Service Navigation for International Students in Toronto

Insights from Service Providers and Community Stakeholders

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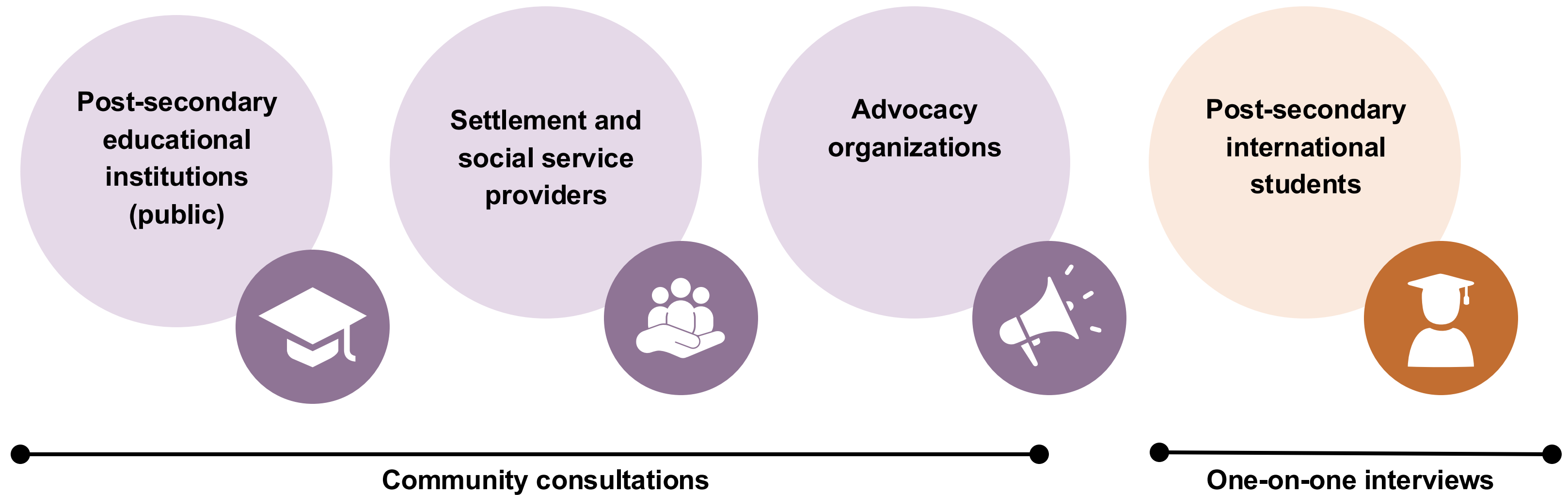
Overview

Objectives:

Learn and document existing issues faced by service providers and international students in Toronto - challenges, current practices, and opportunities

Create opportunities for service providers, members of educational institutions and other community stakeholders to network, discuss issues and learn about one another's work

Project overview:

- 3 consultation sessions with 18 participants
- 5 interviews with international students

Project participants

Post-secondary educational institutions (public)

Settlement and social service providers

Advocacy organizations

Post-secondary international students

Community consultations

One-on-one interviews

International Students: Experiences and Challenges

- **Key Challenges:** Key challenges faced by students include access to employment, housing, financial stress, family obligations, balancing academic obligations, and navigating information in a new environment

- **Underserved population:** Challenges faced by students are exacerbated due to the lack of relevant, timely, and accessible services

- **Information Access:** Navigating the education, employment, immigration, and social services systems in Canada is a major challenge for students, many of whom lack the networks of support needed for transition

Service Providers: Experiences and Challenges

Limited Service Capacity

Limited funding leads to strained staff and resources, with an overwhelming student-to-staff ratio at both service organizations and educational institutions.

Access Barriers

Students underutilize on-campus services, and institutions struggle to identify and address barriers.

Evolving Student Needs and Profiles

Increasing numbers of students aim to immigrate, shifting the "student profile" to include families and greater demands (e.g., health coverage).

Service Coordination and Collaboration

- **Identifying gaps:** Service providers in the social services, settlement, and post-secondary education sectors recognize the need for dialogue to identify gaps in service delivery for international students

- **Referral pathways:** Current forms of collaboration include referral between community service agencies, information sharing to non-eligible students, and experiential education partnerships between agencies and educational institutions

- **Advocacy:** Some advocacy organizations serve to connect vulnerable students with community resources through referral, sometimes for services beyond what is available through educational institutions

Opportunities and Recommendations

Employer and Policy Support

Government incentives for hiring international students and advocacy for recognizing transferable skills over Canadian experience.

Expanded Services

Broadened eligibility criteria to grant international students access to settlement and support services.

Pre-Arrival Information

Comprehensive guidance on labor market gaps, employability, and program outcomes before students arrive in Canada.

Mentorship Programs

Culturally relevant mentorship at educational institutions to better support international students.

Large-scale, long-term solutions

Short-term, community-based solutions

Thank you!

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