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WELCOMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

bulletin

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Announcements and Updates

In response to a commitment made at the October WCI-LIP conference, the WCI has been 'assembling' Local Immigration Partnership strategies and action plans, either uploading completed strategies to the WCI website - www.welcomingcommunities.ca - or providing links to where they are hosted. To date, twelve strategies are available for perusal. This repository will grow as additional strategies are received. In early January, the reports from the practitioner and research workshops will also be posted on the WCI site. Summaries of these reports will be featured in subsequent issues of the newsletter.

New Projects Commissioned by CIC, Ontario Region: LIP Best Practices, Assessment, and Outcome Measures

In order to assist the Local Immigration Partnerships who are at various stages of development, four new projects have been launched by the WCI, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region. The first two projects focus on identifying best practices; the third focuses on LIP assessment and innovation; and the final study

addresses the measurement of LIP outcomes.

The goal of the first project is to identify planning and organizational best practices for the LIPs. Significant differences exist across projects along numerous dimensions reflecting both organizational decisions and local situations. These include the choice of leadership, the role played by the municipality, the weight assigned to economic development, the centrality of settlement agencies in the process, and the manner in which research is integrated into planning. The project will identify a sub-set of these dimensions and assess their impact on intermediate qualitative and quantitative measures.

The goal of the second project is to identify sectoral and cross-sectoral best practices. This will require a comparison of action plans within policy areas, such as employment, education, health, settlement services, and so forth. To do so, this project will employ expert panels (drawn from service provider organizations and Welcoming Community university researchers), coupled with the use of formal assessment guides that the WCI will develop. The project will also examine horizontal strategies. More specifically, it will analyze LIP plans for improving local coordination and synergy across sectors - for example,

by sharing research and resources, evolving common media strategies, and developing collaborative approaches to leadership engagement.

The third project focuses on LIP assessment and dissemination of promising practices. This project will examine the feasibility of applying the European Union's system of open coordination to LIP assessments. If feasible, this system would equip CIC and the LIPs with a tool for conducting objective, in-depth assessments of LIP strategies and action plans, and a feedback process for disseminating promising practices and institutionalizing learning.

The final project focuses on measuring outcomes. As noted in our previous e-bulletin, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has been making a serious effort to look beyond program outputs and deliverables to program and service outcomes. The LIPs will need to support this and to demonstrate that their strategic plans will result in more welcoming and inclusive communities. Earlier this year, the WCI presented a report to CIC identifying 17 characteristics that practitioners and policymakers typically associate with a welcoming community. This project will assist the LIPs in measuring outcomes by identifying and collating data relevant to these 17 characteristics (where available). As a first stage in this process, a survey has gone out to the LIPs to determine their data requirement priorities.

Reacting to the Federal Skilled Worker Evaluation

In November, the federal government released its evaluation of the skilled worker program. Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney cited the results in his remarks at the October WCI-LIP conference. It would appear that there is reason for optimism after years of declining economic prospects for

immigrants. The analysis of immigrants arriving between 2002 and 2008 shows rising employment and earnings coupled with declining employment insurance and social assistance as compared with immigrants who entered before 2002. Key elements accounting for this success were having a job offer before arriving in Canada, official language fluency, and Canadian work experience acquired prior to landing.

Similarly optimistic results were reported in Citizenship and Immigration Canada's 2005 study of earnings based on tax filer records. This study indicated that all major immigrant categories – family, refugees and economic – increased their earnings, with the largest gains being made by economic immigrants. The result was a narrowing of the gap between immigrants' initial earnings and the Canadian average, and reversal of the trend observed for previous immigrant cohorts. The recovery was strongest for engineering, computer and information system professionals. In Ontario, these changes produced a narrowing of the gap between immigrants and native-born Canadians. However, the earnings of immigrants in Ontario still fell below the average for all immigrants across Canada.

What is still not known is whether the improvements reported in the studies have survived the recent economic turmoil and, more particularly, what has happened in Ontario. The continuing fall in Ontario's *share* of total immigration, as well as the fall in immigrant numbers, suggests that the road has not been smooth. From its peak in 2001 to more recent levels in 2009 (the most recent year for which data are available), annual immigration to Ontario fell by 28 percent. Especially interesting is that Toronto's intake fell by 34 percent during this period, while entrants to the rest of Ontario rose marginally by 0.3 percent. Understanding this situation is critical for appreciating the strategies and implementation plans that are being developed by the LIPs.



