

Theme: Leveraging Immigrants' Entrepreneurial Spirit

Immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to Ottawa's economy in multiple ways. They create jobs, promote our city's global connectivity, and generate income for immigrant families to help alleviate poverty. Research shows that immigrants are more likely to be self-employed than local-born Canadians. Many factors underpin this greater propensity to entrepreneurship: drive to succeed coupled with a fewer options in the labour market; competitive advantage in accessing global markets and in knowing about emerging niche markets due to changing consumer taste in food, clothing, arts, design, travel, etc.

An important goal in the Ottawa Immigration Strategy is for Ottawa to become a leader in attracting and supporting the successes of immigrant entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurs. Important collaboratives are emerging in this area thanks to municipal leadership in economic development and innovation.

Discussion questions:

1. *How can we best leverage immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit?*
2. *What collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?*

Group 1

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit?

- Provide immigrants with knowledge of the resources that are available to them
- Ensure collaboration of support agencies to provide quick and seamless access to the relevant support: quarterly or bi-yearly meetings, directory of support groups and resources

Question 2: Who is best to do this?

- The existing support services
- Settlement agencies
- City of Ottawa immigration web portal

Group 2:

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' entrepreneurial spirit?

- Building on the unique platform that OLIP provides by bringing the strengths of our organizations and partners to improve supports to immigrants
- Having one portal where immigrants can go to get information as opposed to them having to go to various sources
- Having an internal site (intranet) for all partners/organizations to communicate their ideas to each other
- Maintaining ongoing communication with partners/organizations.

Theme: Leveraging Immigrants' Skills Through Internships

Ottawa attracts the most educated immigrants than any other Canadian city; and a much larger proportion of local immigrants enter under the economic category than is the case for any other city.

It is estimated that immigration currently accounts for 100 percent of the city's net labour force growth, and 79 percent of our city's population growth. Yet, upon arrival, immigrants often find employers won't offer them a job in their field because they don't have the relevant experience in Canada. Yet, they can't get that Canadian experience until they obtain a job.

Building on initiatives like Federal Internship Program, created by Citizenship & Immigration Canada's Foreign Credentials Office, the OLIP's Economic Integration Sector Table is promoting greater use of paid internships to help resolve this pervasive catch 22. Internships help newcomers gain more familiarity with the profession-specific terms and practices used in Canada. They provide relevant local experience, which increases the odds that others in Canada will hire the newcomer (Oreopoulos 2009). For employers, internships provide an opportunity to tap into new talent. The significance of tapping into immigrants talents is illustrated by the fact that currently 38 percent of those with master's degrees in Ottawa are immigrants (Census 2006). In today's knowledge economy, employers cannot afford to miss this reality.

Discussion Questions

1. *What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?*
2. *Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?*

Key words emerging from discussion

Organizational readiness; cross-cultural training; credential assessment; awareness of immigrant skills; mentorship; labour unions; organizational creativity; understanding demand and supply; incentives for employers; business case; promoting best practices; bridging programs; champions; internship hubs.

Group 1:

Question 1: What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- Openness and readiness by the organizations
What is 'readiness'?
 - ✓ organizational culture that is inclusive, values learning and sharing experiences
 - ✓ hiring managers who have cross-cultural training and are ready to work with temporary hires/interns
 - ✓ organizational support system where staff can act as mentors, not as managers
 - ✓ having the labour unions on board: while there may not be resistance from unions, there might be need to work with them and other partners internally to have everybody on board. As regards temporary vs. permanent hire status, for instance,



balance the number with union members, or agree on a number of temporary hires to be engaged

Note: On the role of unions in the City of Ottawa: The City of Ottawa needs to look at how internship impacts collective agreements.

- Using existing networks and partnerships (LASI, OLIP, City of Ottawa Immigration Network)

Question 2: Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Unions in case of organizations that are unionized
- Anyone; it is the readiness of organization that matters more
- City of Ottawa, universities already have ability to hire temporary positions
- Partnerships, such as LASI, OLIP, City of Ottawa Immigration Network

Group 2:

Question 1: What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- Hear from employers on their expression of need/interest.
- Create incentives for employers.
- Build stronger connection to service providers who are willing to adapt models from a better understanding of current needs and conditions. Encourage greater understanding of supply and demand. Strengthen link between opportunities and assets.

Question 2: Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Those who have the greatest labor market need (but they will need to consider ROI).
- Those providers that have client database.

Group 3:

Question 1: What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- Employers must have jobs
- Employers who have jobs need to know the business case
- Showcasing the gainful examples by organizations who hire immigrants
- Promoting good models, like FIN
- HR processes to be in place (this is not easy but these processes must keep pace)
- Using contract positions, short-term jobs
- Tapping into the existing programs
- Recognizing employers' skills shortages and skills sets that immigrants bring
- Use LASI, Hire Immigrants, etc.

