Unleashing the Entrepreneurial Potential of Immigrants

Immigrants come to Canada seeking a better life. And Canada is seeking more immigrants and a more diverse international trade agenda to secure the future prosperity of the country. In an era of aging workforce and declining numbers of new workers entering the labour market, immigration success will be foundational to maintaining Canada’s high living standard. This includes self-employment and entrepreneurial success.

Research data shows that after 4 to 10 years of living in Canada, entrepreneurship rates among immigrants surpass those of Canadian-born residents. But the Conference Board of Canada has reported that immigrant businesses have mixed success due to common challenges including weak business and social networks, business and regulatory knowledge, language skills and business culture understanding, as well as a lack of targeted supports for immigrant entrepreneurs. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that this is also the case in Waterloo Region.

So, while the entrepreneurial spirit is thriving among immigrants and refugees, it appears there is much to do for communities like Waterloo Region to really tap into the full potential that immigrant entrepreneurism offers to local job creation, economic and community development.

This issue of our Newsletter focuses on immigrant entrepreneurism in Waterloo Region. It explores the challenges, outcomes and potential of immigrant entrepreneurism. It shares the experiences of local immigrant entrepreneurs making a go of their business. It profiles local programs supporting immigrant entrepreneurism. It includes information about the people involved with the Immigration Partnership as well as work being done by our partners.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and that you are inspired to reflect on the importance of immigrant entrepreneurism to the future of Waterloo Region and how you can support newcomers in making their business endeavours a smashing success.

Tara Bedard
Executive Director, Immigration Partnership
Revitalizing Small and Medium Sized City Economies through Immigrant Entrepreneurship

Nelson Graham, Geography Masters Student, Memorial University, and Margaret Walton-Roberts, Professor, Graduate Coordinator, Geography and Environmental Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University

Immigrants to Canada have made significant contributions to national economic development through their innovative entrepreneurship. Waterloo Region has been at the forefront of benefitting from this reality, from the Guderian family who settled here in 1956 and launched Delta Elevator, to Tobias Lütke, one of the founders of Shopify who moved to Canada from Germany in 2002.

Statistics Canada data from 2010 indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs come from four broad immigration classes: business, refugee, economic and family. Over a quarter of all business class immigrants are self-employed, the highest ratio of self-employment among immigration classes, but they make up the smallest ratio among all immigrants that come to Canada. Subsequently, they make up only 10 per cent of all immigrant businesses in Canada. Economic and family class immigrants have self-employment rates of 14.9 per cent, and 14.4 per cent of refugees are self-employed. These figures show that immigrants from all classes are active in the area of self-employment and entrepreneurship. Research indicates this pattern is linked in part to a lack of labour market opportunity and, in some cases, discrimination. In fact, 40 per cent of recent immigrants stated they were self-employed as a result of a lack of job opportunities. Immigrants have low rates of entrepreneurship in the first two years after they arrive but after 4 to 10 years they surpass rates among Canadian-born citizens. Immigrant businesses have smaller numbers of employees than Canadian born individuals. Roughly two thirds of immigrant entrepreneurs are male, and in 2010 more than half of all immigrant businesses were in five broad categories: professional, scientific and technical services, retail and trade, accommodations and food services, transportation and warehousing, and construction. Some studies have shown that immigrant entrepreneurs have higher annual incomes than Canadian-born entrepreneurs, and that immigrants who were self-employed made more money on average than the immigrant population in general. However, that is not to say that immigrant entrepreneurs always thrive.

Most Canadian immigrant entrepreneurial research has been focused on Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Here immigrants have been found to exhibit higher rates of entrepreneurship than Canadian-born citizens, and the importance of immigrant self-employment has been well documented. Research has focused on the factors that encourage immigrants towards entrepreneurship. Research has found that entrepreneurs in large Canadian cities sought self-employment as a way to overcome labour market barriers. Thus entrepreneurship is seen as a viable way to climb the socio-economic ladder. Non-recognition of education and credentials, language barriers and discrimination in hiring practices are leading contributory factors for the high rates of entrepreneurship among immigrant newcomers.

