

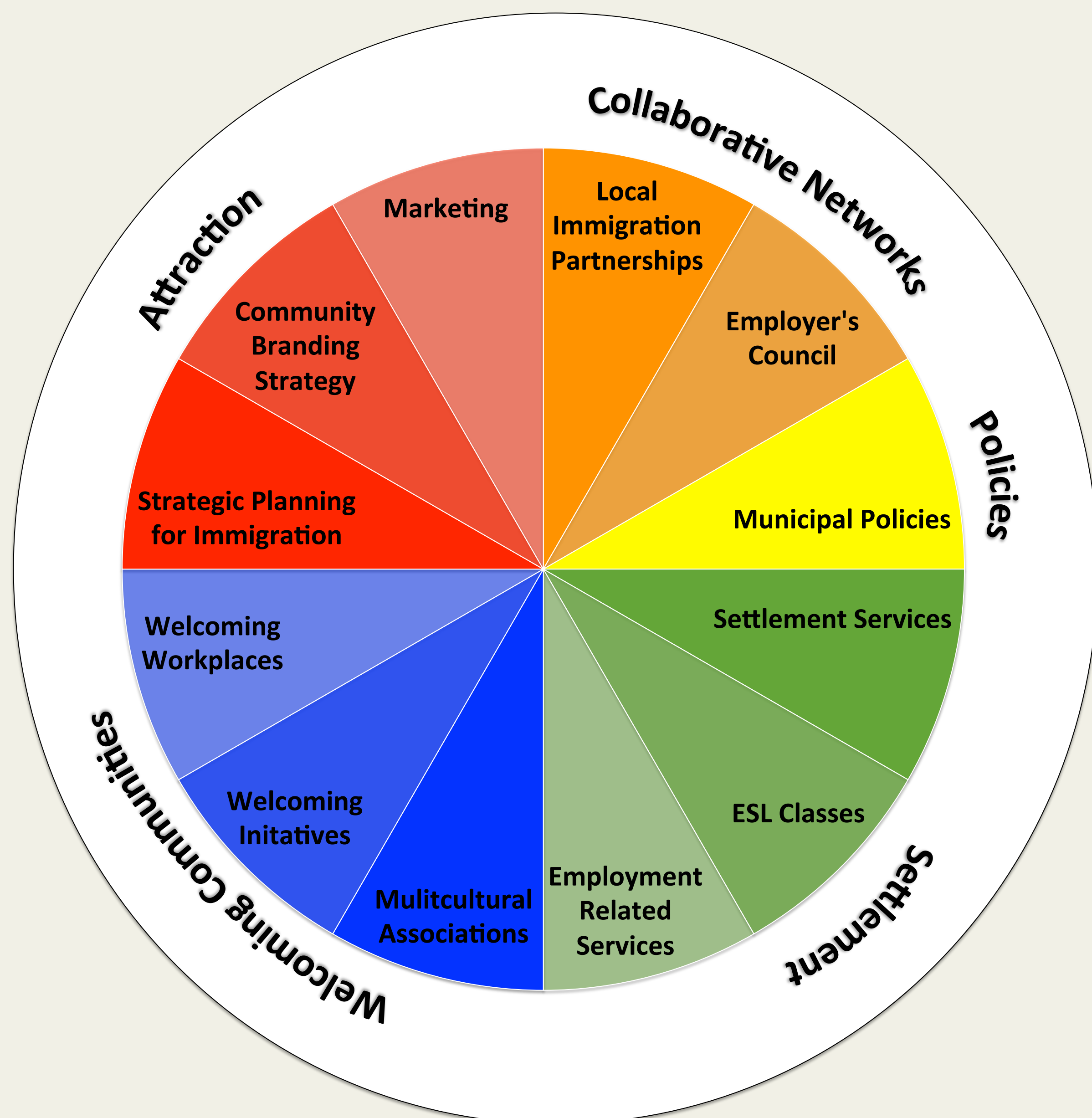
Best Practices: Immigrant Attraction and Retention in Rural Ontario