Question 2: Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Employers, especially large ones, but SMEs are innovation-drivers too!
- Immigrant servicing agencies
Note: Collaborations are not essential but can be beneficial in managing risks, etc.
- Hire Immigrants organization has stupendous models already
- Conference Board of Canada has top-notch research on the immigration advantage and networking/convening leaders and practitioners
- Colleges have great bridging programs
- Governments at all levels
- Business associations and chambers of commerce
- Ethnic associations and community groups
- Coop groups and programs (especially for students)
- Funders to support paid internships and/or credit

Group 4:

Question 1: What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- Commitment to designated positions
- Awareness of transferable skills
- Championship: someone who can initiate
- Competency-based assessment of individuals' skills
- Education on the process for employers
- Discussion in unions
- Assessing the difference between Canadian skills and international skills
- Consistent/same messaging from all groups
- Being linked to each organization's diversity inclusion strategies, not as a separate initiative
- Prioritizing in the budget
- Financial incentives/tax credits, etc. for employer
- Leveraging international company connections
- Cooperative measures
- Encouraging employers/human resources personnel to be more creative in hiring
- Tools and supports: best practices - letting organizations that have done it present their business case
- Mentorship.

Question 2: Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Previously participating employers by presenting best practices
- Peer-to-peer conversations with employers who have had success. Example of a model: CareerEdge (Toronto) with TRIAC
- Involving professional licensing bodies
- Bridging programs/education/industry associations involved with employers.

Group 5:

Question 1: What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- Create an internship hub (inspired by Hub Ottawa) in a physical location with a database
- Promote employer engagement: sell the case/value added to them; determine how they could be brought to the table
- Find ways of allowing employers to make their needs [for interns] known. This can be done by utilizing testimonials on the benefits to employers (e.g., taxable benefit for employers who engage interns) and workers (e.g., work experience value)
- Identify key decision makers in each sector, and promote collaboration between service organizations to increase ability to lobby for access to these resources
- Aim for a level of internship responsibilities that match and challenge intern capabilities, and enable discovery/personal growth. Create opportunities that cultivate, on one hand, know-how (opportunity to learn new skills) and, on the other hand, know-who (opportunity for networking, social connectivity).

Group 6: (French)

Q1. What is needed to help employers create internships for immigrants?

- *Meeting employers*
- *Ice-breaking activities which allow immigrants to market themselves*
- *Helping students find potential employers (despite cultural differences)*
- *Working closely with employers*
- *Adapting strategies and contributions to categories of employers (SME, government)*
- *Leveraging on the differences and the innovation, while promoting "positive" images of immigrant workers*
- *Employers to share their success stories to initiate similar initiatives*
- *Mentorship*

Q2. Who is best to do it?

- *Concerned organizations (schools) and other groups who could offer awareness workshops*
- *Schools: hire immigrant graduates.*

Theme: Leveraging Immigrants' Cultural Contributions for a Greater Vibrancy and Shared Sense of Belonging to Our City

Historically, Ottawa has gone from a population of 87,000 people in 1911 – when visible minority residents accounted for less than 2 percent of the total – to an estimated 920,000 people in 2011, of which 22 percent are foreign-born and 19 percent belong to a visible minority group. Currently our city's population growth is sustained primarily



through immigration (79 percent). And a large majority of immigrants coming to Ottawa (75 percent) are visibly, culturally, and linguistically different from the dominant social groups.

Our city's diversity is increasingly evident in the private sphere. We have great restaurants catering to all culinary tastes. We have private clubs featuring a range of options for entertainment. Small boutiques have over time sprung across the city displaying a variety of tastes in home décor and fashion. Mosques are being built in many neighborhoods and a growing number of churches are run by minority leaders.

This flourishing diversity in the private sphere is ill-matched by the reality of our public sphere. Our public events, civic celebrations, recreation options, school curricula, physical infrastructure, and memory institutions reflect very little of the burgeoning diversity our city's population.

Discussion Questions

1. *What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?*
2. *Who is to best do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?*

Key words emerging from the discussion:

Infrastructure for cross-cultural communication; organic events catering to cultural exchange; immigrant engagement in city cultural planning; media; public space, such as Ottawa Public Library; open communication and dialogue; intersectoral; community - wide effort.

Group 1

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?

