



Cities of Migration



**Webinar agenda**  
**Ballot Box to the Podium:**  
**Mobilizing Immigrant Voters and New Leadership**

- 1) Presentation by **Alejandra Bravo**, Manager, *School4Civics*, *Maytree*, Toronto
- 2) Presentation by **Eva Millona**, Executive Director, *MIRA Coalition*, Boston
- 3) Moderated Q&A with **Kim Turner**, *Maytree*, Toronto

*Note: Full webinar recording is available on the website: [www.citiesofmigration.ca](http://www.citiesofmigration.ca)*



In 2007, we knew that elections at various levels of government were coming, and that this would represent an opportunity for new political actors to emerge.

We recognized, as well, an opportunity for us to enrich the political process by infusing the elections with a new, diverse generation of leaders, already making an impact in society, but not truly politically connected.

We sought to demystify election campaigns – and to some degree the reality of electoral politics – for leaders from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups.

In the process, we'd equip them to run for elected office or work behind the scenes in election campaigns. Why?



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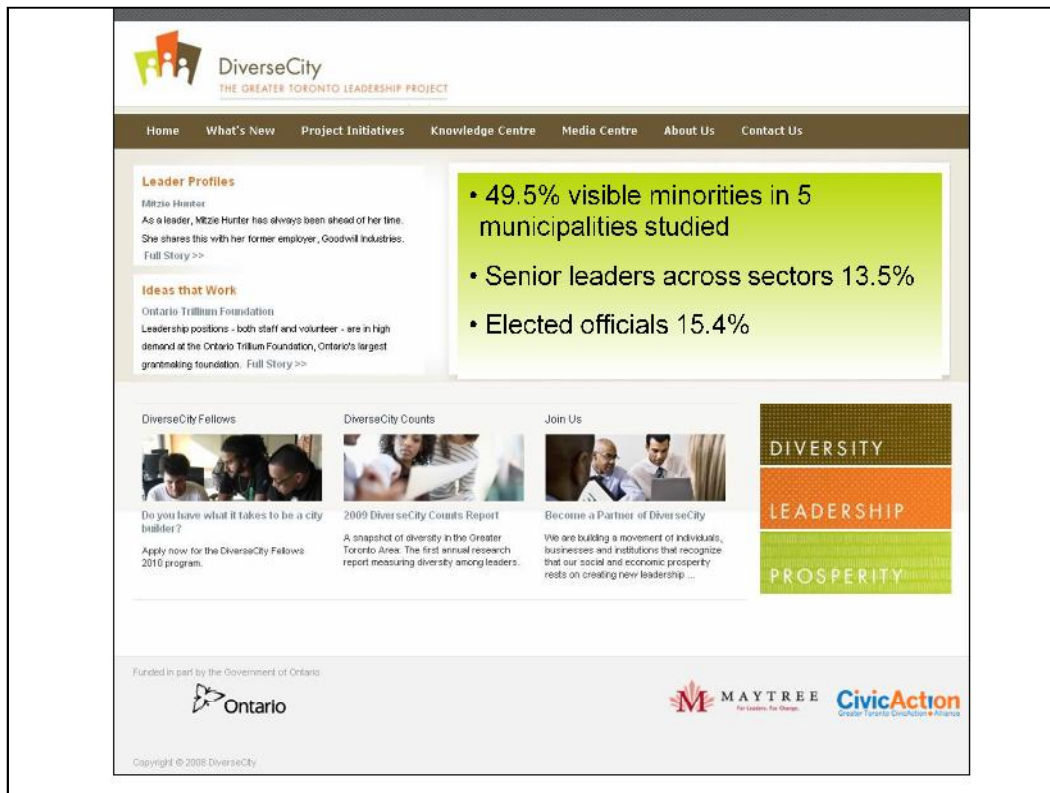


Demographic change in urban centres, fuelled by migration, is a major social force around the world. In our own region, we'll be a majority-minority city by 2031. So more than ever, improving the economic, social, civic integration of newcomers is vital to our city region. In our work, immigrant, neighbourhood, and city prosperity go hand in hand.

