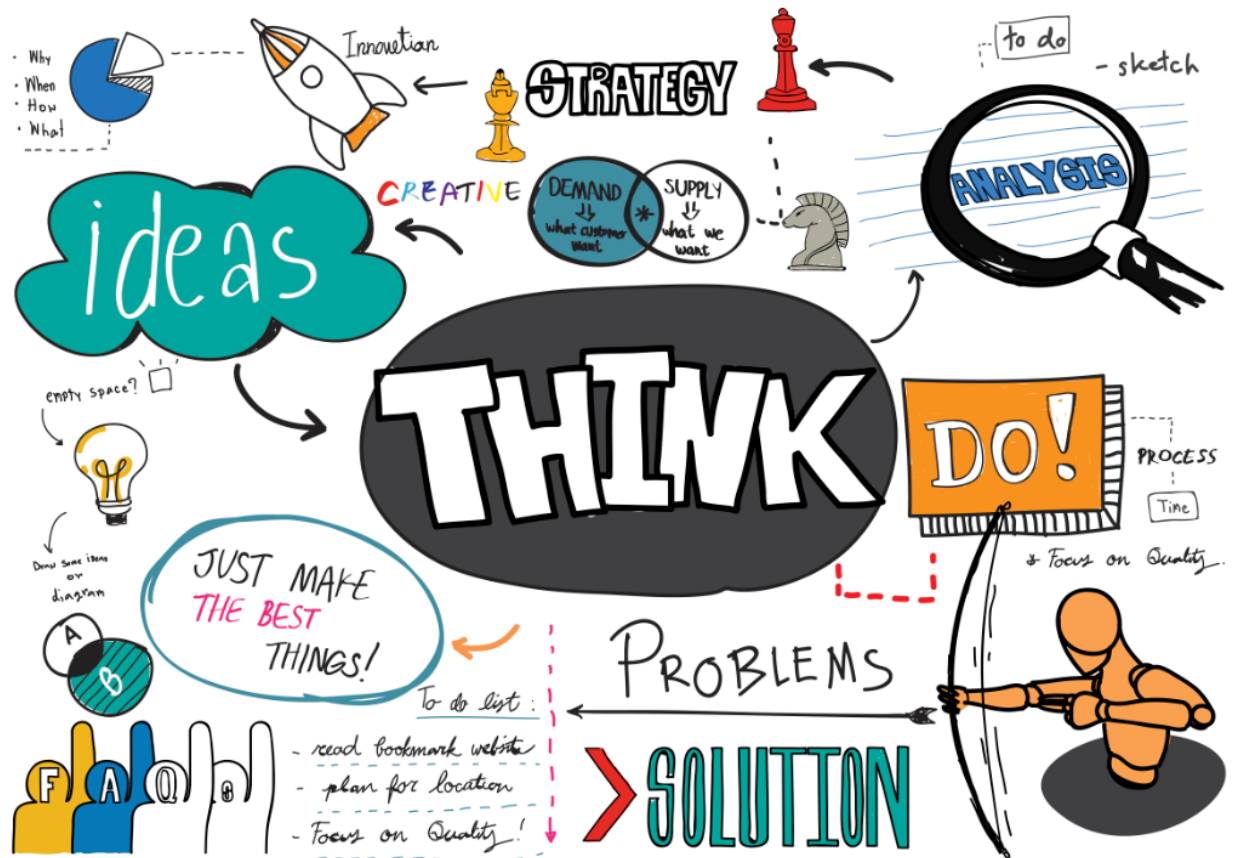




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Kingston, Ontario
 June 2023

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FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Future Skills Centre or the Government of Canada.



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Executive Summary

This report developed by the Innovation for Better Integration (IBI) team at KEYS explores the challenges faced by newcomers and other equity deserving groups in accessing key services in Kingston. Many challenges have been identified including but not limited to discrimination, lack of suitable accommodation, language barrier, and cultural accommodation and sensitivity.

By implementing a qualitative analysis research methodology, the team has collected data through conducting semi-structured interviews with 30 respondents recruited through KEYS newcomers' network. Participants were from different backgrounds, ethnic groups, and many have identified with intersectional identities. Three in-person focus groups, each including ten participants were conducted in a safe and welcoming space.

