



# Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity *Report*

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DECEMBER 2024  
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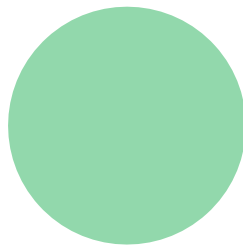
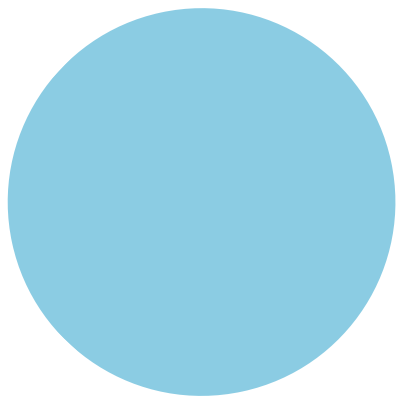
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# List of Acronyms

<b>2SLGBTQ+</b>	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus
<b>AAISA</b>	Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
<b>ARAO</b>	Anti-racism and Anti-oppression
<b>DEI</b>	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
<b>EDI</b>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>EOI</b>	Expression of Interest
<b>GBA Plus</b>	Gender-Based Analysis Plus
<b>IRCC</b>	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
<b>IRPA</b>	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
<b>JEDI</b>	Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>SIFA</b>	Settlement, Integration and Francophone Affairs



# Glossary of Terms

**2SLGBTQ+:** is the acronym used by the Government of Canada to refer to the Canadian community.

2S: at the front, recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQ+ communities; L: Lesbian; G: Gay; B: Bisexual; T: Transgender; Q: Queer; +: is inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies.

**Anti-racism:** The conscious opposition to racist theories, attitudes and actions. Anti-racism is not just about being against the idea of racism. It is also about taking active steps to fight against it.

**Anti-racism and Anti-oppression (ARAO):** Approaches that aim for broader systemic changes, such as dismantling structures of white supremacy.

**Decolonization:** Efforts aimed at relinquishing colonial power dynamics and structures.

**Disability:** Any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. This definition is in keeping with the social model of disability.

**Disaggregated data:** Data broken down by individual's attributes, enabling better understanding of the experiences and outcomes of specific population groups and intersecting identity factors.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI):** A framework focusing on creating inclusive spaces and fostering diverse representation within institutions.

**Environmental scan:** A research method used in this study to gather information about the current landscape of GBA Plus implementation in the sector.

**Equity-enhancing approaches:** Diverse array of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and concepts aimed at promoting fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities across various societal contexts. These include EDI, DEI, JEDI, IDEA, and Anti-racism and Anti-oppression (AR AO).

**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI):** A framework that focuses on creating inclusive spaces and fostering diverse representation within institutions.

**Expression of Interest (EOI):** A tool used in this study to identify potential participants and gather relevant demographic data.

**Gender-Based Analysis (GBA):** An earlier approach focused on addressing women's issues in policy making.

# Glossary of Terms

**Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus):** A comprehensive analytical tool to support the development of responsive and inclusive initiatives, including policies, programs, and other initiatives. GBA Plus is a process for understanding who is impacted by the issue being addressed by the initiative; identifying how the initiative could be tailored to meet diverse needs of the people most impacted; and anticipating and mitigating any barriers to accessing or benefitting from the initiative.

**Immigrant and refugee serving organizations:** Organizations, primarily non-profit and funded by IRCC, that offer comprehensive services to support the multifaceted needs of immigrants and refugees throughout their settlement journey in Canada.

**Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC):** The Canadian federal department responsible for matters relating to immigration, refugee resettlement, and citizenship.

**Intersectionality:** A theoretical framework that recognizes how multiple social categories (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, ability) intersect to create unique experiences and challenges for individuals. It emphasizes that people's lived experiences cannot be fully understood by examining any single identity factor in isolation.

**Intersectional reflexivity:** An approach in research that encourages awareness of how researchers' own social locations, biases, and privileges may impact the research process.

**Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI):** An expanded version of EDI that explicitly includes justice as a key component.

**National immigrant and refugee serving sector:** Organizations primarily funded by IRCC that offer comprehensive services to support the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada. Henceforth referred to as the sector.

**Purposive sampling:** This is a method of intentionally selecting participants based on their characteristics, knowledge, experiences, or some other criteria.

**Semi-structured interviews:** This is a qualitative research method that combines a predetermined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore themes or responses further.

**Settlement, Integration and Francophone Affairs (SIFA):** A branch of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) focused on settlement initiatives and Francophone affairs.

**Settlement services:** Essential services provided by the immigrant and refugee serving sector, including language training, employment assistance, information and orientation sessions, and community connection programs.

# Land Acknowledgement

As a National Project we would like to acknowledge that our work takes place across Turtle Island, which are the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples. The land that we now call Canada, from coast-to-coast-to-coast, has been stewarded by Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial and as we gather today, we pay respect and gratitude to the traditional caretakers and guardians of the land. These lands are either subject to First Nations self-government under modern treaty, unceded and unsurrendered territories, or traditional territories from which First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples have been displaced.

We acknowledge the historical and ongoing oppression of lands, cultures, and the original Peoples in what we now know as Canada, and the role that settlement has played in this oppression. As a sector, we must seek to work toward redressing the injustices from which Settlers of this land have benefitted and affirm our collective action and commitment in sharing in the journey of truth, reconciliation, and decolonization.

We encourage you to reflect today on the lands in which you call home, and how you can support these efforts.

# Project Contributors

The Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Report was authored by members of the National Research and GBA Plus Team. The National Research and GBA Plus Team includes the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA), Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA), Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA), and Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA).

This project is grateful to the service provider organizations who volunteered their time to participate in interviews. We appreciate and extend our thanks to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for their financial support.



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# Executive Summary

It has been long understood that the diversity of Canada’s immigrant and refugee population represents a multitude of cultures and experiences that require diverse and well thought out policies and programs to meet their unique needs. The federal government employs Gender-based Analysis (GBA) Plus as the analytical framework designed to best address the ongoing and emerging intersecting needs of Canada’s newcomer population. Newcomers to this country receive support in the form of language training, community connections programming, information and orientation sessions, employment assistance, and more which are essential to support their meaningful settlement and integration into Canadian society. All of this would not be feasible without Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), non-profit organizations primarily funded by IRCC, who work tirelessly to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees in urban and rural areas from coast to coast to coast.

GBA Plus is not a new concept in Canada with the federal government first adopting Gender-Based Analysis in 1995, before seeing its evolution into GBA Plus in 2011. The addition of the plus signified a shift in perspective in which identity factors beyond gender and sex were considered in policy analysis. This holistic view of policy analysis, programming, and evaluation recognizes that identity factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status intersect and generate different outcomes for newcomers. Even without a formal network of GBA Plus framework or policies, organizations in the sector have demonstrated their deep understanding of the principles of GBA Plus and intersectionality and have committed to improving outcomes for their communities. This report ultimately aims to better understand the extent to and application of GBA Plus in Canada’s immigrant and refugee serving sector. With this information the sector will be better positioned to support formal equity-building initiatives that are rooted in evidence-based approaches.

Through the *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project, research was conducted to better understand the current capacity of the sector in relation to implementing GBA Plus policies, principles, and practices, as well potential strategies to enhance this capacity. This research report highlights the key findings of this study and includes a literature review and environmental scan examining the current evidence base of GBA Plus application in the sector, and 18 formal interviews with SPOs across the country to

**The research findings are organized around six key themes spanning organizational capacity building to funding to program design and delivery:**

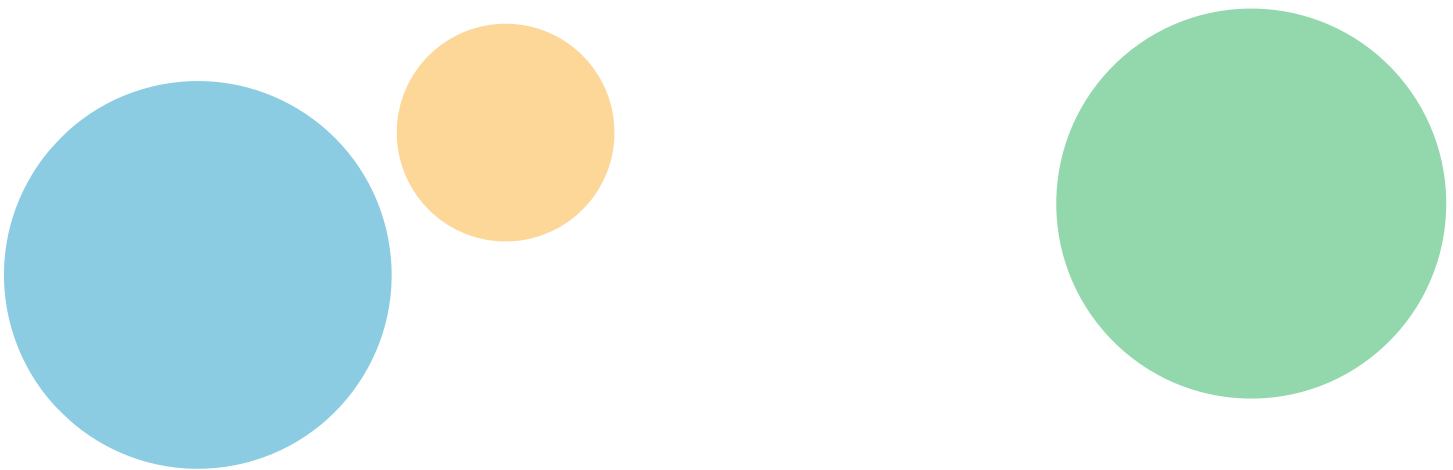
1. Disaggregated Data
2. Community-Centered Programming
3. Formal Policies
4. Lack of Funding Flexibility
5. Diverse Workforce
6. Training and Tools

# Executive Summary

gain insight into their experiences, both formal and informal, with GBA Plus. The research findings are organized around six key themes spanning organizational capacity building to funding to program design and delivery:

1. Disaggregated Data
2. Community-Centered Programming
3. Formal Policies
4. Lack of Funding Flexibility
5. Diverse Workforce
6. Training and Tools

Each theme is analyzed in relation to one or more of the GBA Plus principles mentioned above which serves to identify gaps, strengths, and opportunities that exist across the sector and how that reflects mainstreaming efforts of GBA Plus in practices, principles, and policies. By closely examining each theme this report serves as a foundational document from which the sector can continue its efforts to expand and enhance GBA Plus capacity building efforts which ultimately serve to support the diverse needs and experiences of newcomers. Looking towards the future, this report concludes with a suite of recommendations that advocate for a more inclusive and equitable service environment.



# Introduction

As a settler-colony, immigration is inextricably linked to Canada's economic, social, and cultural fabric. As of 2021, Canada had the highest proportion of immigrants in the G7, with nearly one quarter of the Canadian population (23.0%) identifying as an immigrant (Statistics Canada, 2022). With immigration as the bedrock of Canadian society, and the main driver of Canada's population growth and economic development, the country's immigrant and refugee serving sector plays an essential role in supporting Canada's economic growth through the successful settlement and integration of newcomers. The immigrant and refugee population in Canada is characterized by its diversity, representing a wide array of backgrounds, experiences, and needs. This heterogeneity challenges the notion of newcomers as a uniform group and highlights the importance of tailored approaches to integration and support services. It is considering this that Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), a comprehensive analytical framework developed by the Canadian federal government, contributes to addressing the increasingly diverse needs of the country's population.

GBA Plus is designed to foster the creation of inclusive policies, programs, and initiatives across various sectors. It goes beyond traditional gender-based analysis by incorporating an intersectional approach that considers a wide range of factors influencing individuals' experiences and outcomes (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). These factors include, but are not limited to, age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation (Department of Justice Canada, 2022; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). GBA Plus is particularly relevant to the work of immigrant and refugee serving agencies in Canada, as these organizations serve a diverse population of newcomers with intersecting identities and experiences. This approach allows for more nuanced program design, resource allocation, outcome measurement, and evaluation practices, ultimately leading to more equitable and impactful settlement services.

Recent research has highlighted multifaceted challenges faced by immigrants and refugees, emphasizing the intersectionality of social identities in shaping their experiences. Studies have shown that factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status can intersect and exacerbate the difficulties encountered by newcomers, resulting in compounded marginalization (Marshall, 2021; Carpino, 2024). This growing body of evidence underscores the necessity for a more nuanced understanding of the immigrant experience and calls for more comprehensive support systems.

While many organizations in the sector have informally adopted Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) principles, there is a significant lack of research on its specific application within this context. To address this knowledge gap, a national initiative led by the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) and partnering umbrella organizations, aims to enhance the sector's capacity to mainstream GBA Plus within organizational programs, policies, and procedures. *The Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), seeks to

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develop sector-specific research, create bilingual guidance on mainstreaming GBA Plus, and facilitate both resource development and knowledge exchange. The project's goal is to better understand and enhance the capacity of the sector regarding its implementation and application of GBA Plus principles in its programming, policies, and practices. This report highlights the findings from the primary and secondary research of the *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project and provides discussion and recommendations to support targeted capacity enhancement across the sector.

## Scope and Terminology

The scope and terminology of this report require clarification before delving into its objectives. An environmental scan conducted as part of this research revealed an interesting trend in the sector: while GBA Plus is a framework developed by the Government of Canada to promote inclusive policies and programs, its explicit use in the sector appears limited. With few exceptions in recent years briefly citing GBA Plus, most organizations do not explicitly reference this framework in their initiatives. This observation suggests that while GBA Plus may be known in the sector, its formal adoption or explicit integration into organizational practices is not widespread. Consequently, while this report maintains a focus on GBA Plus, it also broadens its scope to consider other equity-enhancing approaches that may be more commonly used or referenced by organizations in the sector, which maintain significant overlap with GBA Plus.

