

Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership Network Summit Report

February 7, 2013
Oakham House

“The Network Summit was an opportunity to connect, reflect and learn about different networks and their history.”

Summit Participant

Introduction

An agency or group working in isolation can no longer address complex social issues. Successful impact requires collaboration. Over the last decade, networks - partnerships and coalitions of stakeholders - have become a key vehicle for this collaboration. Bringing different players to the table, networks are analyzing community needs and mobilizing action, particularly for vulnerable groups. These networks are collaborating to address the concerns of seniors, youth, women, newcomers and the LGBTQ community. They are tackling issues from crime prevention to mental health. Over 45 of such networks were identified by the Network Research Project, some addressing a specific theme across the GTA, such as food security, and others involved in planning a specific neighbourhood initiative such as a service hub.

The Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TN LIP) identified a need to learn more about their work.

Network Research

Over a 3-month period in 2012, the TN LIP interviewed 25 networks. Several interesting findings emerged:

- Networks based in Toronto North, have limited or no connections with each other, largely due to time or funding constraints. Voluntary participation characterizes most of these networks.
- Networks addressing a specific theme such as domestic abuse or youth employment are more likely to have broader municipal, provincial and national connections and more likely to receive funding.
- Despite constraints, networks are galvanizing diverse activities such as resource development, advocacy, service coordination, information sharing, research, education, community consultations and community fairs. There is no shortage of passionate, innovative leaders and members. They expressed a common desire to strengthen cross-network relationships.
- Several practices bode well for success: member engagement, membership consistency, community support and the use of tools such as work planning.
- There are challenges. Developing leadership, building a shared purpose and planning for sustainability are not easy feats. For some networks, limited resources make it difficult to move beyond information sharing. Further, systemic barriers such as lack of childcare or translation limit the ability to engage local residents.

- Newcomers are indirectly or directly on everyone’s agenda, by virtue of the demographics in Toronto and especially in Toronto North, where according to 2006 census data, 53% of the population is comprised of immigrants.
- Networks share common needs including building capacity to connect with faith groups, executing community outreach and understanding cultural differences.

Following the research, the Toronto North LIP organized a network Summit. The goals were to connect networks, discuss the research, and explore linkages in supporting newcomers. Sixteen Networks participated.

The dialogue focused on 3 questions:

- What is interesting and meaningful about the research findings? What is missing?
- What opportunities exist to deepen collaboration and cross learning among Networks?
- What is needed to leverage the opportunities?

Feedback on Research Findings

The findings led to a robust discussion. One important theme was the need to learn more about Network practices including:

- Models of leadership that support sustainability; engage decision makers and faith groups; network structures and evaluation methods
- Agreements for participation such as Terms of Reference
- Building trust and dealing with power differentials
- Models of community development
- Drivers of focus, life span and social innovation
- Mapping: who is resourced to do what, where are our links
- Integrating learning from theme based (e.g. seniors) and place based networks

Ideas to support cross learning included collecting stories, using social media and newsletters, enlisting Network members as mentors, developing shared tools for evaluation and expanding research. Linking and sharing resources on specific issues such as mental health, youth and seniors was also stressed. The significance of relationship building was emphasized throughout. Finally, the need for resources to support networks and facilitate collaboration was a common theme.

What is Needed to Leverage these Opportunities?

1. Capacity Building: Annual Network Forum

Participants proposed an annual learning forum to build member skills and relationships. The Forum will showcase Network models, best practices, success measures and issue specific expertise. Small,

emerging Networks can access mentorship and networks can reflect on where joining forces makes sense.

2. *Capacity Building: Network Diagnostic Tool*

Participants proposed the design of a simple, accessible diagnostic tool to help Networks self assess their effectiveness. Aspects would include:

- What kind of Network are we? What context are we working in?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- What do we need to do to move forward in areas such as leadership, member skills, succession planning and structure?
- What can we learn from stories that apply to our Network?

3. *Strengthen Relationships*

This proposal concerned the crucial role of partnerships with the wider community, across sectors and among networks. More potential exists to engage stakeholders, share knowledge and promote network strengths to a wider audience. Two ideas discussed were: using social media for ongoing learning; and, cross network and cross agency visits.

4. *Networks Addressing Seniors Issues*

A seniors' lens is a Network planning imperative. All initiatives –whether they are intergenerational programs, mental health supports, affordable housing projects, language programs or meal planning need to be the services that seniors desire and seniors can access. What is currently offered is not necessarily what seniors want.