Northern News

New Additions to the WCI

We are very pleased to announce that we have two new additions to the WCI! Both Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins have now been added to our group. and are planning to commence baseline inventories shortly. We also welcome Algoma University to the WCI.

City Inventory Work Underway in North Bay

The baseline City Inventory, otherwise known as "the Audit", is now underway in North Bay after receiving approval this November from the Nipissing University Research Ethics Board. The project will assess the settlement services that are provided to newcomers to assist their integration in the City of North Bay. With the help of the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre (NBDMC), over 40 organizations in the area have been identified and included in the project's sampling frame. The expected project outcomes include a determination of settlement service gaps as well as an opportunity to highlight exemplary practices. Results from the project will be available in the spring of 2011.

Conference on Northern and Small Communities

A Conference on Northern and Small Communities is being organized in North Bay by the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre and the WCI. It will be held on March 1 and 2, preceded by a complementary event on February 28th involving the Conference Board of Canada. Planning for the conference began in October at the WCI-LIP conference as a result of a meeting at which community and academic attendees discussed the special challenges facing Northern centres.

The ultimate goal of the conference is to help Northern and small communities develop sound Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) strategies and action plans. Currently, municipal and not-for-profit institutions lack both analytic capacity and connections to the academic sector (in the North) and to Northern institutions concerned with development, demographic challenges and the provision of services in smaller centres. In light of this, the main conference goals are:

(a) to identify crucial issues related to one of four sub-themes - economic development; attraction-retention and branding; civic engagement and sports and recreation; and the adaptation of mainstream services; (b) to develop plans for a number of high priority studies; (c) to identify pilot sites in the north for project implementation; and (d) to build a cadre of researchers and graduate students, primarily from Northern colleges and universities, who are interested in becoming involved in research benefiting the North.

To achieve its goals, the conference will convene municipal officials, LIP coordinators, service providers, academic researchers (particularly those from northern communities), officials from key stakeholder organizations and representatives from the two senior levels of government (including FedNor, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, Rural Secretariat). A conference agenda will be available in January.

WCI-LIP October Conference: Evaluation and Suggestions for Future Events

We received 68 responses to our online conference evaluation survey. Thanks to all who took the time to respond and provide feedback so that we can continue to serve the needs of the Local Immigration Partnerships.

Below is a Table detailing responses to five questions pertaining to the conference. Average responses were high - consistently above the scale midpoint of 4 - demonstrating a positive evaluation of the conference and its contributions.

Questions	Average Response
Do you consider organizing and co-funding a conference such as this to be one of the better ways in which the WCI can support the LIPs? (Rating scale 1-7)	5.85
To what extent was the conference a learning experience for you? (Rating scale 1-7)	5.40
To what extent did the conference allow you to form new connections? (Rating scale 1-7)	5.52
Did you feel that you had the opportunity to discuss the LIPs and research priorities with your colleagues? (Rating scale 1-7)	5.28
How useful did you find the conference to be? (Rating scale 1-7)	5.56

Common responses to the question about the most useful aspects of the conference included:

- ◆ Opportunities for networking
- ◆ Gaining an understanding of how the LIPs and the WCI can work together
- ◆ Understanding the importance of research
- ◆ Information sharing and learning from other LIPs and the WCI

Primary suggestions for improvement included:

- ◆ Allow more time for the panels and for questions
- ◆ Fewer workshops and more time to discuss and digest
- ◆ More discussion of LIP challenges and opportunities moving forward
- ◆ Advance hand-outs on what will be discussed to permit better preparation

Overall, participants indicated that they would like to be consulted about topics for future WCI-LIP conferences through e-mail or an on-line survey.

Common suggestions for additional participants to invite to future conferences included:

- ◆ Provincial government representatives
- ◆ More WCI academic representatives
- ◆ More municipal representatives
- ◆ Representatives from Statistics Canada and labour leaders
- ◆ Citizenship and Immigration Canada program officers

Finally, key issues that participants would like to see covered at future WCI-LIP conferences are:

- ◆ Best practices, and examples of products and outcomes
- ◆ Discussion of how the implementation phase is rolling out, and challenges and successes
- ◆ Research results from the WCI projects
- ◆ How the LIPs are engaging local institutions and businesses
- ◆ How to form links with the francophone network

We will be taking this feedback into consideration as we plan future conferences and workshops. We plan to continue to serve a coordinating function for the LIPs, and assist in the dissemination and sharing of information.