Equity-enhancing approaches encompass a diverse array of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and concepts aimed at promoting fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities across various societal contexts. These approaches include, but are not limited to, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI), and Anti-racism and Anti-oppression (ARAO), as well as decolonization efforts. Each of these frameworks emphasizes different aspects of equity work, reflecting their specific histories, focal points, and the contexts in which they were developed and are applied. Applications of these can range from traditional Human Resources approaches to more interventionist and transformative strategies. These may include intentional hiring practices focused on increasing representation of underrepresented groups, regular reviews of compensation and staff promotion processes to ensure fairness, policy advocacy to address systemic barriers, and community organizing to amplify marginalized voices. Many organizations therefore adopt elements from multiple frameworks to create comprehensive equity strategies tailored to their specific contexts and needs. Hence, it's crucial to understand that these various approaches are not mutually exclusive and often overlap in their goals, methods, and underlying principles.

The terminology used to describe the sector that provides programs and services to immigrants and

# Introduction

refugees is a subject of ongoing discussion and debate within the field. This diversity in nomenclature reflects the complex nature of the work and the varied perspectives of stakeholders involved. The term “newcomer-serving sector” is preferred by some organizations as it encompasses a broad range of services and advocacy efforts for immigrants, refugees, and newcomers, emphasizing the inclusivity of their work. However, other commonly used terms include “settlement and integration sector”, which highlights the dual focus on initial settlement and long-term integration processes, and “immigrant and refugee serving sector”, which explicitly names the primary populations served. Each of these terms carries slightly different connotations and may be chosen based on organizational goals or philosophy, target audience, or policy context. The choice of terminology can also reflect evolving understandings of migration experiences and the desire to avoid potentially stigmatizing language. In the context of this report, given the multiple partners involved in the project and the need for a consistent term, the project has opted to use “sector”, or simply “the sector”. This choice aims to strike a balance between specificity and inclusivity, acknowledging the primary groups served while recognizing the breadth of programs, services and support provided by organizations within this sector.

## Research Objectives

The *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project seeks to examine the current status and ability of the sector to integrate a GBA Plus approach throughout all aspects of its work. As highlighted in the introduction, a GBA Plus approach utilizes intersectional analysis to develop policies, programs, and initiatives that are responsive, inclusive, and equitable. In this context, “mainstreaming” a GBA Plus approach refers to:

1. Fully incorporating GBA Plus principles and practices into all activities of an organization.
2. Ensuring this integration occurs at every stage - from design and planning to implementation and evaluation.
3. Applying this approach across all areas - including programming, policies, research, advocacy, and other initiatives.
4. Involving staff at all levels in implementing this approach.

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Hence, the specific objectives of this research report are:

- 1.** To establish baseline information on the sector's current status and capacity regarding GBA Plus implementation at organizational, client, and program levels.
- 2.** To identify key gaps, assets, and opportunities for embedding GBA Plus principles and promising practices within newcomer-serving organizations and the broader sector
- 3.** To support the development of targeted recommendations that will help the sector:
  - a.** Address systemic gaps
  - b.** Build collective capacity
  - c.** Firmly establish the systematic implementation of GBA Plus-informed programming, practices, and policies on a national scale



# Literature Review

To orient the Findings and Discussion of this report, this section provides a comprehensive overview of the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) framework, the concept of intersectionality, and the role of Canada’s immigrant and refugee serving sector in implementing these approaches. It begins by exploring the historical development and key principles of GBA Plus, tracing its evolution from its origins in the 1960s to its current status as a crucial analytical tool in Canadian policymaking. The section then delves into the concept of intersectionality, examining its theoretical foundations and practical implications for understanding the complex experiences of immigrants and refugees. Finally, it discusses the unique position of Canada’s immigrant and refugee serving sector in applying GBA Plus principles, highlighting the legal requirements, institutional structures, and challenges faced in this work. This overview provides essential context for understanding the subsequent findings and discussion, offering a foundation for analyzing how GBA Plus and intersectional approaches are being implemented within the sector and identifying potential areas for improvement in policy and practice.

## **Government of Canada’s Approach to Gender and Diversity: Background to GBA Plus**

Gender-based Analysis (GBA) in Canada has a long history that has evolved significantly over time. The roots of gender initiatives in Canadian public policy can be traced back to the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967. In the 1970s, GBA emerged as a focused approach to address women’s issues in policy making (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). A pivotal moment came in 1995 when Canada formally committed to GBA following the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women. This conference called for “mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and the implementation of programmes” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). In response, Canada, along with other nations, committed to developing tools to evaluate progress in gender mainstreaming.

The evolution from GBA to GBA Plus occurred in 2011, marking a significant shift in approach. The “Plus” was added to incorporate an intersectional perspective that considers multiple identity factors beyond gender (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). This expansion recognized that factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender, potentially reinforcing inequalities. It embodies a more holistic approach to policy analysis, aiming to ensure that diverse perspectives and experiences are considered in all aspects of governance and policy making (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022; Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2023).

GBA Plus, therefore, represents Canada’s current gender mainstreaming tool for policies and programs,



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reflecting years of feminist advocacy at both national and international levels (Department of Justice Canada, 2022; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022). It has become an integral part of the Canadian federal government's approach to policy development and analysis, aiming to ensure more inclusive and equitable outcomes for all Canadians. This evolution demonstrates Canada's ongoing commitment to developing more inclusive and equitable policies and programs that reflect the diverse needs of its population.

## Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) and Key Principles

According to Women and Gender Equality Canada (2022), GBA Plus is a comprehensive analytical tool employed by the Canadian government to develop inclusive and responsive policies, programs, and initiatives. This approach goes beyond considering gender, and instead considers a wide range of intersecting identity factors such as age, disability, education, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. GBA Plus aims to understand the diverse impacts of initiatives on different groups, tailor solutions to meet varied needs, and anticipate and mitigate potential barriers to access (Department of Justice Canada, 2022; Haustant, 2024). Furthermore, GBA Plus analysis is designed to be applied on a macro level to assess systems, organizations, and institutions, and can also be utilized at a micro level to understand the unique experiences and impacts on individuals, and is intended to span the entire lifecycle of program, policy, and initiative design, implementation, and evaluation (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022; Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2023).

GBA Plus is underpinned by several fundamental principles that highlight its comprehensive and nuanced approach to support diversity and equity in policy and programming. For this report, the principles considered are not only explored in depth but also serve as a framework for understanding and interpreting the interview data collected. By applying these principles to the analysis of interview data, this report aims to provide a more holistic understanding of how GBA Plus is implemented and perceived in practice. This approach allows for a critical examination of how well current policies and programs align with GBA Plus principles, identifies potential gaps or areas for improvement, and offers insights into the lived experiences of those affected by these initiatives. Furthermore, using these principles as an interpretive lens helps to uncover nuanced perspectives and challenges that might otherwise be overlooked, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of GBA Plus in the sector:

**Intersectionality:** GBA Plus extends beyond the traditional focus on gender and sex to encompass a wide array of intersecting identity factors. This principle, rooted in Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, recognizes that individuals' experiences are shaped by the complex interplay of various aspects of their identity, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability,





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sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Crenshaw, 1989). By adopting this intersectional lens, GBA Plus acknowledges that people's lived experiences cannot be fully understood by examining any single identity factor in isolation. Instead, it emphasizes the need to consider how these multiple identities interact and overlap, potentially compounding disadvantages or creating unique experiences that might be overlooked in more simplistic analyses (Cole, 2009; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022).

**Evidence-based approach:** The GBA Plus framework places a strong emphasis on utilizing robust, empirical evidence to inform decision-making processes. This principle underscores the importance of relying on reputable statistics, disaggregated data, and both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (Department of Justice Canada, 2022). It encourages policymakers and analysts to seek out and incorporate diverse perspectives, including those with lived experiences relevant to the issues at hand. This approach ensures that policies, initiatives, programs, and services are developed based on a comprehensive understanding of the realities faced by different segments of the population (Government of Canada, 2021). Moreover, it highlights the ongoing need for improved data collection, analysis, and monitoring practices to enable continuous assessment and refinement of initiatives. By grounding decisions in solid evidence, GBA Plus aims to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of organizational actions.

**Systematic and integrated implementation:** For GBA Plus to be truly effective, it must be systematically applied throughout all stages of initiative development, from initial planning through to final evaluation. This principle emphasizes that GBA Plus should not be treated as an afterthought or a superficial add-on, but rather as an integral and fundamental component of the entire policy-making process. By integrating GBA Plus considerations at all levels of an organization and across all phases of project development, it ensures that diverse perspectives and potential impacts are considered from the outset. This systematic approach helps to embed inclusivity and equity considerations into the very fabric of organizational decision-making, leading to more comprehensive and effective policies and programs.

**Addressing systemic barriers:** A core principle of GBA Plus is its focus on analyzing the broader context within which people live, including structural and systemic conditions that may create barriers for some groups while providing opportunities for others (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2023). This principle goes beyond examining individual-level factors to consider how societal structures, institutions, and norms can perpetuate inequities. By identifying these systemic barriers, GBA Plus aims to develop strategies to mitigate or eliminate them, thereby promoting more equitable outcomes (Lee et al., 2022). This approach recognizes that true equality cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of disparities embedded in legislation, policies, programs, and services. It challenges



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policymakers and organization leaders to look beyond surface-level solutions and consider how to create meaningful, systemic change.

**Challenging assumptions and biases:** GBA Plus requires a critical examination of assumptions and a recognition that societal norms are in a constant state of evolution. This principle encourages policymakers, analysts, and service providers to engage in ongoing self-reflection and to question their own biases, both conscious and unconscious. By challenging preconceived notions and societal assumptions, GBA Plus aims to uncover and address potential blind spots in policy development, program and service delivery. This process of critical thinking and self-examination is crucial for avoiding unintended negative impacts on diverse groups and for ensuring that policies and programs are truly inclusive and responsive to the needs of all members of society (Al Shamsi et. al, 2020; Canadian Equality Consulting, 2024). In the context of program and service provision to newcomers, this principle underscores the importance of program and service providers continuously examining and updating their approaches to meet the evolving needs of diverse immigrant populations.

## History and Key Premise of Intersectionality

The roots of intersectionality can be traced back to the 19th century, with early articulations found in the work of anti-slavery and women’s rights activist Sojourner Truth (Truth, 1851). This historical foundation laid the groundwork for a critical examination of how multiple forms of oppression intersect and compound. However, the term “intersectionality” itself was not coined until much later, by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw’s work emerged as a response to the limitations of second-wave feminism, which often failed to address the unique challenges faced by women of color and other marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Following Crenshaw’s initial conceptualization, intersectionality was further developed and refined by African American feminists and critical race scholars. These academics and activists expanded on the concept, applying it to a broader range of social categories and contexts (Collins, 1990; Davis, 1981).

A fundamental premise of intersectionality is that individuals cannot be reduced to a single identity factor. Instead, it proposes that people’s experiences are shaped by the complex interplay of multiple social categories, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability. This principle allows the research to move beyond simplistic categorizations based on isolated factors like gender or immigrant status alone. It encourages a more nuanced examination of how various social and cultural identities intersect to create unique experiences and challenges for both service providers and clients in the sector. This multidimensional approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of identities, experiences, and structural factors that shape both service and



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program provision as well as client needs. It recognizes that individuals' experiences with systems and institutions are not uniform but are profoundly influenced by their unique combination of social identities and the societal power structures associated with these identities.

Intersectionality also offers a powerful lens for examining how multiple systems of power and oppression operate simultaneously within the sector. This theory reveals how organizational policies and practices, even those intended to promote equity, may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities causing further harm to already marginalized populations. By applying an intersectional lens, this research hopes to identify gaps in service provision, highlight best practices, and develop more nuanced recommendations for improving GBA Plus implementation in the sector. Furthermore, intersectionality helps move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches in policy and practice. It encourages the development of more tailored and effective interventions that address the specific intersections of identity and experience within the diverse immigrant communities served by the sector.

Finally, in the context of this study, grounding the research within intersectional theory provides a robust framework for examining the complexities inherent in the sector. That is, allowing for a deeper understanding of how various aspects of identity such as organizational role (front line staff, manager etc.) intersect to shape individuals' interactions with GBA Plus initiatives, their access to services, and their roles within organizations. By exploring these intersections, the study reveals the multifaceted ways in which power dynamics, privilege, and marginalization influence both the implementation of GBA Plus frameworks and the lived experiences of those involved in the settlement process. This intersectional lens enables a more comprehensive and authentic picture of the sector, capturing the nuanced perspectives of service providers and the diverse needs of clients.

In conclusion, the adoption of intersectionality as a theoretical framework for this study provides a robust foundation for examining the complex interplay of identities, experiences, and structural factors within the sector. By embracing this nuanced approach, the research aims to capture a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of how GBA Plus is and could be implemented and experienced across various organizational contexts and individual perspectives, ultimately contributing to more effective and equitable service provision in the sector.

## Role of Canada's Immigrant and Refugee Serving Sector

Since 2001, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has been legally required under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* to report on GBA in its Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration (Government of Canada, 2001). The department's GBA Plus efforts are spearheaded by the Equity Policy and GBA Plus unit within the Strategic Policy and Planning Branch, which acts as the



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focal point for promoting and supporting GBA Plus implementation throughout IRCC (Government of Canada, 2020). This mandate encompasses strengthening institutional capacity, embedding GBA Plus considerations in policy and program development cycles, promoting GBA Plus tools and resources, providing guidance on applying GBA Plus to IRCC initiatives, and collaborating with data experts to monitor GBA Plus implementation across the department, including within the settlement and integration sector. Given IRCC's global reach and its significant impact on immigrants and refugees, the GBA Plus mandate is particularly important (Government of Canada, 2020; 2023).

