TORONTO NORTH
Local Immigration
Partnership

NewTO
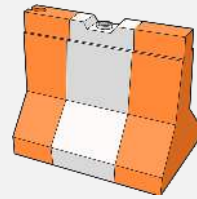
Navigate nearby public services on a map

ACCESS TO TECH SERIES: EXPLORING THE NEWTO APP
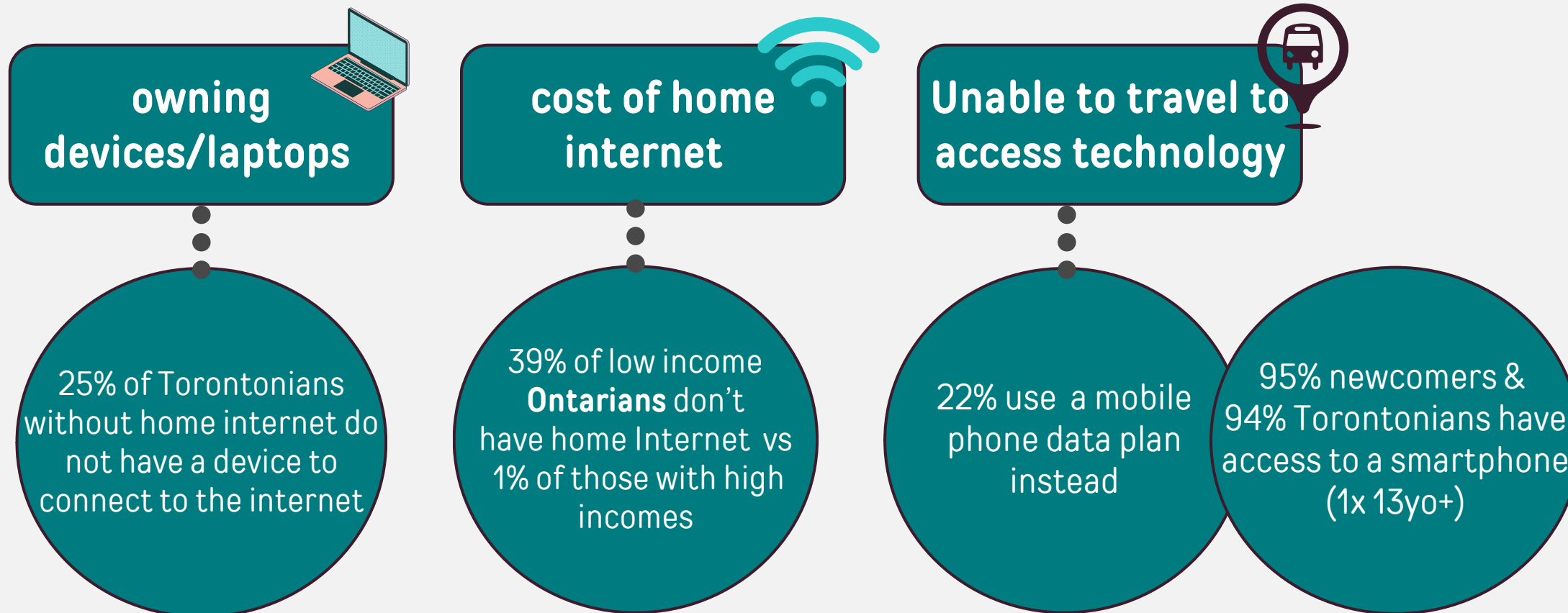
Presenter: Astha Priya, TNLIP Technology and
Community Development Coordinator

The Issue

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34% of **Toronto households** are worried about paying their home internet bills with rates of worry greatest among low-income, newcomer, single parent, Latin American, South Asian, Black and Southeast Asian residents.

Barriers to accessing technology among Toronto newcomers:

owning devices/laptops

cost of home internet

Unable to travel to access technology

25% of Torontonians without home internet do not have a device to connect to the internet

39% of low income **Ontarians** don't have home Internet vs 1% of those with high incomes

22% use a mobile phone data plan instead

95% newcomers & 94% Torontonians have access to a smartphone (1x 13yo+)

32% are not aware of free settlement services (IRCC, 2023)

Newcomers prefer to access settlement information online more than any other format

Phone ownership can be a cost-saving alternative for households to access the internet in comparison to incurring costs of an internet subscription in addition to owning the appropriate internet-enabled devices (e.g., computers, laptops, tablets).

