Day 1 Resettlement – Session Summary

This summary is a longer version of the information included in MANSO’s summit report.

Most session presentations are available on the MANSO website.

Plenary Presentations: Resettlement Update

Presenters: Elizabeth Orton, Assistant Director of Refugee Affairs via distance (IRCC), Arisnel Mesidor (SAH Association), Abdi Ahmed (Immigration Partnership Winnipeg), Marta Kalita (MIIC), Boris Ntambwe (Accueil Francophone), Wendy Petersen (Westman Immigrant Services)

In this session, an update on the Resettlement Assistance Program was followed by brief presentations on highlights and challenges from key representatives in the resettlement process. Elizabeth Orton provided an update on RAP, outlining recent or proposed policy changes and promising practices. Arisnel Mesidor discussed RAP from a Sponsorship Agreement Holder perspective and highlighted its unique implementation in Canada. Abdi Ahmed then emphasized the importance of collaborating with ethno-cultural communities in the resettlement process. Winnipeg RAP providers discussed the need to be proactive in informing PSRs of available services and of the importance of collaboration in addressing the complex needs of traumatized refugees. Finally, Brandon RAP provider Wendy Peterson explained a unique initiative where sponsorship groups support GAR families while waiting for PSR arrivals.

Discussion Points

Elizabeth Orton

- As a result of the RAP Review, there have been recent increase in RAP rates and some service changes. In addition, there are proposed changes to the Immigration Loans program, which will eliminate interest charges, defer start of repayment period from 30 days to 1 year, and reduce monthly installments by extending loan term by two years.
- Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a promising international collaboration in private sponsorship.

Arisnel Mesidor

- Canada is unique in the world for its government collaboration with RAP.
- Private sponsors play an important role. Blended Visa Office Referred Program has been popular in Canada, particularly with Syrian arrivals, and more private groups, particularly churches, have been involved in refugee sponsorship.
- Still, RAP rates need to be more adapted to real cost of living. Private sponsors have had to add money each month for sponsored BVORs families to survive.

Abdi Ahmed

- Ethno-cultural communities play a key role in resettlement process. It is vital to pursue best practices in creating pathways that include these key players.
- Further discussion on collaboration in upcoming workshops and evening session.

Marta Kalita

- Volunteer Matching Program has exceeded expectations and target numbers.
Welcome Place aims to have regular orientation session for PSRs and BVORs to inform them of available services. However, IRCC must be more proactive in addressing information gap that results in limited access to service for PSRs and BVORs.

Boris Ntambwe
- Refugees arriving from war-affected areas can face health issues that require multiple appointments. This can be overwhelming for clients and staff. Collaboration and engagement among organizations has been encouraging and effective in addressing such challenges. This approach should also be taken in addressing barriers to employment for traumatized clients.
- Reiteration of the importance of constantly reviewing RAP programs to increase RAP rates.

Wendy Petersen
- In a unique informal initiative, Brandon sponsorship groups have started supporting GAR families while they are waiting for PSR families to arrive. This initiative benefits GAR families with support in day to day living, as well as social and emotional support.

Recommendations
- Maintain the unique practice of BVOR program which has been popular among Canadians and permanent residents
- Regularly review RAP rates to ensure they are adapted to the reality of the cost of living
- Promote the role of ethno-cultural community groups (ECGs) in settlement and integration by creating clear partnerships and pathways with ECGs
- Maintain and expand regular conference calls by MANSO and other key players, and generally improve collaboration, to overcome multi-barrier issues by communicating about new information, best practices, and outcomes
- IRCC must be more proactive in addressing information gap that results in limited access to services for PSRs and BVORs

Discussions

Collaboration on Standardized Needs Assessments
Presenters: Representative of Resettlement Assistance Programs, Mary Basta (Aurora Family Therapy Centre), Heather Rochon (Family Dynamics), John Biles (IRCC)

This discussion outlined the current processes and preliminary results of needs assessments for Government Assisted Refugees in Manitoba. Felicien Rubayita presented on the three standardized needs assessment tools developed jointly by Manitoba’s three RAP providers with support from MANSO. Mary Basta discussed Aurora Family Therapy Centre’s psycho-social needs assessment and Heather Rochon explained Family Dynamics’ well-being needs assessment.