The Settlement, Integration and Francophone Affairs (SIFA) branch of IRCC has taken proactive steps to enhance gender equality and inclusivity in its programs. In 2022, SIFA launched a dedicated working group focused on incorporating GBA Plus principles into settlement initiatives. Now in its second year, this group has evolved into a dynamic community of practice that serves as a hub for knowledge sharing and capacity building across the sector (Government of Canada, 2024). The working group's activities include developing tailored resources, tools, and guidance specifically designed for the settlement and integration context. Additionally, it organizes annual learning series that bring together academics, practitioners, and experts in migration issues to share insights and best practices. These efforts aim to enhance the sector's ability to apply GBA Plus principles systematically throughout the program development and implementation cycle. By fostering this collaborative approach, SIFA is working to ensure that settlement services are more responsive to the diverse needs of newcomers, considering intersecting factors such as gender, race, age, disability, and other identity markers. Ultimately, the goal is to promote more equitable outcomes for all newcomers, regardless of their background or circumstances, as they integrate into Canadian society.

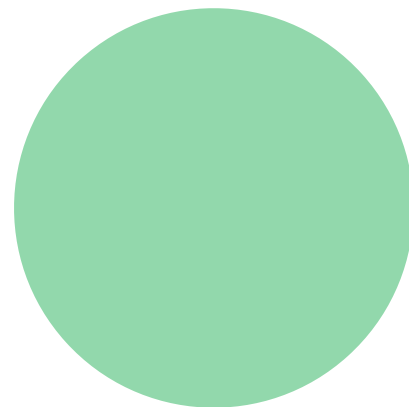
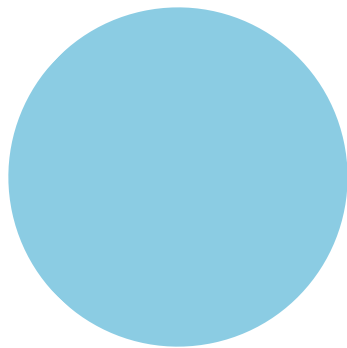
As the frontline facilitators of the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada, the sector plays a crucial role in realizing IRCC's GBA Plus mandate. These non-profit organizations, primarily funded by IRCC, offer a comprehensive suite of services designed to support the multifaceted needs of immigrants and refugees throughout their settlement journey (Hauck, 2001; Mulholland and Biles, 2004). These services include essential language training to help overcome communication barriers, employment assistance to facilitate economic integration, information and orientation sessions to familiarize newcomers with Canadian systems and culture, and community connection programs to foster social inclusion (Esses et. al, 2010; Shields et. al, 2016). In rural areas, where resources may be more limited, the sector often serves as the primary, and sometimes sole support system for newcomers, making their presence particularly critical in these regions. The impact of the sector extends beyond direct service provision to newcomers as organizations actively collaborate with a diverse array of stakeholders, including employers, local governments, educational institutions, and community groups,

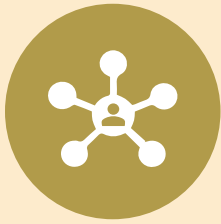


# Literature Review

to build more inclusive communities and address the specific needs of diverse newcomer populations. This collaborative approach allows the sector to leverage community resources and create a more holistic support network for newcomers across the country.

Nonetheless, the sector faces significant funding-related challenges that impact its ability to effectively support newcomers. Research indicates that the lack of long-term, stable funding hampers organizational stability and innovation within settlement agencies, limiting their capacity to address evolving immigrant needs (Mukhtar et. al., 2016). The sector's reliance on short-term, project-based funding models and inconsistent distribution of resources across provinces and organizations further exacerbates these issues. While the federal government, primarily through IRCC, provides significant funding to over 500 settlement providers and 41 resettlement assistance providers across Canada (outside Quebec), the sector still struggles with capacity building and adapting to increasing immigration levels (Praznik and Shields, 2018; IRCC, 2022). Scholars argue that without substantial increases in funding for essential services like housing, healthcare, education, and public infrastructure, the sector may face difficulties in meeting the needs of a growing immigrant and refugee population, despite its demonstrated resilience and adaptability (Caladarau et al., 2021; Shields, 2018).

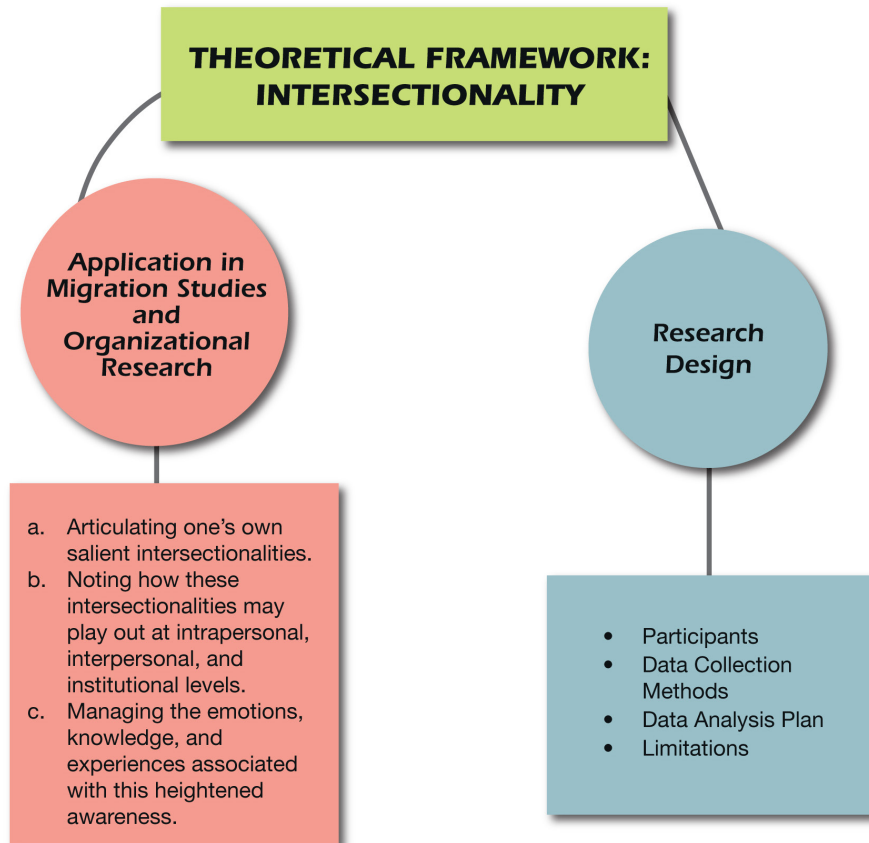




# Methodology

The project, *Enhancing National Sector Gender-Based Analysis Plus*, utilized qualitative semi-structured interviews to understand the varied perspectives of service providers within the sector. The methodology section outlines the theoretical framework and research design employed for research on GBA Plus capacity within the sector in Canada. Intersectionality is introduced as the foundational theoretical framework, explaining its relevance to the research context and its application in (im) migration studies and organizational research. Next, the key premises of intersectionality are explored, highlighting how this theoretical lens shapes the research approach to understanding the complex interplay of identities, experiences, and structural factors within the sector. Finally, this section explores the research design, including participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis, before addressing the limitations of the research. By combining a robust theoretical framework with a structured research design, this methodology aims to capture a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of GBA Plus implementation in the sector.

## Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality





# Methodology

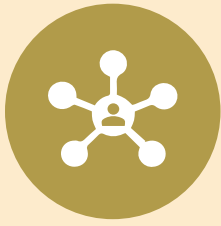
Intersectionality serves as the foundational theoretical framework for this project's research design and findings, particularly in examining the current GBA Plus capacity of the sector. This analytical approach has gained significant traction over the past two decades among academics, policymakers, and non-governmental organizations, offering a nuanced understanding of how multiple social identities intersect to shape individual experiences and organizational dynamics. In the context of this research, intersectionality allows us to explore how factors such as race, gender, immigration status, professional role, and organizational hierarchy interact to influence organizations' perspectives on and implementation of GBA Plus initiatives. This approach enables the research to illuminate how staff members' own experiences of marginalization or privilege inform their work with diverse client populations, potentially enhancing empathy and cultural competence or creating blind spots in service as well as program delivery.

## **Application in Migration Studies and Organizational Research**

In the context of (im)migration studies in Canada and qualitative research on organizational practices, many scholars employ intersectional reflexivity. This approach encourages researchers to be attentive to how their own social location, biases, and privileges may impact the research process. Atewologun and Mahalingam (2018) outline a three-step process for implementing intersectional reflexivity in qualitative research on EDI:

- a. Articulating one's own salient intersectionalities.
- b. Noting how these intersectionalities may play out at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional levels.
- c. Managing the emotions, knowledge, and experiences associated with this heightened awareness.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the interviewees, researchers, and the broader GBA Plus team represent multiple simultaneous social identities that are not fixed and are subject to interlocking socio-structural systems. While all researchers involved in this project are racialized first or second-generation immigrants to Canada (with two identifying as women), the research was also shaped by the larger GBA Plus team, who are similarly subject to these interlocking systems. This recognition of positionality enhances the study's credibility and aligns with intersectionality's emphasis on reflexivity and contextual understanding.



# Methodology

## Research Design

This study employs a descriptive and exploratory approach rooted in the concept of intersectionality, utilizing a diverse array of methodological tools and data sources. The key methods incorporated in this research include semi-structured interviews, an environmental scan, a literature review, and multilevel analysis. This multifaceted design is specifically used to capture the intricate complexity of experiences and perspectives within the sector. By doing so, it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how various factors intersect to shape both individual and organizational practices. The integration of these different methodologies ensures a richer and more comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

## Participants

To identify participants effectively, the study employed purposive sampling, utilizing an Expression of Interest<sup>1</sup> (EOI) distributed through partner Umbrella organizations in December 2023. This EOI included targeted questions regarding respondents' areas of expertise in programming as well as their professional and lived experiences, which facilitated the collection of relevant demographic data. The data collection phase took place from January to March 2024, during which 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted across six Anglophone organizations<sup>2</sup> located in various regions, including Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. Each organization was tasked with recommending three interviewees: frontline/client-facing staff (n=6), middle managerial staff (n=6), and senior executives (n=6). This stratified approach was designed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on the same research questions.

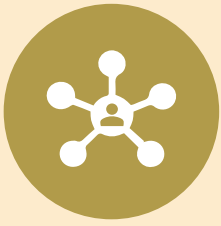
The selection criteria for organizations were based on their familiarity with frameworks such as GBA Plus and other equity-enhancing approaches such as EDI, along with their specific areas of expertise and programming focus. The purposive sampling method ensured that interviewees represented a wide range of lived experiences and professional backgrounds. Among the six organizations interviewed, three exhibited strong familiarity with GBA Plus and EDI frameworks, two reported moderate familiarity, while one had no familiarity at all. Additionally, five organizations had expertise concerning racialized communities; four focused on women; three dealt with persons with disabilities; and three

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Francophone interviews were also conducted by a research team from La Fédération des Communautés Francophones et Acadienne (FCFA). There were three organizations interviewed, each having three interviewees representing the same staff positions (frontline, middle management, executive leadership) as the Anglophone interviews, for a total of nine interviews. These interviews were conducted and analyzed entirely in French, capturing the distinct experience of Francophone SPOs within Canada's settlement and integration sector. See appendix 2





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engaged with 2SLGBTQ+ communities. This diversity significantly enriched the data collected, providing a comprehensive view of the sector's landscape.

Interviewing multiple individuals from each organization also enhanced the reliability of the findings. Notably, the sample included individuals with expertise in often-overlooked demographic areas such as Francophone communities (n=1), Indigenous people (n=1), undocumented immigrants (n=2), and seniors (n=2). The geographical distribution of participants was balanced between urban centres (three organizations) and rural areas (three organizations). Interviews commenced with an open-ended question regarding positionality, revealing that 12 out of 18 interviewees identified as first or second-generation newcomers.

In summary, this research employed a robust intersectional methodology designed to capture the rich diversity of perspectives within the sector. By intentionally selecting organizations and interviewees with varied expertise and lived experiences, the research design facilitated an in-depth exploration of how GBA Plus and equity-enhancing approaches are interpreted and implemented across different contexts. The multi-level analysis incorporated insights from frontline staff, middle management, and senior executives, thereby enriching the data by illustrating how intersectional approaches can differ across organizational levels. Ultimately, this methodology provides a comprehensive snapshot of GBA Plus implementation in newcomer services and programs while highlighting both shared themes and significant regional or organizational differences.

## Data Collection Methods

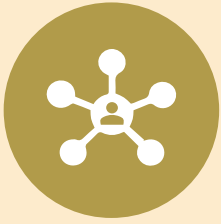
Although the interviews were semi-structured in nature, interviewers adhered to a detailed interview protocol to maintain consistency throughout the process. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face on-site (n=15), while three were held via Zoom (n=3). Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and was recorded using either a digital recorder or Zoom's built-in recording feature. Interviewees provided informed consent prior to participation; they received both consent forms<sup>3</sup> and interview questions<sup>4</sup> at least one day ahead of time and were given the option to remain anonymous if they chose.

