



# The Competencies of Frontline Settlement Counsellors in Canada

## RESEARCH REPORT

### PREPARED BY:

**Dan Scott**

Calience Research and Consulting

**Iren Koltermann**



Developed with the support of

OCTOBER 2019



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1-2
THE CURRENT ROLE OF SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS.....	3-9
THE COMPETENCIES OF SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS.....	10-24
THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCIES.....	10-13
A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK.....	14-15
DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPETENCY MODEL.....	16
EIGHT COMPETENCIES.....	17-24
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS.....	25
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS.....	26
ENDNOTES.....	27-28

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Immigration plays a vital role in Canadian society, in its population, labor force, economic and social development. At present, immigration generates 71 percent of population growth in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Newcomers account for 23.8 percent of the Canadian workforce<sup>2</sup>; 90 percent of labor-force growth is due to immigration, a number anticipated to rise to 100 percent in the coming years as the majority of baby boomers leave the workforce.<sup>3</sup> A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada forecasted that without immigration the country's potential economic growth would slow from 1.9 percent to an average of 1.3 percent annually. Beyond the economic impact, immigration creates linkages to an increasingly globalized world and adds to the richness and strength of Canadian society as a whole.

Canada is widely acknowledged to have one of the most vibrant and robust settlement sectors in the world. The sector has evolved over the past half century in response to emerging needs. At its core are some 500 non-profit organizations<sup>4</sup> that deliver programs and services to help newcomers adjust to life in Canada and to encourage and assist them to become "active in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs"<sup>5</sup> of their new country. The network of organizations has shown resilience, flexibility and creativity in responding to changing needs and requirements of a diverse array of newcomers, excelling in assisting the most vulnerable.

Given the complexity of the whole area of immigration and settlement, it is not surprising that the sector faces persistent challenges. In August 2018, the Conference Board of Canada published a report providing a synopsis of its fourth annual Canadian Immigration Settlement Summit held during May of that year. The report noted that immigrants struggle to "find work commensurate with their skills"<sup>6</sup> and that there are "ongoing challenges with the settlement program, including determining which services are most required and most effective, ensuring adequate settlement funding to cover the growing demand for services as Canada's immigration levels rise, facilitating collaboration among stakeholders, which can be difficult due to competition for limited government funding; and government funders providing settlement organizations with the flexibility to deliver tailored supports that correspond with the diverse needs of immigrants within their respective communities."<sup>7</sup> Of particular note is that the "retention of settlement workers was flagged as a major obstacle by numerous speakers and audience members due to low wages and wage growth in the sector."<sup>8</sup> There are a number of functional positions in the category of "frontline settlement worker." These include information referral specialists, employment counsellors, job developers, language assessors and trainers, and settlement counsellors.

## PURPOSE

This CERIC-funded project was conceived as a contribution toward building the capacity of frontline settlement workers, on whom much of the responsibility for assisting newcomers ultimately falls.<sup>9</sup> The focus of this project is on the functional role of settlement counsellors as it is a challenging role that connects to all functional areas. Settlement counsellors are generalists who, while not usually the first point of contact for a newcomer, address a broad range of needs and issues with varying degrees of depth. This project has two interrelated aims: The first is to gain insight into the work of settlement counsellors and to outline the career path of this position. The second is to identify key competencies that can form the foundation for effective and affordable training. The project seeks to contribute to a rich and growing body of knowledge used by settlement agencies to raise the profile of settlement counsellors; to help identify potential candidates; to provide initial and ongoing training with greater effectiveness and affordability; and to ensure talent is well nurtured. While the focus of this project is on the role of settlement counsellors, many of the insights, conclusions and recommendations can be applied to other categories of frontline settlement workers.

## METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the project involved a comprehensive literature review which was completed in September 2018. The report, titled “The Competencies of Frontline Settlement Workers in Canada – A Background Research Report”, described the nature of settlement work and the larger context of immigration in which it is carried out. It went on to review the research and efforts that have been undertaken thus far toward strengthening the capacity of settlement agencies and frontline settlement workers.

The second phase was completed in mid-April 2019 and involved conducting 40 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 16 settlement counsellors, 17 of their immediate managers and 7 key individuals working in regional roles within the sector. A list of agencies that participated is provided in Appendix A. Participants worked for settlement agencies in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia in both urban and rural settings. The interviews explored in some depth the background of these workers, their motivation for working in the sector, their educational attainments, ongoing training and personal career aspirations, the knowledge they drew on in the performance of their job, and the qualities and attitudes they felt were indispensable for a settlement counselor. In addition, time was dedicated to probing their experience and views on emerging trends and their thoughts on how settlement outcomes could be strengthened. A copy of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

The initial findings were validated and further refined during 5 focus group discussions with settlement counsellors and their managers in 4 cities: Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Finally, the findings and conclusions were shared with the interviewees and their comments and further suggestions were incorporated.

## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Pages 3 to 9 provide a summary of findings regarding the nature of the work undertaken by settlement counsellors and their career preparation and development.

Pages 10 to 13 discuss the concept of competencies and describe several points that informed the approach to elaborating the competencies of settlement counsellors.

Pages 14 to 15 outline the competency framework and identify underlying assumptions.

Pages 16 to 24 provides a description of the competencies, along with an initial list of primary concepts, qualities and attitudes and abilities.

# THE CURRENT ROLE OF SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Settlement counsellors work predominately for non-governmental, community-based organizations that work with newcomers. Some are employed by government agencies such as libraries or school boards. The core of their work is to provide one-on-one and direct services to support the efforts of immigrants and refugees to adapt to life in Canada and begin to participate in the life of society. This invariably involves conducting a needs assessment, identifying strengths and barriers, developing a service plan, and setting settlement goals jointly with clients that consider available services and community supports. The work often extends to advocacy to promote inclusion for immigrants. All settlement counsellors provide referrals and well-researched information relevant to the needs of newcomers. The majority of counsellors provide case management and supportive follow up. Most facilitate group information sessions. All are responsible for administrative reporting.

The interviews confirmed that the scope of work varies from organization to organization. The size and mission of the organization and the nature of the population it serves shape the role and the day-to-day activities of settlement counsellors. For example, some settlement counsellors see clients only by appointment, often booked by intake workers, but many are responsible to have an outreach strategy, to be in the community to identify newcomers in need of support; some do both. Some work almost wholly with individuals or families while others are more involved in organizing and facilitating information and orientation sessions and group workshops on specific topics, such as citizenship classes; most settlement counsellors do both individual and group work. Some counsellors only provide well-researched information and appropriate referrals while others go further and assist clients to complete forms; some go further and personally accompany newcomers as they navigate bureaucratic systems, including escorting clients to appointments. Most settlement counsellors refer crisis situations to dedicated personnel, but some, when qualified, address these cases sometimes with the help of other organizations.

