



JUNE 2026

ANNUAL PLANNING & EVALUATION REPORT

2025-2026



PRE-READ: SCOPE OF THE REPORT AND INTENDED USERS

This report provides an overview of Access Alliance's policy-guided planning and evaluation practices within the agency. Highlights of evaluation reports from April 2025 to March 2026 are compiled as a distinct section. Coordinated and led by the Research and Evaluation Department, each evaluation report contains reflections from the report owners, followed by their planned implementation of the evaluation recommendations. To demonstrate accountability and informed strategic-level decision-making, this document will be shared with Senior Management and the Board of Directors of Access Alliance. For more operational-level planning, this report is intended for use by managers, program staff, and decision-makers.

Impact // Report Takeaway Objectives:

To inform relevant interest holders-

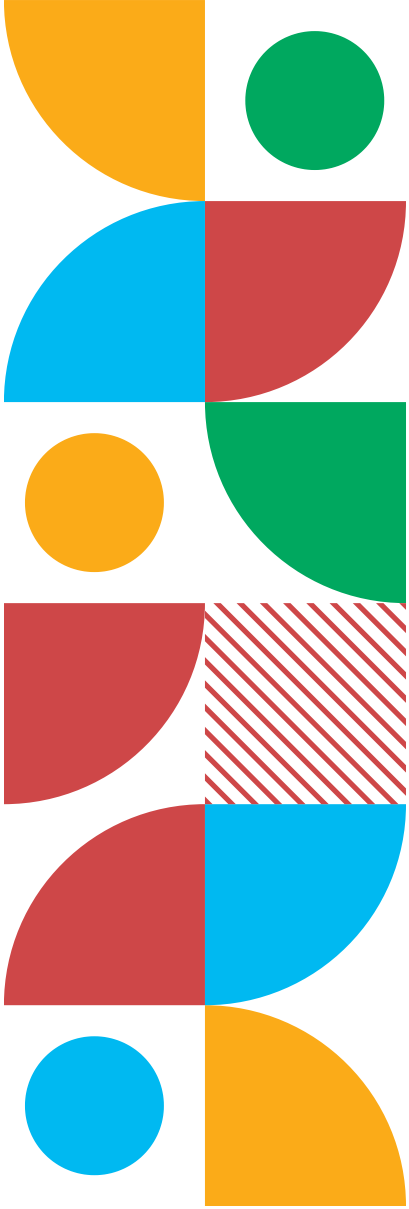
- **Individual level:** This report will increase awareness and support navigation about the programs offered to support community members in a meaningful way.
- **Mezo level** (community partners, researchers and champions): This report will be used to redesign their program(s) and identify common interests for possible collaboration or future interdisciplinary research.
- **Mezzo level** (Access Alliance's teams): To improve programs/services, add/redesign programs with cross-departmental coordination
- **System level:** It acts as a living document that can guide resource planning, program improvements, and investments based on program strengths.

Canadian Council of Accreditation review team observation (2023): "The review team could see some great examples in their reports: Annual Client Activity, Training Needs Assessment of Newcomer Young Adult Mothers and the Annual Report: Planning & Evaluation Activities."

Disclaimer: This report is owned by Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services. If you have any questions or concerns about this report, please contact Courtney Kupka (Research and Evaluation Coordinator) at research@accessalliance.ca.

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SCOPE OF THE REPORT

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (Access Alliance) conducts evidence-informed planning by generating evidence through rigorous evaluation processes to demonstrate accountability at multiple levels and improve the quality of programs or services. Using the validated standards, the agency gathers evidence from diverse sources to plan programs and services that are accessible, equitable, and client-centred. This report incorporates evaluation activities conducted between April 2025 and March 2026. The overarching goal of this report is to facilitate a learning framework for building and sustaining a healthy, evidence-informed and evaluation-focused organization.

This report aims to serve three key functions:

(1) To demonstrate accountability - By summarizing all the evaluation activities (of the year), this report represents accountability to agency mandates, the staff, management, Board of Directors, funders, clients, community partners, and others, such as accreditors.

(2) To serve as a planning tool - By describing the intended planning implications of individual reports, this document reflects the key learnings from the evaluations and how they will be operationalized, thus gauging their impact. This report is advised to be used as a planning tool for programs and services from 2026 onward.

(3) To improve quality - This report captures the participatory approach taken by the respective teams and managers to develop shared planning implications. This process will help improve the quality of the programs and services after identifying the strengths and opportunities for improvement.



PLANNING & EVALUATION POLICY: CONTEXT

The organizational commitment to evaluation is embodied within the Program Planning and Evaluation Policy of Access Alliance - a policy that aims to ensure accountability, learning, and quality of the program planning and evaluation practices.

- This policy applies to all programs, services, projects, initiatives, and research as well as research-like activities of Access Alliance.
- Each department develops its own planning and evaluation strategies that are consistent with the vision, mission, and mandate of the agency.

The Program Planning and Evaluation Policy of Access Alliance is consistent with the Tri-Council Policy Statement mandate:

"Article 2.5

Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review."

(https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2022_chapter2-chapitre2.html Updated: 2023-1-11)

Access Alliance follows these validated standards for evaluation:

- **Utility** (i.e. serves stakeholders' needs)
- **Feasibility** (i.e. realistic, doable)
- **Accuracy** (i.e. dependable results)
- **Propriety** (i.e. conducted legally, ethically, and within agency mandate)

These are consistent with the "Program Evaluation Standards" developed by the Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation of Canada and the USA (JCSEE, 2016).

Access Alliance also implements three measures of quality control for evaluation activities:

- **Credibility** (i.e. believability of the evaluation findings)
- **Fittingness** (i.e. findings are meaningful or applicable to another group or context)
- **Auditability** (i.e. documentation of the researcher’s decision-making process so it can be reproduced and checked if required)

Key elements of Access Alliance's practice for evaluating a program or initiative:

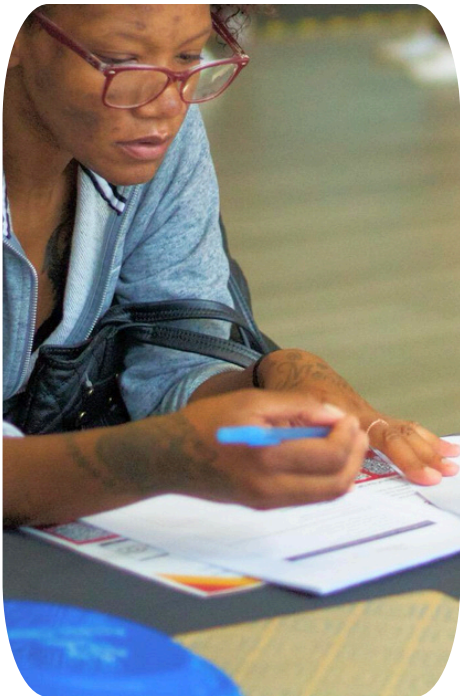
- Led by the evaluation team with support of program staff and in consultation with key stakeholders, an evaluation plan is created, which includes a logic model, an evaluation framework (targets, tools, indicators, etc.), and a knowledge mobilization plan.
- Stakeholders are engaged in all steps in the planning and implementation of the evaluation, which is critical to produce meaningful, tangible planning implications.
- Evaluation processes are consistent with universal ethical standards and best practices that ensure informed voluntary consent, protect the client's privacy and confidentiality, and avoidance of potential harm.