The interview questions were crafted through an intersectional lens which allows for an exploration of how factors such as race, gender, immigration status, professional role, and organizational hierarchy interact to influence organizations' perspectives on and implementation of GBA Plus initiatives.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 3

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 4



# Methodology

Interviews began with questions about positionality specifically, how each interviewee entered the sector. To conclude each session, an open-ended question invited participants to reflect on their experiences more broadly. This approach allowed interviewees to share additional insights or perspectives that might not have been covered during the structured questioning. By encouraging participants to highlight aspects of their identities or experiences that they deemed significant, this method facilitated a more nuanced understanding of intersectional challenges while challenging researcher assumptions. Ultimately, this open-ended reflection enriched the data collected, enhancing both its validity and depth for intersectional analyses.

## Data Analysis Plan

The transcription of interview data was accomplished using Otter.ai, followed by coding through Atlas.ti software. The resulting codes were categorized into three main groups:

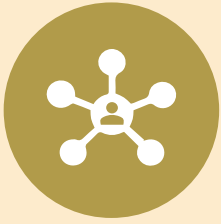
- a. Assets related to GBA Plus utilization
- b. Gaps, barriers, and challenges encountered; and
- c. Opportunities along with recommendations for necessary tools.

Once initial coding was completed, researcher-peer debriefing sessions were conducted alongside co-coding efforts in later stages to further refine findings while ensuring intercoder reliability. To facilitate a multi-level analysis that enhances data dependability, findings were contextualized within broader literature concerning both the sector and migration in Canada.

## Limitations

Despite the thoughtful design underpinning this research methodology, several key limitations warrant consideration. Firstly, given that only 18 interviews were conducted across six organizations representing different regions in Canada, these findings may not comprehensively reflect GBA Plus capacities within all immigrant and refugee serving organizations nationwide. However, due to the exploratory nature of this project, it is essential to note that these findings are not intended as exhaustive but rather serve as an initial “temperature check” for future research refinement.

The representativeness of this study was further constrained by certain organizations’ inability to participate; smaller or understaffed entities may have been unable to engage due to competing work obligations or capacity limitations when the EOI was sent out. Additionally, while efforts were made



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to include interviews with organizations in Northern communities, logistical challenges ultimately hindered participation from these groups. Furthermore, organizations not funded by IRCC were excluded from this study due to its scope.

Moreover, project time constraints limited both sample size and the application of additional research instruments such as focus groups or surveys that could have complemented interview data. The inclusion of these methods would have enriched overall depth and breadth while facilitating a more robust intersectional analysis within Canada's national immigrant and refugee serving sector.

The absence of systematically collected formal demographic data from interviewees represents a significant limitation in the scope of this research. While open-ended questions about positionality provided participants with the opportunity to describe their social locations in detail, this approach may have resulted in inconsistent or incomplete demographic information. The lack of standardized demographic data collection makes it challenging to conduct comprehensive intersectional analyses since the researchers could not reliably compare or aggregate demographic factors across all participants. This limitation potentially obscures important patterns or correlations between specific demographic characteristics and experiences with GBA Plus implementation. Furthermore, relying solely on self-reported social locations may introduce bias; participants might emphasize certain aspects of their identity while downplaying or omitting others. Consequently, the research may miss crucial intersections of identity that could influence perspectives on and experiences with GBA Plus in the sector.



# Findings and Discussion

**This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the sector's capacity to integrate Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) practices, principles, and policies. Drawing from a literature review, environmental scan, and research interviews, the findings are organized around six key themes:**

- a. Disaggregated Data
- b. Community-Centered Programming
- c. Formal Policies
- d. Lack of Funding Flexibility
- e. Diverse Workforce
- f. Training and Tools

## **The analysis addresses two critical questions:**

- a. What is the current baseline of Canada's immigrant and refugee serving sector's capacity to mainstream GBA Plus practices, principles, and policies?
- b. What gaps, strengths, and opportunities exist across the sector in mainstreaming GBA Plus practices, principles, and policies?

By examining these themes and questions, this report establishes a foundation for understanding the sector's readiness to incorporate GBA Plus, an analytical tool designed to address systemic inequities and advance equity through an intersectional lens. The findings highlight existing strengths and gaps, providing valuable insights into how to enhance GBA Plus capacity across the sector to ultimately better serve diverse newcomer populations, and ultimately promote intersectional equity and GBA Plus principles.

## **Disaggregated Data**

An essential facet of the effective utilization of GBA Plus within organizational policies and programs is the principle of an evidence-based approach. This principle emphasizes the importance of relying on reputable statistics, disaggregated data, and both qualitative and quantitative research in ensuring that policies and programs effectively address diverse needs, gaps, and barriers (Department of Justice



# Findings and Discussion

Canada, 2022). In alignment with this, the research process of this project reveals that the sector demonstrates capacity relating to the collection and utilization of client data, but some key barriers and areas for improvement persist. By examining current practices, challenges, and opportunities for enhancement, the aim is to highlight how prioritizing comprehensive data collection can empower the sector organizations to make more informed, equitable decisions. These insights will illustrate how an evidence-based approach, and more specifically disaggregated data, can lead to more targeted and effective interventions, ultimately enhancing the quality and inclusivity of services for diverse groups of immigrants and refugees, in alignment with GBA Plus principles.

Interviewed organizations shared that client demographic data collection primarily occurs during the intake process, gathering information on various identity factors such as language, gender, age, and immigration status. This data is then disaggregated across key identity factors for both internal and external purposes, including program design, service delivery optimization, community outreach, and reporting to funders and stakeholders. As one manager explained, *“During our intake process, we collect a lot of demographic information, gender, pronouns, marital status, transportation, need, education, employment status, how many people in a household, how many children, ages, breakdown in ages for the clients and the children and that’s collected just at the intake stage...”*. The disaggregation of data into specific sub-categories allows organizations to tailor their settlement and integration services more effectively, adapting programming to meet the unique needs, barriers, and circumstances of newcomer clients. This approach is exemplified by another participant’s statement, *“...as soon as [a client] comes here, and they want to register for any program, they go through the intake process, and we collect all that data. We also use it to create the programs as well, when we’re writing proposals, there’s a need, ... then we’re responsive to client needs and we’re creating those programs as a response to that”*.

*“During our intake process, we collect a lot of demographic information, gender, pronouns, marital status, transportation, need, education, employment status, how many people in a household, how many children, ages, breakdown in ages for the clients and the children and that’s collected just at the intake stage...”*

The data collection practices described by interviewed organizations align closely with the GBA Plus principle of an evidence-based approach. By gathering comprehensive demographic information during the intake process and subsequently disaggregating this data across key identity factors, these organizations are implementing a core tenet of GBA Plus (Statistics Canada, 2023). This approach enables the sector to create a nuanced understanding of the unique and evolving needs of their clients



# Findings and Discussion

across multiple intersecting identity factors such as language, gender, age, and immigration status. The systematic collection and analysis of this data directly supports the GBA Plus goal of optimizing data disaggregation and cross-tabulation to identify groups most affected by various issues (Canada School of Public Service, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023). As evidenced by the participants' statements, this data-driven approach allows organizations to tailor their services more effectively, respond to specific client needs, and create targeted programs. This practice exemplifies how the evidence-based principle of GBA Plus is applied in real-world settings to enhance the quality and inclusivity of services for diverse groups of immigrants and refugees.

While the research reveals capacity amongst the sector to utilize disaggregated data, significant challenges persist in fully leveraging client data to inform program development and monitor GBA Plus impacts. Interviewees shared that information is primarily collected to meet funders' requirements rather than to comprehensively understand and address the diverse needs of newcomer populations. For example, interviewees highlighted notable gaps in programming and outreach strategies, particularly in attracting gender-diverse, two-spirit, and non-binary clients. Programming gaps like these could be narrowed or eliminated entirely with the right set of client data and analysis strategies to inform decision making.

The gap between data collection and utilization represents a substantial challenge that requires dedicated capacity to overcome. Effective data management involves not only gathering information, but also developing systems for timely analysis, interpretation, and application of insights to program development and service delivery (Canada School of Public Service, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023). The underutilization of collected data, revealed mainly by rural interviewees, suggests that organizations may need to invest in building their analytical capacity, potentially through staff training, improved data management systems, or partnerships with data specialists. Furthermore, the lack of internal staff data collection indicates areas where enhanced data practices could lead to more inclusive and effective organizational processes. Half of the interviewed organizations do not collect internal staff data, limiting their capacity to implement evidence-based equity-seeking practices and policies. Addressing these issues demands a holistic approach to data management, encompassing collection, analysis, and strategic application, which in turn requires significant organizational capacity and resources. By bridging this gap, organizations could more fully leverage their data to inform decision-making, improve service delivery, and better align with GBA Plus principles, ultimately enhancing their ability to serve diverse newcomer populations effectively as well as better support their staff.

While the collection and disaggregation of demographic data are crucial components of GBA Plus principles and widely acknowledged by interviewed organizations as essential, the process requires careful consideration within the unique context of the sector. Interviewees emphasized that effective



# Findings and Discussion

data collection hinges on building trust with clients and maintaining a steadfast commitment to privacy and confidentiality. This trust-building process is particularly critical given the diverse backgrounds and potential vulnerabilities of newcomer populations. Furthermore, interviewees stressed the importance of implementing culturally sensitive and trauma-informed practices to ensure clients feel safe, respected, and fully informed about sharing their personal information and its intended use within the organization. These considerations are especially pertinent given the unique experiences, barriers, and perceptions that newcomers often have regarding data collection, which may stem from past traumas, cultural differences, or negative experiences with authorities in their countries of origin (Kim et al., 2021; Kassam-Adams et al., 2023). Organizations must, therefore, strike a delicate balance between gathering comprehensive data for effective service provision and respecting the sensitivities and potential hesitations of their clients. This approach may involve providing clear explanations about data usage, offering multiple languages for consent forms, and training staff in culturally competent and trauma-informed data collection methods. By prioritizing these considerations, organizations can create a more inclusive and respectful environment for data collection, ultimately enhancing the quality and relevance of the data gathered while maintaining the trust and comfort of their diverse client base.

In conclusion, the findings on disaggregated data underscore the critical need for not only collecting data, but also effectively analyzing and applying it to enhance service delivery, ensure inclusive programming, and cultivate a diverse workforce. The sector struggles with monitoring long-term outcomes and evaluating programs through data-driven strategies due to the complexity of longitudinal data collection and analysis, resource constraints, and the need for specialized expertise. Organizations face difficulties in establishing relevant and feasible long-term outcome measures, managing large volumes of data, and developing robust analytical capabilities. These challenges stem from various factors, including the complexity of collecting and analyzing data over extended periods, the resources required to maintain consistent data collection efforts, and the need for specialized expertise in data analysis and interpretation. Additionally, the sheer volume of data collected over time can be overwhelming, requiring robust data management systems and analytical tools to process and derive meaningful insights. Addressing these multifaceted challenges could significantly strengthen the sector's capacity to implement GBA Plus principles more comprehensively, effectively serve diverse newcomer populations, and make data-driven decisions. Ultimately, to overcome these obstacles, there must be investment in developing comprehensive data strategies, robust support to build analytical and staff capabilities, and a broad shift in organizational culture that prioritizes evidence-based decision-making to effectively monitor and evaluate long-term program outcomes.



# Findings and Discussion

## Community-Centered Programming

Intersectionality, which recognizes the complex interplay of multiple identity factors in shaping individuals' experiences and needs (Department of Justice Canada, 2022), is a central tenet of GBA Plus, and is also foundational in the sector's approach to meeting complex needs, addressing systemic barriers, and adapting programs to the unique context of newcomers. As evidenced through the research, interviewees demonstrated significant GBA Plus capacity through their commitment to tailored, community-centered approaches in service provision. In particular, the interviewees' demonstrated notable alignment with the principles of intersectionality through the development of targeted programming, delivery of services in multiple languages, and their emphasis on ensuring practical accommodations. While key areas for improvement emerged through these approaches, not only does the sector demonstrate significant GBA Plus capacity, but they are better able to facilitate the meaningful settlement and integration of newcomers across the country.

All interviewed organizations offer targeted programming for groups sharing similar intersectional social identities, such as racialized newcomer women, 2SLGBTQ+ newcomers, and newcomers with disabilities. Interviewed organizations emphasized that these types of programs are integral in supporting key settlement outcomes, while also meeting complex needs, addressing barriers, and ultimately encouraging uptake of programming by clients. The sector's use of customizable strategies tailored to specific communities, rather than a one-size-fits-all model, exemplifies this intersectional approach (WIRE, n.d.). By considering multiple identity factors such as language, gender and sexual identity, and disability in service provision, organizations are better equipped to address the unique needs and barriers of different intersectional groups (Cole, 2009; Warner et al., 2016). This approach contributes to more equitable settlement and integration outcomes across diverse newcomer groups, and ultimately displays the sector's alignment with GBA Plus principles.

*"We have program navigators...which helps when we are serving the community by language and culture. I speak Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Swahili, French and English... [other colleagues] speak Arabic and Somali"*

Multilingual service provision emerges as a key strength in addressing systemic barriers faced by newcomers, particularly language barriers that impact access to information and services. Six interviewed organizations offer services in twelve or more languages, demonstrating a robust commitment to overcoming a key obstacle faced by newcomers accessing settlement and integration programs and services across the country. This practice aligns with the GBA Plus principles of intersectionality and addressing





# Findings and Discussion

systemic barriers, as language proficiency often intersects with other factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status in shaping access to services (Al Shamsi et. al, 2020; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). As one interviewee noted, *“We have program navigators...which helps when we are serving the community by language and culture. I speak Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Swahili, French and English... [other colleagues] speak Arabic and Somali”*. This multilingual approach not only facilitates communication, but also promotes cultural understanding, which is crucial for effective service delivery. The use of program navigators further illustrates a recognition of barriers beyond language. These practices reflect the GBA Plus emphasis on considering how *“multiple overlapping factors shape social, health and economic opportunities and outcomes for people, as well as barriers to accessing programs or services”* (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022: n.p.; Amin et. al, 2022). By addressing these interconnected barriers, interviewees are working towards more equitable access to services for diverse newcomer populations, in line with the core principles of GBA Plus.