## QUALIFICATIONS

While the description of responsibilities was consistent, the required qualifications varied more widely. The size of the organization and its mission impact the qualifications that managers consider when recruiting. Organizations in rural areas were more flexible in selecting candidates with varied backgrounds, likely because of fewer potential candidates.

*"It's challenging to be a settlement counsellor. High workload, emotional work, limited or no funding for training, and constant need to update or learn new things to be able to effectively help clients."*

**LIP Manager in Ontario**

### EDUCATION

The minimum requirement is completion of high school. Some managers felt this minimum was sufficient if the individual had relevant experience and the right qualities and attitudes. However, most managers, particularly those in larger organizations, required completion of a university degree, preferably in human services, but any degree would be acceptable. Completion of the degree demonstrated a level of determination and commitment, and an ability to carry out research and to communicate clearly. Some managers said they would consider an applicant with a college diploma in human services, particularly if it was in the area of immigration, but considered this more of an asset in addition to a degree.

Those counsellors interviewed had diverse educational backgrounds. A few only had a high school diploma and some had various continuing education certifications. Most had a university degree, but in a wide range of backgrounds, including degrees in the physical sciences, economics and finance, in social sciences and human services. About a quarter had studied for an additional diploma or certificate related to the settlement sector.

### EXPERIENCE

Managers look for candidates with previous experience working directly with people, whether paid or volunteer, as one of the essential requirements of a settlement counsellor is the ability to relate to diverse people. Managers emphasized that this disposition cannot be taught. The most desirable experience is working directly with refugees and new immigrants. Several managers made explicit their desire to hire those who have themselves immigrated to Canada, the rationale being that it is possible to train people in the knowledge of Canada but not in the experience of leaving your homeland and resettling in another country.

The majority of those interviewed mentioned that prior to being hired they had extensive volunteer experience in the settlement sector and often with the organization that first employed them. So consistently was this reported that offering to volunteer is recommended as a path to employment in a frontline settlement position.

### OTHER ABILITIES

Settlement counsellors need to work independently, be able to learn in a self-directed manner and to manage their schedule and time.

Except in very small organizations, settlement counsellors work as part of a team and need to work well with co-workers, appreciating the value of working together and contributing to the objectives of the team and the whole organization.

Managers look for people who are well balanced, able to pay simultaneous attention to their own wellbeing and to the work of helping others. Settlement counsellors frequently work with people in difficult situations and who can range from feeling defeated to demonstrating frustration and even hostility. This requires sensitivity and the ability to communicate honestly and tactfully.

Oral and written communication skills in English is a firm requirement. Most organizations also require fluency in at least one other language. There are times when individuals with specific language requirements are hired to reach certain populations. Second-generation immigrants are also hired as settlement counsellors since they are both aware of the language and the culture of the communities they serve. These individuals have the added advantage of direct experience with the very systems they are trying to assist newcomers to navigate. This type of first-hand experience of being a newcomer is deemed a valued qualification by many managers, as it provides the individual with the language and cultural understanding of the communities the organization is trying to serve.

Accurate data entry and familiarity with customer relations management and office suite software is one of the requirements of the work.

A current, clear police record check is a firm requirement. A valid driver's license and good driving record is usually required.

## MOTIVATION

Without exception, each settlement counsellor described their motivation in terms of a desire to help people. The principal motivation is to be of service to others and to contribute to the wellbeing and progress of society. For managers, each said that this is what they look for in a potential candidate; and they look to the experience of a candidate to demonstrate this motivation. When asked how they know they are performing well, settlement counsellors invariably said that they feel rewarded when they have helped people, and they can see that they have made a difference in the person's settlement journey.

*"In some ways all experience is important. Clients are so diverse, and their needs are diverse, so it helps to have staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences."*

**Settlement Counsellor in BC**

Many counsellors qualified that helping people goes beyond providing a service to involve building capacity in their clients, highlighting their objective to ensure that newcomers become able to take charge of their settlement journey. Many of the settlement counsellors interviewed stated explicitly that they are not particularly motivated by money and do not have a desire to advance to higher positions in the organization. They felt higher level positions would remove them from frontline contact with immigrants, which ultimately is the source of their motivation and provides them the most job satisfaction.

## QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES

Settlement counsellors and their managers provided a highly consistent description of the necessary qualities and attitudes. Empathy, sympathy, compassion, gentleness, kindness, and patience were consistently raised as essential qualities.

Those who work well in this role are described as having a love for and an interest in people and an ability to see potential in them. An attitude of caring and helpfulness combined with the ability to create a welcoming, friendly environment is deemed necessary to carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities of the role. Settlement counsellors are nurturing, non-judgmental, accepting and able to work with diverse clients who have varied needs. Counsellors are good listeners, have a disposition to analyze, possess good judgement and an ability to discern the strengths and challenges that people have, so that they can effectively identify issues and problems and help immigrants prioritize their settlement goals and objectives. They are innovative in researching and devising solutions and overcoming obstacles, doing so in a collaborative manner with both their clients and other players in various community organizations. Settlement counsellors are flexible, adaptable and, at the same time, persistent in navigating challenging settlement issues for their clients.

The following word cloud captures the words settlement counsellors and managers used to describe the qualities and attitudes of a competent settlement counsellor.





## KNOWLEDGE

Settlement counsellors are primarily generalists, although in some areas, such as the immigration system, they have specialized knowledge. As such, they need to have a broad knowledge base. Below is a summary of the knowledge areas identified by settlement counsellors and their managers.

A critical area of knowledge is the immigration and refugee system, including a sound working knowledge of its aims, policies, regulations and procedures, particularly as it relates to immigration status and the application process. This also includes a good general understanding of and sensitivity to the broader issues affecting immigrant and refugee communities and the overarching framework of multiculturalism in Canada.

Settlement counsellors also need a good knowledge of essential social and economic systems with which newcomers interact. These include legal, housing, healthcare, education, economic, employment, taxation, social service, particularly language training, and community. The systems as they exist in Canada are complex and often quite different from those with which newcomers are familiar. Counsellors need to have a grasp of the relevant federal, provincial and local legislation and the policies and regulations that govern and guide these systems. They need to know how to access and navigate these systems, in which they frequently advocate for their clients. Settlement counsellors “try to open doors.” Their knowledge needs to be up to date and comprehensive so that they can provide advice and assistance in a manner that promotes understanding of the systems and enables newcomers to eventually interact with them independently.