Research conducted in Canadian gateway cities has also contributed to understanding the experiences and barriers immigrant entrepreneurs have endured in their business activities, which can help communities provide the right supports to strengthen the entrepreneurial endeavours of immigrants. It has demonstrated that immigrant entrepreneurs in both small and large cities are at risk of suffering from low annual incomes and can struggle to adapt to Canadian business norms and expectations.
In small to medium-sized cities (SMC) such as Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, newcomers’ entrepreneurial success relies on human and social capital as it does in larger metropolises, but their business outcomes are arguably shaped more by community responsiveness to their business. With smaller immigrant populations in SMCs, immigrants’ role in place-making through their economic activity is potentially more profound. Another study contributed to the limited literature that focuses on the process of place-making in a mid-sized city, demonstrating the importance of understanding interactions between immigrant businesses and SMC social spaces since successful immigrant entrepreneurship can result in significant community development. Consider for example the success of Peace by Chocolate, founded by the Hadhad family in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. This refugee family restarted their chocolate business from scratch after being displaced by the Syrian war in 2016. Peace by Chocolate now employs 50 people. They sell their chocolate all over Canada and have put Antigonish and its community on the national news, on UN agendas, and their chocolate has even made it into space!

The possibilites for immigrant entrepreneurship to revitalize economies and contribute to community development are clear. Governmental policy in Canada has emphasized recruiting immigrants to SMCs, but the retention and integration of immigrants, including those intending to become entrepreneurs, have been a challenge. The lack of settlement and business infrastructure often acts as a push force against newcomers staying in SMCs. With lower immigrant numbers, newcomers have a harder time of becoming socially embedded within their Canadian communities compared to larger traditional immigrant gateway cities. Complicating research on this topic is the fact that many immigrant businesses are clustering in suburban regions rather than in urban cores. To continue to benefit from the extraordinary contribution of immigrant entrepreneurs, Waterloo Region must maintain and enhance supportive settlement and business development infrastructure, and continue to nurture the community's openness to the possibilities immigrant newcomers and their families offer.

**Immigrant Entrepreneurs as Job Creators: The Case of Canadian Private Incorporated Companies**

“The gross job creation and destruction analysis found that firms owned by immigrants who have entered Canada since 1980—the population of immigrants used in this study—were more likely than firms with Canadian-born owners to be job creators than job destroyers. This gave immigrant-owned firms an advantage in net job creation. As a result, the unadjusted (raw) data indicated that immigrant-owned private incorporated companies registered a higher average annual net job creation per firm over the decade than their counterparts with Canadian-born owners. Firms owned by immigrants accounted for a disproportionate share of net job creation; they accounted for 25% of net jobs created by private incorporated firms over the 11-year period, while representing 17% of the firms studied. The analysis also found that entering firms played a larger role in job creation among the immigrant-owned firm population than among the population of firms with Canadian-born owners. Also, the immigrant-owned firms in the sample accounted for a disproportionate share of entering firms when compared with firms with Canadian-born owners.”

— Garnett Picot and Anne-Marie Rollin

*Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series*

Excerpt from a report released on April 24, 2019
The Challenges of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Waterloo Region

Elizabeth Arcila, Orange Sky Enterprises Founder

Waterloo Region offers, through Conestoga College and organizations like Waterloo Region Small Business Centre or Lutherwood, various types of training to teach newcomer entrepreneurs the basics of starting a business in Canada. In addition, some financial institutions, such as the Business Development Bank of Canada, offer financial advice and support. Orange Sky Enterprises has been offering a training program for newcomer entrepreneurs in Waterloo Region for more than seven years. So far more than 800 students have been through the program, where they’ve learned about business plan development, marketing and the financial basics of starting a business in Canada.

It is absolutely crucial to support newcomer entrepreneurs because they bring their unique experience, knowledge and ideas to the region. They have the possibility of earning a higher income, and entrepreneurs that become successful can provide jobs for other people and contribute to the region’s economic development.