The interviewed organizations further demonstrate their commitment to intersectionality and evidence-based practice through practical accommodations to ensure equitable access to services by clients. A few key examples of practical accommodations were highlighted by the participants, such as providing childcare services for clients with care obligations. By collecting data on the number of clients with children, organizations shared that they are better able to identify and address barriers that can prevent clients from fully participating in their services and programs. Through providing childcare, interviewed organizations can mitigate a significant barrier to service access for immigrant women in Canada, recognizing the intersectionality of gender, immigration status, and caregiving responsibilities (Albrecht et al., 2020).

While the provision of childcare emerges as a strength of the sector, interviewees also shared about efforts to accommodate people with disabilities. Although noted as an area for improvement, accommodations for people with disabilities represent an important step in inclusive service provision. These efforts were highlighted by one interviewed Project Coordinator in a rural area, who shared that while not all parts of their building are accessible for individuals with a physical disability, that they would always seek an alternate space for clients who require accessible services. This insight highlights both the existing limitations in infrastructure that many organizations face, as well as the willingness to devise creative solutions to ensure service accessibility. Such adaptations reflect an understanding of the complex, interconnected nature of systemic barriers faced by newcomers with disabilities. By making these accommodations, organizations are demonstrating a commitment to creating more equitable access to services. However, this example also underscores the ongoing need for more comprehensive accessibility planning in the sector, including considerations for various types of disabilities beyond the physical. The sector’s efforts in this area, while commendable, also point to



# Findings and Discussion

the necessity for more systematic approaches to accessibility, potentially including staff training on disability awareness, regular accessibility audits of facilities and services, and the development of formal policies to ensure consistent accommodation practices across all service areas. These practices collectively reflect an understanding of the complex, interconnected nature of systemic barriers and demonstrate a commitment to creating more equitable access to services for diverse newcomer populations.

The practical accommodations described by interviewees align closely with the GBA Plus principle of addressing systemic barriers. According to the Department of Justice Canada, GBA Plus involves *“analysis of the context within which people live, including structural or systemic conditions that might create barriers for some, as well as opportunities for others”*

(Department of Justice Canada, 2022:n.p.). By providing multilingual services and childcare and disability accommodations, interviewed organizations are directly tackling systemic barriers that disproportionately affect newcomers, particularly those at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Hence, these approaches demonstrate an understanding that language proficiency, caregiving responsibilities, and disability status can intersect with factors like gender, race, and immigration status to create compounded barriers to accessing services and successful integration in Canada. Moreover, given this understanding of the nuanced barriers experienced by newcomers, interviewed organizations are better able to design targeted interventions to address these challenges.

In conclusion, the sector demonstrates a robust commitment to community-centered programming and intersectional approaches, aligning closely with GBA Plus principles. The sector’s efforts in providing targeted services for diverse groups, offering multilingual support, and implementing practical accommodations reflect a nuanced understanding of the complex barriers faced by newcomers. However, to further enhance their GBA Plus capacity, organizations should focus on several key areas for improvement. These include developing more comprehensive accessibility plans that address a wider range of disabilities, implementing regular staff training on intersectionality and cultural competence, and establishing formal policies to ensure consistent accommodation practices across all service areas. Additionally, enhancing data collection and analysis to better understand the intersecting needs of diverse client groups, strengthening partnerships with community-led organizations to ensure programs remain responsive to evolving needs, and regularly reviewing and updating service delivery models to address emerging intersectional challenges are crucial steps forward. By implementing these

GBA Plus involves  
*“analysis of the context within which people live, including structural or systemic conditions that might create barriers for some, as well as opportunities for others”*  
(Department of Justice Canada, 2022:n.p.)



# Findings and Discussion

recommendations, the sector can further strengthen its ability to provide equitable, inclusive, and effective services that truly embody the principles of GBA Plus and intersectionality, ultimately leading to improved settlement and integration outcomes for Canada's diverse newcomer populations.

## Formal Policies

The development, implementation, and evaluation of formalized GBA Plus policies is essential in ensuring organizational accountability in effectively realizing GBA Plus principles within programming and practices. As a mission-led sector with extensive experience in serving marginalized and vulnerable populations, the sector demonstrates significant capacity in meeting intersectional needs, tailoring programming, and championing equity, diversity, and inclusion within their organizations and communities at large. However, as revealed by the research of the project, significant opportunities exist in formalizing the application of these key principles of GBA Plus through policy development, particularly in rural organizations that are more likely to lack dedicated Human Resources capacity. This section will explore the current capacity and best practices of interviewed organizations relating to the formalization of GBA Plus principles through policy development and will also provide key opportunities that exist for capacity enhancement.

The research of this project reveals that implementation of GBA Plus policies in organizations is currently in a transitional phase, with varying levels of formalization across the sector. While most organizations lack standalone formal policy documents on GBA Plus specifically, many have complementary equity-related policies such as anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies that align with GBA Plus objectives, reflecting an intersectional approach. These approaches recognize how multiple overlapping factors shape opportunities and outcomes for people and shape unique barriers to accessing programs or services. Importantly, the absence of formal GBA Plus policies does not necessarily indicate a lack of equity-enhancing practices. For instance, a senior director from an urban-based organization highlighted their formal equity-enhancing framework, *"...we have an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) policy and anti-discrimination policies, which are monitored by our HR staff..."*. This example illustrates how organizations may have complementary equity-enhancing policies that can assist in the formalization of GBA Plus principles, even without standalone GBA Plus documents.

*"...we have an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) policy and anti-discrimination policies, which are monitored by our HR staff..."*



# Findings and Discussion

The interview findings further reveal a significant trend towards establishing dedicated equity committees among organizations, particularly in urban areas. This approach demonstrates a commitment to intersectionality and integrated implementation, two fundamental aspects of GBA Plus (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2023). An integrated implementation ensures that considerations of gender, diversity, and intersectionality are not treated as add-ons or afterthoughts, but are intentionally incorporated into every stage of planning, execution, and evaluation. This approach ensures that the principles of GBA Plus are consistently applied across all departments and levels of the organization, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment overall (Department of Justice Canada, 2022; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2023). Approximately half of the interviewed organizations have implemented committees focusing on organizational policy development, review, and addressing systemic barriers. This systematic approach reflects the GBA Plus principle of examining who is impacted by issues and how, as well as identifying ways to tailor initiatives to meet diverse needs (Department of Justice Canada, 2022). Some organizations have created employee-led committees, such as anti-racism and 2SLGBTQ+ groups which contribute to ongoing policy evaluation and improvement. Overall, the diverse representation within these committees ensures inclusive policy-making processes, embodying the GBA Plus principle of considering multiple identity factors beyond gender (Senate of Canada 2023; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2023).

The findings of this study reveal that the sector, while making strides in implementing GBA Plus principles, continues to face significant challenges in consistently applying these approaches, particularly among smaller organizations and those without dedicated Human Resources departments. This disparity highlights a crucial need for targeted support and resources to enhance GBA Plus implementation across the sector. Interviewees articulated a clear demand for practical tools to formalize their GBA Plus efforts, including comprehensive policy frameworks, template policies, illustrative case studies, and detailed step-by-step implementation guides for their various programs and initiatives. Although many organizations reported intuitively applying an intersectional lens in their work, largely due to their historical contexts and mission-driven approaches, a notable gap exists in the form of standalone policies specifically addressing equity-enhancing strategies. The absence of Human Resource departments mainly among rural organizations further underscores the necessity for dedicated staff to assist with policy formalization, systematic evaluation, and ongoing monitoring of GBA Plus initiatives. This situation reveals a complex landscape where the sector's inherent commitment to equity and inclusion often outpaces its structural capacity to formalize and systematically implement these principles, pointing to a critical area for capacity building and resource allocation to ensure more uniform and effective GBA Plus implementation across organizations of all sizes.

In conclusion, to enhance GBA Plus implementation within the sector, several key improvements



# Findings and Discussion

could be made. These include developing standalone GBA Plus policy documents, providing sector-wide resources for policy formalization, expanding equity-focused committees to rural and remote areas, and enhancing formal training on intersectionality and systemic barrier identification. These improvements are crucial because they address current gaps and challenges faced by organizations, particularly smaller ones or those lacking dedicated Human Resources departments. By formalizing and systematizing GBA Plus practices, organizations can ensure that GBA Plus considerations are embedded in organizational structures and processes, rather than left to intuition or ad hoc individual efforts. This approach aligns with the Canadian government's commitment to GBA Plus, as evidenced by its inclusion in policy development processes and decision-making frameworks across federal departments (Department of Justice Canada, 2022). Furthermore, the emphasis on intersectionality and systemic approaches in GBA Plus implementation reflects best practices identified in federal evaluations, such as those conducted by the Canadian Space Agency (Canadian Space Agency, 2020). Ultimately, these improvements would enable the sector to better fulfill its mandate of supporting diverse newcomers while advancing Canada's broader commitment to multiculturalism.

## Funding Based Limitations

The research reveals that the implementation of GBA Plus in the sector faces significant challenges because of insufficient and inflexible funding. This hinders the ability of organizations to invest dedicated capacity in equity-enhancing programming and policies, respond nimbly to emerging needs of diverse clients, and provide ongoing training and professional development of staff. Furthermore, the research highlights that these challenges disproportionately affect rural and smaller organizations. Taken in conjunction, these financial constraints create a cycle of precarity that severely impacts the sector's capacity to effectively implement GBA Plus principles (Ashton et al., 2016; Department of Justice Canada, 2022). This section will discuss the current challenges faced by the sector regarding funding flexibility and provide some strategies to address these funding constraints that emerged from this study.

A significant finding that emerged from the research was the contrast in GBA Plus capacity between urban and rural organizations due to different funding realities. The research reveals that larger, urban organizations often have larger staff teams, a diversity of funders, and larger budgets which therefore creates more flexible budgets. This budgetary flexibility thereby supports the capacity of larger, urban organizations to develop and deliver equity-focused initiatives, provide opportunities for professional development, and dedicate staff time to supporting equity initiatives and fund development. As rural organizations often have less diverse funding sources, smaller staff teams, and more inflexible budgets, there is more difficulty in systematically developing, implementing, and maintaining equity initiatives.



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The stark contrast in the GBA Plus capacity access between larger urban and smaller rural organizations is illustrated by an interviewee from a rural organization's frustration as they lamented that their organization would like to implement equity focused programs and policies, but lacks the staff capacity to apply for additional funding, and instead often sees these types of programs go to larger organizations who have the capacity to dedicate staffing to fund development and equity-focused programming. The lack of funding not only impedes the comprehensive implementation of GBA Plus across diverse organizations, but also perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage for smaller and rural organizations in enhancing equity-focused services. This financial predicament hinders the sector's ability to provide tailored support to all newcomers, which ultimately impacts the effectiveness of Canada's settlement and integration efforts. The situation underscores a critical need for more equitable resource distribution and support mechanisms to ensure that all organizations, regardless of size or location, can contribute effectively to immigrant and refugee's settlement and integration goals.

The lack of funding flexibility, particularly for administrative costs, also presents a significant barrier to effective GBA Plus implementation in the sector. IRCC, as the main funder of the sector, typically allows for administrative costs to be capped at 15% *"of IRCC's total contribution for program delivery expenses"* (Government of Canada, 2024:n.p.). This funding reality creates particular challenges in terms of supporting GBA Plus capacity, as explained by an interviewed Executive Director, who noted that the administrative budget is the only budget line that they would theoretically be able to use to staff and support equity work, but that this budget line is very limited and must therefore be prioritized to support the administrative functions of the organization. This financial constraint forces organizations, especially smaller and rural ones, to prioritize basic operational costs over equity work, creating a cycle of inequity in service provision. As one interviewee rightly noted, smaller organizations often lack the resources even to apply for funding to enhance their GBA Plus capabilities. This situation not only affects organizations' abilities to build capacity and retain skilled staff, but also compromises the fundamental GBA Plus principle of evidence-based approach. Similarly, limited resources prevent organizations from upgrading essential technical systems and retaining staff with data analysis skills, significantly impairing their ability to collect and analyze disaggregated data crucial for effective GBA Plus implementation (Department of Justice Canada, 2022; WIRE, n.d.). Consequently, this financial predicament undermines the sector's overall capacity to provide comprehensive, tailored support to newcomers and effectively implement GBA Plus principles, perpetuating systemic inequities in service provision.

The lack of consistent funding in the sector further poses significant challenges to implementing crucial improvements that align with GBA Plus principles. This financial constraint impedes organizations from making essential enhancements in various areas, including removing physical barriers to improve accessibility, offering specialized support for vulnerable groups, and investing in staff professional



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development. These limitations directly undermine the sector’s capacity to effectively implement key GBA Plus principles, particularly an evidence-based approach and systematic implementation (Canadian Space Agency, 2020; Senate of Canada, 2023). Moreover, the inability to robustly invest in ongoing staff training compromises the sector’s capacity to systematically integrate GBA Plus principles across all levels of service delivery and create responsive programming to address emerging community needs. This funding shortfall not only affects the quality and breadth of services provided to newcomers, but also perpetuates systemic inequities by limiting the sector’s ability to adapt and respond to the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee populations (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2022).

