

OCASI 2011 Executive Directors Forum

Summary Report

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1. Introduction

Under the title of **Re-imagine the Sector**, the OCASI Executive Directors (ED) Forum took place on Nov 10-11, 2011 at the Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, Ontario.

The OCASI ED Forum gives sector leaders the opportunity to dialogue on sectoral priorities on policy and practice in immigrant and refugee settlement and integration. It is an opportunity to dialogue and network with peers and representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) and other stakeholders.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the OCASI Executive Directors Forum 2011 is to come to a shared understanding and commitment to work together to build and sustain an inclusive and immigrant and refugee-centered settlement and integration strategy for Ontario.

Its specific objectives, to be met through plenary presentations, table discussions and seminars are:

- To strengthen the dialogue on immigrant and refugee settlement and integration among OCASI members, and between OCASI, government decision-makers, funders and other stakeholders;
- To strengthen the capacity of OCASI members agencies to engage more effectively with Citizenship and Immigration Canada's modernized approach to settlement;
- To continue the dialogue on the future of settlement and integration in Ontario through the vehicle of a renewed Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement.

2. Program

The ED Forum program consisted of 5 plenary presentations and 12 seminars. All plenaries and 2 seminars were presented with simultaneous interpretation in French & English.

• Day One program:

Welcome and Opening Remarks that included a short presentation by Deborah Tunis – Director General, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

State of the Sector – Ideas that Impact

A brief, impactful address by three dynamic and innovative 'doers' who talked about their passion/priority and what moves/inspires them in their work. Speakers were:

- Avvy Go – Steering Committee Member, Colour of Poverty Campaign
- Axelle Janczur – Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Rob Howarth – Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

Opening Plenary – The Evolving Sector

The *Third Sector* is facing a time of significant and accelerated change, both a changed social and political environment as well as amplified expectations from community, funders and 'the public'. At the same time, the sector must confront the tension between acting as third-party government contractors while fulfilling our essential role as agents for social change. This plenary featured three Third Sector leaders who shared their vision for Ontario's evolving immigrant and refugee-serving sector.

Moderator: Roberto Jovel – Senior Manager, Strategic Development and Integration, La Passerelle I.D.É
Panelists:

- Olivia Nuamah – Executive Director, Atkinson Foundation
- Sue Wilkinson – Director, Ontario Non-Profit Network
- Carl Nicholson – Executive Director, Catholic Centre for Immigrants - Ottawa

Plenary Presentation – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) - Funded Settlement Program: Context, Performance Measurement, Management, and Implementation in Ontario Region

CIC representatives provided the current fiscal and immigration context; highlighted the value and significance of program performance measurement; shared analyses and reporting initiatives; reviewed the Government of Canada's risk-based approach to its Grants and Contributions management; and presented details about implementation of CIC's settlement program in Ontario Region for 2012-13 and beyond.

Speakers:

- Veronica Barnes – Regional Director, Ontario Region, Directorate of Settlement, Intergovernmental Affairs and Multiculturalism
- Wally Boxhill – Director, Strategic Management and Coordination, Integration Program Management Branch
- Ümit Kiziltan – Director General, Research and Evaluation
- Catherine Simard – Senior Policy Analyst, Integration Branch
- Deborah Tunis – Director General, Integration Branch

• **Day Two program included:**

Panel Presentation – Social Innovation

Ontario's immigrant and refugee-serving sector is facing a shrinking funding envelope, narrow program eligibility criteria and increasing complexity of community needs. These challenges are forcing agencies to look at alternative funding models for service delivery and new directions to resource their work. Is this push to social innovation allowing government to abdicate its responsibilities, particularly those that emerged as a result of years of downloading services? How will it affect the sector's essential role as advocates and agents for social change? This plenary provided a stimulating discourse on social innovation at its best.

Moderator: Mario Calla – Executive Director, COSTI

Panelists:

- Kay Blair - Executive Director, Community Microskills Development Centre
- Margaret Hancock - Executive Director, Family Service Toronto
- Karl Flecker - National Director, Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department, Canadian Labour Congress

Closing Plenary

The Closing Plenary included a presentation by John Tory – Corporate Director, Broadcaster and Chair, Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance and a Panel Presentation as follows:

Panel Presentation – Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA): Devolution or Not

After many discussions on options for renewal of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), the key question is centered on full, partial or no devolution to the province. With a new government in Ontario following the October election, this plenary presented an opportunity to bring a fresh perspective to the discussion framed by the current political context.

