



Wellness Through Community Connections in Greater Victoria

Engaging Newcomers via Physical Activity

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2024/2025



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1.0 VISION

Our vision is to improve social connection opportunities for Newcomers to Greater Victoria through sport and physical activity programming, resulting in an increased sense of belonging and community engagement, and optimized health and wellness.



2.0 BACKGROUND

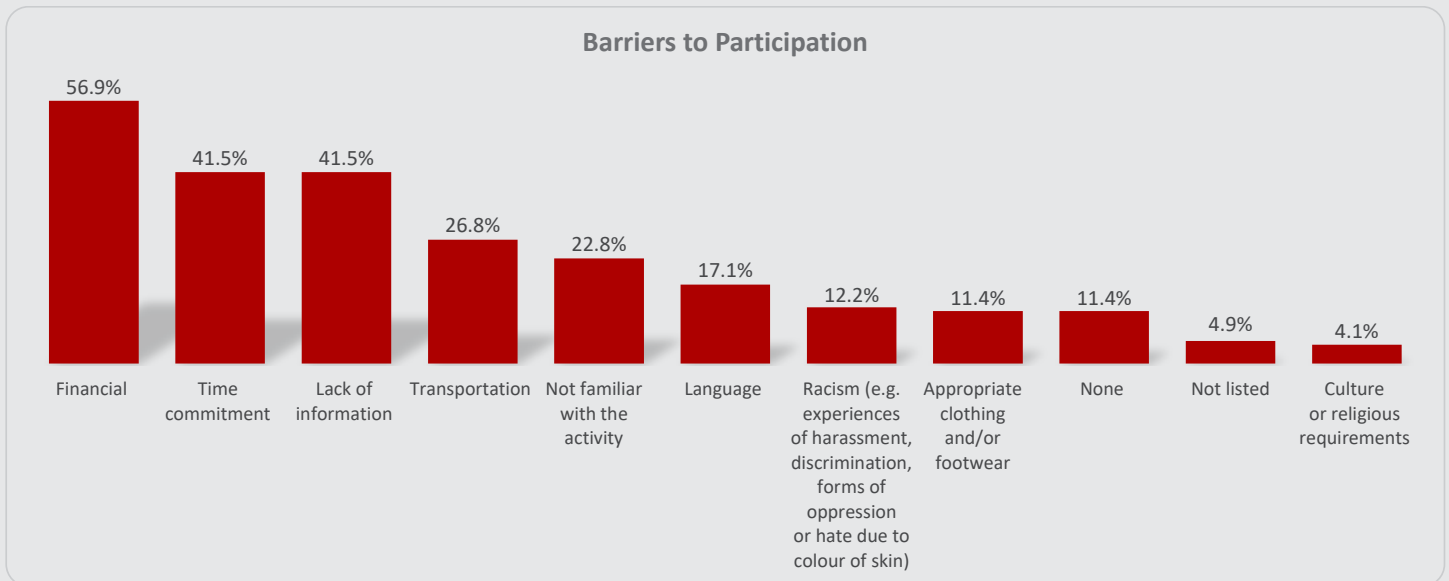
In 2022, Sport for Life conducted a needs assessment report for the City of Victoria to identify the top barriers to sport and physical activity for Newcomers to Greater Victoria. Some of those key findings are as follows:

Barriers to Participation:

“Do you have any barriers preventing you from participating in activities? Please select as many barriers as you experience:”