When assessing the sector’s GBA Plus capacity in light of current funding realities, significant opportunities for improvement emerge. In particular, there is a need to address the unique funding challenges faced by diverse organizations, especially those in rural areas or with limited resources. When looking at the sector, what appears to be missing is a coordinated, sector-wide approach to GBA Plus implementation that accounts for the varied needs and capacities of different organizations. This gap echoes findings from Ashton et al.’s (2016) study on Western and Northern Canada, which reported a lack of capacity for investing in governance and strategic planning in smaller communities with population less than 30 000, highlighting their struggle to provide settlement services. These challenges can be traced back to broader neoliberal governmental policies, such as the 1995 Settlement Renewal policy, which, as Mukhtar et al. (2016: 393) note, replaced core funding for immigrant and refugee-serving organizations with “*competitive, purchase-of-service contract funding.*” Hence, a comprehensive sector-wide strategy is needed that aligns funding policies and requirements with GBA Plus principles while accounting for diverse organizational capacities. This strategy could involve developing tailored approaches for rural and smaller organizations, establishing mentorship programs between larger and smaller entities, and creating a centralized resource hub for GBA Plus tools and best practices, thereby fostering a more equitable and effective implementation of GBA Plus across the sector.

In conclusion, enhancing GBA Plus implementation in the sector requires a multifaceted approach that addresses funding flexibility, capacity building, and systematic implementation across diverse organizational contexts. Crucially, addressing the funding gap is essential for enabling organizations to build capacity, retain skilled staff, and implement a comprehensive GBA Plus framework (Shields et al., 2016; Esses et al., 2021). By aligning these innovations with GBA Plus principles, the sector can work towards more equitable and effective services for newcomers across Canada, ensuring that organizations of all sizes and locations can effectively meet the diverse needs of the newcomer population.



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## Diverse Workforce

Intersectionality, a fundamental principle of GBA Plus, highlights the necessity of acknowledging multiple overlapping identity factors that influence individuals' experiences and opportunities (Crenshaw, 1991; Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). This principle is particularly vital in the sector, where diverse workforce practices mirror the varied backgrounds of the clients served. The research of this study reveals that the sector's capacity to implement and utilize GBA Plus principles is strengthened by its diverse workforce who bring invaluable professional and lived expertise in their roles settling and integrating newcomers across Canada. While this diverse workforce creates empathetic and nuanced delivery of programs and services, interviewees also noted that the intrinsic diversity of the sector requires more dedicated, systematic efforts to go beyond tokenism and be meaningfully representative at all levels of the organization.

*"Our team is incredibly diverse, which naturally brings a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This diversity is our strength and helps us better understand and support our clients."*

The sector exemplifies its commitment to diversity and inclusion by implementing inclusive hiring practices that result in a workforce reflective of the communities they support; for instance, 12 out of 18 interviewees identified as first or second-generation newcomers, immigrants, or refugees. This alignment with GBA Plus principles ensures that multiple identity factors and diverse perspectives are considered, as noted by one interviewee who stated, *"Our team is incredibly diverse, which naturally brings a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This diversity is our strength and helps us better understand and support our clients."* By focusing on inclusive recruitment strategies targeting historically underrepresented and marginalized communities, the sector not only enhances client support but also addresses systemic employment barriers. Consequently, organizations ensure their

*"To be honest, I'm not trying to make [my organization] look great, but since I've started, they have accommodated staff who ... want to take an hour break to go to church on Sunday ... [or] if they want to go to the mosque on Friday ... so there is accommodation, [and] it's actually pretty impressive..."*





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teams mirror the communities they serve, thereby improving their capacity to address complex needs through diverse perspectives.

The sector's implementation of inclusive workplace practices demonstrates a comprehensive approach to creating an environment that respects diverse identities and advances intersectional equity. One interviewed frontline worker remarked, *"To be honest, I'm not trying to make [my organization] look great, but since I've started, they have accommodated staff who ... want to take an hour break to go to church on Sunday ... [or] if they want to go to the mosque on Friday ... so there is accommodation, [and] it's actually pretty impressive..."*. These practices of accommodation were often spoken about by interviewees, including examples such as gender-neutral washrooms and flexible break policies for religious accommodations, ultimately support in addressing systemic barriers and reflect actionable steps to promote inclusivity (Lee et al., 2022). This holistic strategy not only aligns with core GBA Plus principles, but also positions the sector to better serve Canada's diverse newcomer population (WAGE, 2023). By leveraging workforce diversity, organizations enhance their ability to understand and support diverse client needs through staff members' unique perspectives and backgrounds.

The sector's commitment to inclusivity extends beyond physical accommodations to include ongoing efforts to challenge assumptions and biases. One interviewed Executive Director remarked, *"I think change is hard. I think when we're talking about larger societal change ... within an organization ... I think it would be naive to say that changes like this wouldn't be hard. I think people come with biases, and part of our job as people and culture professionals or executive leaders is to ... fill in those gaps for our teams."* Staff members at all levels therefore regularly reflect on client interactions to identify and address potential biases, demonstrating a continuous commitment to the principles of GBA Plus. These practices collectively contribute to a work environment that not only respects diverse identities, but also actively works to dismantle systemic barriers, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive workplace for all employees. This approach not only benefits the staff of immigrant and refugee serving organizations across the country, but also enhances the sector's capacity to provide culturally sensitive and effective support to the diverse newcomer communities they serve.

The sector's commitment to diversity in hiring is a significant step towards better understanding and supporting clients, as highlighted by interviewees who view staff diversity as a valuable asset. However, the principle of intersectionality, as emphasized in GBA Plus, demands a more comprehensive approach to hiring that goes beyond surface-level diversity and tokenism, and instead requires a nuanced understanding of how multiple identity factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status intersect to create unique challenges and opportunities for individuals (Government of Canada, 2022). Some interviewees pointed out that visible diversity alone is insufficient to tackle deep-rooted systemic issues, indicating a need for more thorough examination of underlying biases and



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barriers. A particularly telling observation came from an interviewed frontline worker, who noted a lack of representation in leadership positions, highlighting the need to challenge assumptions about promotion and advancement within organizations. The lack of diversity in leadership has been echoed in similar studies about the sector, where it was noted that “[t]he leadership and management team is not reflective of the served populations. Diversity is present in front-line work and unintegral positions of power” (AAISA, 2022). To truly embody the principle of intersectionality and advance equity, organizations in the sector must move beyond diversity in hiring to actively promote inclusive practices at all levels, ensuring that diverse perspectives are not only present but also valued and integrated into decision-making processes (Canadian Equality Consulting, 2024; Government of Canada, 2024).

While the sector has made significant strides in implementing GBA Plus principles through its diverse workforce and inclusive practices, there remains substantial work to be done to fully achieve intersectional equity and systemic change. Firstly, there is a need to focus on increasing diversity within senior leadership positions, as highlighted in a similar study by Imagine Canada’s (2023) finding that organizations led by underrepresented communities are more effective in advancing equity-enhancing initiatives. Secondly, the development of more robust evaluation methods is crucial to assess the real-world impact of diversity and inclusion efforts on staff experiences, such as regular employee surveys and assessments of organizational policies and practices to identify and address deeper systemic barriers, recognizing that visible diversity alone is insufficient to tackle these issues. These practices align with the GBA Plus emphasis on evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement. Thirdly, the sector could seek to provide tailored mentorship programs to support career advancement for underrepresented employees to address the current lack of diversity in leadership roles. As noted by the Department of Justice Canada (2023), there is a need to review and revise promotion practices to remove biases and support career progression for underrepresented groups. Finally, more research is required to understand the complex nature of diversity within organizations and to develop metrics that can effectively evaluate the impact of these efforts. By addressing these gaps and moving beyond surface-level diversity, the sector can create truly inclusive environments that leverage the full potential of a diverse workforce in serving Canada’s newcomer population, thereby more fully realizing the goals of intersectional equity and systemic change.

As revealed by the findings of this study, the sector demonstrates significant GBA Plus capacity through the diverse workforce it employs. Through this diverse workforce, the sector is enriched with a wide array of professional and lived expertise which supports in being able to better understand and meet the unique needs of newcomer clients through an intersectional lens. While the intrinsic diversity of the sector provides immense GBA Plus capacity, the research also revealed that there is room for improvement in ensuring that this diversity goes beyond tokenism and is reflected at all levels of the organization through dedicated, evidence-based interventions.



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## Training and Tools

A key gap that emerged from the findings of this study pertains to the lack of tailored and comprehensive training and practical tools which hinders the capacity of organizations across Canada's immigrant and refugee serving sector to meaningfully implement GBA Plus principles and practices. Interviews with staff across various organizational levels and regions reveal a critical gap in formalized GBA Plus training whereby the sector has access to fully tested and resourced templates and tools to effectively guide their GBA Plus learning and implementation. All of this serves to compound the issue, ultimately impacting the sector's capacity to effectively implement this framework. This aligns with the GBA Plus principle of evidence-based approach, as without proper training, staff cannot effectively apply GBA Plus principles rooted in evidence-based analysis (Government of Canada, 2023). The situation mirrors broader governmental challenges identified by the Auditor General, who found that long-standing issues continue to hinder the full implementation of GBA Plus across government departments (Office of the Auditor General, 2023). The sector's experience reflects a systemic issue, where the lack of sector-specific training and resources represents a barrier to effective GBA Plus implementation.

The Department of Justice's *Policy on Gender-Based Analysis Plus* underscores the critical importance of mandatory GBA Plus training to develop analytical competencies and heighten awareness about the diverse impacts of policies and programs on different population segments. Yet, the sector faces a significant systemic barrier in implementing GBA Plus effectively due to the lack of sector-specific training and resources. Interviews reveal a pressing need for accessible and manageable training programs that incorporate self-reflection exercises, case studies, and cultural sensitivity training tailored to the sector's unique challenges. As one interviewee aptly noted, *"Having access to already created content, policies, that sort of stuff, and then having... some professional development or some support around implementing those policies into the organization would be extremely beneficial to us."* This sentiment echoes across the sector, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive, tailored training programs accessible to staff at all levels. In addition, there's a pressing need for support in the form of a community of practice or other formalized groups seeking to work together to actualize their goals around GBA Plus implementation. This would allow for more wraparound support to ensure consistency and sustainability in GBA Plus application. The federal government has recognized this need, as evidenced by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) creation of an Equity Policy and GBA Plus Team in February 2022 to provide specialized advice and training (Government of Canada, 2023). Hence, organizations within the sector must prioritize GBA Plus training and its integration into their core processes. This approach not only aligns with federal initiatives but also ensures that the sector can better serve its diverse communities by developing a workforce equipped



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with the necessary analytical skills to apply GBA Plus principles consistently, and effectively, and sustainably in their daily operations.

Furthermore, the interviews reveal a strong desire for practical, hands-on training and sector-specific resources. This demand reflects a significant gap in the current implementation of GBA Plus principles, highlighting the challenges organizations face in translating abstract concepts into tangible practices. As one Project Coordinator aptly described, GBA Plus often appears as, *“kind of this fuzzy sort of thing... We can’t grab [something] that’s not tangible. But we know it’s important.”* This sentiment underscores the sector’s struggle to operationalize GBA Plus effectively, despite recognizing its significance. The consistent emphasis on accessible, hands-on training aligns with the GBA Plus principle of developing analytical competencies and awareness among staff. Interviewees expressed a strong desire for professional development support, indicating a need for tools that can bridge the gap between theory and practice. This aligns with the evidence-based approach principle of GBA Plus, as organizations seek concrete methods to integrate these principles into their daily operations. As noted by another interviewee, *“training and reading materials and just information that people can get, so that they have to be able to understand it more fully.”*, further highlights the necessity for structured, tailored training that can provide clarity and practical application strategies.

The systematic and integrated implementation of GBA Plus is also lacking, as evidenced by varying levels of familiarity with the concept across all organizational levels. This gap in implementation is particularly concerning given that GBA Plus is meant to be a cornerstone of evidence-based decision-making and policy development (Government of Canada, 2024). Staff at all levels, from frontline workers to executive directors, report little to no formal GBA Plus training, indicating a systemic barrier to its integration into organizational practices. As one executive director candidly admitted, *“I took it [that is GBA Plus WAGE course], but that was right before I did my proposal for [Call for Proposal]... I didn’t know much about it before”*. This statement underscores the ad hoc nature of GBA Plus implementation in many organizations, where familiarity with the concept is often gained reactively rather than proactively. The lack of consistent GBA Plus knowledge and application across the sector aligns with findings from other government departments. For instance, the Canadian Space Agency’s evaluation of GBA Plus implementation revealed similar challenges, including a lack of understanding and knowledge, unclear expectations from senior management, and GBA Plus being treated as an afterthought (Canadian Space Agency, 2020).

In conclusion, to fully harness the potential of GBA Plus in the sector, there must be a concerted effort to develop and deliver comprehensive, sector-specific training and resources. This includes creating GBA Plus training programs that incorporate real-world case studies, interactive workshops, and adaptable templates to translate theory into actionable practices within organizations. Resources



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such as step-by-step guides for applying GBA Plus to program design, service delivery, and policy development are essential within the context of immigrant and refugee services. Establishing a community of practice or mentorship program could further facilitate knowledge sharing and support ongoing learning and implementation. By adopting best practices from other government departments, such as establishing a dedicated GBA Plus focal point unit or Responsibility Centre as demonstrated by Indigenous Services Canada, the sector can provide stronger support for GBA Plus application across organizations (Indigenous Services Canada, 2022, 2023). Developing a comprehensive GBA Plus strategy focused on systematizing its integration into core systems and functions would further advance implementation in a collaborative manner. To truly realize systematic and integrated implementation, the sector must move beyond sporadic training to embedding GBA Plus throughout organizational processes and decision-making. This means integrating GBA Plus considerations into the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of all initiatives, programs, as well as incorporating it into core organizational structures. By addressing these training and resource gaps, the sector can achieve a more comprehensive and impactful implementation of GBA Plus principles, ultimately enhancing its ability to serve the diverse needs of Canada's newcomer communities effectively and equitably.



# Recommendations

This recommendation section outlines suggestions aimed at embedding GBA Plus principles across all levels of the sector, from individual organizational levels to national and federal policymaking levels. By standardizing GBA Plus training, establishing a centralized resource hub, embedding GBA Plus in organizational structures, enhancing data collection and analysis, implementing intersectional needs assessments, and aligning funding criteria with GBA Plus principles, the sector can significantly improve its responsiveness to the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee populations. These recommendations not only advocate for a more inclusive and equitable service environment, but also emphasize the importance of accountability and continuous improvement in addressing the unique challenges faced by the sector.

## Sector-Wide Implementation

### Standardize GBA Plus Training

To enhance the capacity for GBA Plus within the sector, it is crucial to standardize and implement a comprehensive, sector-specific training program across organizations. For instance, the Enhancing National GBA Plus Capacity project has led to the development of essential tools such as *“An Introduction to Gender-based Analysis (GBA) Plus: Principles for the National Newcomers, Immigrant and Refugees-Serving Sector”* which provides detailed sector-specific GBA Plus training. Standardized training should be made available for all staff and volunteers, fostering a shared understanding of GBA Plus principles and creating a culture of inclusivity and intersectionality from the ground up. By tailoring the curriculum specifically to the sector, incorporating practical case studies that reflect unique challenges, and regularly updating content to reflect emerging best practices and changing demographics, the sector can ensure the training remains relevant and responsive to emerging trends.

#### Sector-Wide Implementation

- Standardize GBA Plus Training

#### Organizational Level Changes

- Devise a Customized Strategy to Embed GBA Plus in Organizational Structures
- Enhance Organizational Capacity for Data Collection and Analysis

#### Program Design and Delivery

- Implement Intersectional Needs Assessments
- Establish Accountability Measures

#### Funding

- Adjust Funding Strategies to Foster Programming Alignment with GBA Plus Principles
- Fund GBA Plus-Focused Research

#### Staffing in the Immigrant and Refugee Serving Sector

- Fostering a Diverse Workforce
- Prioritizing Training and Development



# Recommendations

This approach will provide the sector with concrete examples of how to apply GBA Plus principles in their daily work, making the training more effective and impactful. The implementation of such a standardized process will build a strong foundation of GBA Plus knowledge and skills across all levels of service provision, leading to more consistent and equitable support for immigrants and refugees. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach will significantly enhance the sector's ability to address the diverse needs of Canada's immigrant and refugee population, ensuring that services and programs are responsive, inclusive, and aligned with the principles of intersectionality that underpin the GBA Plus framework.

## Organizational Level Changes

### Devise a Customized Strategy to Embed GBA Plus in Organizational Structures

To effectively embed GBA Plus in organizational structures within the sector, a comprehensive approach that integrates GBA Plus principles into the core operations of organizations is needed. This process should begin with a thorough review and revision of strategic plans and mission statements, involving key stakeholders such as leadership, staff, and community representatives to ensure GBA Plus objectives are meaningfully incorporated and reflect the diverse needs of the populations served. For larger organizations, the creation of dedicated GBA Plus coordinator positions is strongly recommended, filled by individuals with expertise in intersectional analysis and a deep understanding of the sector. These coordinators would oversee the organization-wide implementation of GBA Plus principles, provide training and support to staff, and ensure all programs and services are developed, delivered, and evaluated through an intersectional lens. To ensure ongoing oversight and accountability, organizations could establish GBA Plus committees composed of diverse representatives from various departments and levels, meeting regularly to review progress, address challenges, and identify opportunities for improvement. These committees should also conduct regular GBA Plus audits to assess the organization's performance in integrating intersectional approaches. Additionally, organizations could implement comprehensive GBA Plus orientation and onboarding annually for all staff members, from frontline workers to senior management, ensuring that everyone has a thorough understanding of GBA Plus principles and how to apply them in their specific roles. By taking these steps, immigrant and refugee serving organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable environment for both staff and clients, ultimately leading to more effective and responsive services for newcomers to Canada.



# Recommendations

## Enhance Organizational Capacity for Data Collection and Analysis

To enhance data collection and analysis in the sector, a comprehensive strategy is recommended that leverages both collaborative efforts and newly developed tools. This approach involves developing standardized data collection instruments that capture diverse identity factors, providing sector-wide training on intersectional data analysis techniques, and establishing a secure, centralized data-sharing platform. Organizations across the sector could collaborate to create a comprehensive set of data collection tools that go beyond basic demographics to capture nuanced aspects of identity, including gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. These tools should be flexible enough to accommodate diverse organizational needs while maintaining sector-wide consistency. To support such efforts, this project has developed *“A Guide to Equity Driven Data Management,”* which outlines GBA Plus and Data Equity principles and guides organizations through five stages of developing a data management strategy through an equity-driven lens. Additionally, the project’s *“GBA Plus Data Narratives”* tool provides an overview in data management through an equity lens, using the framing concept of data narratives to guide the identification of data needs and goals.

A sector-wide training program should be implemented to build capacity in intersectional data analysis, covering both theoretical foundations and practical skills in data interpretation. This training should include workshops on using statistical software, identifying patterns that reflect the complex interplay of identity factors, and translating insights into actionable program improvements. The centralized data-sharing platform would allow organizations to pool anonymized data for larger-scale trend identification, with clear protocols to address privacy concerns and ensure ethical use of shared information. Further to this, regular sector-wide reports produced from this shared data could inform policy recommendations at both organizational and governmental levels. By implementing these recommendations and utilizing the newly developed tools, the sector can significantly enhance its capacity to understand and respond to the complex needs of diverse immigrants and populations, enabling more targeted and effective service delivery and providing a stronger evidence base for advocacy efforts and policy recommendations.

## Program Design and Delivery

### Implement Intersectional Needs Assessments

A comprehensive framework for implementing intersectional needs assessments should be developed collaboratively with diverse stakeholders and employ a range of data collection methods. To complement the implementation of intersectional needs assessments in program design and delivery





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for the sector, the GBA Plus National Capacity project has developed crucial tools. These include the “*ARAO (Anti-racism and Anti-oppression) Organizational Assessment*”, which provides a baseline assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in organizational ARAO practices, and the “*GBA Plus Organizational Policy Assessment Tool*”, which supports organizations in reviewing their policies and procedures using a GBA Plus lens. The framework should integrate the needs assessment process into the program planning cycle, using intersectional analysis techniques to create detailed profiles of diverse needs within the newcomer population. Community involvement can be emphasized through advisory boards and ongoing feedback mechanisms. Organizations are encouraged to invest in and allocate resources for regular assessments and create mechanisms for sharing findings across the sector. By utilizing these tools and adopting this comprehensive approach, the sector can significantly enhance its ability to design and deliver programs that effectively address the diverse and complex needs of immigrant and refugee populations, leading to more equitable and impactful settlement services.

## **Establish Accountability Measures**

Based on the findings and discussion in the report, there is a need to establish sector-wide accountability measures for GBA Plus implementation in the sector. This will address the identified need for standardized approaches as well as the gaps in systematic evaluation and knowledge sharing across the sector. A collaborative effort should be undertaken to create a comprehensive set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure the depth and breadth of GBA Plus integration across various aspects of organizational operations, including program design, service delivery, staff training, community engagement, and policy development. These KPIs should be designed to capture both the process of implementation and its outcomes, such as the percentage of staff trained in GBA Plus, the number of programs that have undergone GBA Plus analysis, and the diversity of community members involved in program planning. To assess progress, a systematic approach to auditing GBA Plus implementation at the organizational level should be established, involving the creation of a standardized audit tool for self-assessment and a peer-review system for cross-organizational evaluation. These audits conducted on a regular basis, should evaluate both the presence of GBA Plus practices and their effectiveness in creating more inclusive and equitable services. In addition, to promote transparency and accountability, an annual report on the state of GBA Plus implementation in the sector could be published, compiling and analyzing data from the sector-wide audits, highlighting trends, successes, and areas for improvement. This report should include case studies of effective GBA Plus practices, analysis of challenges faced by organizations, and recommendations for future actions. By implementing these comprehensive accountability measures, the sector can ensure continuous improvement in GBA Plus integration, leading to more equitable and effective services for diverse



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populations to Canada, and addressing the sector's unique challenges in serving diverse populations with intersecting identities and experiences.

## Funding

### **Adjust Funding Strategies to Foster Programming Alignment with GBA Plus Principles**

Current funding models across many funding bodies are focused on deliverable-based programming. While this funding design allows for programming to be designed to meet tangible and presumed needs of clients, it neither allows for the flexibility to respond to emergent needs, nor focus on core, organizational considerations. Adjusting funding models to better support organizational autonomy in responding to emerging needs, as well as increased budgetary flexibility to support core organizational capacity building would allow organizations to better align with GBA Plus principles. Allowing more flexibility in funding and spending guidelines would allow organizations to respond to the dynamic nature of community needs, allowing organizations to adjust their budgets and program focuses in response to emerging challenges. For example, if an organization identifies a pressing need for mental health services among a specific demographic, it would gain the ability to reallocate funds without facing penalties or onerous bureaucratic hurdles. While the benefits of this flexibility would impact more than GBA Plus specific needs, it would support organizations in meeting the GBA Plus needs within their communities as well as their internal, organizational needs. The format of this flexibility could take a variety of forms as well, including the loosening of restrictions around budgetary movements, or increased organizational funding that is not tied to deliverables. In regards to the specific urban-rural disparities identified in the previous section, considerations could include an adjustable administrative rate cap for smaller or rural agencies, or the prioritization from secondary funding bodies on capacity-based funding for those agencies. Developing tailored approaches for rural and smaller organizations and establishing mentorship programs between larger and smaller entities fosters a more equitable and effective implementation of GBA Plus across the sector.

Adjustments in funding structures need not be limited within individual funding agreements. There are process-based changes that could also have tremendous impact on the sector's ability to meet the intersectional needs of the communities, in line with GBA Plus principles. This could occur through funders collaborating with organizations to provide additional resources specifically for conducting GBA Plus analyses or other equity-based programs. This could involve establishing grants or dedicated funding streams that enable organizations to assess their programs and services through an intersectional lens, ensuring they can identify and respond to the unique needs of diverse newcomer populations. While current GBA Plus analysis and research has highlighted many GBA Plus intersections



# Recommendations

within the work of the sector, there is much more to be known of the real world outcomes of unmet GBA Plus needs, both on the individuals and organizations themselves, and the longer-term societal impacts therein.

In addition to these measures, fostering collaboration among funding bodies, service providers, and community stakeholders is essential for creating a supportive funding environment. Regular forums or workshops could be organized to discuss best practices and share insights on effective funding strategies that support GBA Plus. Funding bodies should also develop flexible guidelines that allow organizations to allocate resources based on the specific and evolving needs of their communities. Multi-year funding agreements could provide the stability necessary for long-term planning and implementation of initiatives, while addressing recurring sector practices, such as precarious, short-term employment positions, that are common within the current structure. Moreover, organizations should be encouraged to explore diverse revenue streams beyond traditional government grants, including partnerships with private sector entities and philanthropic foundations. Training and support in grant writing and fundraising for the sector can also enhance financial sustainability plans. By implementing these recommendations, the sector can cultivate a more adaptable funding framework that ultimately leads to improved outcomes for immigrants and refugees in Canada.

## **Fund GBA Plus-Focused Research**

It is crucial to allocate resources for ongoing studies that evaluate the long-term impact of GBA Plus initiatives on immigrant and refugee outcomes in the sector. Such research should aim to assess how well GBA Plus principles are integrated into policies, programs, and services, providing insights into the tangible benefits these initiatives offer to diverse immigrant populations. Funding bodies must prioritize grants that support longitudinal studies capable of tracking changes over time, thereby illuminating the effectiveness of GBA Plus initiatives. Additionally, research efforts should focus on identifying emerging trends and challenges in implementing GBA Plus, enabling the sector to adapt their strategies in response to evolving community needs. This understanding will help tailor services and programs to address the unique challenges faced by different immigrant and refugee groups. Furthermore, it is essential to explore innovative approaches to intersectional service delivery through funded research initiatives. This could involve investigating best practices from organizations successfully implementing GBA Plus principles and examining new models of service delivery that prioritize intersectionality. Funding bodies should encourage collaborative research efforts that bring together academic institutions, immigrant and refugee serving organizations, and policymakers to share knowledge and develop evidence-based solutions. By fostering a culture of research and inquiry, the sector can continuously improve its practices, ensuring that services and initiatives remain responsive



# Recommendations

to the diverse needs of newcomers. Ultimately, investing in GBA Plus-focused research will enhance understanding of its impact and contribute to building a more equitable and effective support system for immigrants and refugees in Canada.

## Staffing in the Immigrant and Refugee Serving Sector

### Fostering a Diverse Workforce

To effectively integrate GBA Plus within the sector, organizations should adopt proactive strategies to cultivate a diverse workforce that reflects the communities they serve. This includes implementing intentional hiring practices aimed at increasing the representation of underrepresented groups at all levels, including senior management. Organizations can achieve this by actively recruiting from diverse talent pools and forming partnerships with community organizations that support marginalized populations. Additionally, establishing mentorship and leadership development programs is crucial for creating a pipeline of diverse leaders within the sector. By pairing emerging leaders from underrepresented backgrounds with experienced mentors, organizations can facilitate professional growth and ensure that diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes. Regular assessments of organizational culture and policies through surveys and other relevant mechanisms should also be conducted to identify barriers to inclusion and equity, allowing for continuous improvement in fostering a diverse workforce.

