

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE PROGRAM

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia
Halifax, NS

Area of Practice:
Strategies for Employer Engagement

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

May 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 Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is a non-profit organization based in Halifax, NS. It was created by the merger of Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association and Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre in 2009. ISANS is the largest immigrant-serving organization in Atlantic Canada and provides a wide range of services to immigrants in the key areas of language, settlement, employment, and business development.

The English in the Workplace Program (EWP) is one of ISANS' longest running programs; it has been part of its language services landscape for 27 years. It grew out of an identified need for continued support for newcomers transitioning to the local workforce, targeted language support for newcomers in their specific workplaces, and workplace culture support for newcomers new to the Canadian workplace.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

English in the Workplace

Description:

The English in the Workplace Program (EWP) is a free, customized training program for newcomers to help with on-the-job language skills. Instruction is delivered by a qualified English as an Additional Language (EAL) instructor and focuses on the language and communication skills that newcomers need to communicate in the workplace, such as workplace vocabulary and terminology, telephone skills, customer service skills, workplace communication and teamwork, and writing emails, letters, and reports. The program has continuous intake and is delivered during the day in workplaces through individual or group training or online for more remote locations. It is structured in 12-week terms with two 90-minute sessions per week.

Goal(s):

The goals of the EWP are to develop the workplace language of employed and self-employed newcomers in the workforce, increase newcomers' knowledge and understanding of Canadian work culture, and increase the capacity of Nova Scotian workplaces to support newcomers' workforce integration.

Target Client Group(s):

Employed or self-employed immigrants living in Nova Scotia who are at a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 8 or lower.

Delivery Partner(s):

N/A

Human Resource(s):

The EWP is delivered by a team of five instructors, one of whom also works as the program coordinator.

Funding:

The EWP is funded by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The EWP engages both newcomer employees and their employers, and each 12-week course is customized to meet the unique needs of both parties. The program is taught by qualified English as an Additional Language (EAL) instructors who participate in ongoing professional development on different topics, such as EAL instruction, intercultural competence, and trauma-informed care.

Efficient:

The EWP consists of two 90-minute classes each week, which is frequent enough to maintain traction while allowing for scheduling flexibility. While each course is individualized, some topics come up frequently, so a bank of skill-based, topic-based, and workplace-based materials has been created and can be customized as needed. The program coordinator tries to make travel efficient for EWP instructors, so workplace locations are taken into consideration when schedules are developed. EWP instructors are required to have access to a vehicle, and employers are expected to provide parking.

Relevant:

The EWP is customized to meet the unique needs of both newcomer employees and employers, so each course is relevant and makes maximum use of study time. Each course must include 2-4 task-based outcomes to ensure the content is not too generalized and is appropriate for the EWP.

Sustainable:

The EWP engages with all stakeholders on an ongoing basis, including newcomer employees, employers, and funders, to ensure their expectations are being met. When challenges are encountered, program staff and stakeholders work together to address the concerns and make any necessary changes.

Transferable:

The EWP could be replicated by other settlement or workplace-language-focused organizations across Canada. Instructors would need to be appropriately trained and receive transportation support so that they can travel to/between different workplaces.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The EWP takes learning out of the classroom and brings it into the workplace, making it more relevant for learners, increasing newcomers' success in the workforce, and engaging their employers throughout the process. ISANS is currently examining the possibility of integrating digital literacy and blended learning into the program.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

Unlike traditional LINC programs, including workplace-related LINC programs, the EWP works with learners in their workplace, provides a customized course of study, supports their workforce integration, success and retention, and engages employers in the process.

High Client Uptake:

The EWP has high client uptake. Newcomers find their way to the EWP through referrals from ISANS language staff, employers who have participated in the EWP or other ISANS workplace support programs, and other newcomers in their networks.

High Client Retention:

The EWP has high client retention, which is the result of several factors. The customized nature of the program engages learners and their employers by focusing on topics most relevant to them. The duration of the course (12 weeks) is long enough to achieve meaningful outcomes and short enough to be a manageable commitment. The EWP requires 80% attendance, and participation in future iterations is partly dependent on successful completion of previous courses.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

An independent evaluation was conducted in 2019, which provides an account of the program and its benefits, as well as ways in which it can be strengthened. A total of 30 interviews were conducted with EWP participants, including 17 newcomer employees, 9 employers, and 4 instructors. Overall, newcomer employees and employers reported high levels of satisfaction with the program. Newcomer employees developed new language skills, as well as insights into Canadian workplace norms that enhanced their on-the-job performance and their ability to connect with and establish relationships with their co-workers. Content was flexible and task-based, which allowed employers, newcomer employees, and instructors to generate curriculum responsive to the unique communication needs of newcomer employees in the context of the workplace. In addition to new language skills, newcomer employees described increased feelings of independence, confidence, and enjoyment in their workplace, which in turn fostered and strengthened relationships between newcomer employees and their Canadian co-workers. The program also led to a greater understanding amongst employers of the wide range of newcomers' skills and competencies, as well as the challenges they face. Recommendations included offering additional weekly sessions and longer periods of instruction and learning.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

The EWP conducts ongoing reviews and evaluations. A range of quantitative and qualitative data is collected, and progress and outcomes are tracked using a combination of course evaluations, success stories, interviews with stakeholders, and on-the-job observations of instructors. At the end of each 12-week course, newcomer employees and employers are required to complete separate evaluations, which assist in identifying successes and challenges experienced during the course, as well as planning for future courses. Program instructors meet regularly to debrief, compare experiences, and share best practices. EWP instructors are observed and evaluated with the same frequency as other instructors working in the LINC program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ISANS

<https://www.isans.ca>

English in the Workplace Program

<https://www.isans.ca/learn-english/english-for-work/#ewp>

More than Economic Integration: An Independent Evaluation of ISANS' English in the Workplace Program

<https://www.isans.ca/more-than-economic-integration-an-independent-evaluation-of-our-english-in-the-workplace-program/>