

Engaging Newcomer Volunteers

A Guide for Organizations in St. John's



ST. JOHN'S
LOCAL IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIP



ASSOCIATION FOR NEW CANADIANS

Table of Contents:

- About the St. John's Local Immigration Partnership.....p.3
- About the Association for New Canadians.....p.4
- About the Toolkit.....p.5
- Introduction.....p.6
- Newcomers in St. John's.....p.7
- Creating Welcoming Organizations.....p.8
- Integrating Supportive Practices.....p.12
 - Recruitment and Intentional Outreach
 - Intake and Screening
 - Orientation and Training
 - Support
 - Retention
 - Fostering Leadership
- Conclusion.....p.14
- Available Supports in the St. John's Area.....p.15
- Additional Resources.....p.17
- Referencesp.18

About the St. John's Local Immigration Partnership

The St. John's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is a collaborative community initiative dedicated to helping newcomers fully engage in all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life in the City.

Hosted by the City of St. John's, the St. John's LIP is co-chaired with the Association for New Canadians and is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The LIP model is national in scope, and currently there are over 65 LIPs across the country.

Building on the knowledge gained through other LIPs across the country, the St. John's LIP's role is to:

- Establish priorities and develop action plans to help address key immigrant issues.
- Encourage broader stakeholder collaboration.
- Help St. John's grow as a welcoming community for newcomers.

Successful LIPs expand the number of stakeholders involved in immigration planning and service development and better coordinate those services. They are also meant to improve "host" community attitudes and receptivity to newcomers in support of a two-way street model - this is why the St. John's LIP has a working group focused on **Welcoming Communities and Social Connections**. This working group seeks to promote positive attitudes toward immigration and the presence of newcomers in the community, create opportunities for newcomers to participate in social, cultural and civic life in the City, and strengthen social connections between newcomers and Canadian-born residents in St. John's.

This toolkit was developed with support from the WCSC working group, and aligns with the LIP objectives of helping enhance existing programming in the community to benefit newcomers. During the development of this toolkit we worked with staff responsible for volunteer programming within the CSJ and to help spark a discussion with other organizations working in this area.



About the Association for New Canadians

The Association for New Canadians is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to the provision of settlement and integration services for immigrants and refugees. For over 35 years, the Association has delivered programs and services designed to support all aspects of newcomer integration, ranging from settlement information and orientation, to language learning, skills development and employment.

Relying on an experienced and dedicated team of employees, supported by more than 250 volunteers, the Association offers the following programs and services:

- Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)
- Settlement, Orientation, and Integration Services
- ESL Training Program (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)
- Settlement Workers in the Schools (SWIS) Program
- AXIS (Acquiring Experience; Integrating Skills) Career and Employment Services
- Language for Work Program (Education and Support for Employment)
- Settlement Outreach/Distance Supports
- Volunteer Connections Program
- Translation/Interpretation Services (over 60 languages)
- Specialized Programming for Women/Men/Children/Youth/Young Adults
- Diversity Training/Public Education



About the Toolkit

This toolkit was developed in late 2017-early 2018 by the St. John's Local Immigration Partnership and the Association for New Canadians.

We would like to acknowledge Kate Lahey, Norma Chapple, Sanchita Chakraborty, Heather Hickman and the LIP Welcoming Communities and Social Connections Working Group for reviewing, fact-checking and providing feedback throughout this process.

We would also like to thank the organizations that participated in preliminary activities to ensure that this toolkit reflects the needs of voluntary organizations in St. John's. These organizations include: Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Eastern Health, Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, and the City of St. John's.

This Toolkit adapts many of the key considerations put forward in **"Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomer Volunteers: A Guide for Organizations"**¹, a project of Volunteer Canada which consolidates current research and practical resources to support inclusive community engagement strategies. We thank all of the organizations that are creating excellent resources to strengthen newcomer engagement in volunteerism.