This report also provides a clear understanding on the gaps that exist in current service provision models that have been identified through a comprehensive environmental scan conducted for 14 organizations.

The aim of the report is to shed light on the gaps and barriers that face newcomers when accessing services in Kingston using a holistic qualitative study. The report will support the collective work of the service providers' ecosystem to prototype an innovative service delivery model that fosters and/ or enhances how services are offered to a diverse population.

The study found that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) gaps and challenges exist in service provision among the 14 selected service providers. Highlights of the findings are as follows:

- Lack of representation and EDI integration in the organization's branding and marketing strategies.
- Challenges in accommodation in organization's practices when serving customers with language barriers.
- Lack of cross-cultural component in relevant customer services policies and practices.

The study also shows the top three challenges and barriers confronting newcomers and other equity-deserving groups, with **language barrier (50%) ranked the highest, cultural sensitivity ranked the second highest (27%), followed by cross-cultural communication (23%) ranked third** among other challenges identified by the respondents.

An important observation to emerge from the study is that ongoing and accommodated (i.e., translated) provision of information about services in Kingston, particularly, information about what services are available and how they can be accessed, is as important as improving the services themselves.

Overall, the results of the study point to key areas that can productively and fruitfully inform the development and implementation of a new service provision model that is based on the principle of inclusion and accessibility.

1. Introduction

As Canada is promising to welcome 500,000 immigrants per year by 2025, considerable attention has been given to promoting equitable and inclusive environments to more diverse populations. However, to date, there are limited qualitative and quantitative findings to assess the level of inclusivity of the service provision models as well as in depth information around the experiences of newcomers and other equity-deserving groups in accessing those services in Kingston.

To develop an innovative service provision model that is built on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion and in an effort by KEYS to support this model's design being informed by the shared experiences of newcomers and actual challenges faced by service providers, the IBI team has conducted a both qualitative and quantitative analysis to gauge the challenges faced by newcomers and to assess the level of the EDI practices within service organizations.

The data was collected through a semi-structured interview with 30 newcomers of diverse backgrounds. Additionally, an assessment survey was developed to identify gaps in the current service delivery models. One hundred seventy-four (174) service provider respondents completed the survey questionnaire from all 14 organizations. The data from both the semi-structured focus group interviews and demographic assessment surveys was analyzed, and the findings were presented at the monthly roundtable meetings with service provider partners to facilitate a brainstorming and ideation process.

This report addresses the barriers that newcomers face when accessing services in Kingston. It also provides a comprehensive understanding of the EDI gaps in service provision models.

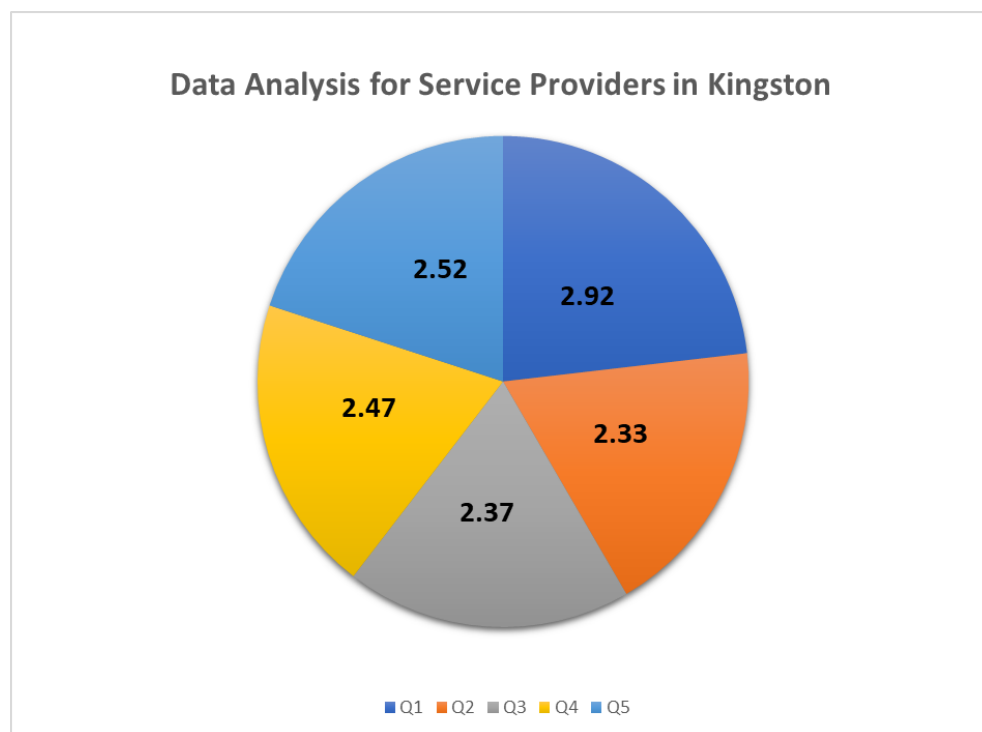
2. EDI Gaps and Challenges among Service Providers