To be effective in their role settlement counsellors need to have an extensive knowledge of programs and services offered in the areas served by the settlement organizations. Settlement counsellors need to “connect to what is going on” in the community and have up to date information about what resources are available to newcomers. They need to have a general knowledge of human rights legislation and policies.

It should be noted that the “knowledge” described in the interviews implies understanding of the settlement system and its foundational concepts. Many counsellors said that policies and procedures frequently change, and they need to be able to research thoroughly and know how to find out relevant and current information.

## PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR FURTHER TRAINING

Settlement counsellors invariably said that there is a need for more training. This prompted questions about what specific types of training they felt they needed and that they would benefit from. Most asked for training that helped them to keep abreast of changes to legislation and policies within the immigration system.

*“The relationships that we make with clients is in itself rewarding. It is all worth it, when you have a thankful client and you know that you’ve made a difference. That’s why I stay in this job.”*

**Settlement Manager in Alberta**

Another area that was frequently mentioned was mental health and wellbeing. It is interesting to note that when settlement counsellors talk about training, they are generally referring to access to information and opportunities to network and learn about various programs and services that will enable them to serve their clients more effectively.

### COMPENSATION

The salary range for settlement counsellors was surprisingly consistent across the country, including in rural and urban settings. The range of starting salary was \$22.82 to \$24.00 per hour and increased with experience to \$25.25 to \$28.00 per hour for a 35- to 37.5-hour work week. Maximum salary levels, then, range from about \$46,000 to \$52,000 per year plus benefits.

*"I love to stay in the field. Maybe move into management position but there is no way for me to get hands on experience or formal training in management issues e.g. funding requirements, writing proposals etc...."*

**Settlement Counsellor in Alberta**

### CAREER PROGRESSION

*"We are seeing more and more second-generation immigrants interested in this work. They understand the culture, speak their own language but more importantly speak English and understand the Canadian system."*

**Settlement Counsellor in Ontario**

Most settlement counsellors were satisfied to remain in the role for a long time and did not aspire to higher positions within the field or the organizations where they work. Some settlement counsellors had moved laterally in the organization, becoming program coordinators, providing greater responsibility and higher salary while remaining engaged with front-line work.

Managers had usually worked as settlement counsellors or social workers earlier in their careers. To move within the organization, they had shown interest in managing programs, budgets and/or people. In addition, they had invested in their own personal development by taking course and enrolling in specific programs related to their work.

To move beyond the position of manager and to take on the role of a program or executive director requires knowledge of funding structures and a corresponding ability to secure funding for programs.

A few of the settlement counsellors we interviewed highlighted that even though they were interested, it was difficult for them to obtain this kind of knowledge and experience or to build the kind of relationships with funders that are necessary. This is one of the barriers identified by those who aspire to move up to various program or executive director roles.

# SETTLEMENT COUNSELLOR CAREER PATHWAY

**Immigration** plays a vital role in the development of Canadian society, responsible for 71 percent of population growth and 90 percent of labor-force growth, in addition to the linkages it creates in an increasingly globalized world, adding to the richness and strength of Canada as a country.

Frontline settlement counsellors are one of the initial points of contact for newcomers, helping them to settle, adjust, adapt and participate in Canadian society. Settlement counsellors play a role in strengthening labor market outcomes of newcomers, increasing absorptive capacity of welcoming communities, and enhancing public support for immigration. As immigration levels rise and the diversity of those settling in Canada increases, the value of the service provided by these workers will rise.



## WHAT THEY DO

**Settlement counsellors** work predominantly for non-governmental, community-based settlement organizations or government agencies i.e. libraries or school boards to provide support to immigrants and refugees to adapt to life in Canada and participate in the life of society.

- Advocating wellbeing
- Build unity in diversity
- Needs assessment
- Navigate systems
- Forster sense of belonging
- Conduct with integrity
- Promote learning
- Foster initiative

### EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE NEEDED

- University degree, preferably in human services.
- Experience with newcomers, whether paid or volunteer.
- Experience working with diverse populations.
- Extensive volunteer experience in the settlement sector.
- Second language & awareness of newcomer experience, first-hand or through work.

### KNOWLEDGE

- Immigration & refugee systems' aims, policies, regulations & procedures.
- Broader issues affecting immigrant & refugee communities.
- Essential social & economic systems newcomers interact with e.g. legal, housing, healthcare, employment, taxation etc.
- Relevant federal, provincial & local legislation, regulation & policies guiding Canada's social & economic systems.
- Extensive knowledge of programs, service, & community resources for newcomers
- Human rights legislation & policies.

## BEFORE ENTERING THE FIELD



- To work independently.
- To learn in a self-directed manner.
- To manage time effectively.
- To work well under pressure.
- To be a team player.
- To pay simultaneous attention to their own wellbeing and to the work of helping others.
- To communicate both written and oral in English.

## ENTERING THE FIELD

- Fluency in at least one other language.
- First-hand experience of being a newcomer or working with newcomers.
- To enjoy working with people and have excellent interpersonal & communication skills.
- To work well with diverse populations.

### QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES

- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Compassion
- Gentleness
- Kindness
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Open & welcoming

## CAREER PROGRESSION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PEOPLE/PROGRAM MANAGER/DIRECTOR

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, TEAM LEADER

SETTLEMENT COUNSELLOR

VOLUNTEER, PROGRAM ASSISTANT, INTERPRETER

## ADVANCING IN THE FIELD



# THE COMPETENCIES OF SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS

## THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCIES

The concept of competence is ancient and has evolved alongside society over centuries. Its first known use occurs in the work of Plato in 380 BC, but as far back as the “Code of Hammurabi” (1792-1750 BC) an equivalent concept can be found.<sup>10</sup> However, the use of competence to systematically analyze work behavior for the purpose of employee selection and training is a more modern development. The concept in this sense can be traced back to the work of psychologist Robert White who, in 1959, published what is now regarded as a classic article, *Motivation Reconsidered: The Concept of Competence*. White used the term competence to “describe those personality characteristics associated with superior performance and high motivation.”<sup>11</sup> He defined competence as “effective interaction (of the individual) with the environment.”<sup>12</sup> David McClelland built on this approach in his 1973 article *Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence*, arguing that traditional academic aptitude and knowledge content tests, popular at the time, were not good predictors of either job performance or life success and that it would be more productive and fairer to test for competence.<sup>13</sup> His call for research set in motion a vigorous action-learning process. Competence became a focus of much research in the 1980s and the concept “dominated the management strategy literature of the 1990s,” emphasizing “core competency as a key organizational resource.”<sup>14</sup>

