

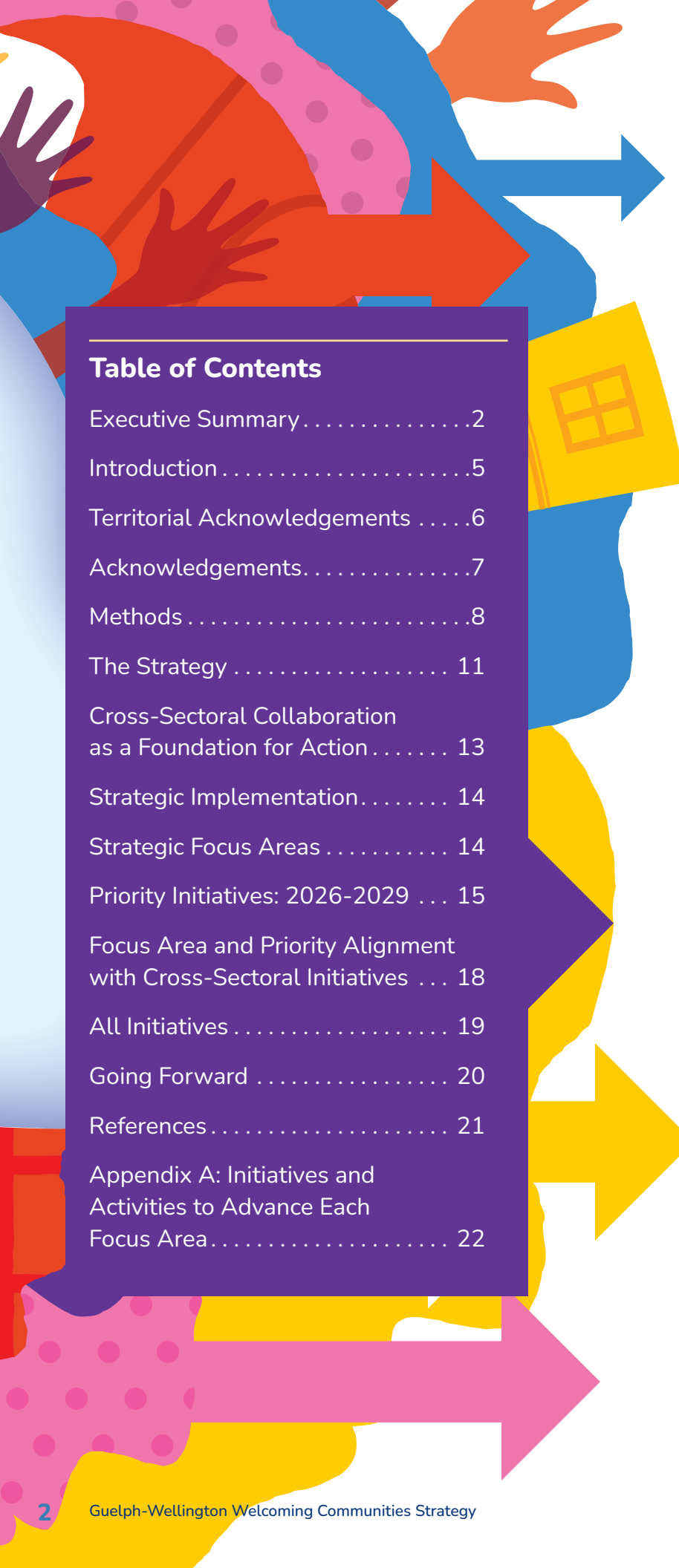


Guelph | Wellington  
**Welcoming  
Communities  
Strategy**

March 2026

GUELPH | WELLINGTON  
Local Immigration Partnership  
*Creating a caring, equitable community where everyone thrives.*





## Executive Summary

Communities are stronger when everyone feels welcome. Across Guelph and Wellington, many networks, organizations, and individuals are already contributing to welcoming communities by supporting immigrants and newcomers in different ways. The Welcoming Communities Strategy and the 2026-2029 prioritized initiatives unite those efforts with shared direction to strengthen collaboration, align priorities, and expand the positive impact of this work across the region.

The Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP), in collaboration with community partners from multiple sectors, led the development of the strategy. It reflects a shared commitment to building communities where newcomers and immigrants experience belonging, connection, and wellbeing.

The Welcoming Communities Strategy seeks to bring these efforts together to achieve a shared impact.

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## Shared Purpose and Impact

At the heart of this strategy is a shared purpose:

**We work together to support positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants, increasing connection, belonging, and wellbeing for everyone in our welcoming communities.**

In this strategy, **positive community experiences** refers to the feeling of everyday observations and interactions with people, places, and systems where we live, work, learn, and play that influence access, connection, belonging, and safety.

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## Foundations of the Strategy

The strategy is grounded in a set of foundational elements that guide how the work will be carried out. These include shared purpose, impact, approaches, values, pressure points, and conditions for success.

A key insight from the engagement process was the central role of cross-sectoral collaboration. While many activities will ultimately take place within organizations or among individual community members, most initiatives begin through partnerships that bring together organizations, institutions, and residents to coordinate action and share resources.