There are some cultural, economic, social and educational challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs face when they start their own businesses here. One challenge is to master the English language enough in order to start, strengthen and maintain business relationships. Another challenge is understanding the culture of conducting business in Canada; to understand how Canadian business owners relate and negotiate with each other. Some newcomer entrepreneurs fail to learn about the Canadian market, and they apply the same strategies they used in their country of origin, which is a similar error made by many big American companies. Economic challenges faced by newcomer entrepreneurs come from a lack of knowledge of the Canadian market, the financial environment and the financial supports available from different organizations. It can also be hard for entrepreneurs to give up the comfort of having a stable income through a full-time job, which can lead some to postpone starting a business.

Tailored programs for newcomer entrepreneurs that focus on business plan development and market research are essential for them to be successful in a new market. To truly support the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants, educational programs need to be designed with enough flexibility to provide them with the education and tools they need to start their own businesses while giving them the flexibility and time to work towards making their ideas a reality.

“It is absolutely crucial to support newcomer entrepreneurs because they bring their unique experience, knowledge and ideas to the region. As a result, newcomers who have the possibility of earning a higher income, and entrepreneurs that become successful can provide jobs for other people, contributing to the economy of the Region.”

Participants of the Orange Sky Enterprises training program for immigrant entrepreneurs.
In Their Own Words: Immigrant Entrepreneurs’ Dreams Come True

Veronica Negrin

My husband, Carlos, and I came to Canada in the winter of 2000 with our two young children looking for a better life for our family. Both Carlos and I have veterinary degrees from Mexico and we worked in the pet industry since 1986. He started working as a vet technician while taking self-employment courses at the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington. I volunteered at a grooming shop until 2001 when I attended dog grooming school. In 2003 we opened our first grooming salon and retail store, Home Pet Home, in Guelph. In 2005, after selling our house and getting a bank loan and financial help from our family, we acquired Pinetree Pet Care Centre, a pet boarding facility on Highway 6 between Guelph and Fergus. We moved our grooming salon and our family to Pinetree. I became an International Certified Master Groomer in 2008 and a Certified Feline Master Groomer in 2011. I obtained a Pet Celebrant Certification and a Pet Bereavement Specialist Certification in 2017. Seeking to improve our business and marketing plans, I attended the seminar “How to start business in Canada” in 2012 led by Elizabeth Arcila from Orange Sky Enterprises. Since then, we have been part of the seminars as facilitators sharing our experience.

Currently, I offer boarding and grooming services for cats and dogs, as well as pet funeral and cemetery services at Pinetree Pet Care Centre. Our business has allowed us to make a great living and it has created new jobs that benefit people in Waterloo Region. We have two full-time employees helping with grooming services, a full-time
employee in charge of boarding services and two part-time students in the summer time.

Being an immigrant and an entrepreneur is not easy. As soon as you arrive in a new country you find a lot of roadblocks, such as lack of Canadian work experience, credit history, public transportation and valid professional credentials. Therefore, you do what you can, for instance, taking a survival job, volunteering or taking English lessons to improve your communication skills. You go with the flow.

Taking over an established business as an immigrant can be a difficult task. One of our biggest challenges has been gaining the trust of and retaining the business’ existing clients. We have been here for 13 years and it has not been easy. However, along the way we also found many helping hands: Canadians eager to share their knowledge, other immigrants willing to share their experiences, new friends and people from our place of faith who have welcomed us with open arms.

When new immigrants ask for my advice, I tell them that it is important to connect with government services, other businesses and non-profit associations to ask for help. Taking courses on how to start your business and gaining Canadian experience by volunteering in your area of expertise are helpful. Obtaining as much information as possible to get licensed before setting up a business, doing workshops or getting certified in your field can also help accomplish your goals. I believe the most important step to becoming successful is to find your passion and to do what you love, allowing your skills to flourish. There are always new beginnings and second chances. If you were brave enough to leave your country, your customs and your extended family to start a new adventure, you can do anything you set your mind to. My final advice is that you should sit down from time to time to look at all your accomplishments and be proud of how far you have come.

