



THE ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION LAB

THREE YEARS IN REVIEW

MARCH 2020

 **NouLAB**



Economic
Immigration Lab

REPORT PREPARED BY

Joanna Brown, Lewis Muirhead, Jules Maitland, Amanda Hachey, Shawni Beaulieu, and Jason Doiron with feedback from Karina LeBlanc.

NouLAB can be reached at innovate@noulab.org

Photos by Storywork Media - jared@storyworkmedia.com

Graphic Recording by Rachel Derrah and Louise Lyman of bravespace.ca

Report design by Mylène Després - info@lastationsupport.com

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THE ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION LAB THREE YEARS IN REVIEW

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a review of the three-year Economic Immigration Lab, June 2017 to March 2020, a social innovation lab facilitated by NouLAB. The report includes a review of lab activities and outputs, an evaluation of objectives, and a summary of learning and recommendations for the future.

More information can be found at:

economicimmigrationlab.org and immigration.noulab.org

ABOUT NOULAB

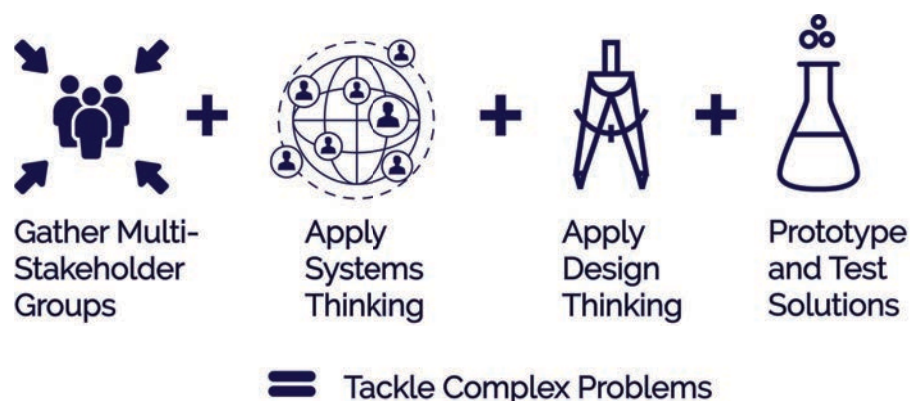
NouLAB helps the public and innovators act together to address our most pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges. By connecting change agents from across sectors, convening them around pressing issues, and facilitating their journey to deep change, NouLAB is making the change process smarter.

Designed to address public challenges that affect many and which no single party or institution can solve alone, NouLAB exists to be a trusted, neutral convener of the change process. As an organization its goal is to attain the most desirable outcomes for all stakeholders. NouLAB offers the space and process to do this.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB?

A Social Innovation Lab aims to effect systems level change, cultural and structural changes that result in shifting the outcomes for everyone who interacts with this reality, such as immigration. The Economic Immigration Lab is focused on making it easier for all newcomers to settle in New Brunswick. Social labs succeed if they have strong relationships that are central in making widespread, structural and cultural change.

*For an in-depth look at the context and need for immigration in NB:
<https://www.newconversationsnb.com/immigration-imperative/>
and <https://www.newconversationsnb.com/immigration-imperative/>



Social Innovation Labs are typically made up of 4 phases:

Discovery

Multi-sectoral teams are guided through activities designed to expand their understanding of the systemic nature of a challenge and uncover the root of the problem. Informed by systems thinking, lab participants explore the broader context and the dynamics between people, power, and resources related to the challenge.

Ideation

Participants then work through a rigorous design thinking process to generate many new ideas, the most promising of which are developed into prototypes.

Prototyping

These new ideas are developed into prototypes, which are then tested and refined. Teams use prototypes to test their assumptions about potential effective solutions. Following human-centred design practices, teams go out in the real world and test their ideas with users. The user feedback is tracked and integrated into further iterations of the prototype.

Implementation

High quality prototypes continue to live on, learn, and adapt, and require resources to continue to support them. Successful prototype teams partner with existing organizations, community groups, or government agencies to continue the testing and eventual implementation of their idea.

LABS HAVE 4 PRIMARY OUTPUTS

Prototyped services and infrastructure ready for further development.

At the end of the lab, some promising ideas emerge. These are not yet solutions, but the best ideas are ready for further development. With additional support and investments, these ideas develop into breakthrough solutions in the form of new services and infrastructure.

