

IN CONVERSATION WITH... THE IMMIGRANT EDUCATION SOCIETY

About Us



THE IMMIGRANT EDUCATION SOCIETY

The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) is a non-profit registered charitable organization based in Calgary, Alberta, that has served newcomers and low-income Albertans since 1988. TIES' primary goal is to provide immigrants and economically disadvantaged individuals with a solid foothold in Canada and afford them the opportunities to feel belonging in their new community.

Successes

Though it's premature to declare the program's success, with the final intake concluding in late November, TIES is enthusiastic about pioneering smartphone-based training in the nonprofit sector. The forthcoming research report in early 2024 aims to inspire other agencies to explore this service delivery method. Additionally, TIES hopes to draw attention to the under-served newcomer youth and young adults (18-30) on the settlement journey, encouraging the design of services for this motivated cohort.

Lessons Learned

While TIES will formally conclude and publish their research in 2024, some early lessons involve designing for a youth cohort (18-30) rather than the traditional 35+ audience. TIES's youth participants, in a dynamic phase of exploration, prioritize clear career outcomes, challenging training programs, and adaptability to their busy lifestyles, especially post-pandemic. This experience has sparked numerous ideas for further programming research.

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FEATURED PROGRAM

Bridge for Digital Youth (BDY)

Bridge for Digital Youth (BDY) is a 13-week online employment training program for newcomer youth (18-30) focused on digital marketing and online business careers. Empowering Calgary-area youth with marketable skills in mobile technology, design, and entrepreneurship, this innovative pilot is accessed exclusively through the Moodle for Mobile app. In collaboration with the University of Calgary, TIES' Research department is assessing the impact and feasibility of smartphone-based training to address educational accessibility gaps for newcomers in Canada.

With over a decade of investment in e-Learning research, TIES, like many organizations, transitioned to predominantly online service delivery amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the unsustainability of traditional laptop/desktop-centric e-Learning due to financial constraints, digital literacy issues, and family commitments, TIES explored mobile-based training to overcome these barriers, given the prevalence and proficiency of smartphones among their newcomer clients.

During the Pandemic, the nonprofit settlement sector swiftly implemented online service delivery but faced resource limitations, hindering equal access to online learning for all clients. Agencies had to create laptop lending libraries or connect clients with external sources for computer access. Once online, a significant number of learners required additional digital literacy training, IT support, and device maintenance. TIES aimed to alleviate the burden by meeting students on their preferred devices, leveraging their experience with Moodle.

While designing for the mobile platform occurred organically, implementation presented challenges amid the pandemic and ChatGPT/AI expansion. It's evident that a reevaluation of participation and completion assessment is necessary for future programs, presenting an exciting opportunity.

Bridge for Digital Youth is a collaboration with the Calgary-based digital agency Evans Hunt, contributing expertise in mobile curriculum design and offering practicum support to participants.

