

Minutes: SISC Working Group

Thursday, May 20, 2021 - 11:00 am to 12:00 pm (Virtual Meeting via Zoom)

Present Ruth Lee, (CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses), Katharine Neale (TNLIP, JVS Toronto), Corina Carvallo (Skills for Change), Timothy Maxwell (Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services), Adriana Pena (TSLIP – WoodGreen Community Services), Jane Guan (WoodGreen Community Services), Pam Cardwell (TWLIP-Job Start), Jassi Ranauta (TSLIP – The Neighbourhood Group).

Minutes: Adriana Pena (TSLIP – WoodGreen Community Services)

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

	Agenda Item
I	<p>Welcome and Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some members reported a decline in client engagement. • It's also been challenging to find new clients. • Staff are feeling tired and exhausted from working from home. • Agencies are adjusting their programs and services to assist newcomers/international students who are applying for the new IRCC permanent residence pathway.
I	<p>Public Internet Access</p> <p>Working groups members were encouraged to sign up for Ryerson University's Overcoming Digital Divides (panel series). This session will discuss how Canada could better support our public internet infrastructure for the marginalized communities who rely on them and for everyone. The SISC WG report on access to technology will be mentioned during the initial remarks of this panel series. Access the event recording and transcript.</p>
I	<p>The National Settlement and Integration Council (NSIC) Technology Task Group (TTG)</p> <p>The TTG Final Report examines the settlement sector transition to a digital and a hybrid service delivery model, especially in the context of addressing needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our access to technology report for service providers and newcomers is mentioned in the Addressing Digital Equity and the Digital Divide section (page13). Access the report here.</p>
DI	<p>TSLIP Strategic Direction 2021-2025 (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSLIP's Strategic Planning process has started. • TSLIP's goal is to support a more inclusive Covid-19 recovery that seeks to redress some of the inequalities plaguing our communities. • Newcomer communities have unique needs and concerns during the pandemic. • It is important not to lose sight of new emerging challenges resulting from the pandemic. With this in mind, TSLIP is gathering data to inform the development of our next strategic plan, which will support immigrant serving agencies and newcomers. • TSLIP is developing a needs assessment survey. The results will help inform our strategic direction for the next 3 to 5 years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By filling out this survey, our working group members can share the needs currently emerging among the newcomer communities, the challenges organizations are facing, and what TSLIP can do to better support and augment members' work during this key period. • TSLIP will be sharing the survey link in our weekly update and by email.
DI	<p>Brainstorming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the greatest need in the newcomer community you serve, which cannot be met by your organization now? Are there any newcomer concerns that you feel have been overlooked due to more focused attention on responding to COVID-19 that need to be revisited? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affordable housing: Toronto is too expensive to live in and people really need more affordable housing. This has been a problem for a while, but now with the pandemic it has increased because people have lost their jobs and have become homeless. ○ Access to healthcare, mental health and resources: People just assume that everybody knows where to find things/information and there are newcomers that may not know. There were wait times already before the pandemic to get supports, and it is getting worse. There is a need for more resources to support the mental health and wellness of individuals, including newcomers. ○ Language skills training for newcomers: They need language skills to find employment. ○ Employment: Newcomers need more support during the pandemic to find employment and overcome financial challenges. ○ Access to Technology: some newcomer families only have one phone; they do not have Internet access and are facing daily challenges. For examples, the TDSB and TCDSB websites only accept online registrations, so these families are not able to register their children for school. • What are some of the ongoing concerns for the newcomer-serving sector? Are there any gaps that may need to be addressed through partnerships, collaborations, enhanced service coordination? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bill 124: this wage-suppression legislation negatively affects registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and health-care professionals. This Bill limits wage increases to a maximum of one per cent total compensation for three years. There is concern around staff retention. * The focus is already on post COVID recovery and retention. Getting people into jobs is going to be quite a challenge. * There is also a concern that certain professions are going to go up and other professions are going to lose demand. Newcomers may be losing their jobs because they are no longer necessary. * There is a lot of online types of interviews. Is that going to continue? ○ Education and youth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * How have they been impacted, newcomer and all youth? For example, children that are really young may have lost a lot of time in learning. Children that are in grade three should have been doing certain things and they have not. Some kids are falling through the cracks with online learning and even their social skills could have been affected by this. Is there going to be a hybrid now in the school system? * The loss of learning is significant for students during this time, and particularly now and going forward.

- * Newcomer kids may be falling behind and fall further behind. What supports will be there to help certain kids catch up?
- **Mental Health:**
 - * The impact on people's mental health, social skills and how much they have lost in their learning, especially newcomers.
- **Decrease in client engagement:**
 - * Concerns about reaching clients.
 - * What different strategies are agencies utilizing for outreach? What kinds of supports are needed to engage with clients?
 - * What's the reason behind this decrease in client engagement? Is it because individuals are feeling tired or are experiencing zoom fatigue? Are there other priorities for them that they need to take care of? Where are the clients? Where could we find them? How do we get their attention? Could it be lack of access to technology? Language barriers?
 - * There is a need to research the reasons for this loss in client engagement. For example, conduct focus groups to find out what are we missing with clients that would bring them in to be more engaged.
 - * There is a concern for the sector around not meeting targets. How will this affect funding? Programs could be losing funding or parts of funding, so we really need to zone in on what is the reason.
 - * The InterLIP back to school survey completed last November and December shed some light on this topic. This was a survey completed by newcomers themselves, newcomer families. It reached about 122 respondents. Newcomer women were finding their resources were used up in supporting their kids online. Between either going out to work or working from home, or maybe job searching and supporting their kids. They simply did not have time/capacity to engage in and access online services.
 - * The same is to be said about language classes. A lot of their families find it difficult to participate even for two hours.
- In what areas could we build increased partnerships or use more representation? Among which groups does TSLIP and the SISC WG need greater representation? (LGBTQ+, Black and/or Peoples of Colour, People with disabilities, Youth, Gender)
 - * The three areas that come to mind are employment, mental health, and digital literacy/access to technology (including access to information)
 - * Our group could look at women who have lost jobs.
 - * LGBTQ plus as well as BIPOC representation.
 - * Asians need a voice in this environment.
 - * We know there has been an increase in gender based violence and family breakdown. Newcomers need to understand family law and other immigration issues that might come into play because of family breakdown.

As part of our strategic planning process, TSLIP is re-evaluating how we do our work and we would like your insights on its effectiveness. TSLIP is made up of its Council Partnership, Executive Committee, Newcomer Council, and Working Groups. Do you have any suggestions on how we could increase engagement within or between the parts of our structure or do you have any suggestions on how we could increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of our Working Groups, including our SISC WG?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is value in attending the working group meetings, but folks need to understand what's in it for them. We have to show them value. How are the working groups relevant to them in the work that they do or their passions? (Depending on whom we bring to these groups). Why is it valuable for them to be part of our group and be engaged? ○ Each project should have a lead. ○ Having it all planned out in a workplan so everybody knows what is expected. What they need to do, and by when. ○ We should develop clear key messages on the goal of our working groups. Each one of them. ○ What is the impact of each of these working groups? ○ People switch up from time to time based on their capacity to be involved. This is the nature of the networks that we work in. We all have many different things that we need to do. There is a lot of competition for time. The structures do not need to change. ○ Projects need to align with what people are doing in their agencies. This will certainly contribute to engagement. ○ Once the projects for the upcoming years are identified, we could look around, see the gaps in representation, and reach out to them, so that key people are at the table.
I	<p><u>Next Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Next meeting: will take place after the Council Meeting. (potential meeting dates will be sent by doodle pole).