Discussion Points
- For Welcome Place, initial, follow-up, and final needs assessments are an integral part of their services since they help monitor settlement and guide referrals. Eg. Referrals are made to employment SPOs for adults/older youth who have indicated they are interested in seeking employment. The collaboration between RAP providers is beneficial in that it allows them to
identify gaps and share best practices to improve on their services. Primary challenges are a lack of staff and time, both to carry out assessments and manage data, as well as a lack of effective data management for the large amount of information generated.

- Family Dynamics’ Wellbeing Assessment Pilot Project originated with the goal of enhancing case management and support for Syrian refugees. The focus on practical and emotional well-being assessments had similar benefits to RAP assessments in terms of informing and referring clients as well as identifying gaps and trends. Determining the optimum timeline for assessment, and doing the assessment without an established a relationship with the clients, were particular challenges. Potential future directions include reassessing the effectiveness of all the assessments, adjusting for optimum timing, and increasing collaboration between all service providers.

- Aurora Family Therapy Centre’s psychological needs assessment started as a pilot project focused on Yazidi refugees but has since been expanded to all GARs. Partnerships and referrals are an important part of this process. Aurora has monthly case management meetings with partners and collaborates with N.E.E.D.S. Inc. to assess children. The six-month follow-up assessment highlights that, while some families are doing better at this point, others are confronting challenges that were not evident at the initial assessment.

- IRCC is considering a national standardized needs assessment. It envisions a system in which all newcomers that come to Manitoba have their needs assessed and those who need more intensive support are referred to more intensive case management.

- The ideal scenario is that needs assessments and settlement plans are given to newcomers to take with them so that they do not need to repeat the question process.

Recommendations

- Share RAP needs assessment tools with all Manitoba SPOs, and assess interest and willingness to collaborate on standardized needs assessments for all newcomers (non-GARs).

- Share collected data on RAP dashboard to offer opportunities for collective analysis of trends, gaps and successes.

Collaboration between Private Sponsors and Service Providers

Presenters: Wendy Petersen (Westman Immigrant Services), Ermias Yoseph (Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council), Gelila Hailu (Refugee Sponsorship Training Program), Daniel Awshek (Philadelphia Eritrean Church Constituency Group)

This discussion looked at current and potential collaboration between private sponsors and service providers. Ermias Yoseph and Gelila Hailu jointly presented an overview of key stakeholders, best practices, gaps, and priority actions for private sponsorship. Wendy Peterson discussed collaboration in the context of a smaller centre while Daniel Awshek shared his lived experience as a former refugee and talked about priorities from a constituency group perspective.

Discussion Points

- The different roles and responsibilities of sponsoring groups and IRCC funded SPOs are sometimes vague. This creates confusion as to who should provide what services and may result in PSRs getting duplicated services or no services at all.
• There is no streamlined process for PSR referrals. This is connected to a lack of data sharing on how many PSRs are arriving and how many are accessing SPOs.
• In Brandon, delayed processes and delayed arrivals have led to a reduction of interest and withdrawal of donations from expectant sponsors. It is necessary to reach out to keep these people engaged and supportive, potentially through additional support to GARs. There is also a need for improved coordination and communication, particularly in terms of arrival times.
• From a constituency group perspective, sponsorship starts before arrival, often while refugee families are still in camps and intending to apply, so groups need assistance in preparing a successful application. Processing times also need to be improved to facilitate successful sponsorship. More statistics, tracking refugees from the point of their application to their granting of citizenship, would help identify gaps in the system.

Recommendations

• Continue to improve collaboration between MANSO, RSTP, and SAHs.
• Clarify IRCC definitions of roles and responsibilities for sponsorship groups and SPOs. Include this in RSTP training sessions for sponsorship groups.
• Streamline referral processes for PSRs/BVORs. Hold joint meeting between sponsorship groups and SPOs to discuss available settlement services and how both parties can partner to deliver services. Include referrals to SPOs on the Settlement Plan checklist of sponsor’s responsibilities.

