

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RETENTION PROGRAM

CAFi
Moncton, NB

Areas of Practice:

Developing Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations to Provide
Supports for Immigrant Settlement and Integration

Video:

<https://youtu.be/6Pj8mumvQFI>

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

CAFi is a non-profit organization based in Moncton, New Brunswick. Founded in 2005, it offers services and supports to Francophone and Francophile immigrants in Greater Moncton and Southeastern New Brunswick, including: initial settlement (e.g., housing, administrative tasks, school registration); information and orientation (e.g., employment opportunities, volunteer opportunities, workshops); job search and labour market integration; supports for parents and their children in the K-12 school system; community connections; a host program matching newcomer and Canadian families; and social connections / supports.

The International Student Retention Program (ISRP) was created to address multiple challenges facing Greater Moncton: an increased number of international student arrivals; a shortage of qualified workers with advanced English language skills - i.e., Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 7 or higher; and ongoing demographic challenges. Representatives from CAFi, University of Moncton, and City of Moncton initially came together and formed a working group with the goal of addressing these challenges. Membership was expanded to include representation from other levels of government, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, etc. The idea of a program to support the retention of international students in Greater Moncton was presented to the Government of New Brunswick, who agreed to support and fund the ISRP.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

International Student Retention Program (ISRP)

Description:

The purpose of the International Student Retention Program (ISRP) is to improve the chances of career success of Francophone international students interested in settling permanently in Greater Moncton. Clients are provided with the following services and supports: English language classes and conversation circles; workplace essential skills assessment and training; resume, cover letter and LinkedIn profile workshops; networking sessions with employers and influencers; mock job interviews in English; and inclusive workplace workshops to better understand the Canadian workplace culture and expectations.

Goal(s):

The goals of the ISRP are: to address the human resources needs of the large customer service hubs in Greater Moncton; to increase the English language skills of Francophone international students enrolled in post-secondary studies at the University of Moncton and New Brunswick Community College; and to develop the workplace essential skills of Francophone international students so that they are able to find meaningful employment in their field of study.

Target Client Group(s):

International students enrolled in a Francophone post-secondary institution in Atlantic Canada who would like to settle permanently in Greater Moncton.

Delivery Partner(s):

The ISRP is co-delivered with the following partners: Government of New Brunswick (funds the program); WorkingNB (delivers workplace essential skills training); Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area (delivers English language training); University of Moncton (provides space for the delivery of training programs); New Brunswick Community College of Dieppe and the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area (organize English language tests); City of Moncton, City of Dieppe, and Greater Moncton Local Immigration Partnership (provide information, orientation and career fairs); Opportunities New Brunswick (provides networking opportunities); and Atlantic Human Services (provides one-on-one job search support for eligible clients).

Human Resource(s):

The ISRP has one full-time program coordinator. Delivery partners also provide the following human resources: one employee with WorkingNB assesses participants' workplace essential skills (pre- and post-program); one employee with WorkingNB delivers workplace essential skills training; and one employee with the Multicultural Association of Greater Moncton Area delivers English language training.

Funding:

The ISRP is funded by the Government of New Brunswick.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The ISRP has met its targets and objectives to date (e.g., planning and implementation, partnership development, promotion, participant recruitment) while remaining on time and within budget. Staff and delivery partners are committed to the program and its ongoing improvement.

Efficient:

The ISRP provides 126 hours of English language training over a 14-week period, and participants are expected to improve their English language skills and move up a level during this time. While experts have indicated that a minimum of 180 hours of English language training is needed for learners to move up a level, most participants in this program have succeeded, with some moving up two or more levels.

Relevant:

The ISRP was developed to address multiple community challenges, and with the needs of various community members and stakeholders in mind. Participant feedback is collected and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the program is meeting needs and expectations of participants and other stakeholders.

Sustainable:

The ISRP is a pilot program, now in its final year. A new working group has been struck to review the program's successes and failures and to develop recommendations based on input from participants, employers, community partners, and stakeholders. The community would like to see the program continue over the longer term.

Transferable:

The ISRP has the potential to be replicated in other communities across Canada. The following steps must be taken when replicating the program: conduct a needs and diagnostic assessment (i.e., confirm that employment opportunities match fields of study offered at local post-secondary institutions, confirm that a minority community is in need of developing official language and pre-employment skills); develop client-centered program goals; establish key community partnerships; plan, pilot and implement the program; and conduct an evaluation of the program.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The ISRP is the first program in Greater Moncton that meets the needs of international students, who would like to develop and/or improve their English language and workplace essential skills, and the needs of local employers, who are looking to fill positions with qualified workers. It was developed with New Brunswick's demographic and economic growth challenges in mind, and aims to provide Francophone international students with a strong socio-economic and vibrant future in a culturally diverse and inclusive community where they will thrive and want to stay.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The ISRP differs from other similar practices in the region in that it provides free, short-term, in-person English language and workplace essential skills training for Francophone international students. Each cohort has 8-16 participants and is led by credentialed instructors.

High Client Uptake:

The ISRP is gaining visibility. Former participants have experienced success and are now promoting the program to other Francophone international students. The program also has high client uptake because it is offered free-of-charge and is thus able to attract clients who cannot afford the cost of other English language training programs.

High Client Retention:

The ISRP has a high client retention rate because it is accelerated, combines theory and practice, and increases participants' chances of finding meaningful employment. That said, retention is lower in summer and winter months for two reasons: international students often travel back to their countries of origin to visit their families, and winter weather conditions sometimes prevent participants from attending classes, which are all offered in-person.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

The ISRP monitors and tracks progress using internal assessment and measurement tools. Client statistics are collected and reviewed on an ongoing basis, and a participant survey is distributed at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the program to track their career development, retention in the region, and learning outcomes. The data show that 31 out of 45 participants who completed the

program found or improved their employment opportunities and 19 participants applied for permanent residency through the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

CAFi uses the following tools to monitor and track client progress and measure achievement of the program's results:

At the start of the program

- Needs assessment (15 minutes) and English language proficiency pre-test (10 minutes) to ensure participants meet the minimum English language requirements
- Comprehensive English language proficiency test (45 minutes) to confirm English language level
- Knowledge assessment (2 hours) to measure participants' workplace essential skills

During the program

- Monitoring and tracking of participants' progress by the training committee, which includes representation of CAFi, WorkingNB, and the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area.
- Ongoing formative assessment to track participants' progress, which is completed by the training committee.

At the end of the program

- Participant survey (15 minutes) to assess participants' experience and level of satisfaction with the program
- Participant survey to measure progress in participants' workplace essential skills

At the end of each session, the training committee meets to review and analyze findings, and make improvements for the next cohort.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CAFi

<https://cafi-nb.org/>

International Student Retention Program

<http://www.cafi-nb.org/prei/>