Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership Newcomer Settlement Strategy 2020 - 2025





Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership Working Together for a Diverse & Inclusive Community



Funded by:

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Acknowledgements

The present document, the Toronto East Quadrant LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy 2020-2025 reflects the collective outcome of a process of needs-based research, community consultation and the contributions of many individuals and organizations from across Scarborough who participated in the planning process.

The development of the TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy was the result of a coordinated effort during extraordinary times – the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with our strategic planning process and necessitated a rapid shift from our usual approach with inperson planning and engagement to a fully virtual environment. We are grateful for the commitment, initiative and innovative spirit of our partner organizations, residents and stakeholders who pivoted with us and contributed their time, insights and expertise to the development of this strategic plan through many virtual sessions, phone and Zoom calls and online survey tools.

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Finally, a special thank you to the TEQ LIP team who worked tirelessly to adapt to the rapid change brought about by the pandemic. We look forward to working together with partners, stakeholders and the community over the next months and years in support of successful settlement pathways for newcomers in our communities. If you want to learn more about our work, please visit our website at <u>www.scarboroughlip.ca</u>.

The TEQ LIP Consortium Organizations

- Catholic Crosscultural Services (Lead Agency)
- ACCES Employment
- Agincourt Community Services Association
- Warden Woods Community Centre

The TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy at a Glance



Outcomes

- Service providers and other stakeholders have access to latest information, research data, and policy direction
 related to newcomer needs and equipped with resources and tools to continue their support to newcomers and
 residents including unprecedented time.
- Organizations and communities in Scarborough are working together to co-create an environment that helps newcomers and refugees feel included, be civically and socially engaged, and be well informed about available services and support systems.
- Service providers are equipped with latest labour market information, resources and tools to support newcomer
 professionals to overcome social and economic barriers and support job integration and retention.
- Service providers are working together, equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to best support
 newcomers in navigating the healthcare system and proactively taking care of their own health.
- Organizations support and promote a healthcare system that is culturally sensitive, connected and facilitates linkages between newcomers and healthcare providers.

Introduction

The Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (TEQ LIP) has been active on the ground in Scarborough since 2012. This settlement strategy represents the third major project cycle for the TEQ LIP. It sets out the focus and priorities of the TEQ LIP and provides a framework to guide implementation.

The planning phase was launched in early 2020 to coincide with the start of a new five-year funding cycle. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, leading to major shutdowns and a significant impact on our community and stakeholders, immigration, the way services are delivered and on society overall. The project management team was faced with the decision whether to go ahead with the strategic planning process and conduct it remotely, or postpone it given the drastically changed and continuously changing circumstances.

With guidance from TEQ LIP's Steering Committee, it was decided to move forward with the strategic planning process this year, shifting from in-person to a virtual process and online communication. The following document is the result of this planning process. It sets out a broad framework to guide the work of the TEQ LIP; at the same time, it is intended to be flexible and responsive to emerging needs.

To achieve flexibility and responsiveness to changing and emerging needs, an annual strategy review and annual action planning process is built into the implementation of the strategic plan to ensure the work of the TEQ LIP recognized and addresses the current priorities of the community, service providers and newcomers.

Project Background

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) are the mechanism through which Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) supports the development of local partnerships and communitybased planning around the needs of newcomers. Through their work LIPs support the development of self-sustaining multi-sectoral partnerships that address and mitigate newcomers' challenges and barriers to settlement and integration. LIPs seek to engage, on a local level, various community stakeholders in the partnership development process including service provider organizations, employers, school boards, boards of trade, levels of government, professional associations, cultural groups, faith-based organizations and the community services sectors.

Objectives of Local Immigration Partnerships

• Support coordination and collaboration in planning and delivery of services for newcomers

• Provide a framework for development and implementation of sustainable local and regional solutions for the successful integration of newcomers

• Strengthen local capacity to integrate newcomers and support welcoming communities

• Achieve improved newcomer outcomes as indicated by increased economic, social, political, and civic participation by newcomers.

About the TEQ LIP

The Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (TEQ LIP) was established in 2012 by a consortium of four organizations: Catholic Crosscultural Services (lead agency), ACCES Employment, Agincourt Community Services, and Warden Woods Community Centre.

TEQ LIP supports service planning and coordination around the needs of newcomers locally in Scarborough and works in close collaboration with other Toronto LIPs and the Toronto Newcomer Office to address city-wide issues.