56.9%
Financial Barrier

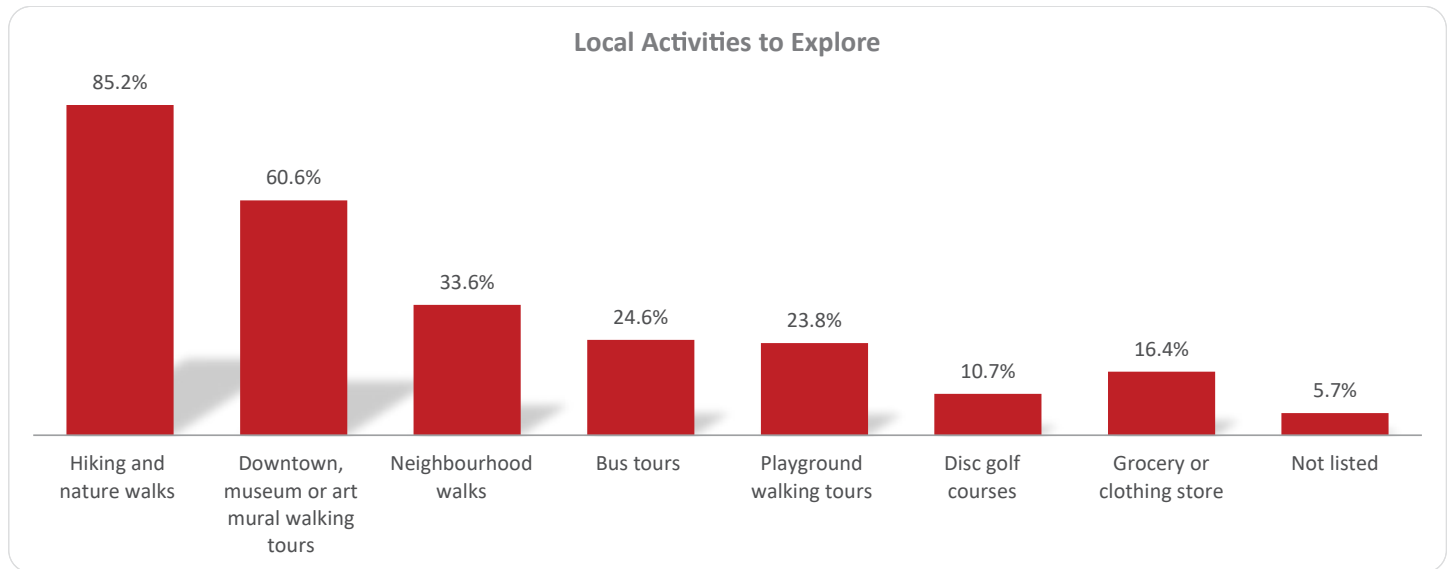
Financial is the biggest barrier (56.9%) followed by time commitment (41.5%) and lack of information (41.5%).



Local Activities to Explore:

“What local activities locally do you want to explore? Please select your top three choices:”

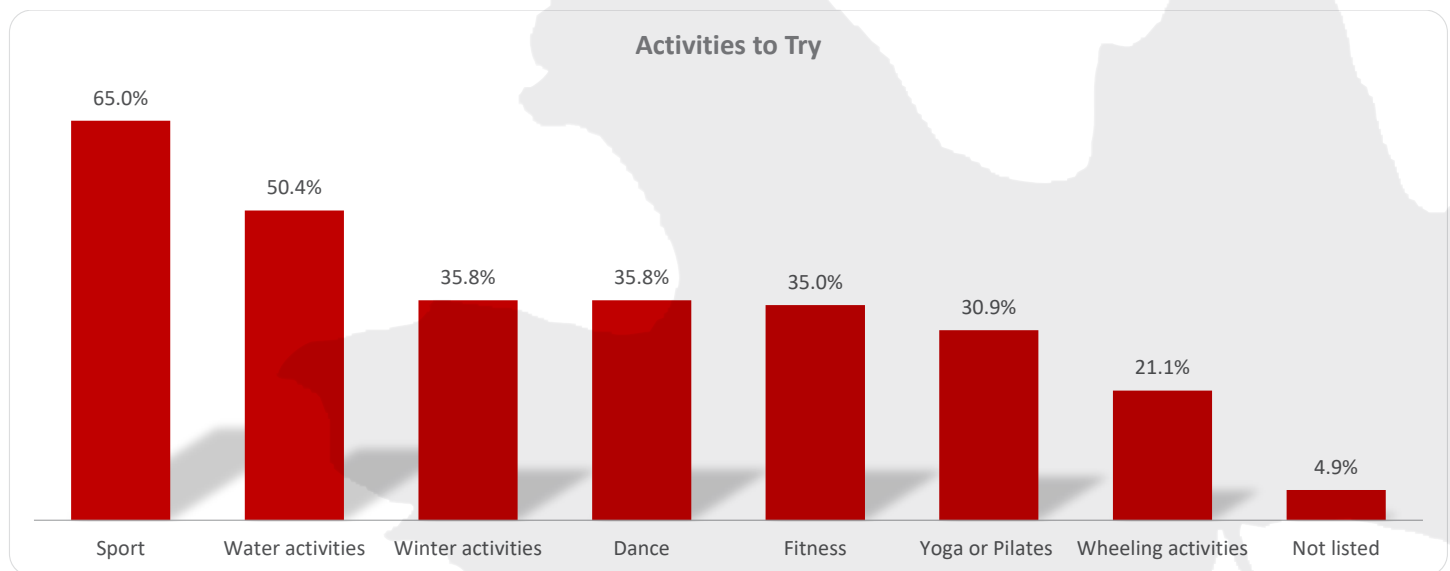
Top activity was **hiking** (85%) and **various walking activities** (downtown, neighbourhood, art and playground).



