

## Resource Sheet #: Compare and Contrast Case Study

Two organizations have responded to the same funding call. They would both like to offer a series of civic engagement workshops on why and how to vote in the upcoming municipal election.

Read the two sets of project objectives and description. Consider which one you would be more likely to fund and why. Look for strengths and areas for improvement in each example.

### Scenario 1: Neighbourhood Community Health Centre

**Project name:** *Vote TO*

**Project description:**

The Neighbourhood Community Health Centre's *Vote TO* project will increase awareness of the importance of voting in municipal elections as a form of civic engagement among 30 newcomers over a six-month period from January to June 2024. This free educational program will be held one day a week for four weeks on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. for one cohort and on Saturdays from 1:00 to 4:30 for the second cohort. The sessions will take place between late April and early June, leading up to the municipal election in the third week of June. The project will be promoted at Neighbourhood Community Health Centre, as well as in local apartment buildings and places of worship.

Neighbourhood Community Health Centre is a health and social-service organization offering a variety of programs and services to the local community. Our catchment area covers from Victoria Park on the west to Midland Avenue on the east, and from the lake to the south to Eglinton Avenue to the north. It is home to a large newcomer population, primarily from India, Sri Lanka and China.

According to City of Toronto data, there is a high number of newcomers who have become Canadian citizens and are eligible to vote. Voter turnout in Toronto municipal elections is generally low. A 2014 study funded by Maytree, "Who Votes in Toronto Municipal Elections?" found a strong correlation between an area's proportion of immigrants and poor voter turnout. Our own anecdotal evidence tells us that newcomer communities harbour numerous misconceptions about civic engagement overall, and voting in particular.

Our existing Program Manager, Selvy Selvanayagam, will coordinate and oversee the project, which will be developed and implemented by a full-time contract staff recruited once funding has been approved. Between January and the end of February this person will conduct a series of consultations in the community to uncover what deters eligible newcomers from registering to vote and from voting. These findings will inform the development of the curriculum. The contract staff person will also research current learning material that we could adapt, with permission, to the needs of newcomers learners who likely do not have English as a first language. An example of existing source material is the education

resources developed by the City of Toronto and posted on their website for at-home instruction on city government elections. Adaptations for delivery to adult ESL learners would include a focus on vocabulary, more background on the political context and some translation, as funds permit.

Learning content will include eligibility, required identification, ballots, advance polls, what happens on election day and mock candidate debates. There will be time for participants to compare local practices to what took place in their home countries. At the end of each session, participants will be asked to complete a brief feedback form. In addition, we will administer a simple “pre” and “post” questionnaire to measure changes in knowledge and understanding.

**Project objectives:**

This project aims to

- Increase participants’ understanding of municipal elections
- Develop greater self-confidence in participants’ ability to navigate a municipal election
- Generate, or enhance, interest in municipal elections

## Scenario 2: New Canadians Community Centre

**Project name:** *Get out the vote!*

**Project description:**

Our nonprofit centre, New Canadians Community Centre, serves new immigrants and refugees in the Agincourt North and South neighbourhoods of Scarborough. We would like to start a new program called *Get out the vote!* for eligible newcomers of voting age and young people who will be eligible to vote in the next municipal election. We hope that with funding we will be able to deliver three, 2-part sessions (in April, May and June) and reach up to 30 newcomers and youth.

Please see our Project Objectives below.

With funding, we will be able to hire a part-time program coordinator, as well as a part-time facilitator who is knowledgeable about civic engagement. They will be working together to design and deliver the program.

We plan to run the three sessions in this way: part 1 for 2 hours one week and part 2 for two hours the following week, on a weeknight in the early evening from 6:00 to 8:00. One session will be in April, one in May and one in June. We will offer a light meal and childcare so that parents can attend. Registration would be free. We plan to promote the program to community members who are landed immigrants or citizens, and therefore eligible to vote in municipal elections. We also plan to promote the program in two local high schools where we would like to establish a connection. We will invite local politicians to the second part.

**Project Objectives:**

This project aims to encourage eligible newcomers to vote in municipal elections by helping them understand the process and how they can make a difference in their community. Participants will learn about how to register to vote and what happens on voting day. They will discuss some of the issues of the day that voters think about when they make their decision about who to vote for.