Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program

A Project of St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Center

Funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation

Evaluation Report

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Introduction
The Facilitating Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Project developed as a successor to an earlier initiative, the Facilitating Inclusion project. This pilot project was originally developed to train women in Hamilton of diverse cultural communities in group facilitation techniques to enable them to connect members of these cultural communities to local community planning processes. The Facilitating Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Project developed based on the success of this pilot and was designed to build on the capacities developed and extend the learning and experience of women in cultural communities of Hamilton.

The Facilitating Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Project was funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation through its Tackling Poverty Together Fund, to train a selected number of members of diverse and multi-cultural communities in facilitation, leadership and civic participation.

The St Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre acted as the sponsoring agency for the project and guided the development and implementation of the project with the support of an Advisory Committee comprised of resource people drawn from public and voluntary sector services engaged in public planning processes. St. Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Center also engaged the services and expertise of the Catalyst Center (Toronto) to develop a curriculum that would train the women in the facilitation techniques and eventually connect the participants to local planning processes in the community.

Evaluation Method
The project plan included a commitment to conducting an evaluation of the project at its conclusion. The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton was commissioned to detail a plan for evaluating the project and then charged with the task of implementing the plan. The methodology developed for conducting the evaluation had several components. Those were:

- gather and analyse project records including feedback and survey forms used to collect ongoing participant comments and assessments,
- conduct key informant interviews with Advisory Committee members
- conduct key informant interviews with project participants
- conduct a focus group session with project participants
- telephone survey of project participants that have not taken part in either an interview or focus group
- analyse and report findings and recommendations

Project Goals and Objectives
The goals of Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program as stated at the outset were: to build community, facilitate access and safeguard the right of racial, ethno-cultural and Aboriginal communities to participate in socio-
political economic spheres. The project proposed to work toward these goals by assisting a culturally diverse group of women to acquire skills and practical experience in the areas of group facilitation, leadership and community development.

The project defined a number of outcomes to be achieved. Those were to equip twenty women from ethno-cultural communities with leadership skills; facilitation skills and increased capacity to participate in community planning processes. The project also committed to the continued operation of an advisory committee that would oversee and guide the project development, recruit and place project participants, support curriculum development and broaden community participation in the program. The project plan called for the delivery of ten group facilitation training sessions for twenty women, and the development of several community projects that promote social change in Hamilton.

The project plan identified a number of indicators that would be used to measure the achievement of project outcomes. The indicators noted were:
- the number of community opportunities for facilitation and leadership skills,
- the number and impact of community projects completed
- the number of women who find employment connected with their enhanced skill set, and
- the number of women acting as members on Boards of Directors or project advisory committees.

**Description of project activity**

Twenty women were selected for the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement program. Over the course of the project four dropped out and one member died during the training period. A total of 15 women graduated after the six month period of training. The project participants were women from various backgrounds that had a wide variety of experiences. The women had formal and informal participatory and cross cultural skills, tools and techniques that they used in various settings and the various communities. Most, but not all had English as a second language. Most of them have put in many long hours of voluntary work in their communities and have brought in from their countries of origin a wealth of ideas on development.

The curriculum which was designed for the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program incorporated theory in the various skills that included leadership, community development practice, anti oppression, business networking, public relations and the media, facilitation, public speaking, proposal writing and funding.

The Advisory Committee was composed of seven members from various organisations. Its role was to guide implementation of the project through discussion, holding meetings, selecting participants and facilitators. Committee members also provided some facilitation training and were instrumental in the
planning and implementation of the program. The Advisory Committee was also responsible for the selection of any additional skills training facilitators. Most members of this committee were highly trained in their areas of specialisation. A vital component of the curriculum was the practicum. The participants were put in groups and had a community development project they participated in with the assistance of a leader from a non profit organisation. These community projects were run for a period of two months.