The idea of competence is, at least on the surface, simple and compelling. It has helped to bridge gaps between education and practical job requirements at a time when the nature and requirements of work, jobs and career paths are rapidly evolving, particularly under the tremendous forces of globalization. Unfortunately, as happens with many useful ideas, the concept has been employed in different ways and with differing underlying assumptions leading to “considerable confusion surrounding the term, which reflects conflation of distinct concepts and inconsistent usage.”<sup>15</sup>

For example, North American management strategy historically viewed competence, particularly “core competence”, as an organizational resource to be exploited to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Somewhat paradoxically, while management strategists emphasized competencies that are unique and firm-specific, human resource development professionals were focused on building highly transferable, more generic competencies used by a wide range of job roles.<sup>16</sup> Over time, the approach of human resource development became widespread and dominant in North America. “Even within the predominantly behavioral approach, many conceptions of competency now include knowledge and skills alongside attitudes, behaviors, work habits, abilities and personal characteristics.”<sup>17</sup> Gradually, competence frameworks became more holistic and sought to align individual competencies with organizational competence, linking human resource development with overall strategy.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to differences of understanding between management strategy and human resource development, there are historically different approaches to the concept. The *behavioralist* approach focusses on observing highly successful job performers and determining what differentiates them from other lower performing employees. This identification is achieved through careful observation and behavioral-event interviews. Competence is based on observable behavior and performance in situ. Because competence is viewed as fundamentally behavioral, specific competencies can be trained and

learned.<sup>19</sup> The *generic* approach to competence also identifies superior performers and their defining characteristics, but seeks to articulate more general competencies, beyond role specific ones, that can be applied to different job and life contexts. It is a broader approach to competence than the behaviorist.<sup>20</sup> The *cognitive* approach focuses on identifying all the mental resources individuals need to acquire the necessary knowledge and master key skills to achieve high performance. The approach classically draws on cognitive approaches including psychometric models of intelligence, models of cognitive development and of information processing. The model has been gradually expanded to include social and emotional competencies, in addition to what was referred to as intelligence.<sup>21</sup> Finally, a *social-constructivist* approach to competency emphasizes the importance of mentoring, continuous dialogue between student and mentor, and performance in practice.<sup>22 23</sup>

It is not our aim to review the rich history of research and literature about competency, but to draw attention to the many ways the concept has been understood and practiced over the past five decades and to note that there are differing assumptions underlying these approaches. While progress toward a more holistic and coherent understanding of the concept is being made, it would be difficult to assert that a clear, coherent theory has emerged that reconciles the various approaches and usages of the concept.

It is against this backdrop that we provide a brief discussion of our approach to competencies, which aims at providing a basis for training content that will support and further develop the capacities of frontline settlement practitioners, particularly settlement counsellors. We do so with acknowledgement of the work that has already been undertaken within the settlement sector.

## A WORKING DEFINITION OF COMPETENCY – GUIDING IDEAS

There is an array of definitions of competence and competency. We have found that the numerous approaches and definitions tend to result in some degree of confusion, even among those working in human resources.<sup>24</sup> To avoid potential confusion – or worse contributing to it – we propose thinking of competencies in a straightforward manner: *A competency refers to the capacity that an individual has developed to operate effectively in a particular sphere of action.*<sup>25</sup>

The definition implies several things. It implies that individuals can learn, that they can build and shape latent capacity into competencies that enables them to contribute effectively in a sphere of action. The individual is the protagonist of this work; no one can learn for someone else. It implies that competency is not something one achieves once and for all, but progressively develops. It implies that a given sphere of action has a relatively well-defined purpose. A job position – or any organization for that matter – has its own intrinsic purpose, its reason for existing. The sense of purpose provides an heuristic for decision making and fosters appreciation of how the position contributes to the whole.<sup>26</sup>

Competencies need to be more than a well-thought-out collection of information and the definition of skills and abilities. They need to help connect knowledge – especially concepts, which are the building blocks of knowledge – qualities and attitudes in a way that makes it clear as to how an individual contributes within a given, relatively well defined, sphere of activity.

At a practical level, competencies should help foster understanding of the nature of the sphere of action and serve as a guide to practitioners and their managers to identify strong performance and enable learning to ensure the position contributes to the organization as a whole. Competencies then are not merely individual skills, certain concepts, discrete pieces of information, or specific behaviors. We view them as referring to relatively broad areas of thought and action that generally require familiarity with a number of concepts and numerous qualities, attitudes, abilities and skills.

A set of competencies is not equivalent to the definition of a job position. They are more effectively viewed as insights into the nature of a sphere of action. Just as a model can never correspond precisely to reality, neither do competencies. However, when thoughtfully elaborated they can provide workers and managers with insights into the purpose, goals and values of the organization and what is necessary to contribute to these.

This approach helps overcome the concern that competencies tend to be highly behavioristic, largely reducing the concept to the assessment and the demonstration of skills and abilities, an approach which can frustrate learning and development more than support it.<sup>27</sup> There then becomes an “overreliance on standardization of competencies, whereas the power of competence-based education lies in its context-embeddedness.”<sup>28</sup> When competency models are overly influenced by behaviorism, they fail to adequately consider and draw on individual agency, talents and perspectives. Human beings possess qualities and talents, some common to all human beings and some that are the individual’s unique endowment, that can be, through the exercise of agency, developed only in the context of working alongside and for the betterment of others. Qualities and attitudes such as, for example, honesty, trustworthiness or compassion cannot be well developed by someone living alone on an isolated island. Without outside goals and interactions, it is impossible for an individual to assess whether he or she is advancing, or whether the knowledge or skills are actually beneficial. Competencies emerge and are developed in an intimate, reciprocal relationship between individual employees and their organization as a whole, its mission and culture – which is in turn shaped by the interactions of the organization with society. Competencies need to consider context and the power of the concept of competence “lies in its context-embeddedness.”

An additional point can be added to the above statements. Human beings are not strongly motivated by mastering skills or applying techniques. As important as these are, there are deeper and more lasting sources of motivation: an individual’s thirst for knowledge, a thirst that is quenched by advances in understanding; search for meaning; and attraction to beauty. Building capacity in human beings needs to tap these deeper sources of motivation.<sup>29</sup> Most importantly, it needs to seek to enhance understanding. This aim has several implications.

