

# SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN EMERGING SECTORS

The Refugee Centre and DevBloc Social Innovation Catalyst  
Montreal, QC

## Areas of Practice:

- Services and Supports for Vulnerable Immigrant Groups
- Developing Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations to Provide Supports for Immigrant Settlement and Integration

## Video:

<https://youtu.be/Edmeq1p1tNA>

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**

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The Refugee Centre and DevBloc Social Innovation Catalyst are sister non-profit organizations based in Montreal, Quebec. Founded in 2015, they support newcomers through innovative and novel practices, with services ranging from English language test preparation (e.g., IELTS) to legal aid services to customized coding classes aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and job placement in the technology sector.

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program was launched in late 2016 to support the economic integration of newcomers and to help fill a labour shortage in the technology sector. Montreal's technology sector was experiencing a period of growth, and companies were not able to recruit enough staff to fill their vacant positions. Several technology companies had reached out to The Refugee Centre and DevBloc Social Innovation Catalyst, and staff saw an opportunity for collaboration. These jobs did not require a university degree or certification, but rather a specific set of skills that could be learned within a short timeframe and lead to meaningful employment.

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program was not created to compete with post-secondary institutions or private schools, which are more intensive and charge high tuition rates that are out of reach for most newcomers. Rather the goal is to replicate their coding classes and "bootcamp" model and offer just enough knowledge and skills to satisfy employers in the technology industry and create a foundation for further self-study and learning.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM**

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**Name:**

Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors

**Description:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is a free coding skills "bootcamp" for newcomers that is taught by industry experts. Participants do not receive a certificate upon completion of the program; instead, they develop a portfolio, which is required for employment in the technology sector. The program is offered three times a year, with each session running for approximately 4-8 weeks. Participants gain new coding skills in different areas, such as web / mobile development, Javascript, virtual reality (VR), and data sciences. Classes have a 70/30 split of newcomers to longer-term residents to provide an opportunity for social network expansion.

**Goal(s):**

The goal of the Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is to provide newcomers with sufficient coding skills to access job opportunities in Montreal's technology sector, gain meaningful employment, and achieve financial stability.

**Target Client Group(s):**

Newcomers with lived refugee experience (including refugee claimants), and newly arrived immigrants.

**Delivery Partner(s):**

N/A

**Human Resource(s):**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program has five program staff, including one executive director, one outreach coordinator, one placement director, one curriculum developer, and one development coordinator. It also has 3-4 instructors and many volunteers.

**Funding:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is funded by the private sector. Previous funders have included TD Bank, SAP, Github, Microsoft, and IBM.

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**KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE**

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**Effective:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program provides skills for newcomers to start their careers in technology, a sector that does not require a university degree and provides meaningful employment and financial stability. The needs of the technology sector are constantly evolving, so the program is continuously being adapted to ensure it remains relevant and up-to-date.

**Efficient:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is a short-term “bootcamp”, which provides just enough knowledge and skills for participants to gain meaningful employment in the technology sector and continue to build their coding skills on their own.

**Relevant:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is a free, foundational program that was created to fill a gap in employment services and provides a relatively quick opportunity for newcomers to gain access to meaningful employment and financial stability. It is taught by industry professionals to ensure that the content is useful and up-to-date. Participants are supported to build portfolios, rather than earn a certificate, which is what employers are interested in.

**Sustainable:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program has been able to leverage support from the private sector each year to cover the costs of running the program. It has a strong curriculum and the full commitment of instructors, and meets the needs of both participants and employers. A review is conducted after each session, and the program is adjusted as needed.

**Transferable:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program could be replicated in other communities across Canada. It could also be replicated by government or large organizations, who could use their clout to leverage larger amounts of funding, as well as more ongoing support, from the private sector.

**Innovative and Forward Thinking:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program was created to fill a gap in employment services for newcomers. It takes a private industry proof of concept – the bootcamp model – and applies it to the non-profit sector. Newcomers who cannot afford the high-cost programs offered through post-secondary institutions or private schools receive access to foundational skills training, and private sector companies funding the program receive a high return on their investment in the form of skilled labour to fill their job vacancies.

**Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program is a free, short-term, skills training program that is open to all newcomers regardless of immigration or financial status. Only two-thirds of the seats are reserved for newcomers; one-third of seats are given to longer-term residents. This creates an opportunity for newcomers and longer-term residents to get to know each other, build intercultural understanding, relationships, and trust, and expand their social networks organically.

**High Client Uptake:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program has high client uptake, which is the result of a successful marketing strategy, high quality service, high job placement rate, and word of mouth from previous participants. The Refugee Centre is not able to meet current demand. All sessions get filled and the organization does not have the capacity to offer additional sessions.

**High Client Retention:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program has high client retention. When the program was first launched, clients had the option of registering for a daytime or evening session. While both sessions were full, client retention became an issue in the daytime session, as participants were finding jobs before the end of the session. Now sessions are offered only in the evening, and client retention is high.

**Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:**

The Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors program monitors and tracks progress using internal assessment and measurement tools. The data show that the program is creating positive outcomes for participants. Approximately 80% of all participants who completed the program found an internship / job or started their own business. From a randomized sample of 71 participants, 39 participants (55%) took one month or less to find a job, 27 participants (38%) took between one and two months to find a job, and 5 participants (7%) took between two and three months to find a job.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY**

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The Refugee Centre tracks the number of applicants and participants, demographic information, immigration status, and previous work / education experience using internal tools to ensure data security and confidentiality, as the organization mostly serves vulnerable populations (e.g., refugee claimants). Participants complete pre- and post-program surveys to measure changes in knowledge, skills, and capacity, as well as to share information about job offers received from employers. The Refugee Centre also conducts one-on-one post-program interviews with participants to gather input on program structure, curriculum, and suggestions for improvement, which is compiled, reviewed and incorporated into subsequent sessions. For example, participants shared that more support was needed between classes, so a Slack channel was created so that they could ask questions directly to the instructor and other participants between classes, as well as gain experience with a collaboration software tool that is often used in the technology industry.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### **The Refugee Centre**

<https://www.therefugeecentre.org>

### **DevBloc Social Innovation Catalyst & Economic Integration in Emerging Sectors**

<http://devbloc.ca/en#about-us>