are opportunities to strengthen the performance measurement of LIPs and information sharing within IRCC to improve program management.

In response to the findings, the evaluation proposed the following recommendations:

1. **IRCC should reaffirm and communicate funding guidelines to LIPs/ZIPs to ensure that expected outcomes are aligned with available resources.**
2. **IRCC should strengthen internal coordination by establishing more consistent mechanisms for information sharing.**
3. **IRCC should strengthen the performance measurement approach for LIPs/ZIPs by updating the Indirect Services logic model and performance measurement framework.**
4. **IRCC should develop an approach to support the NLS in promoting and sharing performance measurement practices and guidance with LIPs/ZIPs.**

List of acronyms

APRCP – Annual Performance Report for Community Partnerships

CFP – Call for Proposals

CUAET – Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel

GBA+ – Gender-Based Analysis Plus

iCARE – Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment

IRCC – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

IEC – Immigrant Employment Council

LIP – Local Immigration Partnership

NLS – National LIPs Secretariat

NOS – Newcomer Outcomes Survey

PMF – Performance Measurement Framework

SIP – Settlement and Integration Policy Branch

SPO – Service Provider Organization

SRO – Settlement and Resettlement Operations

ZIP – Zonal Immigration Partnership

Management Response Action Plan (MRAP)

Recommendation 1

The evaluation found that LIPs' ability to achieve certain expected outcomes can be constrained by challenges related to funding. LIPs are expected to leverage external funding to implement their Strategic Plans and fund activities that are ineligible for IRCC funding, but restrictions on eligible activities, limits on transferring funds, recent reductions to key budget items, and challenges securing external funding present barriers to LIPs achieving their expected outcomes. There is a need to reaffirm and communicate funding guidelines to ensure alignment between resources and expected outcomes. Further, evidence suggests that there is no standardized framework for determining funding amounts among LIPs, which may contribute to funding disparities. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should reaffirm and communicate funding guidelines to LIPs/ZIPs to ensure that expected outcomes are aligned with available resources.

Response: IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

IRCC communicates funding guidelines as part of the Call for Proposal process, and program officers work closely with LIPs and ZIPs to ensure that expectations are well understood. As part of ongoing policy analysis and program development, funding guidelines may be updated prior to the next Call for Proposals. These revised guidelines will provide clear, explicit guidance that links eligible activities to their intended outputs and expected outcomes, ensuring alignment with program objectives and supporting outcome-focused funding decisions.

IRCC also recognizes that funding for LIPs and ZIPs may be inconsistent across regions, and that inconsistency may affect program delivery. The department will explore opportunities to minimize disparities and develop parameters for more effective and balanced funding distribution across the LIPs network, including the possibility of a national funding framework.

Action	Accountability	Completion Date
Action 1A: IRCC will further clarify the objectives of LIPs and ZIPs as part of the Settlement Program funding guidelines and activities outlined in the next funding cycle.	**Lead:** SRO **Support:** SIP	Q4 2027-2028
Action 1B: IRCC will develop possible approaches to improve consistency in funding decisions with regard to LIPs and ZIPs, informed by analysis of regional needs, cost drivers and existing funding trends.	**Lead:** SIP **Support:** SRO	Q4 2027-2028
Action 1C: IRCC will review and update functional guidance for program officers for the next funding cycle, to better define expected LIP and ZIP activities and outputs, and their connection to broader program outcomes.	**Lead:** SRO **Support:** SIP	Q1 2028-29

Recommendation 2

The evaluation identified opportunities to strengthen information sharing within IRCC to improve program management. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should strengthen internal coordination by establishing more consistent mechanisms for information sharing.

Response: IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

Engagement between SP and SRO currently occurs at all levels. In addition to collaboration before and during the CFP 2024 process, and ad-hoc functional guidance requests, leadership from SP and SRO liaise and share information regularly. This communication is important to maintain consistency in the flow of information. It is equally important , prior to and following the regular touch-base meetings between the co-chairs of the NLS and the Department to ensure that there is a coordinated effort and a flow of information internally.

IRCC will continue to maintain open channels of communication between various parts of the Department responsible for LIPs and ZIPs and more broadly within the Department.

While open channels of communication exist between different parts of the Department responsible for LIPs and ZIPs, the Department also recognizes that possible improvements could better support outcomes for LIPs and ZIPs and will look for opportunities for improvements.

Action	Accountability	Completion Date
Action 2A: IRCC will re-establish quarterly meetings with internal management and regional counterparts to reinforce communication, practices, align priorities and ensure consistent, transparent and timely information sharing.	**Lead**: SIP/SRO	Q4 2026 – 2027
Action 2B: IRCC will create a shared repository of key LIPs/ZIPs documents, including an evergreen list of active LIPs/ZIPs, breakdown of APRCP results, and internal summaries of SP and SRO working group discussions.	**Lead:** SIP **Support:** SRO	Q2 2026 - 2027

Recommendation 3

The evaluation found that LIPs/ZIPs significantly contribute to community capacity-building and coordination. In line with their mandate, LIPs do not deliver direct services, but instead work with partner organizations, resulting in benefits to newcomers through enhanced and coordinated services and welcoming communities. While newcomers are the primary intended beneficiaries of these partnerships, the indirect nature of LIPs creates challenges for fully measuring their impact. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should strengthen the performance measurement approach for LIPs/ZIPs by updating the Indirect Services logic model and performance measurement framework.

Response: IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

For the purposes of this evaluation which covers the period from 2019-2024, the existing logic model for that period of time was used. IRCC continues to update and improve its performance measurement tools, including the updated Settlement Program logic model to reflect direct and indirect service delivery performance measurement.

As per the Settlement Program and Resettlement Assistance Program Logic Model (effective April 1, 2025), indirect services have relevant objectives and outcomes, including LIPs and ZIPs. Further, efforts are currently underway to update the CFP 2024 logic model in advance of the next CFP funding cycle.

Action	Accountability	Completion Date
Action 3A: IRCC will develop an updated logic model building off the version published for the current funding period. The new logic model will maintain separate focus on indirect service delivery, including LIPs.	**Lead**: SIP/SRO	Q4 2027-2028 before next funding cycle.
Action 3B: IRCC will align program guidance, performance indicators and reporting expectations of LIPs/ZIPs with the updated logic model and PMF once finalized.	**Lead:** SIP **Support:** SRO	Q4 2027-2028 before next funding cycle.
Action 3C: IRCC will engage the NLS to share and discuss the updated logic model to ensure a clear understanding of program outcomes and the results framework to enable the NLS to support LIPs and ZIPs in aligning their activities with program objectives.	**Lead**: SIP / SRO **Support:** SP	Q1 2028-2029 of the next funding cycle

Recommendation 4

The evaluation found that while work is underway to better measure the success of LIPs, the LIPs community faces challenges related to concretely measuring and reporting their impact. Current performance measurement efforts focus on outputs (e.g., activities completed) rather than outcomes, and LIPs have expressed a need for greater resources performance measurement. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should develop an approach to support the NLS in promoting and sharing performance measurement practices and guidance with LIPs/ZIPs.