This definition seeks to overcome another concern with competencies: developing “abstract, narrow, and oversimplified descriptions of competence that fail adequately to reflect the complexity of competence in the workforce.”<sup>30</sup> The result can be long lists of very specific “competencies,” often reducing competencies to statements of skills or technique and place undue emphasis on measurement and assessment. This can be overwhelming, cause confusion and uncertainty and pose significant challenges to actual use. It often frustrates employees, because it addresses human capacity in too restrictive and fragmented a manner. Individuals, and groups, acquire competency progressively as they

advance in understanding of concepts, assimilate relevant information, and develop qualities, attitudes and habits. Yet, two people do not necessarily develop competency at the same rate; pace and stride vary between people and even the same person may go through periods of rapid or gradual development and plateaus. Any approach to building competency needs to take these patterns into account.

There are two additional concerns with competencies that should be noted as they are important when considering the work of settlement counsellors. One is that “different cultural contexts influence the understanding of competence and this is especially important in relation to the extent to which competence is defined by cultural literacy and involving group identities such as race, gender, age and class (ascription) as opposed to demonstrable behavior (achievement).” “As much as the behavioral and skill-based performance assessments portend to be ‘neutral and objective,’ the ascriptive elements remain present and troubling for today’s increasingly diverse workplaces.”<sup>31</sup>

The individualistic nature of competencies is another important concern. Competencies are centered on the individual, “they are viewed as independent of the social and task-specific context in which performance occurs, yet skill level is a characteristic not only of a person but also of a context. People do not have competencies independent of context.”<sup>32</sup> Quentin Eichbaum noted “an unresolved disjunction between ‘individualist’ and collectivist’ approaches to learning and competence.” Stating that individualism and autonomy are highly valued in Europe and North America, Eichbaum comments that:

If learning and competence are housed within the individual, they move with the individual and are not linked to contexts. If competencies are attributes that the individual can acquire through learning, we can assess them by testing the individual, and we can reward individuals who demonstrate superior performance. The individualist view of learning and competence contrasts with “collectivist” (social or distributed) learning theories in which learning is “situated” or “distributed” within a group or community and arises through participation and dynamic interactions within the group. According to the collectivist view, “Competence ... is not possessed by the individual but negotiated by the group, through work and talk.”<sup>33</sup>

Finally, for a competency framework to be effective it needs to strive to overcome fragmentation, especially between theory and practice and among being, doing and knowing. The value of competencies is not in behavior modification, but in nurturing understanding – for soundness of understanding leads to soundness of action. Nurturing understanding involves more than learning to master a set of skills and techniques. It requires engaging with concepts and strengthening the capacity to move from the abstract to the practical and back again. It also requires clarity of vision, of the individual, the organization and, indeed, of civilization. Vision involves a clear sense of purpose; it informs competencies and helps place them in a larger context; counteracting a tendency for competency statements to become narrow and fragmented. Vision endows even the most mundane tasks with meaning.

It has been observed that the link between competence and performance does not seem to be straightforward. A sound competency framework should lead to the design of effective selection and training activities. Yet, such a framework needs to evolve in a learning mode characterized not by planning and evaluation but by action, reflection on action, consultation and study. This requires the development of capacity in management. Unfortunately, the implementation of a competency framework in resource-strapped environments is challenging, a challenge made more difficult given the rapidly changing social, economic and political circumstances of those working in the social service sector.

# A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS

Developing a competency framework for settlement counsellors in a pan-Canadian context poses its own challenges. The historical pattern of immigration and the resulting approaches to settlement differ from region to region. A great deal of the actual work of settlement is shaped by provincial legislation and programs, and much of the specific knowledge required by settlement counsellors varies province to province. While the work of settlement is essentially the same, these considerations do impact competencies. Beyond this, settlement organizations themselves have different interests, and focus on various aspects of the work differently. This too impacts competencies. We also note that the language used to describe the work varies from region to region and among organizations.

For this reason, what is presented is a high-level overview of the competency framework: a description of each of the individual competencies – including concepts, qualities, attitudes and a number of related abilities – to help give insight into the nature of each competency. However, the framework will need to be adapted to take into consideration regional variations in approach, systems, processes, procedures and knowledge, and then further customized to the focus and workflow of individual organizations.

## COMPETENCIES OF SETTLEMENT COUNSELLORS

*“Integration is not a one-way street; it’s a collaboration between the community and the newcomers. They said it’s a constant effort to help the existing community to reach out and allow newcomers to integrate.”*

**Focus Group participant, Quebec**

Competencies, as we have employed the concept, refer to broad areas of activity that draw on numerous concepts, qualities, attitudes, abilities and skills. Below is a description of each of the 8 competencies central to the role of a settlement counsellor, along with the initial identification of concepts, qualities, attitudes, and abilities. The work of settlement counsellor is fundamentally concerned with capacity building, whether in newcomers or the existing community, and this is reflected in the description of the role and the articulation of the competencies.

It is important to note that not all settlement counsellors perform all the activities associated with the competencies described below. The scope of their work depends on the mandate and organization structure of the agency that employs them. For example, in some organizations, settlement counsellors only undertake needs assessments and provide referrals for newcomers. In others, counsellors do this and provide direct assistance to help newcomers navigate social and economic systems. Most settlement counsellors advocate for newcomers but the amount and focus of such advocacy varies. In general, most settlement counsellors are focused primarily on the first dimension of the role; yet, the second is gaining in importance.

In addition, there are significant differences in approaches to settlement from region to region in Canada, and, indeed, from organization to organization. There are differences of approach, focus, job descriptions and language. These differences pose a challenge to articulating a competency framework for the whole of the country that can be easily understood by everyone. The next phase of the work will be the development of training content that will be customized based on region and even individual organizations.



# COMPETENCIES OF A SETTLEMENT COUNSELLOR



## DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPETENCY MODEL

The role of a settlement counsellor can be conceived as having two essential aspects, each fundamentally concerned with capacity building.

The first aspect, which historically has been the principal purpose of the settlement sector, is concerned with providing direct support to newcomers, paying attention to their physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being. This aspect involves assessing the needs of newcomers and providing appropriate information, orientation, referrals and direct assistance; helping them to navigate a multitude of social and economic systems; and assisting them to appreciate the nature of Canadian society and to understand Canadian culture.

This second, emerging aspect of the role of settlement counsellors is focused on building capacity in the existing community to welcome newcomers. It involves advocating to overcome age-old prejudices and systemic barriers that prevent newcomers from participating in and contributing to the development of society but is primarily concerned with building environments based on unity in diversity. This second aspect emerged from the responses of the interview participants to the questions of how they thought the work of a settlement counsellor may evolve in the future, what trends they have observed, and what is needed going forward.

While the first aspect described above is the primary focus of settlement counsellors at present, the second aspect is asserting itself and will require greater attention in the years ahead. Settlement counsellors, because of their background and their intimate familiarity with newcomers, are well positioned to contribute to this emerging area of work.

