



**IRCC Consultation on Category Based Selection
Written Submission from World Education Services
September 2025**



World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students.

WES is submitting the following recommendations alongside our response to the online Category-Based Selection (CBS) survey.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1) Embed CBS in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to immigration planning, ensuring coordination across federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments, as well as industry, employers, and regulatory bodies;
- 2) Ensure transparency and accountability by setting clear objectives for CBS draws and public reporting on outcomes and effectiveness;
- 3) Ensure viable routes to licensure, certification and skills-commensurate employment for those candidates selected through CBS;
- 4) Leverage CBS as a tool to prioritize TR-to-PR pathways by using it strategically to transition talent already in Canada;
- 5) Maximize the impact of CBS Francophone category by defining goals, setting measurable outcomes, and investing in French-language services and community supports.



A Renewed Vision for Immigration

In the context of acute demographic and economic pressures, WES sees immigration as a critical enabler of the government's plan to build One Canadian Economy and calls for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to advance a renewed vision of immigration — fair, stable, and predictable — that supports Canada's long-term economic policy.

Within this framework, Category-Based Selection (CBS) should be leveraged as a timely and powerful tool to address labour shortages, sustain demographic and economic growth, and attract global talent to bolster Canada's competitiveness, resilience, and innovation.

Since its introduction in 2023, CBS has expanded rapidly. This growth underscores both its promise and its risks: while CBS is intended to address labour market needs and has shown value in certain categories in attracting high-skilled talent from abroad, a continued expansion without data on whether those recruited in specific occupations are in fact working in those fields may undermine its intended purpose and long-term impact.

CBS now plays a central role in reinforcing Canada's existing hybrid selection model. Making this model work as intended requires aligning CBS with long-term goals, establishing clear outcome measures, and coordinating with provinces, businesses, industry, regulatory bodies and employers to remove systemic barriers to workforce entry.

These dynamics underscore why CBS should be embedded within this renewed vision as a transparent, accountable, and outcomes-driven instrument that aligns with labour-market needs while advancing long-term national objectives.

Recommendation 1: Embed CBS in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to immigration planning, ensuring coordination across federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments, as well as industry, employers, and regulatory bodies.

CBS should not be treated as a stand-alone mechanism. Its effectiveness depends on being embedded within an integrated framework that aligns with long-term national objectives and cross-sectoral priorities.

A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is essential to achieve this. At the federal level, unprecedented coordination across ministries such as IRCC, ESDC, Health, Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and Finance is necessary to ensure that CBS categories reflect broader priorities and are aligned with a long-term vision.

Beyond the federal government, provinces, territories, and municipalities must act as equal partners in identifying needs and shaping categories. Industry, employers and regulatory bodies



also bring unique expertise, providing real-time information about shortages, systemic barriers, and integration challenges.

As part of this process, Canada must move beyond annual consultations focused mainly on numbers and create ongoing mechanisms for engagement, planning and accountability. Identifying key stakeholders, setting priorities and goals, and measuring performance are essential first steps.

While not everything will be measurable at the outset, it is critical to establish relationships and feedback channels across key stakeholders. This foundation of coordination and trust will allow CBS to evolve based on evidence and experience.

WES recommends:

- Establishing a federal–provincial–territorial planning framework to align CBS with long-term workforce and population needs;
- Creating a national advisory body with representation from labour, business, civil society, and newcomer communities to provide real-time feedback.

Recommendation 2: Ensure transparency and accountability by setting clear objectives for CBS draws and public reporting on outcomes and effectiveness.

The effectiveness of CBS cannot be judged without reliable outcomes data. At present, there is no publicly available information on whether individuals selected through CBS are ultimately working in the occupations for which they were chosen.

Without this evidence, it is not possible to fully assess whether category-based invitations are effective in reducing labour market shortages in the listed occupations and producing tangible impact (Q13 and 14).

Greater transparency and clearer outcomes would enhance confidence in the system and help ensure that CBS expansion remains aligned with Canada’s priorities (Q10 to 12, 15 and 16).

WES recommends:

- Publishing regular, disaggregated outcomes data (employment, licensure, and retention) for individuals selected through CBS;
- Clarifying objectives for each CBS draw and reporting results accordingly;
- Creating an independent oversight body to monitor CBS effectiveness and report findings to Parliament in a timely manner;
- Embedding performance measurement and accountability mechanisms to track progress against stated goals.



Recommendation 3: Ensure viable routes to licensure, certification and skills-commensurate employment for those candidates selected through CBS.

CBS can only be an effective labour market tool if selected candidates are able to practice in their intended occupations. Today, many internationally educated professionals and tradespeople are prevented from doing so because of systemic licensure barriers and lack of access to skills-commensurate employment. Selecting candidates without addressing these issues risks expanding the pool of underutilized talent rather than filling shortages (Q20 and 22).