Response: IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

IRCC recognizes that measuring the impact of indirect services is challenging and the attribution of community impact is more difficult to demonstrate when compared to direct services and client outcomes. While IRCC recognizes the importance of strengthening outcomes measurement across the network., the Department maintains an arms-length relationship with LIPs and ZIPs, and cannot require service providers to use certain tools, etc.

The Department has already an established relationship with NLS as the coordinating and capacity building mechanism for LIPs and ZIPs. IRCC will leverage this relationship and the regular meeting cycle to encourage the NLS to collaborate with the LIPs network in developing performance measurement frameworks, approaches or tools that reflect the diverse realities of LIPs and ZIPs. In support of this work, the Department will engage with the NLS to share practical considerations, examples, or emerging practices that may assist LIPs in refining their own locally relevant performance measurement approaches.

Action	Accountability	Completion Date
Action 4A: IRCC will engage with the NLS to focus on clarifying the NLS's role in collaborating with the Settlement sector and supporting LIPs to strengthen their approaches to outcome measurement and reporting.	**Lead**: SIP/SRO	Q4 2026 – 27
Action 4B: IRCC will share program insights and information, from sources including the ARPCP, where appropriate, with the NLS to inform their efforts in supporting the LIPs network.	**Lead:** SIP	Q4 2026 - 27

Evaluation Context and Background

Purpose and Objectives

The evaluation was conducted to assess the relevance and performance of LIPs and ZIPs. The evaluation provides evidence and strategic recommendations to inform future directions of the partnerships as well as supporting broader policy in relation to IRCC-funded indirect services with local and community focus. The evaluation was conducted in accordance to the Treasury Board *Policy on Results* (2016) and the evaluation was confirmed in the 2024-2025 Departmental Evaluation Plan.

The evaluation sought to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent are LIPs and ZIPs responding to a demonstrable need?
2. To what extent does management and governance of LIPs and ZIPs effectively support settlement outcomes?
3. To what extent are LIP and ZIP partners aware of and responsive in addressing the identified needs/challenges of newcomers and their communities?
4. To what extent do LIPs and ZIPs contribute to fostering welcoming communities and the improvement of integration outcomes of newcomers?

Scope and Focus

The evaluation covered the period between 2019 and 2024, up to the most current information available at the time of data collection, including the most recent Call for Proposals (CFP 2024)[1].

As a primary focus, the evaluation examined LIPs' and ZIPs'[2] performance in meeting the expected outcomes, including awareness of newcomer needs, development of strategies to address newcomer needs, engagement in newcomer settlement, and supporting newcomer integration and fostering welcoming communities.

As a secondary focus, the evaluation examined the governance and management of LIPs, including the funding model and communication and coordination between LIPs, and with IRCC.

[1] While late in the scope period, CFP 2024 is referenced to provide important and the most current contextual information for the evaluation.

[2] For brevity, and because LIPs and ZIPs serve the same function, this report will refer to both as 'LIPs'.

Program Overview

Background

LIPs and ZIPs are community planning bodies that facilitate collaboration among local stakeholders to support newcomer integration and build welcoming communities. They are managed by agreement holders, such as municipal governments, non-profit organizations, businesses, or educational institutions.

Agreement holders receive IRCC funding to carry out activities that strengthen collaboration, planning, and community capacity. Eligible activities include:

- Partner engagement and planning, such as establishing a LIP/ZIP secretariat, maintaining an inclusive partnership council, and developing community plans that identify key local priorities.
- Community capacity building, including community-based research and needs assessments, knowledge sharing, training, and the development of tools and resources.
- Initiatives that create favorable conditions for newcomers, promote retention, advance IRCC commitments to anti-racism, gender equality, and Truth and Reconciliation, and foster social cohesion among Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, and Canadians.

Each LIP/ZIP is composed of a LIP/ZIP coordinator and a council of member organizations. Council members typically include both settlement and non-settlement partners, such as organizations that directly serve newcomers as well as other community stakeholders such as school boards, employers, health authorities, and ethno-cultural and faith-based organizations.

LIPs have been funded under IRCC's Settlement Program for sixteen years, beginning with a 2008 pilot in Ontario. Following a 2010 parliamentary recommendation, LIPs expanded to other provinces and territories. In 2019, ZIPs were introduced to support larger rural areas with limited settlement service presence.

LIPs

LIPs are community-based coordination bodies that support collaborative planning around newcomer settlement and integration at the local level. They work with their council members to identify community needs, develop local strategies, and strengthen alignment among organizations serving newcomers. LIPs also promote awareness of newcomer issues, facilitate information sharing, and support initiatives that enhance the community's capacity to welcome and retain newcomers.

There are currently 81 LIPs across Canada: 35 in Ontario, 19 in British Columbia, 9 in Alberta, 3 in Saskatchewan, 4 in Manitoba, 4 in New Brunswick, 3 in Nova Scotia, and one in each of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

ZIPs

ZIPs carry out functions similar to LIPs but operate across larger rural areas, where multiple small towns collaborate to coordinate newcomer integration efforts. ZIPs help address geographic and service-access challenges by strengthening coordination between communities that may have limited or dispersed settlement services. The model is designed to build regional capacity and enhance the reach of settlement and integration planning in rural contexts.

There are currently 7 ZIPs across Canada: 3 in Saskatchewan, 2 in Manitoba, one in each of Alberta and Nova Scotia.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, including multiple lines of evidence, to triangulate and develop findings. Data collection began immediately following the approval of the Terms of Reference by the departmental Performance Measurement and Evaluation Committee in October 2024 and concluded in Fall 2025. Data collection included the following activities:

Document Review

Over 90 documents were reviewed, including research reports, program guidance and delivery instructions, APRCP reports, feasibility studies, and correspondence among stakeholders.

Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams with 18 IRCC Program representatives and 2 external stakeholders.