Clara Ines Aguilar

I am a certified accountant. I started my first small accounting business in Colombia 30 years ago when I was a university student. There, I was always learning and trying to implement different ways to improve the procedures of my company by taking advantage of new technological trends. I decided to immigrate to Canada in 2011 to begin a new chapter in my life.

In April 2018, I started my business in Canada by founding Cloud International Advisors. Since then, my company has helped small businesses in Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph by providing bookkeeping services at the client’s office or virtually. We operate a mixed option of Cloud Accounting Software like QuickBooks Online, Time Sheets, FreshBooks, Hubdoc, Xero and Plooto.

Adapting to the Canadian accounting workplace has been a challenge because I have had to communicate in a second language, deal with a different style of doing business, as well as learn to give and receive feedback and understand new management models. I’m still learning, but I describe myself as a lifelong learner. My best advice for those who plan to start a business here in Canada is to stay on track with a lot of perseverance and patience.
Nansi Aburaneh

In 2009, I created Nanaz Kitchen Inc., with the help of my whole family. It is a catering business that blends my Mediterranean roots with Western style services to create a unique and unforgettable food experience. In 2008 I had the opportunity to study at Liaisons College with some of Canada’s most acclaimed chefs. Upon graduating I established Nanaz Kitchen, an in-home permitted catering business. Fast-forward 10 years and I am now opening a restaurant here in Waterloo at 600 Weber Street North, Unit B.

It has not been an easy journey to get where I am today. One of my biggest challenges was to acquire my Chef Diploma. I wanted to be a certified Chef, and in order to do so I had to go back to school. I had four kids under the age of 14 at the time, my husband was very ill and my English skills were not the strongest.

However, with my family’s assistance, a dictionary and my perseverance, I finally graduated from my class with the third highest score. I do not want to make it sound easy because it was not, but with determination, support and hard work I succeeded.

At the age of 18 when I came to Canada I did not speak any English at all. I know how hard it can be and how far away objectives may seem, but if you have a dream, I urge you to pursue it and to speak out. Communication is the key to not only make your dream a reality, but to be able to create and succeed in your business as well. Speak with a local community organization that can help you support your dream, and you will be surprised by the response you will receive.

Immigrant Entrepreneur Supports and Resources:


2. Small Business Advice Support Services & Regulations. Guidance and grants for small businesses in Ontario: [https://www.ontario.ca/page/small-business-advice-support-services-regulations](https://www.ontario.ca/page/small-business-advice-support-services-regulations)

3. Waterloo Region Small Business Centre. Development support for new or existing businesses in Waterloo Region: [https://www.waterlooregionsmallbusiness.com/About.htm](https://www.waterlooregionsmallbusiness.com/About.htm)


My name is Eliana Bedoya. I am from Colombia and I moved to Canada in 2008. I am a mother and a wife, and my family motives me every day to persist in this amazing adventure of entrepreneurship. From a young age, I had interest in fashion. Carnivals, with their vibrant colours, really inspired me to find my passion for sewing. As a hobby, I enjoyed creating unique handmade aprons that connected with the people I made them for. It is from that experience that I decided to build my business, Gourmet Aprons & Accessories. I specialize in handmade aprons, custom made along with other kitchen accessories. I have been developing my business for more than three years. It has been a long on-and-off journey. Although I have encountered hardships, Gourmet Aprons has brought a lot of joy to my heart.

As an entrepreneur, I believe that the challenges we face are what strengthen our pursuit. Personally, I have found that language barriers are my greatest obstacle as a businesswoman. With English being my second language and the dominant language of business, it has been difficult for me. At times I get frustrated when I can not communicate my thoughts correctly to others. The lack of knowledge of Canadian culture also brought challenges and slowed down my business progress.

If you are an immigrant who wants to run your own business and are looking for advice on how to do it, I would say that it is very important to identify the purpose in starting your business and ask yourself: “Does this idea match my passion?” Likewise, I encourage you to find a mentor or personal advisor. They will support you and guide you in different areas of your business. Also, setting achievable short and long-term goals will help you stay on track. Finally, remember to celebrate each milestone with your team and colleagues and get ready for the next step.

