

CASE STUDIES IN ACTION: STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES WITH GBA PLUS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Building a GBA Plus Case Study Template



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PURPOSE

This resource presents real-life scenarios where settlement workers faced challenges or gaps in their programs and policies. By applying a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) lens, these workers identified solutions to address those challenges. GBA Plus is crucial in ensuring programs are inclusive and equitable, considering the diverse needs of clients. After reviewing the case scenarios, readers are invited to use a provided template to reflect on challenges they have encountered in program design, delivery, evaluation, and organizational policies and practices, with a focus on enhancing GBA Plus reflex within their organizations.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

CASE STUDY 1

Empowering Women in Digital Literacy Programs

Context and Background



PROGRAM

Digital Literacy Program



TARGET POPULATION

Foundations level english-learners, primarily women from low-income, refugee backgrounds with little to no work experience in the tech sector.



IDENTIFIED GAP

A significant gap in services for low-level CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks) learners, especially women who face barriers in accessing tech-related programs.

The Challenge

BARRIERS

The tech industry is male-dominated, and these women face additional challenges due to low language skills and lack of work experience. Additionally, cultural power dynamics often prevent women from engaging fully in the workforce, particularly those from refugee backgrounds.

GBA Plus Analysis

INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS

Gender, language ability, socioeconomic status, and refugee background were key factors influencing the access of women in the program.

Solution Development

PROGRAM DESIGN

A new program called Women Empowered Through Digital Literacy (WEDL) was created to help women build confidence in using technology. The program is specifically for women with lower English skills (CLB 3) and aims to reduce language barriers and close the gender gap in the tech industry. This program is designed to increase access to tech-related job opportunities and a reduction in gender disparities within the workforce.

Lessons Learned

FOCUS

The importance of designing programs that not only provide employment skills, but also empower marginalized groups to overcome societal and cultural barriers.

Reflections



What additional support might be necessary to ensure the success of participants in this program?

How can similar approaches be applied in other sectors where women or other marginalized groups are underrepresented?

CASE STUDY 2

Bridging the Gap for Older Adults in Digital Literacy and Health Services in a Rural Context

Context and Background



PROGRAM

Supporting newcomer older adults in accessing health services, in a rural context.



IDENTIFIED GAP

A rural municipality identified that older adults, particularly women, were uncomfortable accessing digital services, especially those related to women's health. Health knowledge mobilization takes place in a digital space now, limiting access to folks who are not comfortable with digital services (websites, QR codes, online forms, etc.). Cultural barriers further contributed to their reluctance.

The Challenge

BARRIERS

Older adults, women in particular, face challenges in accessing (women's health) services due to digital literacy hesitancy. Cultural taboos around discussing women's health make it more difficult for these individuals to seek help.

RURAL CONTEXT

Funding to create collaborative programs with physicians, to ease access to knowledge, is difficult in rural communities.

GBA Plus Analysis

INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS

Age, gender, cultural background, and geographical location play a significant role in the challenges faced by older adults in accessing health services, and health knowledge that is primarily available through online platforms.

Solution Development

PROGRAM DESIGN

As digital knowledge mobilization was not received well among older adult women, the municipality created a “Seniors Tea” program, where older adults could connect while having tea. The program aimed to build connections within cultural groups and with the broader community, while also sharing important information with them. The Seniors Tea both fosters social connections among other newcomer older adults, while providing them with information regarding services available to them, including health and digital literacy support.

Reflections



What strategies could you implement to make digital services more accessible and less intimidating for older adults?



What partnerships or collaborations could you develop with local physicians or community organizations to better support older adults in accessing health services?

CASE STUDY 3

Outreach and Program Registration for Vulnerable Senior Newcomers

Context and Background



PROGRAM

Newcomer Senior Community Connections and English Classes Programs



TARGET POPULATION

Senior newcomers living in isolation, single or in multigenerational families, with foundational-level English or no knowledge of the language.



IDENTIFIED GAP

There is a significant gap in access to services and programs for newcomer seniors who are isolated due to coming as single immigrants or due to the responsibilities and pressures of living in multigenerational households and having literacy and language barriers.

The Challenge

BARRIERS

Language and Literacy barriers and unfamiliarity with the transit system. Some programs are offered virtually, but some seniors may have digital literacy barriers.

Solution Development

PROGRAM DESIGN

Program Outreach and Engagement Strategy across all services aimed at Newcomer Seniors. Utilizing an intersectional lens and working to create an outreach program that uses non-traditional outreach strategies.

GBA Plus Analysis

INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS

Gender, language ability, socioeconomic status, and intergenerational and cultural differences.

Lessons Learned

FOCUS

The importance of designing programs that not only provide employment skills, but also empower marginalized groups to overcome societal and cultural barriers.

- Review the outreach strategies, including creating a plan and map of where the programs and services are being offered and promoted. Also, identify what additional supports can be in place for participants to access programs and services, such as interpretation services and support with transportation costs to access services, which will bring opportunities for independence and agency to newcomer participants.
- Create a potential plan of action for promotion to connect with non-traditional partners that could advertise or refer senior participants. Some stakeholders to consider are: Ethnic Food Stores, Places of Worship and Faith Communities, Walk-in Clinics, and Ethnocultural

Groups with recreation or community-building activities.

- Ensure that the intake processes can be adapted to include an option of a non-written, conversational process that focuses on building relationships of trust and gathers intake information orally.
- Continue to offer registration options in multiple access and with access to interpretation services.
- Engage past participants in in-person feedback sessions on outreach strategies to provide additional information and community resources of which the organization may need to be made aware and connected.
- Another strategy to increase access for newcomer seniors is providing childcare options.

Reflections

What additional support might be necessary to increase the access and reach of participants, especially those with multiple barriers?

How can similar approaches be applied in other sectors where newcomer seniors or other marginalized groups are underrepresented?

CASE STUDY 4

Systemic and Resources Challenges in Small Centres for Newcomer Families with Children with Disabilities

Context and Background



PROGRAM

Newcomer Senior Community Connections and English Classes Programs



TARGET POPULATION

Senior newcomers living in isolation, single or in multigenerational families, with foundational-level English or no knowledge of the language.



IDENTIFIED GAP

There is a significant gap in access to services and programs for newcomer seniors who are isolated due to coming as single immigrants or due to the responsibilities and pressures of living in multigenerational households and having literacy and language barriers.

The Challenge

BARRIERS

- Limited supportive resources for children with disabilities within the local community and small centres
- Lack of culturally appropriate services for families of children with disabilities
- Limited knowledge and strained capacity of SWIS workers to support multiple partners (school staff, families, children, etc.), and navigate additional programs and benefits for families and their children.

GBA Plus Analysis

INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS

Gender, language, socioeconomic status, age, ability, family structures and dynamics, cultural differences.

Solution Development

PROGRAM DESIGN

Creation of a specialized SWIS position dedicated to supporting families and children with disabilities. This staff member will assist families in navigating systems and provide educational information to systems like schools or healthcare providers, regarding the unique intersectional needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Lessons Learned

FOCUS

Having a specialized position to act as a liaison between systems and adjacent supports for newcomer children with disabilities and their families.

- Specialized workers and programs can provide educational information with a cultural competency and humility lens to the systems responsible in providing care to newcomer children with disabilities.
- Specialized workers can liaise and support the newcomer parents of children with disabilities to provide information and connect with specialized programs and support inside and outside the community.
- Specialized workers can gather information on local and regional resources that can support newcomer children with disabilities and their families, including benefits and additional services they may be able to access.

Reflections



What additional support might be necessary to increase the access, especially to those with multiple, intersecting barriers?

How can similar approaches be applied in other sectors where newcomers with disabilities are underrepresented?

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Youth Programming Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback Processes

INTERACTIVE FEEDBACK PROCESS

- In youth programming, feedback is collected through creative interactive methods, such as asking participants to share images of activities they enjoyed.
- This visual approach encourages engagement and allows participants to express their thoughts in non-traditional ways.