Council Member Survey

A survey was administered to 683 council members who were identified by their LIP coordinator, representing members from 35 LIPs.[3] The survey included questions about governance, capacity-building and performance of LIPs. The survey received 165 responses from council members, representing a response rate of 24%.

The majority of survey respondents were members of mature LIPs (80%) serving a large community (60%), with most in the central region (43%) followed by the PNT region (29%), and to a lesser extent in BCY (20%) and Atlantic (8%) regions. More than a third of respondents represented a service provider organization (SPO; 39%), followed by a municipal government (9%), a university or college (7%), and the remainder represented other organizations, employers, and other levels of government. In terms of role within their organization, 40% of respondents were executive directors, 23% were managers, 18% were staff members, 6% were volunteers, and 14% listed another role. The majority of respondents were invited to join the council by the LIP coordinator (66%), some reached out to join themselves (12%) and some were invited by another council member (5%). Half of respondents have been involved with the LIP for over 6 years, 31% for 3-5 years, 15% for 1-2 years, and 4% for less than a year.[4]

APRCP 2025

The APRCP is a mandatory report completed by LIPs at the end of fiscal year. The evaluation team collaborated with IRCC's Outcome Analysis Unit to include questions in the APRCP for the 2024-25 year on LIP coordinators' perceptions of the successes, challenges, and impact of their LIP in their community.

Case Study

Three LIPs participated in the case study. The case study collected and analyzed information on LIP operations, challenges, and outcomes. These LIPs were selected based on representativeness across community size, region, partnership maturity and type of agreement holder.

Table 1: Characteristics of Participating LIPs

LIP	Community Size	Region	Partnership Maturity[5]	Agreement Holder
West Kootenay LIP	Small	BCY	New	Non-for-Profit Organization
Brantford LIP	Large	Central	Mid	Municipality
Saint John LIP	Large	Atlantic	Mature	Economic Agency

[3] Two respondents were members of multiple LIPs.

[4] It was not possible to determine the representativeness of the survey sample due to a lack of profile information on the population of council members.

[5] New LIP: 0-2 years of operation; Mid-range: 3-5 years of operation; Mature: 6+ years of operation.

The case study used multiple qualitative lines of evidence. A document review examined APRCPs and contribution agreements, as well as LIP strategic plans, progress updates, websites, research projects, and meeting minutes. Interviews were conducted with LIP coordinators to provide insight into partnership operations, coordination, and outcomes.

Methodological Considerations, Limitations and Mitigations

The evaluation used complementary methods, and triangulated data from quantitative and qualitative sources to reach findings and recommendations. However, some limitations were identified:

Certain Data Limitations

An analysis of data from the Newcomer Outcomes Survey (NOS) and the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) was originally included in the evaluation methodology to assess differences in uptake of services as well as outcomes of newcomers in communities or regions with and without LIPs. However, data limitations prevented the evaluation from drawing meaningful results from this line of evidence.[6] In particular, NOS data could not reliably be mapped onto LIP geographical boundaries, preventing attribution of newcomer outcomes to the LIP. Further, the vast majority of NOS respondents and settlement service recipients lived in an area covered by a LIP, preventing a balanced comparative analysis of outcomes and service uptake for respondents without a LIP. As well, the evaluation was unable to isolate the potential impact of LIPs from external factors such as geography and urban/rural characteristics, preventing full attribution of outcomes to LIPs. Given these data limitations, results from this data analysis are not included in the final evaluation.

Case Study Participation

Although four LIPs were initially selected for the case study, only three agreed to participate. Several LIP coordinators were contacted but did not respond. To address this, multiple follow-up attempts were made, and alternates from the same region were contacted. Consequently, perspectives from LIPs in the Prairies/Northern Territories were not included. However, input from council members in this region was gathered through the council member survey.

Survey Representativeness

To administer the council member survey, the evaluation team requested the contact information of council members from LIP coordinators, given that IRCC does not collect this information. Despite multiple requests and support from the National LIP Secretariat, less than half of LIPs provided the requested contact information. Additionally, some council members did not consent to having their contact information shared with the evaluation team and were therefore not surveyed. Furthermore, given that survey participation depended on LIP coordinators providing contact information, the sample may have been biased to include council members from more active LIPs. As a result, survey results should be considered exploratory, as they may not be representative of council members across all LIPs.

[6] While iCARE is not a data reporting system for indirect services such as LIPs, the evaluation attempted to use it to map against other data.

Evaluation findings

Finding 1 – LIPs are responding to a need to facilitate collaboration and coordination between local delivery partners, connecting settlement and non-settlement partners to support newcomer integration

Purpose of LIPs

The rationale for LIPs was clear and consistent across all lines of evidence and is well-aligned with IRCC and Government of Canada priorities. According to reviewed documents, interviews and surveyed council members, LIPs support newcomer integration through:

- Collaboration and coordination: facilitating cross-sector partnerships to support newcomer settlement.
- Capacity building: strengthening stakeholders' ability to serve newcomers through research and training.
- Information-sharing and referrals: improving awareness, access, and connection across services.
- Settlement and integration support: enabling access to services.
- Welcoming and inclusion: building community belonging and public support for newcomers.

It was also emphasized that LIPs play a key role in connecting settlement and non-settlement partners, noting that such coordination did not exist prior to the establishment of LIPs.

Additionally, case studies demonstrated that the establishment of a LIP responded to local needs in their communities, including addressing challenges related to population growth, labour market needs, and anti-immigration sentiment. Furthermore, to ensure that a LIP is viable and sustainable in the community, IRCC provides research funding to conduct a feasibility study before a new LIP is established to assess community needs, identifies service gaps, evaluates the community's capacity to convene delivery partners, and estimates potential financial resources.

Role of LIPs in Indirect Services

Some documents and interviews noted potential overlap between the work of LIPs and other organizations. However, evidence overall indicates that their roles are distinct. Specifically, some evidence suggested that LIPs share umbrella organizations' role in amplifying immigrant voices and raising awareness of newcomer needs, but they differ in the activities they undertake and the partners they convene. For example, umbrella organizations connect and build capacity among SPOs within the settlement sector in their province, while LIPs work on a grassroots level and connect diverse sectors within the community, including those outside of the settlement sector, focusing specifically on creating welcoming and inclusive communities. Interviewees and case study participants noted that LIPs are the only planning body to bring together settlement and non-settlement partners and clarified that LIPs aim to minimize duplication of efforts within their communities.

Although both LIPs and Immigrant Employment Councils (IECs) engage with employers to support newcomer employment and build employer capacity to hire and retain newcomers, interviewees explained that IECs are not present in all communities, and that overlap depends on local context and resources.

