

CivicsXchange

CivicsXchange offers a learning environment where individuals from community- and issue-based groups working on poverty reduction efforts can explore how governments make decisions, how non-profit organizations can further engage people in local decision-making, and how communities can claim their rights by engaging and working with government and other decision-making bodies.

The program offers a civic literacy primer, using a resident-centred approach to civics, community building and advocacy. Participants will incorporate what they've learned into their local community programs and initiatives by engaging residents in local civic and advocacy activities, local decision-making, as well as city-wide civic activities.

Program outcomes

The program is based on a cumulative learning model. Participants will:

- Explore dynamics of power, equity and rights
- Identify what is possible in their communities and governments
- Learn about strategies for engaging decision-makers to change systems that create poverty
- Explore and experiment with approaches and tools to support resident-informed, directed and led engagement strategies

Areas of shared learning

Program participants will learn about:

- Realizing and claiming rights
- Incorporating rights into our work culture
- How each level of government works
- How policy is created
- Formal engagement strategies for shaping policy
- Meaningful, people-centred engagement
- Organizing for social change

Program format

The CivicsXchange program will take place from June 2017 to March 2018 and include a variety of learning opportunities such as workshops, site visits, mentorship, and community-based activities.

Components include:

- A half-day meet and greet with program faculty and participants on June 5, 2017
- A full-day opening session on June 6, 2017
- Eight workshop sessions covered in four and a half days from September to November 2017
- Four half-day group learning sessions, once a month from December 2017 to March 2018

Program faculty

Workshops will be led by a faculty of eight facilitators. 2017 CivicsXchange faculty include:

- Beatriz Alas, North York Community House
- Jessica Bell, TTCriders
- Alejandra Bravo, Broadbent Institute
- Judy Duncan, ACORN Canada
- Anna Kim, Agincourt Community Services Association
- Leila Sarangi, Women's Habitat of Etobicoke
- Madison Van West, North York Community House
- Effie Vlachoyannacos, Maytree

Program schedule

The program will take place on the following dates:

- June 5, 2017 1:00pm-4:00pm
- June 6, 2017 9:30am-5:00pm
- September 13, 2017 9:00am-5:00pm
- October 9, 2017 9:00am-5:00pm
- October 16, 2017 1:00pm-5:00pm
- November 10, 2017 9:00am-5:00pm
- November 22, 2017 9:00am-5:00pm

Group learning sessions will be held once a month from December 2017 to March 2018. Times, locations and content will be determined by the group.

Additional supports and resources will be provided by Maytree and CivicsXchange faculty through individual coaching complemented by an online discussion and resource community.

Engaging residents

To deepen their experiential learning during the program, CivicsXchange participants will engage with residents in their local communities and across Toronto, with a particular focus on people with lived experience of poverty. The goal is to develop and implement strategies that have residents at the centre of informing, deciding, directing and leading local engagement on systemic solutions to poverty.

Participants will engage residents throughout the program, with two local discussions held in the summer, as well as in September, December and January. Participants will also engage residents in city-wide discussions in November and February.

For more information about the program, please contact Effie Vlachoyannacos at evlachoyannacos@maytree.com or 416-944-2627.