Individual capacity for innovation.

Individuals who complete a social innovation lab process are trained with new capacities, skills, and the ability to replicate the lab's approach to problem solving in their work and communities. The lab has an explicit goal of building capacity for public sector innovation.

Content expertise.

The lab stimulates new knowledge and learning about complex issues, a more comprehensive understanding of the context and dynamics at play, and builds awareness and readiness for the participants to tackle the challenge beyond the lab.

Networks and trust.

Social innovation labs foster new networks, characterized by increased trust in collaboration. People leave the lab with new relationships and connections that allow their work to be more effective and lead change initiatives inside and outside of their organizations.



THE ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION LAB THREE YEARS IN REVIEW

A SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB IS A
CONVENING OF MULTI-SECTORAL
STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK ON A
COMPLEX CHALLENGE.

THE ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION LAB STORY

The Economic Immigration Lab (EIL) is a social innovation lab designed to convene multi-sectoral stakeholders to work on the complex challenge of expanding immigration success in New Brunswick. The three year lab's objective was to:

- Build a deeper understanding of the newcomer and business perspectives of economic immigration in New Brunswick;
- Build a network of people who are working in this issue and give them space and a new set of tools to work on the challenge;
- Develop prototypes that are taking action on the issue from multiple angles and perspectives.



THE ECONOMIC IMMIGRATION LAB THREE YEARS IN REVIEW

The initial spark for the Economic Immigration Lab happened during NouLAB's Academy program, an introductory workshop on social innovation labs. At this workshop, Alex LeBlanc, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, and Adrienne O'Pray, CEO of the New Brunswick Business Council, found themselves talking about the dire need for immigration to the province and a new approach to solving this challenge. Alex, Adrienne, and the NouLAB team became the convening team, and started planning the Economic Immigration Lab.

Through their conversations and experience, Adrienne and Alex were both aware that traditional methods of attracting and retaining workers and their families to New Brunswick were not working and that systemic barriers hindered current immigration efforts. New Brunswick was facing the double threat of an aging and shrinking population, which had led to a significant shortage of skilled workers in our province. These challenges called for a new approach to immigration and to growing New Brunswick's economy.

The first step was to bring significant stakeholders to the table. An advisory group known as the Leadership Council (LC) was formed, with the purpose of making connections, fundraising, and helping to shape the lab's objectives. Funding and willpower was committed from the New Brunswick government's department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL), Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), McCain Foods, and Imperial Manufacturing and the stage was set for the first year of a three-year lab on economic immigration. These partnerships deepened year by year, and the Economic Immigration Lab was financially supported throughout the three years by PETL and ACOA.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

To help ensure a new approach in addressing immigration in New Brunswick, leaders from different sectors were approached to guide the development of the lab as members of the EIL Leadership Council. The Leadership Council was formed with the purpose of making connections, fundraising, and helping to shape the Lab's objectives. The Leadership Council was formed of leaders from a mixture of private and public organisations representing different perspectives:

Settlement Sector

- New Brunswick Multicultural Council
 - Alex LeBlanc, Executive Director (2016 - current)

Municipal

- City of Moncton
 - Angelique Reddy-Kalala (2017 - current)
- Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick
 - Frédérick Dion (2017 - 2018)

Business Community

- New Brunswick Business Council
 - Adrienne O'Pray, CEO (2016 - current)
- Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick inc.
 - Thomas Raffy (2017 - current)

Public Sector

- Government of New Brunswick - Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
 - Rob Kelly, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (2017- 2019)
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
 - Kalie Hatt-Kilburn (2017 - 2018)
 - Michael Collicott (2018 - current)
- Opportunities New Brunswick
 - Camille Bourque (2018 - current)

As the lab concept gained momentum, the Leadership Council met regularly to define the inquiry of the lab, the purpose, and the objectives. The inquiry that the lab was to explore the following questions during the lab process:

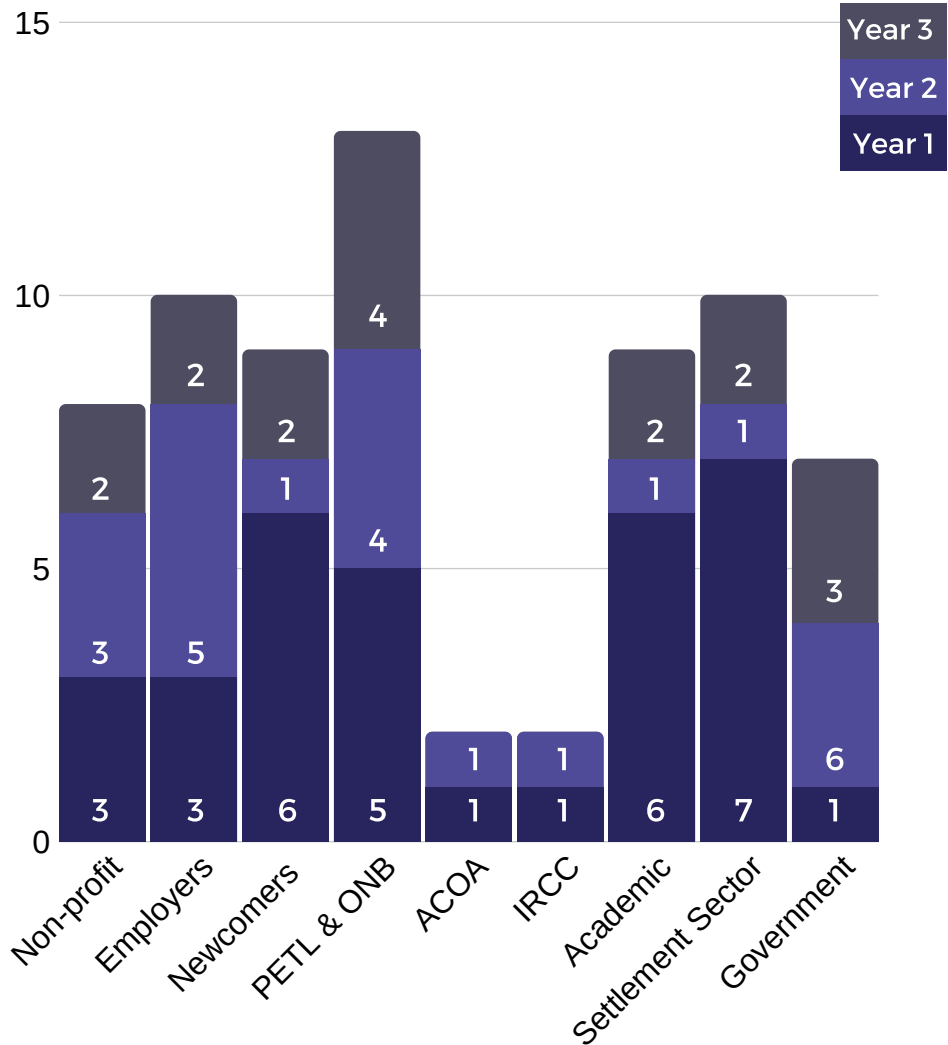
**HOW MIGHT WE BECOME
LEADERS AT ATTRACTING,
WELCOMING AND RETAINING
NEWCOMERS TO CONTRIBUTE
TO THE ECONOMY OF NEW
BRUNSWICK?**

**HOW MIGHT WE HELP
NEWCOMERS TO FIND
MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT
AND FEEL PART OF THE NEW
BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY?**

**HOW MIGHT WE HELP
EMPLOYERS FIND TALENT TO
GROW THEIR BUSINESSES?**

These questions guided the work of the lab and drew engagement from newcomers, businesses, government representatives, and community organisations to work on understanding the problem in more depth, test potential solutions, and re-immense our province in learning how we might become leaders in attracting, welcoming and retaining newcomers.

OUR NUMBERS PER CYCLE



\$43,750

PROTOTYPE FUND DISBURSEMENT TO SUPPORT TESTING

\$627,000+

IN-KIND TIME PROVIDED FOR FACILITATION AND SUPPORT

68 PARTICIPANTS

49 UNIQUE ORGANIZATIONS

15 PROTOTYPES

EIL IMPACTS

The Lab met its objectives through two distinct outcomes: **prototypes** and changes to the **individual perspective** on the issue.

Prototypes

Prototyping is about making an idea or concept tangible – whether that’s through writing, drawing, storytelling, sculpting, digital mockups, or some other approach. Prototyping is not just about the act of making something real, but also about learning something from this process – most commonly in social labs, this is about either testing feasibility, or putting it into people’s hands to get feedback on the idea, or test demand.