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## Strategic Focus Areas

Four focus areas emerged through engagement as the pillars of the strategy:

1. Shared Messages and Training
2. Strong Partnerships
3. Community Involvement
4. Data and Storytelling

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## Priority Initiatives (2026–2029)

Seventeen initiatives were identified across the four focus areas. From these, six were identified as initiatives to prioritize within the first three years of the longer-term strategy (2026–2029):

1. Develop key common welcoming communities messaging in collaboration with partners
2. Deepen and broaden partnerships
3. Share and standardize inclusive policies and processes across organizations
4. Identify reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents
5. Raise awareness of services and supports among partners
6. Develop feedback mechanisms for newcomers and immigrants

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## Going Forward

The Welcoming Communities Strategy is intended to guide collaborative action across Guelph and Wellington over the coming years. While the strategy outlines specific initiatives, its success will depend on the continued commitment of organizations, institutions, community groups, and residents working together.

These collective efforts will help strengthen welcoming communities across the region, ensuring that newcomers and immigrants experience meaningful connection, belonging, and wellbeing.

# Guelph | Wellington Welcoming Communities Strategy

## Our Desired Impact

GWLIP and the broader community work together to support positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants, increasing connection, belonging, and wellbeing for everyone in our welcoming communities.

### We Define Community Experiences As:

The feeling of everyday observations and interactions with people, places, and systems where we live, work, learn, and play that influence access, connection, belonging, and safety.

### Our Shared Purpose:

We work together to create a culture of positive community experience for immigrants and newcomers, across sectors, within our organizations, and alongside community members.

### Our Shared Purpose is Mobilized with:

- Alignment of strategic goals and joint action across sectors
- A shared framework for collaboration, outcomes, and measurement
- One voice for collective advocacy and communication for system change
- Leveraging momentum to value and celebrate diversity
- Coordination and resource sharing to increase capacity
- Networked outreach

### Our Conditions for Success:

- Open communication and trust
- Backbone support and sustainable resourcing
- Equitable representation in engagement and leadership
- Building on existing work
- Shared accountability and measurement

### Values Foundational to Our Work:

- Relationships & Collaboration
- Equity & Inclusion
- Openness & Curiosity

## Our Strategy Includes Four Focus Areas

### Shared Messaging and Training

We will share training to better connect with people from all cultures and develop shared language to deliver welcoming messages.

### Strong Partnerships

We will deepen and increase partnerships for a more connected network that helps us learn from each other and do more together.

### Community Involvement

We will create more opportunities for all community members to increase connection and inform community decision making with lived experience.

### Data and Storytelling

We will share data for planning and funding, and to tell our communities' stories.

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## Introduction

Communities thrive when everyone feels seen, valued, and connected. Across Guelph and Wellington, many organizations, networks, and individuals are already working, each in their own way, to build a stronger sense of belonging for immigrants and newcomers. The Welcoming Communities Strategy seeks to bring these efforts together to achieve a shared impact:

**We work together to support positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants, increasing connection, belonging, and wellbeing for everyone in our welcoming communities.**

The Welcoming Communities strategy is a timely response to current context, with political and social shifts impacting inclusion and belonging. The current rhetoric has made it more difficult to both fund and engage in key elements of welcoming communities work. Policies are restricting and decreasing immigration and contributing to the practice of othering and exclusion. Nationally and provincially, there is a rise in expressions of hate and emboldened behaviour, that our local Experiences of Discrimination data for [Guelph](#) and [Wellington](#) reflects. There is a lack of value placed on evidence-informed practice that intertwines with a negative perception towards diversity and equity work, walking back gains made in the last 10 years. It is more important than ever for newcomers and immigrants, our new neighbours in our communities, to be welcomed, and for everyone in our communities to experience belonging. It will take collective work for this meaningful change to happen.

This strategy is part of a border ecosystem of efforts across our communities, through the dedication of community members and their lived experience, and partners across sectors. Critical ongoing work exists beyond the scope of this strategy, and together we all contribute to movement building for the same important outcome of creating welcoming communities. One example of which is the [City of Guelph's Equity and Anti-Racism Action Plan](#), the purpose of which is to embed equity into governance, service delivery, and community engagement - ensuring that all residents have fair access to opportunities and resources that support their ability to thrive. Specific alignment between the Welcoming Communities Strategy focus areas, the Anti-Racism Action Plan focus areas and actions, and recommendations from the From Evidence to Action Community Consultation on Experiences of Discrimination in Guelph and Wellington, will be further illuminated.

We know there is still more to do to ensure that all newcomers and immigrants experience genuine welcoming and belonging, as evolving political climates and shifting public narratives remind us how essential collective commitment and collaboration truly are. Focusing on the scope of positive community experiences, allows the strategy to focus on areas where community partners, organizations, and residents can meaningfully work together to influence belonging, connection, and wellbeing for newcomers and immigrants.

By aligning our goals, sharing resources, and amplifying one another's work, we can strengthen the fabric of our communities, together.

As we work to welcome newcomers and immigrants, we also recognize the importance of doing so in a way that respects Indigenous rights and histories. Welcoming new residents to this region takes place within the broader context of reconciliation and a shared responsibility to learn about the history and ongoing impacts of colonization in Canada.

This strategy recognizes that building welcoming communities includes creating opportunities for learning, reflection, and respectful relationships between newcomers, long-time residents, and Indigenous peoples, all with an intersectional lens. By deepening understanding of the land we live on and the histories connected to it, we can contribute to communities that are more respectful, inclusive, and grounded in shared responsibility for the future.



## Territorial Acknowledgements

### Wellington County:

The County of Wellington is situated on multiple Treaties within the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg. Historic agreements also include those made with the Haudenosaunee.

We acknowledge this land has and continues to be, inhabited by other nations throughout time such as the Attawandaron, Métis and the Inuit.

We acknowledge we are not the original stewards of these lands but have the responsibility of caring for this land and its people, and to ensure that future generations are able to thrive here.