It is important to note, however, that some surveyed council members noted potential overlap in the work of LIPs operating in close geographical locations, citing instances where there is overlap of council members and activities. However, overlap of council members could not be confirmed as IRCC does not keep record of all LIP council members.

Finding 2 – LIPs are building capacity among local community partners by supporting knowledge sharing, raising awareness of newcomer needs, and facilitating collaboration among service providers.

Reviewed documents, case studies and council member survey results demonstrated that LIPs play a key role in strengthening community capacity to understand and respond to newcomer needs.

Providing Resources and Information

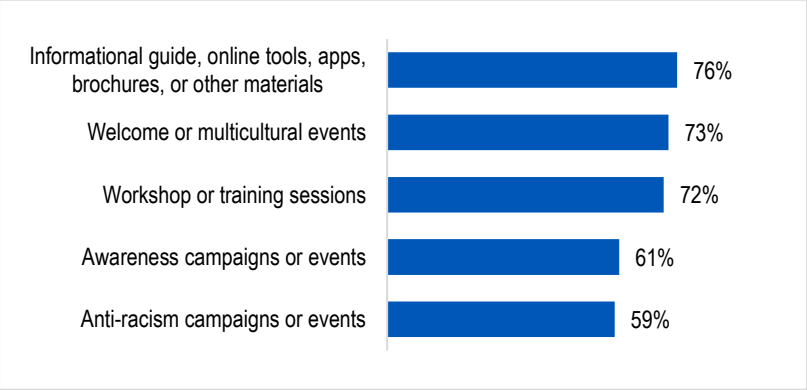
Surveyed council members reported receiving tools, training and resources from their LIP, including:

- Informational materials (66%)
- Research reports (63%)
- Community needs assessment reports (57%)
- Performance measurement and evaluation frameworks (23%)

The majority of surveyed council members (over 80%) who received these resources found them to be somewhat or very effective. Additionally, according to 2023/24 and 2024/25 APRCP data, a majority of LIPs also hosted multicultural events and awareness or anti-racism campaigns.

Interviewees noted that LIPs produced regular newsletters promoting job fairs, cultural events, and updates on local initiatives. Case study participants further reported that their LIPs facilitated information sharing and networking opportunities during council meetings, including organizing research presentations and sessions where newcomers shared their lived experiences.

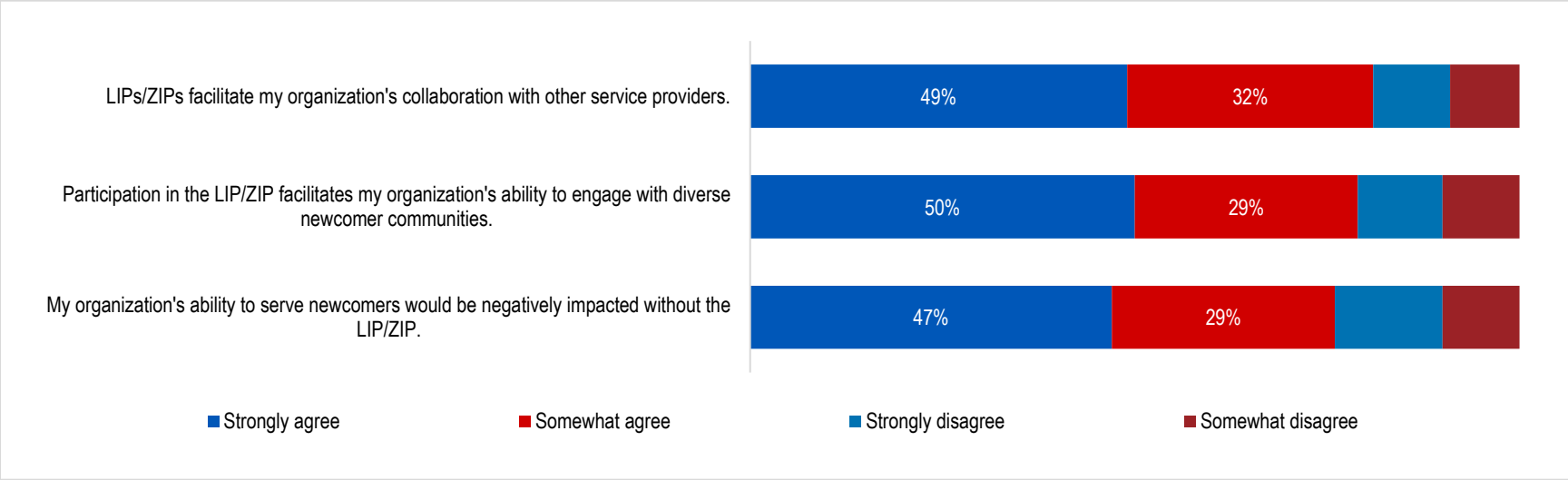
Figure 1: Percentage of LIPs who reported providing resources and training in 2023/24 APRCP



Skill Development and Training

LIPs contribute to skill development among community partners through training, workshops, and professional development opportunities. Over half (53%) of surveyed council members reported receiving training, including cultural competency sessions and related workshops, with the majority (84%) believing that these sessions were effective and that their LIP facilitates their organization's capacity to serve newcomers. Similar results were observed with the 2024/25 APRCP data, with the majority of LIPs providing or coordinating trainings for their members, including anti-racism training (55%), diversity or inclusion workshops (46%), cross-cultural training (34%), and gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) training (19%).

Figure 2: Surveyed council member perceptions of the impact of LIP activities on their organizations' ability to serve newcomers



Finding 3 – LIPs effectively collaborate with local partners to identify newcomer needs and tailor strategic plans to address these needs.

Identifying Newcomer Needs

As part of their role in community capacity building, LIPs are expected to identify newcomer needs in their communities and develop Strategic Plans that are tailored and responsive to these needs. Evidence from case studies, interviews, document review, and the council member survey indicate LIPs are generally effective at identifying newcomer needs in their communities.

Seventy percent of LIPs reported conducting research on newcomer needs in the 2024/25 period. LIPs undertake various initiatives to identify newcomer needs, including: surveys of newcomers and council partners, focus groups, consulting newcomer advisory committees, literature reviews, service mapping activities, immigration data analysis, and stakeholder interviews. As well:

- Some LIPs have partnered with or contracted other organizations (e.g., consultants, researchers) to identify newcomer needs.
- 89% of surveyed council members believed that their LIP was effective in identifying newcomer needs to a moderate or great extent.
- Feasibility studies, which are required for the establishment of a LIP, require consultation with community partners to identify the need for a LIP and newcomer needs.

