



**WELCOMING COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE:
DISCUSSION OF LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIPS
AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES**

Thursday, October 28 – Saturday, October 30, 2010

SUMMARY

The conference's objectives were:

- **To build and solidify the WCI-LIPs knowledge partnership**
- **To prioritize key research needs**
- **To identify the major themes and cross-cutting challenges that have surfaced as the LIP program matures and transitions from strategies to actions**
- **To clarify how the LIP program can establish a robust innovation strategy that locates and builds on promising practices**
- **To determine how the WCI can support the LIPs to become the driving force in Ontario settlement planning and implementation**

More than 150 participants attended the conference and its 13 workshops. This document provides a short summary of each workshop.

RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

There were 5 research cluster workshops. They focussed on:

1. Research priorities and the areas in which research can inform the LIP planning and implementation process
2. Factors to consider when selecting sites for pilot testing and studies
3. Potential partners and funding support

Research Cluster 1: Children, Youth & Education

Workshop Leads: Ginelle Skerritt, Southwest Scarborough Local Immigration Partnership
 Dawn Zinga, Brock University

Research Priorities

This workshop looked at children, youth and education. Issues related to language, special needs, disability, and identity were highlighted, and several specific research priorities were identified:

- Assess teacher training, education policy and school curriculum with a focus on their responsiveness to increasingly diverse populations
- Understand how the educational attainment of immigrants and minorities can be affected by the presence or absence of various community interventions, such as early childhood education, after-school clubs, sports and recreation, parent supports and mentoring
- Examine the practices that encourage bridging social capital and increased interactions between diverse racial, religious, linguistic, ethnic, and socio-demographic groups and how these can be strengthened among children and youth and through the education system
- Examine the factors that affect language training enrolment, completion and outcomes for immigrants and speakers of English- and French- as a second language
- Evaluate recent programs that target children under 6 years of age, with a focus on the impact on immigrant communities and the delivery of settlement services
- Undertake research that takes the experiences and opinions of children and youth into account, with a focus on intersecting identities and intervening variables, such as race, immigration status, recency of arrival and country of origin
- Evaluate the relationship between school-based interventions and the educational achievements of immigrant and minority children

Factors to Consider in Site Selection

Participants noted that several factors should be considered when selecting study sites or cases. These include the research capacity and support networks within sites, as well as the presence of populations and programs that can be compared across sites. Ideally, site selection would also take into account, where practical, the inclusion of the three types of LIPs (rural, urban, and Toronto community-based), and the need for regional variations, comparisons between urban and rural areas, and the importance of including linguistic diversity in studies.

Potential Partners and Support

Participants emphasized that support could include research funding, but also partnerships between the LIPs and WCI, the sharing of existing data, training of student research assistants, and collaborating on data collection and research. With respect to funding, there are a number of possibilities, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Children and Youth (Best Start Program), York University's Centre for Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Laidlaw Foundation, Atkinson Foundation, Trillium Foundation, and the Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative (TIEDI).

Research Cluster 2: Health Care, Mental Health and Well-being

Workshop Leads: Jill Murphy, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership
Kevin Pottie, University of Ottawa

Research Priorities

Participants noted several ways in which research could be used to support the LIPs. These include identifying ideal service delivery models for the provision of healthcare to immigrants, addressing factors related to accessibility such as translation and interpretation, and assessing the demographics and diversity of the healthcare workforce. Key research priorities include:

- Examine mental health and wellness within immigrant and ethnocultural communities, and evaluate the availability of culturally appropriate and accessible services and interventions
- Assess access to a broad spectrum of health and wellness services; dimensions of access include cost and availability of insurance coverage, interpretation and translation services, literacy and education, and the capacity of health workers to respond to diverse needs
- Look at advocacy and accountability issues, including patient rights, patient abuse, discrimination, the treatment of vulnerable populations, and the responsiveness of ombudsmen to immigrant and minority patients' needs
- Capitalize on and effectively disseminate existing research on health and well-being, and encourage additional data collection; participants noted that the difficulty of accessing, analysing, and managing health data often hinders research in these areas

Factors to Consider in Site Selection

Participants identified several factors that should be considered when choosing research sites and case studies. Among these were the size and composition of the site's immigrant population (e.g., recency of arrival, number of temporary foreign workers, average age, cultural and linguistic profile), the state of the site's health infrastructure (e.g. existence of health centres, hospitals, and other treatment facilities), and the need to examine both rural and urban sites.