Key gaps in the service delivery models assessed were found to be around the following themes:

1. EDI integration in organizations' marketing strategies and customer services practices
2. Cultural and communication challenges in serving diverse clients.
3. Accommodation embedded in the organizations' practices when serving customers with language barriers.
4. EDI Integration in the organization's relevant policies and procedures
5. Collaboration with equity-deserving groups when designing and evaluating customer service practices.

Furthermore, the respondents fell into one of two categories: Managers and or Supervisors; and Frontline staff.

Figure 2.1: EDI Gaps in Service Provision Among Services Providers in Kingston



Key:

- Q1**- Cultural and communication challenges in serving diverse clients.
- Q2**- EDI integration in the organization's marketing strategies and customer services practices.
- Q3**- Accommodation embedded in the organization's practices when serving customers with language barriers.
- Q4**- EDI Integration in the organization's relevant policies and procedures.
- Q5**- Collaboration with equity-deserving groups when designing and evaluating customer service practice.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the percentages of existing gaps and challenges faced by service providers across 14 selected service organizations in Kingston. The chart shows that 'The Integration of EDI into marketing strategies and customer services practices' was ranked the lowest value (2.33), reflecting the highest existing gap. Other gaps in the organizations' service provision practices include 'Accommodation embedded in the organization's practices when serving customers with language barriers' and 'EDI Integration in the organization's relevant policies and procedures' ranking (2.37 and 2.47) respectively. Finally, 'Collaboration with equity-deserving groups when designing and evaluating customer services practices,' and Cultural and communication challenges in serving diverse clients, ranked (2.52 and 2.92) respectively, representing the lowest gaps.

3. Newcomer Focus Groups

3.1 Demographics Characteristics of Participants

30 newcomers of diverse backgrounds were invited to participate in the newcomer focus groups. The demographic information shows the distribution of the focus group participants' age, ethnic group, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, highest level of education, religion, disability, and disability type.

Figure 3.1: Age Group

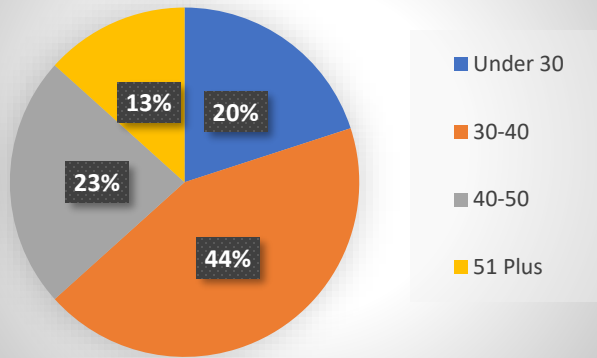
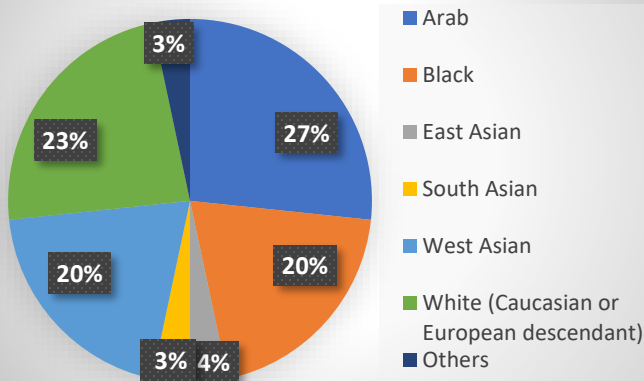


Figure 3.1 shows that 44% of the participants were within the age group of 30-40 years , 23% were in the age group of 40-50 years , 20% were under 30 years , and 13% were 51 years plus.