5. *Networks Addressing Youth Issues*

As with seniors, including youth in planning, program development and implementation is essential. Sharing success stories will help networks minimize barriers to youth participation. There is a need to build the participation capacity of youth.

6. *Learning from Faith Leaders*

As a starting point for building relationships and learning, participants proposed hosting an inter-faith panel focused on community development and approaches to mental health.

The top area of interest was *network capacity building*, supported by tools to facilitate assessment and sharing of practices.

Summit Feedback

The opportunity to learn about what networks are doing and gather ideas was the most meaningful aspect. In particular, learning about network strengths and the research was a highlight. Participants appreciated the chance to connect and reflect. However for many, the short time was a drawback for sharing practices in depth. People want more opportunity to learn about how to build strong networks. One suggestion was to use a story telling framework to make the content come alive.

Next Steps

- Toronto North and the City –wide LIPs will consider the feasibility of a follow up network dialogue.
- Working Women Community Centre agreed to consider organizing an inter faith leadership panel.
- A small group volunteered to consider how to move forward on other ideas including reviewing funding sources:
 - Angie Aranda – Neighbourhood Arts Network
 - Sue Kelleher – Toronto Newcomer Initiative
 - Denise Anderson – Fairview Inter-agency Network
 - Jawed Akhter - Fairview Inter-agency Network
 - Lucy Fitzpatrick - Fairview Inter-agency Network

Appendix 1: Summit Agenda

Toronto North Network Summit
February 7, 2013 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Oakham House

Goals

- Deepen understanding of our shared goals and work
- Explore our linkages in supporting newcomers and creating welcoming communities
- Learn from Network experiences and successes
- Discuss collaboration opportunities
- Build relationships

Agenda

9:00 am	Sign in and Refreshments
9:30 am	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Context for the Summit• Network Introductions• Background: The Toronto North Labour Immigration Partnership (LIP)
10:15 am	The Network Research Findings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Results of interviews with 25 Networks
10:45 am	Break
11:00 am	Opportunities for collaboration
12:00 pm	Lunch
12:30 pm	Prioritizing opportunities and considering feasibility
1:30 pm	Moving Forward
1:45 pm	Reflections and Feedback
2:00 pm	Close

*Hosted by the Toronto North Labour Immigration Partnership
With support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

Appendix 1: Summit Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organization/Network
Ansuya	Chetty	Working Skills Centre/Yonge Eglinton Services Network
Sarah	Clarke	Connecting Communities Ontario Public Legal Education Network
Hamda	Mohamed	Bathurst Finch Network
Rebecca	Price	Toronto East LIP
Natalia	Pivovarov	Toronto North LIP Council Member
Ekuu	Walcott	Harriet Tubman Community Organization/Fairview Interagency Network
Shakara	Walker	Harriet Tubman Community Organization/Fairview Interagency Network
Jawed	Akhter	SWIS/Fairview Interagency Network
Shabnum	Budhwani	CASIP
Kyn	Barker	Fairview Interagency Network
Gresford	Blades	TESS/Fairview Interagency Network
Nooria	Amiri	Afghan Womens Organization
Luanne	Rayvals	Working Women Community Centre/Senior Service Network and North End Partners Network
Maria Antonietta	Crupi	North York Community House
Jill	Shakespeare	Toronto South LIP
Diana	Valdez	Bathurst Finch Network
Haweiya	Egeh	Toronto South LIP
Sheleena	Forfar	Evergreen/Senior Service Network
Stephanie	Gris	Toronto South LIP
Abdirahman	Sabriye	Lawrence Heights Interagency Network (LHION)
Sue	Kelleher	Toronto Newcomer Initiative
Yvette	Bailey	Lawrence Heights Interagency Network (LHION)
Ella	Cooper	Neighbourhood Arts Network
Miya	Davar	Youth Service Network (YSN)
Denise	Anderson	Childrens Aid Soceity/Fairview Interagency Network
Angie	Aranda	Neighbourhood Arts Network
Nancy	Blades	COTA Health/North West Mental Health Network
Lucy	Fitzpatrick	Working Women Community Centre/Fairview Interagency Network
Edie	Saunders	Consultant
Adrianna	Beemas	Working Women Community Centre
Margaret	Walker	POINT
Linor	David	GTA Food Security Network
Zanna	Phaeton	
Kirk	Bowers	Flemingdon Interagency Network
John	Smith	Community Development Unit, City of Toronto