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Education, Equity, and Belonging: Immigrant Women's Pathways in Saint John, NB

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Introduction

This report identifies existing gaps on educational programming for international immigrants in Saint John, New Brunswick, particularly women, and proposes alternatives to fill these gaps based on an analysis of the literature of education and social work and fieldwork. The report first discusses how international immigrants, especially women, face structural barriers related to adult education including language, literacy and numeracy, from a global and a local perspective. Second, this is followed by the review of the literature and a conceptual framework to explore how adult education among international immigrant women in Canada is discussed in social work. Third, the report explains the methodology and methods, with a focus on the positionality of the researchers. Fourth, the study provides a discussion of the research findings, with particular attention on the service gaps by immigrant women in Saint John who do not have elementary and middle school formal education. The report also analyzes the socioeconomic impacts related to investment in adult education for international immigrant women. Fifth, the report makes three recommendations to fill the gaps identified in the report. In this report, we employ the term international immigrant to refer to people that were not born in Canada and migrated to this country. While we acknowledge the different barriers that people face by migrating through different streams (economic and refugee stream, international student, temporary foreign workers, work permit), we also want to acknowledge that the condition of international migration is a continuum that does not end with citizenship.

Background

Globally, women are 17% less likely to be enrolled in elementary school with the probability decreasing even further in later grades (Mapp, 2012). This gender disparity leads to serious consequences such as lower literacy rates, rates of pay, and property ownership (Mapp, 2012; Reichert, 2012). Although women are responsible for two-thirds of the global workforce, they only earn one-tenth of the world's income (Reichert, 2012). Structural barriers prevent girls from attending school, including the lack of toilet facilities or culturally appropriate teachers (e.g. teachers of the same sex) (Mapp, 2012). Safety concerns are also prohibitive to women accessing education. Actions by violent groups or the danger of abduction on their commute are some sources of safety concerns, as well as the high risk of sexual violence in school at the hands of teachers or peers (Mapp, 2012). Sexist practices and assumptions embedded in society can also have a negative impact on women's access to education which are expressed in the exclusion of girls and women from formal education, practices around early marriage and child rearing, and high expectations on women to carry out carework (Mapp, 2012). This is the context of structural barriers faced by many immigrant women that come to Canada, particularly in the refugee stream.

Once in Canada, these barriers become more complex for adult women who are international immigrants as they are also required to learn one of the official languages and navigate new societal norms and systems. While this has not been extensively researched in Saint John, New Brunswick, some existing data show these barriers. First, the report *Diverse Cities: Urban experiences and international migration in Saint John NB* co-authored by Hepzibah Muñoz-Martínez and Kristen Byrne (2025), shows, in a study based on 100 surveys with

international immigrants, that segment of the population that identified as women did not have elementary education or above. Some of the survey participants that reported becoming Canadian citizens still required interpretation and had difficulties communicating in English (Muñoz-Martínez & Byrne, 2026). Yet, as it will be explained below, certified language programs that allow people to further language learning and access elementary and middle school education to prepare for the adult high school diploma or Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) are no longer available after obtaining citizenship. In addition, the report notes a heavy workload in relation to care inside the household. In some cases, immigrant women were single mothers coming to Saint John from areas of conflict as refugees in charge of two or more children (Muñoz-Martínez & Byrne, 2026). This highlights the needs of language, basic numeracy and literacy of women in the context of trauma and a heavy workload in the household. As will be discussed later in this report, these findings were confirmed by the authors' observation during fieldwork.

Second, lack of education further distances international immigrant women from economic empowerment through the labour market. Data from Statistics Canada, based on the 2021 Census, shows that among immigrants without an official language and without high school certificate, credential or degree in New Brunswick, men were far more likely to be in the labour force while women were more often not in the labour force. Men's employment rate was higher by 15.3 percentage points (37.7% men, 22.4% women), while unemployment rates remained close (15.9% men, 17.4% women) in New Brunswick (Statistics Canada 2023). The most evident gap is between ages 25–64. In the case of the Saint John Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), men were more likely to be in the labour force, while women were more likely not to be in the labour force. There is a similar trend in terms of employment and unemployment rate. Men led in employment rate (34.8% men, 10% women), and women had a higher unemployment rate than men (33.3% women, 17.9% men) (Statistics Canada 2023).