Naturally, both dimensions have administrative work associated with them.

Intimately, inseparably interwoven into both aspects are three critical competencies: to conduct oneself with integrity; to foster initiative and to promote learning.

The following 8 competencies are the main findings of this report:

- TO DISCERN THE STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF NEWCOMERS
- TO ASSIST NEWCOMERS TO NAVIGATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS
- TO HELP NEWCOMERS GAIN UNDERSTANDING OF CANADIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE; TO NURTURE A SENSE OF BELONGING
- TO ADVOCATE FOR THE WELLBEING OF NEWCOMERS
- TO CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY
- TO UPHOLD INTEGRITY
- TO PROMOTE LEARNING
- TO FOSTER INITIATIVE

## First Aspect - Empowering Newcomers

## TO DISCERN THE STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF NEWCOMERS

### Description and Sphere of Action

This competency describes one of the key components of the work of a settlement counsellor: helping newcomers identify their physical, social, intellectual and spiritual needs and aspirations, as well as their strengths, resources and the barriers they face. Drawing on this information, they help clients to develop a realistic plan to prioritize and systematically address these needs and advance toward their aspirations. It also includes providing information, orientation, referrals and direct assistance, where appropriate, in a manner that fosters understanding, sets realistic goals, defines plans of action, and enhances sound decision making.

### Primary Concepts

- Newcomer
- Settlement
- Consultation
- Empowerment
- Accessibility

### Qualities and Attitudes

- Truthfulness
- Generosity
- Kindness
- Patience
- Empathy
- Mutual respect
- Clarity and creativity of thought

### Abilities

- An ability and disposition to maintain an open, engaging, friendly, orientation toward people and to convey a sense of optimism and encouragement in one's interactions.
- An ability to establish welcoming, safe, warm and nurturing environments in which newcomers feel safe and able to share their experiences, feelings, needs, expectations and aspirations.
- An ability to perceive and to understand with a reasonable degree of clarity the motivations and feelings of others in historical context, and to see a situation from another's perspective.
- An ability to listen actively, which implies being available and open to people, a mental focus to listen carefully to hear what is being said, to discern relevant and important information, and a discipline to mitigate the influence of one's preconceptions and bias.
- An ability to ask probing and appropriate questions in a manner that builds trust and confidence in the newcomer and elicits helpful information that illuminates the situation and possible resolutions.
- An ability to accurately identify the specific needs, barriers, strengths, limitations, resources and aspirations of newcomers, to place these in proper context, to assess the importance of each and to organize and prioritize them.
- An ability to identify, evaluate and work through a range of approaches, resources and practical steps necessary to address the needs of newcomers and assist them to advance toward their aspirations. This implies a related ability to identify and account for potential barriers and challenges, to consider various courses of action, and to consult with newcomers to identify the best option for their situation. In also involves an ability to set and communicate realistic expectations while maintaining hope and providing encouragement.

# TO ASSIST NEWCOMERS TO NAVIGATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

## Description and Sphere of Action

A great deal of attention of settlement counsellors involves helping newcomers effectively navigate bureaucratic systems, in a manner that conveys encouragement and builds capacity for them to engage with these systems on their own. Such systems include immigration, political education, health, housing, employment, financial, transportation, childcare, and language acquisition. Learning how to navigate these systems and the processes they engender is associated with being recognized and understood, and to becoming a part of the community and society. It involves learning more than procedures to include aspects of culture. Beyond learning how to meet needs and advance aspirations, it helps newcomers feel a sense of belonging.

## Primary Concepts

- System
- Process
- Accompaniment

## Qualities and Attitudes

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Resourcefulness
- Respect
- Courtesy
- Diligence
- Tactfulness
- A disposition for accuracy

## Abilities

- An ability to navigate bureaucratic systems. A closely related ability to explain each system to newcomers in a manner that helps them to understand the system and how to interact with it; this needs to be done in response to the capacity of the client.
- An ability to identify all the various aspects of the situation of a newcomer, to assess courses of action to address needs and aspirations. This extends to identifying alternative approaches, evaluating each, and consulting with the client to identify the most effective course of action.
- An ability to recognize strengths and opportunities as well as potential weaknesses, challenges and obstacles.
- An ability to think creatively, with foresight and in a manner that appreciates the future consequences of current decisions, and an ability to help newcomers understand these implications.
- An ability to manage issues over time in response to changing circumstances, policies and procedures.
- An ability to understand and complete an array of administrative and procedural forms.
- An ability to pay attention to detail.

## **TO HELP NEWCOMERS GAIN UNDERSTANDING OF CANADIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE; TO NURTURE A SENSE OF BELONGING**

### **Description and Sphere of Action**

Beyond assisting newcomers to define, prioritize and plan to address needs, and advance toward aspirations, settlement counsellors perform an educative function, helping newcomers to learn about and advance in their understanding of their new home. Much of this work is carried out in workshops and group settings.

### **Primary Concepts**

- Community
- Society
- Culture
- Belonging
- Information
- Knowledge
- Understanding

### **Qualities and Attitudes**

- Mutual respect
- Kindness
- Patience

### **Abilities**

- An ability to create welcoming, warm, joyful environments in which people from diverse backgrounds can interact and learn together.
- An ability to explain concepts and practices related to Canada and Canadian society with clarity, and in a manner that nurtures understanding and builds confidence. Closely related to this is an ability to recognize when others are advancing in understanding.
- To facilitate group sessions.
- To help newcomers make connections to other individuals and groups in their community.

## Second Aspect - Empowering the Existing Community

**TO ADVOCATE FOR THE WELLBEING OF NEWCOMERS****Description and Sphere of Action**

Newcomers face numerous barriers to their wellbeing and full participation in society, many of which are the result of lingering prejudices that may have given rise to systemic barriers. Working to dismantle barriers to full participation of newcomers is another competency that settlement counsellors need to progressively develop, one that requires them to transcend an “us” and “them” dichotomy.

**Primary Concepts**

- Justice
- Prejudice/bias
- Participation
- Barriers
- Wellbeing

**Qualities and Attitudes**

- Optimism
- Hopefulness
- Courage
- Determination
- Humility

**Abilities**

- An ability to analyze social conditions and forces, to identify and describe systemic barriers that newcomers face.
- An ability to perceive the many parts or aspects of a situation and to fairly assess them, taking into account divergent perspectives.
- An ability to identify strategies, including legal and human rights frameworks, to assist newcomers to overcome barriers. A closely related ability to this is to provide encouragement and a sense of optimism when such barriers are encountered.