SURVEY FEEDBACK PROCESS

- Youth are also encouraged to share their opinions in a survey, to understand which topics are important to them

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social media platforms are leveraged to gather real-time feedback from youth participants.
- This informal feedback collection allows for ongoing program adjustments and encourages active engagement from youth who may be more comfortable sharing their thoughts on these platforms.

Reflections and Opportunities for Improvement



While the youth programming feedback processes are interactive and effective, there may be opportunities for improvement to continue to expand feedback methods on digital platforms

The agency could also explore new ways to involve youth in the feedback process to ensure it is always responsive to their changing needs and preferences.

EQUITY IN ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Diversifying Leadership and Board Representation

The Challenge

Lack of diversity in leadership and board composition

Overview

A few years ago, the board of a settlement agency lacked diversity, with few board members representing different cultures and backgrounds. This lack of representation posed challenges in decision-making and policy development, as important voices and perspectives were missing.

Response

The settlement agency took steps to diversify the board. Jobs were advertised widely online and through networks to ensure a broad range of applicants.

Impact

This process has helped maintain transparency and accountability within the organization's leadership, encouraging continuous improvement in management practices.

Reflections



How does a lack of diversity in leadership affect the quality and inclusivity of policies and decisions made within your organization?

What strategies could you adopt to ensure that your leadership represents the diversity of the community you serve?

In what ways can your leadership and board foster more inclusive practices and policies for the future?

CASE STUDY 7

Enhancing an Organizational Policy for Inclusivity

The Challenge

Workplace inclusion regarding cultural holidays.

Response

This holiday policy was changed to provide staff with **two paid personal days**, allowing them to take time off for cultural or religious holidays, in addition to or instead of statutory holidays. This approach ensures that staff can observe holidays that are important to them.

Overview

This settlement agency's policy manual previously followed traditional Canadian statutory holidays. However, the new Executive Director recognized that staff members came from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, leading them to reassess the holiday policy.

Impact

This policy shift created a more inclusive environment where staff felt their cultural and religious needs were respected, boosting overall staff morale, well-being, and retention.

Reflections



What other policies might unintentionally exclude certain groups, and how can they be improved?

How does your organization stay responsive to the evolving needs of its diverse workforce?



BUILD YOUR OWN CASE STUDY:

**PUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE
INTO PRACTICE**

PROPOSED BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS

Program and Program Evaluation

Describe an issue in planning a program for a diverse audience or a past challenge in reaching a particular newcomer, immigrant, and/or refugee group.

EXAMPLES

Challenges in outreach or attendance, demographics of group program attendees, evaluation of program effectiveness.

What are the hardest populations to reach? Are there barriers preventing clients from accessing your programs that can be addressed?

CONSIDERATIONS

Gender, country of origin, geographical location, immigration experience, language, social networks, isolation, power dynamics between staff and clients, mental health challenges, power imbalances in participant and staff interactions.

Organizational Policies

Describe a specific practice or policy within your organization that needs improvement.

CONSIDERATIONS

Does the policy reflect the needs of all relevant groups (staff, board members, and community)? Can individuals share concerns or provide input on the policy? Examples: Holiday leave, hiring practices, accessibility.

Is your organization open to revising policies based on feedback and changing needs? Is there a plan to regularly monitor and evaluate the policy's impact that considers diverse identity groups?

ASSESSING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Context

Define the context (who, what, when, where, why), key players/decision-makers, data, stakeholder analysis, public environment, and other relevant information.

Gap or Issue

→ Do you want to address a specific need or issue with a particular program or intervention?

→ How have you consulted with those affected by this program/service?

→ How diverse are the groups attending your programs? Who is not part of the conversation, and why?

→ Are the spaces accessible?

Building Relationships

➤ How can we build new relationships with those not at the table?

➤ What strategies can strengthen connections with these groups?

Solution Development

➤ How can this program/policy be redesigned to address the gaps?

➤ Can clients/staff be involved in developing these solutions?

Measuring Change

➤ How will your organization assess the changes you aim to achieve with this program or policy?

➤ How can you ensure that the proposed changes will be feasible and sustainable in the long-term?