The Solution: NewTO Mobile App

"A mobile app that puts the 211 database of community services into the hands of newcomers in Toronto"

The How: Partnerships

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TNLIP Partnership Council
- Identified the need
- Guided development of app features and content
- Provided app testing and feedback

Newcomer Advisory Council
- Input into app design and function
- App testing and feedback

TNLIP Project Coordinator

TNLIP Team
- Contract management
- Developer relations
- Budget management
- Partner relations
- Strategic direction
- App testing

The Developers
- Requirement gathering
- Full stack code development
- Front end design
- Problem solving with 211
- Debugging
- Google Play Store and Apple Store
- Users, data collection, and reporting

211 Central
- 'Front door' to the complex system of human, social and health services
- The NewTO App uses the 211 application program interface (API) to access the rich data on newcomer focused services

The Path Taken

2018
Need identified; data spreadsheet developed; developer hired; 1st version app launched at Newcomer Day 2018

Developer staff changes...

2020
Feedback from PC - some data not showing up; business consultant hired to be the link between the TNLIP and developer

2021
2nd version of the app developed; need for additional data identified; project coordinator change

2022
Revised contract with developer onboarding new project coordinator

2023
Data agreement signed with 211; challenges with developer

2024
New technology partner; app launched on Google Play and Apple Store

User log in removed; debugging; promotion starts

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The Data

Children Employment Services Newcomers Food Seniors Care Classes Transportation Language