And leadership is part of integration and inclusion. It matters who's within the corridors of power, because only those who are able to lead organizations and institutions, and to make decisions – are truly able to shape their future.

Leaders signal who belongs and who doesn't. They provide role models. They're powerful symbols, for future generations, of what they can and cannot aspire to become.

Political leadership is particularly visible. And we know there's a gap.



We've counted senior leadership in our city region as part of our work with DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project.

Within the 5 municipalities studied, 49.5% visible minorities – Statistics Canada definition: non-white, non-Aboriginal

On the other hand, senior leaders across public, private and non-profit sectors are 13.5% VM

Elected officials 15.4%

School4Civics is part of DiverseCity, which aims to change the leadership landscape in the region.

The project recognizes society wins when senior leadership reflects the region's diverse population. Economic and social prosperity can be fuelled with the talent, networks and knowledge of an increasingly diverse people.

So what's our good idea?

## DiverseCity in Civic Leadership



School4Civics

- As a foundation, we would identify, recruit, train and connect diverse leaders. We would offer a non-partisan training and mentoring program delivered by campaign experts from across the political spectrum. Our goal was to help emerging leaders build political power beyond one single election campaign. We wanted to make “lifers” out of program participants.
- The curriculum was built on three key components. The first two for broader leadership development: 1. identify your political values, 2. plan for the short and long term to make an impact; and the third, more specific to elections: learn practical campaign tools such as fundraising, communications, identifying and getting out the vote.
- The program was delivered in workshops, but we also offered online learning via webinars, with phone seminars and networking opportunities where participants learned from each other.
- The frequency of training events: varied from monthly to bi-weekly, but there was consistent contact in between meetings with the program.

## Recruitment & Selection



Our program is aimed at the Greater Toronto Region. We have an extensive network of leaders and organizations that support our outreach.

Participants are selected based on:

1. Demonstrated record of volunteering and social change leadership
2. Capacity to learn in a multi-partisan environment and a commitment to use the lessons in real life elections

The majority of people we selected had volunteered previously on election campaigns, but they lacked knowledge of their inner workings. And they lacked the political networks to play more significant roles.

We've had a broad spectrum of participants, including gender balance, and a good range in ages. This is also true in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and regional representation. The program hasn't been aimed at once specific group.

## Challenges



### Systemic

- Political system – it's still very difficult to defeat an incumbent. Training doesn't happen in isolation from the real world, where election rules can sometimes favour those in power.
- Lack of networks – political outsiders have to work twice as hard to tap networks of donors and volunteers, especially if they were born outside the country.

### Practical

- Every participant is at a different level and therefore requires different training. They're at various stages on a leadership journey. The only way to provide meaningful support is to stay connected well beyond the life of the program.
- Curriculum design – we had to experiment and reboot in order to ensure the workshops were sufficiently participatory, with hands-on exercises. We also added online learning, recognizing that often the busiest people are the most promising political actors.



Starting in 2008, we've trained 100 leaders – more than 90% of graduates have participated in some capacity in an election campaign.

Some indicators from the November 2010 municipal election:

14 candidates from our network filed to run for city council or school board

2 graduates served as senior policy advisors to a mayoral candidate

All 20 graduates of the 2010 program worked on municipal campaigns

Wins: one elected school trustee, but many more contributed to winning city council campaigns

What graduates have told us about the value of the program: they were better prepared, gained new networks, found support among their peers.

They feel part of a political family, albeit not a partisan one. Like most political activists, they've faced more defeat than victory, and yet they continue to pursue social change through the political process.



- We helped change the conversation. The program contributed to a heightened awareness of the lack of diversity in elected office, particularly in relation to the municipal election. It also may have raised expectations for change in the community, by showcasing new candidates and leaders prepared to stand for elected office.

