Newcomers On Board: A Survey Of Immigrant Participation on Local Boards Of Directors and Municipal Committees

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Overview

Goals of this research

• Analyze current levels of diversity on boards of directors and municipal committees in Guelph-Wellington

• Learn about the strategies used by organizations to increase the participation from immigrants, and the obstacles that might prevent their involvement

• Inform the development and implementation of the Newcomers on Board pilot project

• Gather baseline data that can be used to measure our progress and evaluate the impact of the Newcomers on Board program
Survey Methods

Content
Online survey of nine questions focusing on:

1. Organizational Background of Boards and Committees
2. Levels of Diversity on Boards and Committees
3. Strategies to Increase Diversity
4. Obstacles to Newcomers Participating on Boards and Committees

Target audiences

• Directors, presidents, or chairs of any public, private, or non-profit organization with boards and committees in Guelph-Wellington

• Distributed through contact lists of the Volunteer Centre, United Way, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Chamber of Commerce, among others
Results - Organizational Background

### Location
- City of Guelph, 59
- County of Wellington, 15

### Legal status
- Not-for-profits, 59
- Public or government, 14
- Private, 1
Results - Levels of Diversity

• The total number of board members ranged from 1 - 30, with an average of 11 individuals per board

• Organizations reported having between 0 and 5 immigrant members, with the vast majority reporting 0, 1 or 2 immigrant members

• On average, 14% of board members were born outside of Canada:
  o non-profits: average of 14.7% immigrant members;
  o public and governmental organizations: average of 10.2% immigrant members
Results - Levels of Diversity

Proportion of immigrants on local boards

- 17%: 1
- 16-20%: 13
- 11-15%: 14
- 6-10%: 10
- 1-5%: 11
- over 21%: 0

0%: 0
Strategies to Increase Diversity

- Advertise positions in community newspapers and through cultural agencies
- Recognize proficiency in languages other than English and French as a valued skill
- Value knowledge of diverse cultures and traditions
- Implemented an equal opportunity policy
- Willing to accommodate cultural and religious holidays and diversity-friendly apparel choices
- Measure diversity and inclusion statistics
- Provide leadership education and mentoring programs for new or potential board/committee members
- Created a specific role to oversee our diversity efforts (e.g. a Diversity Director)
- Have not implemented explicit strategies to increase the participation of immigrants
Results - Obstacles to Participation

• Most organizations (45 of the 65 who answered this question) weren’t aware of direct obstacles to the participation of immigrants on their board/committee.

• Those that did identify obstacles mentioned:
  – English language proficiency
  – Canadian citizenship
  – Police checks
  – Adherence to a specific religion
  – Membership in a professional association
Conclusion

Key insights for Newcomers on Board:

• Most boards and committees indicated that only 1 or 2 current members are immigrants, and 7 boards/committees have 0 immigrant members

• 17% have provided intercultural awareness or diversity training

• 39% of boards/committees have not implemented explicit strategies to increase the participation of immigrants

• 3% of organizations measure statistics for diversity and inclusion

• 3% of organizations have a specific role to oversee diversity and inclusion efforts
Thank you!

Questions?

Access the report at https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/9732

Contact Caroline at cduvieus@uoguelph.ca.

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