data trading agreements

HSIS - Human Service Indexing System (bilingual Canadian Taxonomy of Human Services)
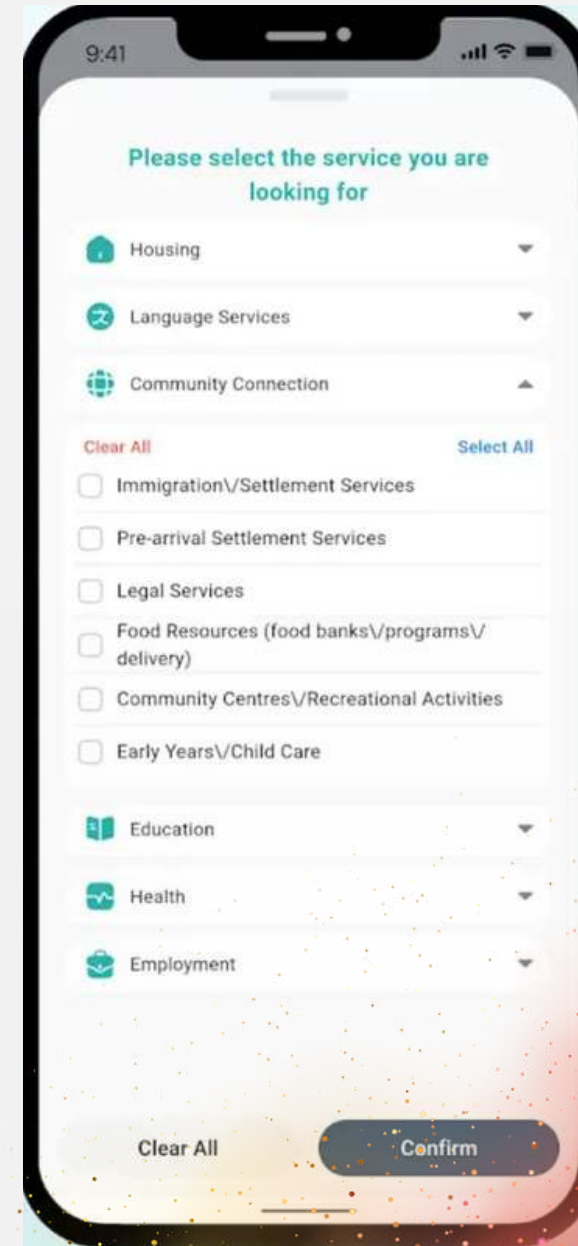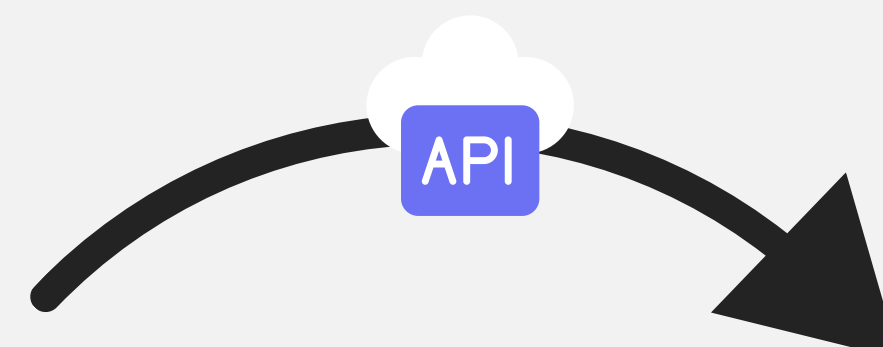
211 Central
Serving Toronto and Durham, Peel and York Regions
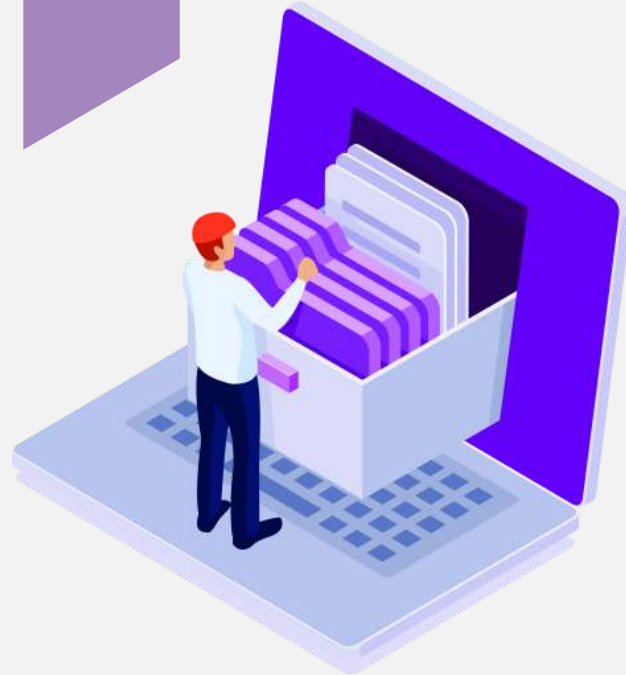
Taxonomy Codes
FT-3425.5600
LT-8950
LT-1985
PH-8500
PN-8100.4500-400
PS-8200.2350
RP-1400.8000-260
RP-1400.8000-805
RP-1500.1400-400
TC-5500.4000
TD-1600.3100-400
YK-6500.4050
YS-8500
YT-2400
YX-0300.0125
YX-0300.0185
YZ-4530

API

9:41

Please select the service you are looking for

Housing

Language Services

Community Connection

Clear All   Select All

Immigration\/Settlement Services

Pre-arrival Settlement Services

Legal Services

Food Resources (food banks\/programs\/delivery)

