

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK PEI OPPORTUNITIES FORUM | FORUM OPPORTUNITÉS ÎPÉ

Coopérative d'intégration francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Areas of Practice:

- Promoting Welcoming Communities
- Employment and Entrepreneurship Supports
- Information and Orientation

Video:

<https://youtu.be/UZsOL1J8LK4>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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**PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY**
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



**VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ**
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

The Coopérative d'intégration francophone (CIF) de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard is a non-profit Francophone newcomer settlement and integration organization on Prince Edward Island (PEI). The organization was first incorporated in 2006 and adopted a province-wide mandate in 2010 to support the greater Acadian and Francophone community across PEI. The CIF aims to facilitate the successful integration of French-speaking newcomers to PEI across social, cultural, economic, and educational domains, and to provide access to relevant services and programs. The organization also seeks to educate the receiving population about the value of cultural diversity and Francophone immigration in PEI. Finally, the CIF has also been instrumental in establishing PEI's Réseau en immigration francophone (RIF).

The impetus for the PEI Opportunities Forum emerged from the CIF's ongoing work with newcomers and consultations with its partners. The CIF wanted to address the unmet needs of three main target groups: newcomers, community organizations and service providers, and employers. Newcomers expressed a desire to contribute to their communities through volunteering and also a need for more resources in employment seeking. Community organizations and service providers reported difficulty connecting face-to-face with newcomers and communicating information about their services. Employers indicated a need for more in-person ways to meet potential French-speaking and bilingual candidates and to learn about their skills and experiences. This led to the creation of an annual in-person forum where these groups can connect and support newcomers' early integration and long-term retention in PEI.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

PEI Opportunities Forum | Forum Opportunités ÎPÉ

Description:

The PEI Opportunities Forum is an annual, in-person event in Prince Edward Island. It functions as a structured "welcome day" designed to support the integration of French-speaking newcomers by bringing together three groups in one coordinated event: newcomers, community organizations and service providers, and employers. The forum creates a structured space for direct connection. Newcomers can meet with employers and local organizations to access settlement information, explore volunteering and employment opportunities, and begin building meaningful community ties. Community organizations are able to present their mandates and services in a more personal, interactive setting, while employers can engage with potential candidates, review résumés, and discuss current and upcoming job opportunities.

The event combines structured and informal engagement, including networking sessions, conversations with employers, and a panel featuring newcomers who are already settled in Prince Edward Island and share their experiences. The forum is invitation-only, which allows for more intentional participation and deeper interaction among attendees.

The first forum was held on October 7, 2023, at the Charlottetown Public Library from 4 PM to 8 PM. Following its success, CIF organized a mini-edition on June 26, 2024, in collaboration with the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), the French Language School Board (CSLF), and the Public Schools Branch. This edition aimed to offer a Francophone day for students who had recently joined the Bachelor of Education (French as a Second Language) program. Newcomers who already resided in PEI were also invited to attend the event. The third edition, held on June 11, 2025, followed the first forum's format by combining facilitated networking and newcomer testimonials to support participants' settlement and integration pathways on the Island. It also expanded the program to include presentations from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the provincial immigration office, and the Study & Stay PEI program.

Goal(s):

The primary goal of the program is to bring together French-speaking newcomers, community organizations and service providers, and employers to create meaningful in-person connections. Additional goals include:

- Increasing newcomers' awareness of available employment, volunteering, and support services
- Improving newcomers' settlement experiences and supporting their integration beyond employment by fostering community engagement and belonging
- Increasing the long-term retention of newcomers in Prince Edward Island
- Amplifying immigrant voices by including testimonials and knowledge sharing

Target Client Group(s):

The PEI Opportunities Forum has three main target groups: 1) newcomers, 2) community organizations and service providers, and 3) employers.

Delivery Partners:

Delivery partners include Prince Edward Island's Réseau en immigration francophone (RIF) – a network of 20 member organizations, including six observer members (such as provincial and federal government representatives) – as well as CIF's community partners.

Human Resources:

The PEI Opportunities Forum is organized by the CIF and RIF teams (including settlement and employment workers, settlement workers in schools, the head of services, the executive director, and the RIF coordinator) in close collaboration with their implementation partners. As well, the participating community organizations, service providers, employers, and established immigrants in PEI serve as both participants and important contributors to the event. They take on roles as exhibitors and panelists.

Funding:

The PEI Opportunities Forum is funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Government of Prince Edward Island.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The forum is effective because it brings together newcomers, employers, service providers, and community organizations in a single, in-person event under the shared goal of expanding the welcome base for French-speaking newcomers in Prince Edward Island (PEI). The forum creates a rare opportunity for all these groups to come together to collaborate on larger-scale community initiatives that would be difficult to achieve through isolated efforts. The in-person format of the event enables participants to directly interact with others, allowing them to make more personal connections that can extend beyond the event and contribute to positive integration outcomes.

