

## **Immigrant integration and inclusion: Investigating the Canadian partnership model from a complex-system perspective**

### **Summary of Proposed Research**

The integration of newcomers to Canada and the creation of an inclusive Canadian society is a complex undertaking that involves many players working together in various formal or informal partnership arrangements. At the most informal level, family and friends play an important role in helping newcomers acclimatize; more formally, governments at all levels design and fund various programs to help immigrants embark on their new lives. Governments are also instrumental in formulating policies and programs to break down barriers and create a welcoming and inclusive society. Public, private and nongovernmental organizations then implement these programs. The purpose of this research is to examine how the elements of this complex partnership work together to serve both the new immigrant and Canadian society as a whole. Understanding the interactions involved in these complex relationships paves the way to improving the overall effectiveness of immigrant integration and inclusion.

A growing body of literature has examined various aspects of the settlement experience, from the perspective of both the service recipients and those of the providers. The proposed study will focus on relationships among the various players in six individual but related programs of research discovery or PODs. Coordination, communication and shared understandings are critical aspects of all partnerships and ultimately influence the quality of service experienced by newcomers as they move through the integration and inclusion process. The intent of this study is to provide a more holistic picture of the settlement and integration process across Canada in order to reveal how the various partnerships in the model work, and how they can be improved. In this way, it can be useful in informing new policies to better serve immigrants through the various phases of their integration.

**Pod 1** examines the elusive term “effectiveness” which means different things to different stakeholders. By combining a historical analysis of the evolution of “effective” immigrant services with an investigation of current usages of the term from the perspective of all stakeholders, we will achieve a common understanding of the meaning of ‘effective’ integration policies and practices. **Pod 2** investigates interprovincial variations in services which may be rooted in the history of different intergovernmental partnerships, different policy decisions taken at the provincial level, different relationships between the province and their service providers, and various exogenous factors. Exemplars of excellence will be presented as part of the outputs from this pod. **Pod 3** moves towards a different, less studied aspect of the partnership – the role of municipalities and neighbourhoods in the integration of newcomers. This pod examines some of the issues municipalities contend with, such as the undefined nature of their role in the partnership model. Many innovative partnerships and programs have been initiated by municipalities; some of them will be examined and presented as exemplars. **Pod 4** focuses on one of the most studied aspects of the partnership, the role of the immigrant serving NGOs; however it looks at them in a novel way, examining their role in helping immigrants and racialized communities to bridge to the general community and/or to bond with their own communities. **Pod 5** involves an extensive literature review and critical evaluation of various models of integration and social service provision as practiced in both in Canada and abroad. This literature review will be augmented by an empirical investigation of mixed model services in different parts of Canada. Finally **Pod 6** looks directly at the impact of policy as the key driver in social changes leading to effective long-term integration and the creation of an inclusive society. Although each research pod investigates a different aspect of the theoretical model, the common thread linking each is the focus on the quality of the partnerships in terms of communication, coordination, support and accountability and the effectiveness of the services. The data from all the pods will be synthesized to reflect the holistic nature of the integration process. A pan-Canadian team of researchers and community collaborators representing all Metropolis Centres will conduct the research.