

AAISA PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

Professionalism in the Settlement Sector

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Importance of Developing a Sector Identity

- The development of settlement sector identity could be traced back to 1986 when AAISA began discussion about professionalization.
- The first Settlement Worker Training Program was launched in 1991.
- In 2000, AAISA approved an Occupational Competencies framework for the settlement sector in the province.
- The framework provides a comprehensive picture of the work performed by settlement practitioners.

Occupational Competencies Framework

Provides a useful description of the work carried out by many different types of practitioners to meet the needs of immigrants. It describes:

- The key purpose of the occupation and the values and principles that guide the work of all practitioners.
- Broad-based functions that enable practitioners to fulfill their roles.
- Day-to-day activities practitioners carry out to meet the expectations of each function.
- Foundational knowledge specifications.
- Performance indicators of good practice that describe the performance expectations associated with each activity.
- Specifications for function-specific knowledge and skills practitioners need to perform in all aspects of their work.

Designation Requirements & Expectation

- AAISA accreditation is designed as a combination of the training modules attended, other relevant courses taken (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition), and experience through documented case studies.
- To apply for AAISA accreditation, one must be a “settlement practitioner” in one of the member agencies of AAISA.
- The AAISA model of accreditation includes three levels of accreditation namely; **Level 2 Practitioner**, **Level 3 Practitioner**, and **Mentor**, in addition to a first level at which *orientation* is given by a settlement agency.

Requirements for Accreditation

Level 2 Practitioner

To recognize practitioners who have developed a level of competence in the settlement field

- **Documented Experience**
 - Minimum 24 months full-time experience in Canada within previous 5 years
 - Self evaluation of 3-5 in 9 CORE functions
- **Documented Education / Training**
 - Minimum of 100 hours of training related to competencies
- **Foundational Knowledge and Skills**
 - Demonstration of training for 20/57 competencies in CORE areas
 - Of these, a self evaluation rating of 3-5 for at least 15 competencies

Level 3 Practitioner

- To recognize experienced practitioners who have developed a level of excellence in the settlement field
- Documented Experience
 - Minimum 5 years full-time experience in Canada
 - Self evaluation of 5 in 9 CORE functions
 - Rating of 3-5 in all functions of ONE option
- Documented Education / Training
 - Minimum of 200 hours of training related to competencies
- Foundational Knowledge and Skills
 - Demonstration of training for 45/57 competencies in CORE areas
 - Of these, a self evaluation rating of 4-5 for at least 15 competencies in either CORE or OPTIONAL areas

Mentor

- To recognize experienced practitioners who have developed a level of excellence and have provided leadership in the settlement field
- **Documented Experience**
 - Minimum 7 years full-time experience in Canada
 - Self evaluation of 5 in 9 CORE functions
 - Rating of 3-5 in all functions of ONE option
- **Documented Education / Training**
 - Minimum of 200 hours of training related to competencies
- **Foundational Knowledge and Skills**
 - Demonstration of training for 45/57 competencies in CORE areas
 - Of these, a self evaluation rating of 5 for at least 15 competencies in either CORE or OPTIONAL areas
 - FIVE examples of leadership roles related to competencies

Designation Requirements & Expectations

Section I: Documented Experience

- Requires a letter of verification of their position by the current agency Executive Director or designate and a detailed description of roles/functions for positions held.
- Self-Evaluation must be verified by the current agency Executive Director or designate.

Section II: Documented Education / Training

- Requires completion of a form that lists training that addresses the AAISA competencies. Training may be evaluated or non-evaluated learning.
- Training may be offered through an AAISA member agency, AAISA, post-secondary institutions or workshops / seminars.
- Requires copies of certificates, transcripts, and course descriptions.

Designation Requirements & Expectations (cont.)

Section III: Foundational Knowledge and Skill

- Demonstration of competencies may be through the completion of an AAISA module, documentation of equivalent training, or through the submission of a related case study.
- Prior Learning Assessment Records (PLAR) processes are used to evaluate documentation of equivalent training and submissions of case studies.
- Case studies have been developed for applicants to demonstrate selected competencies by drawing on their skills and knowledge acquired in the workplace to solve a problem or provide a detailed example.
- Evaluation criteria are provided with each case study so that the assessor knows what points to look for in the applicant's responses. A minimum mark (i.e. 23/30) is identified as needed for the applicant to be deemed as demonstrating applicable competencies.

Designation Impact on Relationship

- One of the core competencies required of settlement practitioners' designation is ***building and maintaining effective relationships*** in relation to clients, volunteers, other staff, and community.
- Practitioners need to have the ability to: ***be self-aware and develop interpersonal skills*** - recognize personal strengths, recognize needs for personal and professional development and strive to fulfill these needs, acknowledge and accommodate differences in values and beliefs and demonstrate sensitivity in a cross-cultural environment;
- ***Facilitate the exchange of information*** –may include sharing experiences and perspectives with others; creating and supporting opportunities to exchange ideas and information with others; recommending information and resources to others.
- ***Develop and maintain relationships with the community*** – working cooperatively with other service providers in the community, communicating regularly with others and sharing information, referral services in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the

Designation Impact on Relationships (cont.)

- Develop trusting relationships and give and receive feedback - creating a welcoming and nurturing environment; assuring confidentiality in relation to personal information and experience; respecting clients' cultural and religious beliefs and practices.
- In their accreditation application, practitioners are required to do a self-evaluation – by rating their ability in these areas and demonstrate how each competency was achieved – either through AAISA training Modules or Prior Learning Assessment Records (PLAR): Equivalent Training completed or Case study completed.
- Self-Evaluation must be verified by the current agency Executive Director or designate.

- ***Accreditation as Mentor*** acknowledges the individuals as a leader with the ability to influence, motivate and enable others in their organizational settings and in the community to achieve greater success in accomplishing the goals and ideals of the settlement sector.
- These individuals would also be called upon to advocate for their clients and to advance the profile of settlement practitioners.

Shared Values and Principles

- A certified settlement practitioner is also expected to abide by the values and principles that guide the work of all practitioners which in turn guide their relationship with clients. Values and principles identified in the framework includes:
- **Empowering clients** by providing them with tools and information necessary to make independent decisions and facilitate integration;
- Recognizing that a spirit of **respect** and **care** must pervade all service delivery and is key to ensuring equity and easing transition.
- Being **accountable** to our clients, the larger community and funders while the designation provides a degree of recognition of the settlement sector, there is also the onus of accountability.
- Accountability to the community as well as to funders is a major factor behind setting up performance standards and measure actual performance.

CONCLUSION

- While the essential competencies are presented in sections as discrete activities, the Settlement practitioners must recognize that in practice these competencies are implemented as part of daily processes and do not stand alone.
- Practitioners must utilize a combination of their knowledge, skills, judgment, and attitude to adjust to changing circumstances and evolving environments.

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