METHODOLOGY

This corporate document compiles the findings of the program evaluation reports produced by the respective teams between **April 2025** and **March 2026** led by the program managers or leads. Staff members, paid consultants, placement students, or Access Alliance's supervised volunteers prepared these reports in teams. The evaluation reports reflect programs and services across Access Alliance, including our sites AccessPoint on Danforth (APOD) and AccessPoint on Jane (APOJ).

The respective managers review the report with their team(s) and prepare the implementation recommendation and implications on each report. Key recommendations are presented and discussed at the Community Programs Planning Day to inform the program design.

The Annual Client Activity Report, Client Experience Survey Report and Community Health Needs Assessment Reports are excluded from this document. These reports, among a few other corporate reports, are submitted separately to stakeholders, including the Board of Directors.



METHODOLOGY



EVALUATION PROCESS

On-the-Ground Evaluation

Conducted by the program team
Supervised by the evaluation team

Practiced annually for all programs to inform planning and quality improvement efforts by the respective team. Clients complete evaluation forms – this is real time collection of feedback/client experience.

In-Depth Program Evaluations

Conducted/Supervised by
the evaluation team

Calendarized evaluations that are in-depth and carried out by agency resources or external consultants, and are repeated every 3-5 years. This comprises a collaborative effort between the evaluation team and the program/project team for rigorous and quality evaluations.

Centrally Managed Corporate Initiatives

Conducted/Supervised by the
evaluation team

Evaluation efforts that are conducted and monitored as part of the corporate mandate which are aligned to accreditation and reporting requirements. These include the Client Experience Survey, Annual Client Activity Report, Community Needs Assessments, among others.

EVALUATION PROCESS

PHASE 1: Design/Plan the Evaluation

- Build the evaluation team
- Clarify program description
- State purpose of evaluation
- Determine the evaluation approach
- Engage stakeholders
- Set evaluation questions & indicators
- Determine data sources & data collection tools

PHASE 2: Implement the Evaluation

- Collect data (quantitative, qualitative, or art-based)
- Analyze data and synthesize findings
- Interpret findings

PHASE 3: Utilize Generated Evidence (KMb)

- Create KMb products: report, presentation, infographic, etc.
- Communicate findings- report back to stakeholders with a designed knowledge mobilization (KMb) plan
- Take action: collaboratively develop evidence-informed action items resulting from evaluation findings

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

2025-2026

In-Depth Evaluations

- Thriving Under the Rainbow (TURN)

On-The-Ground Program/Service Evaluations

- Counsellor Therapist Programs
- Registered Dietitian Programs
- Newcomers Cooking Together
- Seniors Program
- Pole Walking Group Program
- Tea and Chat Group Program
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Thursday Program
- Settlement Program
- Newcomer Women's Support Group
- Mastering Conversational Strategies and Storytelling to Succeed
- Kids Get Cooking + Community Dining Program at AccessPoint on Jane
- Community Dining Program at AccessPoint on Danforth
- Nesting Grounds
- EarlyON Drop-In
- Health Child Screening
- Holiday Hamper
- APOJ: Newcomer Youth School Program
- APOD: Newcomer Youth Program
- Youth Newcomers Cooking Together
- Income Tax Program - Clients
- Income Tax Program - Volunteers
- Learn to Ride
- Do-It-Yourself Bike Repair
- Green Access Events
- Garden Steward

IN-DEPTH EVALUATION REPORT

THRIVING UNDER THE RAINBOW

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Thriving Under the Rainbow (TURN) program offers weekly employment-focused workshops for 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers. The program aims to build community capacity through career, upskilling, network-building, and preparation for employment or post-secondary pathways.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE

To identify the performance of the program by evaluating the reach, program implementation fidelity, accessibility and ascertaining the greater impact produced by the TURN program.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- TURN exceeded target KPIs, with over 325 active participants who identify as part of one or more equity-seeking groups, including 2SLGBTQIA+, women, newcomers (immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers), racialized communities and young adults.
- Participants reported growth in communication, organizational and cultural awareness skills, contributing to increased confidence for interviews and professional interactions.
- Several clients (n=7) report employment or placement opportunities, including Personal Support Worker, a food service entrepreneurship program, community programs or services, and one at the Great Canadian Casino Resort
- Overall, 88.0% (n=22) indicated that the program enhanced their job readiness, strengthening skills, and expanding participants' professional networks.

LEARNINGS

While funding for the TURN program has concluded, important learnings about employment-specific programs/services can be applied in other settings.

- Holistic approach to newcomer employment needs, including navigation of the job market, rights in the workplace, networking, interview skills, etc.
- Increase direct employment opportunities through partnerships with employers, hiring events, and referral pathways to job openings.
- Engage a broader range of professionals to ensure services remain inclusive and representative of participants' career interests.



ON-THE-GROUND EVALUATION REPORTS

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The ON-THE-GROUND evaluation reports in the fiscal year of 2025 to 2026 utilizes the **Head-Heart-Hand-Feet** and **Program Experiences Survey** tools to measure diverse programs across Access Alliance. At its core, both methodologies are designed to assess program effectiveness, equity, accessibility, and opportunities for participant feedback. More specifically, to assess whether programs and services at Access Alliance contribute to learning outcomes, behavioural changes, promote belonging and a sense of community, and provide accessible pathways for participants to engage with programs and services through feedback loops.

HEAD-HEART-HAND-FEET TOOL

The head, heart hand, and feet tool is used to measure a program’s effectiveness by capturing participants’ learning outcomes, emotional responses, behavioural changes, and overall feedback and recommendations of each programs.



PROGRAM EXPERIENCE SURVEY TOOL

A program experience survey tool (virtual or in-person) is used to measure the extent to which anticipated outcomes were achieved and to assess participant experience in relation to organizational priorities in access, equity, and quality.



ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES // COUNSELLOR THERAPIST PROGRAMS

MENTAL HEALTH GROUPS SUMMARY

PROGRAM BRIEF

In addition to 1-to-1 appointments with a Counsellor Therapist, Access Alliance's mental health services support immigrants, newcomers, and refugees through a series of group workshops that provide therapeutic support and strengthen client capacity. The workshops aim to build practical coping skills and promote emotional well-being among participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate additional concrete examples and resource materials to support learning and reinforce key concepts.
- Continue delivering workshops, as participants consistently value the content and approach.



IMPLICATIONS

- Social Workers will continue to ensure workshops are interactive, relatable, accessible and include resource materials.
- Individual work plans will continue to include workshop delivery through interprofessional collaboration.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn:

Participants reported positive learning outcomes, including increased understanding of the role of community connection and self-compassion in mental health. Clients also gained practical, transferable skills such as tools for emotional regulation, stress management, and supporting individuals experiencing suicidal ideation.

HEART - How did you feel:

After the program, participants commonly reported feeling more energized, confident, and emotionally supported. Many also described feeling calmer and physically relaxed.

HANDS - What would you change:

Many participants expressed interest in additional workshops and opportunities for mental health programming, indicating strong perceived value and ongoing need.

FEET - What would you do moving forward:

Participants described feeling empowered to apply the skills in their daily lives. Several also noted an intention to share learning with family and peers, indicating a potential spillover benefit that goes beyond individual participation.

ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES // REGISTERED DIETITIAN PROGRAMS

DIETITIAN GROUPS SUMMARY

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Registered Dietitians (RD) at Access Alliance lead a range of nutrition-focused programs that provide a culturally safe and supportive space for participants to learn about food and nutrition. Through group programs and workshops (9 programs, 6 workshops), clients gain practical skills and knowledge that can be applied in their daily lives to support healthier eating habits and overall wellbeing.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn:

Participants gained foundational nutrition knowledge, including key nutrients such as sugar, salt, and protein, and how diet affects heart health, brain health, and digestion. They also reported greater awareness of dietary patterns, multicultural foods, and healthier home cooking alternatives to processed/fast food.

HEART - How did you feel:

Overall, most participants described positive program experiences, noting improvements in wellbeing, mood, and confidence in making healthier food choices. Many also expressed willingness to share their knowledge and skills with family and community members.

HANDS - What would you change:

Many participants expressed interest in longer or more frequent workshops and suggested improvements to program delivery, such as separating children from adults and separating nutrition sessions from exercise sessions.

FEET - What would you do moving forward:

Participants reported feeling motivated to make dietary and lifestyle changes, including healthier eating, increased physical activity, and using goal-setting strategies to support long-term health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide additional handouts and culturally relevant recipes to support learning outside of sessions.
- Explore options to arrange childminding for adult learning sessions.

IMPLICATIONS

- RDs will continue to identify solutions that allow children of group participants to remain in a safe space during the program so adults / parents can engage fully in program sessions.
- Current RD schedules limit the addition of new sessions, participants will continue to be referred to other nutrition programs offered internally and through community partners where feasible.

ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES // REGISTERED DIETITIAN PROGRAMS

NEWCOMERS COOKING TOGETHER

PROGRAM BRIEF

Newcomers Cooking Together is a community-based cooking program supporting newcomers and other equity-seeking groups. The program's aim is to support newcomers in a healthy transition to the Canadian food environment while affirming cultural food traditions through skill building, health education, and connection building.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Participants are introduced to new ingredients and a range of cultural recipes, while building transferable skills in kitchen safety, food handling, and meal preparation.
- Most participants reported improved wellbeing including perceived benefits to both physical and mental health, as a result of attending the program.
- Participants consistently described the program as welcoming, safe, and inclusive, with many reporting a strong sense of belonging and social inclusion, and all respondents indicated gaining at least two new positive relationships through program participation.



'Calla & Parveen were amazing! I can't thank them & Access Alliance enough. I feel my physical + mental health have improved. I wish this workshop was longer. I can't wait for the next one!'



RECOMMENDATIONS

The program is achieving its intended objectives. Continuing program delivery in its current format with the support of childminding and TTC tickets, reduces barriers to access.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // SENIORS PROGRAM

SENIORS PROGRAM SUMMARY

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Seniors Program delivers ongoing weekly programming, both in-person and online, at APOD and APOJ locations. Activities include health promotion programs such as exercise and recreation, along with workshops and educational sessions that support healthy aging and social engagement.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn: Participants reported learning self-care, particularly stress management and maintaining well-being through physical and social leisure activities and engagement. Many also valued connecting with other multicultural and newcomer seniors, which supported shared learning and connection.

HEART - How did you feel: Participants described positive emotional experiences from the program, expressing feelings of gratitude, support, and appreciation toward program facilitators. Many also reported reduced feelings of social isolation and an increased sense of connection and belonging. Their physical wellness also improved, with them feeling less pain with movement after exercising and generally feeling stronger with increased activity.

HANDS - What would you change: Overall, many seniors expressed interest in continuing with fitness and recreational programming. Notably, digital literacy sessions are helping seniors better connect with their loved ones and increasing their feelings of competency in a highly digital world.

FEET - What would you do moving forward: Participants reported applying learned skills and activities in daily life, including hobbies that supported stress relief, coping with loneliness, and connection with grandchildren.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide clear descriptions of available (in-person and online) fitness and recreation classes & support seniors with class transfers to accommodate their needs and abilities.
- Work with the Volunteer Department to recruit a singer to support the Sing-Along group and conduct outreach to increase participation among seniors.

IMPLICATIONS

- In-person and virtual offerings will continue to support the high demand for senior services.
- The Seniors Fitness Program will continue offering fitness and health education workshops across various activity types and ability levels.
- Recruitment of volunteers with strong singing skills will support the Sing-Along program.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // SENIORS PROGRAM

POLE WALKING GROUP

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Pole Walking group is a weekly program offered at both APOD and APOJ. Conducted outdoors in local parks, the program encourages seniors to walk between 2.5 and 4km with or without the use of Nordic Walking Poles. The program aims to promote regular physical activity, improve balance and mobility, reduce the risk of injury and strengthen community connection among participants.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pole-walking groups at both APOD and APOJ sites should continue to be delivered in their current format that supports various skill levels.
- If funding permits, provide transportation support such as TTC tickets to help reduce participation barriers.
- Though capacity is reached for current offerings of fitness programs, providing clients with information about additional resources and external referrals to other programs / organizations can support their needs.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Participants reported improvements in both physical and mental wellbeing. Many noted an enhanced physical capability, increased motivation to engage in regular physical activity, and improvements in their mobility and weight management.
- The walk group creates opportunities for social connection and inclusion. Notably, participants reported forming positive relationships through the program, a sense of community, and a sense of safety as compared to walking alone.
- Several respondents expressed interest in more frequent seniors' fitness programming, as well as additional health education and social programming opportunities

IMPLICATIONS

Continue with program delivery based on weather and environment conditions.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // SENIORS PROGRAM

TEA AND CHAT GROUP

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Tea and Chat is a weekly recreational session (at APOD and APOJ) for older adults and seniors aged 55 years or older. The program promotes social inclusion, equity, and access by providing newcomer seniors and other seniors opportunities to meet, build relationships, and stay connected to community resources.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Equity: Participants consistently reported feeling comfortable and welcome in Tea and Chat. Many noted developing social connections through the group, including gaining 2 or more or more positive relationships.

Accessibility: All participants (n=36; 100%) reported that the program was easy to get to and that the session timing aligned with their schedules.

Effectiveness: With positive reviews from the majority of the clients, many indicated learning about cyber security (n=32; 91%), as well as seniors' safety, hearing care, library services, and healthcare services.

Efficiency: Majority of participants found registration easy and staff friendly, which increased their sense of belonging to the area, neighbourhood, or community (n=32; 94%). Seniors awareness of how to make a suggestion or complaint can be improved.

Satisfaction: Overall, clients reported highly positive experiences, indicating they would recommend the program to family and friends. Monthly information sessions have been well-received, and seniors' suggestions for topics are incorporated for future sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue the monthly information sessions format and incorporate seniors' suggested topics or topics identified by needs assessments, staff observations or other priorities.
- Provide transportation support for eligible participants if funding permits or becomes available.
- Improve client awareness about the suggestion and complaints feedback process at Access Alliance.
- Continue sharing information about other Access Alliance groups and services, including fitness and nutrition programs.

IMPLICATIONS

- Seniors' awareness of the suggestions and complaints processes will support responsiveness to clients' needs and quality improvements.
- One information session per month on topics of interest to seniors can support their health, wellness, sense of confidence and connection.

2SLGBTQIA+ SERVICES // AMONG FRIENDS

NEWCOMERS THURSDAY PROGRAM

PROGRAM BRIEF

The 2SLGBTQI+ Newcomer Thursday program provides information and support on settlement transitions, mental wellbeing, and immigration or refugee processes. It also creates opportunities for participants to connect with others, helping reduce social isolation, and serves as a platform for referrals to relevant programs, services, and community resources.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Equity: Many participants identified as 2SLGBTQI+ refugee claimants, with many from African countries. All participants (N=23; 100%) reported feeling safe and welcomed, and 88% said the program strengthened their self-acceptance.

Accessibility: Transportation and commuting were the main barriers, with TTC tickets provided to reduce access challenges. Most participants reported it was easy to speak with staff (n=19/23; 83%) and provide feedback (n=17/23; 74%).

Effectiveness: Overall satisfaction was high, with 100% (N=23) rating the program positively, 74% (n=17/23) recommending it, and 71% (n=17/24) reporting improved mental health. There are opportunities to increase client connectedness with one another in the program.

Efficiency: The program has also served as an effective entry point for learning about services available. At least 81% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that sessions were informative and helpful in connecting them with relevant resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Highlighting both internal and external resources during sessions to support participants in navigating available services for holistically supporting their needs.
- Incorporate additional social components (e.g., storytelling activities, buddy systems) to strengthen connections within the program and reduce social isolation.
- Engage external partners (e.g., legal aid, housing, employment, wellness) to deliver information sessions aligned with participant needs.

IMPLICATIONS

- The program sees significant numbers of new clients each week, and sharing weekly flyers on key services and resources internally and externally can support the clients' needs.
- One new community-building activity will be implemented each quarter.
- Establish partnerships with three to five external organizations to co-host at least one session per quarter.
- Monitor emerging participant needs and assess the effectiveness of the hybrid program model and community-building.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES // SETTLEMENT WORKERS

SETTLEMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Citizenship Class Program is geared toward helping permanent residents who are in the process of obtaining their Canadian citizenship through preparation and support for the Citizenship test. Guided by the Discover Canada Study Guide, this program further elaborates in the concepts of rights, responsibilities, history, geography, and culture.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn: The program is significantly effective with program clients “Agree” or “strongly agree” that the program facilitated a better understanding of the Canadian government (n=53/64; 87.5%) of and improved awareness of their rights and responsibilities (n=55/64; 85.9%).

HEART - How did you feel: Individuals expressed positive feelings from the program, indicating that they felt welcomed and comfortable in the program, noting that they would recommend this program to their family and friends (n=50; 100%)

HANDS - What would you change: Results indicate that 90% of clients (n=45/50) rated the program as excellent and very good, with a strong appreciation for delivering these services in both English and other languages (e.g., Arabic). While in-person sessions support connections, online classes allow for flexibility and clients who have other responsibilities to attend at a time that works for them.

FEET - What would you do moving forward: Overall, the majority of the clients indicated an increased sense of confidence and readiness to write the Canadian citizenship test (n=33/50; 66%), with some who have already written the Canadian Citizenship test (n=10/50; 20%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain hybrid delivery, reassess program timing, and available supports for various learning and language needs.
- Allocate structured in person times for mock exams to be more easily accessed and provide timely feedback.
- Establish a centralized communication group to strengthen program engagement.

IMPLICATIONS

- Pilot one cohort of morning sessions to assess attendance and delivery preference.
- Mock tests will be scheduled during live sessions to avoid relying solely on post-session email practice.
- Evaluate overall impact of new time slots and communication methods on program participation and test success rates.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES // SETTLEMENT WORKERS

NEWCOMER WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP**PROGRAM BRIEF**

The Newcomer Women's Support Group is a weekly program that provides practical tools, workshops, and resources to support participants' personal and educational development. The program addresses barriers commonly experienced by newcomer women by strengthening confidence, build supportive networks, and encourage meaningful integration into Canadian society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess the availability of program staff and space to conduct language-specific classes such as Bengali and Tigrinya.
- Assess the availability of space and program time to reduce conflicts with other agency activities and external classes.
- Advocate for dedicated funding to provide childminding support.
- Improve outreach through translated flyers and intake forms, along with support from Peer Outreach Workers.

IMPLICATIONS

- Improve accessibility and participant engagement by reducing language barriers through translated materials and language-specific program delivery formats where feasible.
- Support increased and consistent attendance and retention through adjusted program scheduling.
- Explore feasible childminding options through short-term pilots or partnerships and develop preliminary cost estimates to support future funding proposals.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: Participants consistently reported feeling comfortable and welcomed in the program. Many highlighted the easy registration process, supportive staff, and clear channels for providing feedback. Program barriers identified included limited awareness of available services, language barriers, childcare responsibilities, and transportation challenges.