Activities to Try:

“What physical activities do you want to try? Please select your top three choices:”

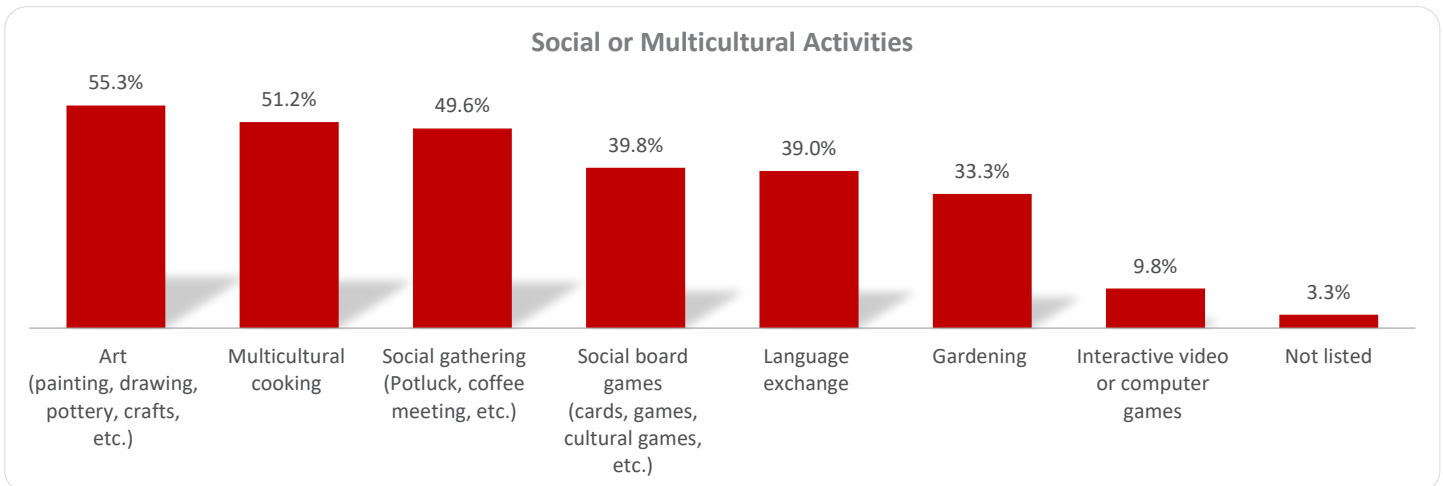
Most popular choices for physical activities to try were **sport** (65%) and **water activities** (50.4%), followed by **winter activities** (35.8%), **dance** (35.8%) and **fitness** (35%).



Social or Multicultural Activities:

“What social or multicultural activities do you want to try? Please select your top three choices:”

Newcomers often focus on employment, housing, health care, education, food and nutrition, which do not provide a connection to the community they have arrived to. Social and multicultural physical activities, both structured and unstructured, **provide the opportunity to connect** with said community and **understand the culture**.