Figure 3.2: Ethnic Group



According to **Figure 3.2**, the highest number of the participants, by 27%, were from the Arab ethnic groups, 23% were white including Ukrainian newcomers, 20% were Black, 20% were West Asian including Afghan and Iranian, and 10% were from other ethnic groups including East Asian, South Asian, and others.

Figure 3.3: First Language

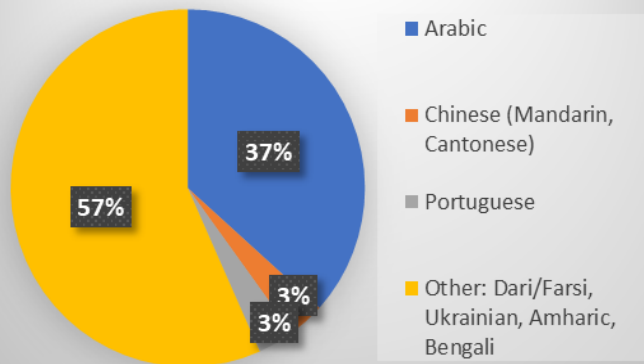
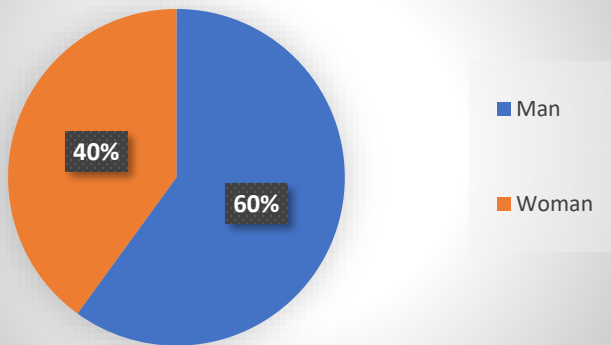


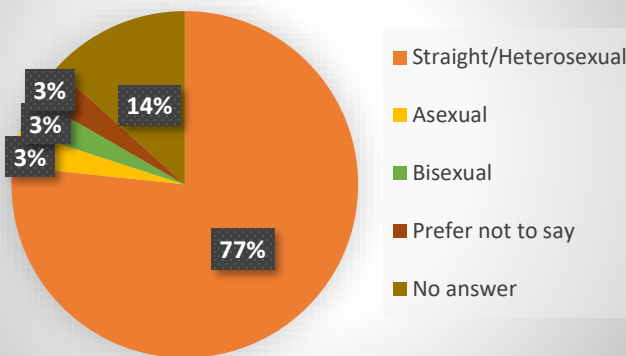
Figure 3.3 shows 57% of participants selected Dari/Farsi, Ukrainian, Amharic, Yoruba, Bengali, and others as their first language, 37% selected Arabic, while 6% selected Chinese and Portuguese.

Figure 3.4: Gender Identity



Furthermore, **Figure 3.4** shows that 60% of the participants were identified as men and 40% were women.

Figure 3.5: Sexual Orientation



According to **Figure 3.5** 77% of the participants indicated their sexual orientation as straight or heterogenous, 6% were identified as asexual or bisexual, 3% preferred not to say, and 14% provided no answer.