Program activity and results
The Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program was completed and the candidates graduated in December 2007. The six month program was conducted through class attendance at the St. Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Center (sjIWC) every Wednesday for the first four months and on one Saturday. Various facilitators gave lectures and involved the women in participatory workshops to instruct on basic tools, techniques and analytical skills necessary for the community development initiatives. The sjIWC provided child care facilities on their premises for the women who had children that needed care while they attended the classes. The community project component was vital to the training as it was a window for practice the skills and gave the participants the hands-on training that they needed. During the course of the project participants were divided into four groups and were put under the mentorship of a not for profit organisation which assisted in conducting different community projects. The four projects which provided the practicum to the training provided the women engaged in the project opportunities to implement the skills they had learned over the four months of classroom training. Below is a table describing the four community development projects that were integrated into the project.

### Breakdown of FI Participants

- Died, 1
- Drop out, 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>15</td>
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- Drop out
- Graduated
- Died
Pre-program Assessment and Post-program assessment Surveys
A brief survey was conducted at the commencement of the project to record a baseline measure of participant’s skill level prior to the training. All of the women entering the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement program responded to the survey. Most indicated that they had a good understanding of leadership in community development but did not know how they would design a community project. The survey results also indicated that they have a poor to moderate understanding of project funding dynamics including how to write project proposals or develop project budgets. Respondents also indicated that their knowledge of media and political process was poor to moderately good. Responses to questions about knowledge of community organizations, community assessments and skill at linking and networking in the community showed a wider range of abilities and confidence with ratings across the scale from very poor to very good.
After the program was completed in December another survey was conducted. Of the 15 women who completed the program, 10 participants returned the survey forms. The figures show a dramatic improvement in the participant’s self assessment of their understanding of facilitation processes and on skills that are necessary in conducting any community development project. (Survey responses are attached in the Appendix C)

Focus Group Meeting - Findings
A focus group meeting was conducted in January 2007 to engage participants in a discussion and reflection on the project and its perceived impact on their skill and abilities. Three project members participated in the focus group discussion. Focus group members were asked to review a set of discussion questions before engaging in the discussion on the program.

Telephone Calls interviews to individual Participants
Attempts were made to contact the remaining thirteen participants in the project by telephone to conduct a brief interview for evaluation purposes. Telephone interviews were carried out with ten of those who had registered or joined in the program. Respondents included project members who completed the project as well as those who had dropped out.
Most project participants interviewed by phone are either going to school or are in full employment during the day.

Key Informants Interviews
Five additional interviews were conducted with key informants who had served as members of the Advisory Committee guiding the development and implementation of the program. These interviews reflected on the achievement of the objectives of the program and resulting outcomes. Respondents reported that their observations of participants in the program indicated that participants had made gains in terms of increased confidence and had gained a sense of confidence and ability as effective community leaders. They did note that it was still too early to take accurate measure of success with increased participation in
community development based on the community projects experience. Key informants noted that dramatic changes in leadership in the short term based on participation in this project may not be realistic given the nature of community systems and that participants could still benefit more involvement in community development projects. It was suggested that project participants could benefit from being linked to community organisations over more extended period of time as “...they would learn more through mentoring as this would give them an opportunity to see how business is conducted”.

Analysis of findings
The majority of participants indicated that they acquired new knowledge and increased ability through participation in the leadership skills training program. The knowledge and skills gained as reported through interviews and discussion include:

- **An increased sense of confidence after the skills training program**
  The majority of participants said the program gave them a confidence that they did not have before. The composition of the group, diverse multi-cultural women, was an experience that the women felt gave them a comfort and a sense of togetherness. The women in this project noted that they may be different and have different backgrounds but their ambitions and desires were the same.

- **An increased knowledge of facilitation and how to handle such processes**
  The leadership and skills training program demystified facilitation processes. The project participants reported that they felt this training prepared them to initiate change in their communities and many other situations that require someone to take a leading role. This they attribute to the increased knowledge of new skills.

- **A better understanding of the dynamics of funding**
  Most participants have been involved in voluntary work with community projects. Some of the projects were funded but the women had no idea how the funding system worked in Canada. The module on funding was particularly valuable and informative.

