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# BRIDGES 2024

**Toronto East Quadrant  
Local Immigration  
Partnership  
April 2024**



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## Introduction

The **BRIDGES Collaboration and Partnership Forum** provides a venue for service providers from across the GTA to discuss innovative strategies and ideas to support newcomers through a time of unprecedented socioeconomic challenges and uncertainty. The forum includes diverse speakers, thought leaders and trailblazing thinkers who share new approaches to designing, delivering and developing partnerships to meet emerging needs in the settlement sector.



## BRIDGES 2024

BRIDGES 2024 was held on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the Centennial College Event Centre. This year's theme was "Innovating Service Design, Delivery and Partnerships in a Challenging Economic Landscape". Over 170 people joined the event workshops in-person, while 30 others joined virtually. The event saw participation from 75 different organizations.

## EVENT OVERVIEW

### Morning Session

The event began with a morning panel discussion. This segment offered insightful perspectives on adapting services to meet the evolving needs of communities, especially in the context of technology and non-traditional partnership models. The moderator and speakers for this session included Julia Gonsalves (Executive Director, Warden Woods), Rodel Ramos (Program Manager, Community Partnerships, York Region),

Tasleem Thawar (Director, Strategic Initiatives, United Way Greater Toronto), Eddie Jjumba (Senior Pastor, Milliken Church), Marco Campana (Communications and Digital Strategy Consultant).

### Afternoon Sessions

In the afternoon, participants were presented with the opportunity to engage in four simultaneous workshops, each delving into pertinent topics within the sector. These included:

- The intersection between housing and refugee needs through non-traditional partnerships
- Support for international students through cross-sector collaborations
- Addressing newcomer challenges through innovative partnerships
- Settlement and technology, focusing on best practices for serving newcomers facing specific barriers.

*“A great  
networking  
opportunity!  
An eye-  
opener to  
relevant  
newcomer  
issues.”*



## EVALUATION RESULTS

After the event, an evaluation survey was distributed to attendees, collecting data between February 7th and February 11th, 2024, garnering 100 responses.

The survey aimed to gauge the following:



### SATISFACTION

with event organization and content



### EFFECTIVENESS

in networking and professional development

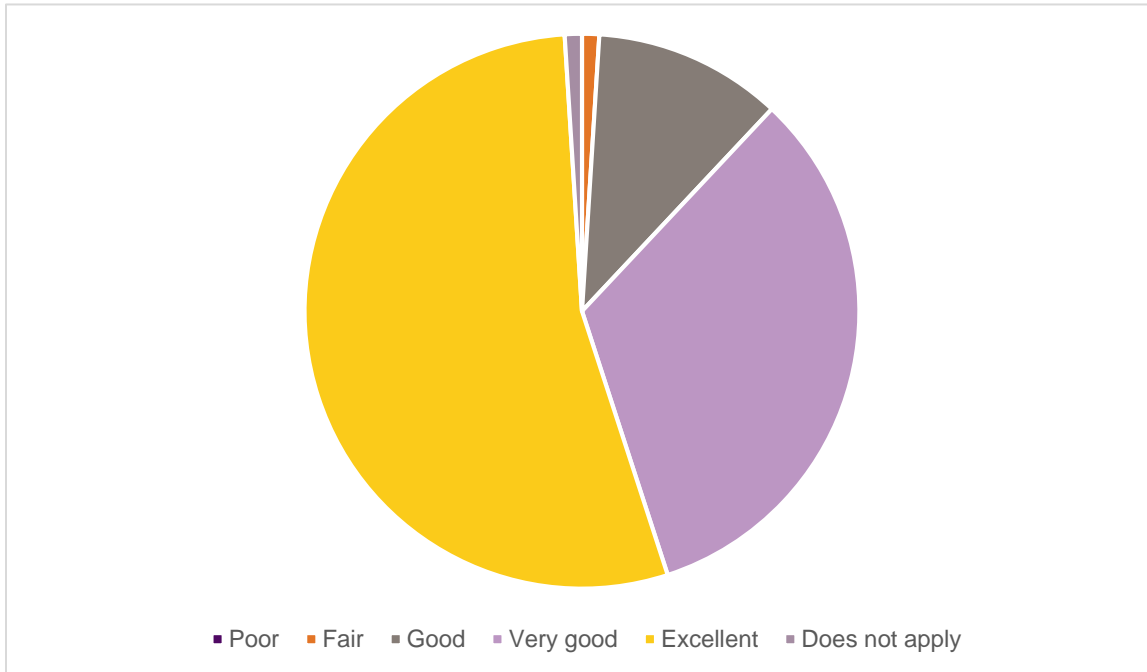


### SUGGESTIONS

for future topics and event enhancements

## 1. SATISFACTION WITH EVENT ORGANIZATION & CONTENT

- When event attendees were asked how satisfied they were with overall organization of the event, 11% of respondents answered *good*, 33% answered *very good*, and 54% answered *excellent*.
- Overall forum content was rated *good* by 14%, *very good* by 37%, and *excellent* by 41% of respondents.



**Figure 1: How satisfied are you with the overall organization of the event?**

## 2. EFFECTIVENESS IN NETWORKING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

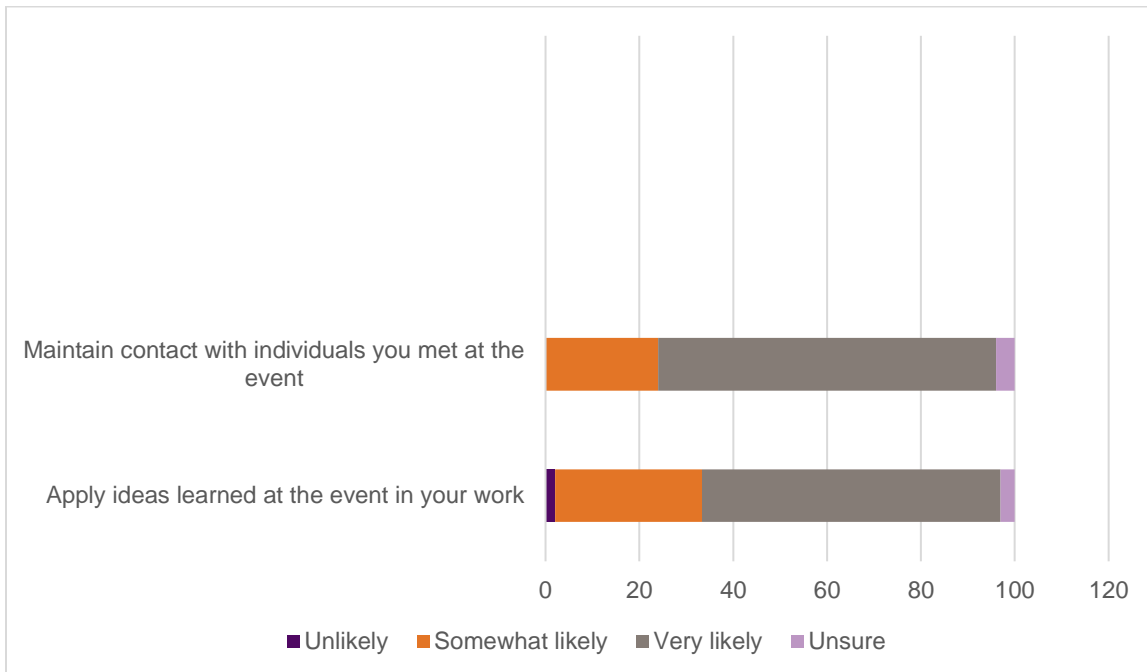
- When respondents were asked how they found BRIDGES as an opportunity to network and make new contacts, 30% rated it *good*, 23% rated it *very good*, and 37% rated it *excellent*.

