

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK BIKE HOST

CultureLink Settlement and Community Services
Toronto, ON

Area of Practice:

- Settlement Services and Supports that Contribute to the Physical and Mental Well-being of Newcomer Individuals and Families
- Strategies for Engagement with Non-Settlement Service Providers

Video:

<https://youtu.be/boj12-rkv5Y>

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

CultureLink Settlement and Community Services is a non-profit agency based in Toronto, ON. Established in 1988, it is dedicated to facilitating the active participation and integration of newcomers and the broader community, recognizing the interdependence of these groups in society. It provides a wide range of settlement and community programs, such as assisting newcomers looking for employment, helping families navigate the school system, providing youth with the skills necessary for bright and successful futures, and bringing together new and established Canadians. These are delivered directly through schools, libraries, community centres, and other partners throughout Toronto.

In 2008, CultureLink entered into a partnership with the Toronto Cyclists Union (now called Cycle Toronto), a member-based advocacy organization dedicated to improving conditions for cycling in Toronto. The goal of the partnership was to promote and facilitate the integration of newcomers in the Toronto area through cycling, as well as help newcomers protect their health, which has a tendency to decline after arrival in Canada. As a result of the partnership, several programs and projects were developed, including the Toronto Cyclists Handbook, an accessible guide to urban cycling available in 13 languages; Bike to School, which provides cycling education programs to Toronto elementary and secondary school students; and Bike Host, which provides cycling mentorship to newcomers in Toronto.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Bike Host

Description:

The Bike Host program is a free cycling mentorship program offered in the summer months for newcomers to Toronto. Newcomers are matched with volunteer mentors who help them discover Toronto by bicycle. The program involves the loan of a bicycle, helmet, and lock, along with participation in basic training and bike rides led by a matched mentor who is an experienced cyclist. Through large and small group activities, Bike Host participants practice their communication skills, learn about civic engagement, and improve their cycling skills and knowledge.

Goal(s):

The goals of the Bike Host program are to increase cycling as a mode of transportation and to increase the sense of belonging amongst newcomers.

Target Client Group(s):

Newcomers to Canada who are 18 years and older with a minimum Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 4.

Delivery Partner(s):

The Bike Host program has been co-delivered with Cycle Toronto, Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank, Evergreen, The Centre for Active Transportation, Clean Air Partnership, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, and The Neighbourhood Organization. Since 2019, CultureLink has also partnered with Peel Multicultural Council to deliver a cycling mentorship program using the same model but not called Bike Host.

Human Resource(s):

The Bike Host program is typically delivered by a team of two program staff, as well as volunteer mentors and researchers who conduct performance measurement and evaluation.

Funding:

The Bike Host program has received funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Metcalf Foundation, Lawson Foundation, Ryerson University – RBC Immigrant, Diversity and Inclusion Project, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Region of Peel.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The Bike Host program addresses barriers to transportation in a practical way. It provides cycling mentorship to newcomers who are interested in improving their cycling knowledge and skills and teaches them how to ride safely in Canada. The program is offered in different locations across the Greater Toronto Area so that participants do not need to travel to downtown Toronto to access the program. Participants are matched with mentors who live close to them so that they are more likely to meet and can get to know their own neighbourhood by bicycle.

Efficient:

The Bike Host program has high volunteer engagement. Volunteers receive training both on the Bike Host program and on cycling, including their roles and responsibilities as mentors, cycling equipment and safety, rules of the road, how to assess the cycling skills of participants, and challenges faced by newcomers during the settlement process so that they are prepared for their role as cycling mentors. Volunteer mentors commit to participating in 10 activities over 3-4 months.

Relevant:

The Bike Host program promotes cycling for transportation, which advances goals related to health, environmental sustainability, road safety, and relieving congestion. Many municipalities are eager to increase cycling as a mode of transportation.

Sustainable:

The Bike Host program has successfully engaged a wide range of funders and delivery partners to support the program in different ways, including program development and implementation, research and evaluation, and participant recruitment.

Transferable:

The Bike Host program is being replicated in other communities across Canada. For example, in Vancouver HUB Cycling has partnered with a local settlement organization to launch a similar program. The program can be offered in any community where there are enough volunteer mentors who can introduce cycling to newcomers and where there is an interest in promoting cycling as a mode of transportation.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The Bike Host program is very hands on and active compare to other mentorship programs. Newcomers are loaned a bicycle for several months and learn to ride a bicycle safely. At the same time, they get to know their community, practice their English language skills, and grow their social network. It provides newcomers with an option for a more affordable and sustainable mode of transportation.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The Bike Host program takes risk and safety very seriously. Mentors and mentees must attend an orientation / training session before they are matched and can participate in the program. The Toronto Cyclists Handbook, which was developed in partnership with Cycle Toronto, teaches newcomers about cycling in Toronto and how to get around safely by bicycle, and is available in 13 languages.

High Client Uptake:

The Bike Host program has high client uptake. Volunteer mentors are experienced cyclists and well prepared for their mentorship role. Participants are provided with bicycles, helmets, and locks for the duration of the program so that they can see how cycling might fit into their daily lives.

High Client Retention:

The Bike Host program has high client retention. Participants who complete the program are offered a second-hand bicycle (as capacity permits), a certificate of completion, and a reference.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

The Bike Host program monitors and tracks progress using intake and exit surveys. The data show that the program is creating positive outcomes for newcomers in Toronto. Between 2015 and 2017, which includes input from 146 participants with matched intake and exit surveys, 74% of participants reported cycling to shopping at least some days each week and 45% of participants reported cycling to work and/or school, compared to 10% who did prior to participating in the Bike Host program. During this period, participants on average reported cycling an additional 1.78 days per week to shopping and an additional 1.35 days to work and/or school, in addition to better access to a wider and better quality selection of goods. Between 2015 and 2018, which includes input from 192 participants with matched intake and exit surveys, participants on average reported making 3.5 new social connections, as well as a greater sense of belonging to their community after

participating in the Bike Host program. During this period, 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would also be more likely to encourage their children to cycle to school. Between 2016 and 2018, 93% of participants (n=140) reported that their health and wellbeing had improved, and 92% of participants (n=142) reported that their knowledge of Toronto had improved as a result of the program. In addition, 93% of participants (n=142) reported increases in cycling skill and knowledge. The top reported benefits of participation include fun, health, exercise, safe cycling skills, and meeting new people.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

In 2013, the Toronto Cycling Think and Do Tank, a research group at the University of Toronto, received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for a national research project on best practices for promoting cycling for transportation. As part of the project, a performance measurement and evaluation strategy was developed for the Bike Host program.

The Bike Host program is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Each year, a research team administers two surveys. The intake survey is completed by participants immediately following program registration, either online or in-person when participants pick up the bicycles that are loaned to them for the duration of the program. The exit survey is completed by participants shortly before the end of the program, either online or in-person when they drop off their bicycles or at the closing celebration. The intake and exit surveys collect different types of information, including participants' demographic information, mode(s) of transportation used to travel around the city, distances traveled around the city, ease of travel around the city, familiarity with cycling, attitude toward cycling, and sense of belonging. Both surveys include the same questions so that pre- and post-program comparisons can be made.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CultureLink Settlement and Community Services

<https://www.culturelink.ca>

Bike Host

<https://www.culturelink.ca/services/health-and-recreation/bike-host/>

Bike Host 2017 Report

<https://www.culturelink.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/BIKE-HOST-2017-REPORT.pdf>

Bike Host 2016 Report

<http://culturelink.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Bike-Host-2016-Report.pdf>

Bikes and Belonging: A Photographic Exploration of the Bike Host Program in Toronto

<https://www.culturelink.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Bikes-and-Belonging-Yvonne-Verlinden-2017.pdf>

Increasing Cycling for Transportation through Mentorship Programs

<https://www.tcat.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Kearns-Ledsham-Savan-Scott-2019-Increasing-Cycling-for-Transportation.pdf>