- Roller Strategies

Whether the prototypes continue being tested and refined beyond the lab, or if they “fail early” and discontinue, the prototypes developed during the course of the EIL have provided value in multiple ways.

They continue after the lab. Prototypes continue beyond the lab, taking a novel approach to addressing root causes of the challenges facing immigrant attraction and retention. Some prototypes are promising enough to attract partners, funding, and implementation support outside of the lab.

They validate existing initiatives. Teams sometimes unknowingly replicate ideas that already exist or are in development elsewhere. The ideas generated by a diverse and multi sectoral prototype team validate the direction and strategy of these immigration initiatives.

They provide new insights. Not all prototypes continue, but they often provide new insights or nuance to a challenge that was not previously considered.

They have significant ripple effects. Individuals lead effective immigration change initiatives inside and outside of their organizations related to their prototype that are augmented by the lab experience.

One of the potential outcomes of the Economic Immigration Lab, was the ideation and testing of prototypes. In total, the EIL participants developed fifteen prototypes over the three years.

A photograph of two men, one older and one younger, both wearing glasses, leaning over a table. They are looking at a large sheet of paper with a diagram that includes a house icon and the word 'PROBLE'. The older man is pointing at the paper with a pen. The background is blurred, showing other people in a room. The entire image has a blue tint.

**ALL THE PROTOTYPES WERE
GUIDED BY THE QUESTION:**

**HOW MIGHT WE BECOME LEADERS
AT ATTRACTING, WELCOMING, AND
RETAINING NEWCOMERS TO
CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY OF
NEW BRUNSWICK?**

SUMMARY OF PROTOTYPES BY THEME (Click titles for links to more info)

ATTRACTING NEWCOMERS

Focus

How Might We

Prototype

Employer Process

How might we help small NB recruiters to navigate the immigration process effectively?

A concierge service for businesses to streamline the process for hiring new employees from outside of Canada by guiding them through the government requirements during the hiring process through one point of contact.

Employer to Employee Connections

How might we help employers looking for low skilled workers to find the right fit?

A screening tool that helps employers assess and identify their hiring needs and match them with appropriate resources and support.

Match NB

How might we help the NB private sector to initiate an international hiring process?

A matching service for recently settled immigrants to find employers that need their skill sets.

Destination New Brunswick

How might we help employers looking for high skilled workers navigate the resources available to recruit and retain newcomers?

A “one stop shop” for employers to navigate the resources available to recruit and retain newcomers.

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

Focus

Community Engagement

How Might We

How might we help newcomers of all backgrounds create meaningful relationships outside of their cultural community of origin?

Prototype

A group included mostly newcomers, built and tested ways to help groups be welcoming and connect across cultural differences.

Diversity Champions

How might we help refugee children feel safe in the Parkton community?

Diversity Champions formed a welcome committee with Parkton residents who collectively hosted community gatherings to see if it helped increase people's feelings of safety.

Capacity For Courage

How might we intentionally create opportunities for local New Brunswickers to connect and share experiences with the others outside their circle?

Bringing local and newcomer children closer together through helping educators bring cultural diversity awareness into the classroom and schools.

Rural Immigration Support

How might we help female newcomers between the ages of 20-45 call Miramichi home?

An invitation to new immigrants and longer-term Miramichi residents to a meeting with a social component that focuses on learning what each person could do to help connectivity between new and existing Miramichi residents.

RETAINING NEWCOMERS

Focus

Foreign

Competency

Recognition

How Might We

How might we help SME employers understand and recognize how immigrant job seekers competencies meet their job requirements?

Prototype

Online tool to help translate and document job seekers' competencies and link them to roles that match their experience.

Internationally

Educated Nurses

How might we better understand the experience of internationally educated nurses (IENs) applying for registered nurse status in NB to improve the process for future IENs navigating the process successfully and gaining employment?

A navigator service to guide potential nurses through the process of immigration, securing employment and settlement in New Brunswick.

Les Connecteurs

How can we help francophone international students in the IT and health industries find a job in their field and gain Canadian work experience?

A student committee that focused on raising awareness in international students of the benefits and importance of English and French language skills and learning Canadian workplace cultural norms.

Newcomer to

Influencer

How might we help GNB hire those who participated in the student employment experience development program over the last year to participate fully in the workplace?