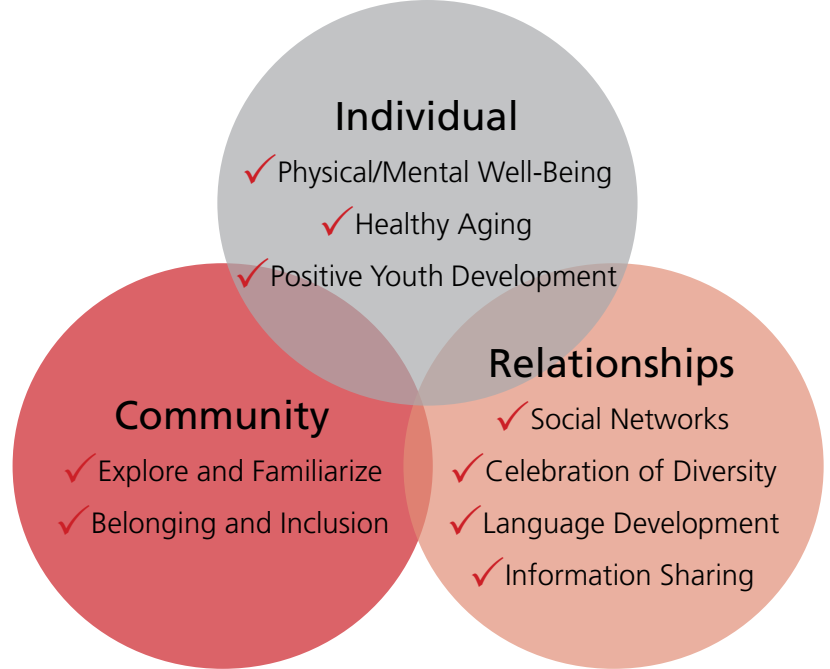
Based on the findings of that report, a partnership was formed with the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria to create a Strategic Action Plan, including an Evaluation Framework and community consultations. In June 2023, funding from the Victoria Foundation Community Grant 2023 – Systems Change stream was successfully secured to:

- Identify Stakeholders of the Greater Victoria Community who serve or support Newcomers.
- Host focus groups with leaders from sectors that intersect with Newcomers’ journey.
- Create a Strategic Action Plan based on the findings of the focused groups.
- Create a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
- Identify Newcomer mentors to engage with families in the Greater Victoria communities.



Our Belief

We believe engaging Newcomers to Greater Victoria through sport and physical activity yields numerous benefits. Our community has identified the following categories of benefits and articulated them in this chart, which will guide our mission.



Individual	1. Improving Physical and Mental Well-being: We believe in the transformative power of activity to enhance both physical and mental health outcomes.
	2. Creating Spaces for Stress Relief and Relaxation: We understand the significance of spaces where individuals can unwind, de-stress, and dissipate worries.
	3. Promoting Healthy Aging: We believe in the importance of lifelong physical activity participation to encourage healthy aging. As individuals age, they can maintain their mobility, independence, and overall quality of life.
	4. Promoting Youth Development: We recognize the importance of providing youth with positive free time outlets and reducing the risk of negative behaviours in the long run.

Relationships	1. Building Social Networks and Community: We recognize the importance of fostering connections and friendships within our community. By providing opportunities for parents to connect while their children participate in activities, we aim to build strong social networks and a sense of community belonging.
	2. Cultural Exchange and Diversity: We celebrate cultural diversity and believe in the power of sports to facilitate meaningful interactions and friendships among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants can connect with others from their cultures and beyond, fostering understanding and empathy.
	3. Facilitating Language Development and Integration: We recognize the role of sports in facilitating language development and integration for newcomers. Through participation, people have opportunities to practice English, build social networks, and integrate into their new community.
	4. Sharing Information and Resources: We are committed to providing comprehensive information to Newcomers on available sports and recreational opportunities in Greater Victoria. By sharing knowledge about local activities and resources, individuals can make informed decisions and actively participate in community life.

