

Supporting Immigrants to be Part of a Thriving Local Economy

Momentum has been working with people living on low incomes and partners in our community to create a thriving local economy for all since 1991.

In 2018, close to 2,500 participants joined one of Momentum's programs including 60% who came to Canada from one of 112 different countries. Of these individuals, half had arrived in Canada in the previous five years, with the largest representation coming from India, Philippines, China, Pakistan and Eritrea. In recent years, overall program attendance by immigrants has been as high as 76%.

In developing the Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy (AAIS), the Government of Alberta has recognized both the significant contributions that immigrants bring to our communities and the potential that is wasted when their knowledge, skills, and experience are undervalued or not recognized. Civil society organizations have important experience to contribute to the strategy. Momentum's programs support the government's goals of building opportunities for immigrants to train for better jobs, start new businesses, and save their money to achieve financial independence.

Momentum Programs

Since 1991, Momentum's *Trades Training* program has helped over 1200 graduates launch careers as carpenters, heavy-duty mechanics, electricians, plumbers, and pipefitters. In 2019, Momentum launched the *Tech Plus: Network and Cloud Technology Program* to equip unemployed and underemployed Calgarians with skills and certifications to pursue careers in Information and Communication Technology, contributing to the province's economic diversification strategy.

- Groups supported through *Trades Training* are immigrants (85%) and Indigenous persons (15%).
- Learners earn substantially higher wages after completing these training programs. The provincial government's portion of the investment in the program is returned to the provincial treasury in just three years through higher taxes paid by graduates.
- 80% of graduates from the first two participant cohorts of *Tech Plus* have succeeded in finding employment in the ICT sector.

Momentum's *Self Employment Program* has offered business training to over 500 Calgarians with employment barriers, half of whom were immigrants, since 1998. An economic evaluation of the program demonstrated that for every government dollar invested in the Self Employment program over \$7 is returned to the community due to increased participant incomes. In addition to the program success, many of Momentum's Self Employment participants go on to contribute to the Calgary economy by employing others who are also often marginalized.

Momentum has 25 years of experience offering *Micro Loans* to Calgarians living on low incomes. Momentum's *Micro Business Loans* support self employment program graduates to launch their business.

- In 2019, the 77 active loan recipients created 117 jobs in the Calgary community.
- Momentum has issued 687 loans totalling \$2.9M with a 92% of borrowers repaying their loan.
- The percentage of immigrant participants who receive Micro Business Loans has ranged between 43-57%.

Contact our Public Policy Team at publicpolicy@momentum.org or (403) 204-6184

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Momentum's *Job Boost Program* began in 2016 to provide career coaching, job market navigation support, and access to micro loans to reduce financial barriers to getting a better job.

- 82 loans have been issued to date – 24% of loan recipients lived in Canada less than 5 years.
- 84% of loan clients were employed after the loan process – of those employed six months after receiving a loan, the average income increase was over \$26,000.

Momentum worked in partnership with *Immigrant Access Fund (now Windmill Microlending)* from its start in 2004 to 2015 to provide micro loans that enable skilled immigrants to obtain the necessary credentials to get a job in their field.

- On average, loan recipients double to triple their income after repaying their loan.
- \$28 million in loans have been provided to over 4,000 immigrants with a repayment rate of 97%.
- Unemployment of loan recipients has decreased on average from 40% to 10%.

Financial Empowerment creates opportunities for Albertans living on low incomes to reduce their debt and build savings. Financial Empowerment strategies focus on money management education and coaching to build financial capability and confidence. Support for people can include filing tax returns, coaching to reduce debt, providing matched savings incentives, and building assets through Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) and Registered and Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs).

- Momentum has offered Money Management workshops to over 22,200 Calgarians since 1999 – historically, 60% of financial empowerment program participants are immigrants.
- Over 16,000 people have participated in financial literacy workshops offered by one of the over 200 community agencies trained by Momentum.
- Over \$4M was saved by participants in a Momentum matched savings program towards the purchase of over 4,000 assets, including the purchase of 159 homes.

Emerging Public Policy Opportunities

Momentum has identified the following opportunities to adapt public policy and programs to ensure that all residents of our province have a role in renewing the Alberta Advantage.

- *Develop a workforce development strategy* to ensure that more Albertans, including immigrants struggling in the labour market, can meaningfully contribute to Alberta's economic future.
- *Prioritize federal labour market transfer funds in Alberta to Integrated Training programs* that work well for immigrants to gain the skills to get good, career-track jobs.
- *Redesign the Canada Alberta Job Grant* to better support employers to train and hire promising candidates with employment barriers, such as immigrants.
- *Leverage social procurement* to build a more inclusive workforce.
- *Integrate Financial Empowerment approaches into Alberta Supports* programs and service plans.

PARTICIPANT SUCCESS: VESAL NASER

Vesal moved to Canada in 2012 after being a translator for the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. Upon arrival, he was only able to find part time work in a warehouse. Recognizing he wanted a career to build a good life, he enrolled in Momentum's Trades Training program to become a plumber.

After his work experience he was offered a job as an apprentice, putting him on track for the career he wanted. He then enrolled in Momentum's Owen Hart Home Owner program, which helped him build his credit up, and purchase a home for himself, his