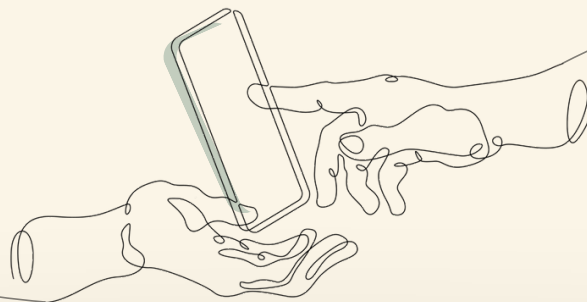


# Project Factsheet



## SettleSMART: Supporting Messaging and Assistance Resource Technology

**SettleSMART** is a federally funded research and intervention initiative by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) under the Service Delivery Improvement (SDI) stream, aimed at improving how newcomers access timely and accurate settlement information. The project uses AI-powered digital messaging tools—such as ChatBot and/or Group Chat—to strengthen service communication while enhancing the digital capacity of Service Provider Organizations (SPOs).

### What We're Doing

**Understanding**  
how newcomers  
& SPOs use  
digital tools

**Developing**  
an AI-powered  
ChatBot &  
Group Chat

**Supporting**  
SPOs in embedding  
these tools into their  
operations

**Delivering**  
AI-powered ChatBot  
& Group Chat to  
newcomer  
communities & SPOs

**Sharing**  
insights on digital  
solutions for  
settlement services

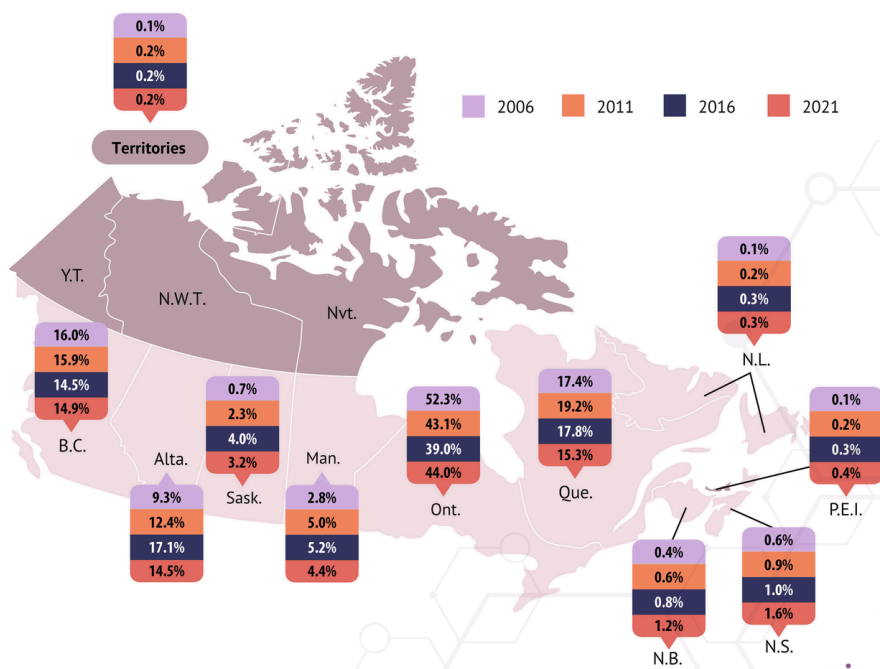
With rising immigration to Canada, improving access to settlement services is increasingly vital. To better understand this trend, we analyzed immigration data from 2016 to 2021.

Between these years, Canada welcomed 1,328,240 **newcomers**, the highest number ever recorded in a census. 193,170 immigrants arrived during the same period in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2021).

#### As of the 2021 Census:

- 23.0% of Canada's population (8.3 million) were immigrants; 15.6% of them arrived between 2016–2021.
- 23.2% of Alberta's population (970,000) were immigrants; 19.9% were recent newcomers.

### The geographic distribution of recent immigrants across Canada



## Newcomer Tech & Media Trends

To better understand digital literacy and communication habits among newcomers, the **SettleSMART** project consulted data from the 2022 **Media Technology Monitor (MTM)** report. The findings reveal that nearly all newcomers own smartphones, with 60% acquiring a new device shortly after their arrival in Canada. Furthermore, over 80% actively engage with social media, with Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram emerging as the most frequently used platforms.

The MTM survey, which included approximately 4,000 newcomer respondents, also examined the use of group messaging applications. It found that 81% of newcomers rely on messaging apps to maintain connections with family and communities abroad. The most commonly used platforms were **Facebook Messenger (63%), WhatsApp (57%), Telegram (14%), and WeChat (10%)**.

These insights directly inform SettleSMART's digital-first, mobile-first design approach. By centring the development of its tools around platforms already familiar to newcomers, the project ensures high levels of accessibility, cultural relevance, and user engagement within digital settlement service delivery.

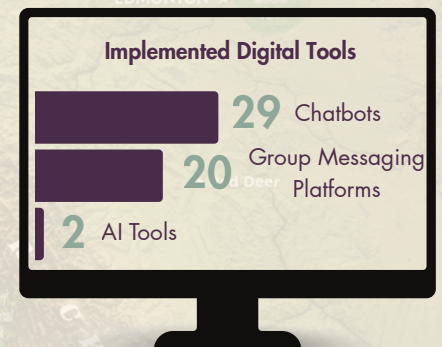
Drawing on this evidence, **SettleSMART** strategically **targets** specific demographic groups to better tailor its services. These include racialized immigrants, refugees, and protected persons; women, youth, and individuals with limited digital literacy; and skilled immigrants and linguistically diverse users who depend heavily on digital information. By focusing on these populations, the project seeks to ensure that its AI-enhanced tools are inclusive, equity-driven, and responsive to the diverse settlement needs of newcomers across Canada.

## Environmental Scan

To identify gaps between newcomer settlement services and the digital tools used by Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), it is conducted a web-based environmental scan as the kickoff stage. The scan focused on Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and key urban centres across Canada, identifying SPOs currently using or piloting AI tools, chatbots, and group messaging platforms. In total, we scanned 362 SPOs across 18 metropolitan areas and provincial/territorial capitals.

Based on the scan conducted in Alberta, 43 IRCC-funded Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) are active in Calgary and Edmonton (July 2025). It is planned to launch a pilot phase in both cities to test and refine the AI-powered chatbot and group chat tools that the SettleSMART developed. The project's goal is to onboard 30 Alberta-based Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) that have yet to implement digital tools, fostering greater innovation and accessibility in service delivery.

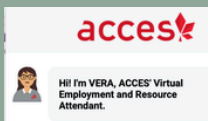
The results of the scan are as follows:



Of the 20 group messaging platforms...



## Similar Projects



As part of the web-scanning efforts, we identified two projects among Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) that are similar to SettleSMART, including:

- Digital Messaging for Settlement and Integration (DMSI) – Refugee 613
- VERA Chatbot – Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) - ACCES

## Partners



Scan to learn more or contact us:

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