Figure 3.6: Highest Level of Education

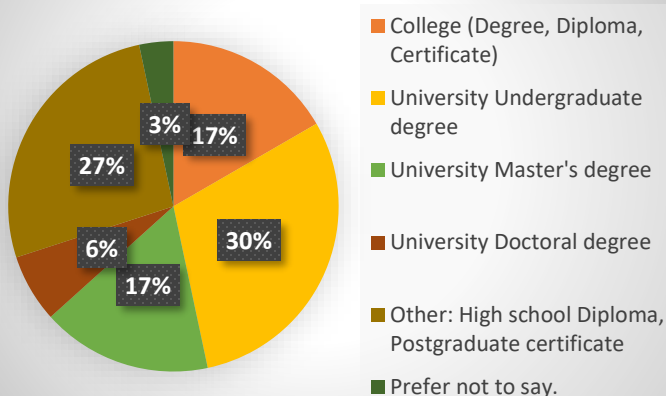
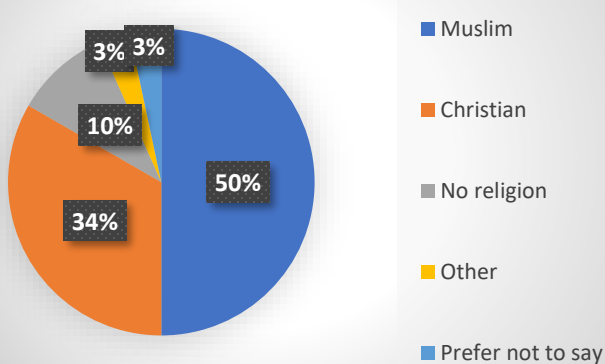


Figure 3.6 illustrates the distribution of the respondent's highest level of education. 30% of the participants indicated to have completed a university undergraduate degree, 17% completed a college program, 17% completed a master's degree, 6% a doctoral degree, and 3% preferred not to say. In addition, 27% of the participants indicated others, such as a high school diploma or postgraduate certificate or diploma.

Figure 3.7: Religion/Creed



According to **Figure 3.7**, 50% of the participants were identified as Muslim, 34% as Christian, 10% no religion, 3% other religions, and 3% preferred not to say.

Figure 3.8: Disability

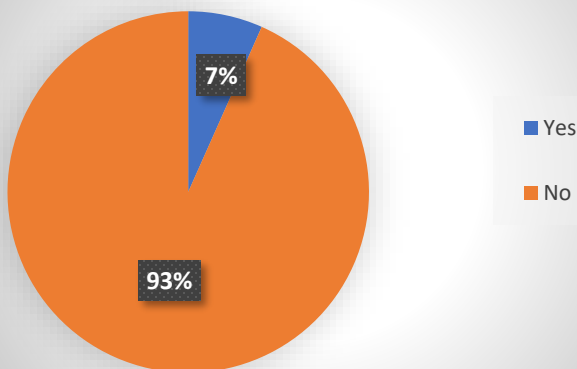


Figure 3.8 shows that 7% of the participants indicated having a disability.

Figure 3.9: Disability Type

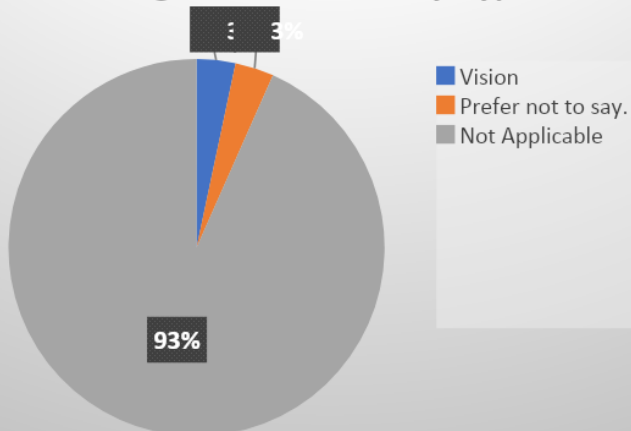


Figure 3.9 shows 4% selected visual impairment as a disability type and 3% preferred not to say.

3.2 Focus Group Results

The focus group study was organized around the following themes:

- How would you describe your experiences accessing key services in Kingston?
- Tell us a bit about the barriers that you face when accessing services in Kingston.
- How do you think service providers should change or improve their practices to make your experience a more inclusive and equitable one?
- Can you share an example of when you felt excluded or unfairly treated?

