

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION FOR FACILITATING GROUP ORIENTATION SESSIONS

This resource includes tips and suggestions on best practices for organizing and delivering group orientation sessions. The information is based on feedback from frontline workers who provide group settlement orientation sessions. Adapt these tips as you see fit for your organization's circumstances.

While IRCC agreed to compile and share this information, inclusion here is not meant to endorse any particular idea. The objective is to share the practical tips being used by organizations across the sector. If you would like more information on any of the content in this resource sheet or share any ideas, please contact IRCC.SIPOrientationCanada-OrientationCanadaPEI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca.

GROUP ORIENTATION

How Can I Promote My Sessions?

Promote Your Sessions in Person

- Face-to-face promotion of the orientation sessions is most effective with a majority of clients and can result in higher attendance rates. Visit the activities offered by your organization to introduce and describe upcoming session topics. This provides clients with an opportunity to ask questions about the session in advance. It also gives them time to plan their schedules so that they can attend.
- Communicate within your organization to ensure staff members know what programs and workshops are coming up. Staff members can then cross-promote all the workshops, classes and sessions offered, in addition to the ones they deliver. A regular email bulletin that includes session descriptions and eligibility requirements will provide staff with a better sense of the type and availability of orientation sessions offered overall.
- Where possible, post a large calendar or dry-erase board with each of the upcoming sessions listed on it, near a high traffic area such as the entrance or close to public washrooms.

Promote Your Sessions Electronically

- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp) to advertise upcoming sessions. "Liking" a page on Facebook will appear in newsfeeds to remind clients of events, etc.
- Encourage clients to provide their email addresses to receive information updates from your organization. Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL) requires that people opt-in or give "express consent" to receive emails. Send a reminder email the day before a session to interested clients.
- Take photos of group sessions and post to your organization's social media accounts to garner interest and set a visual example of what clients can expect (make sure to ask permission to take photos of people, and posting them on social media, before doing so).
- Advertise sessions with interesting tidbits of information not widely known. For example, extract information from the *Orientation to Canada* (O2C) resource sheets to advertise your workshops. "Did you know...? Come to find out more about...!" If feasible, translate these advertisements in multiple languages based on your organization's clientele.

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Examples:

<p>Personal Income Tax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do we pay tax?• What is income tax?• What does filing income tax mean?• What types of income do I need to report?• What types of income are non-taxable?• Who has to file income tax?• What are the benefits of filing income tax?• When is the tax return due? What are the penalties for late filing?• How can I file income tax? What are my options?• What are tax deductions and what can I claim?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What documents should I gather?• How long do I need to keep them?• What happens if I have overpaid/underpaid my tax?• What if I owe taxes but cannot afford to pay it right away?• How can I protect myself from fraud? <p>Winterizing in Canada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are your home and vehicle ready for frigid weather?• How to dress properly for the weather• Winter driving tips• How to deal with emergency situations in the winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What you need to know about your home furnace in the winter time• How can you save money on bills in the winter? <p>Employment Standards</p> <p>KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A WORKER!</p> <p>Come join this information session to learn about your rights as a worker as well as responsibilities of foreign nationals, employers, recruiters and consultants. Whether you are currently having some concerns at work or you are happy with your employment, you should be aware of your rights and responsibilities!</p>
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How Can I Improve Attendance and Retention?

Improve Class Attendance

- Encourage parents to use your on-site child care services, if your organization offers them, while they attend classes. If child care services are not available, schedule session times to minimize conflicts with clients' schedules.
- Offer the same session multiple times a year and at different hours to make it more accessible for students, working and/or volunteering clients.
- If possible, offer sessions in locations close to clients. Off-site orientation sessions can also provide a break in the routine for regular participants.
- Have settlement workers and/or facilitators follow-up on getting clients to return for sessions on various topics.
- Consider accessibility such as the availability of elevators or first floor classrooms for clients who may have mobility issues.

Improve Class Retention

- Offer clients an official Certificate of Achievement upon successful completion of workshops and/or classes.
- Offer a 'Settlement Workshop Passport' where clients receive a stamp for every workshop attended. Your organization could also consider partnering with other settlement service providers to do this (clients could get stamps from different service providers to fill their passports).
- Build a good relationship between settlement organization staff and clients. Implement humorous ice-breaker activities to make classes more enjoyable and increase attendance.
- Share stories and personal experiences to create a connection with clients.
- If clients cannot make it in person to a session, offer the lesson online so that they may access the information at their convenience; offer to have them come in person to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Offer social incentives; organize a potluck at the end of an event so clients can socialize and make connections.
- Use the mobile application, [KAHOOT!](#) This app must be downloaded on participants' devices and allows the facilitator to create real-time quizzes and games to be played during sessions. The app is available free or for a paid subscription and has been received with great enthusiasm from clients.