Potential Partners and Support

Participants made several suggestions in this regard, including the Centre for Mental Health and Addictions (CAMH), Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Local Health Integration Networks, Canadian Diabetes Association, national and provincial dental health associations, Ministry of Health, Health Canada, and Canadian Institutes for Health Research. Participants emphasized the need for creativity and the leveraging of funds.

Research Cluster 3: Labour Market Integration, Foreign Credential Recognition and Business Formation

Workshop Leads: Linda Manning, University of Ottawa
John Okonmah, Timmins Local Immigration Partnership

Research Priorities

Participants had a wide-ranging discussion that touched on several research areas relevant to labour market integration and the LIPs. Priorities were:

- Identify best practices in labour market integration, profile the characteristics of successful immigrant workers and workplaces, and better understand immigrants' integration needs (including those related to training, credential recognition and network-building)
- Undertake community- and employer-centred research, including the forecasting of future labour market needs, preparation of a business case for hiring newcomers, developing employer tools relevant to hiring and integrating immigrants, understanding the role of unions, and compiling an inventory of employers in LIP areas

- Examine the relationship between immigrants' labour market outcomes and other factors, including prior work experience, co-op and internship programs, and mentoring and training; compare newcomers' skill sets to their labour market outcomes and identify where there may be challenges or gaps
- Understand the factors that lead to immigrant business formation, including community characteristics and the profile of immigrant entrepreneurs

Factors to Consider in Site Selection

Participants discussed the need to undertake research that not only meets scholarly standards, but also addresses community needs. When selecting study sites, they recommended considering the community's economic and demographic characteristics, evidence of a capacity to engage and benefit from the results of the research, and demonstrated leadership from community stakeholders and the LIPs. They also suggested sampling strategies that would take labour market trends and local labour force needs into account, as well as addressing the needs of larger corporations and smaller- and medium-sized enterprises.

Potential Partners and Support

Participants identified a number of groups that could provide financial and in-kind contributions to support LIP-related research. These include business organizations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Human Resources Professionals Association, industry associations, and sector councils), local community agencies (e.g., libraries, OCASI), universities and colleges (including graduate students), and government departments (e.g., Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration).

Central to this conversation was a discussion of *how* to access other sources of support. Participants noted that networking is key, as is building an understanding of potential partners' objectives and resource gaps. Participants also highlighted the need to leverage existing resources and suggested that researchers pursue endorsements from LIPs, knowledge dissemination, and relationship-building with consulates, boards of trade and government officials.

Research Cluster 4: Justice Issues, Policing and Conflict Management

Workshop Leads: Vic Satzewich, McMaster University
Cathy Woodbeck, Thunder Bay Local Immigration Partnership

Research Priorities

This workshop addressed justice, policing and conflict management, and participants identified five cross-cutting themes on which future research should focus. These were:

- Measure perceptions in justice and policing including newcomers' perceptions of the police, but also police services' attitudes toward newcomers and minorities and their understanding of challenges related to immigration and diversity in policing
- Examine the over-representation and treatment of newcomers and visible minorities in the justice system and address data gaps in this area
- Identify best practices, particularly in the area of police-newcomer interactions and the building of trust between communities and police services
- Understand interactions between service provider organizations and police services, including the ways in which service providers influence police culture and operational decisions
- Assess barriers to access in the justice system, particularly with respect to newcomers' access to protective and policing services

Factors to Consider in Site Selection

Participants identified a number of ways in which site selection could be targeted to under-studied or more innovative research areas, including studies of police presence in secondary schools, comparative analysis not only

within Ontario but in relation to cities in other countries, and research on sites in Toronto in addition to the second- and third-tier cities that are the focus of the WCI.

