

London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership

Employment Sub-council

Thursday, March 2, 2010 (10-12)

Location: Pathways 1295 Highbury Ave. N

Present: Ahad Emami, Ana Maria Escovar, Anne Langille, Sammy Farhane, Carolyn Ford, Eleanor Weedmark, Jennifer Hollis, Lisa Pace, Ramona Lucan, Nancy McQuillan, Sally Bennett, Stacey Noronha, Saeed Mokhtarzada, Abdul S Barry, Maria Anderson, Huda Hussein

Regrets: Sergio Chuy, Shakil Popatiy, Gord Fansher, Nathan Ross, Robert Collins, Zuzanna Johnson and Mina Ghavidel.

Summary:

Welcome & Introductions:

Anne welcomed the committee members and requested the new members to introduce themselves. New members were welcomed to the group. Anne informed the group that the duty of this council is to focus on setting priorities, strategies and the rationale behind these strategies. Based on the amount of work it accomplishes at each meeting, the council may have three or four meetings to draft the strategy on employment and submit to the Central Council.

Contact List

It was agreed to share the contact list of all members. Huda circulated the contact list to ensure that names of organizations, individuals representing the immigrant communities and other information are captured on the list.

Meeting Times:

Based on the responses received by Huda the following dates and times have been finalized:

Monday March 22 at 12:30-2:30

Tues Apr 6 10:30-12:30

Thursday Apr 22, 10-12

The meetings in April will be held at Pathways, Highbury office. The meeting of March 22 will be held at Kinsmen Recreation Centre..

Consistency in attendance is required due to time constraint and commitment is very essential in completing the given task. If individuals cannot attend a meeting, they are requested to submit their comments on the minutes or input on what's undertaken to Huda before the following scheduled meeting.

Review of Gaps and Priority Setting Template

Summary of gaps and possible activities associated with addressing the gaps are based on the combination of the finding of the Community Capacity and Needs Report and the February 2 Action Planning Day outcomes. There are broader themes, and each theme will include a number of gaps. Members were asked to review the gaps template for ten minutes bearing in mind the issues related to each theme.

Ranking of priorities

Group identified three main themes and decided to plug under each the related gaps.

Theme # One:

Communication/Integration:

- There are not enough liaisons between people looking for job and all agencies serving the unemployed. It was suggested that the seniors wrap around model may be followed. This may lead to a common assessment tool that may be used by all agencies alike.
- The draft report mentions 39 agencies that serve the immigrant on employment and in reality there are five to six major agencies that focus on employment 100% and the others may offer some pieces of this area. The communication gap among these services is big.

Theme # Two: Employer connection

- Missions of different agencies are not clear to immigrants
- Immigrants are not aware of the Canadian workplace culture
- Government (all three levels) do not offer incentives to hire immigrants
- Clash of expectations between the employer and the employee
- Employers and employees need to learn about the transition from collectivist culture to the individualistic culture; the pros and cons of both societies

Theme #3 : Systemic barriers/technical issues

- Eligibility criterion for services provided to immigrants are complicated
- Discrepancy between information presented to immigrants offshore and the reality of the job market.
- Getting the Canadian experience is a big challenge
- Systemic barriers in hiring immigrants: technical issues in terms of recognizing international credentials and access to accreditation and retraining programs
- The government (at all three levels) is lagging behind in employing the immigrants. They need to be involved.
- Empathy towards the immigrant experience – skills of immigrants are not recognized

Strategies: Two issues came under this discussion: the overarching and the blue sky issues

The immediate goal of the sub-councils is to focus on issues that we can influence locally. However the blue sky issues, will not be discounted as our goal is also to advocate.

The group discussed the following strategies starting with building on what exists:

- A low cost option and doable marketing campaign focus on employment on London and Middlesex in different languages – identify expectations on job readiness targeting the new immigrant – use of the immigration portal, the London and Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council, has a column and this can be used to update and give information to immigrants while still offshore.
- There needs to be a common assessment; opportunities are there and the employment sector needs to connect with all the 39 agencies and those looking for jobs: collaboration and community awareness is essential. **Common assessment package of info consistent**
- Centralizing and simplifying and standardizing information – either a website or document that service providers have.
- The one on one approach that some programs have with immigrants may continue as this was a preferable approach for the immigrants seeking jobs.
- Mentorship programs need to be increased and the private sector needs to be involved. Mentorship is valuable in helping the immigrants learn about the Canadian workplace culture.
- In terms of the soft skills immigrants need to understand the value of some of the courses offered by the employment agencies, such as the Canadian Business Culture / Canadian Workplace Culture. Such a strategy will lessen the gap between the expectation of the employee and the employer.
- The process of acquiring a job could be easier if the employer is involved and open to the newcomers' experience and credentials. A suggested strategy is that employers offer specific quota for capable immigrants this system was used in the U.S with its black community and it succeeded. Employment equity needs to be reinstated. This approach should not condescending but constructive.
- Government is lagging behind in employing the new immigrant. We need to get the government at the three levels to hire capable immigrants.
- Encourage employers to use the model of hiring students for summer jobs. The government needs to be involved to encourage such model in the same way they do with the summer jobs for students. This will lead to reduction in the amount the government pays to Ontario Works.
- In terms of clashes of expectations, develop more workshops in the local term on Canadian business as well as cultural awareness workshops. Make use of existing programs at Fanshawe

College, WIL Employment Connections, etc. This issue may be taken with the Education Sub-council as well- open communications among sub-councils

- To bridge the gap of the discrepancy of given information to immigrants prior to their landing, the existing websites may be used such as the immigration portal to convey clear messages and information to immigrants. All existing resources need to be used collaboratively by employers to enhance the job search and finding jobs for the immigrants. Another strategy that Fanshawe College is using successfully is sending delegates to countries, to counsel and assess the immigrants' needs.

Action: Chart created around resource available to employers is available with LMIEC. Jennifer will send it to Huda who will forward it to members along with the minutes.

Blue Sky Issues identified by the group:

- The establishment of an agency similar to the World Education Service (WES) in London and Middlesex based on the idea "bring the service where the client is"
- Tax breaks to businesses that hire immigrant
- The issue of having quotas for capable immigrants

Next meeting: Monday, March 22 (12:30 -2:30) at Kinsmen Recreation Centre, 20 Granville Street Room 2a.