¹ "Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomer Volunteers: a Guide for Organizations", Volunteer Canada
<https://volunteer.ca/content/building-blocks-engaging-newcomer-volunteers>.

Introduction

Strong social networks are important for both the health of communities and for any individual's sense of belonging. It is particularly important to reflect on the social connections that newcomers² have after starting a new life in Canada. Social connections can offer tangible support (shelter, money) or intangible support (friendship, emotional support). As a result, it is crucial to discuss how immigrants develop strong social connections to effectively navigate their new surroundings. Communities that actively work towards becoming more welcoming and inclusive to newcomers create the conditions for social connections to develop and help foster a community where everyone can thrive, regardless of their place of origin.

Volunteering and civic engagement are an important vehicle through which social connections are developed. Volunteerism presents a significant opportunity for individuals to expand their social and professional networks through meaningful working relationships, gain career-related experience and contribute to shaping their communities. Some of the concrete benefits of volunteering for newcomers include practicing a new language, learning new skills, gaining Canadian work experience, building resumes and making new professional contacts or friends.

Engaging newcomer volunteers can also help an organization be more effective by tapping into a diversity of competencies and experiences, widening the pool of potential volunteers, raising cultural awareness within the organization and promoting a positive relationship between the organization and the community.

Despite these benefits, there are often challenges for newcomers to get involved in community organizations and existing volunteer programming. According to Volunteer Canada "many immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than 10 years are still experiencing barriers to participation because of attitudes, structures and practices" (p.4). Integrating supportive practices can assist newcomers in overcoming these barriers and help further their participation in existing programs.

This Toolkit adapts many of the key considerations put forward in "Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomer Volunteers," a project of Volunteer Canada which consolidates current information and practical resources to support inclusive community engagement strategies. This toolkit takes this learning and tailors it to apply specifically to organizations working in the St. John's area. Although volunteer organizations in the St. John's area are the primary focus of this document, many of the lessons and considerations within can be applied not only to other jurisdictions, but to creating inclusive programming and promoting the participation of newcomers in community development initiatives more broadly.

This toolkit has been developed in order to:

- Provide organizations that have volunteer programs with tools to help promote diversity and increase newcomer participation within their programming.

² The term "newcomer" is broadly defined as someone who is new to Canada, regardless of their immigration status and length of time in the country.

- Highlight the importance of volunteerism for building social connections (especially between Canadian-born residents and newcomers).
- Help broaden newcomer engagement in volunteerism, which can in turn help newcomers succeed in other areas of their lives in St. John's (social, professional, etc).

We hope that the information in this toolkit will be particularly valuable to volunteer coordinators, career counsellors, and others working in community organizations in St. John's.

Newcomers in St. John's

The demographic makeup of St. John's is changing, and the diversity in cultures has increased substantially in recent years, with over 50 countries of origin represented.

According to 2016 Census, the total immigrant population of St. John's is 6,535, 6% of the total population of the City. 2,365 are recent immigrants who arrived between 2011-2016. 55% of immigrants in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador reside in the City of St. John's, and 67% reside in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area. The top countries of origin are the United Kingdom, United States, China, India, Philippines, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Bangladesh and Egypt.

For 6,180 residents, their mother tongue is a language other than English or French. For 3,250 individuals, the language spoken most often at home is a language other than French or English. The most common languages spoken most often at home (other than English and French) are Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Tagalog, and Bengali.

The City is also seeing a significant number of temporary residents, especially international students: In 2016 2,474 international students attended Memorial University (MUN Fact Book, 2016). Additionally, in 2015 there were 695 Temporary Foreign Worker Program work permit holders in the province.

In the winter of 2017 the Government of NL set a target of welcoming 1,700 immigrants by 2022 — 50 percent more than were accepted in 2015, and more than three times the number who came 10 years ago.

