

Minutes: Newcomer Services Collaboration Working Group

October 26, 2021 - 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm (Zoom)

Present: Jassi Ranauta (TSLIP - The Neighbourhood Group), Mara Behan (Newcomer Women’s Services), Alla Minasova (YMCA – Newcomer Information Centre), Angelica Hernandez (Salvation Army), Michelle Gordon (CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses), Amanda Choo (WoodGreen Community Services)

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 Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jassi provided an overview of TSLIP’s new Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. The overall focus of the strategic plan is to "Support a ‘just recovery’ for all newcomers by working to overcome social inequality (e.g., racism, poverty)" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anti-racism will continue to be integral to TSLIP’s work with best efforts made to ensure an anti-racist framework is incorporated into this plan and, by extension, TSLIP’s future work. • It’s 3 Strategic Directions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy and Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More engagement with policy relating to newcomers and the sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During consultations, partners expressed a need to support and/or conduct research on the newcomer serving sector through strategic alliances and partnerships with organizations and research centres already doing this work.

- Research was a focus of TSLIP Working Groups in the past and we shifted away from that slightly, but partners expressed that it may be time to move back to re-incorporating it in our work.
 - Community Research in partnership with our members and other stakeholders on specific key issues
 - TSLIP will work to augment our member voices at different tables and at different levels
 - Addressing Systemic Racism
 - Strengthening Connections with Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour through strategic and focused partnership building
 - Creating more spaces for newcomer voices to be heard and centred in this work (e.g. via TSLIP’s Newcomer Council).
- **Support for Newcomer Success**
 - Addressing challenges and barriers in the day to day lives of newcomers (I.e. accessing health and mental health services and employment)
 - Employment was often mentioned in consultation process, particularly in the context of COVID-19 recovery.
 - Responding to challenges arising in the sector (e.g. Afghan arrival and support).
- **Strengthening the Newcomer-Serving Sector**
 - Supporting TSLIP members as they navigate COVID-19 recovery and strive to ensure newcomers are able to equitably participate in Canadian society
 - Supporting new service delivery models that will continue to blend in-person and remote services and adapt throughout the pandemic recovery
 - Supporting efforts to build bridges between newcomer serving organizations and Indigenous communities.
 - TSLIP will be engaging in our own structural review to ensure we are able to further reconciliation and anti-racism
 - Sharing research effectively between our members, funders, and academics and other stakeholders
 - Providing more Professional Development opportunities that align with our strategic plan
 - Coordination of initiatives to support newcomer serving organizations in navigating the sector, immigration system for overall efficiency.

DI **Discussion: Project Planning / Workplan Development**

- Attendees shared their initial thoughts around potential projects they may want the Working Group, and TSLIP more broadly, to work on based on this Strategic Plan and it's directions.
- Policy and Research: it's important to centre newcomer voices and experiences in this work
- Professional Development:
- Workshops focusing on soft skills (such as communication) for newcomers, to enhance their opportunities for success in job market
- Invite employers to learn about what they are looking for from newcomers. Inviting HR from these organizations/companies on what to look for when working with newcomers.
- TSLIP will have an Employment Working Group in this Strategic Plan
- Ontario has proposed legislation to change requirements for Canadian experience for newcomers, we will watch how this evolves and what we can do around this.
- Access to affordable housing continues to be an ongoing challenge for newcomers. Do any programs work on supporting newcomers with information on home ownership? Pathways to housing—sharing of information.
- Could this be included in PD for staff in two parts that brings information on accessing housing and then a second part with a lawyer or someone to address some of the bigger issues. This could evolve into research and policy as well in future years.
- Indigenous and Newcomer bridge building: how can we build these bridges, there is interest around this and PD for staff.
- Labour exploitation: under-reported, how to seek help when being exploited, underpaid or pay being withheld, folks without status and international students for example are mostly impacted by this; policy engagement around this?
- Exploitative immigration consultants: what is being done on this, can we address this in some way?
- Hybrid Service Delivery Models: address this through Professional Development since the sector is widely moving in this direction.
- Helping organizations that want to transition to online service delivery but don't have the capacity; understanding potential funding changes and how to apply for funding/grants going forward; how to maintain critical face-to-face programming and its benefits.

DI	<p>Aghan Refugee Arrival – Member Initiatives and Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YMCA is taking stock of resources in preparation of support that may emerge • WoodGreen: Afghan Settlement Hotline (ASH) - provides Afghan newcomers and Service Providers working with Afghan newcomers with settlement support and accessing services and programs; Mon-Fri 1:30pm - 4:30pm • TSLIP compiling a resource of different services being offered for Afghan refugees to be published this week on our website
I	<p>Organizational Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YMCA Language Assessment Centre: In person, virtual, and on-line services being offered • CARE – developing an internal policy document for volunteers, clients, and staff of what to expect in preparation of January reopening • Newcomer Women: moved from Danforth to 2 locations: 355 Church St. (HUB); 489 Queen E. (settlement services mostly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aiming for January start for in-person; working on policy updates for staff, volunteers, visitors, etc. • Bibliotherapy (pilot program) at WoodGreen: focused on supporting newcomer women who are encountering stress through language activities; guided discussions, readings, and reflective writing focused on wellness/wellbeing. 7 Week Program with a rolling enrollment.
I	<p><u>Next Meeting</u></p> <p>€ Thursday November 18, 2021 1-2pm</p>