The main mechanism for partners to collaborate and work together is through the Action Groups. There are four pillars that mirror the major strategic focuses. Action Groups allow members to network, share information, plan and implement collective initiatives and projects, and attend information sessions and professional development workshops.

Profile of Scarborough

The TEQ LIP covers the geographic area of Scarborough which is considered a suburb of Toronto. It extends from Victoria Park Avenue eastwards to the Scarborough-Pickering Townline and from Steeles Avenue East southwards to Lake Ontario. According to the 2016 Census, Scarborough has a population of 631,910 residents. In the past 5 years (2011-2016), the Scarborough population increased by 1%, at a markedly slower pace compared to the previous 5 years (2006 – 2011) period by 3%. The average population growth of the City of Toronto was 4.5% during both time periods. (Large number of out migration) was observed in Agincourt North whereas a signification population growth was observed in Scarborough Southwest and Central Scarborough. Compared to the City of Toronto overall, the senior population in Scarborough is rapidly increasing and the population of young children between the ages of 0 – 14 years are decreasing.

Toronto continues to attract an influx of immigrants to Canada. As per the 2016 census, 35 % of all immigrants in Canada chose to settle in Toronto. The suburb of Scarborough is a popular community for newcomers in Toronto, largely due to its lower housing costs compared to other parts in Toronto and other diverse communities. The 2016 Census revealed that 56.6 % of Scarborough's population is made up of immigrants, 12.5% of whom were recent immigrants. The main source countries between 2006 and 2016 included China, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh. Top five visible minority groups are South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino and Western Asians. Most recently, Scarborough has seen an increase in newcomers from Syria. Since November 2015 nearly 6,000 Syrian newcomers were admitted to Toronto, with an estimated 40 % of government-assisted Syrian

refugees settling in Scarborough.

As Toronto's easternmost suburb, Scarborough faces a number of challenges that impacts newcomer settlement and service delivery, including a poor public transit infrastructure, lack of access to affordable housing and lower density of service providers as compared to downtown Toronto. The average household income in Scarborough is significantly lower than the City of Toronto. Scarborough encompasses 8 of 31 City of Toronto Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) which include: Crescent Town, Ionview, Eglinton East, Kennedy Park, Scarborough Village, Woburn, Morningside and West Hill).



Developing the TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy

As the 2019-2020 fiscal year came to a close, and with it the TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy 2017-2020, the TEQ LIP noted the continuing priorities that were emerging in the work of the Action Groups, and prepared to undertake a planning process that would determine priorities for the project for the coming five years, from the major strategic themes to the structure of the partnership.

The strategic planning process included a literature review, an online stakeholder survey, consultations with newcomers and review of emerging and ongoing priorities. Following the decision taken by Ontario Government and the Federal Government to implement safety measures including Emergency shut down, ban mass gathering and other safety measures to control COVID-19, TEQ LIP developed a contingency plan to continue the planning process without much delay. All planning meetings were conducted virtually. Two surveys targeted at underserved newcomers (international students and newcomers who have, or care for someone who has, a disability) were conducted as part of the planning process with a total of 78 respondents.

Following the analysis of the data collected through literature review, survey, Newcomer and Action Group meetings, TEQ LIP facilitated three major planning meetings in June, July and August 2020 virtually with 44 representatives of TEQ LIP partner organizations to identify the most pressing community needs, potential action, and to undergo a collective decision making process to set the major strategic themes for the project cycle. Participants at these meetings included members of the TEQ LIP Action Groups, Partnership Council, and the Toronto Newcomer Council.

During the Strategic Planning meetings, members identified key issues and themes that would guide our work moving forward, clarified the desired outcomes and suggested courses of action. The issues identified represent a broad range of themes. The continued and emerging themes from the previous project cycle, results of research and consultation and results from these planning discussions were all taken into consideration. In addition to reviewing and identifying strategic focus areas, TEQ LIP members also conducted a structure review to critically assess the effectiveness of TEQ LIP's implementation structure, including Partnership Council and governance structure, Action Groups and committees to make recommendations for the implementation structure for the period of 2020-205.

Action Planning Timeline

Following the approval of the TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy 2020-2025, Action Groups will develop an Implementation Plan. Given the need to be flexible and responsive in uncertain times, the action planning will commence with annual planning cycles.

The first Implementation Action Plan will cover the time period until March 2022, after which annual or bi-annual action plans will be developed. The TEQ LIP will conduct an annual strategy review and a mid-term strategic review with the LIP partners and stakeholders during 2022-2023 fiscal year to review and update the strategic directions. This will help the Partnership Council to review and modify timelines as needed since flexibility and responsiveness are keystones of the strategy.