# TO CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY

## Description and Sphere of Action

In the years ahead, settlement work will become more and more concerned with building capacity in newcomers and the communities that welcome them to learn how to build environments that build unity in diversity. Such a capacity will contribute greatly to a society that welcomes newcomers and ensures that they fully participate in its development, avoiding two common extremes: isolating in the hope of preserving one's values and culture on the one hand; or fully assimilating and giving up one's values and wisdom on the other. The approach suggested assumes both newcomers and the existing community need to learn and change, as society as a whole advance.

## Primary Concepts

- Oneness of humankind
- Unity in diversity
- Interconnectedness
- Harmony
- Participation
- Justice

## Qualities and Attitudes

- Faith in the capacity of others
- Welcoming, non-judgmental attitude
- A willingness to learn
- Humility
- Diligence
- Constancy
- Transparency of intention

## Abilities

- An ability to analyze social conditions and forces, to identify and describe systemic barriers that newcomers face.
- An ability to convene people from diverse backgrounds and establish warm environments in which they interact.
- An ability to be aware of and value the thoughts and feelings of others. Closely related to this is the ability to listen to others' perspectives while striving to be free of prejudice and personal bias.
- An ability to see how aims and purposes that appear contradictory can be complementary.
- An ability to contribute to building consensus toward building common understanding and agreement.
- An ability to recognize strength and conceptualize how to build upon it.
- An ability to help others adopt a posture of learning.

## Common Competencies

**TO UPHOLD INTEGRITY****Description and Sphere of Action**

All settlement counsellors adhere to one or more codes of ethical conduct that guide their actions as they carry out their work. Being and doing are inseparable aspects of one's life inner condition, effects one's actions and interactions and vice-versa. A commitment to integrity enables us to pay simultaneous attention to both these dimensions. The fruit of ethical conduct is trustworthiness, without which building capacity in newcomers and their communities would be impossible.

**Primary Concepts**

- Truthfulness
- Trustworthiness
- Justice
- Integrity
- Ethics

**Qualities and Attitudes**

- Truthfulness
- Trustworthiness
- Sincerity
- Honesty
- Fairmindedness
- Courage to be firm in adhering to principle
- Passion for learning

**Abilities**

- An ability and willingness to uphold and promote truthfulness in all circumstances. Closely related to this is the ability to conduct oneself in a way that elicits trust.
- An ability to recognize prejudice in all its forms, to possess an aversion to prejudice and a desire to be free from it.
- An ability to be fair in judgement, guarded in speech, avoiding backbiting and gossip or any acts which can erode trust.
- An ability and willingness to assume a high sense of personal responsibility and accountability.
- An ability and willingness to reflect on one's actions and to learn from each situation.
- An inclination to accuracy and precision, to consistency and reliability, to be conscientious in one's undertakings and efforts.
- An ability to assess one's strengths and weaknesses combined with a tendency to build on strength; To be conscious of one's inner condition, limits and to set appropriate boundaries.



## TO PROMOTE LEARNING

### Description and Sphere of Action

If learning is not integrated into our actions to contribute to society our efforts will gradually become ineffective. A commitment to learning, indeed a passion for learning, is indispensable for settlement counsellors who need to learn about their clients and the communities in which they will settle, all in a constantly evolving landscape. For learning to be effective, it needs to be done in relation to an evolving conceptual framework. Learning implies collaboration, especially in the context of settlement work, in which partnerships and cooperation among agencies and their workers is critical to connecting newcomers to services.

#### Primary Concepts

- Learning
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Reflection on action
- Consultation
- An evolving conceptual framework

#### Qualities and Attitudes

- Humility
- Detachment
- Commitment
- Perseverance

### Abilities

- An ability and willingness to think carefully about situations and consider its various dimensions.
- An ability to analyze matched with an equally developed ability to synthesize and integrate.
- An ability to pay simultaneous attention to content and process.
- An ability to pay simultaneous attention to one's inner condition and action.
- An ability to take steps toward a goal; and to act in a creative and disciplined manner.
- An ability to operate in a learning mode characterized by action, reflection on action, consultation and study within an evolving conceptual framework.
- An ability to articulate insights with eloquence.

## TO FOSTER INITIATIVE

### Description and Sphere of Action

Whether assisting newcomers or the existing community, settlement counsellors need to approach their work in a manner that fosters initiative in and empowers others. Settling into a new country requires individual initiative to accomplish things in life; effort is required to achieve anything worthwhile. The same is true for those within an existing community.

### Primary Concepts

- Empowerment
- Motivation
- Encouragement
- Accompaniment

### Qualities and Attitudes

- Generosity
- Tolerance towards other's mistakes
- Avoiding tendencies toward a desire to control or rescue

### Abilities

- An ability and willingness to nurture and develop capacity in others. This involves an ability to recognize and understand the needs, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations of others.
- An ability to recognize strength and be able to envision how to build upon it.
- An ability to encourage others in a sincere manner, free from feelings of superiority; encouragement in words and deeds.

# APPENDIX A

## Interviews

### Ontario

- Brampton Multicultural Community Centre
- Centre for Immigration and Community Services
- OCASI
- Rural Organization in Ontario
- Thorncliffe Neighborhood Organization
- Timmins and District Multicultural Centre
- TR Leger Immigration Services Cornwall
- University Settlement Services
- Working Women
- YMCA Brantford
- YMCA – North York

### British Columbia

- Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
- The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies

### Nova Scotia

- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

### Alberta

- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
- Catholic Social Services

### Quebec

- Youth Employment Services
- Ometz Community Services, Employment & Immigration

### Manitoba

- Eastman Immigrant Services

## Focus Groups

Halifax – 9 participants

Toronto – 16 participants

Montreal – 8 participants

British Columbia – 6 participants

## APPENDIX B

ROLE	NOVA SOCOTIA	QUEBEC	ONTARIO	MANITOBA	ALBERTA	BRITISH COLUMBIA	TOTAL ROLE
<b>Manager/ Director</b>	1	2	11	1	2	1	18
<b>Counsellor</b>	8	7	20		2	6	43
<b>Regional</b>	1		2		5	2	10
<b>Total Region</b>	10	9	33	1	9	9	71

