

NORTHWEST REGIONAL WELCOMING COMMUNITIES (NWRWC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction and Background

The NWRWC derives from a feasibility study that assessed the need and sustainability of a Zonal Immigration Partnership (ZIP) in Manitoba's Northwest area, which includes the region from the Swan Valley to Thompson. ZIPs are regionally based, multi-sectoral partnerships formed and supported by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). They seek to increase newcomer integration and a community's ability to meet newcomer needs through collaborative planning rather than direct service delivery.

While North West Regional Immigrant Services (NWRIS) provides critical settlement services in the region, the feasibility study found an absence of formal, coordinated, multi-sectoral activities aimed at developing strategies for welcoming, settling, and integrating newcomers. Stakeholders from across the region indicated interest and support for the establishment of a ZIP in which communities can work together to better support the development of welcoming communities in which all newcomers can fully engage and access services and employment.

Whilst NWRIS will continue to provide direct client services to Newcomers, NWRWC will provide support and guidance to communities and stakeholders.

This Terms of Reference describes the NWRWC objectives, structure, membership, functions, and operational rules.

2. Purpose, Vision, and Mandate

The main **purpose** of the NWRWC is to serve as a ZIP in the Northwest region. A ZIP is a collaborative framework that supports the formation of community-based partnerships and planning for immigrant needs.

The long-term objective for the NWRWC, in line with other ZIPs, is to foster multi-sectoral partnerships at the local level to:

- Incorporate newcomers' needs into community planning processes.
- Determine community-specific strategic priorities.
- Develop a settlement strategy and action plans to improve newcomer outcomes.

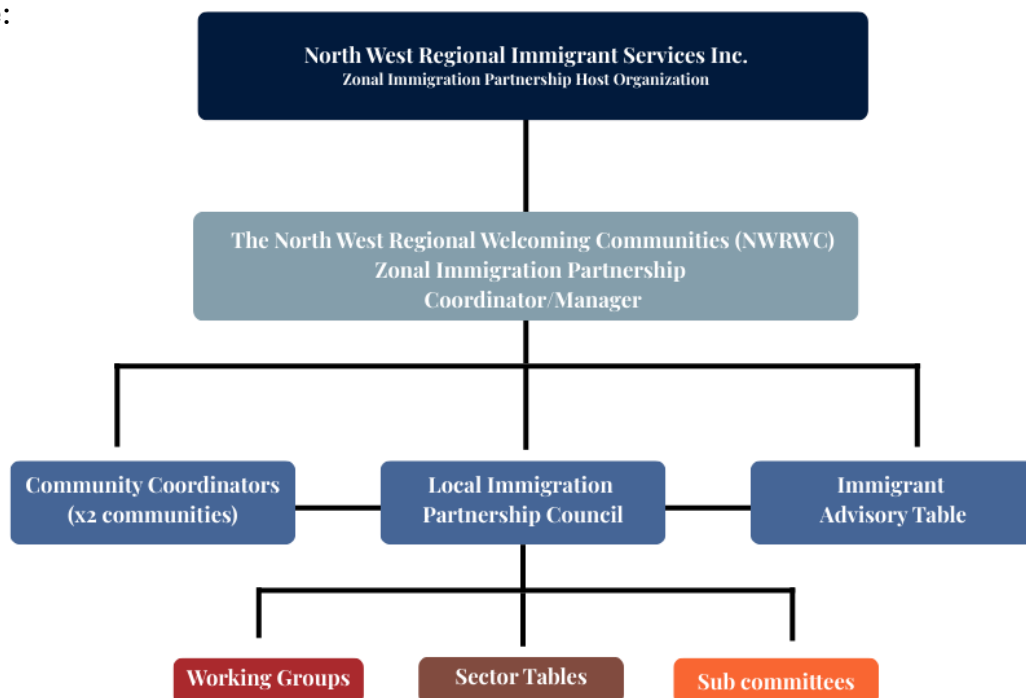
The NWRWC's mandate is to provide the communities in the region opportunities to collaborate on the development of a coordinated plan for growth, and to raise awareness of the components of a welcoming community. The ZIP will focus on engaging partners, stakeholders and community supporters and will assist settlement services and mainstream organizations and institutions to connect with newcomers, raising awareness of issues facing newcomers and to establish inclusive practices within organizations. This includes improving the coordination of social services for newcomers, assessing their requirements, and increasing awareness of the benefits of immigration. The NWRWC will build on current community relationships by conducting discussions on immigration concerns and welcoming communities.

