Citizenship and Immigration Canada | Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Community Connections

Canada

Context

Settlement Approach

- In May 2008 the Modernized Approach for Settlement programming merged three distinct programs into one.
- The modernized approach introduced a transition from distinct service silos, such as LINC/ISAP/Host, to one fulsome settlement program that aimed to provide a holistic approach across the different streams.
- This modernized settlement approach is built on the principles of flexibility, responsiveness, coordination, accountability.
- CIC's modernized Settlement Program is intended to better respond to newcomer needs in support of improved settlement and longer-term integration outcomes.

Settlement Streams

- The major settlement streams identified in the Settlement program include:

  - Information and Orientation
  - Language and Skills Development
  - Labour Market Access
  - **Community Connections**
  - Support Services
  - Needs Assessment/Referrals

Community Connections

- Community Connections is a key component of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC's) modernized Settlement Program and an essential thread that influences all aspects of integration.

The work of Community Connections is twofold:

1. Foster active and meaningful connections between newcomers and host communities, and
2. Enable newcomers to develop a sense of belonging while helping communities better understand the interests and potential contributions of newcomers.

Community Connections

- The importance of connections/engagement in achieving settlement outcomes is exemplified through programs such as:
  - Welcoming Communities Initiative, which addresses racism and discrimination as key barriers to settlement and integration, and;
  - Programming for Francophone Minority Communities.
- These programming elements maintain a focus on fostering and forming connections within and between communities, particularly between newcomer and host communities.
- Connections between newcomers and host communities cannot take place without an active and meaningful engagement of both parties. As a result, Community Connections stream recognizes **social engagement** as an integral aspect of the integration process.

Welcoming Communities

- CIC's work in this area encourages:
  - Engagement between newcomers and Canadians
  - Awareness and understanding, partnerships and promotion of welcoming areas
- Projects support newcomers to form social networks and connect to the various dimensions of Canadian society while also engaging communities and neighbourhoods to welcome newcomers and support their full participation in the community.
  - Mentoring programs, supporting and encouraging volunteerism, fostering cultural awareness, welcoming communities, and neighbourhood services.
  - Community Connections funds place-based initiatives, such as Library Settlement Partnerships, Settlement Workers in Schools and In-School Supports, which provide valuable assistance to many newcomers.

Welcoming Communities – Best Practices

- **Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)**: The SWIS program began in 1999 as a partnership of Settlement Agencies, School Boards and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This initiative facilitates the integration of newcomer children into Canadian schools.

- Settlement workers operate in schools with high numbers of immigrant children, providing services to the parents, the children and to the school system. SWIS increases access to settlement services by providing settlement information, counselling and referral to newcomer children, youth, and their families directly in schools.
- Settlement workers also engage with students, parents and school staff to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Settlement Workers in School (SWIS)

- SWIS workers act as cultural brokers and facilitators between students, parents and the schools. For example, SWIS workers orient parents and children to school rules, teacher expectations and grade placement processes; refer children to appropriate agencies in cases of domestic violence; act as intermediaries between parents and teachers; and provide general information about Canadian society, and culture.

- SWIS started as a pilot in Ontario, but is now in most provinces. The program won the 2008 International Carl Bertelsmann Prize and was recognized for comprehensive and systemic approach to integration.

Welcoming Communities-Best practices

- **Library Settlement Partnerships (LSP)**: Modeled on the Settlement Workers in Schools program, the LSP model is implemented through a three way partnership between immigrant settlement agencies, CIC and the participating public library systems. The model is now expanding to other communities.

- **The Spot – Youth Program**: Community drop in centre for youth that offers recreational activities, information and referral services, outreach programs, computer access, and employment information. Through music and photography the clients can gain new skills while also receiving mentorship from local artists. Helping more than 100 youth, the program has surpassed targets and recognizes the unique needs of the youth in their area. (location: Toronto)

Social Engagement

Evidence

- The most recent Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) found that social support and interactions were cited as a challenge among recent immigrants
- LSIC also stated that a lack of contacts was cited as the second major reason for difficulty entering the labour market (37%), even slightly above language barriers
- In addition, research shows that newcomers may have smaller and less diverse social networks at the early stages of settlement (Kazemipur, 2004)

Holistic Response Across Themes

- Significant work on certain activities such as language acquisition and labour market integration can be complemented by a focus on the importance of the **social dimension** of settlement and integration
- The articulation of policy principles for the social engagement of newcomers can support policy work and ensure a holistic and mutually supportive approach

Defining Social Engagement

- Social engagement is a key component of integration.
- Social engagement aims to support the social connection of newcomers and host communities and facilitates the development of a welcoming community in which both newcomers and established Canadians acknowledge and value each other's contributions.
- This includes three elements that are mutually supportive:

Social Engagement Objectives

- Being
  - Newcomers recognize their personal social engagement needs and goals
  - Communities understand the importance of integration and their role in the process
- Belonging
  - Communities are capable and willing to accept immigrants
  - Newcomers are recognized by their receiving communities
  - Newcomers feel they belong within their adopted community
- Participating
  - Newcomers have positive community interactions and form social networks
  - Canadians actively engage in the settlement process (as friends, volunteers, instructors, guest speakers, etc)

Strategy for action

Based on our existing programs and best practices the following strategy for action has been proposed:

- Encouraging promotion of the benefits of immigration and integration within communities, including campaigns and programs to challenge myths and stereotypes and to highlight newcomer stories (Welcoming Community Initiatives).
- Supporting social engagement spaces that provide opportunities for increased interaction with established connections and interaction with those who are less familiar.