Potential Partners and Support

Participants suggested several potential sources of funding and partnering, including the Association of Chiefs of Police in Ontario, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ministry of Community Services, Ontario Women's Directorate, police unions, Law Society of Upper Canada, Ontario Law Foundation, Trillium Foundation, International Development Research Centre, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Research Cluster 5: Social Inclusion, Community Connections & Civic Engagement

Workshop Leads: Fatima Filippi, North Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnership
 Livianna Tossutti, Brock University

Research Priorities

Participants in this session considered how social inclusion is defined and what it includes. They identified knowledge (e.g., of political institutions, rights and responsibilities), attitudes (e.g., sense of belonging), behaviour (e.g., voting, participation) and outcomes (e.g., representative institutions, equity, responsive services, inclusive public spaces) as the key dimensions. On this basis, they enumerated several research priorities:

- Identify barriers to social inclusion and access, which may include a focus on the points of contact for social inclusion, the relationship between informal and formal engagement, and the connection between pre-arrival experiences and immigrant outcomes
- Compare social inclusion and civic engagement outcomes to available baseline data (e.g., Canadian Election Study voting measures; General Social Survey; National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating); examine newcomers' experiences across the life cycle, undertake work that looks at inclusion and engagement in a multi-generational context, and understand variations in inclusion and engagement between individuals, across groups, and in diverse settings
- Develop an inventory of social inclusion and civic engagement practices; assess their cultural appropriateness and gauge newcomers' attitudes toward these activities
- Evaluate the extent to which current programs lead to increased engagement and connections
- Measure the host community's readiness and capacity to engage with newcomers and minorities and undertake a needs assessment to identify gaps

Factors to Consider in Site Selection

Some participants suggested that sensitivity to geographic scale is important when selecting sites of study. They noted the challenge of including northern communities (particularly those that span provincial boundaries) and the need to examine both French and English centres. Others suggested that geography is less important than policy and issue considerations; they argued that site-specific research must be relevant and applicable to other groups and contexts.

Potential Partners and Support

Participants noted the importance of acquiring financial, infrastructure and in-kind support. Potential sources could include sector councils, provincial ministries (notably the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Laidlaw Foundation, think tanks (including Tamarack and the Wellesley Institution), business, labour unions, youth groups and the local media. They also identified existing data sources, such as the General Social Survey, Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, and the Ethnic Diversity Survey, which could be mined for information.

LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOPS

There were 8 LIP workshops. They addressed several questions under three general themes:

1. Lessons from experiences to date
2. Challenges, gaps and identified needs
3. Next steps

Workshop 1: Transitioning from Strategic Planning to Implementation

Workshop Leads: Meyer Burstein, WCI
Laureen Rennie, Peel Region Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

Planning and implementation are not wholly separate processes, but are overlap in most LIPs. Participants agreed that LIP models vary, that implementation may take a number of forms, and that LIP councils are playing different roles depending on how the LIP has been configured. In some models, the LIP lead is a service provider and the LIP plan tends to give them a more direct role in implementing services; in other models, the LIP lead plays more of an advisory role and assists in leveraging support so that other agencies can use to address identified needs. Among those councils in which implementation is already occurring, this is happening without any additional funding from CIC; the initial investment is instead being used to leverage contributions from other partners, which is a positive development.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

LIPs are finding it difficult to address some of the systemic issues identified in their plans because these cut across sectors and jurisdictions. The mechanisms and networks for accessing new organizations, ministries, and programs are not yet clear. Moreover, the nature of the LIP funding creates some uncertainty, and there is a lack of clarity about the councils' future mandates. This may exacerbate internal politics in the settlement sector, with agencies competing for limited resources. Participants noted that there is a need for more consistent communication from CIC as messages at the regional level sometimes differ from those delivered by National Headquarters.