Effectiveness: Findings indicate positive outcomes for participants. Many reported improvements in overall wellbeing, increased confidence in navigating social and cultural challenges, and greater comfort integrating into Canadian society. Participants also reported forming at least two new positive relationships through the program, expanding their support networks and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Efficiency: Overall satisfaction with the program was high, with 100% of participants (n=23) rating the program as good, very good, or excellent and would recommend the program to family or friends.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES // IMMIGRANT RESEARCHERS SUPPORT NETWORK

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION: MASTERING CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES AND STORY TELLING TO SUCCEED

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Immigrant Researcher Support Network's annual in person workshop events are designed to support internationally educated researchers through connection, networking and skill building. This session was focused on strengthening conversational and storytelling skills. It aimed to build participants' confidence for communicating, using storytelling for influence and connection, and broaden personal and professional communication.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Participants consistently described the workshop environment as welcoming, and 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions met their expectations.
- Feedback indicated that workshop content was relevant to participants' needs, with reported increases in knowledge of storytelling techniques and conversational strategies.
- Overall satisfaction was high, with 87% of participants (n=7/8) rating the workshop positively, and many expressing interest in follow-up sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer follow-up sessions and additional practice opportunities through Coffee Chat sessions to reinforce storytelling and conversational skills. Include structured breakout groups and practical exercises.
- Accommodate requests to share workshop resources immediately after each session (for example, slides, summaries, or recordings) for personal practice.
- Strengthen accessibility by incorporating accessibility considerations into promotion, venue selection, and materials.

IMPLICATIONS

- Timely distribution of resources will support knowledge retention and allow participants to apply workshop content after sessions.
- Proactive accessibility planning, including accommodations and peer-connection supports (such as pairing returning participants with newer participants), may strengthen inclusion and sustained engagement.
- Partner with organizations such as TRIEC, the Ryerson/TMU Gateway program, and other research hubs to co-host or promote workshops and expand reach to internationally educated researchers.

'As a researcher I have [to] convert data and statistics to stories, so the story telling skill can really help me report my findings in a very impactful manner...regarding the making small talk can help me professionally as well as my social life.' - IRSN Member

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS WEST // FOOD INSECURITY & FOOD LITERACY

KIDS GET COOKING NCT & COMMUNITY DINING PROGRAM

KIDS GET COOKING PROGRAM

The Kids Get Cooking Program is a summer program that is a part of the Newcomer Cooking Together (NCT) Initiative. This program aims to teach children ages 7-12 practical cooking skills, promote teamwork, and encourage healthy eating habits.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD: The children (85%) learned practical kitchen skills like reading recipes, measuring and mixing ingredients, and safe handling of kitchen tools. 75% said they discovered new types of ingredients and recipes.

HEART: Many participants (92%) felt that the program was 'amazing', and 40% mentioned that teamwork and working with friends were a highlight of this program

HANDS: It was suggested that the program should allocate more time for activities and some wanted to make changes to the recipes and try more recipes.

FEET: Overall, all the clients indicated that they plan on trying the learned recipes at home and are more empowered to help with cooking. The majority also expressed their interest in trying new recipes.

COMMUNITY DINING PROGRAM WEST

The Community Dining Program (CDP) aims to reduce food insecurity, promote community connections, and improve access to nutritious food through weekly meals.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD: In general, the program has had significant positive results with 100% of the clients rating the program as excellent or good.

HEART: Majority of the clients (71%) felt energized and satisfied after the meal however some (29%) reported feeling neutral or still hungry.

HANDS: Almost half of the participants (405) recommended adjustments to portion sizes and that meals provided should include more vegetables or be more culturally varied (30%).

FEET: Many have noted that with the takeaway food, they try to save it for another meal (80%) or share it with their family, while 10% would give it to someone in need. Overall, 90% noted that this program provides them with financial benefits (saving on groceries) and improved access to nutritious foods and opportunities to connect with others. 40% identified that the program reduced their food insecurity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some participants suggested adding more activities, changing portion sizes and offering more variety in the menu.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS EAST // FOOD INSECURITY & FOOD LITERACY COMMUNITY DINING PROGRAMS

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Community Dining Program (CDP) aims to reduce food insecurity, promote community connections, and improve access to nutritious food through weekly meals.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Equity: The majority of respondents indicated that the program helped improve their sense of inclusion within the community (56.9%; N=52). Approximately 43% of participants reported neither agreement nor disagreement, suggesting that additional efforts to strengthen community engagement may enhance participant experience.

Accessibility: The result shows that a strong majority (94%) feel comfortable and welcomed in the program. Some clients indicated that the seating placements are too close together.

Effectiveness: Most participants generally felt the program has a positive impact on their physical health, with 60% agreeing or strongly agreeing; in contrast, 37% expressed no clear opinion.

Efficiency: Overall satisfaction with the program was high with 83% of participants rating the program as “Good” or “Excellent”.

Suggestions: Client comments indicate they are satisfied with the program. Some feedback was expressed around increasing the variety of foods (e.g. Italian, fish & chips, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to offer nutritious dine-in meals to reduce food insecurity, decrease social isolation, and create capacity to address emerging issues.
- Assess the need for those who cannot physically come to CDP through additional meal programs.
- Maintain a positive environment for volunteers who support the program.



IMPLICATIONS

- Engage volunteers in a gathering once per quarter for organizing activities and connection.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // EXPRESSIVE ARTS PROGRAM

NESTING GROUNDS

PROGRAM BRIEF

Nesting Grounds provides a weekly space (APOD and APOJ) where clients can access support, engage with mental health topics and build a sense of belonging. Sessions are led by newcomer artists, with activities co-created by program staff to combine creative expression with discussions around mental health and wellbeing. Through arts-based activities, the program aims to increase engagement, reduce stigma around mental health and promote overall wellbeing.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn: Participants reported gaining new creative skills and discovering new artistic interests through the program. Many also noted increased awareness of mental health and wellbeing, including strategies for managing stress, along with self-confidence and efficacy.

HEART - How did you feel: Participants expressed high overall satisfaction with the program and described it as meaningful and impactful. Many reported improvements in mood, increased happiness, and reduced stress, describing the sessions as a peaceful break from daily pressures.

HANDS - What would you change: Participants valued the program’s unique approach, including storytelling, creative activities, and the garden space. While many felt the program was already well delivered, a few participants expressed interest in becoming more involved and suggested incorporating reflective activities that help reinforce what they learn during sessions.

FEET - What would you do moving forward: Participants reported applying the benefits of the program in their daily lives. Many noted improved mental wellbeing and increased motivation to pursue personal goals, returning to work or organizing their lives. Others shared that they continued creative activities outside of the program, teaching these skills to others.

‘Stay open for everyone because we share our experiences, like back and forth. In this rush of life, we must find something to enjoy. I know I’m tired, but I need that time when I attend [this program] and I enjoy the time, I feel like it’s a relief.’

- Nesting Ground Participant

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the range of arts-based activities offered as program participation grows.
- Support program continuity and skill development with take-home resources to reinforce learning.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // CHILD AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

EARLYON DROP-IN

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Child and Family EarlyOn programs (APOD) are designed to engage newcomer parents and caregivers of children 0-6 years of age. The program aims to support early learning and childhood development through activities and family connections. Activities include playgroups, parent education, weekly parent chats, bi-weekly parenting workshops, and monthly events.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: The program demonstrated strong accessibility. Nearly all participants (90-100%) reported that virtual and in person programming was easy to register, to access and that service hours were accommodating for working schedules.

Equity: Out of 8 participants, all noted feeling comfortable and welcome in the program. 50% also indicated a strong sense of belonging and inclusion in the community as well as having developed new positive relationships through participation.

Effectiveness: Participants reported improved skills, knowledge, and creativity in engaging with their children. Many also noted increased confidence in parenting approaches, child development and children’s activity. Clients are also more aware of children’s programs and resources in the community.

Efficiency: Altogether, participants expressed satisfaction with program delivery and noted that the program effectively supported quality time with their children while also providing opportunities to connect with others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further exploration is recommended to better understand why only half of participants reported a strong sense of belonging while the remaining participants reported no clear opinion. This missing data would inform improvements in engagement strategies and equity efforts within the program.

TESTIMONIES

“I have increased my knowledge in how should I engage children in activities”

“I have increased my knowledge in how should I help my children to tidy up after the play time”

“I learned how to treat children with others”

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // CHILD AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

HEALTHY CHILD SCREENING

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Healthy Child Screening (HCS) program aims to provide free health screening for children 2-6 years old through assessments and support parents with educational workshops. The program facilitates the early identification of children's developmental needs and provides information and referrals for health and community services. Each HCS event typically included eight screening stations: nutrition, hearing, physical, speech/language, vision, dental, social/emotional development and settlement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider other locations to deliver the HCS program. Findings indicate that the APOD location has experienced consistently low attendance, suggesting that continued program delivery at this site may not be the most effective use of program resources.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Reach: Across five HCS events, a total of 198 children were screened. The nutrition station recorded the highest number of encounters (n=115), followed by the vision station (n=103), speech / language, Social/emotional and physical stations (n=93-94), dental (n=87), hearing (n=78), and settlement (n=71).

Accessibility: Among the 50 participants surveyed, over 90% agrees that “they found the registration process easy”, “the professionals were easy to talk to and encouraged me to ask questions” and “the duration of the screening was adequate”.

Effectiveness: Results suggests that after attending the program, 100% of clients reports an increased awareness about the health and wellness resources available to them and their child(ren). Regarding referrals, most of the referrals were made to Nutrition, Dental, and Settlement services and notably, 105 referrals were made to promote activities that addressed client’s social determinants of health.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // CHILD AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

HOLIDAY HAMPER

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Holiday Hamper program (HH) program supports low-income and newcomer families living in Taylor Massey, Lumsden, Secord, and Crescent Town whose children attend local area schools. The program provides holiday hampers to families with children aged 0 to 12 who are experiencing poverty and other hardships, particularly during the holiday season. The Holiday Hamper program is funded entirely through sponsorship from businesses, organizations, and community members. Sponsors adopt families and provide gifts for the household such as toys, clothing, and other essential items.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Reach: A total of 120 families, representing 431 individuals (190 adults and 241 youths) have received a hamper.

Accessibility: Regarding accessibility of programs such as the registration process, friendliness of staff, or knowing how to make feedback, respondents noted that it the registration process was easy (85.5%), staff were easy to talk to (93%), and more than half knew how to provide feedback for future improvements (68%).

Effectiveness: The program effectively raised approximately \$122,000 through cash and in-kind donations. The program also strengthened community partnerships by maintaining existing sponsors while building new connections. Participants reported positive experiences of inclusion, with respondents indicating they felt comfortable, accepted, and a sense of belonging through the program and within the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate a designated space to store items (e.g., toys or other items)
- Update processes so that tax receipts are issued to donors by the end of December.

IMPLICATIONS

- Explore the availability of storage options.
- Staff will be trained on available software for issuing tax receipts to donors in a timely manner.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // YOUTH PROGRAMS

APOJ: NEWCOMER YOUTH PROGRAM**PROGRAM BRIEF**

The Newcomer Youth Program at APOJ is a weekly structured program for newcomer youth and young adults aged 13 to 24 years. It aims to support youths' overall health, wellbeing and development by reducing isolation, building life skills, and fostering belonging in Canada through interactive activities that support mental and emotional wellbeing, peer connection, and confidence-building.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Equity: All youth felt comfortable, welcome, and safe, with most clients (n=13/16; 81%) reporting a strong or very strong sense of belonging. Participants also noted that facilitators were approachable and easy to talk to, which made it easier to ask questions, provide feedback, and seek support.

Accessibility: All participants indicated that program hours and location worked well with their schedules. However, language was identified as the main barrier to access, with accommodations such as simplified language and new vocabulary used to support learning.

Effectiveness: Overall, program content aligned well with youth interests and needs. Participants reported increased confidence in communication, classroom participation, and self-expression, as well as reduced anxiety. Improvements can be made around sharing information and resources to youth about programs and services that support their needs.

Engagement and Empowerment: Participants reported positive experiences, including forming meaningful relationships, and expressed interest in more youth programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue using simplified language and incorporate shared learning opportunities and supports during sessions.
- Increase awareness of the services offered by Access Alliance and other local organizations.
- A simple ongoing feedback mechanism will guide improvements and effectively tailor content to participant needs.

IMPLICATIONS

- Session plans will be updated to include language supports and recurring interactive elements aligned with youth input.
- Each school session will include a service-awareness component to improve knowledge of available supports by adding a brief "service spotlight" using a simple slide or visual.
- Strengthen engagement and responsiveness by including recurring interactive activities and introducing an anonymous monthly check-in to capture youth feedback

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // YOUTH PROGRAMS

APOD: NEWCOMER YOUTH PROGRAM**PROGRAM BRIEF**

The Newcomer Youth Program at APOD is a weekly structured program for newcomer youth and young adults aged 13 to 24 years. It aims to support youths' overall health, wellbeing and development by reducing isolation, building life skills, and fostering belonging in Canada through interactive activities that support mental and emotional wellbeing, peer connection, and confidence-building.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Program delivery was effective in creating inclusive, supportive spaces for newcomer youth across sites and program streams.
- Participants experienced increased belonging, such as feeling welcomed, empowered, and connected to other peers and community resources
- Positive skill development outcomes were indicated by participants noting improvements in communication, social skills, English learning, and improved navigation of new opportunities.
- Mental health continues to be an important area of need, with participants expressing growing interest in programming that addresses mental health awareness, stigma reduction, and help-seeking supports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide additional opportunities for youth to lead sessions and activities, building on the success of peer-led engagement.
- Integrate additional mental health workshops to address expressed needs and support ongoing stigma reduction and youth empowerment.
- Increase engagement and connection by expanding the arts-based programs (e.g., expressive arts, music, painting) and strengthening collaboration within schools to improve referral and outreach.

IMPLICATIONS

- Future programming will include co-designed sessions led by youth to encourage ownership and practice leadership skills.
- Sessions will incorporate regular mental health check-ins and integrate discussions into program delivery.
- The team will implement engagement and access strategies to strengthen connection to services and broaden reach to newcomer youth and families.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // YOUTH PROGRAMS

NEWCOMERS COOKING TOGETHER

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Newcomers Cooking Together (NCT; APOD) is designed to facilitate a successful transition of newcomer youth to the Canadian food environment while maintaining ethnoculturally specific food traditions. The program fosters healthy eating practices, affirms and builds on food-related skills, and addresses food and nutrition challenges identified by newcomers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen peer leader pathways by identifying returning youth, providing light mentorship, skills coaching, and building in feedback loops.
- Integrate wellness and service integration into program sessions through a 5-minute “service spotlight” and cooking themes that naturally connect to mental health and healthy habits.

IMPLICATIONS

- Build a peer leadership pathway that allows for returning youth participants to be onboarded and trained with structured mentorship and regular check-ins or skill development and feedback.
- Collaborate with external partners such as TNG and other community centers to host guest presenters or joint events to enhance youth referrals and support.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Participants reported improvements in nutrition knowledge, cooking skills, and confidence in preparing healthy meals using Canada’s food guide. Many highlighted the value of learning and practicing recipes with support from other youth and the dietitians.
- Overall feedback was positive with participants describing the sessions as both enjoyable and educational.
- Outcomes after program participation result in reduced feelings of social isolation by creating a welcome environment that fosters connection and belonging.
- Altogether, 100% of participants were satisfied with feelings of gratitude for the experience and expressed interest in having similar programs offered again.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // INCOME TAX PROGRAM

CLIENTS

PROGRAM BRIEF

In partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the Income Tax Clinic Program delivered at APOD and APOJ was created to support low-income community members situated in the East York, West Scarborough and York Regions with annual tax filings. The program aims to improve access to free tax filing services while helping eligible individuals to receive benefits and credits.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: All respondents reported having adequate access to services that were offered 100% (N=56).

Equity: The program created a welcoming and supportive environment. 98.2% (N=56) indicated that they felt comfortable and welcome while accessing the program.

Effectiveness: Participants reported overall positive experiences and appreciated the support from staff and volunteers. Feedback suggested:

- Expanded outreach could help more community members benefit from the service.
- Longer hours, with more multilingual support, and virtual or phone appointments.
- Continue to update and train volunteers on tax regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the recruitment of volunteers to support the volume at APOJ
- Update the filing process to streamline and increase filing volume.

TESTIMONY

"We would like to thank you, and Maureen for today's CRA cleanup. Not only was it a pleasure to meet you in person, but Maureen was added on as a special surprise. Both of you women deserve kudos! It was so effortless, so calm, and it made the day so much better. We wish both of you Karma by the truckload, great vibes, and great luck!"

-Tax Clinic Participants



IMPLICATIONS

- Recruitment of volunteers and updated processes will support efficiency and client satisfaction.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // INCOME TAX PROGRAM

VOLUNTEERS

PROGRAM BRIEF

Volunteers are a critical component of the Income Tax Clinic Program at Access Alliance. To assist our community members with their legal obligation of tax filing, volunteers dedicate their time and service. Volunteers are trained for filing taxes, gain practical experience and contribute to community support efforts.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: At APOD, most volunteers (86%) reported that the scheduled day and time were convenient, while the rest did not respond. At APOJ, 25% agreed that the hours of operation were accessible. These findings suggest stronger accessibility at APOD and opportunities to review scheduling preferences at APOJ.

Equity: Volunteers reported positive personal development outcomes, with all participants noting improved communication skills and confidence through their volunteer experience.

Effectiveness: Aside from being engaged, all report finding meaning within their role as volunteers at the tax clinic.

Efficiency: 50% of volunteers that supported the program had volunteered with the tax clinic previously. Regarding recommendations, all volunteers would definitely (71%) or probably (29%) recommend a family or a friend to volunteer at Access Alliance’s Income Tax Clinic in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider working with partner agencies and universities to recruit student volunteers (e.g., accounting, finance, and business programs) who may be interested in gaining tax preparation experience and expanding their resumes. Additionally, increasing the volunteer reserve pool to ensure ongoing supports.

IMPLICATION

Contact colleges and universities in advance (October of previous years) for volunteer engagement and recruitment.

TESTIMONIES

“I love to volunteer at access Alliance because I get a comfortable place here”

“I had a positive experience working with the team”.

“The clinic was very well run and Hema did an outstanding job coordinating and was a pleasure to deal with at all times.”

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // INCOME TAX PROGRAM

IMPACT

Across the program, filed taxes resulted in a **combined total of \$810,802.01**, including refunds and benefits (GST and Trillium).

	APOD	APOJ	Total
Total Refunds	\$180,262.35	\$17,750.99	\$198,013.34
GST	\$189,198.05	\$27,072.68	\$216,270.73
Trillium	\$361,724.66	\$34,793.28	\$396,517.94



	APOD	APOJ	TOTAL
Number of Sessions	15	7	22
# of volunteers confirmed	95	11	106
#Vol in attendance	77	11	88
# Total Vol hours	449	43.5	492.5
# of Tax filed -electronic and by mail	372	59	431
#of individuals served, including dependents	460	67	527
#of dependents served	116	14	130
# of individual bookings	340	60	400
#of joint bookings	79	0	79
# Tax Returns File	386	59	445
# of Tax Return with Refund	118	13	131

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // SCARBOROUGH CYCLES

LEARN TO RIDE

PROGRAM BRIEF

Scarborough Cycles, part of Access Alliance since 2015, operates three bike hubs that provide bicycles, tools, workshops, and group rides. The Learn-to-Ride Program, in partnership with Cycle Toronto, offers low-barrier classes for all ages, helping non-riders gain essential biking skills over several weeks.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: Participants consistently reported that the program was welcoming, accessible, and inclusive. Staff and facilitators were described as supportive and approachable, contributing to a positive learning environment.