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How Can I Create the Best Classroom Environment?

Create a Safe Space for Learning

- Facilitators should set boundaries and expectations at the beginning of sessions/workshops such as: no cell phone use during class, punctuality, not interrupting others when they speak, and making the space a judgment-free zone.
- Some participants with introverted personalities may find big activities uncomfortable especially if these require them to express themselves or to interact with others. Create a safe and supportive environment and encourage, but do not pressure, clients to participate. This can be helpful for the attendees to step out of their comfort zone and gain new skills and confidence. If the client declines to participate despite receiving encouragement, allow him/her to observe and join in when s/he feels comfortable.
- If the topic is sensitive, choose a facilitator with whom clients are familiar and comfortable.
- If clients are uncomfortable during a session, provide them with an opportunity to leave if they want to. Some clients may become angry or emotional when discussing difficult topics. In some cases, certain topics may be challenging for clients who may have experienced trauma. It is important to follow up with clients individually after the session to ensure they are feeling okay and are connected with the proper resources or help.
- Sometimes clients do not fully understand the information presented. Following up can ensure that they have accurate information and completely understand the topic.
- With repeated sessions presented by the same facilitator, clients become more comfortable and often this increased familiarity allows the participants to discuss various topics in more detail.

Dealing with Difficult Topics

- For sensitive subjects such as domestic abuse, consider separating the men and the women and deliver the session to women-only, then men-only; implement the same strategy for adults and youth during the topic of child abuse.
- Consider using videos or other multimedia to help present difficult topics. Consult the [CentralCollab video database](#) to find an appropriate video in the folder labelled "Settlement Videos Scan --- Vidéos sur l'établissement".
- Do not avoid difficult topics simply because you feel uncomfortable dealing with them; reflect on what makes you uncomfortable and if possible, educate yourself on those issues. Consider opening the sensitive topic with a statement along the lines of "*the session today may be one of discomfort to some*" and allow honest conversation to unfold. Reinforce that although an issue may cause personal discomfort, Canadian law reflects these rights and they must be respected by all Canadians.
- It is important to be open minded and accepting. If you are talking about a topic such as disciplining children and you have a very strong opinion of what is right and wrong, clients can often very easily sense how you feel even if you do not comment on it. Be aware of your non-verbal communication and ensure that clients do not feel judged. Facilitators who have strong feelings about a topic may not be in the best position to present that specific topic to the group.
- When dealing with sensitive topics, it is also a good idea to be clear about what the Canadian law is, and what Canadian expectations are. Newcomers do not have a choice about following the law, however some cultural expectations of behavioural norms may be more open to interpretation.

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How to Maximize Learning

- The most popular mode of learning is kinesthetic (followed by visual, auditory, and reading and writing); where possible, try to incorporate a hands-on participatory component to workshops or sessions. Examples of kinesthetic learning include role-playing, projects and exercises.
- Provide handout material written in plain language; allow clients to take notes, follow along and review on their own time.
- Take breaks during longer sessions. People's attention starts to fade after 60 to 90 minutes.
- Consider energizing breaks (e.g. lead a break with deep belly-breathing for five breaths, do a little stretching exercise together or a game involving movement).
- Use plenty of visuals (e.g. charts, pictures, videos) where applicable.
- E-mail the clients who attended the workshop a list of links to relevant websites.

Invite Guest Speakers

- Prepare guest speakers. Give them some instructions for working with interpreters and clients with lower language skills. If possible, have them send their presentations in advance so you can edit material to plain language. Remind them to speak slowly and allow for time to interpret and digest information.
- Share *Orientation to Canada* (O2C) resource sheets with guest speakers well in advance of their sessions. Ask them to align their presentation with O2C resource sheets where feasible.
- Provide guest speakers with some information about what works for English as a Second Language (ESL) clients. For example, simple vocabulary, slower pace, pauses, sitting down in smaller groups (conversation style) rather than stand-up lecture style; not trying to cover the same amount of information that they would in the same time frame with native speakers, etc.
- Figure out a signal with the presenter ahead of time so that she/he will know that you think it is necessary to slow down a bit or that clients might be lost or confused by a particular word. For example, a little wave that causes the speaker to pause will allow you to interject with a plain language explanation (e.g. assault means to hurt someone).
- It is good to develop relationships with guest speakers and have the same speakers back so that they get a better understanding of the group or client base, what is needed for presentations and what information is relevant. The more often speakers come, the better their presentations for clients will become.
- Position a staff member at the front of the class to assist guest speakers during the presentation. Speakers may have to be paused for interpretation or asked to repeat or explain. Guest speakers may not have an understanding of when students understand or not.
- Writing unfamiliar words or expressions on the board to talk about later can also help. Students know that the teacher will discuss them later and it does not interfere with the flow of the presentation.
- Ask guest speakers before they come in for a key list of vocabulary that can be taught to clients ahead of time.