Provide a 1-year internship to newcomers to help work on improving diversity in government employees and show a clear path between entry-level positions and upper management, regardless of background.

RETAINING NEWCOMERS (CONT'D)

Focus

Business Council for Immigrant Entrepreneurs

How Might We

How might we help nominees from the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in the business stream to have a voice and influence through a provincial organization?

Prototype

A business council for new immigrants and hosting a conference for business immigrants to share knowledge and provide a voice for new immigrant business owners.

Technology Action Group

How might we empower skilled IT professional newcomers to find purposeful employment?

A working group including a settlement agency, immigration support, technology incubator to help navigate IT employees to appropriate positions.

Système Éducatif

How might we, the Francophone school system, respond to the expectations of newcomer parents?

Building an understanding of the reason that immigrant families chose the francophone school system so they can attract more newcomer families.



SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS

Attracting Newcomers

- There is a mismatch between how New Brunswick is presented to potential immigrants, and the reality once they arrive; Employers are unaware of the benefits of hiring newcomers and their hiring needs are not well understood, making effective recruiting a challenge;
- Employers need a simpler way to understand the resources that are available, and how to take advantage of them;
- There are inefficiencies and bottlenecks in our system - many tied to paperwork and knowing what is needed and how to navigate the process;
- Smaller to medium sized businesses have less awareness and time to learn how to navigate hiring newcomers, which effectively eliminates the option to hire them;
- Participants' level of engagement with immigration: employers were either on a continuum of engagement (from first-time to super user) or were disengaged (having stalled or paused immigration efforts). Those who disengaged cited the intrusiveness of the designation process and/or the incompatibility of immigration timelines with their hiring needs;
- The nature of their company's hiring needs: immigration appears to be a more viable hiring strategy for companies with predictable hiring needs than employers who cannot predict the exact skill set or timing and duration of their vacancies (e.g., contract trades, specialist consulting);
- Peer support network: employers who were most actively engaged with immigration also had the strongest peer support networks, both internally (from colleagues who assisted with forecasting, recruitment, and settlement) and externally (with established relationships with settlement agencies, government departments and others with experience of immigration).

Welcoming Newcomers

- The benefits (and the absolute necessity) of immigration to New Brunswick is not common public knowledge;
- The lab highlighted the importance of integrating families into communities;
- Need to take many little steps to help create a cultural shift in order to become a welcoming province to all;
- People are just unaware of what causes cultural divides and racism;
- People are ready to learn and make change if we give them enabling support.

Retaining Newcomers

- Newcomers want to be able to engage and help mold our province's future as fellow citizens (leadership roles, business influence, etc.);
- Newcomers do not see themselves reflected in the government or in those with power;
- There is a general lack of awareness and understanding of the Canadian workplace culture amongst newcomers;
- Situation of unintentional immigrant hires, which happened when internationally educated students or newcomers applied for general job postings. The success of these unintentional newcomer hires motivated the employers to intentionally adopt immigration as a hiring strategy.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

The participants weren't the only ones who gained knowledge in regards to prototyping, so did the NouLAB team, especially when it came to supporting prototype development. Over the years, we learned that there tended to be two types of teams: Learning Objective Teams and Prototype Evolution Teams.

The Learning Objective Prototype Teams tended to be more focused on some specific learnings linked to their prototype testing. These teams tended to have less capacity to invest in development of the prototype after the lab. Once a Learning Objective Team's prototype was tested, they took those learnings, shared them with their respective networks, and invested their new-found knowledge into their work outside of the lab. These prototypes resulted in harvested information, expanded and deepened understanding of the challenge, and the formation of new networks and working relationships.

The Prototype Evolution Teams explored the challenge and dove into their prototype with a longer-term lens. These teams were able to iterate their prototype concept based on learnings gained through prototyping and move their prototype towards a potential pilot.

These prototypes needed to have some key enabling conditions. These core enablers were:

- One or two prototype champion(s) who are invested in moving the prototype team's learning forward;
- Ongoing support from management or their supervisors to give team members time to work on developing the prototype, and;
- Appropriate funds to help the prototype develop.

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Prototype teams that had these enabling conditions were able to deepen and extend their learning of the prototype and of the initial challenge outside of the lab.