The County of Wellington remains dedicated to a better understanding of past, present and future as a gesture of commitment to the process of ongoing and meaningful Reconciliation.

### City of Guelph:

As we collaborate, we take time to reflect on our privilege to live and work in Guelph; a city built over rich Indigenous histories. We reflect upon the responsibility to care for this land, the people who live here today, and the generations to come. We take pause, consider actions that can move us towards reconciliation, and make those decisions with intention and gratitude.

This place we call Guelph has served as traditional lands and a place of refuge for many peoples over time, but more specifically the Attiwonderonk, and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands and territory with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Guelph lies directly adjacent to the Haldimand Tract and is part of a long-established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have come from across Turtle Island call Guelph home today.

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## Acknowledgements

The development of this Welcoming Communities Strategy was made possible through the leadership of the Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) and the many community partners who contributed their time, insight, and expertise throughout the process, including collaboration with Amplify Strategic Consulting Inc. This work reflects a shared commitment across the region to foster communities where newcomers and immigrants feel increased connection, belonging, and wellbeing.

A dedicated working group played an important role in guiding the development of the strategy, helping to shape the engagement process, provide feedback, and ensure the strategy reflects the needs and opportunities within Guelph and Wellington. The working group followed an open and flexible approach to participation with additional members joining at different points in the process when their perspectives or expertise could further strengthen the work. We extend our sincere appreciation to the organizations and individuals who contributed to this work, including representatives from:

- Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington (CMHA WW)
- City of Guelph
- Community members
- County of Wellington
- Guelph Police Service
- Guelph Wellington Poverty Elimination Collaborative
- Immigrant Services Guelph and Wellington
- Starling Community Services
- Toward Common Ground
- University of Guelph
- Upper Grand District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health
- Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

We also recognize and thank the many community members, service providers, organizations, and partners who participated in engagement activities and shared their experiences, perspectives, and ideas. Their contributions were essential in shaping a strategy that reflects the collective vision and priorities of the community.

Together, these contributions demonstrate the strong collaborative spirit across Guelph and Wellington and the shared commitment to creating welcoming communities for all.



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## Methods

With support from a working group formed to guide the approach of the project, three key waves of engagement were conducted to shape our understanding of developing a Welcoming Communities Strategy for newcomers and immigrants Guelph and Wellington.

Throughout each wave of engagement, participants were invited to consider how positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants in Guelph and Wellington could be supported at three interconnected levels:

- For individual community members
- For organizations
- Through cross-sectoral partnerships

In this strategy, **positive community experiences** are defined as:

**The feeling of everyday observations and interactions with people, places, and systems where we live, work, learn, and play that influence access, connection, belonging, and safety.**



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## Wave 1: Developing the Draft Strategy (Jan-Oct 2025)

- A strategic document review yielding 22 documents, including a thorough review and discussion of the Promoting Welcoming Communities Toolkit by Pathways to Prosperity (2024)
- Group conversations with:
  - The Southwestern Ontario Local Immigration Partnerships
  - Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership's Partnership Council
- Individual conversations with key community partners
- A local and broad environmental scan, including a survey with Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada
- A secondary literature review
- Engagement at the Welcoming Week 2025 Breakfast Reception
- A full-day Welcoming Communities Strategy Workshop with community partners including municipalities, educational institutions, community-based organizations working with people with lived experience, police, employment services, and more

A significant amount of time and intentional discussion during this first wave of engagement was devoted to scoping the strategy. Scoping refers to determining the boundaries and focus of the work. Through initial engagement and literature reviews, it became clear that the concept of welcoming communities can be interpreted very broadly and could mean different things to different people.

Working group members engaged in thoughtful dialogue about the mandate of the GWLIP, the sphere of influence of those

at the table and the broader ecosystem contributing to welcoming communities. While many factors contribute to the experiences of newcomers and immigrants, the group recognized that some areas, such as basic needs or whole systems, extend beyond the direct influence of this strategy. As a result, the group agreed to focus the strategy on community experiences.

In this strategy, community experiences refer to the everyday interactions people have with one another, with places, and with systems in the spaces where they live, work, learn, and play. Focusing on this scope allows the strategy to focus on areas where community partners, organizations, and residents can meaningfully work together to influence belonging, connection, and wellbeing for newcomers and immigrants.

Furthermore, the strategy intends to make communities more welcoming for all, and does so by focusing on positive community experiences for immigrants and newcomers. In addition to this being informed by the mandate of the GWLIP, it is informed by best practice. When we focus our efforts on those who experience the most barriers and disproportionate impacts, we increase equity and more successfully create welcoming communities for all.

Through this wave of engagement, culminating with the Welcoming Communities Strategy Workshop, we surfaced our strategy, including scoped shared purpose and impact, values, shared pressure points, conditions for success, four key focus areas for the strategy, and initiatives and activities associated with each focus area. Out-of-scope insights that emerged from the strategy process were intentionally captured and will be leveraged to shape and strengthen future initiatives led by GWLIP and relevant partners.

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## Wave 2: Finalizing the Strategy (Oct 2025-Mar 2026)

Once a draft strategy was developed, another wave of engagement was conducted with a broader audience in Guelph and Wellington to further validate and finalize the strategy. Engagement audiences were asked for areas of the strategy that resonated, whether any initiatives or activities were missing, areas of alignment with their own work, existing work that may be leveraged, reflections on areas to prioritize, and more. Insights gleaned from this phase of engagement were applied to the strategy, as applicable, including the addition of new activities within initiatives.