Addressing the gender gap in literacy and access to further high school and postsecondary education among the immigrant population in the Saint John CMA is important in relation to labour market participation. Saint John represents approximately 29% (men) and 28% (women) not participating in the labour force in relation to the New Brunswick total, with women between 25–64 not in the labour force representing more than the third of the province. In terms of employment rates, Saint John's rates were lower than in New Brunswick with the largest gaps for women. Saint John's unemployment rates for this demographic group were generally higher than New Brunswick, especially for women and to a lesser extent for men. According to international organizations, women's access to labour markets is an aspect to women's equality as stated in the sustainable development goals (UNWomen 2024). In addition, when women have access to education, they gain more economic independence allowing them to play a greater role in society and in their own lives, they also have a greater tendency to encourage schooling for their children (Mapp, 2012)

Literature Review and Framework

Existing literature on social work, immigration, and education mainly revolves around attitudinal approaches of social workers in the field towards migrants (see for example Healy & Link, 2012), and the status of women within the human rights framework (see for example Mapp, 2012; Reichert, 2012). While the latter focuses on the right to education, it does not explicitly focus on its provision and delivery. In their examination of the gendered implications of immigration and their impact on social work education, DeBrenna LaFa Agbényiga and Lihua Huang (2012) found that language barriers are one of the driving factors leading to underutilization of social services by migrant women and identified best practices for social workers working with migrants as recognizing them to be the expert on their own life. Despite Canada's increasing diversity, recent research on international migration indicates a significant lack of scholarly attention toward immigrant experiences, with a noticeable decline in studies focusing specifically on immigrants (Guo, 2021). Furthermore, new immigrants often encounter a "triple glass effect," which consists of structural barriers that devalue their prior expertise and prevent professional advancement (Guo, 2021,).

To address these inequities, scholars propose an integrative intersectional framework which is an Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP), which views diverse identities as strengths rather than deficits (Guo, 2021). This approach encourages educators to move beyond simple categories of class, race, or gender to understand how overlapping power structures impact a learner's autonomy (Guo, 2021). For this reason, this report employs a social work lens informed by AOP to research and shape the provision of social services such as education. This framework is built on the understanding that power is at play from individual one-on-one interactions to the ways that cultural, political, and socioeconomic systems impact our daily lives (Schmid, 2024).

The AOP lens also allows for an understanding of integration as a two-way process (Berry, 1997) rather than an immigrant fitting in an existing society (Levy & Daly, 2023). John Berry's concept of integration relies on an understanding of culturally plural societies, which are those that are constantly evolving and taking the necessary steps to meet the needs of all ethnocultural groups (Berry, 1997). Integration then requires cultural humility and mutual adaptation by both the migrants and the receiving community (Levy & Daly, 2023). Here immigrants are not seen as part of homogenous group, but rather as individuals with unique strengths, prior knowledge, joyful and challenging life experiences, who are internally negotiating their own cultural norms and values with those of their new place of residence while learning a new language and social systems (Levy & Daly, 2023). This requires a two-sided exchange of adaptation and learning, which includes the role of the host society in providing appropriate conditions and supports such as educational opportunities.

Methodology and methods

Using the framework of AOP, the authors of the report explored different layers of their identity to learn about how their position in research and society at large, impacted their perspectives and interactions, during their research process (Schmid, 2024). The authors reckoned with the challenge of remaining aware of our biases, particularly surrounding language and educational background and goals.

Through her engagement in this project, Winnie has deepened her awareness of her own positionality and significantly reshaped the lens through which she interprets and understands immigrant women. As an international student at UNB, Winnie is increasingly aware of the privilege associated with her educational background and her ability to independently access both campus and community resources. In contrast, the author has observed that immigrants with lower levels of literacy often experience significant barriers that force them to rely heavily on case workers to navigate essential services such as healthcare or housing, largely due to language limitations. This reliance is further compounded by the high caseloads that case workers frequently manage, which limits their availability and can delay the timely support these women require. Through an AOP lens, these experiences highlight how systems of oppression rooted in language, race, gender, and immigration status intersect in ways that disproportionately impact immigrant women with low literacy rates. Recognizing these intersecting barriers not only deepens Winnie's understanding of their lived realities but also reinforces the need for critically conscious practice that challenges structural inequities rather than locating the problem within the individual.

In her participation in this research, Zoe found that her assumptions around education were challenged. Having grown up in Eastern Canada with University educated parents, she had internalized the belief that most people had access to elementary education and would naturally prioritize educational attainment. This project grew her awareness of the global diversity of women's experiences and the cultural, economic, and political influences shaping individual perceptions on women's education. The author developed a deeper understanding of how barriers such as socioeconomic status, gender expectations, responsibilities of care work, citizenship status, and literacy skills intersect to limit the opportunities women have, challenging the assumption of choice. Through an AOP lens, this pushed Zoe to recognize how her own privilege of education shaped her interpretations, and to reshape her understanding of barriers faced by migrant women as one of systemic oppression rather than individual deficit. This reflexive practice strengthened her commitment to practicing critically, and challenging structural inequities.

The authors of this report recognized that they had assumptions around the backgrounds of international immigrants, their educational goals, and their knowledge of existing resources and how to access them. To counter these, they made sure to keep in mind their understanding that individuals are experts on their own lives, and that everyone contains strengths and untapped resources.