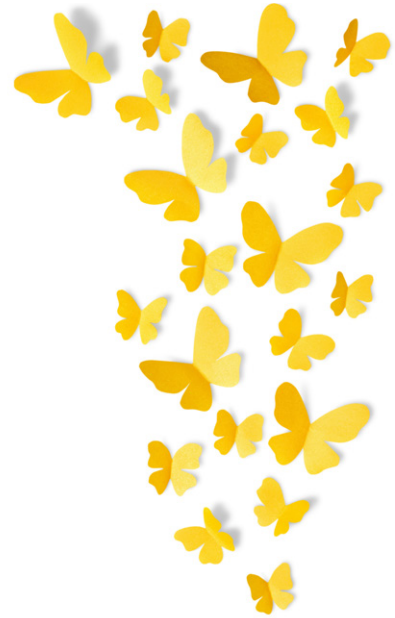
## ENDNOTES

1. El-Assal, Kareem and Daniel Fields. Canada 2040: No Immigration Versus More Immigration. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2018, p. iii.
2. Statistics Canada, Census data table 98-400-X2016372.
3. Kareem El-Assal. 2018. "Canada's 2018-2020 Immigration Plan is a Step in the Right Direction, but More Work is Needed", Canada Immigration Newsletter, <https://www.cicnews.com/2018/04/canadas-2018-2020-immigration-plan-is-a-step-in-right-direction-but-more-work-is-needed-0410485.html#gs.IWUwIrgd>, p. 14.
4. El-Assal, Kareem, and Ali Bajwa. Strengthening Canada's Immigration System. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2018.
5. Ibid., p.8.
6. Ibid., p. iii.
7. Ibid., p. 14
8. Ibid., p. 18
9. There are a number of functional positions in the category of "frontline settlement practitioner." These include information referral specialists, employment counsellors, job developers, language assessors and trainers, and settlement counsellors. In some organizations there may be overlap among these positions and it is not uncommon that one individual may carry out the functions of more than one. However, these are relatively well-defined functional areas that match IRCC funding channels and can be discussed independent of one another. The focus of this project is on the functional role of settlement counsellors as it is a challenging role that connects to all functional areas. Settlement counsellors are generalists who, while not usually the first point of contact for a newcomer, address a broad range of needs and issues with varying degrees of depth. Examining this role in more depth provides substantial insight into the other frontline positions as well.
10. Mulder, M., T. Weigel & K. Collins (2006). "The concept of competence concept in the development of vocational education and training in selected EU member states. A critical analysis." *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 59,1, 65-85.
11. Delamare Le Deist, Francoise and Winterton, Jonathan (2005). "What is Competence?" *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 27-46, March 2005, p. 31.
12. Ibid. p. 31.
13. McClelland, David, C. (1973). "Testing for Competence Rather Than for 'Intelligence'." *American Psychologist*, January 1973, p. 1-14.
14. Delamare Le Deist, Francoise and Winterton, Jonahan (2005), p. 1.
15. Ibid, p. 28.
16. Ibid, p. 28.
17. Ibid, p. 32.
18. Ibid, p. 32-33.
19. Mulder, M., T. Weigel & K. Collins (2006), p. 5.
20. Ibid. p. 6. Also, Young, Jolee and Chapman, Elaine (2012). "Generic Competency Frameworks." *Education Research and Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1, p. 1-2.
21. Ibid. p. 6-7.

22. Mulder, M., T. Weigel & K. Collins (2006), p. 7.
23. Adding to the complexity, there are various ways of describing the development of competencies over the past 50 years, of which the description in this paragraph is one. Another common approach to exploring competence is examining three main schools that each offer a way of perceiving the abstract construct of competence: 1) differential psychology, which focusses on human differences and seeks to identify characteristics of people – cognitive and physical abilities, values, traits, motives, interests and emotional qualities – related to superior performance; 2) educational and behavioral psychology, which emphasizes developing people to be successful and focuses on stages of learning new skills and techniques, helping individuals move from unconscious incompetence to competence; 3) management sciences which focus on the specific job rather than the employee, using job analysis techniques that lead to a list of knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal characteristics it demands. See Wilcox, Yuanjing (2012). “An Initial Study to Develop Instruments and Validate the Essential competencies for Program Evaluators.” (Doctorate Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota), p. 24-27.
24. The confusion around competence and competency is widely acknowledged. Delamare Le Deist, Françoise and Winterton, Jonathan (2005) provide an excellent overview of the confusion around these terms in the section of their paper titled “Competence as a ‘Fuzzy Concept’”, p. 29.
25. In thinking about competencies, we have drawn on the work of Dr. Sona Farid-Arbab in describing the concept of capability in the context of education. See Farid-Arbab, Sona (2016) Moral Empowerment: Elements of a Conceptual Framework for Education. (Doctorate Dissertation) University of London.
26. The value of purpose in the life of an organization, and by extension we argue a job role, is receiving wider attention. See, for example, Big Innovation Centre (2016) The Purposeful Company – Interim Report available at <http://www.biginnovationcentre.com/media/uploads/pdf/The%20Purposeful%20Company%20Interim%20Report.pdf>
27. Mulder, M., T. Weigel & K. Collins (2006), p. 18.
28. Ibid. p. 20.
29. Motivation is one of the most researched and written about aspects of human resource management. Without motivation, employees and volunteers learn little and their contribution to the work of the organization lessens. What’s more, motivation is contagious; it has a collective dimension that manifests in organizational culture. If we step back and reflect on what motivates people, some factors can be described as temporary. These generate interest and motivate people to action for a brief period. Other factors are what we could term permanent. These generate motivation that endures for a long time even in the face of immediate obstacles. Permanent factors have their roots deep in a person’s heart and extend beyond the material realm. Often, there is a tendency to rely heavily on transitory motivators that are fairly easy to provide and generate an immediate sense of gratification and a brief uplift. Yet, if we rely too much on transitory factors, we end up needing to constantly think of new ideas to generate motivation and enthusiasm, and after a time we become exhausted. To be effective in strengthening organizations and contributing to a better society, we need to seek sources of motivation that are permanent and help create environments that are supportive of and enhance these lasting factors.
30. Delamare Le Deist, Françoise and Winterton, Jonathan (2005), p. 30.
31. Ibid. p. 30.
32. Ibid. p. 31.
33. Eichbaum, Quentin (2015). “The Problem With Competencies in Global Health Education.” *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 90, No. 4, (April 2015), p. 415. See also, Lingard L. Rethinking competence in the context of teamwork. In: Hodges BD, Lingard L, eds. *The Question of Competence: Reconsidering Medical Education in the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca, NY: Columbia University Press; 2012:42–69.

# The Competencies of Frontline Settlement Counsellors in Canada

## RESEARCH REPORT



### PREPARED BY:

**Dan Scott**

Calience Research and Consulting

**Iren Koltermann**



**eCaliberGroup**  
TRANSFORMATIVE TALENT MANAGEMENT

Developed with the support of