Engagement in this wave consisted of 15 key informant interviews and two group conversations. Audiences included those both previously and newly engaged in this project such as partner organizations, faith leaders, community members, and political representatives.

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## Wave 3: Prioritizing the Strategy (Feb-Mar 2026)

The finalized strategic focus areas and initiatives were then brought back to the working group for prioritization. Working group members individually scored each initiative within the strategy using weighted criteria and a scoring rubric. Criteria included impact, measurability, partner support, and resources. An average score was calculated for each initiative and shared back with the working group for collective sensemaking and finalization. This process informed the time frame and initiatives identified for activation within that time frame. The additional initiatives and activities are still key to welcoming communities, and queued for implementation in subsequent years of strategy implementation.





# The Strategy

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## Foundations of the Strategy

Before outlining the specific initiatives and activities that will bring this strategy to life, it is important to recognize the foundational elements that support and shape the work. Successful welcoming communities are not built through individual programs alone; they are created through shared values, supportive conditions, and collaborative efforts that enable organizations and communities to work effectively together.

This section highlights the foundational components of the strategy: our shared impact, shared mobilization, values, shared pressure points, conditions for success, and cross-cutting considerations that must be embedded throughout all initiatives and activities. These elements provide the underlying framework for how the work is carried out, influencing decision-making, partnerships, resource allocation, and the overall approach to supporting newcomers and immigrants. While these components may be less visible than specific projects or programs, they are essential to ensuring that efforts are coordinated, sustainable, and responsive to community needs.

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## Our Shared Purpose

We work together to create a culture of positive community experience for immigrants and newcomers, across sectors, within our organizations, and alongside community members.

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## Our Intended Impact

We commit to strengthen connection, belonging, and wellbeing for everyone in our communities.

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## Our Shared Purpose is Mobilized with:

- Alignment of strategic goals and joint action across sectors
- A shared framework for collaboration, outcomes, and measurement
- One voice for collective advocacy and communication for system change
- Leveraging momentum to value and celebrate diversity
- Coordination and resource sharing to increase capacity
- Networked outreach



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## Values Foundational to Our Work:

Our work in this strategy is guided by:

- Relationships and collaboration
- Equity and inclusion
- Openness and curiosity

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## Our Shared Pressure Points Are:

- **Funding & Resource Scarcity:**  
Chronic underfunding, short-term cycles, and competitive grant culture.
- **Capacity & Burnout:**  
Limited staffing, emotional fatigue, and lack of administrative capacity.
- **Systemic Complexity:**  
Fragmented services, duplication, and uncoordinated policies across sectors.
- **Social & Political Climate:**  
Growing polarization, inequity, and shifting public values.
- **Advocacy & Voice:**  
Difficult to have a collective voice, particularly amid shifting rhetoric.

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## Our Conditions For Success Include:

**Open communication and trust:** Strong relationships built on transparency and trust allow partners and community members to share ideas, address challenges, and work collaboratively toward shared goals.

**Backbone support and sustainable resourcing:** Dedicated coordination and reliable resources, including funding, staffing, and organizational capacity, are needed to support collaboration and sustain the work over time.

**Equitable representation in engagement and leadership:** Ensuring diverse perspectives, including those of newcomers and immigrants, are reflected in engagement and leadership helps make initiatives more responsive and effective. Equitable representation also includes taking into account the distinct factors that may influence planning and implementation across municipalities, including differences in rural and urban contexts.

**Building on existing work:** Aligning with and strengthening current initiatives, partnerships, and resources helps maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

**Shared accountability:** Welcoming communities are created through collective responsibility, with partners across sectors committing to shared goals and working together to achieve them.

**Shared measurement:** Developing shared methods to measure progress helps partners understand what is working, identify gaps, and track the collective impact of the strategy. By agreeing on shared indicators and approaches to data collection, organizations can align their efforts and make informed decisions about how to strengthen welcoming community initiatives over time.

## Cross-Sectoral Collaboration as a Foundation for Action

Through the process of delineating initiatives and activities by audience, it became clear that nearly every action identified in this strategy originates from or relies on cross-sectoral collaboration. Cross-sectoral partnerships bring together individuals, community groups, organizations, and institutions to collectively identify priorities, design initiatives, and coordinate efforts across the community.

Stemming from cross-sectoral partnership, it is important for these planning processes to intentionally determine, communicate, and facilitate coordinated actions for individual organizations, groups, and community members. The initiatives begin at the cross-sectoral level and conditions are created that allow organizations and individual community members to participate and contribute meaningfully. For example, a community-wide communications campaign would start with cross-sectoral planning, then individual organizations would further create and share key messages followed by individual community members using these shared messages.

Advancing the initiatives in this strategy will require organizations, groups, and individuals to step forward as cross-sectoral leads and supporting members, helping to convene and move collaborative work forward. Moving collaborative work forward will require **cross-sectoral**, **organizational**, and **community member** action. While the prioritized initiatives have clear activities across sectors and organizations, activities for community members will be developed as part of implementation.



### Welcoming Communities take action — and it starts with YOU!

Beginning in 2026, community led working groups will form, creating space for lived experience, local expertise, and collective action to drive meaningful change.

Want to be part of shaping what comes next? Contact the GWLIP at [gwlip@guelph.ca](mailto:gwlip@guelph.ca) to:

Express interest in leading or supporting cross-sectoral initiatives



Share information about work your organization is already doing or wants to do that contributes to the welcoming communities strategy



Contribute to the development of a community member actions list to make it easy and accessible for individuals to contribute to welcoming communities



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## Strategic Implementation

Building on the foundations outlined in the previous section, this part of the strategy focuses on the initiatives and activities that will help bring the vision of welcoming communities to life. These actions translate the shared values, conditions for success, and key considerations of the strategy into practical projects that organizations, partners, and community members can work on together.