About the Project and this Poster

Many rural communities are facing population decline and labour shortages, thereby creating challenges for their viability and sustainability. Attracting and retaining newcomers has been identified as a potential strategy to revitalize rural regions. A team of researchers at the University of Guelph are documenting best practices from four counties across Ontario (Oxford County, Perth County, Lanark County, and Cochrane District) that have initiatives to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants. The best practices from the case study areas will be compiled into a toolkit that will be publically available in the Spring of 2016. This three-year project is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Below is a model of best practices that will make up the toolkit. This poster features selected best practices from the following broad categories: Attraction, Collaborative Networks, Policies, Settlement, and Welcoming Communities.

Model of Best Practices



Selected Best Practices

Attraction

Immigrant Attraction is creating initiatives, programs, and policies in order to promote the opportunities in your community to newcomers. Communities should create an attraction strategy outlining plans for community branding, marketing, and promotion.

Timmins' "I'm In" Community Brand

Tourism Timmins and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation led the development of a free marketing tool to promote the City of Timmins to visitors and prospective new residents. The brand encompasses a brand story, logo, tagline, videos, and photos. Co-branding is mutually beneficial for all parties involved, and works to create a universal story for the City of Timmins. For more information see: www.timminsbrand.ca

Promoting Northern Job Opportunities to Immigrants in Urban Centres

The Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) in Timmins and North Bay promote employment opportunities in Northern Ontario by connecting with employment centres in Mississauga, Toronto, London, and Windsor. Many employment agencies in urban centres are oversaturated and struggle to find employment opportunities for a large number of immigrant clients. In those situations, the employment counselors can inform their clients about job opportunities in the North.

Collaborative Marketing

An immigration marketing strategy was created for five cities (Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, North Bay, and Sudbury) in Northeastern Ontario to highlight the region as a whole. Marketing efforts included attending tradeshows, settlement expositions, and conferences across Canada. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade funded these efforts.

Policies

Policy documents and/or statements are explicit ways of professing support for attracting and retaining immigrants and show commitment to creating a welcoming community.

Welcoming Policy of the City of Timmins

Timmins recently became a signatory of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CCMARD). CCMARD provides a toolkit of strategies to address discrimination and increase social inclusion at the local level. The City of Timmins, in partnership with the Timmins LIP, is currently drafting a policy against racism and discrimination for all departments of the City.

Settlement

Immigrants may require a variety of supports when they arrive in a new community. Most commonly, communities facilitate settlement by providing access to a settlement counsellor, ESL classes, and employment services.

Rural Outreach

TR Leger Immigrant Services (run by TR Leger Schools) is responsible for providing settlement services to the Greater Cornwall Area and eight surrounding rural counties. With a large geographical jurisdiction, and only one physical office in Cornwall, Immigration Services is utilizing staff at other TR Leger Schools (without settlement services) and local libraries to help any newcomers in the area connect to the Cornwall staff via Skype. This approach will cut down on travel time, and allow counsellors to serve a greater number of newcomers.

Community Police Officer Presentation

Constable David Murphy was invited to present to an ESL class in Smiths Falls. His presentation covered the Canadian law enforcement system, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the role of the police. An important part of his session was the question answer period, which allowed newcomers to pose questions such as: What is the legal drinking age in Ontario? Will we get arrested for walking on the grass? Can my children drink at home? He hoped the session dispelled myths about the Canadian police and increased the likelihood of newcomers contacting the police for support if needed.

No Wrong Door Approach

In Oxford County, the "No Wrong Door Approach" is implemented to ensure immigrants are receiving the services they need. Given the interconnectedness of a newcomer's settlement needs, service providers need to understand all the services and resources available throughout the County in order to make the proper referrals. This approach is especially crucial in rural areas without settlement service counsellors.