I hope my story inspires you to chase your dreams. The adventure of being an entrepreneur will take time. It will teach you to be persistent and you will learn new lessons in every step. Some days will be sunny and others will not, but in the end the journey will be a learning lesson to move to the next stage.
Newcomer Programs in Waterloo Region

Self-Employment for Immigrants: Building Entrepreneurial Excellence program

Tina Allishaw, Manager of Community Partnerships and College Collaboration, Conestoga College

Conestoga College initiated the Self-Employment for Immigrants: Building Entrepreneurial Excellence program after recognizing that it was becoming more difficult for newcomers to find employment in their related field. The program came to light in 2017 to support newcomers in creating their own work by utilizing their current skills in new ways.

Self-Employment for Immigrants: Building Entrepreneurial Excellence is a 16-week program offered by Conestoga College that supports newcomers with building their business by enhancing skills, knowledge, awareness and networking. The content of the program covers a variety of subjects such as Market Validation, Business Card Development, Sales and Development, LinkedIn, Networking, Pricing and Legal Considerations.

The program offers newcomers a range of benefits, including: To start or grow their own business; to strengthen their sense of community belonging and generate profits to have a comfortable life here in Waterloo Region; and to develop personal and professional connections to help their business. This program creates more inclusive communities for newcomer youth and helps them develop a sense of belonging. It also encourages the wider community to be welcoming and inclusive.

So far, the program has helped approximately 100 participants to start their own business. Approximately 70 per cent of program participants move forward with their business idea and are successful in generating a profit. Others have moved on to other employment or continue to research key elements to develop their business idea.

For more information about the program, call 519-748-5220 ext. 3448 or visit: http://www.conestogac.on.ca/new-canadians/

Waterloo Region Small Business Centre’s Start-up Business Basics for Newcomers

The Waterloo Region Small Business Centre recently offered a targeted program for immigrants called Start-up Business Basics for Newcomers. The program was available to immigrants who were new to Canada and interested in starting a new business venture. The program helped immigrants learn the necessary steps to start their own business.

It covered a range of topics including:
- how to assess your entrepreneurial readiness
- the various forms of business ownership
- government regulations
- the importance of a business plan
- forecasting cash flow
- identifying your target market and client profile
- when and why to register for HST
- newcomer funding and training programs

To learn more about the program and when it will next be offered, contact: Ksenia Zverev, Small Business Advisor, Waterloo Region Small Business Centre, 519-747-6265 or ksenia.zverev@waterloo.ca.
Junior Achievement Waterloo Region Programs Prepare Students for a Prosperous Future

Erin Leroux, Program Manager, Junior Achievement Waterloo Region

Celebrating 100 years, Junior Achievement (JA) offers programs that prepare students for a prosperous future. JA is the world’s largest charitable foundation, active in more than 100 countries. It is devoted to educating youth about businesses and the opportunities its programs can provide.

JA Waterloo Region coordinates with volunteer business professionals to go into classrooms and connect their real-life experiences to learning for students using JA’s experiential content that includes workbooks, videos, board games and exciting challenges. The information delivered by volunteers’ bridges gaps in school curriculum on the topics of financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work readiness. JA Programs are free to parents and schools and are funded by local businesses and foundations. This year, more than 5,000 students have taken part in JA Waterloo Region programs.

Through JA’s Our Business World program, students learn about the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship in Canada. This inspires students to consider careers as business owners, and nurtures those who already have an entrepreneurial spirit. Our Business World leaders make learning fun by using games and multimedia tools to boost students’ self-confidence and help them retain learning. By the end of this program, students understand how a business operates and creates profit. It inspires them to ask, “Do I have what it takes to become an entrepreneur?”

