

# RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOFT SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT PRACTITIONERS



## MODES OF VIRTUAL NETWORKING

- Job fairs
- One-on-one mentorship and engagement
- Employment workshops
- Hiring events
- Professional development conferences
- Virtual internships

## VALUE OF VIRTUAL NETWORKING

Virtual networking removes geographic barriers for connection by:

- Enabling connections and engagement with professionals across the country through video conferencing
- Accessing networks that would not have otherwise been met organically in person

## GAPS AND CHALLENGES OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

### LOSS OF INTERPERSONAL CONNECTION

- Unable to build the same sense of community and relationship as in-person gathering

### MISCOMMUNICATION

- Context essential to effective communication can be lost when interacting virtually, such as:
  - Social cues
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language

### INTERCULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- Types of expressions
- Vocabulary
- Communication management

## BEST PRACTICES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

### ON-GOING COMMUNICATION

- Create and foster opportunities for communication among staff
  - Create safe spaces for internal staff to voice emergent challenges
  - Establish lines of communication for peer-to-peer mentoring and supports

### FOSTER COLLABORATION

- Create opportunities for **peer-to-peer mentoring**
  - Establish a **regular check-in** for staff to gather and share information they have learned from practice
  - Allowing staff to build upon each other's **lived experiences**
  - Create dialogue to assist one another in **troubleshooting and problem solving**
- **Invest in relationship building** with external agencies
  - Foster communication, collaboration, and cooperation to share and implement emergent best practices

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## BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

### ASSET MAPPING

- Identify community partners and the unique assets they bring whilst building a network
  - Create a catalogue of agencies and individuals, describing what skillsets and resources they offer

### PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING

- Create safe spaces for staff to share lived experiences
  - Foster mutual mentorship to co-create solutions to emergent challenges

### BUILD COMMUNITY

- Leverage assets through facilitation of **cooperation, collaboration, and coordination** of agencies and individuals
  - Ensure partners have a safe space to bring forward their unique skillsets and services

## NETWORKING ONLINE

Networking is an essential method of connecting with professionals across industries, geographies, and services.

Networking is a tool commonly associated with seeking employment but settlement and integration practitioners can utilize networking in their day-to-day practice to:

- Build knowledge of professionals and the services they can provide for newcomers
- Co-create and share best practices utilized in the sector

Employment practitioners can build their networks in a multitude of ways such as:

- Sending out informational outreach emails
- Joining professional networking sites such as LinkedIn
- Participating in online communities and reading blog posts from employment agencies
- Attending live virtual events and conferences
- Maintaining an online presence

Adapted from: ALIS: The Importance of Networking.

## VOLUNTEERING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE

### Volunteering & Relationship building

- Volunteering in the virtual space allows prospective newcomers to build relationships with prospective employers by:
  - Identifying their **transferrable skills** through relationship building with clients, understanding their previous history (work experience, volunteer experience, hobbies, and extra-curriculars)
  - Creating an environment to **build and grow professional networks**
  - **Building digital literacy skills** relevant to the virtual workplace
  - Identifying **new employment opportunities** outside of physical geography constraints
  - Allowing newcomers to **sample new industries** they previously may not have experience in

