

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK NEWCOMER ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB

Ryerson University and Scadding Court Community Centre
Toronto, ON

Area of Practice:

Services and Supports for Vulnerable Immigrant Groups

Video:

<https://youtu.be/E3ZKmS-VwMU>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

March 2020



Funded by:

Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



**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

The Diversity Institute is based out of Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management in Toronto, ON. It was launched in 1999 to advance understanding of diversity and inclusion through the lens of employment, innovation, and skills. The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Its approach advances knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leads practices to effect change, and produces concrete results.

Scadding Court Community Centre is a multi-service agency located in Downtown West Toronto, ON. Founded in 1978, its mission is to support and foster the wellbeing of individuals, families, and community groups by providing and encouraging local and international opportunities for recreation, education, athletics, community participation, and inclusive social interaction. It offers a wide range of program, services, and opportunities for people of all ages and walks of life. Its work is about supporting individuals and families, strengthening communities, and building a better Toronto.

The Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub (NEH) stems primarily from two action research initiatives conducted by The Diversity Institute in the areas of settlement and economic integration of vulnerable newcomers, which showed that micro-enterprise projects are drivers of community economic development and especially beneficial to groups facing augmented labour barriers, such as racialized immigrants (The Diversity Institute, 2011). It is based on a similar model called Business out of the Box (BoB), another entrepreneurship program created by The Diversity Institute and Scadding Court Community Centre for people with low income, but is tailored specifically to vulnerable newcomers and offers improved business support delivery.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub

Description:

The Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub (NEH) is a skills-based training program designed to help reduce barriers to entrepreneurship for newcomers. Through key partnerships, it offers participants the tools and resources needed to start their own business. It provides participants with 40+ hours of entrepreneurship training led by industry professionals and Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management faculty. Participants are matched with business mentors and provided with low-risk market-testing opportunities and wrap-around supports to ensure ease of access to programming. The NEH is a cross-sector, multi-pronged solution that integrates several components into one seamless model.

Goal(s):

The goals of the NEH are: to increase entrepreneurship skills in newcomers; to facilitate access to business financing resources; to provide real hands-on business testing opportunities; to build social capital through mentorship and networking opportunities; and to support newcomers facing barriers to entrepreneurship in areas that will increase their ability to participate in training, launch businesses, and gain financial independence.

Target Client Group(s):

The target client group is newcomers to Canada of all immigration categories, regardless of length of time in Canada. The NEH specifically targets low-income and vulnerable groups, and seeks ethnically-, linguistically- and gender-diverse participants. Participants range from 18 to 65+ years in age and come from a variety of education levels and backgrounds.

Delivery Partner(s):

The NEH is delivered in partnership with ACCESS Community Capital Fund, Futurpreneur Canada, and Alexandra Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre.

Human Resource(s):

The NEH is delivered by a team of five staff, including one program administrator, one mentorship coordinator, one recruitment coordinator, one testing coordinator, and one administrative assistant.

Funding:

The NEH is funded by the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The NEH leverages Scadding Court Community Centre's affordable entrepreneurship opportunities and platforms for product testing, as well as its wraparound services for newcomers, including settlement services, childminding, literacy and education upgrading, and health and recreation programs. It also leverages partnerships with business support and settlement organizations to reduce silos in support services to newcomer entrepreneurs. It builds on the extensive knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship and small business financing of its delivery partners, ACCESS Community Capital Fund, Futurpreneur Canada and Alexandra Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre, providing relevant and practical content to clients.

Efficient:

The NEH is a one-stop hub for newcomer entrepreneurs, providing language offerings, networking opportunities, mentorship, funding information and market testing in one place. At the same time, it is flexible and caters to newcomer entrepreneurs at any stage of their business development. It leverages existing information services of delivery partners, such as financing, legal and housing

support, and mental health support. The NEH model ensures that clients are supported throughout their settlement journey as they work toward launching their businesses.

Relevant:

The NEH provides access to the content and resources needed for clients to participate in the program and pursue entrepreneurship. The content is regularly updated to ensure it remains relevant, and the use of wraparound services ensure accessibility and inclusion of traditionally disadvantaged groups. It is open to all newcomers, regardless of Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level, as interpretation can be provided. In 2019, interpretation was provided to 10 clients in the following languages: Arabic, Burmese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Turkish.

Sustainable:

The NEH has secured an additional three years of funding through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Transferable:

The NEH could be replicated in other communities across Canada by organizations seeking to offer entrepreneurship training as a means of economic empowerment for their clients. The program model is versatile and can serve a diverse range of clients. For example, the model was used to develop the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub (WE-Hub), an entrepreneurship hub for low-income, self-identifying women wishing to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The NEH builds on the skills and experiences of newcomers, and provides them with the tools and supports needed to launch a business in Canada. While other programs may offer business development support, such as coaching and sales assistance, the NEH adds value by acknowledging and addressing the additional challenges that vulnerable newcomers may face, such as unfamiliarity with Canadian norms and regulations, language barriers, financial limitations (e.g., credit checks), and exclusion from mainstream programs due to immigration status (e.g., refugee claimants).

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The NEH offers one-on-one mentorship by industry experts and local entrepreneurs. Mentors and clients are connected by a mentorship coordinator who ensures that clients are matched based on their business interests and, where possible, their first language. The NEH provides wraparound services to ensure accessibility by diverse groups, such as settlement and language support, transit tokens, childminding, and skill upgrading. It also provides opportunities for experiential learning and practical, hands-on testing opportunities.

High Client Uptake:

The NEH leverages Scadding Court Community Centre's connections with newcomers, whose staff refer suitable clients to the program. Client feedback is collected on an ongoing basis, and constant improvements are being made to the program. This has resulted in increased client uptake.

High Client Retention:

The NEH has a high client retention rate, which is due, in part, to its responsiveness to client feedback. For example, improvements were made to the mentorship component of the program as

a result of client feedback from the first cohort. A dedicated mentorship coordinator was recruited so that clients could benefit fully from this component, and matches became more focused on the specific business and language needs of the individual, where needed. The location of the program was also changed after the first cohort. It was originally delivered at Scadding Court Community Centre and Ryerson University, and is now delivered only at Ryerson University. Clients appreciated attending the program at a university campus, as it made them feel more respected and valued.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

The NEH monitors and tracks progress through client surveys and interviews in order to fine-tune the program and ensure client needs are being met. The data show that the program addresses multiple learning and support needs for entrepreneurship, as well as providing valuable social connections and networks. The program consistently receives high client satisfaction scores, with the majority of clients reporting an increase in the knowledge and skills needed to start a successful and sustainable business. To date, client retention rates have increased from 50% to 74%, and 32 clients have started their own businesses.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

NEH staff track the number of applicants, participants enrolled in the program, and participants who complete the program, as well as the number of ineligible clients and referrals to other agencies / programs. Data are collected through client satisfaction surveys and post-program interviews, which are conducted at specific intervals to track client progress, success of businesses and economic outcomes.

The NEH uses the following indicators to measure outputs and outcomes:

- Outcome: Increase entrepreneurship skills in newcomers
Indicator: Client satisfaction measured through pre- and post-program surveys as well as post-session surveys
- Outcome: Facilitate access to business financing resources
Indicator: Number of clients who attend the “Accessing Finances” workshop
- Outcome: Provide real hands-on business testing opportunities
Indicator: Number of clients who access market testing opportunities
- Outcome: Build social capital through mentorship and networking opportunities
Indicator: Number of clients who are paired with mentors; number of clients who attend networking events
- Outcome: Support newcomers facing barriers to entrepreneurship in areas that will increase their ability to participate in training, launch businesses, and gain financial independence
Indicator: Number of clients who launch businesses

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Diversity Institute

<https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/>

Scadding Court Community Centre

<https://scaddingcourt.org>

Newcomer Entrepreneurship Hub

<https://scaddingcourt.org/neh-2/>