

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK WILLING TO WORK (W2W)

Newcomer Kitchen Inc.
Toronto, Ontario

Area of Practice:
Employment and Entrepreneurship Supports

Video:
<https://youtu.be/rwbmUShaJal>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

January 2024

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

Newcomer Kitchen, founded in 2016 as a social enterprise, aims to provide social and economic opportunities to newcomer women through food-based activities in the Greater Toronto Area. Initially, the organization offered commercial kitchen space at a restaurant for Syrian refugee women to meet, cook traditional foods, and interact with the local community. Over the course of two years, the concept was successful and gained support from private and corporate entities interested in hiring the women for workshops and catering events. However, since Newcomer Kitchen was not an employment agency and the women lacked the necessary guidance to pursue independent ventures, Newcomer Kitchen decided to change its social enterprise model to also include an entrepreneurship program.

Newcomer Kitchen piloted the program "Willing to Work" in 2019. The program aims to train women in food entrepreneurship through real-life experience, activities, and sales in a team setting. The goal is to build on the success of the social enterprise and equip newcomer women with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the culinary industry and establish their own businesses. Additionally, the program aims to involve the local community as a supporter and benefactor of these activities. Moreover, another goal is to create a standardized program so that it can be replicated and embedded in settlement agencies across Canada. For this reason, Newcomer Kitchen partnered with the Centre Francophone de Grand Toronto in 2022 to pilot the program in French and test its efficacy with a larger settlement agency. Through this collaboration, Newcomer Kitchen recognized the importance of considering cultural factors, even with a standardized program, further emphasizing the significance of inclusivity and diversity in their approach.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Willing to Work (W2W)

Description:

The program is offered as a hybrid program over the course of 12.5 weeks, consisting of 25 classes. The online component of the program includes two 3–4-hour long sessions per week with a live trainer, providing women with business knowledge across three modules:

- 1) Product-to-market (includes the creation of products, recipe development, branding, tailoring products to consumers, costing, and developing production schedules).
- 2) Prepared meals (involves preparing pop-up takeout meals, where each woman in a team is responsible for one aspect of the meal).
- 3) Catering (includes finding clients in need of catering services and tailoring products based on event size and customer preferences, as well as adapting traditional meal ideas into "finger food" servings that can be used as party trays).

Module 1 consists of four theory-based business classes and two in-person application days in which women can sell the finished products, either online or at local farmers' markets. Modules 2 and 3

also include online classes and two in-person preparation days in which food is prepared, orders are taken, and orders are later picked up by customers.

The online component uses a trainer along with a detailed curriculum on platforms such as Canva for lectures and presentations, and includes embedded deliverables. Various other resources, such as YouTube, are also utilized to teach each module online. Additionally, the women have the option of accessing weekly 30-minute private mentorship sessions, which greatly enhance their confidence and chances of success.

The program offers modules for two cohorts each term—one for daytime and one for nighttime. In total, there are three terms per year, resulting in a yearly total of six cohorts. Each cohort has 6-8 women.

Goal(s):

The short-term goals of the program are to increase newcomer women's knowledge of the local food business environment and to provide them with a realistic understanding of the requirements for success in the food business. The program also aims to help women build social and business networks, community connections, and confidence. Additionally, the program provides newcomer women with the opportunity to earn money.

The intermediate and long-term goals of the program are for women to engage in some form of revenue-generating food activities, develop a greater sense of belonging in Canada, and increase awareness of the available support services.

Target Client Group(s):

The target client group consists of newcomer women who are eligible for IRCC-funded settlement services. Additionally, to qualify for the program, women must have a minimum English language proficiency level of LINC 4. There is no specific duration of residence in Canada required for individuals to participate in the program.

Delivery Partners:

Newcomer Kitchen partners with farmers markets and other delivery programs to share information and services. In addition, the program receives support from community partners, such as educational institutions and corporations, as well as the general public, which all place orders for meals or catering services.

Human Resources:

The program is delivered by two part-time staff members: the program trainer and the program sales manager. The program trainer is responsible for implementing the curriculum and actively engaging with the clients during the events. The program sales manager handles administrative tasks, coordinates sales streams, and ensures the seamless operation of the program. In the event that an additional cohort is added, an additional part-time trainer is required to meet the training needs. All staff members must possess experience in business and knowledge of the food industry.

Funding:

The program is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through the Racialized Newcomer Women Pilot (previously called the Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot).

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

Through the W2W program, clients gain hands-on experience in a commercial kitchen to organize real sales events for the public and program partners. This enables program clients to earn revenue based on their efforts while learning the intricacies of running a food business.

The program is effective because clients learn how to use sophisticated food production equipment and techniques. This knowledge can be applied in their own food businesses. Additionally, clients participate in weekly mentorship sessions for food business advice and support, which helps boost their confidence and overall success. Furthermore, the program promotes teamwork and collaboration as clients form teams, create a brand identity, and progress through the program under that brand name.

Efficient:

The hybrid delivery of the established curriculum enhances the efficiency of the program, especially benefiting women who balance professional commitments and family responsibilities. Additionally, classes are recorded and provided to those unable to attend, offering flexibility. These recordings can then be reviewed during one-on-one mentorship sessions. Ultimately, the program creates a win-win situation: customers purchase an excellent product, supporting newcomer women, and program clients gain confidence, income, and community connections.

Relevant:

The real-world experience gained through the program is crucial in addressing client needs. The program directly immerses clients in the Canadian context, offers them practical training in all aspects of small food businesses, and facilitates the expansion of their social and business networks in Canada.

