

Practice Name:**Date Created:** 26-May-09**Author:****Last Updated:****Abstract:****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Practice	Welcoming Communities Pilot Project
Date	18-June-08
Name of Municipality	Town of Innisfail
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THE ISSUE**Abstract:**

What is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?

Please briefly describe the final practice developed. (e.g. if you developed a new Council agenda, list the agenda items, or if a new communications plan was created,

provide a summary of the plan's goals, objectives and highlights.)

The development and use of Welcoming Communities' best practices in the attraction and retention of newcomers to Central Alberta. Welcoming Communities promote the full participation of newcomers in the social, cultural and economic life of the region without discrimination. The Town of Innisfail applied to act as the pilot municipality under the direction of the Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP).

Need:

Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) why you needed to create this practice (policy or process).

What issue made it necessary? (e.g. "We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...", or "We needed an annual forecasting tool because...")

Alberta's strong economy has placed high demands on its labour force resulting in critical skill shortages. The situation may become even more significant over the next decade as the province faces a number of demographic challenges - an aging population, low birthrate, urbanization, and decreased interprovincial migration - all of which will affect the province's and the Town of Innisfail's ability to meet the labour force demands of a prosperous economy. The Town of Innisfail desired to become the pilot municipality as, during the initial launch, Sunterra Meats was about to hire thirty immigrant workers from the Phillipines. The Town of Innisfail recognized the importance of facilitating a smooth transition of foreign workers into the community.

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

Research:

How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?

Please include any research documentation you can share, or give us a source reference (e.g. Web site, literature, "We reviewed the bylaws from other municipalities in the area...").

Process:

How did you go about designing your practice? For instance, did you create a team, hire a consultant, borrow something ready-made from another jurisdiction?

Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.

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To launch a Welcoming Communities initiative, CAEP first offered a Welcoming Communities Forum in 2007. The Forum objectives were two-fold - first it would introduce the concept of Welcoming Communities as it relates to the attraction, retention and integration of new citizens and secondly, it would present a Best Practices Toolkit. The March 29, 2007 forum resulted in identifying three basic Welcoming Communities strategies going forward: strategic collaboration actions, direct client support efforts, and advocacy strategies. One of the strategic collaboration actions identified was to continue to promote Welcoming Communities Best Practices through forums, information sessions and resources made available on the CAEP website.

During development of the best practices toolkit, the Town of Innisfail took the initiative to take the Welcoming Communities concept one step further and became a pilot municipality. Community partners came to the table and a welcoming community committee was formed. The partners included:

Pat Bidart – Olds College – Committee Chair
Patt Churchill – Town of Innisfail
Karen Parsley - Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP)
Scott Boyd - Chair, CAEP's Welcoming Communities Steering Committee
Adam Corkum – Town of Innisfail
Paul Lindsay – Sunterra Meats Innisfail
Nino Tobias – Sunterra Meats Innisfail (immigrant worker)
Jan Underwood - Central Alberta Refugee Effort (C.A.R.E)
Donna Arnold – Henday Association for Lifelong Learning
Jane Duncalfe – Innisfail Chamber of Commerce
Colleen Hayden – Innisfail Public Library

Shawn Russell – Chinook's Edge School Division
Lauranne Hemmingway – Innisfail Career and Employment Centre
Mona Blain – St. Marguerite's Bourgeois Catholic School

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE**Authority:**

Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?

CAEP agreed to work with the Town of Innisfail as the pilot project site. Innisfail Town Council fully supported the project and agreed to provide funding and administrative support.

Reporting:

How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?

The Innisfail Welcoming Communities Committee provided regular updates to Town Council on their progress. CAEP provided a staff member who sat on the committee and reported progress to the CAEP Board of Directors. (Please see the attached Innisfail Welcoming Communities toolkit)

Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.

Consultation:

Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?

Yes.

If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your consultation.

Chinook's Edge School Division and the Red Deer Catholic School Division both submitted a comprehensive package, in a number of foreign languages, which would assist foreign workers enrolling their children into the school system. The packages contained strategies that would assist in ESL (English as a Second Language) integration and education.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE**Plan:**

Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.

The Innisfail Welcoming Communities Committee began to distribute the toolkit, through local industry, to their foreign workers.

Cultural diversity training was offered to the schools and businesses throughout the community.

Social events were held to introduce the foreign workers and immigrants to the community which included inviting them to participate in 2007 Canada Day celebrations and setting up booths to showcase their cultural cuisines.

Local media was involved throughout the process to inform the community of this tremendous initiative.

The Henday Lifelong Learning Association of Innisfail began offering courses in English to foreign workers and their families.

A package was developed to assist immigrants in obtaining medical care in Innisfail.

Translated documentation and maps of the Town of Innisfail were prepared to assist foreign workers and immigrants get around Innisfail.

Interpreters, from within the community, were recruited to assist with language translation needs.

No changes were needed to any Town bylaws or regulations, however, the Town has become much more aware of cultural diversity in our maps and publications.

Policy:

What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?

Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.

When:

When did your municipality begin to use the practice? Was it implemented all at once or in stages?

Who:

As the pilot municipality many of the practices were implemented throughout the development of the toolkit. The Innisfail Welcoming Communities Committee continues to meet regularly to ensure changing needs, of the community, are addressed.

