

WORK CENTRAL AB

Newcomer Handbook

Your Starting Orientation to Life in Central Alberta

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

The Work Central AB Newcomer Handbook

A condensed handbook bringing together the essentials from our full Newcomer Resources series - use this as your starting orientation, then explore the linked full guides for complete detail on each topic.

1. Your First Priorities

- Apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) - required to legally work and access most government services.
- Register for AHCIP (Alberta Health Care) as soon as you're eligible (see Healthcare Registration).
- Connect with a local settlement agency - Catholic Social Services, Care for Newcomers, Bredin, or CAIWA are all active in Central Alberta (see Settlement Services).

2. Building Toward Permanent Residence

The Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP)

Alberta's Provincial Nominee Program, with streams for workers, graduates, and entrepreneurs.

Key streams include the Alberta Opportunity Stream, Alberta Express Entry Stream, Rural Renewal Stream, and Dedicated Health Care Pathway.

See our full AAIP guide for eligibility factors and the application process.

3. Working in Your Field

- Check whether your occupation is regulated in Alberta - if so, you'll need Foreign Qualification Recognition through the relevant Professional Regulatory Organization.
- Consider a credential assessment through IQAS or WES to support both job applications and immigration processes.
- Explore Foreign Credential Recognition Loans if licensing costs are a barrier (see Credential Recognition).

4. Building Your English Skills

- LINC (free for eligible newcomers) and ESL programs are both available locally, including through Bredin, Care for Newcomers, and Catholic Social Services.
- The Red Deer Public Library offers free online language-learning tools with a library card.
- See our English Language Programs guide for how to get started.

5. Building Community

- Cultural associations help you stay connected to your heritage while building new local relationships (see Cultural Associations).

- Community Support Organizations can help with food, housing, and family needs if you hit a rough patch (see Community Support Organizations).
- Volunteering is one of the fastest ways to build Canadian experience and community connections (see Volunteer Opportunities).

6. Building Your Professional Network

Building professional connections can help you learn more about your field in Canada, expand your network, and gain insight from established professionals.

- The **Mentorship Program** connects newcomers with experienced professionals in the same or a related field for up to four months of career guidance, industry insight, and support navigating the Canadian workplace.
- The **Connector Program** introduces newcomers to established professionals for a focused 30-minute conversation. Connectors can share local industry knowledge and introduce you to others in their professional network.

Both programs are offered by Care for Newcomers (carefornewcomers.ca/employment-support) and provide opportunities to build professional relationships and strengthen your connections within Central Alberta.

7. Financial Basics for Newcomers

- Open a bank account early and consider a secured credit card to start building Canadian credit history (see Banking in Alberta).
- You may be eligible for the Alberta Child and Family Benefit if you have children, on top of the federal Canada Child Benefit (see Financial Assistance Programs).
- File a tax return even in your first year, since many benefits require it (see Tax Information).

8. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

Is this handbook a substitute for immigration legal advice? No - for complex immigration questions, consult a licensed immigration consultant or lawyer; this handbook covers general settlement orientation.

Do I need to be a permanent resident to access these services? Not always - many settlement and community services are broadly accessible regardless of status; confirm specifics for programs like LINC.

What's the single best first call to make? A local settlement agency - Catholic Social Services, Care for Newcomers, or CAIWA can help orient you across nearly every topic in this handbook.

9. Your Next Steps

This handbook covers the essentials, but each topic has a full, detailed guide in our Newcomer Resources series worth reading as you reach that stage of settling in - from your first week through your first year and beyond. Come back to specific guides as new questions arise; settling in is a gradual process, not something to figure out all at once.

Newcomer Handbook Checklist

- ✓ Applied for a SIN and registered for AHCIP
- ✓ Connected with a local settlement agency
- ✓ Checked whether your occupation requires credential recognition
- ✓ Started a language assessment if needed
- ✓ Explored community and cultural connections in your new home
- ✓ Explored Care for Newcomers' Mentorship or Connector Program

Explore More at Work Central AB

See our full Newcomer Resources series for complete detail on every topic above. Visit workcentralab.ca/resources.