However, some LIPs face challenges in identifying newcomer needs, including:

- Reductions to research funding under LIP agreements;
- Lack of staff and resource capacity to conduct and analyze research;
- Limited access to disaggregated, up-to-date data (e.g., census data is outdated, difficulty obtaining local and rural data).

Strategic Plans

Seventy percent of LIPs who completed the 2024/25 APRCP and all LIPs who participated in the evaluation case study reported having a Strategic Plan. Evidence shows that LIPs' Strategic Plans are tailored to the needs of their communities:

- 97% of surveyed council members believed that their strategic plan accurately reflects the priorities and needs of their community.
- Case study analysis demonstrated that Strategic Plans are directly informed by and reflective of research on newcomer needs in the community.
- LIPs also demonstrated that their Plans were agile and responsive. For example, by updating their plan prior to its expiration in light of changing needs or new data, or by updating working groups to better align with current needs.

Across multiple lines of evidence, the most common identified newcomer needs were related to employment, housing, healthcare, as well as addressing anti-immigration sentiment and sense of belonging.

However, interviewees questioned whether LIP strategic plans can address needs that are rooted in systemic issues, which require significant policy changes and cooperation across all levels of government. In contrast, 95% of surveyed council members believed that their LIP's Strategic Plan was feasible.

Inclusion of Key Local Partners

The LIPs' effectiveness at identifying and tailoring their activities around newcomer needs is credited to their engagement with local community partners. LIP partner councils include a variety of organization types, including:

- SPOs

- Provincial and municipal governments
- Schools
- Newcomers and Newcomer Advisory Committees
- Employers

In general, stakeholders felt that LIP council membership was well-rounded and inclusive, and that LIPs had strong recruitment and retention of council partners. The evaluation found some key insights on the inclusion of council partners, including:

- Involvement of a municipal government was felt to be an important factor in LIP success;
- The importance of having newcomers or a Newcomer Advisory Committee to inform decision-making and build a reciprocal relationship;
- Council partners are most effective when the partner representation is a senior member of their organization and can influence internal decision-making within their organization;
- While Truth and Reconciliation was identified as a priority area for LIPs in the most recent CFP, Indigenous representation on partner councils is not possible for all LIPs. Some communities may not have large Indigenous representation, while the requirement for Indigenous engagement may create an undue burden on Indigenous organizations who are invited to join multiple initiatives in other communities.

Council Engagement

Seventy-nine percent of LIPs who completed the 2024/25 APRCP reported their level of member engagement was high or very high. Further, most surveyed council members reported frequently or always attending LIP council meetings, and members reported being involved with their LIP in various ways as, shown in Figure 3.

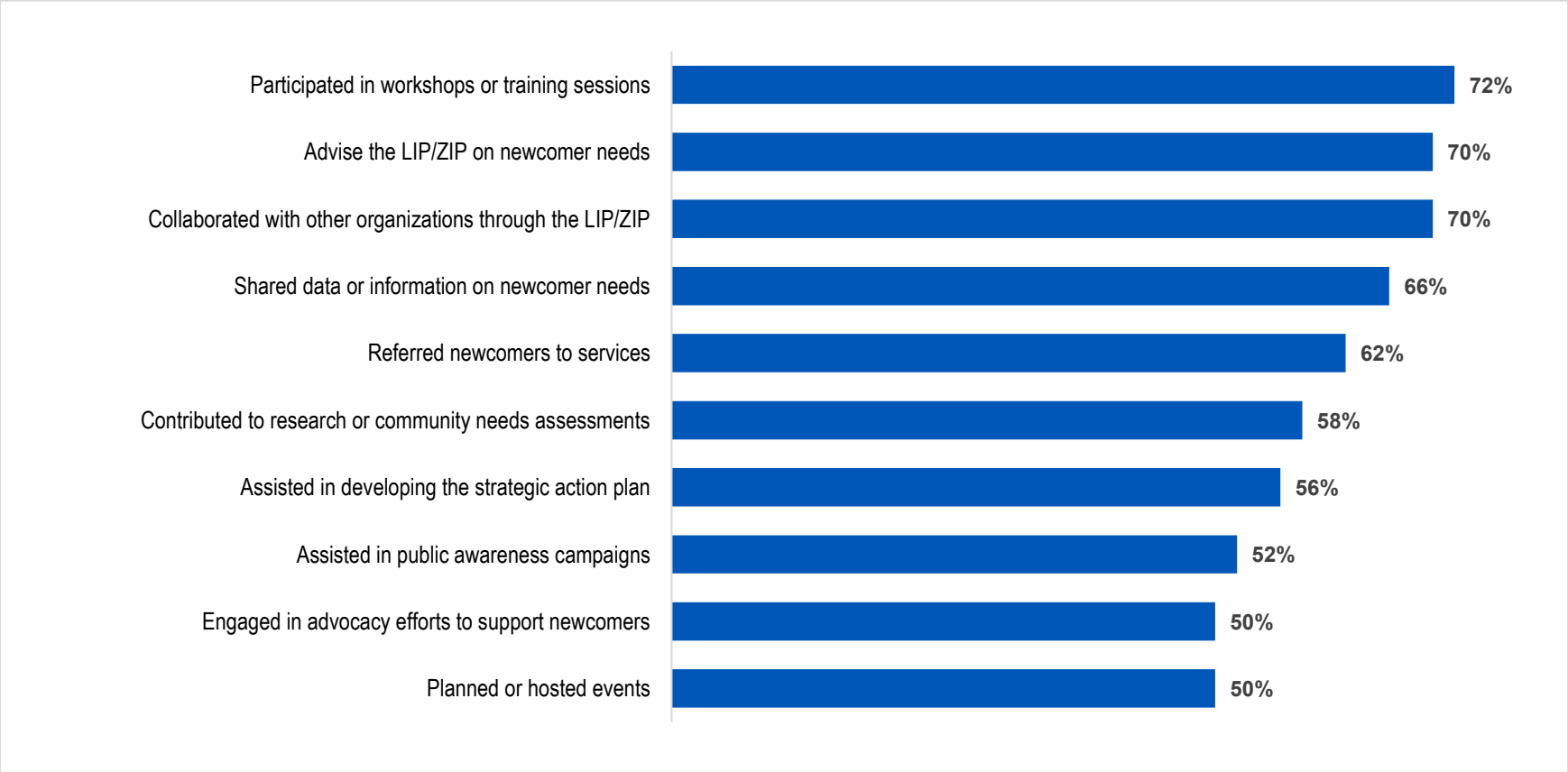
Council members also participate in LIP working groups to advance key priorities. The 2024/25 APRCP reported that surveyed LIPs had an average of five working groups.