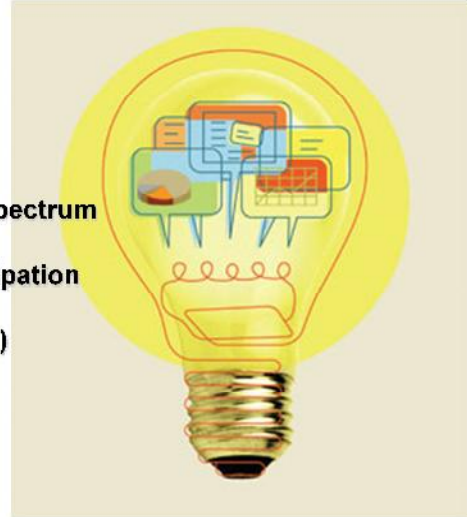
- In part this happened because of extensive print and electronic media attention. Both the program – and the diversity gap – have been referenced in election-related stories... Articles with titles like, “Visible Minority candidates running for Toronto trustee seats,” and “Diverse candidates running strong.” and our candidates garnered many media endorsements and were listed as “new faces to watch.”

- Behind the scenes we also helped, by using our own networks to connect new faces with reporters looking for stories.

- Finally, the increased profile has generated interest among the political parties in the people we are training...

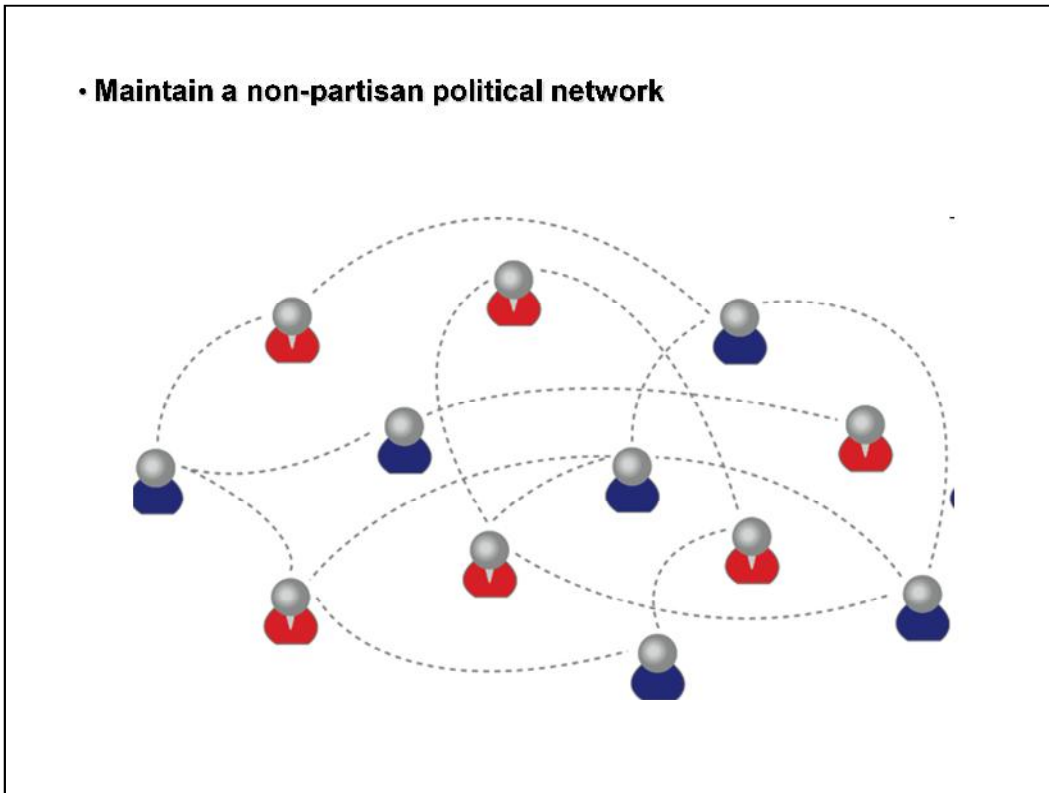
## Program Insights

- **Recruit from across the political spectrum**
- **Build a program for lifelong participation**
- **Invest in success (broadly defined)**



- Someone with political experience is needed to run the program ... this person will have a broad political network that crosses party lines.
- Provide trainers with tools – they may have strategic, fundraising, communications, or other expertise, but they may not be teachers. Equip them with interactive exercises and other learning tools.
- Invest in success... especially with limited resources, it makes sense to invest more (support, time, opportunities), in people who will truly benefit. In practical terms, build coaching into the program and offer it to the most committed participants; match them with mentors when they're really able to use the advice. Mentors and coaches, like trainers, are people with a multi-partisan spirit, and with the experience to bring practical lessons from the field.
- Define success broadly – not everyone can get elected or even run, but everyone can participate: [train not only candidates, but people who'll employ their skills in other campaign roles]
- It's also important to tell the story of the program's success through the stories of the leaders you train.