Next Steps

CIC has highlighted the LIPs as a best practice for collaboration and information-sharing, and most view the LIPs as having a role beyond the creation of an immigration plan. Discussion thus centred on how to sustain the councils on a more permanent basis. Participants agreed that there is a need for collaboration with other funders, particularly given that the modernized approach to settlement requires a shift from agency-centred to newcomer-focused activities. This requires that work be undertaken collaboratively. The LIPs are well-positioned to do this and should promote the role they can play in this regard.

Workshop 2: Improving the Model: Lessons from the Current LIP Process

Workshop Leads: Caroline Andrew, University of Ottawa
Tim Rees, Hamilton Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

LIPs are, by and large, not delivering a single program or service, but rather engaging in a process of community collaboration, which is multi-faceted and includes organizational development, partnership-building, engagement, awareness-raising and public education, institutional capacity-building, strategic planning, and acquiring financial support. Many of these tasks, while developmental, will nonetheless continue throughout the implementation phase.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

While the LIPs have focussed primarily on planning and development processes, participants acknowledged that they have had to confront demands for immediate action and results; research timelines, similarly, are not always in sync

with stakeholder expectations. These time pressures have led some LIPs to curtail the more participatory processes they had envisioned simply because it was becoming difficult to meet established deadlines. Governance models have also evolved, with many councils assuming more of an advisory role. Nonetheless, participants noted the need to evaluate collaborative processes and mechanisms to determine which models work best.

Next Steps

Participants emphasized that the LIPs model requires more stable funding so that longer term objectives related to collaboration can be realized and sustained. Short-term funding is not compatible with this goal. Communicating the work of the LIPs to a variety of audiences would be useful; the production of fact sheets or op-ed pieces would allow the LIPs to highlight shorter term or more immediate successes. There was also recognition that settlement issues need to be integrated into mainstream services and local institutions, including City Hall; Hamilton was highlighted as a best practice in this regard, with City Council having recently signed a Declaration of Intent, a model that could potentially be followed in other centres.

Workshop 3: Exploring the Municipal Immigration Information Online (MIIO) Program and Opportunities for Partnerships

Workshop Leads: Danny Marafioti and Lynne Kranidis, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Donna Marentette, Windsor Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

The Municipal Immigration Information Online Program (MIIO) was implemented in 2006 through the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. Municipalities can access modest grants and annual workshops to develop web-based applications that improve newcomers' access to municipal information or services, promote the municipality as a destination for newcomers, and identify settlement supports and local employment opportunities for immigrants. The MIIO now has 128 partners in 21 Ontario communities.

Municipalities have used funding from the MIIO in a variety of ways. For example, North Bay has launched a web-based Business Immigrant Attraction Initiative, Sarnia-Lambton is developing a Newcomer Employment Options application, Sudbury has an online job bank, and Niagara is creating a Kijiji-style ad board to match newcomers with available volunteer opportunities. Others, such as London and the Durham region used online tools to advance their attraction and retention strategies.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

Participants noted the importance of evaluating existing web-based tools, including usability and client satisfaction; online surveys, focus groups or web analytics could inform improvements. Participants identified the challenge of ensuring that online activities complement but do not duplicate more conventional initiatives.

Next Steps

Participants were keen to investigate new options, including the use of social media, blogs, and applications for web-enabled devices like the iPhone and Blackberry. It was agreed that the LIPs, WCI, and government partners should explore opportunities for collaboration.