Community Centres\/Recreational Activities

Early Years\/Child Care

Education

Health

Employment

Clear All   Confirm

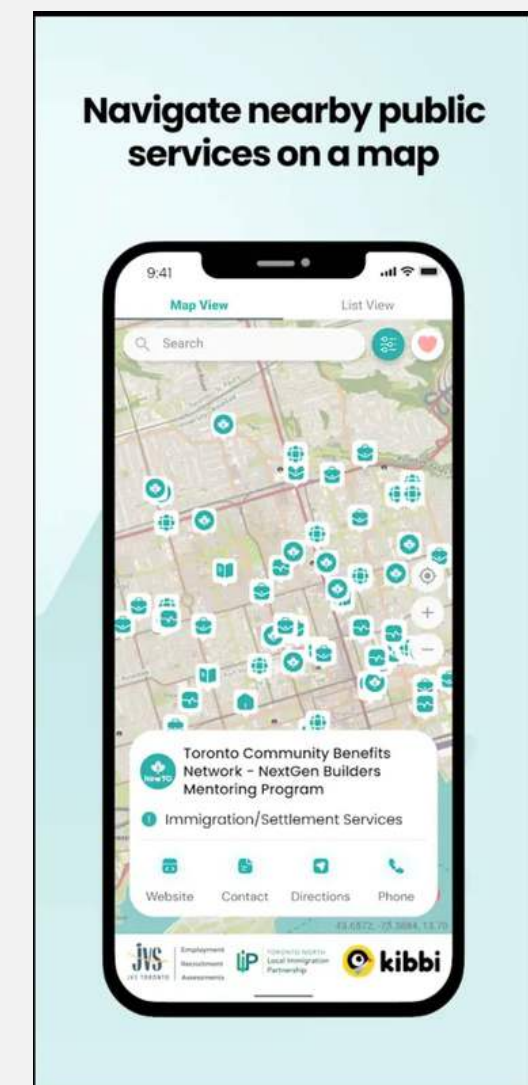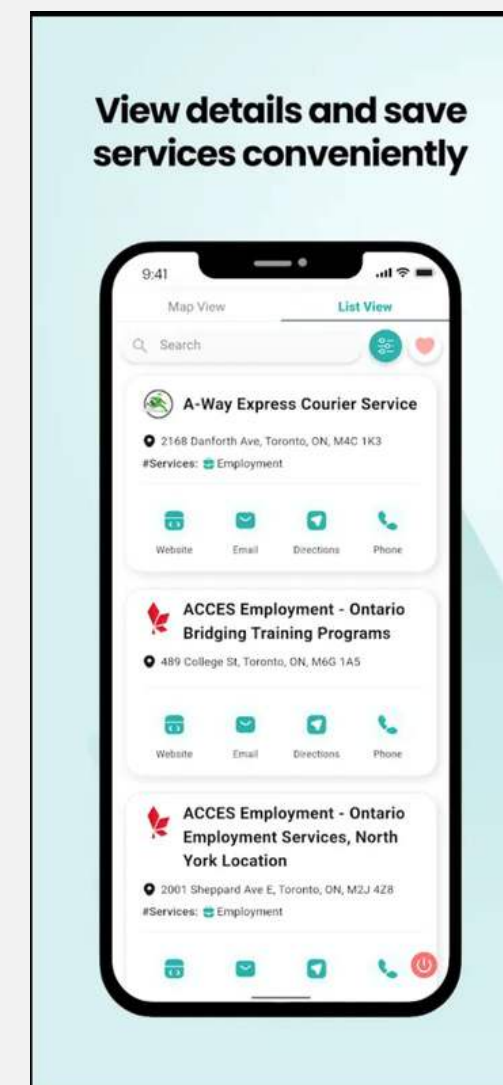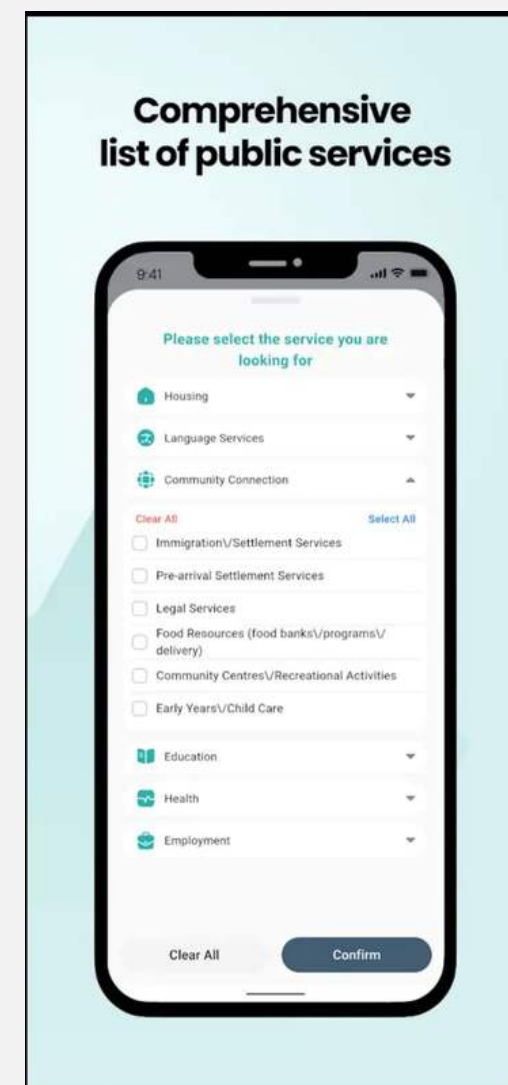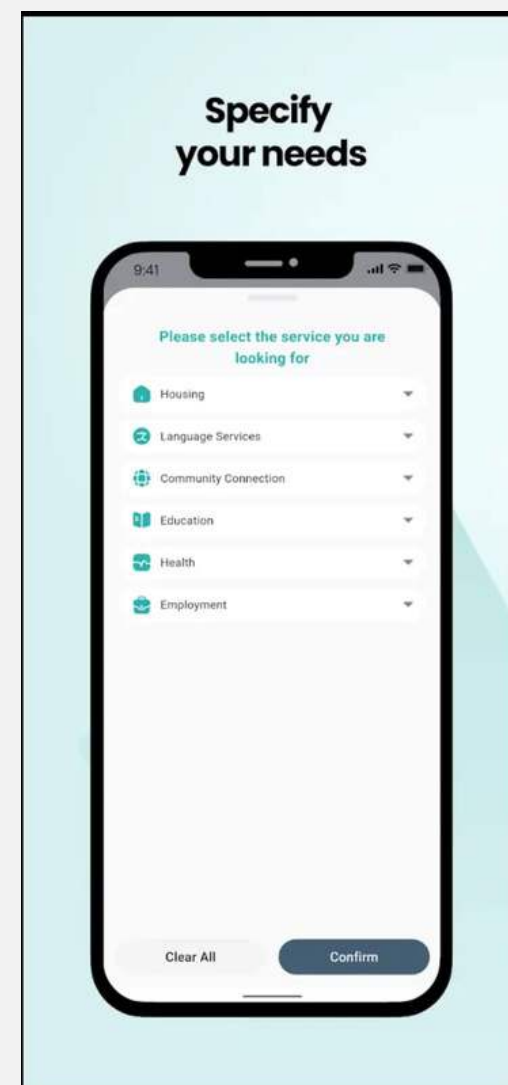## TORONTO NORTH
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683 Unique Taxonomy Codes