Newcomers to the province bring a rich resource of culture, education, and skills. It is crucial to ensure that St. John's is ready to help promote the participation of newcomers in all aspects of life in the City of St. John's. Ensuring the successful settlement and retention of immigrants in St. John's is thus considered essential, which is why The City of St. John's has identified making St. John's "A Magnetic and desirable city for newcomers" a key goal in its Economic Roadmap 2021.³

³ <http://www.stjohns.ca/publications/roadmap-2021-highlights>.

Creating a Welcoming Organization

A welcoming organization fosters an environment that allows for people from diverse backgrounds and mindsets to work effectively together and where everyone is encouraged to participate and contribute in a meaningful way. As a member of an organization, one place to start is to ask yourself “how welcoming is my organization currently?”

It is important to remember that newcomers to Canada are not one homogenous group – these individuals come from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds, languages and English proficiencies, prior employment and volunteer experience, and may face different barriers depending on race, country of origin, gender, sexuality, ability, income, age and any number of additional factors. Creating volunteer programming that is sensitive to the barriers that many different people face can help support newcomers in succeeding in their new country, and in turn can bring new perspectives, new energy and new opportunities to enrich your organization.

In many cases, human resource policies normally designed for paid staff can be applied to volunteer programming as well. Reviewing the organizations culture, policies and structures can be a good place to start.

- Can the organization articulate why it is important to engage newcomers?
 - Having a conversation with all staff and volunteers can be a good place to start in fostering a culture that is committed to supporting diversity.
- Is the organization willing to be flexible and willing to make some changes in order to support the participation of newcomer volunteers?
 - In many cases, small changes to existing programming and paying attention to barriers that newcomers may face can be enough to help get newcomer volunteers involved.
 - Asking for feedback from newcomers and longer-term immigrants can be a great way to better understand how programming can be improved to support newcomer engagement without making assumptions about barriers or needs.
- Do materials (i.e. brochures, stock images, website content, etc) depict a multi-cultural organization?
- Is diversity training available to staff and volunteers?
 - The ANC Diversity Team or another community organization may be able to assist.

- Is the organization familiar with Human Rights legislation?
 - The NL Human Rights Commission can assist in furthering your understanding of the Human Rights Act <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/index.html>.

- Does the organization participate in dialogue regarding diversity and inclusion in the community?
 - There are many events and learning opportunities being held on a regular basis in the city. Connecting with the Local Immigration Partnership or another organization in the immigration sector can help keep you up to date on events relating to immigration, diversity and multiculturalism happening in St. John's. [Subscribe to our newsletter](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) for updates.

- Does the organization know what supports and resources are available to increase its cultural intelligence and help become more supportive of newcomers?
 - In Appendix A you will find a list of suggested community resources available in St. John's.

- Does the organization reference a commitment to inclusion and diversity in mission, value statement, or formal policies?
 - Example: from [Community Sector Council NL](#):
"Approach our work with an entrepreneurial, goal-oriented approach, with a strong commitment to integrity, to diversity in all forms, and learning by listening, acting, and constant self-improvement."

- Does the organization have a diversity and inclusion strategy?
 - If not, this [resource](#) from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion can help you get started.

Supportive Practices

Organizations across the country have developed a range of supportive practices to help newcomer volunteers who may have particular barriers to accessing, or fully participating and benefiting from volunteer opportunities.

Outlined below are some supportive practices your organization can implement to address some barriers that may be challenging to newcomers.

Supportive practices that may assist newcomers may address the following barriers:

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Language
- Cultural Competency

Childcare: Consider whether a volunteer opportunity might allow for a volunteer to include their child. If it is an activity that could be inclusive of children make that clear in the position description. Additionally, consider allowing friends and family members to volunteer together. Being flexible about volunteer times or offering a range of volunteer time slots can also help individuals manage their childcare commitments and still be able to volunteer. For instance, if one care-giver is at home during the day attending to childcare responsibilities until another comes home, offering an evening time-slot may allow for that individual to participate.

Transportation: If a volunteer opportunity is accessible via public transportation consider including this information in the description (perhaps include which bus route stops at that location). Some organizations may offer transportation or a transportation allowance for all volunteers, however for those with limited resources simply including a map of the area, public transportation options available or directions from Google Maps can also be effective.