Community	1. Encouraging Exploration and Familiarity with the Community: We believe that physical activity and sports engagement can help Newcomers become more familiar and comfortable with their surroundings. By exploring different areas and facilities in Greater Victoria, individuals can gain confidence and a sense of belonging in their new environment.
	2. Fostering Belonging and Inclusion: We strive to create environments where everyone feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. By promoting social inclusion, cohesion, and well-being, we aim to strengthen the fabric of our community and ensure that Newcomers feel welcomed and valued.



3.0 WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Creating welcoming and inclusive environments for Newcomers to Greater Victoria involves a multifaceted approach addressing various barriers to participation. Our overarching goal is to foster a sense of belonging and community engagement among Newcomers while promoting their health and well-being. To achieve this goal, we aim to develop programs and initiatives that are culturally sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs of Newcomers. These involve considering factors such as language, cultural preferences, and accessibility requirements to ensure that everyone feels included and can participate fully. We also recognize the importance of creating opportunities for mentorship and support and providing resources and information in multiple languages to facilitate engagement.

In addition to program efforts, we strive to create physical environments that are welcoming and accessible to Newcomers. It includes ensuring that recreation and activity centers are equipped to accommodate diverse needs and minimizing or eliminating barriers to participation, such as financial constraints or transportation challenges, wherever possible. We recognize the importance of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, feel valued, respected, and supported in their participation in sport and physical activity.



4.0 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The top barriers to participation for Newcomers to Greater Victoria include financial constraints, time commitments, lack of information, transportation challenges, and unfamiliarity with available sports and physical activities. These barriers can prevent Newcomers from accessing sports and physical activities, and limit their opportunities for social connection, health, and well-being.

Dismantling Barriers

These specific actions will give us a clear roadmap to overcome and dismantle barriers.

Financial Support	Promote advocate for financial support programs
Information Accessibility	Implement a multi-prong strategy for communication
Address Racism	Definitively combat racism and discrimination
Policy and Strategy	Enhance inclusivity through new and/or improved policies
Community Engagement	Focused engagement to build trust
Time Commitment	Implement flexibility into scheduling and volunteer commitments
Miscellaneous	Uncategorized but significant ideas



A. Financial Support and Accessibility

• Promote Existing Programs

- Partner with Newcomer agencies, local schools, and community centers to actively promote existing financial support programs like KidSport, Jumpstart, Athletics 4 Kids, Greater Victoria Regional LIFE program, and Sport Assist Langford.
- Partner in broader community development initiatives with national and provincial sports organizations, I-SPARC (Indigenous, Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council), United Way of BC, and BC Ministry of Health.

• Provide Complimentary Access

- Collaborate with recreation centers and sports organizations to offer complimentary family passes for recreation activities. Increase unlimited access to two years before re-applying for family leisure access.
- Promote the ability for sport organizations to reduce or waive fees if families are ineligible for other streams of financial support. Or implement a fee-by-donation policy.
- Encourage local sport organizations to implement a “try it before you buy it” initiative or a free trial period.
- Host events in public venues for increased exposure.

• Advocate for Flexible Thresholds

- Lobby sports organizations and funding bodies to adjust financial assistance thresholds including cost of living, family size, and housing expenses.
- Advocate for change in tax breaks for being involved in sport.

• Seek Equipment Assistance

- Establish partnerships with organizations that provide equipment assistance (e.g., Calgary Flames Sports Bank, Rec 4 Kids in Surrey) and promote these resources to families in need.
- Organizations can apply directly to Jumpstart for equipment, and local managers of Canadian Tire can offer discounts.
- Establish opportunities to reuse gently used equipment.

• Transportation

- Implement a free ride on public transportation if wearing a jersey.

B. Information Accessibility

- **Host Workshops and Info Sessions**

- Organize community workshops and information sessions where families can learn about available sports programs, registration processes, time commitments and financial assistance options.

- **Multilingual Materials**

- Translate registration forms, program flyers, and informational materials into multiple languages commonly spoken by Newcomer communities. Include information on the benefits of physical activity, including improved academic performance.

- **Clarity in Registration**

- Provide step-by-step guides and FAQs in plain language to assist families in navigating the registration process for sports programs.