Effectiveness: This program has helped improve our participants' knowledge of the community and has also helped get them connected to the growing cycling community in Scarborough. In addition, the participants report (75-80%, N=24) that they have learned how to maintain and repair bikes, safety measures while cycling, knowledge of the neighbourhood and connections with others.

Satisfaction: All participants (N=26) reported high satisfaction, rating the program as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent.” Many noted increased community belonging, quality time with friends and family, and gaining bicycle knowledge and repair skills.

Qualitative Feedback: Based on overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program and staff, many participants expressed interest in more programs across all seasons, particularly during school breaks, and more targeted sessions by intensity level (beginner, intermediate, advanced rides).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Resource Sharing: exploration of creating manuals or DIY kits for participants interested in doing simple repairs for their bikes.

Storytelling: document more qualitative data on the impact of our programs as well as the impact on the lives of people. Such as success stories that may amplify the reputation of the program externally.

IMPLICATIONS

Capturing one participant success story each quarter to help understand program impact and support external communication about the program.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // SCARBOROUGH CYCLES

DO-IT-YOURSELF BIKE REPAIR

PROGRAM BRIEF

Scarborough Cycles operates three bike hubs that provide bicycles, tools, workshops, and group rides. The Do-it-Yourself Bike Repair Program is designed to provide residents with free access to the bike hub's space and tools. Residents can work and learn how to fix or maintain their bikes independently with guidance from staff.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Resource Sharing:** exploration of creating manuals or DIY kits for participants interested in doing simple repairs for their bikes.
- **Storytelling:** document more qualitative data on the impact of our programs as well as the impact on the lives of people. Such as success stories that may amplify the reputation of the program externally.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Accessibility: All of our respondents found the program and the staff welcoming, accessible and inclusive (n=23)

Effectiveness: Participants have significantly improved their physical health and developed personal skills after attending this program, with 92.9% indicating that they now know how to repair and maintain a bicycle.

Satisfaction: All respondents (n=28) rated high satisfaction with the program, indicating it was “very good” or “excellent”. They note how the program has supported them in fixing and maintaining their bikes, with some having older bikes repaired to donate to neighbours or other community members.

Qualitative Feedback: Results showed strong positive receptivity to the program and staff. Participants shared that the program helped build repair skills and confidence in applying what they learned to help friends and family. Several also suggested longer hours and additional workshops, including bicycle tips and on-the-road repairs.

IMPLICATIONS

Consider capturing one participant success story each quarter to help understand program impact and support external communication about the program.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // GREEN ACCESS PROGRAM

GREEN ACCESS EVENTS

PROGRAM BRIEF

Sustainable Living/Green Access events are in-person, one-off events for adults held at APOD during the growing season. They combine education, hands-on activities, and civic engagement around local environmental or health issues. This year's events included Seed Saturday, the Green Access Free Market, and the Truth and Reconciliation: History to Resilience Nature Walk.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

HEAD - What did you learn:

Participants reported gaining new knowledge and practical skills related to environmental issues and sustainable living. Some examples included knowledge of heirloom seeds, biodiversity, storing seeds, the medicinal value of plants, and fresh pesto recipes.

HEART - How did you feel:

Many respondents reported to feel 'happy', 'relaxed' and 'peaceful', especially being a part of a program that fostered a sense of connection to other members and the environment

HANDS - What would you change:

Client feedback indicates high satisfaction with the events, expressing an interest in more similar events to be conducted.

FEET - What would you do moving forward:

Altogether, participants are empowered to make changes to their lives, such as increasing their intake of vegetables and showing more interest in opportunities that cultivate healthy food. After these events, participants said they feel emboldened to share knowledge with their family and friends or already have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work closely with colleagues focusing on civic engagement and collaborate with them for civic engagement sessions in addition to events.
- Develop follow-up sessions or expand online resources to provide participants with additional learning materials and next steps after attending events.



IMPLICATIONS

- Use simple processes to encourage survey completion before participants leave events.
- Provide volunteers with clear briefings so they can actively support participant engagement and evaluation activities.
- Consider small incentives, such as a draw, to encourage survey completion.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS // GREEN ACCESS PROGRAM

GARDEN STEWARD

PROGRAM BRIEF

The Green Access Program uses the Green Roof at Access Point on Danforth as a space for community-based activities that focus on organic gardening, food production, and biodiversity protection. The program integrates community development, environmental education and health promotion. The rooftop garden also provides community members, many of whom live in high-rise buildings without their own outdoor space, with opportunities to participate in outdoor gardening and food-growing activities.

KEY EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Equity: Majority feel comfortable and welcome in the program, stating that registration process was easy to access. The hours of the program delivery aligned with participant schedules and all participants reported increased feelings of inclusion in the community after the program.

Effectiveness: All participants agree or strongly agree that their knowledge about native plants and cultivating food crops has improved with being more informed about their dietary choices. Respondents indicate they have gained a newfound motivation to create a more sustainable environment and that their participation has impacted/informed their dietary choices

Efficiency: Altogether, there is an overwhelmingly positive review of the program with all participants rating it 'good', 'Very good', or 'excellent'. All participants state that they would recommend this to a family or friend due to respective positive experiences with the program and program facilitators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess the steward onboarding process to take into account the skills and supports required by the applicants.
- Document success stories to demonstrate the program's success.

IMPLICATION

- Apply to 2-3 funding sources to sustain the program, as addressing food security is an important pillar of community programs. Reference success stories to demonstrate impact and relevance of the program.

CONCLUSION


At a glance, the programs delivered across Access Alliance this year demonstrate strong engagement and meaningful outcomes for the communities we serve. Many of our clients identify as newcomers, immigrants, refugees, youth, seniors, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and other equity-seeking communities who face barriers and isolation in their day-to-day lives. As findings suggest, participants consistently describe our programs as safe, welcoming, and respectful.


From an evaluation standpoint, this is imperative as it not only reflects client satisfaction, but also indicates that the programs are reaching people in a way that is responsive to their needs. Additionally, throughout different programs, all participants reported building new relationships and feeling less isolated. For many people, these programs are not only about the services themselves but a space to connect, strengthen ties and feel a sense of belonging within their neighbourhood.

Programs also support skill-building across areas such as employment readiness, mental health and wellbeing, nutrition and cooking, parental supports, financial literacy, environmental awareness and recreation. Many have noted dramatic improvements, especially when the skills learned in these programs are applied in their daily lives. Overall, these findings reinforce the importance of the continuity of these programs. Sustained support will allow Access Alliance to maintain what is working well, respond to emerging needs, and keep services accessible for community members who rely on them.






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