Language: Is fluency in English required for the specific volunteer task at hand? Consider including information about the language requirements. Many opportunities may not require more than a basic facility with English. Some organizations may be equipped to allot some resources for materials and use of interpreters. Others may look at alternatives, for instance by ensuring that all Volunteer Program policies and procedures are written in plain English. Pairing high-level low/ high level English speakers or allowing a volunteer to come with a friend who can act as a translator may be a way to address language barriers. This could be something to consider during the volunteer intake process.

Community organizations such as the Francophone Immigration Network or the ANC can assist in making referrals to translation and interpretation services.

Culturally Competent Practices: Has the person in charge of volunteers received training in the areas of human rights, diversity, cultural competency and harassment? If not, this should be provided. Organizations and individual staff members may benefit from maintaining meaningful partnerships with cultural groups and immigrant serving agencies to encourage and support the

diversification of the Volunteer Program. Liaisons in the community may be able to provide insights and advice on specific questions on an ongoing basis. It can also be very valuable for cultural intelligence training to be provided to all volunteers to help create a welcoming environment for all.

There are many simple adjustments that can be made to increase the organization's ability to include people from a diversity of cultural backgrounds. For example, providing a quiet room that individuals can avail of during prayer time may be one way to make your opportunity more accessible to Muslim volunteers. Another may be to ask if there are specific times of the year where individuals may have more or less time to volunteer because of other commitments (for example, the month of Ramadan may be a difficult time for some individuals to take on the extra responsibility).

Asking in volunteer application or intake forms if there are any considerations (religious, cultural or otherwise) that the organization should be aware of in order to help support their participation can be a good first step. Being flexible and acknowledging the range of family, cultural, religious, work, and educational commitments that individuals may have can be an important part of attracting new and retaining existing volunteers.

Resources:

- The ANC's Diversity Team may be able to assist in help your organization become more culturally intelligent and provide other suggestions on how to integrate culturally competent practices into your volunteer programming.
- The [NL Human Rights Commission](#) works to help the public gain a better understanding of the importance of protecting all people from violations of their human rights and can advise and help individuals, groups, organizations and governments on matters related to human rights. An important part of the Human Rights Commission's mandate is to educate and inform the public about the *Human Rights Act*. The Commission believes that the best way to reduce the occurrence of human rights violations is to ensure that all people and organizations know what their rights and responsibilities are under the *Human Rights Act*. The Commission is available to give free presentations and information sessions for any interested organizations, groups, or individuals. If you would like to discuss scheduling a presentation, please [contact us](#).
- Other organizations in the community may be able to assist you should you have questions. See the list of immigrant-serving, multicultural, cultural associations and faith-based organizations on page 16.

Integrating Supportive Practices in your Volunteer Program:

Some suggestions for ways to integrate an inclusive lens on the following aspects of a volunteer program:

1. Recruitment and Intentional Outreach

- Forming relationships with settlement agencies, organizations that promote multiculturalism, cultural associations, and neighbourhood associations can help ensure that opportunities are reaching newcomer's populations. Expanding from traditional communication channels that may be targeting the same people, and asking different organizations to share your opportunity with their members may help expand your reach to newcomer communities. Putting up posters in key public locations (such as libraries and community centres) or where service providers are located may also help reach individuals that may not be connected to your online networks.
 - On page 16 you will find a list of multicultural orgs/cultural associations that may be able to help promote your volunteer opportunities to newcomers.
- Longer term immigrants can serve as cultural bridges and help develop inclusive outreach strategies – ask people with lived experience of immigration, do these strategies make sense based on their experience?
- Some agencies may consider translating promotional material into a range of languages to engage those with limited English Language Skills. However, this may be challenging for organizations with limited resources. Using plain language and symbols wherever possible in promotional materials can help be a big help in mitigate some of these barriers.
- Using promotional materials that depict a multicultural organization (in stock imagery, for example) can help signal that the organization values diversity.