Get Feedback on Sessions and Workshops

- Create a survey for clients to fill in post-workshop, use this information to improve sessions.
- Consider a debrief with clients to offer them an opportunity for feedback.
- Ask for suggestions on what can be improved and what works for them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Facilitator Guide

<http://www.workshopexercises.com/Facilitator.htm#Facilitators%20Guide>

The Role of a Facilitator

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/RoleofAFacilitator.htm>

Settlement Org

Facilitator Guide to Encourage Newcomer Voluntarism (PDF)

http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/atwork/Facilitator_Guide_Encourage_Newcomer_Voluntarism.pdf

Ontario Community Integration Network

Resources for Working with Newcomer Youth (PDF)

http://www.cin-ric.ca/PDFs/Resources_for_Working_with_NC_Youth.pdf

Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Creative Expression Workshops for Immigrant and Refugee Children (PDF)

<http://www.sherpa-recherche.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Lu-Petersen-Lacroix-Rousseau-2010-Stimulating-creative-play-in-children-with-autism-thru-sandplay1.pdf>

Facilitation Tools for Meetings and Workshops

<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/tools.pdf>

Facilitation Activity Bank

http://my2.ewb.ca/site_media/static/library/files/6/facilitation-activity-bank.pdf

Facilitation and Co-Facilitation

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVMARKETPLACE/Resources/Handout_Facilitation_techniques.pdf

Videos

6 Quick Facilitation Tips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxOAYfRWAQ>

5 Tips for Facilitating your Next Workshop

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0otyurya48>

The Eight Things to be as a Facilitator

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQGQXTuLf80>

Six Tips for Adult Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdI0JXSealg>

The Six Adult Learning Principles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLJ7cRwKI-I>

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Learning Styles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQYW6vYSGXs>

How to Invite, Incite and Inspire Participation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsvGI7Fwy1Y>

Facilitation Series Effective Training Techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8LxLAV6xc4>

The Facilitator Role

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5-44wQ0iS0>

Training

AAISA

AAISA offers an online pre-service certificate program, a settlement practitioner certification, and collaborative learning strategies to newly hired settlement practitioners. The initiatives address anti-racism and anti-Islamophobia, and creating a culture of respect for LGBTQ people in the settlement sector.

<http://aaisa.ca/professional-development/training/>

Justice Education Society of BC - Immigrant Legal

Immigrant Legal provides a variety of resources addressing a range of legal topics for the Canadian settlement sector. Resources include videos, resource sheets, FAQs, and online courses.

<https://www.immigrantlegal.ca/main>

WelcomeBC Settlement Services Training

A series of interactive PDF training modules were designed to complement the in-house staff training provided by settlement organizations.

<https://mytrainingbc.ca/SST/>

OCASI Positive Spaces Initiative

OCASI's Positive Spaces Initiative provides resources and training to the Canadian settlement sector to help facilitators serve LGBTQIA+ immigrants, refugees, and newcomers. Self-directed online training and facilitated online training is also available. Resources are also offered in French.

<http://www.positivespaces.ca/>

OCASI Learn at Work Online Learning

OCASI's Learn at Work initiative offers both facilitated and self-directed courses addressing a range of topics online in both English and French.

<http://learnatwork.ca/>

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Online Learning

Free online education aimed at building awareness and knowledge of mental health challenges and at reducing stigma.

<https://moodle8.camhx.ca/moodle/>

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IRCC Teachers' Corner

Teachers' Corner offers games and resources to teach citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism subjects.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadians/celebrate-being-canadian/teachers-corner.html>

DOCUMENT URLS

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KAHOOT!

<https://kahoot.com/>

CentralCollab Video Database

<https://app.centralcollab.com/oDrive/>