3.2.1 Challenges and Barriers to Accessing Services

The participants were asked to provide an explicit description of their experience and the constraints they often encounter in accessing some major services in Kingston. Based on their responses, the top three challenges were identified as follows:

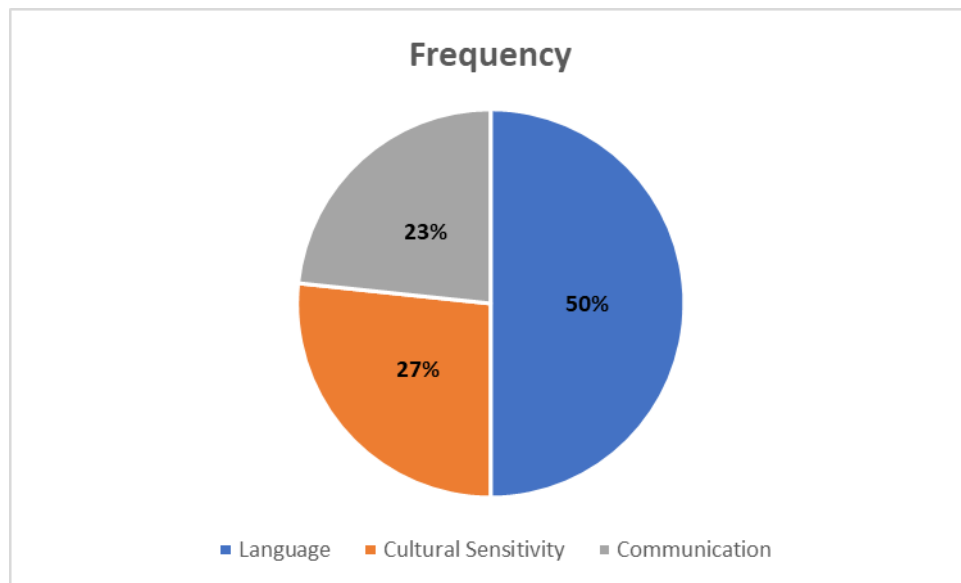
- Language Barrier
- Cultural Sensitivity, e.g., discrimination
- Communication, e.g., lack of information

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.10 show the list of the top three challenges and barriers that all participants of this study have been facing. 50% of the respondents ranked language as the first significant barrier to accessing services, Cultural sensitivity challenges by 26.7% and Communication barriers by 23.3% were ranked as the second and the third barriers to accessing services. In addition, participants expressed dealing with mental health struggles, anxiety, stress, and social exclusion as a result of facing these challenges.

Table 3.1: Challenges and Barriers to Accessing Services

Challenges and Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
Language	15	50 %
Cultural Sensitivity	8	26.7 %
Communication	7	23.3 %
Total	30	100 %

Figure 3.10: Challenges and Barriers to Accessing Services



3.2.2 Newcomers' Solutions for More Inclusive Services

The participants of the study provided suggestions on productive ways that service providers could improve their practices to make the service recipients' experience more inclusive. These suggestions are as follows:

- Providing language interpretation services.
- Providing more accurate language interpretation.
- Service organizations provide more information about their systems, procedures, and services for newcomers, such as information on websites, training, seminars, courses, and workshops.
- Improving customer service practices, to be devoid of discrimination, racism, biases, and unfair treatment and lack of cultural sensitivity
- More awareness of the newcomers' cultures and needs.
- Making services more accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Use of technological tools: e.g., online booking appointments instead of long waiting hours.

- EDI support to be offered by expert matters for staff and welcoming/orientation programs for newcomers.
- Some higher education and healthcare services to become more accessible and affordable for newcomers.

4. Conclusion

This study offers evidence-based findings on the barriers newcomers have been facing in accessing services in Kingston, and the challenges the service provider organizations encounter in serving the diverse communities. This research aims to address the existing gaps and provide information on the specific areas of improvement. Since the communities are becoming more diverse, cultural awareness, improving traditional practices, and acquiring novel methods in service provision models are pivotal in creating more inclusive environments.