Any occupation considered for CBS should have a viable pathway to licensure or direct entry to the workplace, supported by clear licensure and/or labour market data and measurable outcomes. Restricting prioritization to those who already hold Canadian work experience or licensure would narrow the talent pool without addressing the barriers to licensure or labour market integration (Q17, 25 and 27).

The only way to address this barrier is through systemic reforms, harmonized standards, and targeted supports that help candidates achieve licensure and certification. Otherwise, CBS risks skewing the country-of-origin profile of selected candidates and undermining the diversity and fairness of the system.

Lastly, extending the work experience requirement to 12 months within the past three years before selection would exclude many strong candidates who are ready to contribute but lack continuous experience due to barriers beyond their control, such as difficulty accessing employment commensurate with their skills, global displacement, or caregiving responsibilities (Q26). The existing points system already accounts for differences in experience and ensures stronger profiles are prioritized without unnecessarily shrinking the pool.

WES recommends:

- Ensuring CBS categories in regulated professions are tied to clear, viable licensure pathways before invitations are issued; this could be achieved by:
 - Designing a case-managed approach where IRCC, in cooperation with provinces/territories and regulatory bodies, ensures prior to selection that candidates in regulated professions and trades (not already licensed in Canada) have a viable pathway to licensure based on their circumstances, and provides them with specific information and direct connections to the appropriate bodies and supports;
 - Investing in systemic reforms to remove credential recognition barriers;
 - Using robust workforce data to identify shortages, underutilization, and outcomes of selected candidates.



Recommendation 4: Leverage CBS as a tool to prioritize TR-to-PR pathways by using it strategically to transition talent already in Canada.

Canada's future workforce is already here. More than [2.9 million people currently hold temporary status](#), many of them studying or working in critical sectors such as health, trades, and services. Yet for too many, pathways to permanence remain fragmented, uncertain, and overly competitive. CBS provides a clear opportunity to prioritize this group, ensuring that individuals already contributing to the economy have a stable future in Canada.

Leveraging CBS for TR-to-PR transitions would maximize the return on the investments already made: by Canada in education and work opportunities; and by international students, temporary foreign workers, and internationally educated professionals in building their skills, careers, and communities here. Aligning CBS with these pathways would reduce labour market precarity, strengthen integration outcomes, and reinforce public confidence.

WES is calling for permanence to be re-established as the foundation of the immigration system, with CBS used strategically as a transition measure to support TR to PR pathways until the population of temporary residents has significantly declined. Once this “in-Canada focus” has been consolidated — by stabilizing pathways for temporary residents — CBS can then be expanded more ambitiously to meet needs in areas where domestic supply cannot keep pace with demand, as long as the system is functioning effectively and contributing to Canada's long-term goals (Q18).

WES recommends:

- Leveraging CBS as a mechanism to transition international students, temporary workers, and internationally educated professionals and tradespeople already in Canada to permanent residence;
- Aligning CBS with the Immigration Levels Plan to reduce reliance on temporary migration and reinforce permanence as the foundation of the system;
- Expanding international recruitment through CBS only once TR-to-PR pathways are well-established and functioning effectively.

Recommendation 5: Maximize the impact of CBS Francophone category by defining goals, setting measurable outcomes, and investing in French-language services and community supports.

CBS has proven to be a promising tool to increase selection of Francophone candidates to reside outside Quebec. With clear objectives and robust retention measures, this strategy can achieve its full potential.

Francophone immigration serves multiple purposes — demographic renewal, labour market needs, and community vitality — and these priorities should be clearly defined within the CBS framework and linked to monitoring and evaluation.



Beyond selection, long-term retention is essential. Evidence and feedback from Francophone organizations highlight that attracting newcomers is only the first step; success depends on access to high-quality French-language services, education, employment opportunities, housing, childcare, and transportation. Community infrastructure and local engagement are central to ensuring that Francophone newcomers not only arrive but also remain and thrive.

CBS can be a powerful instrument to advance Francophone vitality if it is anchored in measurable outcomes — admissions, retention, integration, and community impact — and supported through coordination between federal, provincial, and community partners (Q28).

By setting clear goals and investing in services, IRCC can ensure that the Francophone CBS category functions not just as a selection mechanism but as a driver of demographic renewal and social sustainability across Canada.

WES recommends:

- Defining clear objectives for Francophone CBS categories (e.g. demographic renewal, community vitality, sectoral needs);
- Establishing measurable outcomes that track both admissions and long-term retention of Francophone newcomers;
- Investing in French-language education, settlement, and employment services across regions to support integration;
- Supporting Francophone students and workers already in Canada with tailored TR-to-PR pathways;
- Partnering with Francophone organizations and municipalities to strengthen community infrastructure such as housing, childcare, and social networks.

About WES:

World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For over 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).