Moderator: Josie Di Zio – President, OCASI

Panelists:

- Mathew Mendolsohn – Director, Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation
 - Naomi Alboim – Fellow, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University
- Discussant: Reza Shahbazi – Executive Director, New Canadians' Centre for Excellence

Seminars

Seminars included the following sessions:

- Contribution Agreements – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (offered with simultaneous interpretation English and French)
- Advocacy and Risk Management (offered twice)

- Orientation to Ontario – A Standardized Orientation Program for Newcomers to Ontario
- Risk Assessment and Management (offered twice, one session with simultaneous interpretation English and French)
- Risk Assessment and Management (Offered twice)
- Roundtable Discussion - Reclaiming our Space: Sectoral Strategies
- Social Innovation as a Tool for Poverty Reduction (Offered twice)
- The 'How-to' of Social Enterprise: Ideas, Challenges and Good Practices
- Understanding the Ontario Not-for-Profit-Corporations Act (Offered twice)

For detailed information about the program please visit www.ocasi.org/forum and access the 2011 Program Package. A tag at the top of the main ED Forum website page will allow you to obtain the Program in the French language.

3. Participation

A total of 267 participants from 153 OCASI member agencies and other Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funded settlement service organizations attended the OCASI ED Forum. It included:

- Forty-one (41) CIC officers (plus several others that attended some of the activities without prior registration)
- Ten (10) representatives from other funders, such as Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and United Way of Greater Toronto.
- Twenty eight (28) presenters and panelists comprised of consultants, academics and representatives from immigrant settlement organizations, government and other relevant non-profit organizations.
- OCASI staff.

Of the total number of agencies participating, 127 were OCASI member agencies and 114 were CIC-funded agencies (includes OCASI member and non-members.)

Evaluation forms were completed by 52 participants, representing approx. 30% of agencies attending the Forum. Based on results from these Evaluation Forms, 54% of agency participants were Executive Directors, while 46% were Directors, managers or held other senior positions at their agencies and attended in representation of the Executive Director.

Twenty-six (26) percent indicated that they attended the ED Forum for the first time. Seventy-four (74) percent indicated that they attended more than one time. More than half of those that have attended before have done so more than 5 times.

4. Evaluation

Participants completed an ED Forum Evaluation Form at the end of the Forum. The Evaluation Form was also accessible online. Several participants completed this form online after the Forum.

Participants also completed an Evaluation Form for each seminar. Evaluation Report for seminars will be available by the end of December 2011.

The following is a summary of the information collected from the ED Forum Evaluation Forms.

Quality of the activities

Participants were asked to rate the quality of the following activities. See below for their responses.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	N/A
How do you rate the forum?	66.7%	31.4%	2.0%	0.0%
Pre-forum communication	67.3%	30.8%	1.9%	0.0%
Online registration	78.8%	17.3%	1.9%	1.9%
Schedule of events	56.9%	39.2%	3.9%	0.0%
Plenary: Opening Plenary	66.7%	29.4%	2.0%	2.0%
Plenary: CIC Plenary	38.5%	48.1%	13.5%	0.0%
Plenary: Friday morning Panel	70.8%	22.9%	0.0%	6.3%
Plenary: Closing Plenary	48.7%	30.8%	2.6%	17.9%
The hotel facilities and services (meeting rooms, food etc)	46.2%	30.8%	11.5%	11.5%
Networking opportunities	56.0%	36.0%	4.0%	4.0%

Logistics and scheduling

Most of the participants indicated that the whole Forum was very well organized. Participants highlighted that the OCASI staff were welcoming and available at all times and very helpful in providing services to Forum participants.

Some participants indicated that the first day the schedule was very busy what resulted on some activities starting late as well as cutting into the already short time between activities that could have been used for networking.

Some participants from Toronto requested to have the option of staying overnight at the hotel to have more opportunities for networking and participating in the evening social networking activities. Most of the participants commented that the Westin Hotel was a better choice than previous hotels.

Networking

As in previous Forums, most participants welcomed the opportunity to network and share information, ideas and problem-solving with peers. Many indicated that the Forum provided with the opportunity to re-connect with colleagues from across the province, build relationships across the sector, discuss potential collaboration, exchange ideas and innovation and access CIC staff. However, several participants from Toronto indicated that networking was hindered for those that did not have the opportunity to stay overnight at the hotel.

Seminars

Participants completed evaluations for each seminar. A report on these evaluations will be available at the end of December 2011. The following comments were expressed in the General Evaluation.

The *Risk Assessment and Management* seminar was mentioned by some participants as the best part of the Forum. It provided good insights, excellent strategies and information, handouts were very useful and of high quality. Excellent presenter. Participants recommended to present this seminar in future events but to extend it to 2 or 3 hours.