- **An increased desire to get involved in community development projects**
  For project participants increased confidence almost always translated into an increased desire to participate. Nine of the fifteen graduates are now in formal employment. Some of the women were already in employment before they joined the training program but some have since found jobs. Most of them give credit to the leadership training program for the confidence to seek formal employment vigorously. Some of the women have gone back to school and some are hoping to get involved in community development work.

- **Anti Oppression**
  The anti oppression theme was central to the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program. Community projects touched on the issue of anti oppression particularly the community development project conducted by City of Hamilton’s Access and Equity department. The majority of participants
however felt that the subject did not get the attention it deserved. “The issue needs a closer look as it affects people from marginalised groups.” and “If we get the skills training we need and go out to face a world where we continue being looked at differently, we will not have made a difference”, said one of the participants. Other participants emphasized that the issue should be tackled on a broader scale. “When people think anti oppression they think racism. It should be looked at from all aspects that include gender, religion, racial, and language. We should discuss it so that we bring the commonalities that exist and then find ways of acceptance of the differences in a productive manner,” said another participant.

- Community Development projects
The participants viewed the community development projects that constituted part of the practice as a positive component. Half of those interviewed said the practicum gave them an opportunity to put the learned skills to use. Other participants suggested that if the projects are to be effective, participants should be put in various service organisations where they would be mentored for a period of time. This they said will give them adequate time to see what really happens in a work environment. Almost all participants said they benefitted from the groups they worked with.
One group however felt the organisation they dealt with did not seem to take the advice and suggestions they brought in seriously. They suggested that the selection of organisation should reflect a synergy with the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program and the not for profit making organisation.

- The program as a job search conduit
The Facilitation Inclusion and Leadership Enhancement Program was a skills training program to enhance the participants’ level of involvement in community development. It was an assumed result that the new skills will enable the group to secure jobs but it was not specified that participants will be connected to jobs. Some members of the group expressed disappointment as they realized there was no job guarantee after the training. Most participants were however clear on the issue. They joined the program because they wanted to improve themselves and indicated that if a job resulted from the training, it would have been an added bonus

- Accreditation of the Facilitation Inclusion Leadership Enhancement Program
A suggestion was also made that the program be accredited. Efforts to make the curriculum recognised by an academic body should be made. This, they said will make the program more reputable and more versatile.
“McMaster has a similar program which involves skills in leadership and community development. This is similar to the program we attended which was also conducted in a highly professional manner” said one graduate from the program.

- The future of the institute
The majority of participants indicated a desire to have the program continue with more on hands training and with linkages to other non-profit
organisations. Most of the women also have made strides in encouraging their friends and other members of their communities to participate in the leadership skills training.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on a review of the project's success to date and the input of those consulted in reflecting on experience with the project to date.

1. That funding be sought for the next phase of the FILEP program. There is great enthusiasm from the participants and the continuation of the program will help to define improvements in the program design.

2. That the number of partners be increased for the next phase. The partners include other non-profit organizations able to assist with functional skills including administration, finance and accounting practices, seeking out new project or business opportunities and day to day program management. The partners could also assist in providing mentoring.

3. That project partners and sponsors explore ways in which the program could be accredited through a local post-secondary education institution.

4. That another group of trainees be recruited and started in phase one of the program to continue with the momentum created through work to date.

5. That some initiative be taken to use this project as a resource to deliver anti-oppression training programs in voluntary and public sector organizations in Hamilton.