Who was responsible for implementing the practice?

The Innisfail Welcoming Communities Committee.

If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget:

How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?

The Town of Innisfail provided \$500 to the Committee and assisted in producing the mapping and brochures. CAEP's budget was approximately \$28,000 for the development of the toolkit and the consultation process.

What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?

Staff:

What human resources did you need to design, implement and manage your practice? (e.g. "It took X staff member (s) X months on this" or "This is part of normal staff duties.")

The Innisfail participants were 100% volunteers. The Central Alberta Economic Partnership provided one staff member to work on the project.

Infrastructure:

What "capital costs" (such as information technology, other equipment or building assets) did you need to design, implement, manage, and/or evaluate your practice?

No capital costs were required.

EVALUATING YOUR PRACTICE

Formal:

If you did a formal evaluation (e.g. user satisfaction survey, analysis of annual expenditures or number of rate payers served) for your practice, please describe the evaluation tool and the process used.

No formal evaluation has been done to date.

Tell us who was involved.

Informal:

If you did an informal evaluation, describe what you did (such as discussing the practice with people in the office or on the street, or letters/comments received).

The Committee Chair was invited to present the toolkit to a forum in Halifax. From that presentation the Chair has been invited to present the project to a committee of the British Columbia legislature. Other municipalities, within the CAEP region, have taken the toolkit and adopted the practices within their own communities. Finally, Innisfail citizens have shown an overwhelming support for our foreign workers. Countless donations, of household and recreational goods, have been received by the foreign workers.

Performance measures:

Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change

in equipment life expectancy.)

Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:

- collecting data
- establishing a baseline
- applying the measures
- results
- follow up

Changes:

(a) Based on the evaluation (formal or informal), describe any changes you have made, or would like to make, to your practice as a result. (e.g. “After implementing this practice, we decided that it would be better if...”)

-or-

(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?

The initial thirty Innisfail foreign workers have now settled in and have applied to bring their families into our community. It is anticipated the Committee will be undertaking future surveys, with foreign workers and industry, to confirm the success of the program.

The Welcoming Communities Committee are committed to ensuring this is an evolving and adaptable program. The Committee meets on a regular basis to evaluate and develop new programs as the need arises (ie. a host family program is now in the development stages in response to an identified need).

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED

Benefits:

What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)

The town of Innisfail is now considered a Welcoming Community and, along with industry, the town is better positioned to attract and retain foreign workers and immigrants (workers from other provinces).

Key Lessons:

What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:

- designing;
- obtaining approval;
- implementing; and
- evaluating your practice?

Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. “We realized that we needed to spend more time...”)

We have many champions in our community.

An understanding of the importance of newcomers to your community's economic development is crucial. If there are no newcomers in your community, the result is no employee base for economic development.

Utilize resources that have been developed, (ie. the Tool Box of Ideas for Smaller Centres and Central Alberta's Pilot Project Supplement).

Inevitably, not everyone will be as enthusiastic as the Committee and team members.

Support services must work together.

Municipal support is essential. This initiative must be a priority for the town and Town Council in developing community growth.

It is important to have representation from a variety of groups on the committee (ie. Chamber of Commerce, Town, Schools, Library, Employer's etc.).

It is important to learn from resources (ie. CARE), but also to develop your own resources in your community.

It is important to meet regularly.

Working with employees is a team effort and should not be the responsibility of the employer alone.

Not all employers or groups are receptive to a Welcoming Communities Committee.

It is important to share your ideas and work with and learn from other communities.

Remember that the committee consists of volunteers who are all very busy so things may not happen as quickly as the committee may want.

The committee is a work in progress and it is important to work together.

Advice to Municipal Peers:

What advice would you give to another municipality that is considering adopting your practice? Is there anything you might have done differently?

To ensure the health of your community and business sector it is a necessity to open the doors of your community and welcome foreign and immigrant workers.

PRACTICE UPDATES**New Information:**

There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:

- a new process has been implemented in your municipality;
- there are new practice evaluation results; or
- there has been a change affecting organizational direction. For example, explain how new economic conditions or a new vision/strategy affect the practice.

Please indicate those changes here. Don't forget to list any new documents that may be useful to your peers. Then go to "Other Information" to attach the new documents.

OTHER INFORMATION**Suggestions:**

Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).

Attracting & Retaining Immigrants
Toolbox of Ideas for Smaller Centres
(attached)

Useful websites document (attached)

How to Retain Foreign Workers
(attached)

Documents & Attachments:

Please attach (using the "Browse" button below) any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).

Innisfail Welcoming Communities Toolbox
Attracting & Retaining Immigrants Toolbox of Ideas for Smaller Centres
Useful Websites For Skilled Workers & Employers
How to Retain Your Foreign Workers in Alberta

* Note: If you do not have an electronic copy of a document, please send Municipal Excellence a paper copy for scanning to:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Municipal Excellence Network
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4L4

Nominations:

Do you have any suggestions of other individuals or municipalities with municipal practices that we should add to the Municipal Excellence network? Please list their

practice, municipality, and contact information.

Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.

COMMENTS

Have we missed something; anything you'd like to add to the areas we have touched on, or an area we have not mentioned?