Report on the State of the Settlement Sector

A report titled *Reconfiguring Settlement and Integration: A Service Provider Strategy for Innovation and Results* was recently prepared by Meyer Burstein, a member of the WCI, for the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA-ACSEI). It is based on an extensive series of workshops and interviews with settlement agencies, ethno-cultural groups, government officials and stakeholders across the country. According to CISSA-ACSEI, "members without exception perceive the report's observations and recommendations to be insightful, timely and important."

The core argument advanced by the report is that settlement organizations enjoy a strategic advantage over other organizations when it comes to addressing the key challenges facing immigration and integration. This advantage derives from the sector's special capacities: (i) An ability to combine siloed services to address newcomer needs; (ii) An ability to focus on families, rather than individuals, as the 'unit of analysis'; and (iii) A 'place-based' capacity that is able to direct services to neighbourhoods and promote 'bridging' between diverse communities. Critically, the knowledge and skills that endow the sector with these capacities can only be acquired tacitly, on-the-job. Similarly, the ability to bridge and mediate between communities can only be acquired by working hands-on with mainstream and ethno-specific organizations, thus earning their trust and respect.

Based on this analysis, the paper argues that there exists a shared interest by governments and the settlement sector to boost investment in five areas of common interest:

1. Investments in the settlement sector's intellectual capacity so as to bolster innovation in services as well as in policies and programs.
2. Improved metrics that focus on outcomes supported by changes in accountability regimes so as to boost planning, analysis and coordination.
3. The introduction of a universal front-end assessment so as to optimize referrals, support specialization, and improve client assistance.
4. Investments to strengthen connectivity between the settlement sector and ethno-specific and mainstream organizations in order to forge better ties and trust between newcomer and host communities, as well as ensuring better services for newcomers.
5. A broadening of integration 'boundaries' to accommodate policy shifts and population dynamics: namely, services adapted to temporary workers and long-duration residents.

The report is currently being reviewed by provincial settlement bodies. Once this stage is complete, the core findings and recommendations will be discussed with provincial and regional authorities responsible for funding services and developing policy. Three additional mini-studies elaborating on select aspects of the report will soon be available as well, (in English only).

The report in both English and French can be found at:

http://welcomingcommunities.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=41&Itemid=36

Spotlight on Student Research

Sara Edge (edges@mcmaster.ca) is a PhD Candidate at McMaster University in Hamilton where she focuses on environment and health, social justice, and multi-stakeholder governance. One of her interests is immigrant health which led her to become a research assistant in a project headed by Professor Bruce Newbold. The project, 'Journey to Health', examines refugee health needs in Hamilton, as well as looking at the shortfalls and successes of available health care and social services. During the early stages of research, it became apparent that the perspectives of youth were inadequately reflected in research, policy development, and decision-making. To address this gap, Sarah has undertaken a series of interviews and focus groups with refugee youth representing a range of ages, countries of origin, and length of time in Canada. Her work focuses on perceptions of health, health priorities, the role of family and community in regard to well-being, and the manner in which health care and support services are accessed. Youth are also providing information about sources of formal and informal support, access barriers, and suggestions for improving service effectiveness and accessibility. The study will result in academic publications along with a roundtable to discuss research findings and their implications for policy and practice.

A Message Received from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) is proud to support the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) initiative, and to work with our federal and municipal counterparts to strengthen the role of local communities to serve and integrate immigrants. LIPs are an important step towards promoting local partnerships and working together to develop a strong community-based planning process. It is by fostering strong partnerships that organizations can leverage one another's strengths and work together towards a common goal.

MCI's Municipal Immigration Information Online (MIIO) program is a partnership between all three levels of government and supports municipalities to deliver local immigration information. The MIIO community shares best practices and supports each others' program by sharing tools and partnering for more cost-effective immigration initiatives. MCI encourages collaboration between the LIPs and MIIO to identify areas where partnerships can support local planning and common goals, such as helping immigrants integrate into our communities. A full list of our MIIO partners can be found online at: www.ontarioimmigration.ca.

The WCI-LIP conference reminded us of what can be achieved through partnership and collaboration, and MCI will continue to support initiatives that aim to do so.

Thank You

We would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region for their continued financial support.