Workshop 4: Identifying Key LIP Outcomes to be Measured

Workshop Leads: Hindia Mohamoud, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership;
Zenaida Ravanera, University of Western Ontario

Experiences to Date

Participants focused on how to measure LIP outcomes. Each LIP has addressed this challenge differently, and a number of examples were given. These include stakeholder discussions to evaluate LIP milestones, achievements, and indicators of success; the development of results-based accountability frameworks; and the creation of strategic

plans with specified activities, timelines and outputs. Participants noted that evaluations of the LIP process must focus on the value-added that the LIPs provide; this might include the initiation of systemic change, capacity-building, and the development of new collaborative processes and coordination mechanisms. Some LIPs have begun to track the involvement of new actors and to gather evidence on new processes and improved collaboration.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

Participants also considered the [17 indicators of a welcoming community](#), which have been developed by the WCI. There was broad agreement that these are the “ultimate” indicators of a welcoming community; nonetheless, LIPs are sometimes constrained in their ability to achieve change on all of these fronts. For example, although the availability of suitable housing was recognized as important, LIPs do not necessarily have the ability to effect change here given that they are not in the business of building suitable housing. Some suggested other indicators to consider, including measures related to immigrant attraction, language acquisition, and other aspects of economic integration (e.g., entrepreneurship). Participants stressed the need to communicate indicators in accessible language; for example, they suggested using terms like trust, collaboration, and network-building rather than the more academic “social capital.”

Next Steps

Participants agreed that measurement requires the collection and compilation of indicator data, and this is an area where next steps are needed. In particular, LIPs need to work together to acquire administrative data (especially when disaggregated by neighbourhood and according to key demographic categories), as well as to tailor existing data sources to meet LIP measurement needs (e.g., adding a “newcomer” category in the collection of data on social assistance as Niagara has done).

Workshop 5: What Next for the LIP Planning Architecture?

Workshop Leads: Neil Bradford, University of Western Ontario
Scott Fisher, The Greater Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

This workshop focused on the future permanence and sustainability of the LIPs. Participants admitted that while the LIPs were not initially conceived of as a “permanent” community fixture, they have become so as a result of concerted efforts to build partnerships. The LIPs have also been instrumental in educating the public about immigration and its benefits and have worked to connect high-level policy aspirations to the everyday experiences of immigrants. To do so, the LIPs have developed a number of service delivery innovations that involve communities and multiple stakeholders. As one participant noted, the LIPs serve as a “social incubator” for new ideas that can be applied to other issue areas.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

It was noted that the kind of “transformative change” envisioned by the LIPs can only occur over the longer term and will require concerted and consistent leadership. This implies an ongoing planning and implementation cycle, as well as resources to evaluate outcomes, adjust activities, and recruit new players. Some also noted that many of the intangible benefits that the LIPs provide – notably the building of trust, networks, and cross-sector collaborations – are difficult to measure, and LIPs are sometimes unable to provide concrete evidence of these achievements.

Next Steps

Participants agreed that there is a need to push forward efforts to make the LIPs a permanent part of the policy landscape. They noted that the LIPs offer a means of connecting vertical institutions (e.g. federal, provincial and municipal governments) with horizontal communities (e.g., service providers, employers). To achieve this, the LIPs need to develop a stronger collective voice about their role and value-added, and they need to make a case to funders to provide sustained support. Continued knowledge transfer and the sharing of information and best practices is required, as are efforts to build partnerships with broader interest coalitions.

Workshop 6: How Can the LIPs Promote Innovation and Promising Practices?

Workshop Leads: Victoria Esses, University of Western Ontario
Elisabeth White, London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

The LIPs are being executed in a number of ways across the province. This offers a broad palette for learning and transferring good ideas across sectors and cities. Participants in this workshop discussed the “machinery” that is required to do this.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

There was recognition that a considerable volume of information is being amassed as part of the LIPs process, and that resources are needed to transform this into useable formats. These should be targeted to diverse audiences and use a number of vehicles including newsletters, websites, and social media. Participants emphasized the need to build on existing platforms, including the WCI website, where a “What’s New” button could draw attention to the most recent information. There was support for web-based approaches where participants could share information on pilot projects, trial balloons, and innovative practices, with a template provided for communicating results. Webinars and moderated discussion boards could provide a virtual meeting space, although avenues for face-to-face discussion remain important. Participants further suggested that key LIP documents, such as strategic plans, be centralized in a single repository and that an inventory be created so that subject matter specialists and speakers can be identified.