Refugee Claimant Eligibility and Supports

Presenters: Samir Sarem (Community Supporter), Abdi Ahmed (Immigration Partnership Winnipeg), Ghezae Hagos (Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council), Sarah Paquin (Rainbow Resource Centre), Louise Simbandumwe (Refugee Public Awareness Coalition)

This session was an opportunity to discuss supports for refugee claimants in Manitoba. Anna Bird discussed how current government and frontline agency working groups, notably the Federal Provincial Territorial Forum of Ministers and the Ad Hoc Provincial Inter-Governmental Task Force on Irregular Migration, are communicating to address issues like hearing backlogs and work permits. Ghezae Hagos Berhe of Welcome Place and Sarah Paquin of the Rainbow Resource Centre spoke about the increase in claimants seeking services and the various supports they are providing, notably paralegal and pre-hearing support. Abdi Ahmed spoke from the perspective of the Somali community on how the community at large has been stepping up to provide services. Finally, Louise Simbandumwe presented the Refugee Public Awareness Coalition’s document Bread and Borders, a toolkit to support service providers and the general public in contributing to constructive public dialogue regarding claimants.

Discussion Points:

• 60-80 clients per month have been coming through Gretna and total asylum claims were 1125 by the end of October 2017. Welcome Place and Rainbow Resource Centre have seen a significant increase in refugee claimants seeking services. For Rainbow, this is not only due to more people crossing the border but also an increased awareness of the ability to make a claim based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
• Refugee claimants face many unique challenges. They are not eligible for IRCC funded settlement services. Individuals face a huge amount of work to prepare for a hearing in an unfamiliar place, and there have been significant delays in hearings as well as determinations.
There are challenges and risks to individuals being idle while they wait in limbo and do not have a social role here. There have been long delays in receiving work permits although this appears to have changed.

- Welcome Place and Rainbow outlined the range of services they offer. Paralegal services are an essential service provided by Welcome Place and funded by the Province. Rainbow provides intensive prehearing support, including counselling and psychosocial assessments, since many refugees do not know how to put words to their experience of gender and sexual identity.
- The community at large, particularly ethno-cultural communities, has been stepping up to provide housing, take in unaccompanied minors, provide translation, serve as co-signers for rental agreements, and help establish identity for some of the claimants.

Recommendations

- Support organizations with diversified funding to provide services to refugee claimants.
- Continue to advocate for more resources to be allocated to the Immigration and Refugee Board to provide quicker hearings and determinations.
- Advocate for mothers who give birth to a child while waiting for a hearing in order to help them navigate systems where the child, born into citizenship, is eligible for services but the mother is not.

Workshops

**Refugee Housing and Comprehensive Supports: Research**

Presenters: Ray Silvius (University of Winnipeg), Jill Bucklaschuk (University of Guelph), Sally Nelson (New Journey Housing), Wendy Petersen (Westman Immigrant Services)

This workshop featured research on the need and potential for comprehensive supports linked to refugee housing. Ray Silvius and Jill Bucklaschuk presented recent research on refugee housing in Winnipeg. This was followed by responses from service providers Sally Nelson and Wendy Petersen, who work in different housing contexts. The session concluded with a brief discussion on key gaps and priority actions for refugee housing in Manitoba.

Discussion Points

- Housing challenges are not only a question of available funds. A sense of stability and community are also fundamental to low-income people. It is important to reframe housing stability as a key goal and consider how this is influenced by factors beyond budgets.
- While it is vital to invest in social housing, it is also important to engage with and improve the private market. Developing partnerships with landlords, and better understanding their choices under the Manitoba Residential Tenancies Act, is a necessary part of this process.
- It is important to communicate with newcomers in order to manage high expectations about housing. This could be done through pre-arrival information as well as communication with ethno-cultural communities who play a supportive role in settlement.
- IRCOM provides a strong model of refugee housing with wrap-around supports. Research on the long-term impacts of this model would be valuable and could support the development of similar initiatives.
Recommendations

- Shift language to focus on housing stability, rather than simply affordability, in order to emphasize the need for comprehensive supports.
- Engage with the private market and develop partnerships with landlords to understand their priorities and decisions.
- Develop pre-arrival information and communicate with ethno-cultural communities to attenuate newcomers’ housing expectations.
- Develop a study on the long term impacts of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) model to support the development of similar initiatives.

Supporting Staff who are Exposed to Trauma

Presenters: Carl Heaman-Warne (Aurora Family Therapy Centre), Alfred Koineh (Mt. Carmel Clinic), Geoffrey Thompson (Occupational Health Centre)

This session focused on what workplaces, including refugee-serving organizations where staff are frequently exposed to trauma, can do to support the mental health of their employees. The Occupational Health Centre (OHC) provided information on mental health in the workplace, the new National Standard on Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace, and ways OHC can assist the settlement sector to create psychologically healthy and safe organizations. Carl Heaman-Warne and Alfred Koineh shared ideas about good organizational practice in supporting staff who are exposed to trauma, as well as warning signs of vicarious trauma.

Discussion Points

- It is important for employers to take a “big picture perspective” on supporting the psychological health and safety of workers. Addressing workplace factors for mental health requires a shared commitment to an ongoing preventive approach.
- A prevention approach includes effective policies, good workload management, manager training, staff education, and change management. Policy should reflect an ideal of respect for people in workplaces. The way policy is implemented is key, including building in spaces for reflection and having management actually demonstrate an open-door policy.
- Vicarious trauma is a result of empathy. Settlement workers can be particularly vulnerable due to their high level of commitment and compassion. To take care of individual risks factors, one must learn to recognize various symptoms of vicarious trauma. Encouraging self-care and a balanced lifestyle are important.
- Healing and resilience also comes through collective support- joining around shared values, motivations, and goals. Developing a culture of reflective practice, in which staff can engage in reflection on their work in a supportive and safe environment, is key. For example, at team meetings, leaders should ask questions that open up space for reflection and build trust. Eg. “What was the most meaningful/challenging part of the week, and why? What more can we be doing to support the struggles you are having?” Other strategies include helping staff dealing with complex issues, anticipating boundary violations, and recognizing milestones encountered by staff.
• It is important that leaders model vulnerability in these spaces and are open about their own struggles, for example with case scenarios and success stories.
• Having reasonable and manageable caseloads is a fundamental consideration.

Recommendations

• MANSO to continue offering opportunities for dialogue and learning about vicarious trauma.
• IRCC and PNT umbrellas to potentially engage in dialogue on case load norms for workers.
• MANSO to work with Occupational Health Centre in offering opportunity for organizations to explore and implement holistic approaches to psychological health and safety in the work place.

The Refugee Employment Development Initiative (REDI) as Promising Practice

Presenters: Stuart Schwartz (Red River College), Marvin Marcial (Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology), Tina Barkman (Friesen’s Publishing), REDI Participant (Manitoba Start), Johsa Manzanilla (Skills and Employment Partnerships, Province of Manitoba)

This workshop was an opportunity to reflect on promising practices from the REDI pilot as an innovative program to address meaningful employment for low CLB refugees. Red River College Language Training Program and the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology presented on lessons learned as language training stakeholders for the project. Altona employer Friesen’s Publishing discussed the successes and challenges of the project as a result of their collaboration with Opportunities for Employment, another key program stakeholder. Finally, a program participant shared her personal perspective on the opportunities created through the REDI project. This participant spoke of an increased sense of confidence as well as an increased understanding of Canadian workplace culture. Throughout the presentation there was an emphasis on the collaborative nature of the project, both within and beyond the sector, as an example of the interconnections vital to successful integration.

Discussion Points

• Collaboration among REDI program stakeholders was key. These organizations assisted one another with language training, connections to employers, and opportunities to share best practices. Collaboration between the federal and provincial government was also essential since this co-funding model opened up required language and skill-specific training.
• The program assists newcomers in the transition between income support and employment and creates an opportunity for service to new client groups.
• Employers have specific concerns, such as worker safety and the link to language skills or religious practice. It is crucial to understand the needs of industries and the labour market, build and maintain strong employer-stakeholder relationships, and respond to employer feedback throughout the project.
• Managing participant expectations before and throughout the course of the program is also essential. Changes in job-matching, health concerns, priorities, and life circumstances can all affect the participant’s experience and eventual employment. There is a need for programs to adjust their decision making in real time to account for these challenges.

Recommendations

• Continue to invest in, develop and refine the REDI model to meet the needs of this client group.
Ensure comprehensive wrap-around supports for clients to increase the likelihood of success.

Develop a tool to measure client suitability, including factors such as existing technical or vocational skill-set, motivation levels, physical capability, and possession of a driver’s licence.

Continue current efforts to expand the REDI project model into a rural context.

Resettlement Roundtables

Each group focused on key gaps and priority actions within a specific topic. Key questions were:

- What are three key gaps that we would like to collectively address?
- What are priority actions to address each gap?
- Who should be part of the process? What are next steps?

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<th>Health, Mental Health, and Disability</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Gaps</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Overall lack of accessible appropriate mental health services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of services for specific demographics including newcomer youth, newcomer seniors, refugee claimants, and service provider staff experiencing vicarious trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of culturally appropriate services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of long term trauma counseling</td>
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<td>2. Newcomer children and youth under 21 with developmental disabilities face major barriers in accessing provincial services in the school system</td>
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<td>• E.g. Children’s disABILITY Services and Community Living disABILITY Services.</td>
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<td>3. Referral pathways for mental health services are cumbersome and circular</td>
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<tr>
<th>Priority Actions</th>
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<td>1. Overall lack of accessible appropriate mental health services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• IRCC needs to look at settlement and resettlement as holistic, therefore funding mental health services beyond current levels</td>
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<td>• MANSO and IPW to jointly look at funding alternatives E.g. Winnipeg Foundation, United Way, City of Winnipeg, private sector, faith based organizations</td>
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<td>ii) Partners</td>
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<td>• Involve the private sector around employment and mental health</td>
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<td>• Develop list of doctors/ psychologists/ psychiatrists who would be willing to donate their time</td>
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<td>iii) Collaboration</td>
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<td>• Develop a community of collaborative practice and share case studies</td>
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<td>• MANSO and SPOs to provide support to increase capacity of regional SPOs</td>
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<tr>
<th>Housing Supports</th>
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<td><strong>Key Gaps</strong></td>
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1. **Overall lack of adequate housing**
   - The government is not investing in social housing and the private market is not adjusting to provide low/mid income housing options

2. **Challenge of navigating transition from supplemented/subsidized income and/or housing to non-supported income and/or housing**
   - Supports exist but clients are not aware of how to navigate them

3. **Lack of awareness/communication re: available supports and training to navigate this transition period**
   - Training exists but clients and many service providers are not aware of it

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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Overall lack of adequate housing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research Residential Tenancies Act to determine its influence on availability of adequate low/middle income housing in private market (anticipate implications of national housing strategy)</td>
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<td>- Increase role of IPW in cross-sector research such as this, thus increase links with the city and province</td>
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<td><strong>2. Challenge of navigating transition</strong></td>
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<td>- Continue to expand training for all newcomers on how to navigate transition away from financial support</td>
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<td>- Improve institutional memory by decreasing staff turnover rates linked to unpredictable funding</td>
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<td><strong>3. Lack of awareness/communication re: available supports and training</strong></td>
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<td>- Increase role of MANSO as a community connector and centralized database</td>
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<td>E.g. Elaborate on MANSO community service map to develop checklist for community partners, including employers and EAL teachers</td>
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<td>E.g. Continue collaboration with Right to Housing Coalition, Winnipeg Rental Network</td>
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<td>- Promote awareness of MANSO as a central information source, with publicity through media engagement and advertising</td>
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**Family Reunification**

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<td><strong>1. Limited routes to Family Sponsorship</strong></td>
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<td>- Some economic immigrants have no pathways since they do not earn enough money to sponsor and their family member is not eligible to come through skilled worker pathway</td>
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<td>- Affects settlement outcomes due largely to concern for, and lack of additional support from, family</td>
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<td><strong>2. No opportunity to bring in non-immediate family</strong></td>
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<td>- Close extended family can have different cultural significance and in situations of war can often be the equivalent of parents or children to resettled refugees</td>
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<td><strong>3. No flexibility in 1 Year Window program</strong></td>
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<td>- Family members are not included in initial application often due to misinformed advice or presumed deaths</td>
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<td><strong>1. Limited routes to Family Sponsorship</strong></td>
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• Continue Supervisa program to allow parents to visit and assist with childcare and social supports
• Base immigrant selection on social/education assets more than financial assets or prearranged jobs
• Increase investment in higher level EAL so not just wealthy migrants can reach full potential
• Fund SPO staff to support PRs and new citizens with family reunification pathways and paperwork

2. No opportunity to bring in non-immediate family
   • Open up categories for family members to include other family members who are the direct responsibility/parent or child equivalent of newcomers
   • Allow for flexibility in trauma-affected families Eg. Birth parent/grandparent still in country of origin with a child but being with extended family is safest place for child

3. No flexibility in One Year Window program
   • Improve pre-departure orientation and efforts to block misinformation
   • Allow people to add family members to initial application if they can prove the connection

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### Key Gaps

#### PSRs and BVORs

1. Overall communication between federal and provincial governments, sponsor groups, and SPOs
   - E.g. Communicating new arrivals to communities and SPOs
2. Understanding privacy concerns
3. Lack of central place to streamline PSR, BVOR, and Group of 5 arrivals

#### Priority Actions

1. Overall communication
   - Strengthen collaboration between Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), SPOs, and MANSO
   - In RSTP checklist, include links to MANSO and SPOs and tailor list based on sponsor group location
   - Connect with newcomers immediately and follow-up in 30-60 days

#### Employment

1. Overall issue of underemployment
   - Challenge for newcomers to find employment that supports them and their families and that is in their chosen field, resulting in people working multiple jobs or staying on EIA out of necessity
2. Challenge of transition from GAR/PSR or EIA support to employment without supports
3. Challenges with language and understanding of Canadian workplace culture

#### Priority Actions

1. Underemployment
- Focus on participatory career plans
  E.g. Build off of REDI model with more emphasis on engagement in articulating employment goals and areas for skill/knowledge development

2. Challenge of transition from GAR/PSR or EIA support to employment
   - Lobby governments so supports like IFH (Interim Federal Health) and EIA Health Benefits can follow newcomers into the workplace for a number of months until they are established

3. Challenges with language and understanding of Canadian workplace culture
   - Provide funding to develop workplace integration program model

### Youth

**Key Gaps**

1. Overall challenge of coordination for youth supports
2. Overall lack of services and programs for youth
   - Lack of services for refugee youth outside of core areas of Winnipeg
3. Limited pathways for older youth
   - Ongoing challenges and insufficient school system resources for older youth with low official language levels and/or literacy needs
   - Lack CLB 5-7 classes for older youth in order to be able to access provincially funded adult education programming
   - Lack programs for youth graduating with e-credits
4. Related issues and challenges
   - Gang involvement and related issues with addiction, mental health, sexual health
   - Sexual health issues and lack of education for youth and parents
   - Lack of parenting programs for young adults
   - Fear and reluctance of bullied youth and their parents to reach out to teachers

**Priority Actions**

1. Overall challenge of coordination for youth supports
   - Develop tools for youth needs assessments and referral pathways
   - Improve understanding and collaboration between private sponsors and SPOs
     i. Include youth on a checklist for private sponsors
     ii. Facilitate mutual learning between sponsors and SPOs
2. Overall lack of services and programs for youth
   - Explore good practice in enriching after-school programming
   - Develop volunteer programs in collaboration with local businesses
3. Limited pathways for older youth
   - Encourage school divisions to implement division-wide strategies
   - IRCC fund more CLB 5-7 classes for young adults
4. Related issues and challenges
   - Continue discussions on gang prevention strategy
   - Develop resource to educate parents on sexual health, potentially including a curriculum with specific lens for Muslim families, and develop parenting programs for young adults
- Provide supports to encourage communication between youth, parents, and schools about challenges like bullying