2. Intake

- Ensuring that staff are equipped to welcome individuals with limited English skills and provide information about volunteer opportunities.
- Assessing the language fluency requirements of the specific volunteer position or task at hand to see what is actually necessary for each task.

- Ensuring that screening processes and practices are designed with fairness and sensitivity. Providing support to those who may have more challenges navigating the intake process, especially if the intake requires steps like providing immunization records or Vulnerable Sector Checks.
- Allowing pairing for intake process- for example, allowing a volunteer to come with a friend or family member with a higher level of English to help interpret.

3. Orientation and Training

- Adapting group and one-to-one orientation with translation, interpretation, or non-verbal communication.
- Creating “buddy systems,” where a newcomer volunteer is matched with an experienced volunteer can help support orientation and training.
- Creating multiple versions of a presentation or training resources, making materials accessible to those with lower-level of English through the use of plain language and symbols (note that many other people with low levels of literacy besides newcomers to Canada may benefit from this as well).

4. Ongoing Support and Volunteer Development

- Creating opportunities that progressively develop newcomer volunteer skills and language fluency can be beneficial to both the organization and the volunteer. Matching a volunteer’s skill set or area of interest to specific roles or opportunities can help maximize the volunteer’s contribution to the organization, and at the same time is more likely to enhance the volunteer’s experience through professional development and skill building.

5. Leadership

- Research shows that although the roles and tasks of immigrant volunteers are varied, Canadian born volunteers are more likely to take on positions as organizers, fundraisers, chairs of committees, board members, and other leadership roles. The boards of

directors in non-profit organizations tend not to be reflective of the diversity of Canadian society or of immigrant involvement.⁴

- Organizations can actively address the barriers newcomers may face to accessing leadership positions by providing opportunities for newcomers to increase their leadership skills and experience.
- Assessing diversity in the organization's governance or leadership roles may help organizations see whether access to leadership roles is equitable and can help start a conversation about diversity in the organization.

The Value of Integrating Supportive Practices

Many of the supportive practices described above can help volunteer programming become accessible and inclusive of other groups who may face barriers to participating in volunteerism. One simple change may help address a barrier for people with disabilities, people from different socio-economic backgrounds, single parents, youth, women and others.

Creating volunteer programming that is sensitive to the barriers that many different people face can help support newcomers in succeeding in their new country, and in turn can bring new perspectives, new energy and new opportunities to enrich your organization.

Get in Touch!

For more information regarding the information in this toolkit, or to get involved, please contact Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator Jessica Barry at immigration@stjohns.ca or Association for New Canadians Volunteer Coordinator, Megan Howse at volunteer@ancnl.ca

We would be happy to help connect you with further supports and resources or to discuss how your organization could apply supportive practices in your volunteer programming to engage newcomer volunteers.

⁴ Bradshaw, Patricia & Christopher Fredette, (2011), The Inclusive Non-profit Boardroom: Leveraging the Transformative potential of Diversity, The Nonprofit Quarterly.

Resources:

Immigrant-serving, Multicultural, Cultural and Faith-Based Organizations in St. John's

The following is a list of Multicultural Organizations, Cultural Associations and Faith-Based Organizations in St. John's. Connecting with these organizations may help you promote your volunteer opportunities to newcomers in the region, or may be able to provide perspective or advice as your organization works towards integrating supportive practices for newcomers.

*Note that this is not an exhaustive list and as these are external organizations the LIP cannot guarantee that all contacts are up to date. If you would like to add an organization to the list please e-mail immigration@stjohns.ca.