Sustainable:

The Newcomer Kitchen's website and mailing list serve as a sales platform, enabling community partners (the public) to support the program by purchasing goods and services offered by the clients of the program. The deliberate engagement of the public by Newcomer Kitchen is crucial for maintaining their involvement and support, contributing to the program's sustainability. In addition, Newcomer Kitchen is currently developing "XP", a business incubator program designed to address the specific business development needs of past clients.

Transferable:

With guidance from Newcomer Kitchen and use of the program's manual, this program can be replicated in other urban centres across Canada. Newcomer Kitchen estimates that a program similar to W2W could be successful in regions with a population of over 70,000 people and a diverse food culture. The program can also be adapted to serve a wide variety of client groups, provided these

groups have a support base within the food community. In terms of human resources, if administrative support is available in the SPO, it is possible that the program could be delivered by one full time trainer instead of two part-time staff members.

Newcomer Kitchen has already collaborated with the Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto for a year, delivering the program to French-speaking newcomer women. Following the successful implementation of the program, the Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto decided to offer the program for a second time.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The program uniquely combines a social enterprise model with an entrepreneurship model, aiming to empower clients financially through a business-focused approach. Client training is based on real sales experiences within the community. The program also actively engages the Canadian public as customers, fostering a sense of community and support for the clients. Additionally, the program builds connections between various sales venues, including farmers markets and online gift and corporate sales streams, enabling clients to access diverse revenue sources. The program also emphasizes the importance of online marketing materials and leveraging social media platforms to effectively showcase the women's unique stories and products.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The program is unique in its specific focus on newcomer women and food services. It enables women to form groups to establish mock businesses, offering hands-on experience while generating income for the program's clients and providing real products to the Canadian public. The program's in-person experiential learning revolves around actual events, challenging clients to enhance their culinary skills to meet diverse customer needs. Additionally, the program allows the surrounding community to participate as customers in the program rather than as volunteers, creating a transactional exchange between clients and the community that benefits both parties.

High Client Uptake:

The program achieves high client uptake through various channels. Word-of-mouth plays a crucial role as satisfied clients share their positive experiences, resulting in a robust referral network. Additionally, strategic partnerships with settlement agencies facilitate the sharing of information, reaching a broader audience of potential clients. The program also hosts a yearly gathering, creating networking and outreach opportunities to attract interested individuals. Furthermore, the program effectively utilizes social media to promote its offerings and engage with prospective clients.

High Client Retention:

Several factors contribute to client retention. Clients sign a partnership agreement to ensure their understanding of the commitment they are making to the program. Additionally, the group format of the program allows participants to hold each other accountable and maintain performance standards. Finally, program participants receive the financial honorarium only upon program completion, except in cases of exceptional circumstances.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

From September 2019 to December 2023, 120 clients participated in the program over the course of 10 terms, with 110 clients successfully completing the program (92%). To Newcomer Kitchen's knowledge, 15 of these clients started their own business after graduation.

Findings from focus groups with clients in 2021 revealed positive responses to the program's impact. Clients not only learned about food business operations in Canada but also felt empowered to be independent and confident in pursuing their dreams. A few testimonials include:

"Now I feel I am stronger and can go outside and work. We learned to challenge ourself so much and we learned we can do so much more than we imagined. We learned to rely on ourself. We learned to trust ourself. I learned so much about myself and my skills."

"Yes, I realized that here in Canada I have to learn how to make money. Back home, I didn't have to work. I just did charity work. Now, I have to learn how to go and make money. In Canada everything moves fast. I even learned how to cook fast. Back home I take hours to cook, here we have to learn to cook very fast. Also, in Canada they like to mix lots of flavours. I tasted things I never imagined they go together. We also learned about how to take care of food and preserve it properly so we don't hurt anyone and the rules in Canada about that."

"The program exceeded my expectations. I not only learned about food and business and different cultures, I learned so much about myself. The program made us push ourself so much and break the fear barrier. We spoke English when we didn't know how. We talked to Canadians and made conversations and made so many mistakes. But we learned it was okay to make mistakes. I also learned how to cook. I didn't know how before. I also learned about time management because now we have more responsibility and have to do so much work."

Additionally, feedback surveys based on 64 clients revealed that 95% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they benefited from the food business training program. Between 45% and 60% of the clients felt they had learned a lot about connecting with the community, about Canadian culture, and acquired many different skills such as food production skills, budgeting and costing, menu design, marketing and sales, digital skills, and language skills.

Furthermore, 53% reported having plans to start their own business after the program, while the rest reported considering it. About 37% of the clients stated that earning income while participating in the program was somewhat important, while 52% reported that it was extremely important for them. All clients indicated that they would recommend the program, and 83% of clients expressed interest in future opportunities with Newcomer Kitchen.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

The program aims to measure success through several methods. At the beginning of the program, an intake form is disseminated to assess client goals. At the end of the program, individual client feedback forms are distributed to assess various aspects of the client experience, including learning outcomes, challenges throughout the program, suggestions for improvement, and whether they would recommend the program to a friend. In addition, Newcomer Kitchen also conducts focus groups with a translator to capture more in-depth client feedback and conversation.

The program also employs proxy measures of success, such as evaluating the completion of program deliverables in online classes by clients, tracking the number of sales generated after each event, monitoring the number of return clients and referrals, and counting the number of new businesses started upon graduation.

Feedback collected has led to several program changes, including adjustments to the program's duration, frequency, and class timings. Feedback has also informed the next phase of the W2W program, resulting in the creation of "XP", a business incubator program designed to address the specific business needs of previous clients.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Newcomer Kitchen

www.newcomerkitchen.ca