- **Maintain a non-partisan political network**



- Maintain a network and be deliberate about connecting people, not just with each other, but also with people in positions of power and influence... That could be an elected official or a well-connected activist behind the scenes.

- Partner – however informally – with other organizations working to promote political leadership and participation of other underrepresented groups... In our case that's been women. Share your knowledge broadly – curriculum, contacts, trainers – the more organizations committed to this work, the better.

- The program may end, but the political journey begins... so remain connected... the success of the leaders you trained, and their social impact, could be months or years in the making.



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## More Information

Alejandra Bravo

[abravo@maytree.com](mailto:abravo@maytree.com)

<http://www.maytree.com/training/school4civics>

[www.diversecitytoronto.ca](http://www.diversecitytoronto.ca)



# From the Pledge to the Polls

MOBILIZING PRO-IMMIGRANT VOTERS IN  
MASSACHUSETTS



## The Setting



- Massachusetts population 14% immigrant —Seventh largest immigrant population in the nation
- Population ethnically and economically diverse
  - Over 140 languages spoken in Boston
  - Boston’s population is about 610,000, of which 28% are immigrants-  
- over 170,000 people
  - Over half of Massachusetts PhDs are immigrants.
- Almost half immigrant population is naturalized.
- About 13% of registered voters are “New American Voters”—  
naturalized citizens, plus U.S.-born children of recent immigrants.

## Registering New Americans

- MIRA worked with Citizenship and Immigration Services to station volunteers at 16 swearing-in ceremonies across MA in 2010.
- Engaged 75 volunteers to register immigrants on weekends at commercial centers.
- Followed up with phone calls and postcards before election.
- Also contacted voters from 2009 drive.
- In total, contacted 8,000 New American voters.



## Identified Pro-Immigrant Voters



- Bought database of 100,000 voters in “Metro West,” a zone of anti-immigrant sentiment.
- Used database to place over 5,200 calls to identify pro-immigrant voters in that area.



- Followed up with second phone calls and postcards before election to those identified.
- Knocked on almost 700 doors around election day.

## Media Strategy



- You're more likely to go to a party with a "buzz" (*i.e. you vote when you think others are voting*).
- Press releases in English, but interviews in native languages.
- Send releases to all media, but concentrate outreach to ethnic media.

## Media Strategy



- Sept- Oct: Sent press releases detailing voter registration drive.
- Oct – Nov: MIRA staff and members conducted on-air TV and radio interviews in Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole.
- Oct- Nov: Sent ethnic radio stations PSAs, both pre-recorded and recorded by MIRA staff and members.
- Election held November 2, 2010.

## Outcomes

- (+) Pro-immigrant governor Deval Patrick re-elected with strong turnout in largest immigrant cities.
- (+) All pro-immigrant reps returned to D.C.
- (+) In the only open U.S. House seat, the state's major anti-immigrant candidate, State Rep. Jeff Perry, lost with decisive vote from immigrant-heavy districts.
- (-) Several allies in state legislature defeated, and anti-immigrant forces doubled numbers in lower house.



## Keys to Success



- Built ethnic media contacts over time, utilizing members and staff for connections.
- Found members and allies to reach out in various languages.
- Made use of naturalization ceremonies for photo ops and story pitches
- Made campaign long-term, utilizing 2009 and 2010 databases.

## Acknowledgments

Webinar: Ballot Box to the Podium:  
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January 25, 2011

Alejandra Bravo, Manager, *School4Civics*, *Maytree*, Toronto

Eva Millona, Executive Director, *MIRA Coalition*, Boston

Moderator: Kim Turner, *Maytree*, Toronto



*Cities of Migration is a Maytree initiative:* [www.citiesofmigration.ca](http://www.citiesofmigration.ca)

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