Characteristics of a Welcoming Community

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Purpose of the Report

- To review the current state of knowledge concerning welcoming communities

  - Scholarly literature

  - Government and community reports

  - Best practices and case examples

- To describe key characteristics of a welcoming community

Importance of Identifying Key Characteristics of a Welcoming Community

1) Growing awareness that more attention needs to be paid to communities' receptivity to newcomers and the long-term integration of immigrants

2) Critical feature of CIC's modernization initiative is a focus on outcomes rather than solely inputs and activities

3) Increasing focus on regionalization requires defining and identifying key characteristics of a welcoming community

What is a Welcoming Community?

- Spatial dimension – a physical location in which newcomers feel valued and their needs are served

- Discourse dimension – a community has agency and engages in actions that facilitate the integration of newcomers

- A collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included

- A location that has the capacity to meet the needs and promote inclusion of newcomers, and the machinery in place to produce and support these capacities

A welcoming community attracts and retains newcomers by:

- Identifying and removing barriers

- Promoting a sense of belonging

- Meeting diverse individual needs

- Offering services that promote successful integration, with successful integration defined as the "ability to contribute, free of barriers, to every dimension of Canadian life – economic, social, cultural and political" (CIC Integration Branch, 2001)

Framework

- Outcome indicators

- Key processes and structures that produce and sustain these outcomes

- Examples of best practices

Example: Employment Opportunities

| Outcomes	Key Processes and Structures	Examples of Best Practices
Low unemployment rates Adequate wages (income) Low underemployment rates	Immigrant employment councils/ networks	London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council (LMIEC)
	Credential recognition and bridging programs	International Pharmacy Graduate Program (U of T)
	Programs that valorize foreign work experience	Workplace Integration of Newcomers (WIN)
	Programs that support entrepreneurial opportunities	Passport to Business Success (Ontario)
Lack of employment discrimination	Programs that seek to create inclusive workplaces	City of Winnipeg *Best Employers for New Canadians*

Characteristics
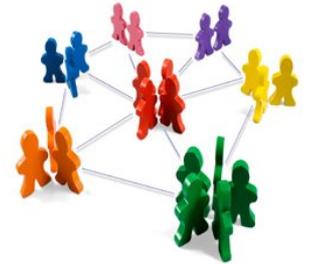
1. Employment Opportunities

2. Fostering of Social Capital

3. Affordable and Suitable Housing

4. Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants, Cultural Diversity, and the Presence of Newcomers in the Community

5. Presence of Newcomer-Serving Agencies that Can Successfully Meet the Needs of Newcomers

6. Links between Main Actors Working toward Welcoming Communities

7. Municipal Features and Services Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers

8. Educational Opportunities

9. Accessible and Suitable Health Care

10. Available and Accessible Public Transit
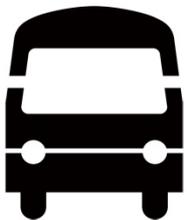
11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations

12. Social Engagement Opportunities

13. Political Participation Opportunities

14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System

15. Safety

16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreation Facilities

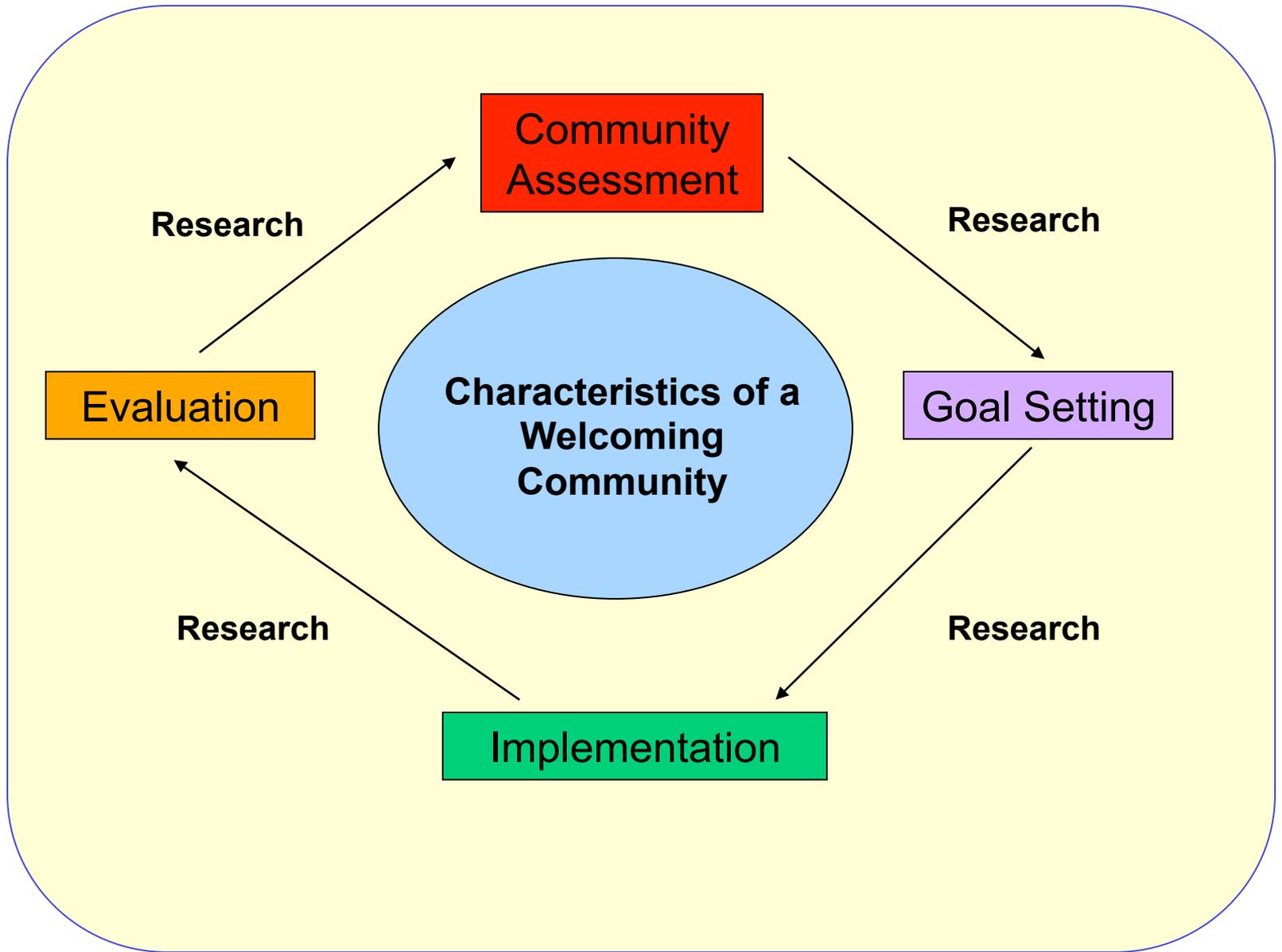17. Favourable Media Coverage and Representation

Provisos

- Importance of each characteristic to any given community will vary

- Important to understand what each indicator means and what accounts for its level in a particular context

- Measurement of outcomes is complex
  - Meaningful comparisons are required

- Essential to examine multiple indicators within and across characteristics

An Evidence-Based Agenda for the Future

- There has not been a systematic, sustained program of research examining each of the characteristics, their indicators, and the outcomes associated with their presence in a community

- Thus, we still have a lot of work to do in order to build a firm understanding of the characteristics of a welcoming community

- We also need to build empirical support for best practices

Five-Stage Approach For Working Toward A Welcoming Community

1. Assess the current state of the community at a global and specific level

2. Create short- and long-term goals

3. Implement (and adjust) policies and programs designed to target gaps and weaknesses and to work toward the goals

4. Evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and programs

5. Assess community outcomes (feedback to Stage 2)

Community Assessment

Research

Research

Evaluation

Characteristics of a Welcoming Community

Goal Setting

Research

Research

Implementation

Questions?