Guiding Principles

The overall objective of the Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership (TEQ LIP) initiative is to enhance the capacity of service providers in terms of knowledge and skills to more effectively meet the current and emerging needs of newcomers in Scarborough. The Settlement Strategy for the TEQ LIP is an inclusive collaborative process which builds upon the pre-existing accomplishments, community strengths and assets, and consultation with stakeholders. It aims to provide a framework to support newcomers to Scarborough to settle and integrate successfully by supporting an integrated and collaborative approach to effective service delivery.

Following are guiding principles that are central to the TEQ LIP's planning, development and implementation phases of the initiative.

1. Service Coordination and Collaboration

The TEQ LIP acknowledges that the successful settlement and integration of newcomers is dependent on a multitude of factors including access to housing, physical and mental health, legal status, occupation, social inclusion and access to other resources in the community. Therefore, working with a wide range of stakeholders in Scarborough and neighbouring regions is crucial to enhance access to programs and services. TEQ LIP will continue to engage LIP partners and stakeholders in the implementation phase to work collectively to address the challenges faced by newcomers and fill service gaps. TEQ LIP will also consult and collaborate with stakeholders who are advocating for the community to address systemic issues that need policy change, allocation of more resources and community involvement.

2. Newcomer Engagement

Since the beginning, TEQ LIP has been committed to engaging newcomers in the development of its strategic plan, decision-making and implementation of action plans. Given the diversity of Scarborough's immigrant populations and the accountability of the LIP initiative to newcomers, their engagement and involvement at various stages of planning, implementation and evaluation is essential. TEQ LIP will continue to engage newcomers and increase opportunities for them to contribute towards comprehensive, reflective and participative outcomes within the community.

3. Knowledge and Capacity Building

The TEQ LIP has an underlying commitment to enhance knowledge and build capacity of LIP partner organizations, newcomers and grass root level organizations involved in the initiative. Considering the complexity of the newcomer needs and challenges, building the organizational capacity to address these issues become very crucial in the process. TEQ LIP will create opportunities for LIP partners and stakeholders to enhance knowledge and skills of staff at all levels of an organization to better meets the needs of our newcomer population.

4. Responsiveness to Emerging Needs

This strategic plan has been developed in a time of upheaval and significant change due to the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in the spring of 2020. While any strategic plan needs to account for unanticipated developments and changes over the duration of its implementation, this is especially crucial at this time of significant societal change. Ensuring an ongoing and purposeful process for identifying and addressing emerging needs it is a vital and purposeful part of this strategic plan and will be built into the action planning and implementation process.

Strategic Priorities

The following section describes the strategic priority areas identified by TEQ LIP members and community stakeholders that will provide the guiding framework for TEQ LIP's work from 2020-2025.

A. COVID-19 Pandemic

Firstly, it is important to note the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had over the course of the past months. The pandemic is still affecting service delivery, the economy, immigration and settlement and community and social cohesion in a major way. It is becoming very clear that the effects of the pandemic will have an impact far into the future and is leading to significant changes in the way we live and work. The situation is still constantly evolving and its full effects cannot yet be predicted.

During the strategic planning sessions held in summer 2020, the TEQ LIP partnership highlighted the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both newcomers and service providers. A great number of key issues related to recovery and continued support to newcomers were analyzed, and a number of recommendations were made to strengthen the capacity of organizations and the community to respond, use alternate service delivery methods, learn and adopt best practices and continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable during the unprecedented pandemic time.

The Partnership Council recommended to consider this area as a priority area, included as crosscutting theme of the four pillars of the settlement strategy plan to ensure the issues specific to different sectors are addressed and outline the role TEQ LIP plays in supporting newcomers and service providers in recovery efforts during pandemic situation.

Recommendations

- Document and share best practices used by different service providers in GTA and create awareness about available support for service providers to continue services. This includes capacity-building and knowledge-sharing around how to use technology effectively in service delivery.
- Develop a guide with ideas and recommendations on how to outreach and engage clients and deliver services during the pandemic, especially reaching new and the most vulnerable clients.
- Capturing volunteer-led and local community initiatives that are helping in response to the pandemic.
- Consider forming a discussion group for different types of organizations to join the planning process in creating effective service delivery and resource sharing.
- Create awareness on COVID-19 related fraud and identity theft.

Desired outcomes

- Organizations are capable of using online tools for outreach and serve clients.
- Organizations and networks build their capacity to serve the community groups that are more vulnerable seniors, families and have less access to technology.
- Create a platform for agencies to share resources and knowledge exchange among service providers to outreach to connect with people who are not connected to any services.
- Documentation of best practices during COVID-19 service delivery.

B. Strategic Pillars

Following are the four major strategic priority areas identified by the TEQ LIP membership to guide TEQ LIP's work for the next five years:

1. Access to Current and Relevant Information

Objective

- Facilitate service providers' and other organizations' access to current and relevant information, enabling them to better understand newcomers' settlement, integration and emerging needs.
- Increase newcomers and immigrants access to services by sharing relevant information, including support for using technology and alternative methods to reach clients remotely.

| Key Issues | Recommendations |
|--|--|
| Newcomer have difficulty navigating information and services due to language barriers, limited access to information, lack of technological skills and/or access to technology. More information is needed about who is not accessing services and why. With the COVID-19 pandemic and move to remote service delivery, this is more important than ever. Who is not able to access services, what are the barriers and intersecting reasons that newcomers don't seek or find the support they require? Service providers need more information about the systemic barriers and specific challenges faced by certain groups such as international students, domestic violence victims, refugee claimants and those without status, LGBTQIA+ newcomers and newcomers with disabilities. Coordination of information sharing on emerging issues, programs and funding is urgently needed in the time of transition following the COVID-19 pandemic. Newcomers with low income have challenges in accessing information sharing and service delivery are done virtually due to the pandemic and increasingly expected to be virtual. | Continue to work with service providers to develop protocols/systems to update, learn and inform on key issues affecting newcomers. This includes sharing information and research from outside sources, and conducting research and information gathering such as a newcomer survey. Continue development and implementation of a shared data collection system to help provide timely and geographically specific information on newcomer settlement and service access trends in Scarborough. Coordinate with LIP partners and other service providers to support sharing of updated information and knowledge to inform newcomer service delivery. Support development and sharing of tools and resources that improve connection of newcomers with service providers. Support organizations in Scarborough to use technology effectively to reach vulnerable and underserved newcomers during unprecedented times of COVID-19 and beyond, and to provide services more effectively in-person and online. |

Desired Outcomes

- Service providers and stakeholders have timely access to the latest information, research data, and policy directions related to newcomer needs and are equipped with resources and tools to continue their support to newcomers including vulnerable groups and underserved groups.
- Increased service collaboration, partnerships and effective service delivery pathways among
 organizations to provide seamless support to new immigrants through partnerships and
 collaboration.

2. Employment & Economic Opportunities for Newcomers

Objective

Contribute to successful newcomer employment pathways by serving as a platform for stakeholders to enhance support for newcomers navigating the labour market.

Key Issues

- There is a lack of understanding of the potential and experience of newcomers and the qualifications they bring to the Canadian labour market. Newcomers face challenges in obtaining their desired and alternative career pathways in Canada.
- Service providers require sufficient tools and resources to better prepare newcomer clients for the changing nature of work during unprecedented times, such as the rapidly changing landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Vulnerable populations including international students and newcomer students face multiple barriers in accessing the labour market.
- Employers need to be brought to the table to discuss and address racism and discrimination in hiring practices regarding fair, equitable and transparent hiring processes.
- Service provider organizations need to be well equipped to support clients in the context of systemic racism in HR practices, also highlighting the conscious/unconscious biases in the workplaces.

Recommendations

- Support newcomer employment by facilitating the sharing of information about mass hiring events, hidden job markets, and working with partner organizations to facilitate the initial connection between employer and jobseeker.
- Facilitate information sharing and knowledge exchange sessions on virtual platforms and online tools/resources available to support newcomer clients in their job search strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- Enhance service providers' awareness of supports and information on entering the job market, and on alternative career paths for foreign-trained professions
- 4. Address racism and discrimination in hiring practices through anti-racism initiatives, forums and meetings that allow individuals to share their point of view as job seekers, and facilitate or support workshops for organizations to address racism and discrimination in the labour market. Connect with HR professionals around diversifying the workplace and making hiring and recruitment policies inclusive.
- 5. Strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions to ensure international students are better supported.

Desired Outcomes

Service providers are equipped to support newcomer professionals with job integration and retention. Relevant information is shared and received by service providers and newcomers.

Resources, tools and information will be easily accessible for newcomers to help them overcome social and economic barriers such as racial inequality in employment.

