

Planning for Immigration in Rural Communities:

Lessons and Promising Practices for Attracting and Retaining Newcomers

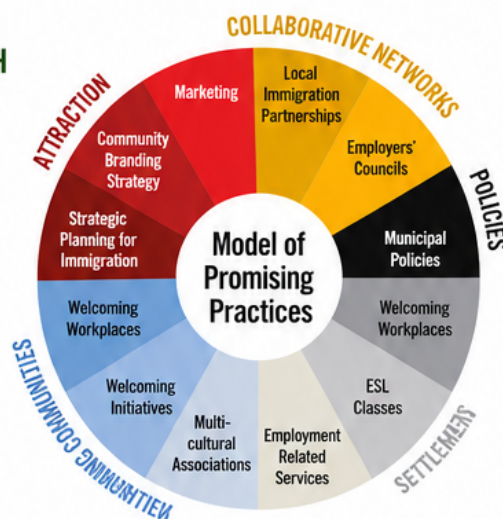
INTRODUCTION

Rural communities across Ontario face population decline, labour shortages, demographic change, and the out-migration of young people. Immigration offers an important opportunity to strengthen local economies, support workforce needs, and sustain vibrant rural communities. This research explored practical approaches that municipalities and community partners can use to attract, welcome, and retain newcomers.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Funded through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)–University of Guelph Partnership, this research examined immigration experiences, community capacity, promising practices, and municipal leadership opportunities in rural communities and small towns.

The work resulted in reports, workshops, presentations, community resources, and the book *Attracting and Retaining Newcomers in Rural Communities and Small Towns*.



WHAT WE LEARNED

ATTRACTING NEWCOMERS

Community branding, marketing, workforce opportunities, and strategic planning help communities become visible and competitive destinations.

SUPPORTING SETTLEMENT

Language services, employment supports, community networks, and accessible information help newcomers establish roots.

BUILDING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Inclusive attitudes, community participation, and local leadership strengthen long-term retention and community well-being.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Immigration Supports Rural Vitality**
Newcomers can help address labour shortages, population decline, and demographic challenges facing rural communities.
- 2 Municipal Leadership Matters**
Local governments play a critical role in creating welcoming environments and coordinating community responses.
- 3 Retention Is As Important As Attraction**
Successfully retaining newcomers requires long-term commitment and community engagement.
- 4 Collaboration Is Essential**
Strong partnerships among municipalities, employers, service providers, schools, and community organizations are key.
- 5 Welcoming Communities Succeed**
Communities that embrace diversity and support integration are more likely to attract and retain newcomers.

WHY IT MATTERS



Immigration is a powerful tool for building economic resilience and addressing workforce needs.



Newcomers contribute to community life, diversity, innovation, and local prosperity.



Long-term success depends on attracting newcomers, helping them settle, and creating communities where they choose to stay.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED



Develop local immigration strategies



Build strong collaborative networks



Engage newcomers in decision-making



Support employers and workforce integration



Promote rural quality of life and community assets



Adopt a "No Wrong Door" approach to services

RESEARCH CREDITS

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Funding:
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) – University of Guelph Partnership

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit the project website for reports, presentations, workshop materials, and community resources.

www.waynecaldwell.ca/projects/working-with-immigrants/

Book:

Attracting and Retaining Newcomers in Rural Communities and Small Towns
Wayne Caldwell, Brianne Labute, Bakhtawar Khan, and Natasha D'Souza

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