JA offers programs for students in grades 3-12. JA’s flagship program, Company Program, provides high school students the opportunity to form a company with their peers. They are advised on management of the company by business professionals who volunteer their expertise to help the students over the 20 week course. Company Program provides a hands-on, no-risk opportunity to students in grades 9-12 who are interested in exercising and learning entrepreneurial skills.

Looking forward, youngsters will be the people driving change and innovation. JA volunteers inspire Waterloo Region youth to be those leaders. Schools can register for JA programs at: www.jawr.ca. JA relies on dedicated volunteers and has a great need for more of them. If you are interested in delivering a one-day program, you can contact JA Waterloo Region at: info@jawr.ca.
New Canadian Youth Connections Program

Hoda Al-Obaidi, Service Coordinator-New Canadian Youth Connection, Community Justice Initiatives

New Canadian Youth Connections (NCYC) is a collaborative program created by Reception House Waterloo Region and Community Justice Initiatives that aims to create an inclusive and strong community using a whole society approach that works with multiple actors.

Our main goal is to create friendship circles for newcomer youth with volunteers from the community. Friendship circles form through participation in a weekly recreational night and two homework support nights where volunteers and refugee youth interact. From these interactions, we hope that natural connections form between volunteers and the newcomer youth. The circles then meet outside of the program to participate in activities that are unique to their interests (sports, arts, etc.).

Through NCYC, volunteers and newcomers build connections that break down cultural barriers and foster a sense of belonging. Friendship Circles provide newcomers with the opportunity to acquire language skills, be introduced to social norms, obtain resources, access mental health services and get educational and emotional support. It also provides the volunteers with an opportunity to better understand the refugee experience and get to know the newcomers who could be their neighbours, classmates or coworkers one day. To learn more about the program or get involved see: https://cjiwr.com/new-canadian-youth-connection/

The Immigrant Business Expo is coming to Waterloo Region

The Immigrant Business Expo is coming to Waterloo Region for the first time on September 21, 2019, at the Kitchener City Hall. The Expo is a great opportunity for immigrants to enhance their understanding and awareness of entrepreneurship and business in Canada. This annual, one-day event brings together exhibitors, resource people, subject matter experts and enthusiastic immigrants on a platform of learning, interaction and fun, and includes one-on-one exhibitor interactions, panel discussions and business workshops. One of the Expo segments most loved by participants is a small business clinic where they get personal time with an expert to discuss their very own business idea or challenge.

Since its inception in Toronto in 2016, the Immigrant Business Expo has been an event of significant importance for exhibitors and participants in the Greater Toronto Area. In 2018 alone over 400 immigrant entrepreneurs participated. The Expo provides an excellent opportunity for organizations and corporations to meet, discuss and share ideas with a group of highly motivated “immpreneurs” (immigrant entrepreneurs) and enthusiasts.

In Waterloo Region, the Immigrant Business Expo is being organized by New Horizons Media Inc. in collaboration with the Immigration Partnership and will include experts from many sectors. For more information and partnership inquiries, get in touch with: contact@newhorizonsmedia.ca or call 416-818-2040.
Immigration Partnership People

Nancy Bird, Senior Director, Community Investment, United Way Waterloo Region Communities

I have lived in Kitchener all my life. In a community that is growing and changing all the time, my experience is becoming less common. I think that’s a good thing.

I work at United Way Waterloo Region Communities, a registered charitable organization that brings together volunteers and fundraising to invest in local solutions to local issues. I have been with United Way for over 18 years. When I started to work there, I just needed a job. I started as the Receptionist/Administrative Assistant.

Now, I am the Senior Director, Community Investment. I have the privilege of developing our funding strategy to address local issues (with lots of input from researchers and community) and overseeing the funding that goes out to local agencies to support that strategy. I have a Bachelor in Arts from the University of Waterloo and recently completed a Master’s degree in Leadership from the University of Guelph.

I have been a member of the Immigration Partnership Council for two years now, and United Way has been a funding partner since the days of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) that pre-dated the Immigration Partnership. Supporting organizations that work directly with immigrants and refugees is important to United Way and to me because we believe that everyone should have the opportunity not only to survive, but to thrive in our community. Our community is stronger because we are working as a network and our voices are louder together. I believe we learn to work differently when there is diversity of perspectives, and that is what Immigration Partnership provides.