Appendix A _ Research Ethics Board of Canada Approval



INDEPENDENT REVIEW BOARD COMMUNICATION

IRB Review Date: 03-Feb-2023

IRB Communication Issuance Date: 07-Feb-2023

Tracking Number: 2023-3163-13773-3

Sponsor: Future Skills Centre

Study Name: Innovation for Better Integration

Principal Investigator: Wessam Ayad

Study Expiration Date: 31-Dec-2023

RE: Response to Conditions – Principal Investigator and Site Review – Unconditionally Approved

The Independent Review Board has completed its review using the delegated review procedure, in compliance with [normative documents](#) governing research with humans. Please find attached a list of the members (by affiliation) who participated in this review.

Please find below a list of the documents that were reviewed by the Independent Review Board along with their review status:

Document Type	Document Name	Document Date	Document Version	Document Status
Curriculum vitae	Wessam+Nov+22_Resume	19-Dec-2022		Approved
Study agreement	IBI Signed Contract	21-Dec-2022	1	Acknowledged
Study budget	Jan 27th Veritas study budget	27-Jan-2023	2	Approved

NOTES

- Wessam Ayad was unconditionally approved as principal investigator for the above-mentioned study on February 3, 2023. However, the IRB Communication documenting this approval was not released at that time, as the study documentation was conditionally approved by the Independent Review Board;
- Following a review of the responses provided to the Independent Review Board, the above-mentioned study was unconditionally approved on February 6, 2023;
- As the study protocol (version 4, dated February 2, 2023), informed consent documentation, study budget, and investigator have been approved, the above-referenced study may now commence at the site of Wessam Ayad;
- All Unanticipated Problems involving risks to Research Participants must be reported to the Independent Review Board within 10 business days. Should these Unanticipated Events occur, please alert us by completing the appropriate form available on www.irbconcierge.com. In the event that a more complete report may be needed, you will be notified. Please visit our resources page at <http://www.veritasirb.com/resources.html> for more information on what unanticipated problems to report to the Independent Review Board.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- At the end of the COVID-19 pandemic or at the time of study closure, whichever comes first, a debriefing of the impact of the pandemic on the study must be submitted to the Independent Review Board for review. This debriefing should include information on both the impact on the rights and welfare of research participants, as well as on the integrity of the study data, if any.

Should you have any questions or require clarification of any issues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you.

Veritas IRB Inc.

Ana Amélia Simões Lopes, MD

Managing Director

Veritas Independent Review Board - Member List**Chair/Ethics Representative**

Female – PhD (Philosophy) – Bioethicist, University Health Network, Toronto, ON – Assistant Professor (status-only), Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON – Technical Committee Member, Human Research Standards Organization (HRSO) – Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian Association of Practicing Healthcare Ethicists (CAPHE-ACCESS) – English

Obligations under this Certificate of Approval

Under this Certificate of Approval, you agree to:

1. Obtain the appropriate and applicable regulatory approval for the use of the investigational product in a clinical trial prior to the initiation of the study and submit evidence of such approval to Veritas IRB once available;
2. Register the clinical trial in a WHO-recognized registry, when applicable, and submit evidence of such registration to Veritas IRB once available;
3. Conduct the study in accordance with the guiding ethical principles and normative documents abided by the IRB (as presented on the IRB's webpage at www.veritasIRB.com), as well as all applicable regulations;
4. Acknowledge that Veritas IRB has the authority to review, oversee and suspend approval of the study if necessary to protect the rights and welfare of research participants;
5. Conduct or supervise, and abide by, the investigative procedures described in the IRB-approved study protocol;
6. Utilize only the IRB-approved study documentation to recruit and enroll research participants;
7. Make no changes to the research without the IRB's approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research participants;
8. Provide Veritas IRB with the information it requires to conduct ongoing and continuing review of the study on a timely basis and acknowledge that if the information is not provided, Veritas IRB may suspend its approval of the study;
9. Acknowledge the right of Veritas IRB to conduct an audit of the study's documentation and informed consent process if deemed necessary;
10. Report all Unanticipated Problems involving risks to Research Participants to the Independent Review Board in a timely manner, in accordance with [Veritas IRB Reporting Policies and Procedures](#).

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