

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK ENTRY PROGRAM

Altered Minds Inc.
Winnipeg, MB

Area of Practice:
Information and Orientation

Video:
<https://youtu.be/uZXPp267uiA>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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**PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY**
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



**VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ**
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

Altered Minds Inc. (AMI) is a non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, MB. AMI provides programs and services to all newcomers in Manitoba, including pre-arrival, employment and settlement services, information and orientation services, English language classes, and basic computer training.

Prior to the establishment of the Entry Program, there was no central place in Winnipeg where newcomers could go for comprehensive settlement information and referral upon their arrival. Newcomers would eventually find their way to an English language program, employment agency, or government service centre, and then bounce between different agencies and/or programs before finding the information or services they needed.

The Government of Manitoba came up with the idea of creating a “front door” where all adult newcomers could come for orientation to life in Manitoba before going their separate ways. AMI was contracted to develop a program that:

- Ensured newcomers would receive essential information upon arrival to help them make informed decisions, navigate systems, and access services more quickly;
- Reduced the time it took for newcomers to find answers, locate services, and meet their initial settlement needs; and
- Provided early language instruction and practice while newcomers waited for more formal language training opportunities.

Since 2004, AMI has been delivering the Entry Program for newcomers to Manitoba.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Entry Program

Description:

The Entry Program is an orientation and language program that provides information and basic skills development for newcomers to Winnipeg in a classroom or online setting. It is a module-based program delivered by certified English as an Additional Language (EAL) instructors and covers four major topics: health, education and employment, laws, and places to go. Each week, guest speakers join the program to meet and connect with participants, providing newcomers with direct contact to staff from key agencies, such as immigrant serving organizations, government departments, community organizations, police, and private businesses. The Entry Program is offered in three streams: four-week classroom (English), one-week classroom (limited to newcomers identified as fluent in English), and online (English and French). Newcomers are registered for the Entry Program through Manitoba Start, the provincial centralized intake system.

Goal:

To provide newcomers with essential settlement information and related language skills for daily living so that they can make informed decisions and more quickly achieve their settlement goals.

Target Client Group(s):

All newcomers to Winnipeg (free of charge for permanent residents; small fee for temporary residents and refugee claimants)

Delivery Partner(s):

Approximately 25-30 partner organizations participate in delivering presentations to Entry Program clients.

Human Resource(s):

The Entry Program has 1 executive director, 3 coordinators, 10 certified ESL instructors, administrative staff, and 700+ volunteers.

Funding:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The Entry Program is divided into four modules: health, education and employment, laws, and places to go. It provides newcomers with the settlement information they need, preparing them for language learning and/or job search because their settlement information needs are met. The program can be accessed by newcomers regardless of English language level, as it is delivered by certified EAL instructors. Weekly guest speakers and use of interpreters are two additional features that contribute to successful outcomes for participants. Participants gain knowledge in all outcome areas, have a better idea of community services available, and are better able to seek out assistance and supports when needed.

Efficient:

The Entry Program provides information and orientation in a timely manner. Classes are offered in the morning, afternoon, and evening on a continuous intake / exit basis. Intake is on a weekly basis, allowing newcomers to join the program shortly after arrival. Newcomers receive settlement information and resources in one comprehensive program, thus reducing the time it takes to connect with essential services. To ensure that newcomers are placed in the appropriate stream, AMI provides training to Manitoba Start staff on assessment techniques and approaches based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, and new Manitoba Start staff are invited to observe Entry Program classes to learn how best to place clients.

Relevant:

The Entry Program's comprehensive curriculum covers all the topics prescribed by the federal government. There is a curriculum coordinator on staff who ensures that all information is up-to-date.

Sustainable:

The Entry Program conducts ongoing performance measurement and evaluation. Uptake is consistent and feedback continues to be positive. The Entry Program is offered in different streams – four-week classroom, one-week classroom, and online – to meet the diverse needs of clients. Staff strongly believe in the program and put effort into maintaining it.

Transferable:

The Entry Program can be implemented in other communities. The classroom stream requires a minimum of 4 ongoing classes / 60 participants for learners to have the option of morning, afternoon or evening classes at their level of proficiency. The online stream is built on the Canvas platform and can be adapted to meet local needs, irrespective of number of participants. In Manitoba, the Entry Program Online has been piloted in French, and other communities have adapted the online program to meet their local needs.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The Entry Program is flexible, allowing newcomers to join online or in-person at different times of day, depending on their schedule and needs. It uses cutting-edge methodology and clearly articulated outcomes to optimize learning. The online program uses the latest interactive technology for newcomers unable to join the classroom stream.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The Entry Program combines information and orientation with English language learning, two service streams that IRCC tends to fund separately. It is longer and more comprehensive than other information and orientation programs, using a modular and flexible structure that allows for continuous intake. It is delivered by certified EAL instructors using a well-designed curriculum and adult learning principles. Individuals of all physical and intellectual abilities are accommodated, such as newcomers who are seeing and hearing impaired and those with physical, intellectual or learning challenges. AMI works closely with agencies such as the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to learn how best to support individual needs and bridge newcomers to mainstream services and supports.

High Client Uptake:

Winnipeg agencies share essential client data and have developed clear referral pathways to ensure a seamless client flow. Newcomers are referred to the Entry Program by Manitoba Start, the centralized intake service model used in Manitoba. All Provincial Nominees receive a letter from the Government of Manitoba to let them know about the Entry Program.

High Client Retention:

Most newcomers complete the full program, and many serve as volunteers while attending the program. Feedback is collected on an ongoing basis to ensure the program meets the needs of participants.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

An independent outcome evaluation of the Entry Program was conducted using a Study Group of 290 newcomers. While the evaluation found that orientation services in general improved knowledge about life in Manitoba and Canada and sense of capacity, respondents who participated in the four-week Entry Program reported significantly better outcomes in all areas of knowledge and capacity assessed than the control group who attended other orientation programs of shorter duration.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

In 2017/18, AMI hired an independent consultant to conduct an outcome evaluation of the Entry Program. The evaluation sought to determine if four-week Entry Program clients had better outcomes than clients in orientation programs of shorter duration. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study group were developed in collaboration with IRCC. The Study Group included four-week Entry Program participants (n=104), one-week Entry Program participants (n=84), and a control group (n=102) of newcomers (non-refugees) who received information and orientation services from pre-selected Manitoba organizations. It explored outcomes related to improved understanding of life in Manitoba and Canada, improved awareness and knowledge of settlement information and services, and increased participant capacity to achieve their settlement goals in Manitoba. It compared Entry Program participants' self-assessed changes in knowledge, confidence level, and satisfaction with orientation received. Retrospective pre/post surveys were developed in eight languages and distributed directly to clients.

For the Entry Program, a performance measurement framework has also been developed to review quarterly progress. Input is collected from participants prior to starting the program and upon completion of the program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Altered Minds Inc.

<https://alteredminds.ca/>

Entry Program

<https://alteredminds.ca/entry-program/>

Entry Program Online

<https://alteredminds.ca/entry-program-online/>