### Prioritizing Training and Development

Organizations must prioritize ongoing training and professional development programs centered on GBA Plus principles, intersectionality, and cultural competency. Such training will equip staff with the necessary skills to effectively apply GBA Plus in their daily work, creating an inclusive environment where every employee feels empowered to contribute to equity-driven initiatives. The GBA Plus National Capacity project has developed valuable tools to support these efforts, including the “*Staff Diversity and Inclusion Survey Guidelines and Template*”, which provides a framework for evaluating and enhancing diversity within teams; “*Staff GBA Plus Readiness and Capacity Survey Template*”, designed to help organizations assess their staff’s readiness to implement GBA Plus; and “the Settlement Sector-Focused Board Diversity Matrix Template”, which emphasizes the importance of board diversity and leadership commitment to equity work. By utilizing these tools, organizations can systematically enhance their understanding of GBA Plus implementation and improve diversity and inclusion practices. Ultimately, these recommendations will foster a more equitable environment that meets the diverse needs of staff while ensuring that diverse voices are represented in decision-making processes.

# Conclusion

The *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project comes at a time where Canada's population growth continues to be led by immigration who bring with them a unique set of needs and experiences. As the sector continues to take on the crucial role of ensuring the meaningful settlement and integration for all newcomers, it is essential that all organizations are equipped with robust capacity to support the intersecting needs and identities of newcomers to Canada. As a comprehensive analytical framework that supports the development of inclusive policies, programs and initiatives, GBA Plus is an essential tool for addressing the diverse and multifaceted needs of immigrants and refugees in Canada. This report has sought to establish a baseline understanding of the sector's existing capacity for GBA Plus in addition to identifying key gaps, assets and opportunities that see GBA Plus fully embedded in the sector at the organizational, client, and program levels.

The findings of this report reinforce the ingenuity and industriousness of the sector's existing capabilities of supporting all newcomers to Canada. Despite a lack of formalized policies specifically pertaining to GBA Plus, the sector has always been able to recognize and meaningfully devise strategies and solutions to address the unique needs and barriers experienced by immigrants and refugees. However, this report also illuminated opportunities for a systematic, well integrated approach to support the consistent application of GBA Plus across organizations. It's imperative for organizations and the wider sector to prioritize comprehensive training on GBA Plus and its principles to lay a strong foundation of GBA Plus awareness on which we can build. Additionally, utilizing the tools developed through the *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project can significantly enhance organizational capabilities and foster sector-wide capacity building. With a commitment to the recommendations in this report, the sector can further strengthen its ability to meet intersecting needs of newcomer communities through more nuanced programming and policy making.

Ultimately, this commitment to integrating GBA Plus not only enhances service and program delivery, but also contributes to building a more equitable society that values diversity and inclusion at its core. The findings of this report underscore the necessity for ongoing collaboration among stakeholders to continuously improve practices and policies within the sector. As Canada's demographic landscape evolves with increasing immigration, it is vital that the sector remains responsive to the needs of all newcomers. By embedding GBA Plus principles into their programs and frameworks, organizations can ensure that they are not only meeting immediate needs, but also contributing to long-term, systemic change that promotes equity for all individuals in Canada.

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# Appendix 1 - Expression of Interest (EOI)

## Enhancing National Sector Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Plus Capacity - Expression of Interest

### **Overview**

The *Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity* project is designed to improve the settlement and integration sector's capacity to mainstream gender equality and [Gender-based Analysis \(GBA\) Plus](#) in their organizational knowledge, programming, and policies. This project is a national collaborative effort led by the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) in partnership with Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA), Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA), Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARISA), and Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA).


As part of the project's research, we are inviting staff working in IRCC-funded agencies across the country who contribute to their organization's programs, services, and internal policies to participate in a 45–60 minute interview.

### **Purpose & Benefit**

The purpose of the interview is to inform a baseline assessment of the current status and capacity of the national settlement and integration sector to mainstream GBA Plus and provide future recommendations. Data collected through the research interviews will also support the identification of key gaps, assets, and opportunities to enhance capacity and embed GBA Plus principles through best practices specific to settlement and integration. The interview will take place during working hours and will be performed either in-person or virtually depending on the feasibility of the agency. Before you submit an EOI, please ensure that you have read the Project Backgrounder and Interview Informed Consent for additional details.

### **Participant Selection**


Participants should have a strong grasp of organizational programs, services, and internal policies. Since this EOI is directed to executive leadership, we would like those interested to refer us to other employees that would be willing to be interviewed in the form below. We are looking for up to three participants from each selected agency in total: one involved in client-facing work (e.g. case management), one in a middle management role (e.g. program manager) and one in an executive leadership position within their agency.



To ensure that the selected interview participants represent the diversity of the national settlement and integration sector, please complete the following Expression of Interest (EOI) form. The EOI form should take about 10 minutes to complete, and any questions can be directed to Ebony Rosa, National Manager, GBA Plus, at [erosa@amssa.org](mailto:erosa@amssa.org) or Leesha Kanbour, Director, National Sector Engagement, at [kanbour@amssa.org](mailto:kanbour@amssa.org). The deadline for submissions is January 10, 2024 with selected participants contacted shortly thereafter.

### **Screening Questions**

1. Name
2. Email
3. Job Title
4. Organization (must be IRCC funded)
5. Location (city, province)
6. How many employees does your organization currently employ?
7. Interviews will take place in [month] during work hours, either in-person or virtually, will you be available to participate during this time?
8. How familiar are you with GBA Plus/Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion/Anti-racist, anti-oppression frameworks? (Participants will be able to provide a response using a scale to indicate level of familiarity)
9. Please indicate **demographic** areas where you have **professional expertise** (select all that apply):
  - a. Racialized communities
  - b. Indigenous people
  - c. Persons with disabilities
  - d. Linguistic minorities
  - e. 2SLGBTQI+ and gender-diverse communities
  - f. Francophone
  - g. Women
  - h. Permanent Residents
  - i. Citizens
  - j. Migrant Workers
  - k. Refugees and Refugee Claimants
  - l. People without immigration status
  - m. Temporary Residents, including international students
  - n. Seniors
  - o. Youth
  - p. Other... (comment box)
10. Please indicate **demographic** areas where you have **lived experience** (select all that apply):
  - a. Racialized communities
  - b. Indigenous people

- 
- c. Persons with disabilities
  - d. Linguistic minorities
  - e. 2SLGBTQI+ and gender-diverse communities
  - f. Francophone
  - g. Women
  - h. Permanent Residents
  - i. Citizens
  - j. Migrant Workers
  - k. Refugees and Refugee Claimants
  - l. People without immigration status
  - m. Temporary Residents, including international students
  - n. Seniors
  - o. Youth
  - p. Other... (comment box)
11. Please indicate **programming** areas where you have professional expertise and/or lived experience (select all that apply):
- a. Children and youth services
  - b. Pre-arrival services
  - c. Resettlement Assistance Program
  - d. Services
  - e. Language programming
  - f. Employment services
  - g. Community connections programming
  - h. EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion), JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)
  - i. GBA Plus
  - j. Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression
  - k. Other (please specify)
12. Please indicate **service locations and types** that you have professional expertise and/or lived experience (select all that apply):
- a. Urban centres
  - b. Remote and rural centres
  - c. Northern communities
  - d. Remote/itinerant service delivery
13. Please list up to **three potential interviewees** in your organizations (at least one involved in client-facing work (e.g. case management), at least one in a middle management role (e.g. program manager)?

\*Note: For questions 8-10, participants will be able to select more than one option and indicate whether they have professional expertise, lived experience, or both.

# Appendix 2 - Consent Forms

## **Informed Consent Form - Interview**

**Project Title:** Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity Project

### **This project is being conducted by:**

This project is being conducted by a member of the research team from the Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity Project. This project is being funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

**This consent form is for your reference and is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what this interview is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you can contact Ebony Rosa, National Manager, GBA Plus, at [erosa@amssa.org](mailto:erosa@amssa.org). Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any information.**

### **Purpose of this Interview**

The overall purpose is to assess the current status and capacity of your organization/agency to mainstream gender equality and GBA Plus through identifying key assets, gaps, and opportunities which will allow us to test and refine an approach to mainstreaming GBA Plus within your organization/agency and in the long-term with all Settlement Provider Organizations (SPOs) across Canada. The interview data will inform the report that details the national settlement and integration sector's current baseline capacity in relation to mainstreaming GBA Plus, and will provide recommendations to support capacity enhancement.

### **Participants**

Participants should have a strong grasp of organizational programs, services, and internal policies. We are looking for up to three participants from each selected agency in total: one involved in client-facing work (e.g. case management), one in a middle management role (e.g. program manager) and one in an executive leadership position within their agency).

### **Interview procedure**

This interview will take about 45 - 60 minutes and will either be in-person or online. To protect your privacy, information collected will be stored on google drive in a secured locked folder accessible by only the GBA Plus Research Leads and National Management Team.



## **Benefits**

The findings and recommendations of this research will be shared nationally and will help contribute to capacity building on GBA Plus. This will include an analysis of the baseline data collected including the sector's current strengths and gaps will be shared through a report. This research is designed to ultimately support organizations' capacity-building efforts related to GBA Plus.

## **Risks**

Your participation in this interview does not expose you to any risk outside of everyday life. It will not affect your ability to provide settlement or related programs and services. However, there may be some psychological or emotional risks involved. Sharing some insights may bring some discomfort. To alleviate these risks, we will make sure we provide all participants with as much information as possible before the interview, including a list of questions.

## **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

To protect your privacy, we will not keep any personal information. Your data will be treated in accordance with the provisions of the Government of Canada Privacy Policy.

While we will anonymize data (remove personally identifiable information from datasets for the purpose of preserving your privacy), please note that we cannot ensure that you remain anonymous, as the specific nature of information provided might allow others familiar with your position to infer your participation. To mitigate this, a copy of the draft of the report will be provided to you prior to our submission.

Only the GBA Plus Research Leads and National Management Team will have access to audio recordings, which will be uploaded on an encrypted Sync folder using two-factor authentication. Audio - but not video recordings - of each meeting will be kept using Zoom's record function. Prior to each meeting, we will remind participants via email of the importance of keeping discussions confidential. When logging into Zoom, participants will be encouraged to log-on using a pseudonym so fellow participants will not be aware of their real names. Unless specifically requested by the participants that we use their real names, we will not be using their real names when disseminating data from this project.

We will delete the audio recordings of the interviews after we have transcribed the interview. Transcripts of the interview will be uploaded in an encrypted Google Drive folder that only the Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity Project can access. The transcripts will not contain identifiable information. Pseudonyms will be used.

## **Costs**

There is no cost to you for your participation in this interview.

## **Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Interview**

All participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any question you do not want

to. You may stop the interview at any time. A participant’s decision not to continue participating will not influence their relationship or the nature of their relationship with researchers or with staff of the Enhancing National Sector GBA Plus Capacity Project. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, your free and informed consent is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

### Questions

Your questions are important to us. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Ebony Rosa, National Manager - GBA Plus, at [erosa@amssa.org](mailto:erosa@amssa.org) or Leesha Kanbour, Director - National Sector Engagement, at [kanbour@amssa.org](mailto:kanbour@amssa.org).

### Consent

Your signature on this form means that you have understood the information for taking part in this interview.

I consent to the use of anonymized quotation(s) from the interview to be used in both internal and external project deliverables.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in this interview. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

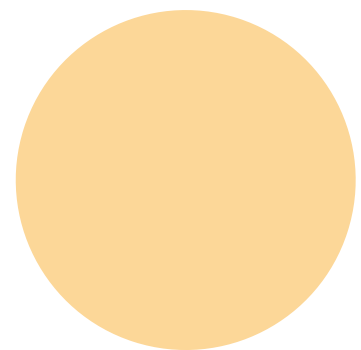
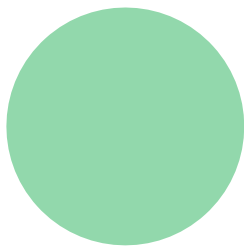
\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Participant’s  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Participant’s Signature Date  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_





# Appendix 3 - Interview Questions

## Enhancing GBA Plus Capacity Project Interview Questions

### Introduction

1. How did you get interested about working in this sector?
2. What does Gender-based Analysis (GBA) Plus mean to you?

### Current State of GBA Plus Capacity

3. In what ways is your organization working to use a GBA Plus framework or other equity-enhancing approaches to ensure more equitable programming and services to its clients?
4. In what ways is your organization working to use a GBA Plus framework or other equity-enhancing approaches within its organization i.e. in its recruitment, policies, training etc?

### GBA Plus Capacity Barriers

5. Can you describe any challenges or barriers you have encountered in incorporating a GBA Plus or other equity-enhancing approaches?
6. What are some gaps or areas for improvement that you are finding in the implementation of GBA Plus or other equity-enhancing approaches?

### GBA Plus Capacity Opportunities

7. What kinds of support would be helpful for your organization and the sector to improve its capacity to use equity-enhancing approaches such as GBA Plus?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

# Appendix 4 - FCFA Report

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada



Rapport d'étude sur les capacités du secteur francophone de l'établissement en matière d'Analyse comparative entre les sexes plus (ACS Plus)

L'IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE AU CANADA par la fcfa FÉDÉRATION DES COMMUNAUTÉS FRANCOPHONES ET ACADIENNES



 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Please [click here](#) to access the full report.