- **Utilize Multiple Communication Channels**

- Employ a variety of communication channels (e.g., social media, community newsletters, and word-of-mouth referrals) to reach and engage Newcomer families. Social media could include cultural-specific channels such as WeChat.
- Ensure information is hosted on your website and available through a Google search.

C. Address Racism and Discrimination

- **Implement Anti-Racism Training**

- Collaborate with community organizations and anti-racism advocates to develop and implement anti-racism training programs for sports coaches, administrators, and volunteers.

- **Foster Cultural Competence**

- Offer cultural competency workshops and resources to sports organizations to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds and fight racism and discrimination.

- **Expand EDI Policies**

- Review and update equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies to explicitly address racism, discrimination, and harassment within sports organizations. Establish a committee or join regional initiatives. Engage cultural associations and people with lived experience to inform policy.

D. Policies and Strategies

- **Review and Revise Policies**

- Convene relevant agencies, define the collaboration purpose, identify opportunities, gather and share information, meaningfully include people with lived experience and equity-deserving groups, create space for relationship building, and schedule opportunities to review and update policies regularly.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies within sports organizations to identify and eliminate barriers to participation for Newcomer families. viaSport for club policies, schools for education settings, municipalities for public facilities and spaces, provincial and federal sports associations.

- **Develop New Inclusive Policies**

- Draft and implement new policies that prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity, including policies related to financial assistance, program scheduling, and anti-racism initiatives.
- Increase diversity in board, management, and operations teams within an organization. The 50/30 challenge for diversity advantage and improved equity was discussed. Toolkits for implementation are available.
- Implement zero-tolerance policies and support applications by local sport organizations. Ensure that these are reviewed by both the community and the lawyer. Ensure these policies are visible on websites so they can be shared in the process for adjudication.
- Create resource guides and toolkits to assist sports organizations in adapting their programs to be culturally inclusive and welcoming to Newcomer families.

- **Provide Ongoing Education and Training**

- Organize regular training sessions and workshops for sports administrators, coaches, and volunteers on topics such as cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and conflict resolution.
- Work with national and provincial sports organizations to integrate cultural competency training into coach certification programs and ongoing professional development opportunities. Ensure CAC/NCCP requires anti-racism training and mentorship in a community of practice.
- Create a network or buddy system to share and develop organizational policies.
- Conduct an environmental scan for the training program. The unlearning club with the Ministry of Health was a program-identified (Racism, not racist). Understand the cancel culture approach within zero-tolerance and support learning/growth. A top-down approach included guidance from Sport Canada, the Ministry of Sport, and the Ministry of Heritage.

E. Community Engagement and Awareness

- **Targeted Collaboration, Outreach and Partnerships**

- Forge partnerships with settlement agencies, cultural associations, local schools, and community centers to organize sports events, workshops, and outreach activities for Newcomers.
- Schools are the most accessible location for families.

- **Establish Mentorship Programs**

- Develop mentorship or buddy programs where experienced community members or volunteers can guide and support Newcomers navigating sports programs and resources.
- Build trust and rapport with Newcomer families through genuine connections, personal outreach, and ongoing support from community leaders and volunteers.
- Identify community champions with lived experience who understand cultural contexts and support their training and leadership.

- **Community Resources**

- Health, housing, and food security resources are available, and associations have established the ability to refer them.

F. Time Commitment

- **Varied Scheduling**
 - Encourage local sport organizations to diversify their program schedules, including offering weekend and evening sessions to accommodate diverse family schedules. Survey groups to better understand situations that constrain times for sport and recreation.
 - Have drop-in opportunities and partner with a school for co-curricular experiences.
- **Address Volunteer Requirements**
 - Work with sport organizations to re-evaluate volunteer requirements and consider alternative options, such as volunteer waivers or reduced volunteer hours for Newcomer families.

G. Miscellaneous

- **Location**
 - Address challenges of navigating multiple locations for practices, games and events.
- **Registration**
 - Continuous intake or ongoing opportunities to register or participate.
- **Family**
 - Establish family and/or all-ages programming.
- **Potential Touchpoints**
 - International students at local colleges and universities
 - Faith-based, cultural organizations, band offices, employment services, festivals, or holiday events
 - Key people or staff to pass along information

By implementing these strategies, we aim to dismantle barriers and create welcoming and inclusive environments where Newcomers to Greater Victoria can access sports and physical activities. This leads to improved social connections, health, and well-being within our community.