We asked EIL participants to reflect on the learnings they acquired throughout their time in the lab. Each prototype team had concrete learnings tied to their specific challenge and the prototype. Further information about the EIL prototypes as well as the scaleable learnings and leverage points for action can be found at the websites below:

- [Immigration.noulab.org](https://immigration.noulab.org)
- [Economicimmigrationlab.org](https://economicimmigrationlab.org)

Some of the global insights, themes, and patterns that emerged during the three-year lab are compiled below as well as some recommendations of how to work in these particular spaces in immigration.



INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

The Economic Immigration Lab helped instill new approaches for doing things in immigration work by providing a safe place for collaboration to occur and encouraged creative ideas to come to the surface. The lab brought people from all walks of life together to work on one challenge allowing for trust and new relationships to be built. While the prototypes are the more tangible outcome of lab work, the individual change and changed perspective may ultimately be longer lasting. This individual change was facilitated and intentionally driven by the deep work done in the lab sessions. Participants were challenged to hold their preconceived biases at the door and be open to diverse perspectives.

An EIL participant commented during a check out:

“The old way of doing things in immigration meant reaching a quota of new immigrants. Now, with this new way of working, it’s about community relationship building with newcomers.”

The impacts of the lab go further than just prototyping concepts. Many lasting impacts permeated the cultural and individual fabrics of those who have participated in the EIL. For more detailed EIL impacts, you can read our reports from each year of the EIL economicimmigrationlab.org/resources.

High level impacts of the EIL have been:

- Over a hundred stakeholders engaged at the grassroots level;
- Improved and deepened understanding of the newcomer experience;
- Improved and deepened understanding of the employer experience;
- Fifteen prototype teams testing and learning from prototypes;
- Learnings that are scalable to other communities;
- Greater understanding of leverage points for action;
- Built capacity for innovation through participants to take back to their places of work.

“If you build capacity there will be successes in 5-10 years. The next generations are going to have it, it is built in the culture now.”

The EIL will live on through the participants and the intention of the work to become leaders at attracting, welcoming, and retaining newcomers to contribute to New Brunswick's economy by:

- The resources and materials contained on the [EIL website](#) available for all to use;
- The momentum of the prototypes. Five prototypes have moved beyond the testing and learning phase into pilot/scaled implementation.
- The new networks, relationships, and collaborative work approaches of EIL alumni, who break down silos daily as this network of innovators continues to grow.

POLICY

The lab's impact on policy was significant. Policy makers worked closely with lab teams and tracked the findings of the prototypes to inform program creation. For example, Rob Kelly, as a member of the Leadership Council and Assistant Deputy Minister for the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, was able to bring EIL learnings directly to the program which resulted in important adjustments.

Policy Change

- Changes to the Atlantic Immigration Pilot included:
 - Adjustment to the work permit requirement for internationally educated nurses to allow them to work as support workers in care homes while they do their credentialing to become Registered Nurses;
 - Extension of work permit for post-secondary international students from one year to two years following graduation;
 - Ability for spouses of applicants to apply for work permit upon arrival to Canada;
 - Position created in the provincial government to navigate internationally educated nurses through the immigration and registration process;
 - The focus on the end-user in the AIP has been highlighted by the lab with influence on the process going up the federal immigration level at Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Policy changes that resulted from work done during the lab:

- The one-stop-shop for newcomers at the Fredericton Multicultural Association was inspired by conversations and connections in the lab;
- The silos within between different departments working on immigration are being removed;
- In the Internationally Educated Nurses program there is more openness for change from the regulators. They have been motivated and enabled to take bolder action;
- A detailed population growth strategy has been named as a prerequisite for municipalities to receive money from the province.