Respondents felt they were able to connect with the stories and experiences of experts in the industry across different workshops, as is seen from the testimonials below:

***“It’s a great networking opportunity. It’s an eye opener to more than I knew already about newcomer issues” – Respondent***

- BRIDGES is also regarded as a platform for discussing potential connections and collaborations within the settlement sector for East Toronto. Twenty-eight percent of respondents found it to be a *good* opportunity to discuss collaboration ideas, while others rated it as *very good* (27%) and *excellent* (25%).
- To probe more into whether BRIDGES was a successful event to make connections, respondents were asked how likely they are to maintain contact with people they met at the event: 24% said they were *somewhat likely*, while 72% said they were *very likely*.





**Figure 2: How likely are you to utilize new connections and ideas?**

This year's theme was "Innovating Service Design, Delivery and Partnerships in a Challenging Economic Landscape". The TEQ LIP assessed whether it provided respondents with the knowledge and tools to navigate new modes of service design and delivery, learn to create new partnerships, and understand the socioeconomic needs of different types of newcomers.

When asked whether BRIDGES helped respondents understand complex socioeconomic challenges faced by newcomers, 45% said it *helped somewhat* while another 49% said it *helped a lot*. These challenges include current housing issues, employment, food security etc.

***"The best aspect of BRIDGES was the way it tackled) the realities of the socioeconomic impact that capitalism has had on newcomers, homeowners, and the unhoused" – Respondent***

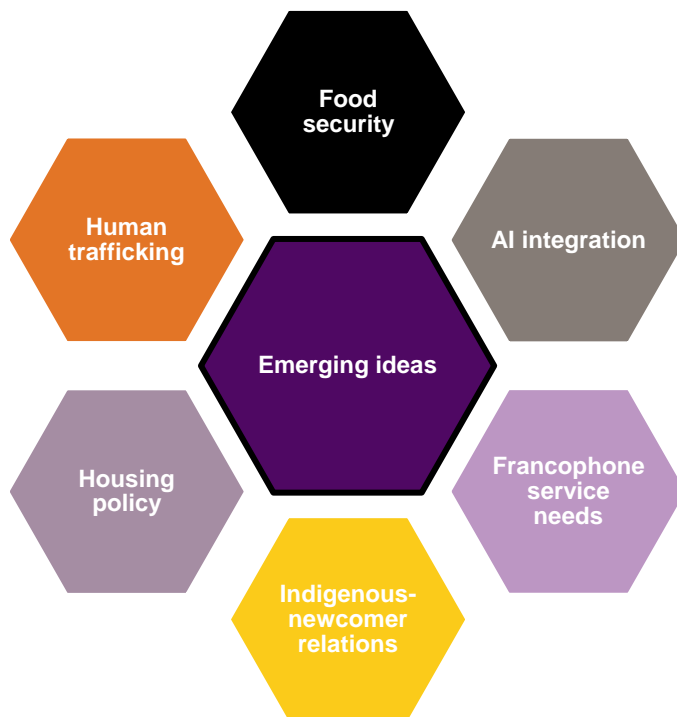
Further, respondents were asked whether BRIDGES helped them feel more confident about exploring new approaches to developing partnerships to meet changing socioeconomic needs -- 36% of respondents said it *helped somewhat* while 57% said it *helped a lot*.

### 3. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE TOPICS & ENHANCEMENTS

The Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership understands how important it is to organize future events and discussion forums around the most relevant topics in the sector. As part of our evaluation for BRIDGES, we asked respondents to tell us interesting areas we can focus on for the next BRIDGES Forum.

Some topics that can be highlighted from our feedback include preventing human trafficking in newcomer populations, food security, AI integration in the sector, methods for more widespread information-sharing across service providers, Francophone service needs, and many more.

In our feedback, we also asked attendees to tell us any enhancements we can make to the BRIDGES Forum itself. We were asked to include segments where agencies can speak more in-depth about their fundraising ideas or capacity-building projects. Additionally, more time allocation for networking was requested by many respondents.





## Acknowledgements

The TEQ LIP expresses sincere appreciation for our esteemed community partners, the Toronto Inter-LIP network and all event participants and attendees. Your commitment and contributions have played a vital role in facilitating this evaluation process. Your insights are deeply valued as they enable us to comprehensively assess the impact of the TEQ LIP project on our partners and the community, while identifying areas for improvement. We thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration.