

Building Community Through Immigration



Community Action Plan
2020–2025

"Immigration plays an important role in Waterloo Region's continued growth and prosperity. New immigrants provide an important source of talent which is critical to our growing economy. They also contribute greatly to the multicultural experiences that make Waterloo Region a unique, diverse and prosperous community. Increased diversity within our organization also brings a broader range of perspectives, thinking and problem solving, which ultimately leads to a more responsive public service."

Mike Murray, Former Region of Waterloo CAO

Community Citizenship Ceremony
hosted by the City of Kitchener
and the Immigration Partnership,
Kitchener City Hall, 2017. Photo
courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.



Canada is a country of immigration. Immigration has in the past and will be in the future a defining feature of the growth and prosperity of Canada and communities like Waterloo Region.

Waterloo Region has been built on and benefited from the strengths, talents and contributions of immigrants.¹ Since 2009, the Immigration Partnership has been a platform for community partners to work collaboratively to maximize the benefits of immigration for Waterloo Region by creating conditions for immigrants to succeed.

Immigrants help make Waterloo Region a stronger community and everyone has a role in helping them thrive.

This Community Action Plan (CAP) reflects our commitment to success and prosperity for immigrants and the community as a whole.

During development of this Plan, Canada and Waterloo Region have been completely disrupted by the emergence of COVID-19, the first global pandemic in a century with unprecedented health, social and economic effects. While the implications of COVID-19 evolve, immigration will continue to play an important role in Waterloo Region's resilience and success, now during the immediate crisis and later as the community recovers, rebuilds and grows in the future.

It is in this context that we bring this Community Action Plan to life, with a firm focus on the community's future success. It is "made in Waterloo Region" – built on the expertise of immigrants, community partners and the wider community. It sets priorities for collaborative work from 2020–2025. It is based on the premise that as conditions in the community change, so too will our priorities and strategies to help make Waterloo Region a better community for everyone.

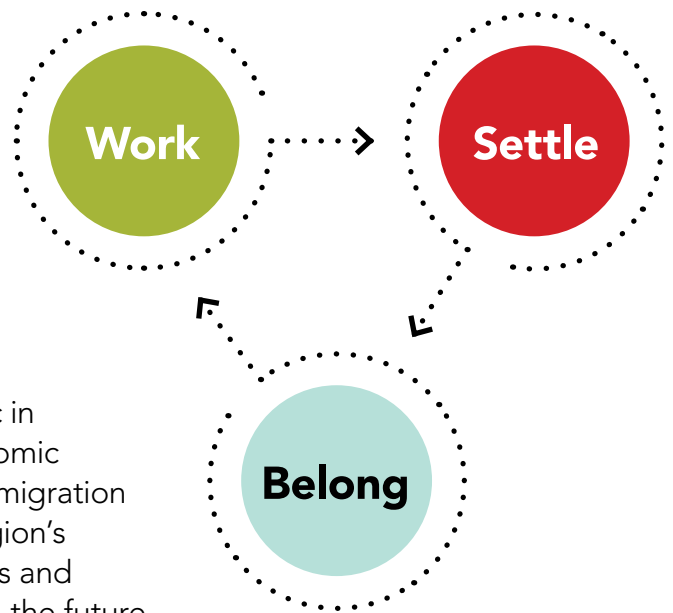
On behalf of the Immigration Partnership.

Pari Karem
Chair

Tracey Hare Connell
Vice Chair

Tara Bedard
Executive Director

Waterloo Region, April 2020.



¹ We use the term "immigrants" to include people who were born outside of Canada and now live in Waterloo Region, including permanent residents, temporary residents, foreign nationals and Canadian citizens.

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About Immigration Partnership

Who We Are

Immigration Partnership is a collaboration of community service, business, municipal and post-secondary organizations and Waterloo Region residents working together.

Our Vision

Immigrants reach their full potential and contribute to creating and sustaining a thriving, prosperous community for everyone.

Our Mission

We work together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community.

We achieve this through leadership, collaboration, research, engagement, education and advocacy.



Immigration Partnership's 10+ Anniversary Partner Appreciation Event, Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum, 2019. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.

Our Guiding Principles

We focus on community-driven impact by being responsive, collaborative and results-oriented.



RESPONSIVE

Striving to be flexible in adapting to the changing needs of immigrants and refugees through broad community consultation

COLLABORATIVE

Working collectively in an inclusive, respectful, non-judgmental manner which follows consensus and builds on best practices and innovation while being transparent and accountable to the community

RESULTS-ORIENTED

Taking action to efficiently achieve community-wide change to the systems and supports that impact immigrants and refugees

We Will:



Amplify immigrant voices.

Help everyone do their part.



Work for equity.

Tailor community actions to unique immigrant journeys.

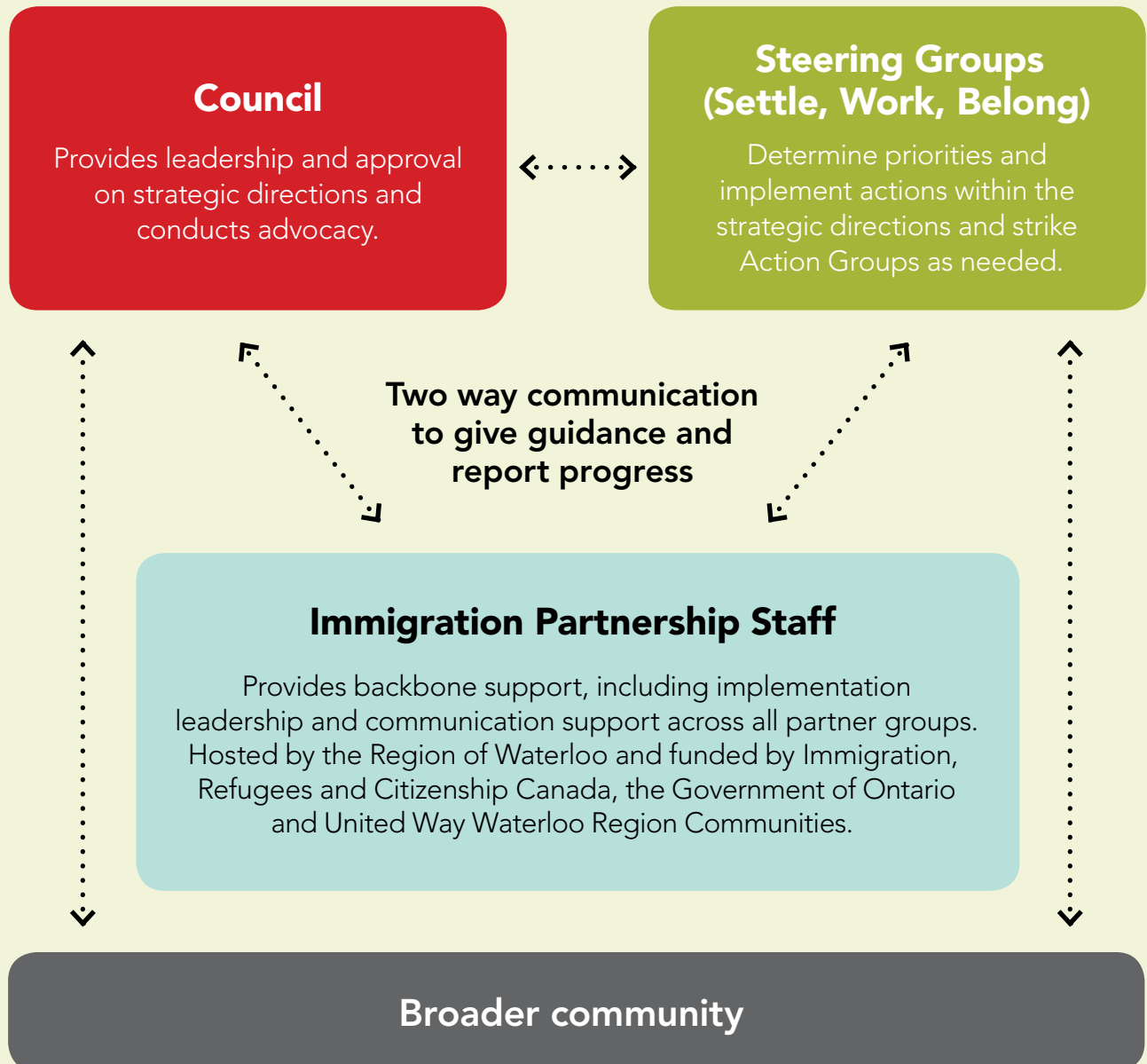


Foster mutual learning and inter-relatedness among immigrants and others.

How We Work

The Immigration Partnership brings together community partners through a Leadership Council and three Steering Groups – Settle, Work, Belong – to work collaboratively. We engage with other community initiatives to increase their capacity to foster immigrant success. We are accountable to each other, the community and our funders.

Immigration Partnership Decision-Making Framework



The Imperative

Canada has a strong system of managed migration. It selects people from around the world based on their ability to contribute to Canada's economic success. It provides a fresh start to refugees fleeing war and persecution. It encourages family sponsorship to foster immigrant retention and success.

Significant research and data on immigration in Canada has shown that immigrants have helped to build up communities across the country for generations. Statistics Canada data shows that nation-wide, immigrants have higher entrepreneurship rates than Canadian-born, they are more likely to be job creators and have higher growth. They donate more to charity and they volunteer. They consume arts and culture at higher rates and are a driver of arts and culture in Canada.

Where immigrants have succeeded, communities have thrived.

There is a pressing economic imperative for immigration. Due to aging populations and low fertility rate, Canada needs new sources of talent to enter the labour force to maintain high living standards. The Conference Board of Canada has reported that between now and 2040, 1.6 million fewer people will become workers than the number of people exiting the labour force. Immigration will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth (projected at 3.7 million workers) and one-third of the economic growth rate.²



Waterloo Region Welcomes Syrian Refugees community celebration, Kitchener City Hall, March 2017. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.



Internationally trained immigrants networking with employers at the 12th Global Skills Conference, March 2020. Photo courtesy of Eliseo Martell and Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre.

² See: https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/585e440b-7d98-4e34-a11e-adc4007aab1a/10150_Can'tGoltAlone_BR.pdf.

Without strong immigration, the economy will shrink. The federal government has responded by increasing annual immigration targets, moving from single to multi-year immigration levels plans and adapting policy to enable more temporary residents to become permanent immigrants. There is fierce global competition for talent pushing countries and communities to develop intentional strategies to attract and retain a robust immigrant population.

With the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Canada and Waterloo Region's economy and social norms were shaken to their core. In less than one month, physical distancing was mandated to slow the spread of the virus and government decrees shutdown most non-essential services across the country. Many workplaces and other gatherings moved online, and the Conference Board of Canada estimated 2.8 million jobs were lost as of April 2020 – nearly 15% of total employment in Canada, and predicted it will take time for Canada's labour market to fully recover.³

While the pandemic was intensifying, Canada announced its decision to welcome over 1 million new immigrants over the next three years.⁴ While Canada's economy is currently contracting, the future focused nature of Canada's immigration policy means immigration will be crucial in helping fill immediate job vacancies and growing the labour force in the future in the wake of millions of baby boomers retiring.⁵

Waterloo Region is a better community because ...

"... 'we' immigrants bring to Canada education, skills, knowledge and commitment to create a better community"

"... I am a community builder and like to contribute to my community"

"... I strive to be a good person, who is kind to others and respects the rules"

"... I am an engaging, smiling and friendly person who loves helping other people"

"... I believe in diversity and appreciate the cultural differences that make Canada and Waterloo a great place"

—Immigration Matters Survey 2019 Respondents



The Al Ibrahim family, soon after their arrival as government assisted refugees in Kitchener. Photo courtesy of Brian Limoyo and Reception House Waterloo Region.

³ See: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/blogs/bracing-for-major-job-losses>.

⁴ See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2020.html>.

⁵ See: <https://www.cicnews.com/2020/03/despite-coronavirus-canada-needs-immigrants-0313905.html#gs.39uvcr>.

As was made clear through the community's successful resettlement of Syrian refugees in 2015-16 and is showing in the early days of COVID-19, collaborative and cross sectoral approaches are key to success. Now more than ever, there is a need for collaborative initiatives like the Immigration Partnership to help the community face challenges and harness opportunities as they arise.

Immigration is dynamic and ever-changing. Federal immigration policy, national economic trends, global migration patterns and fluctuations in support of immigration all affect immigration success. They have implications for Waterloo Region in terms of immigrant success, community cohesion, growth, economic development, service delivery and more.

Some challenges and hurdles are inherent to moving to a new country, and every immigrant journey is unique. Everyone has a role in helping immigrants and the community thrive, and we are committed to helping everyone in Waterloo Region do their part.



Immigration Partnership's Faith, Settlement and Syrian Resettlement Research Forum, Balsillie School of International Affairs, September 2017. Photo courtesy of the Immigration Partnership.



Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Festival, 2019. Photo courtesy of Al Doerksen and Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre.

Trends and Environmental Influences

- The immediate and long-term effects the COVID-19 pandemic on Waterloo Region's economy and community are and will continue to evolve and influence our work
- Immigration will be one of the most significant drivers of the economy and all new labour force growth is expected to come from immigration due to generational retirement and low fertility rates
- The community will face high unemployment due to COVID-19 and a potential backlash against immigration
- The future of work and learning is rapidly changing the local labour market
- The number of residents on temporary permits has grown exponentially and impacts housing, future permanent immigration, community cohesion and more
- The rise and/or fall of anti-immigrant sentiment influences the community and immigrant experiences
- Global community competitiveness will impact our ability to attract and retain new immigrants



Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Festival, 2019.
Photo courtesy of Al Doerksen and Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre.

Coalition of Muslim Women of KW Annual General Meeting, 2020. Photo courtesy of Coalition of Muslim Women of KW.



What We're Going to Do

Council

To provide community leadership and amplify the work of the Steering Groups:

1. Champion advocacy and engage elected officials, systems and policy leaders
2. Build awareness of the Immigration Partnership and beneficial impact of immigration
3. Lead collaborative learning and community education
4. Break down silos within the Partnership and the community for immigrant and community success

Work

1. Develop campaigns and tools to market the value proposition and economic contribution of immigrants to employers
2. Foster cohesive service to employers and immigrant job-seekers across sectors and talent
3. Engage networks of employers to hire and retain immigrants
4. Collaborate with leaders and organizations (public, private and not-for-profit) leaders to foster immigrant attraction, employment and entrepreneurship

Settle

1. Develop communication tools and strategies to simplify service systems and pathways for immigrants
2. Brand "settlement" and drive collaboration and innovation within the sector
3. Leverage service providers and planning tables as effective immigrant supports through strong relationships and collaboration
4. Activate networks of private stakeholders in serving immigrants

Belong

1. Build connections, capacity and civic engagement among ethno-cultural groups to increase immigrant influence in policy making and social connectedness
2. Work with municipalities and other public sector partners as leaders and advocates to strengthen immigrant welcoming, inclusion and engagement
3. Increase public support for immigration, and action to address racism, discrimination and foster immigrant belonging through campaigns and initiatives
4. Collaborate with systems and community tables and leaders

The Details

Partnership-Wide

The Immigration Partnership Council builds the brand and champions the Partnership's work in the community, enabling system and strategic planning, advocating and overseeing governance. It fosters shared leadership for collective action in Waterloo Region and beyond, and amplifies the work of the Steering Groups.

What We've Accomplished:

- Government and systems leaders informed and engaged in immigrant settlement.** Surveyed election candidates on immigration topics and shared responses widely to inform voting. Engaged in policy processes and shared community priorities with elected officials and government leaders. Convened and participated in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada consultations to shape national settlement priorities. Engaged municipal officials in regional immigration forums and advocating on immigration matters.
- Increased public awareness about immigration matters.** Made information available showing the benefits of immigration. Social media engagement with significant increases in audience and reach. Provided thought leadership on immigration with the Immigration Partnership Newsletter and other tools. Worked with local media and shared information in public events. Hosted the Immigration Waterloo Region website to streamline information for immigrants.



Immigration Partnership's 2018 Community Forum, Kitchener. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.



The Hon. Perrin Beatty of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce at the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce/Immigration Partnership "Immigration and the Economy" Forum, 2019. Photo by the Immigration Partnership.

- **Strengthened focus on collaborative learning and development.** Established common measures of collective success, implemented evaluation strategies, shared findings widely and facilitated reflection on next steps. Facilitated collaborative planning of settlement funding approaches. With research partners, developed and shared significant data analysis and research on immigrant experiences, immigration impacts and perceptions of immigration in Waterloo Region. Shared the Immigration Partnership's journey and impact over 10+ years.
- **Strengthened community ability to support immigrants.** Provided foundational leadership to Waterloo Region's historic community effort to resettle around 1,800 Syrian refugees in 2015/16. Partnered with the International Migration Research Centre and others to develop immigration research and policy improvement. Worked with collaboratives like Wellbeing Waterloo Region, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council and Children and Youth Planning Table to build safer and more prosperous communities. Collaborated with Local Immigration Partnerships across Southwestern Ontario and Canada to share information and influence policy development.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Immigration is not yet a high level community priority
- The Immigration Partnership is not widely known across Waterloo Region
- Many limits to immigrant potential stem from policies, systems and traditional ways of working
- We haven't fully leveraged community capacities for learning, influence and more



Community Foundations of Canada/Manulife announcement of funding for the Immigration Partnership Council Fund for Syrian Newcomers, Waterloo, 2016. Photo by the Immigration Partnership.

Goals:

We will be a catalyst for community action on immigration, so that by 2025:

- The value and benefits of immigration and immigrants is widely known and championed
- Community leaders are committed and effective champions of immigration matters
- Policies, systems and ways of working that limit immigrant potential are changed to enhance immigrant and community success



Immigration Partnership staff and partners providing input on immigration priorities to then-Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen. Kitchener, 2017.

Strategies:

To amplify the work of the Steering Groups, Council will:

1. **Champion advocacy and engage with elected officials, policy and systems leaders**

This could include elected official and system leader engagement, council and committee hearings delegations, policy briefs, committee or planning table participation, support for relevant campaigns and more.

2. **Build awareness of the Immigration Partnership and beneficial impact of immigration**

This could include brand overhaul, new communication and community engagement strategies, media engagement, publishing, social media engagement, networking, annual leadership events, overhaul of the Immigration Partnership website and more.

3. **Lead collaborative learning and community education**

This could include post-secondary institutions, researcher and trainer engagement, collaboration with Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada (i.e. the Southwestern Ontario LIPs group), evaluation strategies and tools, reports, publications, learning events and more.

4. **Break down silos within the Partnership and the community to promote immigrant success**

This could include acting on synergies across work areas, creating mixed working groups, encouraging new ways of working, encouraging immigrant integration in the work of other initiatives and more.

Settle

The Settle Steering Group (SSG) helps build the brand of the Immigration Partnership and works together to support the community integration of immigrants by addressing transitional hurdles faced by some when arriving in Waterloo Region. The Immigration Partnership Council will amplify and elevate this work at a policy, systems and community leadership level.

What We've Accomplished:

- **Strengthened language learning and interpretation supports.** Mapped formal and informal English learning programs. Developed simple user-guides to make it easier to access language programs and interpretation services. Supported launch and implementation of the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network and the KW Multicultural Centre medical interpretation initiative.
- **Engaged landlords to provide housing for immigrants.** Increased information sharing about landlords that rent to immigrants. Recognized landlords who provide immigrants with affordable, appropriate housing. Developed relationships with landlords and Waterloo Region Apartment Management Association. Encouraged landlords to rent to immigrants.
- **Strengthened information sharing, connections and collaboration.** Published an Immigration Weekly update to keep hundreds of people from about 100 different organizations/groups informed about thousands programs, events and resources. Connected with new groups, from ethno-cultural groups, to international students, to family outreach workers. Shared information about community supports and partnerships. Developed simple user-guides on accessing settlement services. Facilitated collaborative planning and service integration within the settlement sector.
- **Strengthened community ability to support immigrants.** Participated in Wellbeing Waterloo Region, the Refugee Mental Health Working Group and the Waterloo Region Oral Health Coalition. Shared information and empowered them to support and advocate for immigrant housing, mental health and oral health.



The Ali Welid family, soon after their arrival as government assisted refugees in Waterloo Region. Photo courtesy of Brian Limoyo and Reception House Waterloo Region.



New immigrants learning English. Photo courtesy of St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centres.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Affordable, appropriate housing is not readily available
- Learning English and availability of interpretation services can be a top challenge
- Awareness, responsiveness and navigation across community services can be hard
- (In)eligibility for community services due to status and other issues and access to private sector services can be a barrier to settling

Focus:

We will work closely with both community services and private sector stakeholders like landlords, refugee sponsors, medical professionals, etc. to address these challenges. Wherever possible, we will partner with existing community initiatives.

A stop at Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre during the Community Coalition on Immigrant and Refugee Concerns' 2019 "Walk with Refugees" event. Photo by the Immigration Partnership.

Goals:

We will be a catalyst for effective service to immigrants so that by 2025:

- Service providers increasingly have the relationships needed to find information, make the right referrals, solve problems and provide excellent service to immigrants
- Barriers to service due to immigration status are reduced and immigrants are a priority for community service and other organizations
- Immigrants have the necessary information to get the service they need to find a home, learn English, enrol in school, get physical and mental health care and more



Recipients of the Immigration Partnership's 2019 Newcomer Landlord Award at the Waterloo Region National Housing Day Event in Waterloo. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.



Strategies:

1. **Develop communication strategies and tools to simplify service systems and pathways for immigrants**

This could include tools, infographics, an online communication forum for service providers, immigration website changes, the Immigration Weekly updates, media and marketing strategies and more.

2. **Drive collaboration and innovation within the settlement sector**

This could include collective branding and marketing of services for immigrants as a holistic system, common intake and navigation tools, collaborative planning for regional settlement funding and approaches to working with other sectors, launch of an integrated regional settlement hub (bricks and/or clicks), collaborative staff development and more.

3. **Leverage service providers and planning tables as effective immigrant supports through strong relationships and collaboration**

For front-line service, this could include regular meet-ups or workshops (general, sector, demographic or issue based, training focused, etc.), online communication forum, one-to-one introductions, charter of commitment to serving immigrants, awards program for exceptional service to immigrants and more.

For planning tables, this could include participating in planning tables and forums, informing their work on immigrants, partnering on initiatives, pushing for investments and changes that work for immigrants, engaging the Immigration Partnership Council in higher level engagement and advocacy and more.

4. **Engage networks of private stakeholders in supporting immigrants**

This could target landlords, property managers, private refugee sponsors, doctors, psychologists, tutors and more. It could include collaborating with industry leaders and associations, online affinity groups for learning/information sharing/problem solving/recruitment, awards program for engagement in immigrant success, occasional meet-ups and more.



Education event with the Human Resources Professionals Association on hiring immigrants, 2019. Photo courtesy of the Grand Valley Human Resources Professionals Association.

Work

Employment is a primary indicator of immigrant settlement, integration, success and retention. The Work Steering Group (WSG) helps build the brand of the Immigration Partnership and works together to maximize the economic contributions of immigrants by equipping employers with resources to hire and retain immigrant talent. It also addresses the challenges of some immigrants to finding meaningful employment or starting a business. The Immigration Partnership Council works to amplify and elevate this work at a policy, systems and community leadership level.

What We've Accomplished:

- **Made employers aware and open to hiring immigrants.** [#HireImmigrantsWR campaign](#) activated new employers to hire immigrants. Developed resources and helped hundreds of employers understand the business benefit of hiring immigrants through peer-to-peer educational events and outreach.
- **Employers connected with immigrant talent.** Created opportunities for hundreds of employers and immigrants to connect and explore employment opportunities. Connected employers to the right partners to hire immigrants.
- **Conceptualized employer-focused solutions to immigrant hiring challenges.** Developed concept and business plan for a one-stop immigrant talent hub to provide solutions employers are seeking and get more immigrants into employment.
- **Strengthened community ability to support immigrants.** Participated in Community Employment Literacy Linkages Network and partnered with groups like Communtech, the Manufacturing Innovation Network and Manufacturing Day. Shared information and empowered them to support employers in hiring immigrants.



Internationally trained immigrants at the Immigration Partnership's employer networking session at the 12th Global Skills Conference, March 2020. Photos courtesy of Eliseo Martell and Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Waterloo Region's work force will shrink without strong immigration
- Some immigrants struggle to get into meaningful work. This can be because of real or perceived language barriers, skills and credentials not being recognized, mismatch of available jobs and skills, inadequate employment service support, lack of professional networks, discrimination and more
- Some employers are not aware of this talent pool or how to access it. Some experience challenges to hiring and retaining immigrant employees, from the time it takes to find talent, to addressing cultural differences and soft skills, English language and other training, complicated service supports and more

Focus:

We will address these challenges by working closely with employers, industry and economic development stakeholders, Waterloo EDC, colleges and universities and service providers, etc. We will partner with existing community initiatives wherever possible.



Debbie Douglas of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants giving a keynote address at the Immigration Partnership's 2018 Community Forum. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.

Goals:

We will be a catalyst for economic development through immigration so that by 2025:

- Immigration is a recognized economic driver and priority in regional talent strategies
- An employer-focused immigrant talent hub is launched and employers are able to seamlessly hire and retain immigrants living in Waterloo Region and globally
- Immigrant-focused employment specialists are elevated as experts to support industry and economic development leaders in fully leveraging immigrant economic contributions
- Services help immigrants across the talent spectrum find meaningful work
- Immigrant entrepreneurs thrive

Strategies:

1. Develop campaigns and tools to amplify the value proposition and economic contribution of immigrants to employers

This could include research, resource materials, infographics, marketing or advertising campaigns, producing regular content for the Waterloo Region Immigration Portal, success stories, employer speakers' bureau, publications and more.

2. Foster cohesive service to employers and immigrant job-seekers across sectors and the talent spectrum

This will have focus on screening, hiring onboarding, retaining, professional development opportunities, credentialing and skills recognition, work-place language skills development, entrepreneurship and more. It could include educational events for employers and service providers, awards program for excellent service to immigrants, one-to-one introductions, networking, planning for new programs to address gaps, launching an employer-focused immigrant talent hub and more.

3. Engage networks of employers to hire and retain immigrants

This could include engagement events, one-to-one meetings, affinity groups for learning/information sharing/problem solving/recruitment, awards program for immigrant hiring, occasional meet-ups and more.

4. Collaborate with leaders and organizations (public, private and not-for-profit) to foster immigrant attraction, employment and entrepreneurship

This could include strategic partnership with industry, economic development, education and skills development associations, tables and forums, partnering to launch an employer-focused immigrant talent hub and other initiatives that make sense, sharing information about immigrants to inform their work, pushing for investments and service changes that work for employers and immigrants, engaging the Immigration Partnership Council in higher level engagement and advocacy and more.



Immigrants meeting potential employers at the Workforce Planning Board/Immigration Partnership Manufacturing Day Bus Tour, 2017. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Arcila, Orange Sky Enterprises.

Belong

The Belong Steering Group (BSG) helps build the brand of the Immigration Partnership and works together to unleash the vibrant and diverse community contributions of immigrants by addressing long-term challenges to developing a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region. The Immigration Partnership Council works to amplify and elevate this work at a policy, systems and community leadership level.

What We've Accomplished:

- **Engaged multicultural community leaders to increase social connectedness and address social isolation.** Strengthened relationships with multicultural community leaders to deepen social connectedness across ethno-cultural communities.
- **Organized events and campaigns to foster belonging and inclusion.** Enabled hundreds of community members to learn and strengthen inclusion and belonging through initiatives like the Global Migration Film Festival, #belongtogetherWR anti-discrimination campaign and open conversations.
- **Supported area municipalities to provide leadership in the welcoming and inclusion of immigrants.** Worked with the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo on initiatives to celebrate newcomers and encourage their municipal engagement like citizenship ceremonies, local government presentations and Newcomer Day celebrations.
- **Strengthened community ability to support immigrants.** Participated in Wellbeing Waterloo Region's Social Inclusion Catalyst Group and the Social Development Centre Kitchener-Waterloo's Civic Hub. Empowered them to support immigrant belonging and inclusion.



Attendees and organisers of the 2nd Waterloo Region Global Migration Film Festival, Kitchener City Hall, December 2019. Photo by the Immigration Partnership.



#belongtogetherWR Anti-Discrimination Campaign. Photo courtesy of Tomasz Adamski.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Making friends and social connections is a top challenge for a significant number of immigrants
- Anti-immigrant sentiment is present in Waterloo Region and impacts immigrant experiences of living and thriving here
- Some immigrants experience racism and discrimination which limits potential and negatively impacts belonging
- Immigrants have limited influence in policy making due to low representation in municipal and other advisory committees

For us, belonging is an essential human need to be accepted and valued by others in order to reach one's full potential in connecting, participating, integrating and thriving in the community

Focus:

The Belong Pillar will address these challenges by working closely with ethno-cultural groups, the immigrant community, municipalities, other public sector bodies and the broader public.

Goals:

We will be a catalyst for immigrant integration and community vitality so that by 2025:

- Immigrants are socially connected, community engaged and have influence
- Ethno-cultural leaders have influence in local policy and community development processes
- Immigration is widely supported and racism and discrimination are addressed through a regional Anti-Racism Strategy
- Municipalities and other public sector bodies are informed advocates and leaders in welcoming, including and engaging immigrants



Rhythm & Blues: Celebrating Black History Month at the Idea Exchange in Cambridge. Photo courtesy of Eliseo Martell and City of Cambridge.

Strategies:

1. **Build connections, capacity and civic engagement among ethno-cultural groups and the community at large to increase immigrant influence in policy making and social connectedness**

This could include strengthening relationships between emerging and established groups; connecting to community leaders, resources, service and space; virtual space for connecting; cross-cultural networks; capacity building initiatives and more.

2. **Work with municipalities and other public sector partners as leaders and advocates to strengthen immigrant welcoming, inclusion and engagement**

This could include supporting partners to: educate staff on immigration, its importance and impact on their work; make immigration a strategic priority; effect policy change for immigrant inclusion; hold events (Newcomer Day, citizenship ceremonies, other); make programs accessible to immigrants; recruit immigrants to committees and staff roles; make space, other assets and funding available; address anti-immigrant sentiment; advocate with higher levels of government; and more.

3. **Increase public support for immigration, and action to address racism, discrimination and foster immigrant belonging through campaigns and initiatives**

This could include research, resource materials, infographics, campaigns, producing content for the Waterloo Region Immigration Portal, success stories, immigrant speakers' bureau, publications, trainings, workshops, awards program for immigrant community builders and champions of immigrant belonging and more.

4. **Collaborate with systems and community tables and leaders**

This could focus on municipal, arts, culture, community, faith, service or other tables and forums. It could include partnering on initiatives, informing their work with immigrants, connecting ethno-cultural leaders to their work, pushing for immigrant-friendly investments, supporting development on an Anti-Racism Strategy, engaging the Immigration Partnership Council in higher level engagement and advocacy and more.



Newcomer Day Cambridge Festival, 2019. Photo courtesy of Al Doerksen and City of Cambridge.

How We Got Here

This is our fifth Community Action Plan. It is the culmination of 10+ years of working together, significant research and evaluation, and input from immigrants and others in the community. Through the leadership of the Immigration Partnership Council, community partners developed this Plan between November 2019 and April 2020.

Our Evaluation Advisory Committee will oversee development and implementation of a data and evaluation strategy. Each year, we'll report on progress, take stock of policy and other changes and adapt the Plan as needed. This way, we will continue to achieve results and be responsive to aspirations and changes in the community.