Next Steps

Participants recognized that there is an opportunity to build information-sharing into the LIPs given that all LIPs are still early in their implementation. They need to work together to review existing practices, to identify what is working, and to draw insights from experiences in other sectors. In addition to this kind of internal information-sharing, the LIPs need to develop ways to connect with external partners and potential funders and to alert them to achievements and successes.

Workshop 7: How Should Cross-cutting Concerns be Dealt With?

Workshop Leads: Bill Sinclair, West Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership
Avril White, Jobstart/ Central South Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnership

Experiences to Date

In this session, participants discussed how the LIPs can best address cross-cutting themes. They categorized the issues in three ways: (1) those that are cross-cutting but can be addressed locally (e.g., newcomer service delivery, recruitment and retention, community attitudes); (2) those that require policy change or broader government action (e.g., program eligibility, language training); and (3) those that are more “wicked” in that they are complex and persistent problems and there is not a single, identifiable agent who is responsible (e.g., health and well-being, affordable housing, poverty). Although the LIPs are making some gains in addressing these issues, there are challenges. Nonetheless, participants agreed that the role of the LIPs is to engage community leaders, raise awareness, encourage multi-sector dialogue, and put forward a vision of an inclusive community.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

A particular challenge is the number of stakeholders and audiences involved in the LIPs. This requires that the LIPs clearly communicate their achievements in ways that speak to each partner’s needs. For example, if a LIP develops a job-matching program, this can be highlighted as an activity that addresses goals related to labour market integration; however, it would likely also be of interest to business partners, and those working on poverty issues and the development of web-based tools.

Next Steps

Participants agreed that they need to communicate with stakeholders and government officials about the difficulties they are facing in addressing cross-cutting and systemic issues. They suggested that coalition-building with other like-minded organizations would be useful, as would a joint statement from the province's LIPs about the challenges inherent in this policy field.

Workshop 8: The Role of LIPs in Promoting Community Connections

Workshop Leads: Mary Ellen Bernard, Windsor Local Immigration Partnership
Aurelie Lacassagne, Laurentian University

Experiences to Date

Participants discussed models for building connections between service providers, ethnocultural agencies and mainstream organizations. Two models were identified. The first is an "integrative" model in which agencies function simultaneously as a service provider and cultural agency *or* as a service provider and mainstream agency; this model is most common in Northern communities. The second is a "case by case" model in which agencies collaborate to obtain funding and execute a specific project; this model is most common in Toronto with the Neighbouring Action Partnership. Participants emphasized the importance of shared spaces (e.g., the presence of several agencies in a single building), and noted that community events can build the personal relationships that bring stakeholders to the table and legitimize the process.

Challenges, Gaps and Identified Needs

The LIPs continue to work at partnership-building, and there is a need to bring additional agencies into the process. Facilitating communication is key, particularly given that the present system encourages inter-agency cooperation while funding arrangements simultaneously demand competition. A cultural shift is needed, and the LIPs can play a leadership role here not just in facilitating the shift but also in building trust through collaborative partnerships.

Next Steps

There was support for the organization of a LIP-focused workshop that would permit information-sharing and the development of a strategy to pursue permanence and sustainability. Participants also noted the need for a centralized information repository, such as the WCI website, where LIPs documents could be stored and shared. Greater emphasis should be given to documenting the LIPs process and disseminating best practices and recommendations for related initiatives, including those in other policy fields.

Funded by:



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada