



MANSO

MANITOBA ASSOCIATION
OF NEWCOMER SERVING
ORGANIZATIONS

Lessons Learned

Settlement & Integration Consultation

Executive Summary – June 29th and June 30th 2016



Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Between November 4th, 2015 and the end of March 2016, the Federal Government brought 26,140 Syrian refugees to Canada. Manitoba received 928 of this number. 83% were Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), 13% Blended Visa Office Referred (BVORs), and 4% Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs). (A small number of GARs from other countries also arrived during the same period, as well as many families of PSRs from other countries).

All of the GARs that arrived during this period settled in Winnipeg (766). Winnipeg also saw the arrival of 37 Syrian PSRs and 37 Syrian BVORs, and the communities of Dauphin, Morden, Winkler, Altona, Kleeferld, Steinbach and Arborg also welcomed BVORs. Families have since arrived (or are expected soon) to Brandon, Carman, Portage la Prairie, Clondeboye and Steinbach.

To ensure their smooth reception and integration across our Province an unprecedented level of coordination and collaboration took place between three levels of government, the settlement umbrella organization (then MIRSSA), the two RAP providers, other Settlement Service providers, Private Sponsorship Agreement Holders, ethnocultural and faith community groups and the general public through volunteering and donations. IRCC also made several funding innovations including adding a new RAP pilot in Brandon.

MANSO was asked by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada Western Region to convene a lessons learned meeting for Manitoba, after some Service Provider Organizations expressed an interest. A planning committee was formed in May 2016, which built on a framework developed for similar events in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

On June 29th and June 30th 2016 these key stakeholders and the wider settlement community came together to discuss lessons learned, best practices and challenges faced during the resettlement initiative and how these findings can be used to ensure successful integration outcomes for these Syrians and all refugees and immigrants who settle in Manitoba.

DAY ONE included representatives of those organizations directly involved in the initial resettlement of Syrian refugees. These included RAP agencies, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), ethnocultural and faith community groups, the Province of Manitoba, and other key service providers.

OBJECTIVES FOR DAY 1:

- Take stock of lessons learned from Syrian refugee resettlement initiative in Manitoba
- Look forward to strategies for building a more responsive refugee resettlement system
- Envision future planning and coordination efforts for refugee resettlement

Key Themes

Key themes that emerged from the Initial Settlement Break-Out Discussions: Clear lines of communication at all levels of coordination and among multiple stakeholders are critical and will continue to be going forward. The wide variety and range of settlement services being accessed by newcomers requires ongoing commitment to sharing best practices and innovative approaches to planning and collaboration.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordination & Collaboration

- Continue existing coordination mechanisms, including multi-stakeholder coordination table and MANSO conference calls and working groups
- Immigration Partnership Winnipeg and MANSO to continue convening opportunities for information-sharing between ethnocultural and faith community groups
- Prioritize coordination around employment supports for refugee newcomers with low English and French skills and/or little formal education
- Explore ways of engaging dental practitioners in responding to increased needs

Provincial Government

- Confirm provincial supports for housing, including continuing the provincial rent subsidy program and/or adjusting the policies around Rent Assist so that it offers better support to refugee families, as well as continuing to maintain the provincial housing inventory
- Pro-actively engage with Employment and Income Assistance, RAP providers and other settlement stakeholders to plan for “Month 13” and the transition of some families to EIA supports
- Explore ways of expanding the capacity at BridgeCare Clinic and/or engaging their expertise in planning for alternate strategies. Engage the Regional Health Authorities in educating physicians about refugee health needs

MANSO & Service Providers

- Collaborate with Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) on more resources for sponsor groups in Manitoba, to possibly include a “Made in Manitoba” sponsor guide and/or bulletin board
- Work together on developing common needs assessment and settlement planning processes for RAP providers and other service-providers, as well as convening learning opportunities for service providers to better understand privacy legislation and policy, in order to facilitate the referral process

- Look for opportunities to partner with ethnocultural and faith community organizations, and engage them in planning and service delivery
- Strategize on ways to communicate about real and perceived inequities between cultural groups

IRCC

- Ensure that pre-arrival orientation is offered to all refugees, and that the orientation offers realistic expectations about life in Canada (including finances, housing, etc.)
- Develop protocols for sharing better data about the arrivals of privately sponsored refugees with provincial governments and the settlement sector. Build on approaches used for Syrian refugees for all refugees
- Align RAP programming to eliminate disparities between groups of different nationalities (in transportation loans, eligibility for IFH). Help RAP providers and settlement sector develop strategies for communicating around these disparities
- Ensure that sufficient settlement funding is provided to RAP agencies to allow them to offer ongoing settlement support to clients
- Add support to RAP budgets for bus passes for youth to allow them to access key support programs
- Offer more education tools to health providers nationally to encourage primary care physicians to register with IFH (and increase number of available practitioners)
- Expand IFH coverage to cover interpretation for all 10 possible sessions with psychologists and increase the number of sessions that can be paid for by IFH
- Increase the pre-arrival medical information available to RAP providers, especially for those with complex needs in order to allow more preparation time
- Continue to work with CMAS on streamlining regulations as much as possible for Care for Newcomer Children (CNC), while still maintaining children's safety

Funders

- Continue supporting umbrella organization

with coordination capacity

- Offer support for specialized employment programming for low-benchmark refugee clients
- Ensure that specialized supports for clients with disabilities are available, as well as specialized mental health services
- Offer financial support for supports offered by the ethnocultural and faith community groups

DAY TWO focused on service providing organizations, researchers and other stakeholders, as well as many of the participants from Day 1. The scope for Day 2 was much broader with a focus on collecting input on trends and needs, as well as future sector planning and coordination. Participants were asked to not only reflect on the Syrian refugee response but to examine the implications of the Helping Immigrants Succeed (H.I.S) strategy for their programs and organizations. The H.I.S strategy is a Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) strategy developed to ensure Immigrants understand life in Canada and experience inclusion, a sense of belonging, and life satisfaction, having fully realized the social and economic benefits of immigrating to Canada. Canadians embrace immigrants and their contributions to building communities and a prosperous Canada. This will be achieved through stronger partnership in the following areas:

- **On Social Connections**, the plan endeavors to strengthen the social networks of newcomers and foster welcoming communities.
- **On Official Languages**, efforts will focus on strengthening collaborative efforts to facilitate awareness of, and access to language learning opportunities by newcomers outside of, and not immediately destined for, the labour force.
- **On Employment Fit/FQR**, efforts will seek to strengthen employer engagement to facilitate newcomers' labour market integration. The plan will also seek to improve immigrants' awareness and usage of services for employment and foreign qualification recognition, both pre-arrival and in Canada. This work will be closely coordinated with the FPT FQR Working Group.



OBJECTIVES FOR DAY 2

- Collect input on settlement trends and emerging needs
- Inform stakeholders on the Helping Immigrants Succeed (HIS) strategy and engage in structured dialogue on how these three areas will be addressed moving forwards
- Share information on funding opportunities and current research on settlement & integration outcomes
- Envision future sector planning and coordination efforts



Key Themes

Key themes that emerged from the Day 2 Plenaries

Communication and collaboration are key, as is evidence to support funding requests especially data recorded in iCARE. Resources are limited and will be allocated according to proof of need. Health and mental health came up in several presentations, especially the need for interpretation via IFH. Innovative and collaborative solutions to employment programming supports for clients with low levels of language were discussed. Provincial involvement in housing issues is critical, including a central housing registry and evaluation of the Rent Assist program. Youth were highlighted as a population facing additional barriers to integration, as was the minority francophone immigrant population, especially when joining the labour market. Engaging public and private support in newcomer integrations strategies was considered key. The need for clear data about settlement across the province was highlighted as were the additional barriers for those settling in rural areas to accessing language and health supports.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Language

- Mental health issues are affecting language training. Wrap around care for clients and staff must be provided to ensure best language outcomes
- Increase Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) programming and investigate innova-

tive alternatives for mothers for whom child care is a barrier

- Expanding best practice of linking language training with parenting programming
- Increasing options for continuing language training while working

Social Connections

- Increase financial support and involvement of ethnocultural and faith community groups to enable them to reduce social isolation in their communities
- Adaptations to programming to meet client needs, including interpretation, curriculum adaptation, trained volunteers
- Consistency of funding for rural programming to ensure service offerings are available wherever newcomers settle
- Transportation subsidies, especially for youth, are key to allowing newcomers to access available critical social supports
- Support host family initiatives that will lessen newcomer dependence on funded service providers

Labour

- Encourage relationship building between SPOs and employers in order to assist newcomers with successful integration within the workplace
- Expanding capture of labour outcomes to include underemployment (different NOC code from country of origin), temporary position as a step to long term career goals, and medium and long term follow up after an employment intervention
- Encourage employers to include language learning at work options in order to improve workplace integration, career planning, employment maintenance and enhancement
- Keep focus on Qualification Recognition as key in long term integration and employment success


FACILITATION AND NOTETAKING

Facilitation of the event was a combined effort by MANSO staff, board members, and membership. Notetaking was provided by

four University of Manitoba masters students under the supervision of Lori Wilkinson of Immigration Research West (IRW). MANSO staff also undertook some of the notetaking responsibilities during the plenaries and during question and answer sessions.

FOLLOW UP

Following the two-day event, MANSO convened a conference call for service providers who were unable to participate at the event in-person. Input collected from that call was also included in this report. We thank all of the participants for their input and we look forward to hearing more challenges and solutions as the conversation continues.

 **Tweet activity**

MANSO @mansomanitoba
Refugees need ongoing, timely orientation. They cannot absorb all the information in the first two weeks. #mansoconsult

Impressions240

times people saw this Tweet on Twitter

Total engagements5

times people interacted with this Tweet



