

Minutes: Newcomer Services Collaboration Working Group

April 22, 2021 - 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm (Zoom)

Present: Jassi Ranauta (TSLIP - The Neighbourhood Group), Adriana Pena (TSLIP – WoodGreen Community Services), Rozeta Aleksov (TSLIP – The Neighbourhood Group), Nadjib Alamyar (WoodGreen Community Services), Tracy Cummins (George Brown College), Acel Clemente (YMCA – Language Assessment Centre), Alla Minasova (YMCA – Newcomer Information Centre), Michelle Gordon (CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses), Ophelia Xavier (University Settlement), Amanda Choo (WoodGreen Community Services), Laura Dowding (ACCES Employment), Natasa Boskovic (Newcomer Women’s Services), Mbalu Lomur (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture).

Minutes: Jassi Ranauta (TSLIP – The Neighbourhood Group)

I= Information Di=Discussion Dc=Decision A=Action

	Agenda Item
I	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Acknowledgement • Introduction/Check-In
I	<p>Strategic Planning Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jassi gave an overview of last year’s 1-year transitional strategic planning process: supporting the sector during COVID-19; and what to expect from this year’s strategic planning process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TSLIP Council discussion to determine most urgent themes to inform direction of strategic plan ○ Focus groups based on these themes to identify specific issues ○ Working Group to develop projects based on identified themes and specific issues. ○ Recap of last year’s strategic plan themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anti-Oppression/Anti-Racism in the sector ▪ Transition to Remote/Blended Service Delivery

- Digital Marketing and Outreach

DI **Strategic Planning Discussion**

- Topics of focus and potential project ideas:
 - Mental Health, especially given the context of the pandemic and its long-term impact on the sector remains critical
 - Incorporate activities and tools to go along with workshops in addition to materials on how to identify stressors
 - Supports or learning around healthy homes/domestic violence/gender-based violence
 - Agency-to-Agency collaboration: identifying strengths each agency has and working collaboratively to help each other to support newcomers
 - As a proactive response to changes in service delivery going forward (blended/virtual models)
 - Focusing on Post-COVID recovery model for the sector
 - Sector has been in responsive mode: sector response due to changes to immigration policies in response to public health guidance
 - Pool of individuals needing/accessing services has been shrinking due to reduced numbers in immigration; this is will increase post-pandemic and we need to be prepared as a sector
 - Increased marginalization of newcomers not able to access virtual platforms and services due to COVID restrictions, closures, exacerbated barriers
 - What is the mental health impact of these changes on newcomers, especially when restrictions are lifted (will they access services? Will there be hesitancy? What is the social impact?)
 - Frontline and management working together to be proactive (pre-emptive approach) in post-pandemic recovery
 - Particular impact on women: have chosen to leave the workforce to focus on meeting basic needs and care
 - How to engage colleagues and front-line workers when their energy levels are depleting
 - Post-pandemic outreach strategies
- Discussion on group capacity to take on a new interim project during strategic planning period
 - The group decided to house these ideas (above) within the strategic planning process rather than an interim project

DI Sector Updates

- New Pathway to Permanent Residency for 90,000+ international graduates and “essential”-deemed temporary workers: IRCC
 - Language assessment aspect: have identified language benchmark level 4 but YMCA Language Assessment Center has not been informed by funder about changes to policy of assessment requirements. Government has not clarified if assessment needs to be from an assessment centre or service provider. Language Assessment centre has waitlist until this is clarified and is referring back to newcomers’ immigration lawyers.
 - Issue has been raised, waiting to hear back but questions remain for now
- Tax-Filing Information and Resources for Newcomers in different languages:
 - Benefits and Credits for Newcomers to Canada (video): <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/cra-multimedia-library/individuals-video-gallery/benefits-credits-newcomers-canada.html>
 - New to Canada? Learn about the benefit of doing your taxes: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/newsroom/tax-tips/tax-tips-2021/new-canada-learn-about-benefit-doing-taxes.html>
 - Home Office Expenses for Employees: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/tax-return/completing-a-tax-return/deductions-credits-expenses/line-229-other-employment-expenses/work-space-home-expenses.html>
 - Home Office Expenses for Employees: Calculator: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/tax-return/completing-a-tax-return/deductions-credits-expenses/line-229-other-employment-expenses/work-space-home-expenses/calculate-expenses.html>
- Virtual Toronto Newcomer Day 2021:
 - Call for information fair exhibitors, deadline is end of day Friday April 23, 2021: www.toronto.ca/newcomerday

Funding Opportunities:

- Law Foundation of Ontario Responsive Grants for ideas generated by non-profit community groups to improve access to justice; “grants aim to encourage new ideas, approaches, and relationships that can help address emerging needs and connect more people to legal information and supports, especially people who are not currently being reached”:
<https://lawfoundation.on.ca/news/responsive-call-for-applications/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toronto Arts Council for engagement of newcomers and refugees and another for refugee and newcomer mentorship. Both are due in June: https://torontoartscouncil.org/grant-programs/tac-grants/newcomers-and-refugees
I	Organizational Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
A	Next Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jassi to send out recurring calendar invite for regular WG meetings going ahead Jassi to send out an email with all resource links shared during this meeting
I	<u>Next Meeting</u> <p>∉ Regular WG meetings to take place on the 3rd Thursday of each month going ahead, adjusting for holidays and conflicts as needed</p>