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Tips for New Canadians on Starting a Business
From Access Employment’s Entrepreneurship Connections Program

1. Go to local small business centres for information about registering your business
2. Ask for written contracts for each deal done
3. Consider the legal regulations for your business from the very beginning
4. Consider accessing association directories and visiting your local library to identify potential customers
5. Prepare and practice a strong sales presentation
6. Use online marketing to reach new customers
7. Target your key words and make sure you are on the right social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.)
Immigration Partnership Updates

Settle

Settle Steering Group (SSG) partners, including the Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, have been exploring the most critical legal support needs of immigrants and refugees and how to fill gaps. This is particularly relevant in light of budget cuts to immigration and refugee law services through Legal Aid Ontario.

The Language Learning Task Group developed an overview of English Language Learning Options in Waterloo Region, including formal class-based programs and informal options like conversation circles, tutoring or online learning. It is a helpful guide for organizations serving immigrants and refugees who want to improve their English skills and is available at: https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/EnglishLearningOptions. The Language Learning Task Group also met partners working with newcomer youth to explore ways to better connect youth to appropriate language learning options.

As part of work to address newcomer housing challenges, the Call for Nominations for the 2019 Newcomer Landlord Award is now open: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/landlordaward. This Award, presented in November at the National Housing Day celebrations, recognizes and encourages landlords that go above and beyond to provide housing to immigrants and refugees. Nominate a great newcomer landlord today! Local partners are also building stronger connections between settlement organizations and private refugee sponsorship groups. There was a training program for settlement workers in March and a design workshop in May exploring further collaboration.

Work

The Work Steering Group (WSG) has been focused on exploring a one-stop talent hub for employers to access immigrant and refugee talent. The action group developing this concept met several times and did a site visit to further assess need and develop a plan for action. The group is preparing a survey for employers to gather input and a questionnaire will go to partners and stakeholders to collect their ideas and commitments. The idea of a one-stop hub to access talent addresses a long-expressed concern by employers who want a more efficient and specialized system to support them. The action group will meet over the summer to review all input and roll out a more defined plan by the fall.

WSG had a busy winter and spring developing employer connections and sharing resources to help their hiring of newcomers. WSG hosted a networking event for employers as part of the March Global Skills Conference for internationally-trained immigrants where employers reported seeing outstanding talent and definite hires. The #HireImmigrantsWR campaign which encourages employers to hire immigrants continued with advertising on 98.5 radio, Faith FM and ongoing ads at the Apollo and Princess theatres. As a result, employers continue to inquire and are connected to local partners best able to help them access immigrant talent. WSG partnered with the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce on a Point of View event in June which promoted the value of hiring immigrants and refugees and shared resources that support employers in doing so. WSG also participated in several Chamber of Commerce Business after Five events to meet new employers and share information and resources.

WSG has a busy fall ahead. In partnership with New Horizons Media Inc., an Immigrant Business Expo will take place on September 21 at Kitchener City Hall. WSG is supporting employment service partners in hosting an employer recognition event and is planning a seminar for employers called Demystifying Bringing in Foreign Trained Workers. The workforce gap continues to grow due to the aging population and lower numbers of new workers entering the job market. Immigrants and refugees are a key solution to this challenge and WSG is working hard to ensure the gap between this talent pool and employers is bridged with efficient and clear systems and programs.
Belong

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21), the Belong Steering Group (BSG) encouraged people across Waterloo Region to take part in the #belongtogetherWR social media campaign for the third year in a row. This campaign aims to encourage Waterloo Region residents to take a stand against all types of racism and discrimination in our community. The campaign was very successful and we couldn’t have done it without you!

Members of the BSG social inclusion action group met regularly to follow up on its November 2018 WR Multicultural Connections Forum where leaders and members of various ethno-cultural groups developed ideas and voted on actions to increase social connectedness among Waterloo Region’s multicultural communities. At the beginning of April the action group hosted another meeting with the ethno-cultural group leaders and is organizing a second Waterloo Region Multicultural Connections Forum that will take place during the summer.