Past and present community partners at the Immigration Partnership's 10+ Anniversary Appreciation Celebration, 2019. Photos by Tomasz Adamski.

Our Partners

Council

Pari Karem (Chair), YMCA
Immigrant Services

Tracey Hare Connell (Vice
Chair), The Coaching Co

Karen Spencer (Past Chair),
Family and Children's Services
of the Waterloo Region

Ian McLean (WSG Chair), Greater
KW Chamber of Commerce

Dianne Boston-Nyp (BSG
Chair), Volunteer Action
Centre Waterloo Region

Lucia Harrison, KW
Multicultural Centre

Thusany Puvanendran,
Waterloo Wellington Local
Health Integration Network

Brian Kamm, United Way
Waterloo Region Communities

Douglas Bartholomew-
Saunders, Region of Waterloo,
Community Services

Bryan Larkin, Waterloo
Region Police Services

Margaret Walton Roberts,
Wilfrid Laurier University

Elaine Ranney (alternate James
Bond), Waterloo Region
District School Board

Conal Vaughan, Immigration,
Refugees & Citizenship
Canada (ex officio)

Sonja Erstic, Ministry of Citizenship
& Immigration (ex officio)

Community Members:

Eliseo Martell (SSG Chair),
Dr Ernest Osei

Settle

Eliseo Martell (Chair),
Community Member

Laura Stoutenburg (Vice
Chair) and Crystal Brown,

Conestoga College

Ana Luz Martinez, KW
Multicultural Centre

Anna Schwarz and
Marian Rozman, YMCA
Immigrant Services

Eda Dede, Sanctuary
Refugee Health Centre

Debbie Engel, Carizon Family
and Community Services

Jarvis Sparks, Kitchener
Public Library

Kristine Marchetti, Crystal
Swinton and Jennifer Staples,
Region of Waterloo Public Health

Lynne Griffiths-Fulton, Reception
House Waterloo Region

Sherry White and Sanjay
Govindaraj, Region of Waterloo
(Housing and Citizen's Service)

Gael Gilbert, Supportive
Housing of Waterloo

Kaylee Perez and Stephanie
Schreuders, Mennonite
Central Committee Ontario

Janet Waito and Pauleen Payne,
St Louis Adult Learning Centres

Priscilla Muzira, Aids Committee
of Cambridge, Kitchener
Waterloo and Area

Nermin Ozdemir, House
of Friendship

Sarah Harjee, Centre
for Family Medicine

Hoda Ghonim, SHORE Centre

Sheri Follett, Big Brothers Big
Sisters Waterloo Region

Rachael Lake, Waterloo Region
Community Legal Services

Diane McGregor, KW
Counselling

Siba Al-Khadour, Levant Canada

Barb Van Giessen and Sarah
Badran, The Working Centre

Rana Shami, KidsAbility

Community Member:

Lilliana Araujo

Corresponding Members:

Ed Kaut and Roger Gilbert,
Region of Waterloo (Income
Support and Children's Services)

Jennifer Ardon, Lutheran
World Relief

Sakina Kirefu-Khan,
Grand River Hospital

Shannon Down, Waterloo Region
Community Legal Services

Shelley Campagnola, Mennonite
Coalition for Refugee Support

SSG Task Group Members:

Thusany Puvanendran and
Sarah Farwell, WWLHIN

Brittney Emslie, KW
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Crystal Cormier, Sanderson
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Erin Forde, Mennonite Coalition
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Emma Jennings, Reception
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Lynn Macaulay, Lutherwood

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Sheila McIntosh (Vice
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(Human Resources)

Annie Haus, Accents Training

Charlene Hofbauer, Workforce
Planning Board Waterloo
Wellington Dufferin

Chris Farrell and Ksenia
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Ela Cekanovic, Wilfrid
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Elizabeth Arcila, Orange
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Janet Lehman, JD Sweid Foods

John Rose, Resourceful

Julie Newman, Carizon Family
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Sherri McDermid, Lutherwood

Sue Benoit, Clearpath Robotics

Swati Sharma, YMCA
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Tim Callan, Agilec

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Brittney Emslie (Vice Chair),
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Brice Balmer, Interfaith
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Marie-Pierre Daoust, Conseil
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and Rebecca Florence,
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Sarah Shafiq, Interfaith
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Get involved and stay in touch with our work. Join a working group, sign up for our updates, visit our website, contact us by phone/e-mail or request your own copy of this Plan. For information or an alternative format:

Phone: 519-575-4757 ext. 3172

Deaf and hard of hearing (TTY): 519-575-4608

Email: ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca

Website: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/subscribe

Social media: [Facebook](#) / [Twitter](#) @ImmigrationWR



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