The *Advocacy and Risk Management* and the *Understanding the Ontario Not-for-Profit-Corporations Act* seminars were also pointed out as excellent, with useful information and exceptional presenters.

Many participants also indicated that the *Roundtable Discussion - Reclaiming our Space: Sectoral Strategies* was a very useful experience and that sessions with similar format and content should be available in future professional development conferences and forums.

Social Innovation as a Tool for Poverty Reduction and *The 'How-to' of Social Enterprise: Ideas, Challenges and Good Practices* were also mentioned as valuable seminars, with excellent presenters offering differing perspectives, although there was a need for more time to engage in a discussion and sharing of experiences.

Some participants commented that the *Contribution Agreement* session was useful because it addressed their "meat @ potatoes" day-to-day needs and recommended that important seminars like this one be offered twice.

In general, participants indicated that all seminars were very good and informative and provided really useful, tangible information and tools.

Plenaries

Many participants indicated that the plenary meetings were the best part of the event. They highlighted that the plenaries were excellent, with very smart presentations that provided an insight on current trends and priorities. Some commented that they got a better sense of the magnitude of change and the perceptions of the rest of the sector on these changes as well as useful information on modernized ISAP, Icams, tools to explore new strategies and ideas for building the business case for service as well as new innovative ideas for program delivery. However, some participants observed that great questions were raised but there was not enough time for discussions.

Some participants indicated that the CIC presentation needed to have more depth, more concrete information and handouts. However, many commented that they gained knowledge and update from the CIC plenary and that it was a necessary part of the ED Forum. Others remarked that they would have preferred that speakers were not held to the 15-min restriction because they were addressing their day-to-day, short term needs.

Several participants emphasized that, in general, the plenaries allowed for stimulating policy-level discussions and a better understanding of the future of the sector. They provided the "big picture", much food for thought for future planning and sectoral needs, lots of inspiration through the presentation of new directions, the changing political environment and differing points of view.

5. General Overview

Most of the participants indicated that the Forum provided stimulating policy-level discussions, valuable information and an insight on current trends and priorities for the sector, a "great venue for keeping up-to-date re: developments in the settlement service sector". They highlighted that the presenters were inspiring, provided important information and valuable handouts and resources as well as a road map to move forward.

Many participants remarked that this was the best ED Forum held by OCASI in terms of logistics and content and that they were very impressed with the quality of the discussions and the stimulating high level presentations mixed with practical workshops.

6. Recommendations

Several participants indicated that it would be beneficial to have roundtables discussions at the closing plenary and/or roundtable group discussion, at any other time during the event, divided by region or provincial groups such as SWIS.

Participants commented that they would like to have federal and provincial reps together speak at the Forum, have more information from funders (both federal and provincial), more time for dialogue and more extensive Q&A time.

Other recommendations includes more opportunities for specific training for EDs, such as workshops supporting the mental health, work/life balance for EDs, strategies to work with Board of Directors, presentations of best practices in the delivery of settlement services in small, medium and highly populated communities and activities focused on performance management issues as it pertains to the new climate in the sector.

Having more networking time was recommended by many participants.

7. Participants' Remarks

The following remarks summarize participants' additional observations regarding the 2011 ED Forum:

The plenaries and workshops struck a good balance of addressing short, medium and long term shortfalls/gaps and goals. Thoughtful, challenging plenaries.

Les discussions m'ont permis d'avoir un meilleur sens des défis actuels pour le secteur et des réponses possibles. Les ateliers ont offert des renseignements clés (notamment juridiques) pour le fonctionnement des organismes. Le réseautage est toujours fort productif.

Everything was important! I am just starting my 2nd year as Director, so I have learned so much, have been inspired and my hope renewed.

Resautage avec les autres francophones et anglophones. Echange des défis actuels que nous rencontrons comme secteurs d'établissement en ces temps de changement.

I had not attended the ED Forum and OCASI forums for a while, but I was very impressed that so much has improved. Very impressed with the organizational end as well as the quality of the discussions.

Ce Forum est, en effet, "the premier annual event" pour le secteur. Keep it up.

Le Forum a été un véritable succès. Le thèmes des plénières et les panelistes ont été stimulants, amenant des réflexions critiques très utiles pour le travail à venir. Les ateliers aussi, ont offert des pistes pour mieux se placer comme organisme au service des immigrants dans le contexte actuel. En somme : pertinent, opportun, productif !

Witnessed the dynamism of the sector; felt the strong commitment of the NGO reps to the improvement of immigrants' (settlement) outcomes.