

Rural And Francophone Community Immigration Pilots Open January 31, 2025



On January 30, 2025, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada introduced two new pilots aimed to improve retention of foreign workers in rural and francophone communities. The Rural and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilots represent a new pathway to permanent residence for skilled workers with a job offer in a participating rural community.

What are the Rural and Francophone Community Immigration Pilots?

Like other regional immigration programs, the Rural and Francophone Community Immigration Pilots require employers to become designated prior to participating in the program. Designation applications are processed by the community's economic development organization, which will screen the employers with their own criteria to ensure their participation in the program will make a substantial economic contribution.

Participating communities are as follows:

Rural participating communities	Francophone participating communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictou County, NS • North Bay, ON • Sudbury, ON • Timmins, ON • Sault Ste. Marie, ON • Thunder Bay, ON • Steinbach, MB • Altona/Rhineland, MB • Brandon, MB • Moose Jaw, SK • Claresholm, AB • West Kootenay, BC • North Okanagan Shuswap, BC • Peace Liard, BC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acadian Peninsula, NB • Sudbury, ON • Timmins, ON • Superior East Region, ON • St. Pierre Jolys, MB • Kelowna, BC

As of today, no information is available on the community-based criteria which employers will be evaluated against, nor on the process to apply for designation.

Once an employer is designated and has completed the requisite training, employers may make job offers under the program. To be eligible for participation under the Rural Community and the Francophone Community Immigration Pilots, candidates must apply for a community recommendation and demonstrate they:

1. Intend to settle permanently in their community.
2. Have a genuine job offer for a full-time, indeterminate position within the community boundaries.
3. Have accumulated at least one year of full-time or part-time work experience in the past three years. The work experience must be at a related skill level, which depends on the TEER of the position offered. The skill level criteria does not apply to graduates of post-secondary institutions located within the community, or those with a job offer in a NOC 31301 position.
4. Meet the language scores as evidenced by an IRCC-approved language test, depending on the program:
 - a. Rural Community Immigration Pilot:
 - i. Teer 0 or 1 job offer: CLB 6
 - ii. Teer 2 or 3 job offer: CLB 5
 - iii. Teer 4 or 5 job offer: CLB 4
 - b. Francophone Community Immigration Pilot: CLB 5.0 in each category on an approved French language test
5. Have completed education at no less than a Canadian high school level, or the foreign equivalent as evidenced by an IRCC-approved education credential assessment report.
6. Hold sufficient settlement funds for their family size.

Communities may require additional criteria be met in order to issue a recommendation letter. Once issued, candidates can submit their permanent residence application to IRCC directly. Thereafter, they may also be eligible to apply for a work permit enabling them to begin work in the rural community before their permanent residency is issued.

Next Steps

IRCC's release of these two new pilot programs comes as welcome news to both employers and workers located in rural communities. Launched as a way to promote economic development in remote communities and promote the settlement of French speakers outside of Quebec, these pilot programs are sure to provide a predictable and effective pathway toward permanent residence for eligible candidates. As with similar programs, we expect each community to tailor their selection criteria toward filling labour market gaps and helping local businesses attract and retain workers.

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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