- Opening up Ottawa's knowledge of its diverse communities; visible minorities do not participate in city-wide cultural planning
- Enhanced communication strategies that are inclusive, not assimilating
- Promoting 'cross-pollination' between communities and cultural events
- Consulting with community-based groups before constructing cultural programming to include these communities into such programming
- Promoting cultural exchanges through the arts, culture, culinary traditions to enhance cross-community interactions and spawn relationships. Organic events catering towards an exchange of practice/sharing practice between individuals and organizations
- Addressing the lack of knowledge or lack of outreach from city or funding organizations
- Addressing the problem of lack of funding opportunities available to cultural communities
- City needs to ease the navigation of their resources. City needs to participate in the community.



In conclusion, there has to be an **easier infrastructure for communities to cross-communicate**. Generate creative collaborations and support existing ones. Moreover, encourage communities to collaborate and exchange expertise from their field of knowledge.

Group 2

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?

- Communication between cultural organizations and community is key
- Encouraging cultural exchange
- Building a sense of belonging; promoting cross-cultural participation: “us” vs. “them
- Promoting civic participation, dialogue and connecting with the 3 levels of government, business and media.

Group 3

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?

- We need to know more about Ottawa’s diversity: the statistics, profile of populations coming to Ottawa, etc.
- Identifying community leaders and public spaces that are engaging and inclusive
- Getting the word out there. There are great events happening, but communication is lacking.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- The individuals and individual communities – identifying champions.
- Community networks
- Through celebrations (sport, entertainment/food)
- Community newspapers and publications
- Individuals by taking personal ownership of achieving cultural integration. Everybody needs to be part of this change in our personal lives.

Group 4:

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?

- “Changer ma communauté” project at Ottawa Catholic School Board (learning about education in our school boards)
- Dialogue in public with community leaders
- Big commitment to shaking things up
- Public space for immigrants



- Removing the barriers with professional organizations
- Structured systematic involvement of all main players, cultural committees, boards, media.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- All main players and partners: 3 levels of government and funders, schools, businesses, NGOs, service and professional service organizations, media (TV, radio, newspaper).
- Service providers to create audio-visual tools. Examples include the experience of Inuit Truth and Reconciliation committee creating a video documentary of their Report.
- City of Ottawa contemplating idea of mentorship (re arts funding support)
- Artists, because they have special power to become symbols of society, representing what people are going through and their sense of identity
- Media/ movies
- Example of 'Contact Ontario', MASC (Multicultural Arts for Schools and Communities)
- Community development front-line workers at community health centers and community health and resource centers.

Group 5:

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?

- Increase inclusiveness and a sense of belonging
- Early diversity education
- Promote the notion of "us" not "them"
- Increase funding for grassroots organizations to promote awareness on their events, art, culture
- More annual events to promote discussions on immigrants and their contributions

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- City of Ottawa
- Media/social media
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Community leaders
- Forum participants
- Cross-cultural participation
- Awareness
- Building capacity
- Building a sense of belonging: "us" not "them"

Group 6:

Question 1: What is needed to leverage the flourishing diversity of our community into the public life of our city?



- Identifying talents of immigrant artists and gaps in leveraging it by collecting the data and studies
- Providing public space to artists to showcase their talent.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Ottawa Public Library and School Boards can develop opportunities to showcase cultural exhibits at no charge
- Community leaders who can step outside of their own cultural groups and help cross-cultural exchange
- Ethnic grassroots organizations themselves.

Theme: Leveraging Immigrants' Civic Contribution for Greater Progress in Equity and Inclusion

An important, but often overlooked asset in Ottawa's arsenal for progress in equity and inclusion is the presence of a large number of integrated immigrants. The established, foreign born citizens of Ottawa share a profound awareness of the many challenges new immigrants have to overcome in order to find their ways into their new community. Many among them are committed to helping new immigrants in their neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and worship places. Some take on leadership roles in promoting immigrants' equitable access to social, health, and education services.

At the same time, many organizations that serve the diverse citizens of Ottawa encounter significant capacity challenges in their efforts to be accessible to immigrants. This is not surprising given that the journey towards inclusion requires sustained and comprehensive efforts to address staff training, human resource management, community connections, policy development, program planning, organizational culture, and so on.

1. *How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?*
2. *Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?*

Key words emerging from the discussion:

Civic education and training; public spaces; community leaders and champions, community /grassroots networks; immigrant involvement in various boards; participatory program development with direct engagement of immigrants in devising services for them; volunteer opportunities; changing lexicons and stereotypes at workplace, starting from HR; community forums and celebrations.

Group 1:

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Build the capacity to advocate; identify and cultivate leaders
- Promote immigrants' involvement and participation in decision-making process
- Enhance participation on different boards and other decision-making bodies
- Build collaborations, partnerships
- Provide volunteer experience
- Enhance skills for representation
- Organize support groups; explore or start new initiatives
- Organize community network or individual champions
- Bring commitment and patience to process to bring about the change.