Within the AOP methodology, the report's research method combines community partnership, observation, and institutional cataloguing. In collaboration with the Promise

Partnership at UNB, Envision Saint John, and the YMCA Newcomer Connections, PRUDE Inc., and the Saint John Newcomers Centre (SJNC), the report gathers publicly available information on existing language learning and educational programs. To this end, we met with local institutions in the fields of immigrant services and adult elementary and middle school education to catalogue services available prior to and after citizenship and observe their delivery. We paid particular attention to the eligibility requirements to understand structural barriers tied to immigration status and language proficiency. The data was catalogued and analyzed.

Research findings and Impact Analysis

Through observation and publicly available information, we identified gaps in educational programming and delivery for international immigrant women. Our findings show that funding structures, language level requirements, and institutional mandates significantly shape access to educational opportunities for immigrant women, as reflected in our observations of programming at the YMCA Newcomer connections, SJNC, PRUDE Inc. and other service providers (See Appendix A). We catalogued available language and elementary/middle-school-equivalent programming for immigrant adult women, both pre- and post-citizenship, in the city of Saint John, New Brunswick. The data collected was categorized by institution, program name, access requirements (citizenship status, language level, age, gender), program content (language, numeracy, technology literacy), time commitment (schedule and program duration), delivery method, program outcomes, and funding source (see Appendix A for the full catalogue). Compiling this information enabled us to identify jurisdictional funding gaps that contribute to structural deficiencies directly affecting this demographic.

It is also important to highlight the challenges we encountered in locating this information online. Even as university students with strong technological literacy, we found that details about available programming were often difficult to find, outdated, or scattered across multiple platforms. This raises critical questions about information access for immigrant women who do not speak English fluently or who have limited digital skills. If we struggled despite our academic background and language proficiency, how much more difficult must this process be for immigrant women navigating unfamiliar systems? The burden of bridging these information gaps often falls on already overextended Immigrant-Serving Organizations (ISOs), who must compensate for a lack of centralized, transparent, and publicly accessible program information. These observations underscore the need for more coherent information-sharing systems and more sustainable funding structures to ensure that international immigrants can access the programs designed to support their settlement and educational goals.

Language levels in Canada are measured according to the Canada Language Benchmark (CLB) which range from levels 1-12 in four categories (speaking, listening, reading, writing) (Immigration and citizenship, 2025). There are language courses free of charge for international immigrants upon arrival to the city prior to citizenship, which can also include basic technological literacy (YMCA-NC, PRUDE, SJNC; See appendix A). As these are programs aimed at improving language skills for the purpose of obtaining citizenship and societal integration, they are funded by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), with some also

receiving funds from the provincial government or the private market for specifically targeted programs (see figure 1).

While there are several conversational English groups (SJNC, PRUDE inc.), only the YMCA NC, provides CLB accredited programs to immigrants prior to citizenship. Funded by the IRCC, the YMCA NC offered language training up to a CLB8 up until recently when the federal government cut funding to programming after CLB4 levels effective April 1st, 2026 (CTV, 2025). Notably, obtaining citizenship status requires a CLB4 in only two categories, speaking and listening. Once citizenship has been achieved, immigrants can no longer access the YMCA's IRCC funded programs (Immigration and citizenship, 2025).

Post-citizenship language learning programming is mainly funded by the provincial government through the department of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour (PETL), and the options are scarce. The Saint John chapter of READ NB offers a volunteer led tutoring program for anyone with a CLB3 language skill level or above. As this program is volunteer based, there is no certainty that the volume of mentors will be sufficient to meet demand, nor are they able to offer language certification. Additionally, offering short and relatively infrequent sessions, learning is typically drawn out and mostly self-led using their online platform. The reliance on an online platform is an added barrier to entry for international immigrant women who might not have access to tech literacy, a concern that is also applicable to CCNB's Blended Online Language Training (BOLT). BOLT is a web-based program focused on job-oriented language learning and offering employment specific certification upon completion. The BOLT program is certainly valuable to some, but with the technological barrier and the specificity of its applicability it does not meet the unique needs of international immigrant women who have lacked access to elementary and middle school education.

In terms of elementary- or middle-school level education, there are currently no programs in the city designed to address needs of international immigrants. The existing programs that offer this level of education are open to all residents who meet the eligibility requirements. King's Learning, the John Howard Society, and the Learning Exchange offer a variety of options for learning literacy, numeracy, and tech literacy ranging from elementary to high school levels. These programs lead to the final goal of obtaining the Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) or the Adult High School Diploma, both of which are considered equivalent to a high school diploma for the purpose of further education and career advancement. These options for elementary and middle school adult educational programming and continuing adult education are funded by the provincial government through the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour (PETL). Most of them are restricted to the same eligibility criteria detailed in the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) guidelines which require a CLB6 in all four skill categories (Government of New Brunswick, 2025).

Additionally, the Workplace Essential Skills (WES) program operates in the city. WES is a Government of New Brunswick program led by Working NB under PETL designed to help adults build job-ready competencies by providing free training based on occupational needs. The program focuses on essential skill areas such as reading, writing, numeracy, communication, problem-solving, digital literacy, collaboration, adaptability, and creativity (Government of New

Brunswick, 2025). WES is open to adult residents of New Brunswick who are employed or seeking employment but can only be accessed through a referral by a case manager in the case of unemployed individuals with clearly defined and documented occupational goals, or upon the request and assessed need of an existing employer (Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, 2025).

Despite the value of this initiative, its scope and applicability are extremely limited. It is also notable that we encountered significant difficulty when trying to access information from WorkingNB. Several community partners are said to facilitate WES programs; however, there is no publicly available list of providers. It is also unclear what language levels participants need to have to participate in a WES program. Following several attempts at locating programming details online, via phone, and in-person, the limited information we were able to obtain came to us by email. This experience highlights the broader issue of how challenging and inaccessible adult education information can be for learners seeking support.

Through cataloguing and analyzing this information, we noticed some interesting but alarming details. On the one hand, IRCC only funds training up to a CLB4 prior to the obtention of citizenship. On the other, hand, provincially funded adult educational programming requires CLB6 for eligibility. Additionally, there are no accessible options for further formal language learning as programs offering elementary and middle school education for adults require a CLB6. This shows a jurisdictional gap in funding and programming for language, literacy and numeracy training for people between CLB 4 (who most of the time only meet the goals of understanding and speaking but not writing and reading) and CLB 6, leaving service providers and service users with nowhere to turn for funding to develop programming to fill this gap.

The importance of these structural deficiencies cannot be overstated. Eligibility requirements surrounding immigration status and language levels create a divide between those considered deserving and undeserving of accessing educational resources. Women suffer the brunt of this as they are significantly more likely to have been denied access to early education, and to be more heavily encumbered with the responsibilities of care work, both important factors interfering with their capacity to choose to invest in their goals (Varvos, 2021).

Limiting educational opportunities available to women prevents self-empowerment and furthers a power imbalance within the host society. This is particularly relevant to immigrant women who exist at the intersection of multiple disadvantages based on their identity within non-dominant groups (i.e. gender, immigration status, socioeconomic status, lacking formal education, etc.) (Berry, 1997). Through an AOP lens, political decisions around funding and bureaucratic disempowerment impact the lives of individuals, the economic paths available to them, and the sociocultural context they live within (Schmid, 2024; Varvos, 2021). This is not only about labour market integration. By seeing international immigrant women as knowledgeable and capable, and by providing the avenues for them to choose their own life path, we would enable their self-empowerment which would in turn empower the community (Guo, 2021; Schmid, 2024).

Berry (1997) argues that mutual accommodation, immigrants’ adaptation to the receiving society while institutional systems such as education and labour meet the needs of all members of society, including immigrants. Language acquisition and literacy are fundamental to societal integration, more than academic skills (Wall, 2019). This service gap adds more barriers for international immigrant women, preventing their full participation in society (Wall, 2019). At the same time, the host society misses the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, skills and expertise that immigrant women have through their lived experience and informal education.

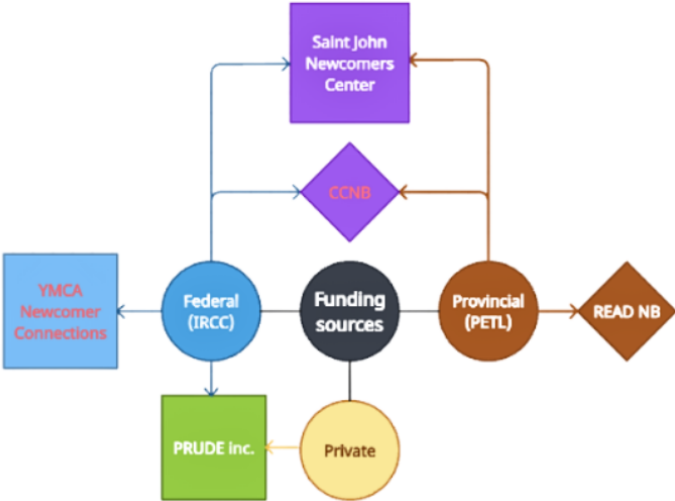


Figure 1: Language learning programs in Saint John, NB sorted by funding source. Square box = available pre-citizenship only Diamond box = any citizenship status/marketed to citizens Pink text = provides accreditation. See appendix A for full data catalogue.

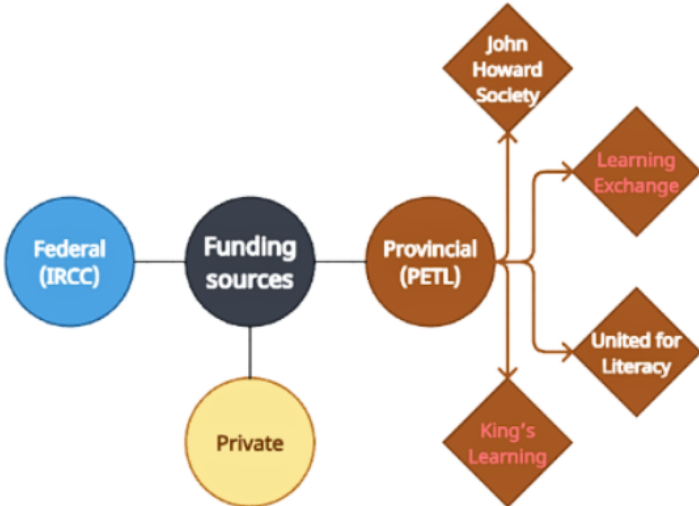


Figure 2: Adult literacy and numeracy educational programming in Saint John, NB, sorted by funding source. Square box = available pre-citizenship only Diamond box = any citizenship status/marketed to citizens Pink text = provides accreditation. See appendix A for full data catalogue.

While adult education for immigrant women has been widely overlooked in policy practice in New Brunswick, investment in this area can yield significant social, economic and governmental returns. Often described as a “buried treasure”, this demographic represents a significant source of untapped potential that when fully supported, disrupts cycles of inter-generational poverty and social isolation (Silver, 2022).

The social impact of educating immigrant women yields more than individual benefits. It sends a ripple effect through families and communities (Varvos, 2021, p. 361).

- *Intergenerational transfer*: Adult education of immigrant women has a primary benefit of the improved performance and prospects of the students’ children (Silver, 2025a). Research indicates that when mothers return to school to further their education, their children were more likely to enroll and graduate from post-secondary institutions (Salomon-Fernández, 2024). This process disrupts the intergenerational cycle of poverty, as children of educated immigrant women will have higher income jobs as a result of their academic success (Silver, 2025b).
- *Strengthened social networks*: Immigrant women, particularly refugees with language barriers, often have smaller social networks (close friends and acquaintances) than Canadian-born residents (N4, 2024). Literacy training fosters “comity”, which is the establishment of friendly relations and rapport, to help build diverse social connections (Victoria, 2017). These expanded networks lead to better integration and increased employment opportunities (N4, 2024).
- *Community Engagement and Volunteering*: Improved literacy empowers women to move from dependency to self-sufficiency, enabling them to take on leadership, mentorship, and volunteer roles (Crawford et al., 2023). It also increases civic participation, such as voting and engaging in political activities, which are often limited for those with low literacy levels (Silver, 2025b).
- *Personal Wellbeing*: Graduates of adult learning programs report a 90% satisfaction rate regarding their children's benefits and nearly as high for their own happiness and self-esteem. Furthermore, this increased self-confidence is vital for navigating a new society and pursuing personal goals (Silver, 2025a).

Investing in low-literacy immigrant women presents an economic opportunity, in boosting labor numbers and overall revenue.

- *Expanded Tax Base*: Through full-time employment after graduation, immigrant women are able to contribute directly to the economy through provincial income tax revenue (Silver, 2025c; Silver, 2025d)
- *Increased Number of Workers*: Education moves individuals who were previously "neither employed nor looking for work" into the active labor force. This is crucial for addressing labor shortages, especially in sectors like healthcare, where many immigrant women aspire to work (Silver, 2025d)

- *Higher Earnings and Local Spending:* Improving literacy levels significantly boosts individual earnings. Graduates often see their income shift from under \$10,000 to the \$70,000 range. These increased earnings create a "multiplier effect" as the money is spent back into local economies (Silver, 2025d).
- *Return on Investment (ROI):* While training is an initial cost, it is justified by extensive improvements in labor-market outcomes (Mahboubi, 2017). It has been estimated that raising literacy scores for those at the lowest levels could provide an \$80 billion boost to the Canadian economy (Silver, 2025d)

Governments benefit directly through cost savings in social services and the long-term fiscal sustainability of adult education programs.

- *Reduced Social Assistance Payments:* One of the most immediate fiscal benefits is the reduction in Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) or welfare dependency. Studies show a 62% reduction in the number of graduates requiring social assistance (Silver, 2025c)
- *Health and Justice Savings:* Higher literacy levels are strongly correlated with better overall health and lower costs to the healthcare and criminal justice systems (Silver, 2025a, Silver, 2025d). Literacy allows women to understand health information, access services independently, and advocate for their own care, reducing the strain on public health resources (Varvos, 2021)
- *Fiscal Self-Sustainability:* Adult basic education is effectively cost-free for the government in the long term. Research suggests that within ten years, the cumulative net fiscal benefits (from taxes and reduced welfare) equal the annual program costs, making the program pay for itself and eventually produce a net profit for the province (Silver, 2025a).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the report recommends the following.

1. Extension of access to certified language programs funded by Immigration, Refugee, Citizenship Canada four years after the obtention of citizenship and/or;
2. Increase funding to strengthen existing programs of adult education and language by the province of New Brunswick, while allowing flexibility in CAELP funding to also cover the needs of international immigrants and/or;
3. Develop a pilot project in partnership between University of New Brunswick campus Saint John through the Promise Partnership and Saint John Newcomers Centre and PRUDE, with advice from the YMCA Newcomer connections. This project will also take into considerations the gendered barriers to adult education by international immigrants. The proposal is informed by the reviewed literature and best practices [\(see appendix 2\)](#) as well as the Centre for

Canadian Language Benchmarks, including Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), ESL for Adult Literacy Learners (ESL for ALL) principles and portfolio-based language assessment.

Eligibility for the programs will be mothers (18+) with limited formal education in pre-CLB English (or no official-language ability), or in need to obtain level 5 and 6 after obtaining citizenship. Priority will be given to families facing multiple settlement barriers.

Two parallel cohorts (12 learners each) meet for 288 instructional hours distributed according to the advice of partner organizations (Envision Saint John, Promise Partnership, Saint John Newcomers Centre, PRUDE, YMCA Newcomer Connections) with one day reserved for case management for families facing multiple barriers. The curriculum will be pre-benchmark/CLB 1, CLB 5 and 6 with portfolio-based assessment, organized into six modules. Instruction follows ESL literacy best practices (explicit, small-group, highly scaffolded, multi-sensory).

The sessions will be offered in the morning (9:00–12:30), which aligns with school/daycare drop-off and reduces evening caregiving conflicts.

Potential locations for program delivery are the following:

For classes

- 1) At the University campus, with the cost of the space donated by UNB campus Saint John, or
- 2) At PRUDE and Saint John Newcomers Centre (no cost),

For mentorship and case management,

- 1) PRUDE and Saint John Newcomers Centre, or
- 2) Family Resource Centre, Crescent Valley, ONE Change, Carleton Community Centre.

In order to consider the gendered barriers to adult education, the project will provide two forms of childcare for children (12 months–4 years) while the parents attend class in the same building. The modality of childcare will depend on funding. With access to funding, the project could provide care for children in the same building where instruction is provided by outsourcing the services to a daycare (the same way it is done in academic congresses with the proper liability and insurance required by the organization where program delivery will take place). If funding is not available, children can be in the same classroom where parents learn while volunteers with criminal record checks entertain the children in the presence of parents (Family Resource Centre model). (The Care for Newcomer Children requirements are ratios in the range of 1:5 (toddlers ~19–30 months) and 1:8 (31 months–5 years) (CMAS Canada).

In addition, transportation and attendance incentives will be provided (bus pass/gift certificates) to compensate participants for the time they will give up in carrying out care work (which will have to be carried out at busier and more difficult times during the day)

For 2 cohorts (24 learners total), the staff needed will be:

- 1 program/volunteer coordinator
- 2 Lead ESL Literacy Instructors (one per cohort), trained in ESL for ALL / CLB and ESL literacy pedagogy.
- 2 Classroom Aides/Volunteers (one per cohort) to run stations, provide additional modeling, and support emergent readers.
- 3 or more childminders (depending on number of children and their ages)

- 1 Case Manager/Family Navigator for clients with multiple barriers.
- 6–8 Volunteer Peer Mentors / Conversation Partners (3–4 per cohort), recruited through Promise Partnership.

Upon completion, attendance letters and CLB progress reports will be provided (through a CLB-using provider) to articulate readiness for LINC CLB 1–2 classes or LINC CLB 5-6 levels.

There are different pathways upon completion of program.

- Transition to YMCA LINC CLB 1–2 or specialized literacy LINC where available in the case of Pre-CLB cohort.
- Referral to King’s Learning or Learning Exchange for entering high school diploma or certificate preparation in the case of CLB 5-6 cohort.
- Continuation of conversation circles at Saint John Newcomers Centre and PRUDE programs.
- Participants will be able to access more easily Work Employment Skills programs (WES).

Budget (Pilot Year; 10 months)

Personnel

Program coordinator at Promise Partnership: \$80,000. Rationale: administration, volunteer and organization coordination.

Lead ESL Literacy Instructors (2.0 FTE; salary & benefits): \$140, 000. Rationale: specialized ESL-literacy pedagogy and PBLA administration. †

Classroom Aides/Facilitators (2 volunteer): \$3,000. Rationale: provide small compensation for volunteers supporting small-group rotations explicit in ESL-literacy best practice.

Case Manager/Family Navigator (0.5 FTE; salary & benefits): \$40,000. Rationale: Provide supports to families facing multiple barriers

Childcare (3): \$18-21 dollars per child a day. Rationale: address gendered barriers related to care work

Total personnel \$263, 000 (without childcare)

Program Delivery

Instructional Materials & PBLA supplies (picture readers, manipulatives, printing, portfolios): \$6,000.

Childcare Equipment & Consumables (cots, mats, safety gates, toys, cleaning PPE; start-up and replenishment): \$4,000.

Supports for transportation and attendance (bus tickets for learners to attend class/field visits): \$8,000.

Transportation for volunteers (\$0 if program is delivered on campus, 100 per volunteer to compensate transportation costs to other sites)

Evaluation & Data (pre/post CLB checks, PBLA audits, analysis): \$4,000.

Subtotal Program Delivery: \$22,000

Total Pilot Budget (Year 1): \$285, 000 (budget does not include childcare and other Promise Partnership's services)

Implementation Timeline (10 months)

Months 1–2: Confirm lead agency & MOUs; curriculum/materials procurement; community outreach (YMCA, PRUDE, SJNC. Envision Saint John, Promise Partnership). Training of volunteers.

Month 3: Intake and CLB placement; learner orientation; start Module 1; establish PBLA portfolios.

Months 3–9: Deliver Modules, biweekly case-management; monthly field learning/family literacy.

Month 10: PBLA/CLB checks; transition planning to LINC CLB 1–2 or CAEC/Adult High School Diploma; program evaluation and next-cohort recruitment. Propose longitudinal study to follow up participants' path after attending the program.

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Appendix A Institutional Catalog. (next page).

Organization	Program	Program Requirements				Program content				Time commitment				Outcome	Funded by	Notes
		Citizenship status	Language level	Age	Gender	Language	Numeracy	Tech literacy	Schedule	Length to complete	Delivery method					
YMCA	LINC classes	Pre-citizenship	Foundational	18+	All	CLB 1-3 focus on LS	No	Yes	M-F 9-12PM; 1-4PM; 5-8PM	Varies	In-person	CLB certification	Federal/IRCC			
YMCA	Sector Specific Employment Language Training (SSELT)	PR or temporary resident	CLB4+	18+	All	Employment specific	Employment specific	No	M-F 9-3:30	12 weeks	Blended	No official certification - goal of better employment prospects	Federal/IRCC	Section-specific: Hospitality, Finance and Accounting, Landscaping, Customer Service, Health Sciences, Child Care, Facility maintenance and housekeeping		
SJNC	English Foundations Club	Pre-citizenship	Beginner	N/A	All	Beginner	No	No	M 3-4PM & W 12-1PM	No completion	In-person	No official certification	GNB			
SJNC	English Mastery Club	Pre-citizenship	Intermediate	N/A	All	Intermediate	No	No	W 5:30-6:30PM & Th 5-6PM	No completion	Blended	No official certification	GNB			
SJNC	English Business Language Lab	Pre-citizenship	Advanced	N/A	All	Professional/Academic	No	No	F 5-6PM	No completion	In-person	No official certification	GNB			
SJNC	Supporting Mothers And Raising Toddlers (SMART)	Permanent Residents	N/A	N/A	All								Federal/IRCC	No ongoing info online. For parents of children 18mos-3yos		
SJNC	Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)	Permanent Residents	N/A	N/A	All								Federal/IRCC	No ongoing info online. For parents of children 3-5yos		
SJNC	SKY	Any	CLB4+	15-30	All	French and english language enhancement	Employment specific	Employment specific	F 9-12	20 weeks	In-person classes and work placement	Goal: Employment	GNB (PETL) & Federal (Youth employ ment and Skills Strategy)	Includes a work placement and childcare (not advertised) Program focuses on: Canadian workplace culture, Resume building & interview skills, Local labour market insights, Networking & job search strategies, English language enhancement		
SJNC	Crafts and Conversation	Any	Any	Adult	Women	Conversational	N/A	N/A	F 10-12	No completion	In-person	No official certification	GNB			
CCNB	BOLT - Blended Online Language Training	Any	Any	Adult	All	Job oriented French and English language training	N/A	Yes	Varies and flexible to working adults	Varies	Online	Certification	GNB (PETL) & Federal (through targeted grants)	BOLT is a joint initiative of CCNB and Working NB		
PRUDE	Newcomer Women Leadership program	Any	Any	Adult	Women	Conversational	N/A	N/A	Varies - TTH 6-8	6 weeks	In-person or online, depending on participant consensus	No official certification	Federal/IRCC and RBC Foundation			
PRUDE	Come Together! The Canadian Way	PR	Any	Adult	All	Conversational	N/A	N/A	M-F 10-12	No completion	In-person	No official certification	Federal/IRCC			

