

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK ORIENTATION TO ONTARIO

COSTI Immigrant Services
Toronto, ON

Area of Practice:
Coordination of Settlement Services in Communities with Multiple
Service Providers

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

COSTI Immigrant Services is a community-based, multicultural agency based in Toronto, ON. Founded in 1952, it provides employment, educational, settlement, and social services to all immigrant communities, new Canadians, and individuals in need of assistance. It operates from 18 locations in Toronto, the Region of Peel, and York Region, and provides assistance in more than 60 languages. COSTI Immigrant Services uses a client-focused, proactive, and innovative approach in the planning, development, and delivery of services, ensuring that newcomers to Canada can use their existing skills, learn new skills, and participate actively in all aspects of Canadian life, regardless of language or cultural barriers.

Orientation to Ontario (O2O) began as a pilot project in 2009, after the federal and provincial governments issued a joint call for proposals to develop a pilot model for a coordinated and standardized approach for the delivery of information and orientation services across Ontario. During the initial phase of the pilot project, with George Brown College as the lead agency, consultations were held with settlement agencies and wider community networks across the province. The findings pointed to a need for a holistic approach to orientation for newcomers to ensure they received the same up-to-date information about Canada and Ontario. In response to this need, a range of standardized orientation curriculum and resources were developed, allowing for customization for regional/ local information and context.

In 2012, O2O was rolled out across the province with joint funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Government of Ontario. COSTI Immigrant Services became the provincial coordinator of O2O, with the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Collège Boréal, and George Brown College as implementation partners. Initially, ten service delivery agencies were identified based on geographic location and need, service gaps, capacity and other factors, and sub-contracted by COSTI Immigrant Services. COSTI Immigrant Services was responsible for coordination of all partners and wider community networks, piloting the curriculum and resources, supervising and monitoring the ten service delivery agencies, conducting professional development for O2O facilitators, and reporting out results of a third-party evaluation. OCASI was responsible for developing the database, hosting the website, hiring O2O trainers, and making logistical arrangements for O2O facilitator training. Collège Boréal was responsible for coordination with Francophone communities and delivery of O2O workshops at their six locations.

Now in its ninth year, the number of service delivery agencies participating in the program has increased from 10 to 36, and more than 400 workshops are delivered annually serving over 4,500 clients. The Centre de santé communautaire Niagara/Hamilton replaced Collège Boréal as the Francophone partner, and 211 Ontario and the O2O project team now deliver training. SimpleCTS was contracted to create a centralized database that all service delivery agencies are required to use. O2O continues to offer new modalities for service delivery, based on client needs and technological advancements.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Orientation to Ontario

Description:

Orientation to Ontario (O2O) is a bilingual program designed to facilitate and expedite the settlement of newcomers to Ontario, helping them make informed choices using a standardized, client-centred, multi-dimensional approach. O2O consists of three separate resources: workshops, print resources, and an interactive website with online resources and on-demand webinars. Two options are available for workshops: standard or fast track. The standard model is 10-12 hours long, with three half-day workshops offered in the same week or over three consecutive weeks. The fast track model is 7-9 hours long, with one full-day workshop or two half-day workshops offered in the same week or over two consecutive weeks. Workshops can take place during the day, evening, or on weekends and include a combination of standardized content (e.g., context about Canada and Canadian society, people, laws, rights and responsibilities, inclusiveness, family relationships, settlement services, caring for the environment) and customized content based on the needs of the group (e.g., health care, housing, consumer services, community participation, transportation, legal rights and services, childcare, education, working and business, money / personal finances). Online resources include a workbook in 16 languages, 30 factsheets, an online settlement planning tool with built-in email reminders, and on-demand webinars on more than 25 settlement topics. A bilingual chatbot is also in development to augment the services provided by frontline settlement workers.

Goal(s):

The primary goal of O2O is to deliver seamless, standardized, client-centred, holistic, and bilingual information and orientation for newcomers to facilitate their settlement process. O2O aims to help newcomers understand the network of supports available to them, have a clearer sense of what they already know and still need to learn, receive answers to their key questions, and develop a settlement plan.

Target Client Group(s):

Newcomers to Ontario

Delivery Partner(s):

O2O is administered by COSTI Immigrant Services in collaboration with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara, and George Brown College. It is co-delivered with the following service delivery agencies: Agincourt Community Services Association, Brampton Multicultural Community Centre, Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, Centre communautaire francophone Windsor Essex Kent Inc., Centre for Immigrant and Community Services, Centre francophone de Toronto, Collège Boréal – Windsor, Collège Boréal – London, Conseil économique et social d’Ottawa-Carleton, CultureLink, Halton Multicultural Council, Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, Kingston Community Health Centres, La Passerelle, London Cross Cultural Learners Centre, Multi-Cultural Council Windsor and Essex County, New Canadians Centre of Excellence, Newcomer Centre of Peel,

Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, North York Community House, Peel Multicultural Council, Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, The Neighbourhood Organization, Thunder Bay Multicultural Association, University Settlement Services, Wesley Urban Ministries, WoodGreen Community Services, YMCA of Cambridge and Kitchener Waterloo, YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, and YMCA of South Western Ontario.

Human Resource(s):

The O2O team consists of four full-time staff, including the general manager, an assistant manager, a bilingual coordinator, and a communications administrator, who are responsible for coordination and administration of the program.

Funding:

O2O is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration Division.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

O2O offers reliable information and resources that newcomers can use on their own or in a group setting. Key features that contribute to the program’s effectiveness include: up-to-date and accurate information for recent newcomers and pre-arrival clients; a holistic approach to the settlement process with a focus on client needs through a built-in customization and selection approach; various tools designed to cater to different learning needs of end-users; orientation and material support for workshop delivery; workbook in 16 languages; standardized content with regional/local customization and a personalized settlement plan; and springboard to a network of programs and services.

Efficient:

O2O is coordinated at the provincial level to ensure standardized, accurate, up-to-date resources and service delivery across the province. Resources are developed centrally, with input from stakeholders across regions, and stored on an interactive administrative website designed specifically for service delivery agencies. Workshops are delivered by experienced settlement workers using either a standard or fast-track model. Workshop facilitators are trained on how to deliver O2O workshops, and are provided with a facilitator’s manual, customizable slide deck, registration forms, evaluation forms, and suggestions for possible regional/local handouts.

Relevant:

No two O2O workshops are ever the same, as they are tailored to the clients in the room. After completing the standardized component of the workshop, clients have the option of selecting from a list of different topics. Guest speakers are also invited as appropriate. Information is offered in different languages and formats, serving as a launchpad for settlement services in the community.

Sustainable:

O2O builds capacity for the settlement sector through resource and tool development, professional development, and community partnership building. COSTI Immigrant Services participates in many government and community-based networks to ensure all resources and content remain current. Close collaboration is also maintained with the Orientation to Canada (O2C) initiative. All partners can continue to deliver the program on their own as a result of the innovative service delivery model and digital resources. The joint funding model provides more sustainability for program delivery and enhanced flexibility for clients.

Transferable:

As a bilingual program, O2O could be replicated at the regional or national level. The coordination model, program format, and resource development process could be tailored to other regions and/or populations. For example, O2O was easily modified to meet the needs of government assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees who arrived during the Syrian Refugee Initiative. Staff of Reception Centres across Ontario received special training, and new factsheets, handouts, webinars, and other resources were developed in Arabic and Armenian.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

O2O has created an extensive inventory of online resources, which are available to clients on-demand and at no cost. Technology is used and embraced, allowing services to be delivered using more innovative ways, such as e-settlement plans, webinars, e-books, and a forthcoming chatbot to augment the settlement services provided by frontline staff.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

O2O uses a holistic approach to the settlement process by providing a combination of standardized and regional/local information. Each O2O workshop is unique, as clients decide what information will be presented during the customizable part of the workshop. There is no eligibility restriction for clients because of the dual funding model. All resources are also available publicly on the website in order to respect confidentiality and ensure personal safety. For example, domestic violence is never selected as a topic of interest in workshops, but is one of the most viewed webinars.

High Client Uptake:

Since its inception, O2O has exceeded its client targets. Each service delivery agency is required to serve a minimum number of clients per year (approximately 10 clients per workshop). Clients are recruited by service delivery agencies, with word of mouth being the most effective strategy. COSTI Immigrant Services provides customizable e-flyers to all partners for promoting workshops, and workshops are also promoted through Settlement.Org, OCASI, and Eventbrite. To date over 2,500 workshops have been delivered across the province, serving over 30,000 clients.

High Client Retention:

O2O has high client retention. Each workshop is customized based on client preferences and information needs, and available in multiple languages. Support services are also provided, such as bus tokens, childminding and interpretation, to encourage clients to attend the full workshop.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

O2O monitors and tracks progress using different assessment and measurement tools. The data show that the program is creating positive outcomes for clients. For example, a third-party program evaluation was conducted on the second part of the pilot phase in 2014. The evaluation methodology consisted of: a review of O2O materials, documentation and program administrative data; interviews with representative of 10 service delivery agencies; and a web-based survey of 116 O2O workshop participants. O2O workshop participants indicated satisfaction with the workshop and 74% of respondents reported recommending it to other newcomers to Ontario. A total of 65% of survey respondents fully agreed, and another 30% partially agreed, that O2O had given them the information they needed to get settled. In addition, 64% of survey respondents fully agreed, and 28% partially agreed, that O2O had helped them make more informed decisions, with some survey respondents indicating that O2O helped them create a plan to assist them in getting settled, and that they had followed their plan.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

O2O is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. A centralized, web-based database is used for data collection, reporting and analysis. Demographic information and feedback is collected from clients using a standardized evaluation form that is distributed at the end of each workshop, and this information is used to inform, update, and revise content provided in the workshops and other resources. Feedback is also collected from service delivery agencies, including their most frequently asked questions and requested topics, through monthly updates and quarterly / annual reports, and this information is used for ongoing program/resource development and enhancement. The O2O project team also conducts workshop observations at the start of the partnership, after customization, and on an annual basis to ensure a consistent delivery approach across the province. The Program Management Committee, which includes representation of stakeholders, also monitors O2O's progress and delivery through quarterly meetings and updates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

COSTI Immigrant Services

<http://www.costi.org>

Orientation to Ontario

<https://settlement.org/o2o/>