

Working Committee # 1: Access to Information - Minutes

Date: June 27, 2011

Location: Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto – Unit A/B 2600 Birchmount Rd.

Attendees: Christine Xie (Newcomer Resident), Timothy Chan (Resident), Hanifa Kassam (ACSA), Artan Spahiu (PICS), Dan Rutembesa (CCS), Mani Mahadeva (NWS LIP), Rezwan (NWS LIP), Michelle Davis (NWS LIP)

Purpose of the Meeting

1. Review the progress
2. Discuss and secure support for the future activities

Hanifa will chair the meeting today

Agenda

- Welcoming and objective of the meeting
- Brief intro's of participants
- Newcomer resident Christine Xie participated in the meeting. She is a newcomer from China now living in Canada for 3 mos.
- Activities undertaken during first quarter
 - Online review
 - Sub-committee of Mani, Sulekha and Helen reviewed three major websites for Newcomer Online information (see "2011 Recommendations for Online Newcomer Information"). This is a revisit to the review done in 2010.
 - Review report has been created and the WC #1 is to review the recommendations made this year and submit to LIP Staff by July 15th
 - Once all feedback from WC#1 is consolidated it will be shared with all LIP members and forwarded to the appropriate parties as NWS LIP recommendations.
 - Welcome Package
 - Another sub-committee reviewed the Newcomer Welcome package provided at Pearson International airport (see "2011 Review & Recommendations for Newcomer Welcome package")
 - A recommendation that was missed for pre-arrival recommendations is Canadian embassies providing a "Must Read" pamphlet or brochure that

includes a checklist of important reading materials and relevant website addresses to immigrants in their respective home countries

- Printed copies can be made available at Canadian Embassies
 - Hard copies should also be available for the government sponsored refugees before they arrive.
 - Translation of materials is another key issue for pre-arrival package
 - Recommendations on the Welcome Package needs to be more specific and comparative to clarify exactly what needs to be changed, added, or edited
 - Feedback from our participating newcomer – felt that the information needs to be tailored to each person, currently the “Day-to-Day Guide” is not very practical as it does not include health information, a section for FAQ and a map
 - The recommendations need to be broken down into themes – Ex: Language, Employment, Health care, etc.
 - WC#1 members are to review the recommendations and submit to LIP staff by July 29th
- Outreach methods
- Artan from PICS shares his findings
 - 32 member organizations have completed the survey
 - Main outreach tool is word of mouth to promote their services
 - 2nd preferred is information desks at libraries, schools, info. fairs, visiting other agencies
 - Most members use ethnic media to promote services, events, workshops, etc.
 - Not many had contacts with government agencies
 - No agencies have outreached to apartment complexes
 - Not all the agencies have outreach coordinators
 - The airport was a lesser used method of promotions
 - A lesser number of organizations have used Open-House’s as a method of promotions
 - From the findings it would be beneficial to figure out the reasons why certain methods are used more or not utilized as much through a case study of a sample of member respondents
 - It is beneficial to decide what (collective) outreach methods will be useful
 - Artan will develop a questionnaire and submit to LIP Staff
 - The survey will be completed by August 5th
- Capacity development of frontline staff
- There is a recent call for proposals related to sector capacity and collaboration
 - Support front-line staff to be better equipped to deal with different areas of concern for newcomers
 - LIP in conjunction with Hong Fook Mental Health Association organized a two day training on mental health’
 - 5 LIP organizations participated out of the 12 spaces made available
 - LIP needs to devise a plan on how to better target the front-line staff of member organizations

- LIP staff will need to follow-up with member organizations to find out who needs to be contacted when LIP sends out opportunities, fax flyers of LIP organized training and make follow-up phone calls
- Options for training topics are to be sent to LIP members to get their feedback on most interested topics before setting dates
- Next training topic to be organized for September
- Elizabeth Fry can provide a session on criminal justice
- Scarborough Housing Help Centre can provide training on housing related topics and tenants rights
- Toronto Police Service can provide training on community safety and common scams
- East Metro Youth Services can also provide training on mental health – on different topics as required
- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario agreed to provide training on legal service related topics
- Website Development
 - Michelle presents the proposed design and navigation tools of redesigned website.
 - NWS LIP website will have link to a portal that connects to other LIPs in Ontario.
 - WC # 1 was asked to test run the website during coming weeks.
 - The website will be in function by August and will be officially launched in September.
 - Collected feedback from meeting participants:
 - More graphics depicting people of ethnic origin
 - Colours should match logo
 - The word's "Newcomer" and "Residents" should be larger
 - More design
 - The word "Welcome" should be in more languages
- Newcomer Centre guideline
 - Follow-up on having partner organizations with newcomer resource centres send their newcomer centre guidelines
 - Thus far 2 organizations have shared their guidelines
 - Information collection will be organized through LIP and to be completed by mid August
- Discussion on other activities for the second quarter
 - Finalize and submit recommendation on online information and welcome package
See deadlines
 - Study and make recommendation on newcomer centre guidelines
 - Collective approach to promote services
- Wrap up

Next WC #1 meeting to take place August 22nd 2011, from 2:30-4:30pm (Location TBA)