Efficient:

The forum is efficient because it builds on existing relationships between the CIF, RIF and its partners. Since PEI is a small island, the resources available are limited. Instead of having to rely on large budgets, the partner organizations volunteer their time and expertise at the forum. This approach allows the forum to maximize impact with limited resources while ensuring that the newcomers' needs are adequately met. Bringing all partners together in a single, in-person event also promotes shared awareness of emerging issues, available resources, and collective priorities. This ensures that there is coordinated action among the partners serving newcomers.

Relevant:

The forum responds directly to the expressed needs of the three target groups: newcomers, community organizations and service providers, and employers. For newcomers, the forum allows them to make essential connections with community members such as employers and volunteer organizations. For employers, the forum allows them a unique space to meet potential French-speaking candidates that may have unexpected talents that would otherwise go undiscovered. For community organizations and service providers, the forum allows them to make in-person connections with newcomers to explain to them their mandates and the services they offer. The forum offers a unique opportunity to align services, opportunities, and information with the goal of improving newcomer integration.

Sustainable:

The sustainability of the program is reflected in its strong collaborative partnerships and its community integration. PEI is a small island and therefore, has fewer resources to support newcomers than other areas. However, the Francophone community is highly active and willing to mobilize collectively around shared goals. The forum relies on the voluntary contributions of partner organizations. This reduces its reliance on large operating budgets while allowing resources and expertise to be pooled.

Transferable:

The model of the forum is highly transferable because it relies on the coordination capacity of the community, rather than a specific geographic context. The replication of the forum depends primarily on the presence of a coordinating body, such as a RIF or Local Immigration Partnership, that can gather employers, service providers, and organizations around shared goals. In larger provinces, the

forum could be implemented at a regional or sectoral level to maintain the “tight knit” and personal nature of the forum that contributes to its success.

The forum’s ability to be transferable has been demonstrated through the organization of a special mini-edition of the forum in collaboration with the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), the French Language School Board (CSLF), and the Public Schools Branch. This adaptation of the annual forum demonstrates how the forum model can accommodate the needs of specific groups, while continuing to maintain its primary objectives.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

This forum is an innovative and forward-thinking practice because it supports newcomer integration through a holistic approach that goes beyond employment connections alone. By combining settlement information, community engagement, and employment connections in a single “welcome day,” it strengthens newcomers’ early orientation and community attachment alongside workforce integration. The forum also emphasizes transparency by incorporating newcomer testimonials that present a realistic picture of settling in Prince Edward Island as a Francophone newcomer. This transparency helps newcomers develop more accurate expectations and supports community organizations, service providers, and employers in better understanding the realities that newcomers face.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The PEI Opportunities Forum differs from traditional employment forums in two definable ways. First, it intentionally integrates volunteering and community engagement alongside employment opportunities, creating additional pathways for newcomers to connect with their communities while exploring work options. Second, it includes a testimonial component in which established newcomers share their settlement experiences, which reassures newly arrived newcomers and supports peer connection.

High Client Uptake:

The forum has attracted strong participation across its first three editions. Attendance numbers have reflected the demand and interest from newcomers, community organizations, service providers, and employers. The first edition of the forum far surpassed participation targets and welcomed approximately 75 participants, 15 exhibitors, 7 panelists, 1 moderator, and guests of honour. The 2024 mini-edition of the forum was similarly well attended, despite targeting a more specific audience. The third edition in June 2025 saw a notable increase in exhibitor engagement with 25 exhibitors participating.

High Client Retention:

The PEI Opportunities Forum has demonstrated high client retention through sustained engagement, repeat participation, and continued demand across the forum editions. The CIF is now planning the fourth edition of the forum, with employers, service providers, and community organizations continuing to return as exhibitors. Newcomers have also demonstrated engagement beyond the event through follow-up connections with those they have met at the forum.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

Based on qualitative feedback provided by forum participants and partners, the forum led to positive outcomes for newcomers, employers, community organizations, and service providers. Newcomers were able to make new connections with employers and community organizations they previously did not know or knew little about, and left with clearer direction regarding available volunteering and employment pathways. The testimonial component helped normalize early settlement challenges and was reassuring for newly arrived newcomers, supporting more realistic expectations about settling in PEI and strengthening early feelings of connection to the Francophone community. Conversations initiated between employers and newcomers continued beyond the event through follow-up contact and, in some cases, progressed to employment-related opportunities. In addition, the forum supported more coordinated and responsive settlement support by enabling organizations to provide immediate, practical guidance during the event and to continue follow-up afterward. The event also contributed to a deeper shared understanding of newcomer experiences among employers and community partners involved.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

Following the first edition of the PEI Opportunities Forum, the CIF surveyed all three key participant groups on their impressions of the event. Newcomers indicated strong support for the forum and voiced many requests for increased participation from employers and organizations. Employers and service providers also expressed interest in expanding the forum to include additional Francophone groups. This feedback directly informed subsequent editions of the forum and led to the CIF seeking increased participation from exhibitors and other organizations. In addition to surveys, the CIF conducted interviews with newcomers and gathered continuous feedback year-round through regular partner meetings and working groups. Using this approach, the CIF has been able to incorporate comments and suggestions throughout the year and make ongoing improvements to the forum.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Coopérative d'intégration francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard

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