3. Scope and Area Served

The NWRWC program is intended to assist Manitoba's Northwest region, specifically the communities between the **Swan Valley and the Thompson Area**; the effort seeks to reach and engage these newcomer-receiving communities.

4. Governance Structure

The NWRWC will operate under a governance structure designed to facilitate collaboration and strategic planning across the region. Key components of the proposed structure include:



Host Organization

Northwest Regional Immigrant Services Inc. (NWRIS) serves as the host organization and holds the IRCC Contribution Agreement (CA). It has overall governance for the organization.

Zonal Immigration Partnership

The Northwest Regional Welcoming Communities (NWRWC) functions as the ZIP initiative, led by a coordinator who manages and oversees planning, coordination, and stakeholder engagement across the region.

Core Components

- **Local ZIP support workers** – Local staff based in the participating communities who provide on-the-ground leadership and ensure regional representation.
- **Local Immigration Partnership Council** – The central body that sets direction, and guides the overall objectives of the ZIP.
- **Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT)** – Provides newcomer and lived-experience perspectives, ensuring policies and strategies reflect real settlement and integration needs.

Collaborative Structures

- **Sub Committees** – Region specific committees to ensure that municipalities have an opportunity to participate in the NWRWC to identify region specific concerns for the development of strategic planning and other NWRWC initiatives
- **Sector Tables** – Forums that bring together stakeholders around key priority areas (e.g., employment, housing, health, language training, Indigenous–newcomer relations).
- **Working Groups** – Flexible, ad hoc teams formed to respond to specific issues or emerging needs identified in the strategic plan or by the Council.

This structure is designed to be appropriate and effective for the region, acknowledging the unique characteristics of the communities and the needs of newcomers.

5. Membership

Membership in the NWRWC should be broad and inclusive, including representatives from all sectors and communities within the specified region. Members will be chosen from a pool of volunteers and persons who expressed an interest through applications, municipalities, business organizations, associations, and other stakeholders with a direct relationship to welcoming and receiving newcomers.

Partnership Council:

To guarantee variety, the proposed membership ranges from 8 to 15 people. Members should be high-level decision-makers from a cross section of various sectors in the region, with community influence and decision-making skills within their field.

- Representatives from diverse sectors including, but not limited to government (municipal, provincial, federal), Indigenous organizations education, health, employers, settlement services, newcomers, refugee sponsorship groups, ethno-cultural community groups, social services.
- One board member from the host organization (NWRIS).
- At least one member who is a newcomer.
- The representatives should be from across the region being covered by the ZIP

Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT):

Composed of immigrants reflecting diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Sector Tables, Sub Committees and Working Groups:

Can include NWRWC Partnership Council members and other individuals from within the various sectors and communities. Working group members should act as subject matter experts. Representation from municipalities is needed where applicable.

Membership commitment: Members representing organizations or sectors will be asked to commit for a minimum term of one year.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Host Organization (NWRIS):

As the CA holder, NWRIS is responsible for:

- Holding the IRCC Contribution Agreement.
- Meeting IRCC's eligibility criteria and reporting requirements.
- Managing finances and ensuring financial accountability to IRCC.
- Overseeing the budget
- Providing governance and oversight
- Providing organizational, management, and administrative support to the NWRWC Coordinator and initiative.
- Hiring and managing NWRWC staff, including the ZIP coordinator and Local Zip Support Workers

ZIP Coordinator:

A critical role in the initial creation and ongoing operation of the ZIP. The host organization employs and manages the ZIP coordinator. Responsibilities include:

- Supporting the NWRWC Partnership Council and committees.
- Hiring and managing Local ZIP Support Workers
- Receiving guidance and support from the Executive Director and the Board of NWRIS
- Directing Working Groups.
- Facilitating strategic planning based on research and community feedback.
- Ensuring the ZIP follows IRCC's guidelines and reporting to IRCC (via NWRIS).
- Serving as the media contact.
- Possessing knowledge of newcomer issues, regional networks, and network management skills.

Local ZIP Support Workers:

Located in each community (except where the Coordinator is based) to provide local leadership and representation. They assist the ZIP coordinator and various committees.