However, multiple lines of evidence highlighted that partners may face capacity issues that limit their engagement in the LIP or create an overreliance on a small number of council members to implement the Strategic Plan. Some surveyed council members reported experiencing barriers to participating in the council, including: lack of time (44%); limited staff capacity (42%); and lack of funding or resources (19%).

Role of the LIP Coordinator

Multiple lines of evidence highlighted the that the LIP coordinator role is essential to the success of the LIP, and that staff turnover in the coordinator position can be very detrimental to the LIP.

Figure 3: Surveyed council members' reported involvement in their LIP



Finding 4 – LIPs organize activities to foster welcoming communities and the integration of newcomers. However, challenges persist in measuring the impact of these activities.

LIP Activities

Evidence from all lines of evidence demonstrate LIPs' efforts in supporting newcomer integration and creating welcoming communities, including through:

- Newcomer events (e.g., welcoming events, newcomer trips, cultural celebrations);
- Resources for newcomers (e.g., job fairs, service navigation tools, SIN card sessions, employment toolkits, recreational programs);
- Information sharing (e.g., websites, newsletters, navigation tools, social media); and
- Public messaging campaigns (e.g., promoting newcomer hiring, inclusivity and cultural campaigns, anti-racism workshops, advocating for improved public services).

While some LIPs undertake similar activities (e.g., newcomer welcoming week), evidence shows that LIPs tailor their activities to the need of their community and that LIP activities vary across the country. As well, stakeholders felt that the localized nature of LIPs enable them to be flexible and nimble in their activities.

Flexibility of LIPs

The evaluation found that the indirect nature of these partnerships enable LIPs to support a wide range of newcomers and emerging needs, making communities more welcoming for all residents. Interviewees highlighted that LIP activities benefit a population beyond IRCC settlement clients including temporary foreign workers, international students and asylum claimants; further, case study participants noted that addressing needs related to these populations was a main objective of their LIP.

LIPs have also effectively responded to emerging needs:

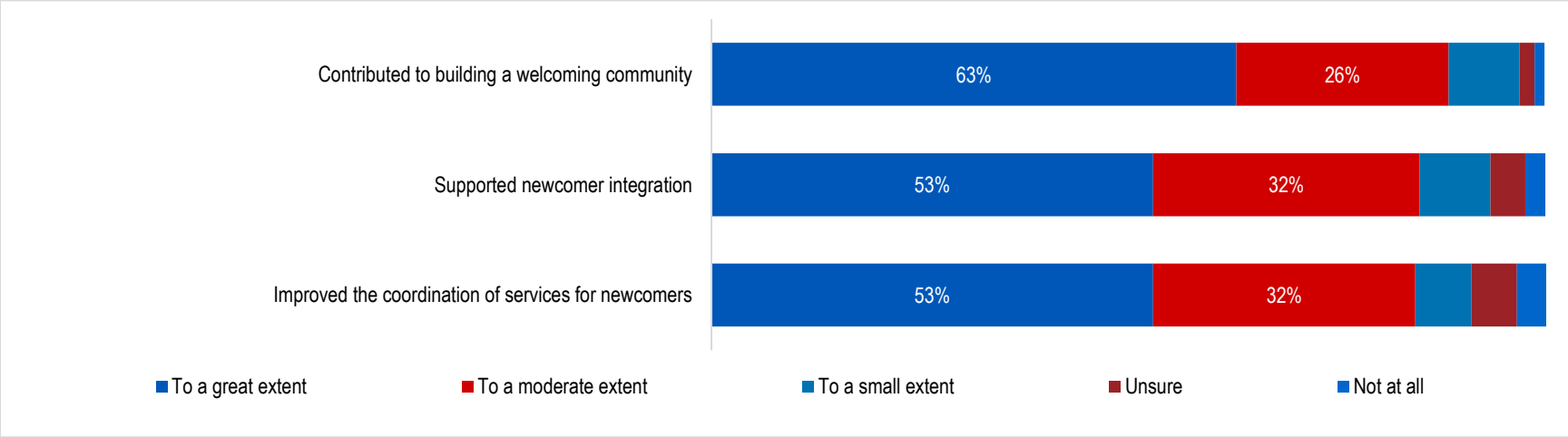
- LIPs have mobilized community partners in response to the mass arrival of Syrian, Afghani and Ukrainian newcomers, including by coordinating housing and other supports and disseminating critical information. For example, two case study LIPs translated welcome guides for newly arriving Ukrainians.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, LIPs advocated for newcomer needs in local emergency planning bodies, disseminated health information for newcomers, and worked with partners to adapt service delivery.

Impact of LIP Activities

Despite strong evidence on the extent of LIP activities, LIPs' indirect role of supporting council members' abilities to serve newcomers makes attribution towards newcomer integration difficult. However, LIPs and council members generally report that their LIP contributed to fostering a welcoming community and supporting newcomer integration. When asked about their impact, LIPs reported that:

- They contributed to improved accessibility of services to newcomers (92%);
- Their community has become more welcoming and inclusive of diverse perspectives and populations (91%);
- Services are better coordinated at the community level (86%);
- Non-settlement institutions have adapted programming and service delivery to newcomer needs (78%); and
- Planning priorities or funding decisions of a range of stakeholders (e.g., government, institutions) are increasingly informed by local needs (78%).

Figure 4: Surveyed council members' perspectives on extent to which LIPs:



Finding 5 – The current structure of funding agreements and difficulties securing external funding may limit LIPs' abilities to fully achieve certain objectives.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities include those related to partner engagement and planning, local or community capacity building, as well as activities that create more favorable conditions for newcomers. LIP activities were expanded in 2021/22 to include COVID-19 Response, Refugee Resettlement, Francophone Connections, Indigenous Connections, Anti-Racism Initiatives and other settlement needs.

Other activities, including direct service delivery, select honoraria, and advocacy and lobbying activities, are ineligible under LIPs funding agreements. Some interviewees felt that the scope of eligible activities may restrict LIPs from addressing urgent needs (e.g., assisting with the coordination of natural disaster evacuations), particularly as activities considered "direct services" are ineligible.

IRCC Funding

IRCC funds the development, but not the implementation, of Strategic Plans. LIPs are expected to leverage external funding to implement their plans and fund otherwise ineligible activities, but evidence suggests that this funding model may present challenges to implementing Strategic Plans.

While LIPs can negotiate minor amendments to their funding agreements and transfer limited amounts between line items, some felt that the LIP funding model lacked flexibility to allocate funding according to community and emerging needs.

Interviewees noted that there is no standardized framework for determining funding amounts between LIPs, and some felt this led to funding disparities between LIPs. Both LIPs and internal stakeholders expressed a preference for grants over contribution agreements, as it was felt that grants are less administratively burdensome than the claim reimbursement model of contribution agreements and allowed LIPs to dedicate limited capacity elsewhere.

Changes to IRCC Funding

Recent changes to LIPs funding under CFP 2024 reduced budgets for key activities, which was felt to be misaligned with expected outcomes of LIPs:

- Hospitality/catering budget, which may hinder the ability to bring people together and give back to newcomer volunteers;
- Research budget, which may hinder the ability to understand the needs of newcomers in the community;
- Travel budget, which may hinder the ability to attend the Pathways to Prosperity Conference and disproportionately impact rural LIPs;
- Promotion budget, which may hinder public messaging efforts.

Challenges Securing External Funding

LIPs are expected to secure external funding and rely on council partners to implement Strategic Plans. 54% of LIPs reported receiving external funding in the 2024/25 period, primarily from provincial bodies. Further, LIPs report leveraging financial and in-kind supports from their host organization (e.g., staff support and salary top-ups, physical materials) and council members (e.g., volunteer time, research, programming).

However, multiple lines of evidence found that LIPs experience challenges in securing external funding, including:

- Lack of staff capacity to apply for external funding, particularly for newer and smaller LIPs;
- Lack of opportunities due to inflation and a limited pool of grants;
- LIPs may face restrictions in securing external funding due to their organization type (e.g., municipal policies may prevent

LIPs hosted within municipalities from accessing additional funding); and
- Unsuccessful applications; 7% of LIPs reported applying for external funding but were unsuccessful in the 2024/25 period.

Interviewees noted that LIPs face challenges in implementing Strategic Plans without external funding, and documents noted that uncertainty around funding was a significant concern for LIPs.Finding 6 – The National LIPs Secretariat (NLS) has been effective at building the LIPs network, developing and sharing resources, and connecting LIPs to IRCC.Establishment of the NLS

The NLS was established through CFP 2019 and officially began its work in 2021. It was created to address growing challenges related to communication, coordination, and information sharing as the number of LIPs expanded across the country. The NLS is currently co-led by the Toronto South LIP and Jasper LIP and serves as a central coordinating body and a repository for LIP projects, promising practices, and tools. The purpose of the NLS is to support new LIPs in building partnerships and contribute to conversations with the settlement sector providing a unified voice for LIPs.

The NLS is governed by an Executive Committee composed of coordinators from 10–12 LIPs and two co-chairs. Executive Committee members are selected to ensure proportionate representation of LIPs from each region and type of agreement holder (e.g., municipality, SPO), as well as diversity factors such as ethnicity and gender.

Networking Among LIPs

Reviewed documents, interviews, and case studies consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of the NLS in facilitating communication and networking among LIPs. For example, interviewees indicated that knowledge sharing has been enhanced using Basecamp, an online forum monitored by the NLS, where LIPs are able to post questions and receive guidance. Peer-to-peer support through these networks was described as particularly helpful for newly established LIPs and for onboarding new coordinators. The NLS also supports the development of regional communities of practice, which encourage collaboration among LIPs in the same geographic regions.

All case study participants reported that the NLS was a helpful resource for onboarding, sharing information, and encouraging collaboration through regional networks, working groups, and peer-to-peer workshops.

Developing and Sharing Resources

According to LIP coordinators who completed the 2024/25 APRCP, the NLS provided the following support to their LIP:

- Research-related support;
- Information and knowledge sharing;
- Networking opportunities;
- Training and professional development;
- Connection to IRCC; and
- Advocacy and promoting LIP interests to influence policies.

Interviewees and case study participants expressed that the resources developed and shared by the NLS were useful. For example, the NLS manages the Research and Anti-Racism working groups, offering centralized resource hubs to support the work of LIPs in those areas. It was also noted that the NLS website and weekly newsletter kept coordinators informed of developments across the network and the annual surveys of LIP coordinators allowed the NLS to collect and report on common successes and challenges experienced by LIPs.

Interviewees emphasized that the NLS plays an important role in sharing research and data. The NLS also gathers insights from LIPs via surveys and interviews on topics such as partnership-building and funding negotiations, and shares promising practices and guidelines across the network. Additionally, the NLS has developed tools and training resources, supported anti-racism initiatives, and organized events such as the National LIP Network Summit alongside the Pathways to Prosperity Conference, which LIPs felt to be useful. Additionally, interviewees noted that the NLS worked with IRCC to amend funding agreements, ensuring LIPs had the necessary resources to attend the National LIP Network Summit.

Finding 6 - The National LIPs Secretariat (NLS) has been effective at building the LIPs network, developing and sharing resources, and connecting LIPs to IRCC

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Finding 7 – There is an opportunity to strengthen information-sharing within IRCC to improve program management.

Within IRCC, the responsibility for the LIPs program is shared between policy (Settlement and Integration Policy; SIP) and operations (Settlement and Resettlement Operations; SRO) teams. Consequently, communication between LIPs and IRCC generally flows through two channels:

- LIPs provide operational updates to their Program Officer in SRO through regular meetings, discussions and negotiations related to their contribution agreement, and quarterly and end-of-cycle reports. As a result, SRO has a clear view of the day-to-day operations of LIPs (e.g., progress on activities, expenditures).
- LIPs report to SIP through the APRCP. SIP also receives updates on LIP activities and challenges through the NLS. As a result, SIP has a higher level understanding of LIP operations, but a clear view on the policy direction for the program.

The evaluation found that current information sharing experienced gaps, in part due to limited communication channels between SIP and SRO. Interviewees from both groups noted that discussions between SRO and SIP are infrequent, typically occurring during CFP collaboration or occasional functional guidance, but is lacking in relation to program operations and performance.

In particular, reviewed documents and interviews showed that SIP does not receive information on the operations of LIPs. For example, SIP does not receive details on LIP activities, expenditures, nor up-to-date contact information of LIP coordinators. In contrast, key learnings and analyses from APRCPs and other LIP performance data are not systematically communicated to SRO. While the APRCP process has recently been streamlined to allow for improved data collection and analysis, aggregated data and insights on regional and national APRCP findings are not consistently shared with SRO.