6 categories

50 subcategories

2,450 results!

The App

"A mobile app that puts the 211 database of community services into the hands of newcomers in Toronto"

NewTO App Video

Post Launch

To Do List

Privacy and Data Usage Policies

Build awareness of app

Have and implement a promotion plan

Get users; gather feedback

Get maintenance support

Shop for and secure hosting

Form an advisory group to inform adoption and use of the app

Knowledge transfer plan - "Train the Trainer" Sessions

The Impact

Newcomers
- Eliminates barrier to using 211 website
- Provides more categories of services for newcomers
- Quick and easy access on smartphone
- Search across multiple categories - different icons
- Results displayed on a map in relation to users' locations
- Reduction in travel time and costs

Service Providers Users
- Providing additional support to help newcomers easily and quickly find local services
- Update information on the 211 website
- Service coordination with other SPOs in vicinity facilitating better referrals
- Enable the delivery of itinerant services (SWIS, Libraries)

TNLIP Team
- Demographic Information, e.g. immigration status, and main needs of app users - we are newcomer-centered and specific in service provision

Lessons Learned

- Importance of choosing the right technology partner (understanding non-profit SPOs)
- Importance of documentation and project management of the app development to keep all parties accountable
- Importance of allocating costs and efforts for Post-Launch and App maintenance

Future Potential

- Including (more) grassroots and faith communities
- Natural Language Processing and use of AI to enable keyword vs taxonomy search
  - 211 Canada App API
- Greater research on app use and implementation - has the app increased use of services and positively supported settlement service providers?