NWRWC Partnership Council:

Responsibilities include:

- Developing strategic directions and action plans based on stakeholder input.
- Facilitating and monitoring strategic plan implementation.
- Initiating discussions to identify priorities, gaps, and opportunities.
- Elevating newcomer voices and advocating on newcomer issues.
- Attending meetings and actively participating in discussions.
- Reviewing programs and identifying gaps/challenges/opportunities.
- Building collegial working relationships.
- Championing the work of the NWRWC.

Co-Chairs: One or two co-chairs selected by the Partnership Council.

Responsibilities may include:

- Leading Partnership Council meetings.
- Coordinating agenda development.

Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT):

Acts in an advisory capacity. Responsibilities include:

- Providing a newcomer perspective on settlement and integration issues.
- Acting as a liaison between newcomers, the Council, and committees.
- Contributing to the work of other committees/working groups.
- Providing feedback on the strategic plan and initiatives.
- Providing ideas and recommendations for implementing the vision.
- Connecting with their social groups to share ideas.

Working Groups/Committees:

Operate under the guidance of the Partnership Council. Responsibilities include:

- Working on specific projects or priority areas, regionally or locally, identified in the strategic plan or emerging issues.
- Producing tangible project outputs.
- Developing and implementing their own plans within the wider scope.
- Reporting back to the Partnership Council on discussions, activities, and recommendations.
- Acting as subject matter experts.
- Following through on assigned tasks.

7. Working Groups and Committees

Working groups are intended to be flexible ad hoc groupings that respond to new needs and concerns. Specific target areas may include newcomer employment, healthcare, housing, positive views toward newcomers, and access to immigrant-serving services. The ZIP coordinator leads working groups.

Working groups should include municipal representatives as appropriate. Each working group may create its own Terms of Reference, which include its name, members, goals, meeting frequency, communications, and conflict of interest statement. Members may be selected from the Council, Sector Tables, IAT, or other relevant community stakeholders.

8. Meetings

The NWRWC Partnership Council will meet quarterly. Flexibility in meeting times and format (hybrid/virtual) is important given the geographic area

Meeting minutes will be kept, approved at the following meeting, and shared with the board of NWRIS and IRCC at the time of writing.

Agendas will be set, and members may propose items. Members unable to attend may send regrets and send an alternate representative if appropriate.

Working groups will also meet regularly, with frequency determined by the group, reporting back to the council.

9. Decision Making

Consensus building should be the primary decision-making technique whenever possible. A majority vote may be used to make decisions when consensus is not possible or when time is of the essence. Each member with voting status on the Council has one vote. The Chair leads voting procedures. IRCC representatives and staff participate as ex-officio members and do not vote. The Chair will have the deciding vote if needed. Voting may also be carried out by email if necessary.

Final decision-making authority remains with the Host Organization (NWRIS) in adherence to the contribution agreement provisions, and resolutions/policies will be forwarded to the NWRIS Board for final ratification

Three members of the partnership Council will be part of the NWRIS Board. The first appointee will be the council chair, the second/third person will be appointed. As board members of NWRIS they will be expected to attend the regular board meetings via zoom or in person.

10. Conflict of Interest

Members are expected to declare any actual, perceived, or possible conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when a member's actions or decisions may unfairly benefit their personal or economic interests, their organization, or relatives or acquaintances.

When a member declares a conflict, he or she should withdraw from any associated discussions or votes. Members should not utilize their membership for personal gain. The Council or the relevant committee may have the ability to decide how to settle the conflict.

11. Confidentiality

Members are expected to maintain confidentiality about NWRWC business and will not share confidential information gained at meetings without prior approval.

12. Media and Communications

All media inquiries concerning the NWRWC should normally be directed to designated spokespersons, such as the Executive Director, the NWRWC coordinator, or the council chair. Individual members normally do not have the authority to speak on behalf of the council unless specifically permitted.

External communications and press releases may require evaluation or approval, sometimes from the funder (IRCC). All communications should **acknowledge the contribution offered by the Government of Canada via IRCC**. Communications should be ethical, respectful, and inclusive; hate speech and bullying will not be accepted.

13. Terms of Reference Review and Amendment

These terms of reference are meant to be a dynamic document. The ToR will be evaluated annually, by the NWRWC Partnership Council. Any proposed changes must be accepted or approved by the partnership council before they are sent to the board for final ratification.

13. Agreement to Terms of Reference

Members of the NWRWC Partnership Council and working groups are normally expected to acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to the Terms of Reference. This demonstrates their dedication to the NWRWC's mandate, aims, values, and operational principles.