

TOGETHER PROJECT

togetherproject.ca | a project of MakeWay

Introducing the Welcome Group Program

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2024 P2P National Conference



Agenda

- 1. Introducing the Welcome Group Program** (Andrew Lusztyk)
- 2. Evaluation of the Welcome Group Program** (Dr. Alina Sutter)
- 3. Participant Perspectives:**
 - a. Settlement Worker** (Ishaq Faizi)
 - b. Newcomer** (Luwam Girmay Tesfay)
 - c. Volunteer** (Astrid Levelt)
- 4. Concluding Remarks and Q&A** (Andrew Lusztyk)

About Us

Since 2016, Together Project has aimed to make change in three interconnected ways:

- building newcomer social connections
- supporting newcomer integration priorities
- amplifying community involvement in newcomer integration

The Welcome Group Program

The Welcome Group Program connects government-assisted refugees, refugee claimants, protected persons and Ukrainian CUAET arrivals with a “Welcome Group” of 3+ volunteers for 3-6 months of social support that is tailored to the specific integration priorities of each household.



What Role can Volunteers Play?

- Build social bridges between communities
- Provide social support tailored to individual households' unique integration priorities
- Complement rather than replacing or duplicating settlement services
- Find the role that best suits the need:
 - Ally
 - Advocate
 - Guide
 - Tutor
 - Mentor
 - Friend

Key Program Features

- Double layer of matching (volunteer to volunteer, volunteers to newcomers)
- Group matching to share responsibilities
- Volunteer training, resources, and support
- Longer-term volunteer commitment
- Performance measurement
- Settlement sector collaboration
- Capacity for hybrid program delivery

Examples of Volunteer Social support

- Conversational language practice
- Job search support: resume creation, job application, mock interviews
- Youth empowerment: tutoring, mentorship, extracurriculars
- Service navigation: understanding forms, learning about and accessing services
- Emotional support
- Building a social network



Our 2021-2024 Evaluation Project

- Comparing the experiences of program participants whose matches are primarily remote vs. primarily hybrid
- Funded by IRCC's Service Delivery Improvement stream
- Three settlement agency partners:
 - COSTI Immigrant Services (GTA)
 - Catholic Centre for Immigrants (Ottawa)
 - DIVERSEcity (Surrey, BC)
- TD Bank partnered to provide volunteer support
- Externally evaluated by partners at Western University

Participant Perspectives

**How Volunteer Social Support Impacts the Effectiveness
and Efficiency of Settlement Services: Perspectives From a
DIVERSEcity Case Specialist**

Mohammad Ishaq Faizi
DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society

Participant Perspectives

Perspectives of a Welcome Group Volunteer

Astrid Levelt

Welcome Group Program Volunteer

Participant Perspectives

Sharing my Experiences as a Newcomer in the Welcome Group Program

Luwam Girmay Tesfay
Welcome Group Program Newcomer Participant

Where do we go from here?

- Incorporate learnings from evaluation into program delivery (e.g. match timing and duration, sector coordination, definition of roles)
- Lead by example - how can we help maximize impact of volunteer programs in other agencies
- Scaling the Welcome Group Program across Canada
- Continue learning about the role of the volunteer in the integration/settlement landscape

Q&A

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