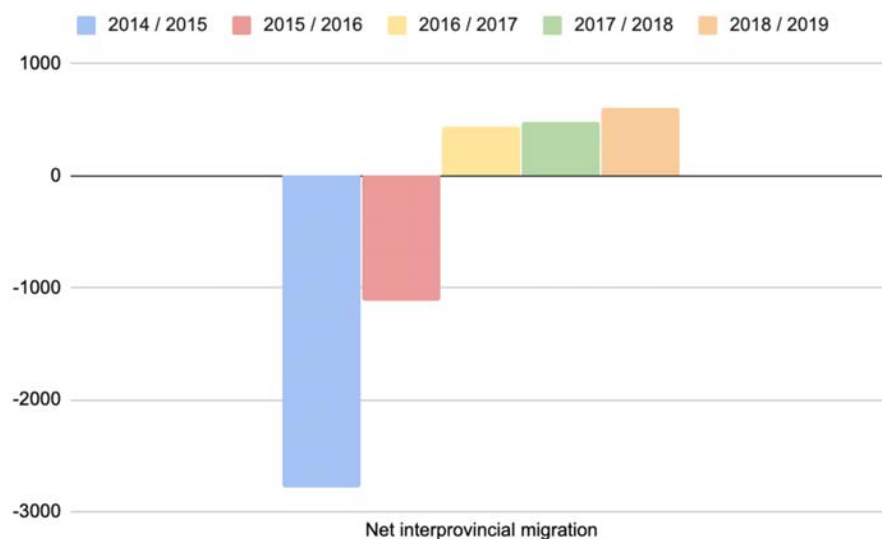
Policy Recommendations

- Continue to hold an open space for innovation in the immigration sector;
- Keep the end-user at the centre of all policy created;
- Integrate the development sector into the conversation around housing;
- In rural areas, more support is needed with transportation;
- Building widespread awareness for the need of immigration is important and continued support for initiatives like the [New Conversations Tour](#);
- Continued work is needed to focus on targeted recruitment strategies. Data shows that those who chose to come to New Brunswick stay here long term as opposed to those who didn't choose New Brunswick as their first choice;
- Support the private sector responses to the immigration challenge by incentivising businesses that are working to bring more people here;
- Build on the success of the cross-sectoral partnerships created during the lab by supporting government agencies to have time for listening to the needs of immigrants and businesses that could hire them;
- Support for local micro-initiatives where people are meeting and making new relationships is at the heart of integration. Recognising that no two communities are the same, a tailored approach is important.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The initial challenge that sparked the creation of the lab in 2016 (an aging and decreasing population contributing to a declining labour market) still exists today. However, recent data are showing positive trends.

New Brunswick is seeing an increase in immigration and an increase in interprovincial migration where more people are moving to New Brunswick than are leaving.



<https://davidwcampbell.com/2020/01/rumours-of-glory-new-brunswick-edition/>

Statistics Canada Table: 17-10-0008-01

New Brunswick is committed to not only recruiting newcomers, but to welcoming, investing, and enabling them to succeed and stay in our region.

The New Beginnings: A Population Growth Strategy for New Brunswick

2019 – 2024 report, outlines the province's goal of attracting 7,500 newcomers in New Brunswick annually with a 85% retention rate by 2024. In this report, Trevor Holder, the Minister of Post Secondary Education, Training and Labour underlined the importance of a grassroots approach that includes communities, key partners and all New Brunswickers. The work of convening and working effectively across these groups is at the heart of what NouLAB did with the EIL.

The most recent update from Premier Blaine Higgs during [The State of the Province Address](#) on January 30th 2020, laid out an immigration strategy that includes working with the Federal Government to bring 10,000 immigrants to the province by 2027. With dedicated resources, political will, the continued and vital work of those working in immigration, and the Economic Immigration Lab, New Brunswickers have never been better positioned to become leaders at attracting, welcoming, and retaining newcomers to contribute to the economy of New Brunswick.

EIL participants shared their perspectives on this with us:

- We have gotten smarter and strategic at targeting and retention;
- Change happens from the ground up and is everybody's responsibility;
- Just because we have willing employers and willing newcomers, it doesn't mean success;
- Work is still needed in New Brunswick to increase retention rates;
- We need to share experiences in different communities (even if they have different contexts) because the challenges are similar;
- We must continue to sharpen our collaboration skills;
- There is a continued need to provide space to step back from the day-to-day and innovate on systemic solutions to problems;
- Solving problems for newcomers addresses serious issues for all New Brunswickers. Problems with housing and transportation have been there for a long time, not just when it comes to immigration;
- It is important that we continue to support and deepen our welcoming of newcomers at community and business levels;
- Supporting employers to welcome workers from different backgrounds into the teams;
- Sustaining the welcoming initiatives / gestures so they can continue beyond "hello".

and emerge
and guided

Thank you to all the participants and organizations that invested their time into the Economic Immigration Lab. NouLAB continues to be engaged with the stakeholders from this project and can be reached at innovate@noulab.org. We look forward to hearing any feedback or questions you may have about this work.