Collaborative Networks

Rural communities benefit from working collaboratively on the common goal of attracting and retaining newcomers. Examples of a collaborative networks are a Local Immigration Partnership or an Employer's Council.

Creating an Employers' Council

In an effort to replicate the success of North Bay's Employers' Councils, the Timmins Economic Development Corporation (TEDC) created the TEDC Employers' Council in 2011. The Council brings together approximately 10 members, including major employers, the Far Northeast Training Board, Service Providers, and educational institutions in order to devise strategies on how to work together to fill labour market gaps. In 2014, the Northeastern Ontario Immigration Project created Employers' Councils in the Town of Cochrane, City of Temiskaming Shores, and the Central Almaguin so that small towns can reap the benefits of collaboration. All the chairs of the Employers' Councils in the region meet on a quarterly basis to discuss best practices.

Welcoming Communities and Workplaces

When newcomers come to a small community they can feel lonely and socially isolated due to remoteness, unfamiliarity of the landscape, lack of ethnic diversity, lack of transportation, and lack of existing networks of friends and family. In order to address these concerns, the concept of welcoming communities emerged. Being a welcoming community means focusing on creating connections between newcomers and Canadians; eliminating barriers to social and economic integration; and raising awareness about strategies to combat racism and discrimination. In addition, welcoming workplaces are a key part of creating welcoming communities. Workplaces that are welcoming respect diversity, accommodate the unique needs of employees with various cultural backgrounds, and ensure all staff are trained to communicate effectively in an intercultural work environment.

Welcome Pass

The Peterborough Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration created a free 'Welcome Pass' to encourage newcomers to explore different cultural, arts, and recreational spaces in Peterborough at a discounted price.

Racism Elimination Day

Timmins participates in the annual UN International Day of Racism Elimination by educating students and the broader community about the prevalence of racism in Timmins and how to address it. The event includes an anti-racism poster competition for the schools, educational presentations within classrooms, nominations for the human rights wall of fame, and public education campaigns.

Diversity Training for Leaders

Oxford County held a diversity training session for members of the LIP, service providers, employers, and interested community members. The County organized a breakfast meeting and hired Diversity Specialist Dr. Leono Karumanchery to facilitate the three-hour session. The session was very informative and well-received by the diverse audience. The session was co-funded by three organizations.

Micro-grants

The Local Immigration Partnership of Renfrew and Lanark recognized they had challenges retaining immigrants. To address this challenge, they proposed a project that uses micro-grants to support local organizations that are interested in making their existing policies and/or programs immigrant-friendly. They have received over thirty expressions of interest from local organizations keen to make small, sustainable changes to existing programs and policies to include a diversity and/or multiculturalism component. For example, organizations could be granted funding to purchase translation services to make a program more accessible.

Multicultural Association

The Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron (MAPH) was started by Dr. Gezahn Wordofa. After several years of the association meeting in coffee shops, it was formally established 2 years ago with support from the United Way. Recently, MAPH became independent of the United Way and is predominantly governed by a group of dedicated newcomers. The purpose of the MAPH is to create a space in which social connections between immigrants can be fostered; to help create awareness about diversity through multicultural events; to facilitate volunteer opportunities; and to offer referrals to the services they need.

Guide for Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces

The Smith Falls LIP created an educational guide for employers interested in hiring immigrants. The guide is entitled *Employer's Guide to Integrating Newcomers into the Workplace* and is intended to help employers understand the needs of immigrants in the workplace and how to support their integration. The guide covers topics such as the benefits of hiring newcomers, language, foreign credentials and work experience, working with cultural differences, and how to prepare your workplace.

Immigrant Entrepreneur Award

In partnership with the Smiths Falls LIP, the Chamber of Commerce provides a free one-year membership for newcomers. This allows newcomers to engage in networking opportunities and have their business(es) listed in the Chamber of Commerce Directory. In addition, the Chamber organizes an annual immigrant entrepreneur award, recognizing an immigrant business owner at their annual AGM. This award has been well received by the community and receives many nominations each year.