Through the Welcoming and Inclusive Municipalities Working Group Waterloo Region’s first ever Newcomer Day is being planned in the City of Cambridge. On Tuesday, September 17, the day will kick off with a community citizenship ceremony hosted by the City of Cambridge in partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. The ceremony will be followed by Newcomer Day celebrations at Cambridge City Hall. We invite you to join us in welcoming and celebrating newcomers in the beautiful City of Cambridge.

Partnership-wide

On the collective learning front, Immigration Partnership launched the results of its 2018 Partner Survey and facilitated partnership-wide discussions about what the results mean for future planning of the Partnership’s work and of individual partners. The 2019 survey of immigrants and refugees opened and runs June 17-July 9 online and in-person in multiple languages. It collects information on newcomer experiences to improve how newcomers are supported. We partnered with the University of Waterloo on its Waterloo Region Matters Survey to understand current perceptions of immigration in Waterloo Region – the data will be analyzed and shared to shape the way partners are developing their work. We also worked with the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services Department to develop the 2019 Immigration Profile, which does a deep dive into the most recent census and other data on immigration in Waterloo Region to develop local understanding of immigration trends and experiences.

On the strong and responsive systems and policy front, the Partnership worked to strengthen the immigration focus in municipal strategic planning processes by providing collective written submissions and recommendations on immigration matters to area municipalities and participating in strategic planning events and forums. The Immigration Partnership Council delegated to the Cambridge and Waterloo city councils and Regional Council with a focus on deepening relationships with the area municipalities.

Staff participated in the national Metropolis conference, which brings together academics, practitioners, government and business stakeholders from across Canada, with colleagues from the International Migration Research Centre and the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities research network, profiling work in Waterloo Region to build resilience in the newcomer settlement system.
In 2019 the Immigration Partnership marks 10+ years of community supporting immigrants and refugees. On February 13, past and present staff, community partners, public sector representatives and friends gathered at the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum to acknowledge and celebrate 10+ years of commitment, engagement and action to make Waterloo Region a better community for everyone.

To learn about the history of the Immigration Partnership visit: https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/en/business-opportunities/10_years_anniversary.aspx

“The story of the Immigration Partnership is not neat or linear. It is the story of a growing and evolving community, and a maturing of relationships. It is a demonstration that immigrant and refugee settlement is everyone’s responsibility, regardless of which sector you work in or which community you are a part of. It shows the strength of collective action, shifting mindset, changing ways of working and the realization of some impressive accomplishments in a relatively short period of time.”

—Karen Spencer, Immigration Partnership Council Chair
Community Events and Updates

Newcomer Day Celebration

The City of Cambridge, together with community partners will host the first every Newcomer Day celebration.

When: Tuesday, September 17, 1 - 7 pm
1 - 4 pm, Community Citizenship Ceremony
4:30 - 7 pm, Newcomer Day Celebrations

Where: Cambridge City Hall
Everyone Welcome

Manufacturing Day

Hosted by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, this is a day devoted to connecting local manufacturers to students and job-seekers in Waterloo Region.

When: October 4, 2019

Where: Waterloo Region manufacturing facilities
Details at: https://www.workforceplanningboard.com/projects

Waterloo Region Immigration Matters Forum

Learn and have your say on the direction of immigration in Waterloo Region.

Coming November 2019!

Waterloo Region Newcomer Landlord Awards Nominations Open

Nominations for the third annual Waterloo Region Newcomer Landlord Award are open. Nominate landlords who provide affordable housing solutions for recent immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region!

Deadline: Friday, October 4, 2019, 4:30 pm

Award Ceremony: November 17, 2019

Nomination form: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/landlordaward

New to Waterloo Region?

Check out the Immigration Waterloo Region calendar (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/calendar) and get weekly updates about upcoming immigrant and refugee-focused programs and events at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/subscribe.