5.0 EVALUATION

Sport for Life has partnered with the University of Victoria (UVic) to evaluate program components.



Sport for Life and UVic have secured funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to support this evaluation. The following provides an overview of the evaluation plan that we have established:

Why: Canada has a growing Newcomer population, with federal immigration targets for 2023-2025 of 1.5 million Newcomers joining our country over this period. For people who are new to Canada, there are increased barriers to accessing services, employment, and health. Feeling like they belong and are included in their new home may reduce some of these barriers for Newcomers. Sport and physical activity may provide an avenue for Newcomers to feel like they belong and that they are included in Canadian society.

Purpose: This project aims to improve social connection opportunities for Newcomers to Greater Victoria through sport and physical activity programming, so that they feel more like they belong, are engaged in their community, and have better health and wellness.

How: Sport for Life has developed the Wellness through Community Connections program.

How do we evaluate? We will evaluate the outcomes of Wellness through Community Connections Program at three levels: program delivery agents, program mentors, and program participants, considering the impact each participant has on the success of the levels they support (see Figure 1).

At the **Program Delivery Agent level**, we wish to determine the successes and challenges faced when supporting and programming the Wellness through Community Connections Program. We will conduct focus groups with program delivery agents to gain feedback on their experiences with the program.

At the **Program Mentor Level**, we wish to learn about mentors' successes and challenges in participating in and delivering mentorship activities. We also wish to know the personal and professional successes mentors may experience following participating in the program (e.g., employment opportunities, social connections with other program mentors, greater engagement with their community). We will conduct focus groups with program mentors to allow for open-ended conversations about their experience as mentors for Wellness through Community Connections.

At the **Program Participant Level**, we wish to understand the impact of participating in Wellness through Community Connections on participants' sense of belonging, social connectedness, well-being, and physical activity engagement. We will use community-informed questionnaires (see Figure 2) to ask questions on these topics before and following program participation. We will follow up with program participants in focus groups to better understand how the program supported their connection to the community.

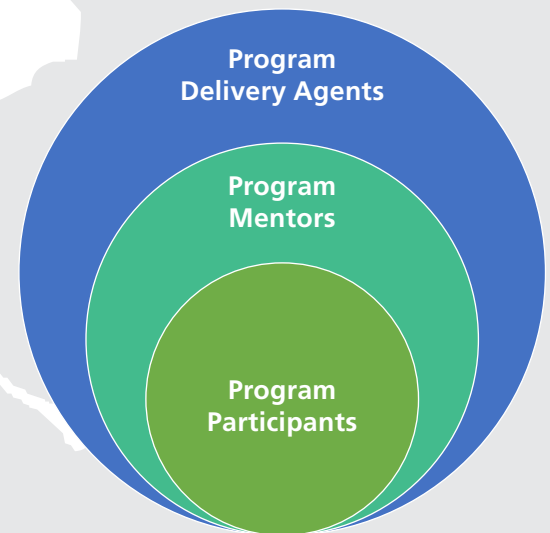


Figure 1: Nested relationships between levels of feedback

Developing Questionnaires: We will use a multi-step process to develop questionnaires to understand program participant experiences (see Figure 2). First, we connected with Sport for Life and the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA), who highlighted that existing questionnaires need to be connected to the Newcomers' experience. We had discussions within our three organizations to develop relevant themes (belonging, social connectedness, well-being, physical activity engagement) from existing questionnaires and to refine and adapt current questionnaires. We will then engage with experienced Newcomers (those living in Canada for more than 5-7 years) to review the questions we have developed based on the feedback from Sport for Life and ICA. These experienced Newcomers will provide feedback on the questions and question-wording and suggest new questions. Finally, Sport for Life, the ICA, and UVic will work together to edit, refine, and finalize the questions to capture feedback provided by experienced Newcomers.