**Conclusions**

The results of this evaluation indicate that the project was successful in making progress toward the goals of building community, facilitating access of ethnocultural and Aboriginal communities to participation in socio-political economic spheres of community activity. The project also achieved its principle targets for outcomes by recruiting a diverse group of women into a program of instruction and skill development that developed leadership, engaged them in community projects and improved their employment status to some extent. The group reported being positively effected by participation in this six month program. Almost all the participants indicated that they felt charged by the experience both during and after the training. They described this opportunity to share ideas with other women of culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences as encouraging to them. The new skills they learned were described as “eye openers” and this increased their sense of self-confidence. The value of these perceptions cannot be precisely quantified but should not be undervalued in a community such as Hamilton’s with an increasingly diverse population and increasingly dependent on newcomers to the community for growth and prosperity for the city over the long term.
The community projects that participants were involved in also gave them a valued hands-on chance to use the various skills that are important to service delivery processes. Participants and the community project leaders alike made particular note of the value of the practicum experience to the point of suggesting that more of this is needed in any future iteration of the project. The two months spent in a non-profit organization was only a brief introduction to the workings of community services and more experience of this kind is needed for the participants to be fully conversant with the business side of the projects.

Plans are under development to move graduates of the program into a venture that would see the development of a cooperative business enabling women from the program to continue work in their skill areas through a new an independent self-sustaining business. A good number of participants have expressed desire to pursue the prospect of creating that cooperative. Conditions exist which suggest such a venture may prove successful. The growing nature of the diversity in Hamilton will require many community service providers to implement anti-oppression training programs. Graduates of this program would be well suited to providing such workplace training. With continued support through the start phase of forming such a community cooperative venture new skills and services could be better provided to organizations, businesses and public institutions in our community.
Appendix A
Advisory Committee Members

Advisory Committee

- Maxine Carter  Access and Equity Office, City of Hamilton
- Denise Doyle  Community Member
- Madhavi Reddy  Hamilton Housing Help Centre
- Marg Kowalski  Senior Program Officer, Department of Canadian Heritage
- Jennie Vengris  Social Planning and Research Council
- Raimonda Gorisht  Facilitating Inclusion Representative
- Fatima Homid  Facilitating Inclusion Representative

Program Coordinator:
- Jennifer Aggus,  St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre

Ongoing Consultant
- Ines Rios  St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre

Ongoing Observer
- Christine Mackenzie  Catalyst Centre for Popular Education and Research

Corresponding Member
- Suzanne Skinner
Appendix B
Practicum projects

The Factory: A Media Arts Centre (2 participants)
- This was a promotional project to assist non-profit organizations maximize their promotional efforts by providing a competitive documentation and promotional support. The Factory project invited non-profit organizations to attend an exhibition they held. The participants also assisted in making a short film that was used at the meeting. They networked with the 60 members that attended the exhibition. The report written by the Director of The Factory indicated that the participants were fully involved in the whole program and showed knowledge of how to conduct meetings and showed great eagerness to learn.

Equity and Access-The City of Hamilton (4 participants)
- The City of Hamilton Access and Equity conducted this project in its effort to initiate a training program for its staff. The program was to provide a culturally competent and inclusive service to Hamilton’s diverse community. This was a stepping stone in putting into practice Hamilton’s Race Relations Policy. The participants were involved in a number of focus group meetings. This project was not fully completed but contributed to the final implementation of the City of Hamilton’s Race Relations Policy.

Wellwood Resource Centre (4 participants)
- The Wellwood Resource Centre provides information and services to people living with cancer in a community that is multi-cultural. The participants assisted the Centre with the development and dissemination of user friendly and inclusive information. They recommended that information pamphlets and brochures also be translated into additional languages that reflect the community members who are the beneficiaries of the service. Hindu and Arabic languages were seen as a priority for translation. The group also advised that the Board of Directors approve the budget items for development of brochures in various languages and also for the hiring of a translator for the centre as some of the community members who frequent the Centre fail to benefit from the Centre because of the language barrier.

St Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre – Power Camp Plan (4 participants)
- The objective of this group was to identify communities in which young immigrant and refugee women and their daughters would be interested in and benefit from leadership and confidence building programs. The group developed a proposal for funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation for a new curriculum and training program. Project participants were involved in focus group meetings with a selected group of mothers and young immigrant women. The project is incomplete pending renewed funding for St Joseph’s Immigrant Women’s Centre.