Saint John King's Adult Learning	Adult learning	All	level 6	Adult	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Flexible	No completion	Both In-person and on-line	GED/CAEC	GNB/PE TL	No cap on age for students. There is no limit to learning.
The Learning Exchange	GOALS	All	level 6	16-19	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Varies	no completion	In-person	GED/CAEC	GNB/PE TL	Money incentive for attendance
The Learning Exchange	LEAP	All	level 6	youth and Adult	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Varies	No completion	Both In-person and on-line	GED/CAEC	GNB/PE TL	
The Learning Exchange	BEST	All	level 6	Adult	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Varies	No completion	Both In-person and on-line	GED/CAEC	GNB/PE TL	
READNB	Literacy tutoring program	All	Level 3	Adult	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Varies	No completion	Both In-person and on-line	Improve skills to access learning opportunities	GNB/PE TL	Run by trained volunteers, confidential, one-on-one training tailored to learner's interests and needs. Learners study at their own pace. No group classes.
United for Literacy	Youth one on one learning	All	None	18-Dec	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Mon- Fri 9am-3pm	No completion	In-person	Communication, Adaptability	GNB/PE TL	
John Howard Society	CALP - community Adult Learning Program	All	Level 6	19 and older	All	Elementary/ middle school	Yes	Yes	Mon- Fri 9am-3pm	No completion	In-person	GEC/CAEC ready	GNB/PE TL	
John Howard Society	WES Program (Workplace Essential Skills)	All	Level 6	16 and older	All	Employment specific	Yes	Yes	Varies	No completion	In-person	Employment readiness	GNB/PE TL	
Working NB	WES (Workplace Essentials Skills)	All	unknown			Unknown. Information not publicly available.	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	Employment readiness	GNB/PE TL	Three types: special initiatives, Employed, job seeker, Special initiatives come from suggestions from employment counselors and the community

Appendix B Best Practices

Community-Based English as a Second Language (ESL) Literacy Programs. "Stepping out" is a program piloted by the Calgary Board of Education ESL department targeting refugee immigrant women from rural areas who had low first-language literacy. It has 3 phases from a tutor at home to community-based classes and then transition to traditional classroom ESL, (Varvos, 2021). Child-care services are also incorporated in the program. This program proved effective for immigrant women from war-torn countries who had never lived in a large city and were likely to remain isolated due to limited English proficiency and low confidence (Varvos, 2021). This is a trauma-informed transitional model.

Gender-responsive and holistic models. Immigrant women are empowered when other women give them support, especially when this support is provided by other immigrant women. These women-specific agencies offer programs and services that respond to all areas of settlement needs such as language training, family literacy, family service supports, mental health trauma-informed support, legal support, housing support, health literacy, employment training for all levels of functional literacy, and childcare support. Examples are Canadian Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) Centre, Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO), and Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW) (Varvos, 2021, p. 361). For instance, the CIWA offers the SMILES program provides culturally sensitive childcare for children aged 3 - 4 while their mothers attend CIWA programming. CIWA also delivers the 30-week (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) through HIPPY model, which supports permanent resident families with low income and low literacy by helping mothers develop skills to teach their preschoolers at home while also enhancing parental English skills and employment readiness. For adults over 55 with financial need, the Everyday English for Seniors program strengthens written and oral language abilities through one-on-one and first-language support, classroom learning, and field trips that allow students to apply English in real-life situations. CIWA further offers CLB 1–4 courses. Additional services include Learning Support Services for learners struggling with language acquisition, provided by referral and focused on individualized learning strategies. The Pebbles in the Sand, is a program for immigrant women with fewer than seven years of education that emphasizes English acquisition, family literacy, life skills, and one-on-one mentoring with field-based learning opportunities. CIWA also offers sector-specific employment training funded by IRCC, and the Employment Integration and Advancement Project, which provides employment counselling, résumé support, workplace skills training, computer classes, and First Aid certification for women with CLB 4 in all categories and is funded by Scotiabank.

Food hospitality activism. It offers shared meals as a platform for meaningful intercultural dialogue. In this model, potlucks are hosted in participants' homes, bringing together migrants and locally born community members. A trained facilitator guides the exchange, encouraging participants to share the cultural stories behind the dishes they bring, helping to build connections across racial and cultural differences. By fostering these interactions, the program contributes to addressing issues of social injustice and racism through community-based relationship building (Morrice et al., 2017).