3. Inclusion and Equity

Objective

Support service providers, faith-based groups, and other community stakeholders in working together to make Scarborough a more welcoming place where newcomers feel included, connected, supported, develop a sense of belonging and actively participate in community and civic life.

| Key Issues | Recommendations |
|---|--|
| Many newcomers do not feel connected with their neighbours and may not know how, or have the opportunity to, make important social and professional connections. Systemic racism and discrimination affect newcomers in areas of employment, housing, community connection and more. Housing remains a challenge with decreasing affordability and prevailing discrimination in accessing housing. Faith and other community stakeholder groups are not sufficiently knowledgeable of or connected to the community services sector. | Facilitate anti-racism training for staff and newcomers, as well as information sharing and discussions around discrimination and racism. Capacity building for community service provider organizations on addressing racism in the sector and the community, better equipping front-line workers to support clients. Foster more connections with faith communities in Scarborough, facilitating connections with service providers and supporting local initiatives that help newcomers. Focus on centering the newcomer voice, telling stories of the success and struggles of newcomer in Scarborough. Build on our partnerships with different stakeholders to encourage newcomer inclusion and access to housing. Work closely with different stakeholders in the community, including the private sector, to build an environment that allows newcomers and refugees to establish their personal and professional lives successfully. |

Desired Outcomes

Organizations and communities in Scarborough are working together to co-create an environment that helps newcomers and refugees feel included, be civically and socially engaged, and be well informed about available services, support systems, and matters that impact their lives. There is greater inclusion and more connected and active individuals and communities in Scarborough.

4. Newcomers' Physical and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Objective

Develop a holistic and equitable approach to newcomer health that considers the physical and emotional health of individuals, families, and communities from a social determinants of health perspective. Examine barriers to accessing services and particular health challenges for particular newcomer groups and increase service provider capacity to address them.

| Recommendations |
|--|
| Identify and foster opportunities for newcomers to share their experience and contribute to decision making on health access within the LIP structure, existing networks, and partners' events. |
| Develop an awareness campaign aimed at service providers on the need for specific training, policy, and procedures to improve health equity and meeting the needs of vulnerable and marginalised newcomer groups (i.e. SOGIE newcomers). Build service providers' awareness of and |
| ability to support the specific mental health needs and existing psychological resiliency of underserved newcomer groups through training |
| 4. Develop resources for service providers to raise awareness of the long-term effects of stigma, and guidance for managing biases while providing culturally appropriate care for stigmatised communities (i.e. racialized newcomers, SOGIE youth, and newcomers who have disabilities) and stigmatised health needs (i.e. TB, HIV, and COVID-19). |
| 5. Enhance service providers' understanding of domestic violence and build capacity to support healthy outcomes for communities by sharing information and increasing supports for survivors. |
| Work with partners and newcomers to identify gaps and develop recommendations for supporting culturally appropriate food access and active lifestyle choices, including during COVID-19. |
| |

¹ SOGIE - Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression: More recently accepted language for LGBTQIA+

Desired Outcomes

Service providers are working together, equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to best support newcomers in navigating the healthcare system and proactively taking care of their own health. Organizations support and promote a healthcare system that is culturally sensitive, connected and facilitates linkages between newcomers and healthcare providers.

Accountability

The TEQ LIP Newcomer Settlement Strategy 2020-25 sets out the framework for TEQ LIP's actions and intended outcomes. TEQ LIP Partnership Council will facilitate the development of the detailed action plan for key strategic areas in stages, given the need to be flexible and responsive in uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The TEQ LIP will use a process and outcome based project management approach to coordinate the implementation of the plan.

This will be achieved by including clear, time-bound measures for tracking progress and impact made towards achieving the objectives set out in the strategy. Measures to track progress and outcomes will be developed by the Partnership Council and the Action Groups collectively as part of the annual implementation action plan. The TEQ LIP membership will implement an annual evaluation and conduct periodic assessments to track implementation and outcomes.

Action Groups will report on their work to the Partnership Council and Steering Committee on a quarterly and annual basis. The Partnership Council will consult the Action Groups and Steering Committee periodically to ensure progress of the LIP initiatives, guide activities, and make adjustments where needed.

Considering the current rapidly changing and unpredictable environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, TEQ LIP will conduct an annual strategy review with the management team and Executive Committee, and a mid-term strategic review with the LIP partners and stakeholders in 2022-2023 fiscal year to review and update the strategic directions as required.

Let's Connect!



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