Implications for Program Management

Interviewees suggested that divided responsibility over LIPs combined with limited communication channels creates a potential for misalignment on program direction. For example, it was noted that while SIP is responsible for policy and program direction, SRO oversees funding decisions, including approving feasibility studies and the establishment of new LIPs. Without consistent information sharing or a standardized framework for determining funding amounts, decisions may not align and could result in funding disparities across LIPs.

Furthermore, neither SRO nor SIP collect contact information of LIP council members, key stakeholders who support LIP activities, resulting in missed opportunities to gather and use their input towards program improvement and performance measurement.

The gap in communication also increases the risk of duplicated effort and administrative burden, as LIPs report their activities and operations to SRO, SIP, and to some extent to the NLS.

The lack of communication reduces IRCC's ability to monitor program performance, identify emerging issues, and leverage lessons learned across regions, with numerous interviewees emphasizing that more systematic information sharing between SIP and SRO would strengthen performance measurement and support effective program management.

Finding 8 – While work is underway to better measure the success of LIPs, IRCC and the LIPs community face challenges in fully measuring results and telling an overall outcomes story.

IRCC's Performance Measurement

Program documents demonstrated that, while a performance measurement framework (PMF) had been developed for the LIPs program, IRCC efforts to measure the performance of LIPs has been recent and limited:

- IRCC relies on self-reported data through LIP annual reporting, and to date has not leveraged additional identified data sources (e.g., iCARE data, survey of council members) to measure performance.
- While the APRCP was launched in 2015, IRCC only recently developed the capacity to analyze and synthesize this data. While interviewees felt that the APRCPs were detailed and informative on individual LIPs, interviews suggested that APRCP results are not widely shared internally.
- Data collection on LIP performance (i.e., APRCP, annual reports) focuses on LIP outputs, rather than longer-term outcomes and impact. For example, the PMF includes indicators and data sources for the program's outputs, immediate and intermediate outcomes, but not for the program's ultimate outcomes.

Notably, IRCC has recently updated the APRCP tool to allow for more outcomes-focused data in future reporting.

LIPs' Performance Measurement

Evidence shows that performance measurement efforts in the LIP community are underway. For example, the NLS developed a Community Data Program to provide LIPs in the PNT region with access to community-level immigration data to support research and performance measurement efforts on settlement outcomes. Interviewees felt this Program was a positive step in enabling LIPs to tell a results story, but also noted that funding for the development of the Program and NLS performance measurement tools recently expired, potentially limiting performance measurement efforts going forward.

Nearly all individual LIPs (97%) are developing and conducting performance measurement activities, though at varying levels of maturity. LIPs are using a number of resources, including:

- Community Data Program
- Welcoming Communities Toolkit
- Newcomer surveys and focus groups
- Council member surveys and consultations
- IRCC data (e.g., iCARE, immigration data)
- Statistics Canada and census data
- Canadian Index for Measuring Integration

Evidence suggests that LIPs have expressed a need for more guidance and resources to enable effective performance measurement.

Challenges with Measuring Success

Despite efforts, all lines of evidence highlight challenges with measuring the success of LIPs, including the:

- Attribution and the indirect nature of LIPs. LIP activities chiefly target council members, but the program's ultimate outcomes focus on newcomer settlement outcomes;
- Inability to isolate the impact of LIPs and directly attribute it to newcomer outcomes;
- Difficulty of measuring intangible impacts on community capacity and coordination;
- Diversity of LIP local contexts, activities and goals, which prevents IRCC from telling an aggregated or national results story; and
- Limited resources for LIPs to undertake performance measurement work (i.e., limited staff and capacity, decreased research funding, and limited access to local and updated data.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of LIPs and ZIPs. The evaluation was conducted to provide evidence and strategic findings to support future directions of the partnerships as well as broader policy and implementation in relation to IRCC-funded indirect services, and it assessed the relevance, governance and performance of LIPs and ZIPs.

The evaluation found that there is a continued need for LIPs to facilitate collaboration between settlement and non-settlement partners, connecting diverse stakeholders to support newcomer integration. LIPs have been effective in building community capacity through knowledge sharing, training, and resource development, and they collaborate with local partners to identify newcomer needs and develop tailored strategic plans. LIPs also organize activities that foster welcoming communities and support integration, although measuring the impact of these activities remains challenging. However, their ability to achieve objectives is constrained by limitations in funding agreements and difficulties in securing external funding. The evaluation also found that the NLS plays an important role in networking, resource development, and connecting LIPs to IRCC.

Overall, the evaluation highlights that LIPs are a critical mechanism for fostering collaboration and inclusion at the community level, but gaps in information sharing within IRCC and in performance measurement impede effective program monitoring and management.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The evaluation found that LIPs' ability to achieve expected outcomes is constrained by challenges related to funding. LIPs are expected to leverage external funding to implement Strategic Plans and fund activities that are ineligible for IRCC funding, but restrictions on eligible activities, limits on transferring funds, recent reductions to key budget items, and challenges securing external funding present barriers to LIPs achieving their expected outcomes. There is a need to reaffirm and communicate funding guidelines to ensure alignment between resources and expected outcomes. Further, evidence suggests that there is no standardized framework for determining funding amounts among LIPs, which may contribute to funding disparities. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should reaffirm and communicate funding guidelines to LIPs/ZIPs to ensure that expected outcomes are aligned with available resources.

Recommendation 2

The evaluation identified opportunities to strengthen information sharing within IRCC to improve program management. The evaluation recommends that:
IRCC should strengthen internal coordination by establishing more consistent mechanisms for information sharing.

Recommendation 3

The evaluation found that although LIPs strengthen community capacity-building and coordination, their efforts are directed toward supporting council members, and newcomers benefit indirectly from the resulting improvements in coordination – making it difficult to describe and fully measure their indirect impact. A such, the evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should strengthen the performance measurement approach for LIPs/ZIPs by updating the Indirect Services logic model and performance measurement framework.

Recommendation 4

The evaluation found that while work is underway to better measure the success of LIPs, the LIPs community faces challenges related to concretely measuring their impact. Current performance measurement efforts focus on outputs (e.g., activities completed) rather than outcomes, and LIPs have expressed a need for greater resources to enable performance measurement. The evaluation recommends that:

IRCC should develop an approach to support the NLS in promoting and sharing performance measurement practices and guidance with LIPs/ZIPs.