The initiatives identified in this section reflect priorities raised through engagement and are intended to strengthen collaboration, address key opportunities, and support positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants across Guelph and Wellington. While each initiative outlines specific areas for action, their success will depend on continued partnership, shared commitment, and alignment with the foundational elements that guide this strategy.

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## Strategic Focus Areas

Four key focus areas emerged through engagement for the strategy. They include:



### Shared Messaging and Training

Develop coordinated cultural competence and systemic oppression common messaging and training that support consistency of community experience.



### Strong Partnerships

Broaden and deepen partnerships to enhance community and network connections to leverage capacity and influence service pathways.



### Community Involvement

Create opportunities for civic engagement for immigrants, newcomers, and community members to increase connection to community and inform community decision making with lived experience.













### Data and Storytelling








Collaborate for disaggregated data to inform planning, shared funding applications, and collective impact storytelling.

## Priority Initiatives: 2026-2029

The work of creating Welcoming Communities is long term, relationship and system based. For the purposes of focusing initial efforts within a realistic timeframe, the engagement informed initiatives were prioritized and ranked. Seventeen total initiatives were identified across focus areas. Six priority initiatives were identified across the four focus areas to be implemented first through this strategy. A three year time frame was identified for implementation of the six prioritized initiatives; 2026 to 2029. Where there is capacity within that timeframe for additional implementation, the initiatives ranked next in the prioritization will be rolled out. These priorities include the following:

| Focus Area  | Priority Initiatives   | Priority Activities  |
|---|--|--|
|  <p><b>Shared Messaging and Training</b></p> | <p><b>1. Develop key common welcoming communities messaging in collaboration with partners</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  <p><b>Cross-Sectoral</b><br/>-Launch an actionable community wide welcoming campaign to increase engagement and awareness and shift culture</p> </li> <li>  <p><b>Organizational</b><br/>-Support the creation of key common messages and guidelines for implementation</p> </li> <li>  <p><b>Community Member</b><br/>(Activities to be developed)<br/>-Bring Welcoming Campaign actions to life once developed (for example):<br/>- Speak kindness<br/>- Get to know your neighbours<br/>- Attend a cultural community event</p> </li> </ul> |
|  <p><b>Strong Partnerships</b></p>         | <p><b>2. Deepen and broaden partnerships</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  <p><b>Cross-Sectoral</b><br/>-Deepen existing partnerships and seek opportunities to expand relationships and broaden our network</p> </li> <li>  <p><b>Organizational</b><br/>-Seek opportunities for collaboration in strategic alignment with welcoming communities to leverage capacity and increase impact</p> </li> <li>  <p><b>Community Member</b><br/>(Activities to be developed)<br/>-Volunteer and share your lived experience in groups doing collective work</p> </li> </ul>   |

| Focus Area   | Priority Initiatives  | Priority Activities   |
|--|---|---|
|  <p data-bbox="142 380 326 489">Shared Messaging and Training</p> | <p data-bbox="388 233 756 380">3. Share and standardize inclusive policies and processes across organizations</p>           | <p data-bbox="800 226 889 321"></p> <p data-bbox="902 233 1130 264"><b>Cross-Sectoral</b></p> <p data-bbox="902 275 1459 380">-Support the development and sharing of standard policies, procedures, and resources</p> <p data-bbox="800 411 889 506"></p> <p data-bbox="902 411 1130 443"><b>Organizational</b></p> <p data-bbox="902 453 1459 558">-Identify and share practices that could be leveraged across organizations for consistency and capacity building</p>   |
|  <p data-bbox="142 753 321 821">Data and Storytelling</p>         | <p data-bbox="388 600 719 789">4. Identify reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents</p> | <p data-bbox="800 600 889 695"></p> <p data-bbox="902 600 1130 632"><b>Cross-Sectoral</b></p> <p data-bbox="902 642 1459 747">-Conduct a scan to learn from other organizations regarding reporting and responding to incidents of hate</p> <p data-bbox="902 768 1459 873">-Informed by the scan, establish a system to report and respond to hate motivated incidents</p> <p data-bbox="800 894 889 989"></p> <p data-bbox="902 905 1130 936"><b>Organizational</b></p> <p data-bbox="902 947 1471 978">-Socialize the mechanism to report hate</p> <p data-bbox="800 1010 889 1104"></p> <p data-bbox="902 1010 1211 1041"><b>Community Member</b></p> <p data-bbox="902 1052 1292 1083">(Activities to be developed)</p> <p data-bbox="902 1094 1459 1230">-Be an ally and speak out against hate - simple actions to be developed to support (e.g. see something, say something)</p> <p data-bbox="902 1251 1479 1314">-Access reporting mechanisms for responding to hate-motivated incidents</p> |

| Focus Area  | Priority Initiatives   | Priority Activities   |
|---|--|---|
|  <p><b>Strong Partnerships</b></p>   | <p>5. Raise awareness of services and supports among partners</p>  | <p> <b>Cross-Sectoral</b><br/>-Collaborate with community partners and those offering relevant services, to support deeper collective awareness of supports, resources, services, and programs</p> <p> <b>Organizational</b><br/>-Apply increased awareness of relevant services and supports internally to increase capacity and access</p>  |
|  <p><b>Community Involvement</b></p> | <p>6. Develop feedback mechanisms for newcomers and immigrants</p> | <p> <b>Cross-Sectoral</b><br/>-Create consistent and centralized opportunities for feedback to ensure we are meeting the needs of our newcomers</p> <p> <b>Organizational</b><br/>-Share existing approaches to feedback mechanisms that can be leveraged for best practice and centralized to increase ease of access</p> <p>-Outreach to hear stories for the purposes of communicating about a welcoming community</p> <p> <b>Community Member</b><br/>(Activities to be developed)<br/>-Take part in community opportunities and share your thoughts through feedback mechanisms</p> |

