

Information Report



Service Area	Public Services
Date	Friday, June 19, 2020
Subject	Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership Update

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Council on Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) achievements in the 2019-2020 federal fiscal year (April 1-March 31), as well as its strategic plan going into 2020-2021.

Key Findings

GWLIP Project Achievements 2019-2020

The activities listed below were completed in 2019-2020. These activities served to increase knowledge and capacity in sectors serving immigrants; highlighting local needs, increasing access to local immigrant data, and reinforcing positive attitudes towards immigrants in the community. Selected projects include: the immigrant housing study; refugee settlement study; international student study; newcomer bike host program research; neighbourhood-level snapshots of immigration data; interactive map of community services; community inclusion campaign; supporting cultural programs and activities; employer roundtable events; and participating in economic development forums. Recommendations from GWLIP research studies have informed the 2020-2021 strategic plan.

GWLIP Strategic Priorities and Selected Activities 2020-2021

The following projects will build on GWLIP's work from the previous year, and are built on three strategic pillars. These pillars are increasing access to services; supporting education and cultural connection; and enhancing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for immigrants. Selected activities include: the interactive dashboard of local, neighbourhood-level immigrant data through the City of Guelph; increasing access to medical interpretation services; pilot housing mentor service; Bikes 4 Community Connection bike hosting pilot; newcomer community kitchen pilot; community inclusion campaigns; initiatives to support international students; and a newcomer youth mental health study.

Financial Implications

GWLIP is 100% funded by the Federal government, specifically the Ministry of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). GWLIP has been successful in their application for continued funding through a five year IRCC Grant 2020-2025. There are no financial implications to the City of Guelph.

Report

Details

The GWLIP was established in 2009 and is hosted by the City of Guelph. It serves the areas of both Wellington County and the City of Guelph. Directed by a Leadership Council of community stakeholders, GWLIP engages local service providers, businesses, and other institutions involved in the settlement and integration of newcomers. It supports community-level research, strategic planning, policy development, and improves the coordination of services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration.

Immigration impacts our economy, tax base, services, and politics. As of 2016, 21% of Guelph's total population and one quarter of Guelph's working-age population are immigrants, and this proportion is expected to increase as Canada's aging population and low birth rate requires even higher levels of immigration to stimulate economic activity. GWLIP has an important role to play to coordinate local efforts to ensure immigration is a success for all residents.

GWLIP has three strategic priorities: increasing access to services; supporting education and cultural connection; and enhancing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for immigrants. Through increasing access to services, GWLIP enhances the coordination and collaboration among community programs and services to provide immigrants and immigrant families with timely, clear and relevant information, and provides tools to access and navigate support services. Through the supporting education and cultural connection priority, GWLIP fosters cultural and social connections to support newcomers in their integration and language enhancement, as well as sharing knowledge on student integration. Through employment and entrepreneurship, GWLIP will continue to engage with employers to raise awareness of international talent, promote newcomer entrepreneurship, and support all levels of government in reviewing economic development policies around newcomer economic integration and workforce needs.

GWLIP has recently completed the 2019-2020 fiscal year, and has achieved its strategic goals for that period. Selected projects in 2019-2020 include the immigrant housing study, refugee settlement study, international student study, newcomer bike host research, neighbourhood-level snapshots of immigration data, interactive map of community services, a community inclusion campaign, supporting cultural programs and activities, employer roundtable events, and participating in economic development forums. Overall, GWLIP activities have increased knowledge about newcomer needs in the community to support policy and planning decisions. GWLIP activities have helped identify gaps in service delivery and promoted diversity, inclusion, and community connection. As an organization, GWLIP works toward facilitating the settlement process for newcomers, while remaining responsive to emerging needs in the community. Recommendations from GWLIP research studies have informed the 2020-2021 strategic plan.

Recognizing that work plans may need to be altered given the COVID-19 public health emergency, GWLIP plans to undertake the following projects and activities in 2020-2021 through consultation with our community partners:

1) Update Interactive Services Map

Update the current interactive map to ensure that community service information is accurate, up to date, and readily available.

2) Interactive Dashboard

In collaboration with the City of Guelph and GWLIP, create an interactive dashboard on the City of Guelph's website showing Statistics Canada census data on immigrant demographics at the neighbourhood level, in support of various sectors, services, and citizens.

3) RentSmart: Newcomer Lens [Housing Study recommendation 2019-2020]

Support the County of Wellington in including a newcomer lens in this landlord/tenant housing education program. The program will be promoted in the settlement sector, and to prospective landlord and tenant participants.

4) Housing Mentoring Program [Housing Study recommendation 2019-2020]

In partnership with Wellington County, the RentSmart program and the People and Information Network, train volunteers to provide a wide variety of housing supports to newcomer families, especially those who have English language barriers.

5) Housing Guide [Refugee Study recommendation 2019-2020]

In partnership with the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination and Wellington County Housing Services, develop and distribute an updated Housing Access Guide by adding housing information and resources for newcomers. The guide will be available to settlement services, as well as the wider population.

6) Improve Access to Medical Interpretation Services [Refugee Study Recommendation 2019-2020]

In partnership with Waterloo-Wellington Local Health Integration Network and Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Centre, convene and collaborate to develop resources that will increase awareness about the WWLHIN's free Medical Interpretation Service. This will support awareness and outreach in the Health and Settlement sectors.

7) Transportation Project

Transport related projects are twofold. The first activity will conduct research into newcomer transport choices, challenges, and barriers with support from University of Guelph's Community Engaged Scholarship Institute. The report will inform future policy and program development at multiple levels of government. The second project is a newcomer bike-mentoring pilot in partnership with Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington, the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation, and the City of Guelph. The goal is to encourage newcomers to use active transport and bikes as a safe, sustainable, and affordable means of alternative transportation while supporting social and cultural integration.

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Consultations

This report was written in consultation with GWLIP co-chairs Sandra Cocco, Executive Director - Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington, and Trish McComb Early Years Intake and Eligibility Manager, County of Wellington.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The GWLIP Strategic Plan aligns with the City of Guelph Strategic Plan priorities through the work to foster an inclusive community, celebrating diversity and the differences that make the community stronger. GWLIP also encourages Guelph's businesses to recognize and attract talent that will support growth and provide meaningful opportunities for all. This plan also supports the promotion of active transport, provision of housing that meets community needs as well as well-being and safety. GWLIP research increases knowledge in the community and this informs policy development, direct service planning, and program delivery.

Departmental Approval

Alex Goss, Manager, Community Investment

Report Author

Sherrylea Perera, Project Manager, Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership, Interim

This report was approved by:

Danna Evans

General Manager, Culture Tourism and Community Investment

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2621

Danna.evans@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Public Services

519-822-1260 extension 2558

Colleen.Clack@guelph.ca