Group 2:

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Conduct awareness training: avoid the assumption that newcomers know Canadian institutions and systems; prepare teachers for civic training in schools
- Overcome the disconnect between the service provider agencies and the newcomers: we think we know what they need, but instead we need to go to the community and ask them first-hand what they need
- Offer a feedback service for newcomers to voice their opinions and concerns
- React to the needs as they are asked – utilize 'user-driven' services
- Invite the communities to integrate, not segregate themselves
- The word 'inclusion' has to be deeper than just inviting to participate.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Settlement services and real people
- Engaging the newcomers already in the system to contribute to engaging other newcomers
- Using an immigrant 'exit survey' to help determine ROI

Group 4

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Have more newcomers as members of the Boards
- Change the bias/barriers associated with newcomers:
 - ✓ Check individual's skill set first
 - ✓ Give them opportunity to gain 'Canadian' experience
 - ✓ Thoroughly recognize their credentials in a timely and efficient manner
- Educate staff about benefits of hiring immigrants (i.e., they bring in new ideas, innovations, creativity)
- Review present policies and revise them to be more inclusive, and influence change
- Ensure that policy drives action
- Start with Human Resources – this is where education begins
- Seek more representation of diverse population in the workplace
- Use diversity to inspire change and growth

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Leaders of individual organizations
- Collaboration with the organizations' funders

Group 5:

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Teach newcomers how to use existing structures
- Create spaces, opportunities for newcomers to engage beyond their "comfort zone"
- Remember that 'inclusion' sometimes entails developing specific initiatives for newcomers, sometimes it also means ensuring their involvement in existing program
- Get community together to celebrate diversity and vitality

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Inter-sectorial collaboration
- Community forums – they create opportunities around engagement
- Recognize cultural moments through diverse cultural celebrations – creating a sense that this is also their space
- Reflect community diversity in staffing/volunteers
- Step-by step effort, starting with volunteers

- Ensure that communities see themselves in changes in organizations; acknowledge their role in change

Group 6

Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Make it a priority: reflect in the organization's strategic plan, understand the benefits to organization, address resistance by recognizing and acknowledging organization's own culture
- Make the organization accessible for all
- Reflect diversity in hiring practices: determine the right medium for job advertisement (online, etc.) and use multiple languages
- Increase knowledge of newcomers about how to access public organizations (City of Ottawa, community facilities and resources, etc.); hold free accessible public events frequently
- Involve diverse communities in discussions and program planning, not just as clients but as co-builders
- Give information in a simple language
- Reach out to specific communities. Build trust and rapport. Use 'deep outreach'.
- Be mindful of language considerations (English/French/others)
- Evaluate to ensure that services are accessible and in comfortable locations; greetings are in multiple languages.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Involve immigrants themselves in the process: from being clients to participants
- Organizations and bureaucracy are to be flexible; allow communities to shape/own their programs and processes
- Connect with key leaders
- Real listening leads to changes in action
- Identify existing resources (who can contribute what and how much?)

In conclusion, make the organization/self-accessible via outreach to communities and via organizational change.

Look out: who's excluded?

Look in: how can we change?

Group 7



Question 1: How can we best leverage immigrants' civic contributions – that is their awareness, commitment, and leadership – and at the same time help public service organizations progress on equity and inclusion goals?

- Open the doors: strengthen partnerships with small, grass-roots organizations, promote dialogue between organizations and groups. Public libraries can take such a role.
- Give people mentors – someone to ask questions to.
- Organizations should hire immigrants and then those people hired can welcome other new immigrants to the organization - be a model to other immigrants, give them hope and be a foster person.
- Youth Service Board: tap into new immigrant groups – make sure our services are relevant
- Introduce modifications into City's services for seniors: Chinese seniors are more mobilized, learn from them and adapt more appropriately
- Training workshops on different cultural practices and behaviors
- Provide appropriate physical space and design: for example, Starbucks coffee cups can give a "You"/"Us" image.
- Dialogue forum: opportunity to work as a volunteer. Often, recent immigrants are not accepted as volunteers – thus, we need to make the situation more inclusive
- Work for opportunities: community gardens' model - bring diverse groups together, sometimes speaking in 10-15 languages in one garden; lots of interesting sharing through community kitchens.

Question 2: Who is best to do it? What creative collaborations are possible to leverage this contribution?

- Service providers and employers, by sharing organizational learning and best practices; lots of stories get buried – by bosses and by organizations, especially front-line workers. These are wonderful examples of things tried within organizations that don't get recognized.
- Collaboration and dialogue between organizations and immigrant groups (especially linking small grass-roots). Organizations need to continually check to make sure that services are relevant. One approach to doing this could be hiring immigrants on staff.