



Welcome

Oxford Local
Immigration Partnership

PREPARED BY: CENTRE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



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Support

Executive Summary

As part of the Oxford Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) plan to develop a comprehensive strategy to effectively attract, integrate and support immigrants who live in Oxford County, LIP has hosted community consultations in order to:

- become more aware of newcomers' needs
- identify assets and gaps in serving newcomers/immigrants within Oxford County
- gather initial feedback from employers about their openness to hiring immigrants
- gain understanding of residents feelings toward welcoming immigrants into Oxford County

To this end, The Centre for Organizational Effectiveness Inc. was contracted to gather feedback from Oxford County residents, service providers and immigrants. In addition, the YFactor was contracted to gather feedback from employers. In total 520 people participated in providing feedback through online surveys and focus groups.

“Oxford County is a great place to live because **it's the perfect size community to raise a family, work and enjoy life.** Not too big, not too small, central to so many things”

This was the over arching response of the 350 people who were asked why Oxford County is a great place to live. This common thread among residents, newcomers/immigrants and service providers establishes the foundation from which to build the capacity and collective commitment needed to make Oxford County a place that sees its growth and prosperity linked to the successful settlement of immigrants within its community.

As the data has been reviewed, beyond this question, some important themes emerged specifically related to each stakeholder group (immigrants, residents, employers and service providers) as well as common themes across these groups. These are highlighted below:

Residents

Residents recognize that the community needs to sustain itself and/or grow however, they are cautious of possible neglect of current residents and disruption of what currently exists. Responses indicate clear understanding that community growth through the attraction and retention of immigrants will:

- have a positive economic impact on the community
- draw a wider range of expertise
- draw on a strong work ethic and
- increase the population which will help broaden the tax base

“an overwhelming majority (81%) felt that they could create a welcoming community for immigrants”



However, there were some caveats expressed in the comments offering such qualifications as:

- encouraging immigration from groups of people who were able to contribute economically to the local community rather than draw from it
- encouraging immigration from those willing to adapt to the ways of life that is already valued within Oxford County

In addition, the resident responses to the top four challenges that immigrants may face were honest in listing:

- language
- isolation
- intolerance
- culture

While rating themselves conservatively as only “Somewhat Welcoming” (51%), an overwhelming majority (81%) felt that they could create a welcoming community for immigrants.

Immigrants

The sample size for the immigrant survey was small with 30 people responding to the online survey and 11 participating in the focus group. Of the 30 people who responded 16 were from racialized 2 groups (Asia 6, Latin America 5, Africa and the Middle East 5). 16 respondents also indicated that they had moved to Oxford County within the last three years. The recent increase in diversity in Oxford County is consistent with the diversity seen in a larger centre such as London and is reflective of current patterns of immigration and where immigrants will be coming from in the near future.

It is important to recognize that this demographic is very different from the current demographic in Oxford County, of which those responding as residents are aware and may explain some of the reasons for the qualified support for increased immigration expressed in residents’ survey responses.

There was remarkable similarity between the resident survey and the immigrant survey in terms of why they have chosen to move to Oxford County. Immigrants find Oxford County friendly, with a strong sense of community. Responses indicate that immigrants feel welcomed and are pleased with their decision to move to Oxford County.

In terms of challenges with respect to living in Oxford County, language and culture were the predominant themes, once again, consistent with the survey results of the residents.

Outside of employment, engagement within the community is often a key indicator in building a sense of belonging and while sample sizes are small immigrants do not appear to be strongly connected, 4 people said they volunteered in the community just 6 responded to having attended events and festivals, 7 have a library card. All of these are indicators of integration.



It should not be a surprise to note however, that employment is the key driver of reasons why immigrants would come and stay in the County.

The focus groups provided depth to the results of the online survey with two overriding important themes stemming from the dialogue:

- Employment
- Developing a sense of belonging

Service Providers

Service providers play a vital role of being the link or bridge within the community to successful integration. Within their survey, this group was asked three questions that are key to informing the work of a Local Immigration Partnership. These were:

- What strategies need to be considered to better integrate immigrants into the community?
- What capacity exists within their own agencies to meet these needs?
- What would they need to be able to enhance their capacity so that they can better serve this population and contribute to their successful integration?

“For immigrant communities, employment is often the key driver that brings them to an unfamiliar community”

In response to what the community as a whole could do to better integrate immigrants the majority of responses stated education for residents and service providers. Education would include the value of cultural diversity and the need for immigration to support growth in Oxford County as well as an understanding of specific challenges newcomers face in adapting to life in Canada.

An initial list of services provided to immigrants was also generated through the online survey and confirmed in the focus group. While there are few services directly targeted at immigrants, service providers were open to finding ways to ensure their services became more accessible to immigrants.

The summary of the readiness assessment questions provides preliminary baseline data in terms of what organizations perceive they are doing well and areas that need further development. Areas for improvement include:

- Strategies to attract or assist in settling immigrants into the community
- Having print material (flyers/brochures etc) available in multiple languages
- Offering programs, as needed, specifically designed to help with the attraction or settlement of immigrants in the community
- Staff recruitment procedures that would ensure recruitment from diverse populations
- Effective use of interpretation services

Noteworthy is the fact that of the 119 service providers that responded to the survey only 7 were born outside of Canada.

There was a strong openness to becoming more culturally competent. Strategies to bring about this change included:

- Training
- Time to learn and talk to those from other cultures
- Increased knowledge of cultures and diversity

Focus group participants reviewed the preliminary data and confirmed the themes within the service provider data and their experience with residents in Oxford County noting that the openness to having a more diverse community was a welcomed shift from the resident group that a few years ago seemed much more closed to the idea.



Integrate

84%

having lived
in the county
for 10+ years

Collective Priorities

All three groups were asked to list what they considered the top three strategic priorities for a Local Immigration Partnership. While not all respondents named three, the highest responses from all three groups were:

- improved support system
- employment
- community education

For immigrant communities, employment is often the key driver that brings them to an unfamiliar community but a welcoming community that supports the whole family is what will determine how well they integrate into that community, participate in and contribute toward a thriving community. Immigrant communities are aware that their language and culture have an impact on their ability to integrate successfully.

The residents of Oxford County are long-term residents with 84% having lived in the county for 10+ years. While acknowledging the benefits that immigrants can bring to the community, there is concern among these residents with respect to the impact on the

community due to immigrants from diverse cultures settling in the County.

The uncertainty of the unfamiliar from both residents and immigrants appears to be a source of some discomfort. All respondents identified the need for an improved support system as a key component for community readiness. Service providers have identified training and awareness as essential elements that can help residents better understand the new community moving in, as well as enhance their own capacity to serve the immigrant community toward fuller integration.

Employers

Based on the review of the information collected through the online survey, a few recommendations can be made both in order to further refine the findings of this study, and for more long term programs/initiatives that ought to be initiated in order to assist local businesses in acquiring and retaining the necessary talent and labour. There are definite patterns according to the industry. Recommendations from the initial study with employers are found below.

Recommendations

The Local Immigrant Partnership of Oxford County should consider the following as it develops its Action Plan:

- 1 Begin with the strengths articulated about Oxford County since this is the common ground between residents, immigrants and service providers. There are many attractive factors about Oxford County that ring true for residents, immigrants and service providers. This can assist in the development of a value proposition for Oxford County.
- 2 Address the concerns and outline the benefits of creating a welcoming community for immigrants through a public awareness and education campaign. Increasing the capacity of Oxford County to welcome and support immigrants will ensure a vibrant community where immigrants stay and become contributing members, enhancing the vitality of the County.
- 3 Focus on the number one concern of immigrants: Employment. Create pathways for solid immigrant integration into the workforce by working with employers, employment agencies, English-as-a-second language groups and immigrants themselves. Find ways to create success within the workplace. See recommendation #6 for further information on employers' perspective.
- 4 Embed an immigrant lens into the work that Oxford County is doing with respect to Belonging. The second priority for immigrants was finding ways to feel like they belong to the community. Some of this work relates to immigrants feeling like they "are not alone" including linking and integrating into the larger neighbourhood, community and area.
- 5 Create a comprehensive strategy to strengthen serving organizations so that there is increased capacity to service immigrants. This can include a strong training, mentoring and coaching component as well as ensuring organizations meet all aspects within the readiness assessment.
- 6 Continue to work with employers and the local Economic Development Offices to further understand the business needs of each key sector by collecting tacit information regarding their respective issues and problems that they are facing. This process could be useful in generating industry driven programs and initiatives to leverage and share resources. As part of this strategy:

A. DEVELOP THE OXFORD VALUE PROPOSITION

The research that was completed in previous studies and reports all outlined that Oxford County will face a shortage of labour and talent in the upcoming years. This holds true for many other communities in Canada. The marketplace for talent and skilled workers is extremely competitive as there are many communities vying to attract talent and workers to their respective communities.

If Oxford County is looking to attract and retain talent, value propositions and reasons behind why workers ought to consider the community as their choice to live and work has to be clearly established. Developing value propositions would require understanding the community's critical strengths in comparison with other communities that are attempting to attract similar types of workers. The information gathered in other sections of this report should inform this process.

Referring to the Newcomer Attraction Marketing Strategy is recommended, as a few key value propositions were established and explored as part of that strategy.

B. SECTOR LEVEL APPROACH

When the results of the survey are reviewed, it becomes quite obvious that different sectors have different issues and results on a variety of topics. The differences range from current hiring practices to anticipate shortages as well as the pathways being used to fulfill employee and hiring needs. Understanding that sectors deal with shortages and issues differently will be the first part of developing solutions that are easily implementable at the business level.

Solutions geared to specific to certain sectors might be appropriate as opposed to taking an over arching approach to workforce needs. Key issues per sector were defined in the research results, for instance the Hospitality and Tourism sector faces critical issues in finding apprentice and internship positions, while the Manufacturing, Logistics and Transportation sector has the same issue in the mid-level experience levels. The interviews recommended could be used as avenues to develop more industry or business size specific solutions.

C. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

In order to fulfill anticipated labour shortages, as well as deal with chronic issues in finding employees of specific skill levels, it would be important to develop and cultivate strategic partnerships with organizations and groups that could help. This can be done at the sector level in order to develop strategic relationships whereby both sides are aware and appreciative of the critical value the relationship can provide to one another.

The Hospitality and Tourism industry can be (if not already) better linked to local Colleges, which might provide Hospitality and Tourism courses. This sector seems to anticipate issues in finding employees at the entry level, so facilitating this connection might be a potential solution. Besides local colleges, it is important to look at educational facilities that are within an hour radius of Oxford County.





“The solution might be to ensure that the entry-level positions that are hired are retained.”

D. ENHANCING AND PROMOTING CURRENT PATHWAYS

There were a few hiring pathways which were used widely across all sectors. Work in Oxford and other online job boards seem to be the primary means through which businesses are currently finding employees. It would be important to keep enhancing and promoting the use of these tools not only to businesses who use them, but also to people looking for jobs.

The Work in Oxford website, which is hosted and supported by Community Employment Services - Woodstock, is not only a very well used tool, but it is also a locally grown solution to the needs of many employers. This initiative ought to be supported not only by the organization that manages it, but also through the various local partners and networks. Promotion should be done to both businesses as well as job seekers.

E. ADDRESSING MID-LEVEL SKILL SHORTAGE

A key issue that is being faced by business in Oxford County is the anticipated needs in being able to fulfill employment requirements at the mid level. This would mean individuals with about 3 - 7 years of experience (roughly). This shortage was seen as being critical amongst the Manufacturing, Logistics and Transportation sector as well as amongst the ‘Other’ sector category of firms.

Being able to address this issue will be relatively hard, as the shortage is across many sectors, and the employees in this range tend to be relatively mobile. The solution might be to ensure that the entry-level positions that are hired are retained and that they are progressed properly into the mid level positions.

Assistance in career planning and developing career pathway models for employees in different sectors might a potential way through which to retain workers - if not within the firm, at least within the community. Career planning and pathway development would consist

of reviewing potential employment which people within the industry can undertake and clearly defining what work/skill/experience requirements are needed to progress from one career to another. These can be offered as classes to employees at local firms, as well as community members.

F. ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIER ISSUES

Language proficiency seems to be a critical issue for Hospitality and Tourism sector businesses. As these businesses rely a lot on face-to-face interaction with their customers, an excellent grasp of the language as well as familiarity with the Canadian dialect is necessary. Even though many new immigrants have excellent English, their awareness of the Canadian dialect and normal phrases in use might not be equally good.

This is an issue that does not have an easy solution however, as raised by service providers and immigrants themselves there are strategies that can assist in practicing Canadian English and learning sector specific terminology. Thus, training can enhance the language ability of newcomers and can be considered as a means through which to decrease language barrier issues.

G. DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL LABOUR POOL

The development of a local labour pool database, perhaps hosted on the Work in Oxford website, where seasonal and temporary Tourism and Hospitality sector businesses and workers can connect with each other is a potential solution. The online forum could be a means through which labour pools can be shared so that employment is guaranteed for more than just seasonal.

This initiative would have to be supported by the industry, as their participation in providing information would be critical.

FEBRUARY 25, 2014

Local Immigration Partnerships – Oxford County

STEERING COMMITTEE FEEDBACK ON REPORT & ACTION PLAN



Stemming from the Oxford Local Immigration Partnership – Community Consultation Report (January 2014) and its recommendations, the LIP Steering Committee agreed on the following action items:

Oxford LIP Action Areas

1. **Address the concerns and outline the benefits of creating a welcoming community for immigrants through a public awareness and education campaign.** Increasing the capacity of Oxford County to welcome and support immigrants will ensure a vibrant community where immigrants stay and become contributing members, enhancing the vitality of the County.

“Begin with the strengths articulated about Oxford County since this is the common ground between residents, immigrants and service providers. **There are many attractive factors about Oxford County that ring true for residents, immigrants and service providers.** This can assist in the development of a value proposition for Oxford County.”

2. **Create a comprehensive strategy to strengthen serving organizations so that there is increased capacity to service immigrants.** This can include a strong training, mentoring and coaching component as well as ensuring organizations meet all aspects within the readiness assessment.
3. **Create opportunities for immigrants/newcomers to increase their English language proficiency** so as to more readily secure employment and integrate into the larger Oxford Community. Both formal and informal approaches need to form part of this strategy taking advantage of local and natural gathering places.

Link with Oxford County initiative:

4. **Embed an immigrant lens into the work that Oxford County is doing with respect to Belonging.** The second priority for immigrants was finding ways to feel like they belong to the community. Some of this work relates to immigrants feeling like they “are not alone” including linking and integrating into the larger neighbourhood, community and area.
5. **Support the work of the Oxford Workforce Develop partnership** as they continue to work with employers and the local Economic Development Offices to further understand the business needs of each key sector by collecting tacit information regarding their respective issues and problems that they are facing. This process could be useful in generating industry driven programs and initiatives to leverage and share resources.

Action Teams will need to be created to carry the work of LIP to move the LIP forward.



Action

Call to action

The Oxford Local Immigration Partnership is a volunteer-driven Council represented by a diverse group of service providers, community based organizations, faith groups, government and newcomers.

The Oxford Local Immigration Partnership welcomes anyone who is interested in giving their time and talent to build a more welcoming community.

We are actively recruiting interested individuals who would like to be involved in the planning and implementation of identified priorities, recommendations and action plan.

- What am I prepared to do as an individual to respond to the information, recommendations and action plan
- What can the organization I am with do to respond to the information, recommendations and action plan
- What can I do in my neighbourhood with people I know to respond to the information, recommendations and action plan

If you wish to be involved or share your ideas we encourage you to please email; nsurridge@ceswoodstock.org



“Collaboration, getting together is a start, remaining together is an advancement, working together is an achievement.”



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