Supporting Social Engagement Spaces

- Public spaces within a community can play an important role in reducing social distances between people, fostering connections and establishing belonging.
- The higher number of local engagement spaces, the greater capacity for social integration, as newcomers will have numerous spaces in which they are recognized and feel they belong.
- Means to support social engagement spaces include:
  - Exploring current models and best practices, such as neighbourhood houses within the Province of British Columbia/Manitoba
  - Further exploring of settlement programming with a place-based approach, such as settlement workers in schools or libraries
  - Promoting and awarding the collocating of services within community spaces, such as at a community centre, school or information centre

Evolution of Municipal and Community Involvement

- Since the mid-1990s, CIC has increasingly recognized the importance of engagement at the local level.
  - Municipalities play a central role in delivering many services that impact the settlement and integration experiences of newcomers.
  - Tremendous capacity and expertise exist at the local level.
  - Economic benefits of immigration are most evident in the local context.

- Municipalities and communities are taking a greater role in planning for and guiding immigration and settlement.
  - Attraction: critical gaps have been identified in the local labour force.
  - Retention: entire families need to feel welcomed for workers to stay.

Current Context

- Speech from the Throne (2010)
  - **"...the best solutions to the diverse challenges confronting Canada's communities are often found locally"**.
  - **"Our Government will take steps to support communities in their efforts to tackle local challenges"**.

- Activities under Welcoming Communities Initiative, including the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), support newcomers to form social and professional networks and connect to Canadian society, while also engaging communities and neighbourhoods to welcome newcomers and support their full participation.

What are the LIPs?

- LIPs represent a new form of collaboration at the community-level related to the settlement and integration of newcomers.
- LIPs actively engage many stakeholders, including mainstream institutions, to encourage a locally-driven strategic planning process.
- The vision for LIPs is to support the development of self-sustaining multi-sectoral partnerships at the local level to integrate newcomer needs into the municipal planning process, while influencing provincial and federal priorities and processes.
- Local Immigration Partnerships typify the two-way street approach to integration, which regards all newcomers and members of the host community to be equal and important agents of change.
- LIPs are broad in scope. Being structural and not task-specific, they are capable of serving a multitude of ends through a collaborative approach with a wide variety of local stakeholders interested in settlement and integration.

Forming Strategic and Sustainable Partnerships: Ex: LIPs in Ontario

- Local Immigration Partnerships originated from two calls for proposals in early 2008. One targeted communities throughout Ontario, and the other was directed at neighbourhoods in Toronto. The calls for proposals were flexible with reference to applicants, recognizing that local leadership in immigration can vary depending on the place. As a result, municipal or regional governments lead some LIPs while community organizations lead others.

- Both calls received keen responses. There are now 45 LIPs in Ontario: 30 in Ontario communities outside Toronto and 15 in Toronto neighbourhoods, including a Toronto city-wide LIP. Three Francophone Immigration Networks in Ontario - Réseau Est, Réseau Nord, and Réseau Centre Sud-Ouest – complement these partnerships.

Updated Purpose of the LIPs

1. Assessing newcomer needs
2. Partnering to plan and set priorities
3. Coordinating services at the community level
4. Addressing uptake of settlement services
5. Improving outcomes for newcomers

Template for Community Planning

A guide for the LIPs was developed through consultation with community experts, practitioners, researchers, and officials from HRSDC, Public Safety, INAC and other federal departments.

The main components of a comprehensive community plan include:

A. Community Context
B. Vision for the Community
C. Background of the LIP
D. Overarching Goals
E. Priorities, Outcomes, and Potential Activities
F. Knowledge Transfer and Learning (Monitoring and Evaluation)
G. Next Steps for the LIP

Moving forward

- Partnership projects bring together diverse organizations and agencies to coordinate their efforts on initiatives to welcome immigrants destined to their community.
- Partners should work together to establish a common vision around fostering welcoming communities and supporting integration.
- Partners should come from a wide array of sectors, such as educational institutions, local government, employers and businesses, community service providers, ethno-cultural organizations, or faith groups, among many others.
- These partnerships should also provide opportunities to address gaps in settlement services and the sector as a whole.
- There are presently 114 agreements that CIC is funding across Canada to service providing organizations in order to deliver Community Connections type projects.

Moving forward

- CIC is engaging and partnering with local governance networks to address the country's major challenges of economic innovation, social and cultural inclusion.
- Success can only be achieved by adopting a holistic approach and intervention.
- Moving away from the traditional approach of centralized and top-down towards enhancing the value of community and municipal assets , local voices, and ensuring that there is a "local lens" in order to assess the impacts of national policies and maximize the benefits for people while creating good places, and communities for people to live, work, and participate in.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada | Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

Thank you

Canada