

Assessing Impacts of Recreational Programs on Seniors

Emily Graham, Matthew Iamonaco and Jessica Sopher

About the Client:

University Settlement



University Settlement

Founded 1910

University Settlement is a multi-service agency that was founded in 1910 and has the distinction of being the first secular social service centre in the City of Toronto. The organization's three offices are part of the culturally rich and vibrant neighbourhoods in downtown Toronto and North York.

With a full-time and part-time staff of approximately 150, University Settlement has developed programs to address the needs of more than 10,000 unique users annually in a number of diverse areas including settlement services, English language classes, children's programs, employment counselling, seniors' programs and services, homeless programs, music and arts education, and daycare and recreation programs.

In addition, many annual festivals and celebrations provide opportunities for communities to come together to honour and celebrate the traditions and customs of the diverse groups. Since its inception over a century ago, local needs have shifted and changed and University Settlement has demonstrated the ability to identify emerging trends and take positive action to respond.

About the Project:

Project Scope

University Settlement is working toward ensuring that all its programs are evidence-informed. To this end, consultants will assess the impacts of recreational programming on the cognitive, physical and social well-being of seniors to produce an in-depth literature review on effective program structures, which will be used to support funding proposals and grant applications. In addition to examining the impacts of cultural programming on the centre's urban seniors, consultants will also examine which programming aspects, elements and practices appear to influence positive outcomes most.

Project Rationale:

This project is important because at present, the centre's seniors' programs, which are delivered in the downtown core, are not evidence-based, except in the most basic way (e.g. demonstration of need). University Settlement wishes to improve and restructure them and ensure that they are based on best practices founded on research. In order to do that, the impact of seniors programs and aspects affecting positive outcomes must be identified. This information will form the foundation of future program design and delivery going forward. As well, in furtherance of the centre's goal to deliver high quality seniors' programming when seeking additional funding, a compelling case for support is contingent on strong evidence identified through research.

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Methodology:

- **Phase 1 – Annotated Bibliography**
 - Worked with University Settlement to define research scope.
 - Compiled academic and grey literature documents for senior's recreational programming, with an emphasis on urban populations and cultural programming for Asian seniors.
 - Summarized key findings and created a sample report outline.
- **Phase 2 – Report Design**
 - Based on client feedback our team developed the report design to best highlight the emerging areas of focus in our research.
- **Phase 3 – Finale Report: Literature Review**
 - Created a final literature review highlighting the cognitive, social and health impacts of senior's recreational programming.
 - Illustrated relevant findings to support funding and program design opportunities, as well as the importance of cultural programming.

RESULTS & DELIVERABLES

- Annotated bibliography.
- Sample report design
- Final report of relevant literature supporting evidence-based impacts for senior's recreational programming and effective program design

PROJECT IMPACT

- With this review, University Settlement will have evidence-informed findings to support effective program design for seniors and will have documentation to support future funding proposals and grant applications

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