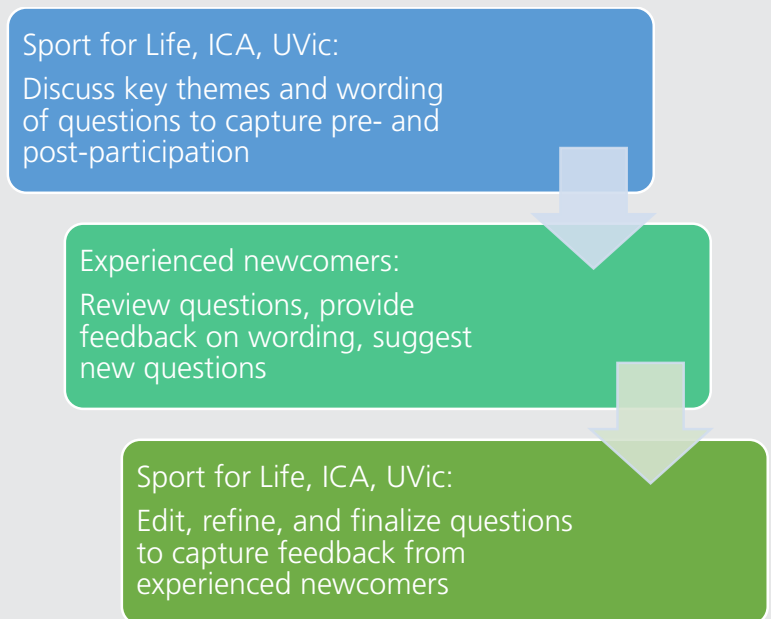


Figure 2: Development Process

Anticipated Outcomes: The findings from this project will have a direct and immediate community impact as all results will be fed into revisions of the Wellness through Community Connections Program. We will share results with relevant groups and at community meetings and summits. We will also work with Sport for Life to develop government-agency-specific presentations for policy reform in relevant provincial and federal branches to ensure ongoing support for programs that support Newcomers' sense of belonging, community engagement, and social support.



6.0 NEXT STEPS

- Test the Evaluation questionnaire(s).
- Share the Strategic Action Plan with the Community Stakeholders.
- Build the capacity of the Newcomer Mentors via training and employ them to engage the Community.
- Foster Community buy-in by building awareness and providing training opportunities to Organizations so they can better welcome Newcomers.
- Community engagement by the Newcomer mentors is used to match families to their physical activity best fit.



7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Victoria Foundation provides funding through the [Community Grants Program 2023](#).

We appreciate many persons and organizations across Greater Victoria doing amazing work with Newcomers. This Strategic Action Plan specifically thanks the following persons and organizations for their contributions:

- [Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria](#)
- [City of Victoria](#)
- [Kidsport Greater Victoria](#)
- [I-SPARC](#) (Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council)
- [Pacific Institute of Sport Education](#) (PISE)
- [Aboriginal Sport Circle](#) (ASC)
- [Ismaili Youth Soccer Academy](#) (IYSA)
- [Winnipeg Newcomer Sport Academy](#) (WNSA)
- The BC Muslim Association – [Victoria Branch](#)
- University of Victoria – [School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education](#)
- [Westshore Parks & Recreation](#)
- [BC Alliance for Healthy Living](#)
- [The Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission](#)
- [Rep Here In Canada](#)
- [LeRelais Francophone BC](#)

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8.0 REFERENCES

- [Sport for Life for Every New to Canada Participant 2.0](#)
- [Successful Aging among Immigrant and Canadian-Born Older Adults: Findings from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging \(CLSA\)](#)
- [Social determinants of health and health inequalities](#)
- [UNHCR’s Sport for Protection Toolkit](#)
- [Overview Video: 2024 Sport for Life Summit](#)



9.0 APPENDIX

[Project Video: Wellness Through Community](#)

Community Scan – Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Community: Greater Victoria, B.C
Population: 388,470
Approximate number of New to Canada Participants: 18% (73,345)
Approximate number of New to Canada Youth Participants: 47% (34,000)



 **Sport for Life**

 **Physical Literacy
for Life**

 **Inter-Cultural
Association
of Greater Victoria**