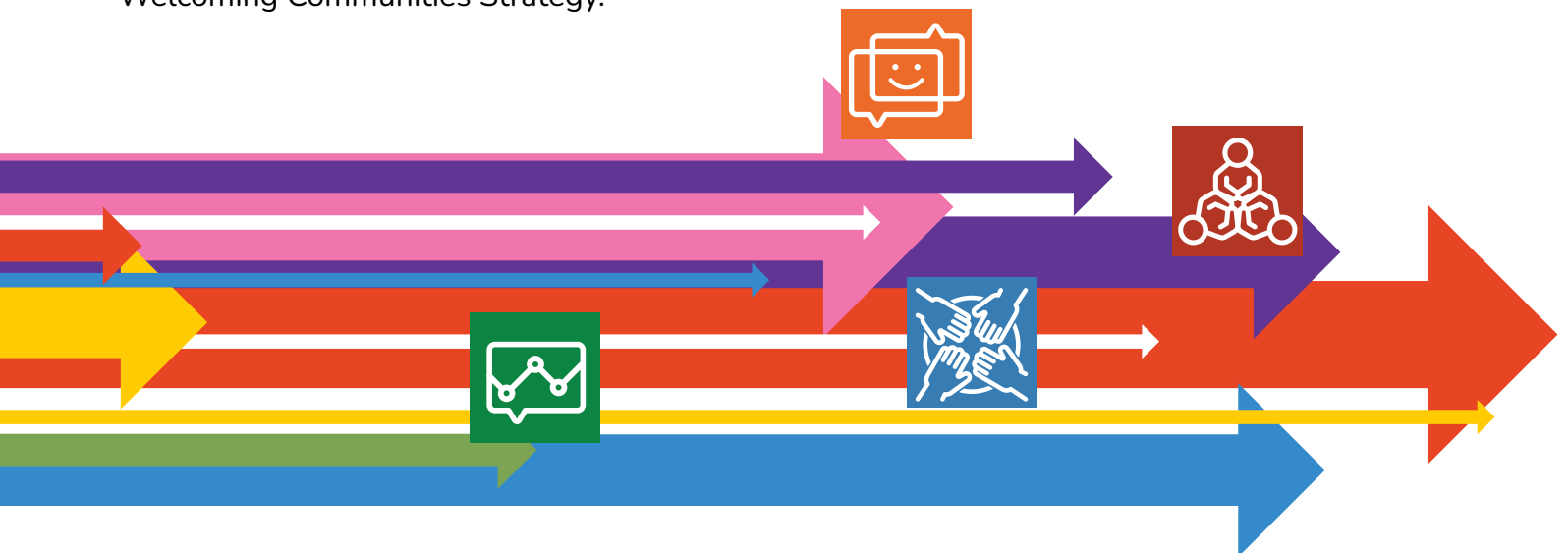


## Focus Area and Priority Alignment with Cross-Sectoral Initiatives

The Welcoming Communities Strategy is informed by engagement and builds on previous work. Its success rests on its intersection with existing efforts within and beyond scope of the strategy to advance welcoming communities. Many collaboratives and organizations are advancing relevant work, including the partners comprising the working group. Opportunities to leverage existing initiatives and activities through the Workforce Planning Board, Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, and Toward Common Ground, as examples, have been identified.

The findings and recommendations from the From Evidence to Action Community Consultation on the Experiences of Discrimination (September 2023) include, establishing collective infrastructure, increasing network connection, developing common messages, sharing information and resources, collaborating on disaggregated data and focusing on reporting systems. This lends collective voice, common messaging, and furthers access to increased belonging. These, not surprisingly, are strongly linked to the focus areas, initiatives and outcomes of the Welcoming Communities Strategy.

The [City of Guelph's Equity and Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) has strong alignment with the Welcoming Community's Strategy. Focus 1 of the City's plan, Promote Equity and Inclusion - is strongly connected to our first Strategic Focus Area, Shared Messaging and Training. Focus 2 of the City's Plan, Combat Racism and Discrimination crosses several focus areas and presents a key opportunity within Data and Storytelling (Strategic Focus Area 4) to advance the prioritized initiative of identifying reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents. Focus 3 of the City's Plan, Engage and Empower Community, is paralleled with our third Strategic Focus Area, Community Involvement. Furthermore, the values, mobilization and conditions for success in the Welcoming Communities Strategy are foundationally interwoven into the City's Community Plan Guiding Principles and Equity and Anti-Racism Plan actions.



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## All Initiatives

Beyond the Welcoming Communities Strategy priorities identified for 2026-2029, the following list shows all 17 initiatives that emerged through all phases of engagement and data gathering. After the priority initiatives are implemented from 2026-2029, a new time frame for the next phase of the strategy will be determined, with prioritized initiatives informed by this current engagement and ranking process and relevant context at that time.

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List items that appear with an arrow symbol (→) indicate a current initiative

List items that appear with an asterisk (\*) indicate initiatives that fit within multiple focus areas

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### 1. Shared Messaging and Training

- Develop key common welcoming communities messaging in collaboration with partners
- Share and standardize supportive policies and processes across organizations
- Support community education in cultural competency\*
- Identify backbone support to sustain coordination and collaboration\*



### 2. Strong Partnerships

- Deepen and broaden community partnerships
- Identify backbone support to sustain coordination and collaboration\*
- Support the wellness of those doing the important work of welcoming communities
- Engage in collective advocacy
- Identify a shared framework for collaboration among community partners
- Increase opportunities to convene and collaborate\*
- Raise awareness of services and supports among partners



### 3. Community Involvement

- Bring diverse groups together in multi-cultural celebration
- Develop feedback mechanisms for newcomers and immigrants
- Increase opportunities to convene and collaborate\*
- Creatively engage volunteers for low-barrier actions
- Engage community members in decision making roles
- Identify reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents\*



### 4. Data and Storytelling

- Support community education in cultural competency\*
- Explore coordination of shared data and indicators for evaluation
- Identify reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents\*
- Support our understanding of the current context through data



## Going Forward

Welcoming communities are built through everyday actions, relationships, and shared commitment. Across Guelph and Wellington, many individuals, organizations, and partners are already contributing to this work in meaningful ways. The Welcoming Communities Strategy provides a shared direction to help strengthen these efforts and will lean on organizations, groups, and people to share their time and expertise to bring the strategy to life.

This strategy is intended to guide collective action over the next three years. While it outlines focus areas, initiatives, and priorities, its success will depend on the continued engagement and leadership of community partners, organizations, and community members working together. Those who might lead and support each priority will be identified through expressions of interest and working groups will be formed to guide each priority. Working groups will take an open approach to add members as time goes on; ensuring people with lived experience are part of these groups will be key.

As the work evolves, the strategy can also adapt, building on progress, responding to emerging needs, and identifying new opportunities for collaboration. A combination of collaboration and supportive conditions, including backbone support and resourcing, will ensure the success of this strategy.

**We share responsibility to work together to support positive community experiences for newcomers and immigrants, strengthening connection, belonging, and wellbeing for everyone in Guelph and Wellington.**



## Welcoming Communities take action — and it starts with YOU!

We're building a more inclusive Guelph Wellington, and we need community members, grassroots groups, and organizations to mobilize and bring this welcoming strategy to life. This next phase is about sharing the strategy, sparking conversations, and securing real commitments to lead and support action.

Beginning in 2026, community led working groups will form, creating space for lived experience, local expertise, and collective action to drive meaningful change.

Want to be part of shaping what comes next? Contact the GWLIP at [gwlip@guelph.ca](mailto:gwlip@guelph.ca) to:



Express interest in leading or supporting cross-sectoral initiatives



Share information about work your organization is already doing or wants to do that contributes to the welcoming communities strategy



Contribute to the development of a community member actions list to make it easy and accessible for individuals to contribute welcoming communities

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## References

Aslam, A., Barros, P. R. P., Hamilton, L. K., & Esses, V. M. (2024). Promoting welcoming communities: A toolkit for communities and those who support them. Pathways to Prosperity Partnership. <https://p2pcanada.ca/library/promoting-welcoming-communities-a-toolkit-for-communities-and-those-who-support-them/>

## Appendix A:



### Initiatives and Activities to Advance Each Focus Area

The following table shows initiatives and activities identified through all phases and methods of engagement to support progress in each of the focus areas. The initiatives and activities are organized by their most applicable focus area, though several can connect to multiple focus areas.

| Initiative<br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)   | Activity   |
|--|--|
|  <b>Focus Area: Shared messaging and training</b> |  |
| <b>Develop key common welcoming communities messaging in collaboration with partners (1)</b>                                       | Develop a common language to use across organizations when supporting welcoming communities; use plain language  |
|  | Support the creation of key common messages and guidelines for implementation  |
|  | - Embed key common messages into organizations (e.g., training, client support); Support multi-pronged communications such as printed flyers and in multiple languages   |
|  | Launch a community wide welcoming campaign to increase engagement and awareness and shift culture. A multifaceted campaign aligned with intended audiences using the most impactful messaging (e.g., values, empathy, experience, etc.) Include tips for action and engagement (e.g., “a smile is the same in every language”, share cultural norms such as potlucks, gardening, voting, giving holiday-specific greetings, window decals, engaging in small talk, etc.) |
|  | - Community members access key messages through multi-pronged communications   |
| <b>Share and standardize supportive policies and processes across organizations (3)</b>  | Support the development and sharing of standard policies, procedures, and resources, including inclusive hiring practices  |
|  | Develop shared practices & policies that advance the message of welcoming communities  |

Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.

| <b>Initiative</b><br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|--|--|
|  <b>Focus Area: Shared messaging and training</b> |  |
| <b>Support community education in cultural competency (14)</b>   | Develop strategies to combat rhetoric and mis-information, including resources to support negative online interactions; leverage and build on existing trainings   |
|  | Develop coordinated cultural competency, DEI, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and welcoming trainings  |
|  | - Support training implementation at the system level  |
|  | - Offer training to professionals and individuals to intervene, check in after, and respond to acts of discrimination  |
| <b>Identify backbone support to sustain coordination and collaboration (11)</b>  | Develop mechanisms to cross-promote each other's initiatives   |
|  <b>Focus Area: Strong Partnerships</b>          |  |
| <b>Broaden and deepen partnerships (2)</b>   | Deepen partnerships between non-profits, community agencies, and government organizations; bring small/medium businesses to the table; facilitate cross-sectoral working groups; ensure people with lived experience are represented, including in decision making roles; partner with healthcare organizations to better support service navigation; bolster partnerships with faith-based organizations; include those with common goals and different audiences |



Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.

| <b>Initiative</b><br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|--|--|
|  <b>Focus Area: Strong Partnerships</b> |  |
| <b>Identify backbone support to sustain coordination and collaboration (11)</b>  | Provide a shared calendar of activities across orgs; leverage AI to improve ease of access and updating  |
|  | Determine how to best facilitate cross-sectoral sharing of knowledge and resources (e.g., systems, staff, templates, communication platforms, etc.)                                      |
|  | Implement consistent ways to communicate with partners, including rotating group chairs and both synchronous and asynchronous communication methods; create a central hub to communicate |
|  | Advocate and co-apply for funding  |
| <b>Support the wellness of those doing the important work of welcoming communities (13)</b>                              | Develop strategies to support the wellness of those doing the important work of welcoming communities  |
| <b>Engage in collective advocacy (8)</b>   | Identify and act on opportunities for collective advocacy (e.g., through a shared advocacy calendar)   |
| <b>Identify a shared framework for collaboration among community partners (12)</b>                                       | Clarify each organizations' role in the bigger picture of welcoming communities and how we will move together to achieve our common goals  |
|  | Align organizational goals with our shared strategy  |
| <b>Increase opportunities to convene and collaborate (10)</b>  | Create more opportunities for partners to convene on specific topics and issues  |
|  | Make space and resources available for collaboration, relationship building, and partnerships  |

Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.

| <b>Initiative</b><br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)  | <b>Activity</b>   |
|--|---|
|  <b>Focus Area: Strong partnerships</b>   |   |
| <b>Raise awareness of services and supports among partners (5)</b>   | Support deeper awareness of supports, resources, services, and programs available through community partners, including among organizations who offer relevant services to different audiences.   |
|  | Through deepened understanding of partner supports, determine how to best integrate supports and reduce duplication of efforts where possible (e.g., develop a resource library)  |
|  | Identify and leverage where similar work is occurring outside the scope of newcomers and immigrants; embed activities for immigrants and newcomers within related work and vice versa   |
|  <b>Focus Area: Community Involvement</b> |   |
| <b>Bring diverse groups together in multi-cultural celebration (16)</b>  | Support public-facing, regular, multi-located, multi-cultural events in collaboration; work to ensure true welcoming during the events themselves   |
|  | Create shared performance/celebration spaces (annual community showcase)  |
|  | Support multi-faith spaces for knowledge sharing  |
| <b>Develop feedback mechanisms for newcomers and immigrants (6)</b>  | Create opportunities for feedback to ensure we are meeting the needs of our newcomers through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agencies and a platform to provide feedback</li> <li>- Outreach to hear stories for the purposes of communicating about a welcoming community</li> </ul> |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share the learnings with partners to understand and meet needs</li> </ul>  |


Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.

| <b>Initiative</b><br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|--|--|
|  <b>Focus Area: Community Involvement</b> |  |
| <b>Increase opportunities to convene and collaborate (10)</b>  | Develop a quick guide for newcomers to get involved in the community with opportunities for feedback embedded  |
|  | Support neighbourhood based activities such as neighbourhood tours for newcomers   |
|  | Develop tailored approaches to rural audiences, considering the depth of isolation   |
|  | Launch a micro-grant program for community-led initiatives (e.g., hobby clubs, conversation channels, informal referral networks, practical advice to navigate Canada, etc.) |
| <b>Creatively engage volunteers for low-barrier actions (17)</b>   | Create and expand a welcome package program with welcoming goods and community resources   |
|  | Create mentorship support (e.g., support circles and buddy systems) to pair newcomers with long-time residents for support and peer-to-peer support                          |
|  | Create a volunteer network for informal support (e.g., rides to appointments, donating clothing)   |
|  | Create volunteer opportunities for and by older adults   |
| <b>Engage community members in decision making roles (15)</b>  | Create a working group specific to community members   |

Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.

| <b>Initiative</b><br>(Prioritized Rank in brackets)  | <b>Activity</b>  |
|--|--|
|  <b>Focus Area: Data and Storytelling</b> |  |
| <b>Support community education in cultural competency (14)</b>   | Uplift community voices to reduce misconceptions and foster empathy  |
| <b>Explore coordination of shared data and indicators for evaluation (7)</b>   | Engage key informants on data coordination opportunities   |
|  | - Support creative storytelling to showcase the impact of individual and collective contributions in a safe environment                |
|  | - Develop shared measurement and evaluation practices to understand how organizations collectively contribute to welcoming communities |
| <b>Identify reporting mechanisms and supports for responding to hate-motivated incidents (4)</b>                           | Conduct a scan to learn from other organizations regarding reporting and responding to incidents of hate                               |
|  | - From the scan, determine the best local mechanism for reporting and responding to hate motivated incidents                           |
|  | - Develop training for allies to respond to and support witnessing hate motivated incidents  |
| <b>Support our understanding of the current context through data (9)</b>   | Develop creative methods to de-silo our understanding of our data (e.g., pair different social determinants data with workplace data)  |
|  | Develop a better understanding of what’s happening in the community through data and lived experiences                                 |

Note:

Activities with a “-” in front of them indicate the activity flows in sequence from the one above.



GUELPH | WELLINGTON

## Local Immigration Partnership

*Creating a caring, equitable community where everyone thrives.*



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