Immigrant-serving and Multicultural Organizations:

- [Association for New Canadians](#)
- [AXIS Career Services \(Association for New Canadians\)](#)
- [COMPAS Immigration \(Federation des Francophones se Terre Neuve et du Labrador\)](#)
- [Multicultural Women's Organization](#)
- [Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council](#)
- [Réseau immigration francophone / Francophone Immigration Network](#)
- [Tombolo Multicultural Festival](#)
- [Sharing our Cultures](#)
- [Memorial University Internationalization Office](#)
- [Human Rights Commission of NL](#)
- [Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, Government of NL](#)
- [St. John's Local Immigration Partnership, City of St. John's](#)

Cultural Associations:

- Philippine-Newfoundland Organization
 - Contact Hazel Alpeurto: Tel: (709) 754-2823
- Greek Community of NL
 - Contact Katrina Bartellas: nlgreekassociation@gmail.com
- Korean Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
 - Contact Dr. C.W. Cho: cho@physics-mun.ca
- Friends of India Association
 - Contact Hyme Nainu: hnaidu@mun.ca

- Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
 - Contact Betty Wong: bwong@mun.ca
- [African Network Association](#)
- African and Canadian Association of Newfoundland
 - Contact: Alwell J. Oyet: aoyet@math-mun.ca
- Italians of Terra Nova
 - Contact Joseph Sale: jsale@crossbielgroup.com

International Student Groups at Memorial University

<https://www.mun.ca/become/graduate/international/studentgroups.php>

- [MUN Arab Society](#)
- [Bangladesh Students' Association \(BSA\)](#)
- [Brasileiros em Newfoundland](#)
- [MUN Chinese Students and Scholars Association](#)
- [MUN German Society](#)
- [Indian Youth Association \(IYA\)](#)
- [International Student Resource Centre \(ISC\)](#)
isc@munsu.ca 709-864-2002, UC-6002
- [MUN Iranians](#)
- [Korean Students Association at MUN](#)
- [La Sociedad de Español en MUN / The MUN Spanish Society](#)
- [MUN Malaysian Student Society](#)
- [Muslim Students Association at MUN \(MSA\)](#)
- [Newfoundland Japanese Society](#)
- [MUN Nigerian Student Association \(NSA\)](#)
- [MUN Pakistani Student Association \(PSA\)](#)
- [SEAS @ MUN | South East Asian Students at Memorial University](#)
- [MUN Vietnamese Association](#)
- [Zimbabwean Society](#)

Faith-Based Organizations:

- [Muslim Association of NL](#)
- [Masjid al-Noor](#)
- [Hindu Temple \(St. John's\) Association](#)
- [Jewish Community Havura](#)
- [Beth-el Synagogue](#)
- [Chabad Jewish Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [Sikh Community of St. John's](#)

- Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of St. John's
- Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation:
 - Tel: 726 3660
- Anglican Church of Canada
 - Tel: 576 6697

For more information see: <http://www.arts.mun.ca/localreligions/profiles/index.html>.

To learn more about volunteering in St. John's and Newfoundland and Labrador:

- Community Sector Council NL
- Student Volunteer Bureau, Memorial University

Additional Resources:

- Volunteer Canada Offers a useful list of additional resources: <http://volunteer.ca/newcomers>.
- For organizations: Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomer Volunteers
- For newcomer volunteers: Building Blocks for Newcomers Volunteering: A Newcomer's Guide to Volunteering

Research:

- Volunteerism and Civic Engagement Among New Canadians (Canadian Institute for Advanced Research in partnership with Manulife, 2014).
- Giving and Volunteering among Canada's Immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2012).
- Beyond the Boomers: A Guidebook for Building an Immigrant Workforce in the Nonprofit Sector (Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, 2011).
- Building Bridges: A Guide for Making Volunteer Programs Accessible to Persons of Diverse Cultures with Various Levels of English Language Proficiency (Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University, 2009).
- Making Connections: Social and Civic Engagement among Canadian Immigrants (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006).
- Untapped Resources: Opportunities for Volunteers with Limited English and French Language Skills – A Self Assessment Tool for Program Managers (Volunteer Ottawa, 1999)

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<https://www.mun.ca/ciap/Analysis/Factbook/Factbook2015.php>.

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