Provincial Needs Assessment: Improving Refugee Resettlement in Alberta
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. About AAISA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Acknowledgements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Executive Summary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Inventory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Introduction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Resettlement in Alberta</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory of Programs and Services for Refugees in Alberta</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Results</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee Resettlement Needs</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Employment</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGDM</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Citizenship</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs and Services Offerings in Alberta</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Centres</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Centres</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Trends</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational and System Capacity</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Capacity</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Service Offerings</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Capacity</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Discussion and Summary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Inventory</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Action</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Appendices</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Bibliography</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Endnotes</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAISA</td>
<td>Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGDM</td>
<td>Age Gender Diversity Mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVOR</td>
<td>Blended Visa Office-Referred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELBAN</td>
<td>Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLBA</td>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLBLA</td>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLBPT</td>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAR</td>
<td>Government Assisted Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBA+</td>
<td>Gender-Based Analysis Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELTPA</td>
<td>Enhanced Language Training Placement Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILVARC</td>
<td>Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment – Referral Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRCC</td>
<td>Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRPA</td>
<td>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFHP</td>
<td>Interim Federal Health Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAP</td>
<td>Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSW</td>
<td>Job Search Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARCC</td>
<td>Language Assessment, Referral, and Counselling Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINC</td>
<td>Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSR</td>
<td>Privately Sponsored Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAP</td>
<td>Resettlement Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAH</td>
<td>Sponsorship Agreement Holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWIS</td>
<td>Settlement Workers in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPO</td>
<td>Service Provider Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN CESCR</td>
<td>United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. About AAISA

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) is a regionally and nationally recognized leader in the settlement and integration sector. As an umbrella organization, AAISA’s mandate is to build sectorial capacity by providing member agencies that serve newcomers access to relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities, to act as a liaison with stakeholders, and provide a centre for knowledge, expertise, and leadership. Our member agencies provide services to assist newcomers in becoming fully integrated members of Alberta society. Examples of services include orientation, interpretation, counselling, employment services, educational assistance, and programs for immigrant youth.
II. Acknowledgements

AAISA would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals, organizations and funders for their contributions and support:

Government of Alberta

The individuals and departments that shared their experience, insight and financial support of this project.

AAISA Staff and Volunteers

Caroline Hemstock, Deniz Erkmen, Joe Crowther, Kylee van der Poorten, Lusine Harutyunyan, Milton Alfonso Ortega, Pradnya Yadav, Sahar Safder, Stephanie Kot and William Mansfield.

Focus Group and Survey Participants

The individuals and organizations that shared their time, experiences and expertise with this project.

Layout and Design

True Market Design

Suggested Citation

III. Executive Summary

With the financial support of the Government of Alberta, AAISA undertook a provincial needs assessment from February to May 2016. This needs assessment examines the current and future resettlement needs of refugees, the programs and services that support their success, and existing organizational and provincial capacity in order to better understand resettlement and develop recommendations that will enable organizations to support refugees as they successfully settle and integrate in communities across Alberta.

The results of this needs assessment are based on a mixed-methods approach which involves a comprehensive review of literature, online survey, program and service inventory, and focus groups. Through this approach, key insights and recommendations were generated, which can serve to guide decision making on refugee resettlement at both the policy and program levels. This report is intended to be a strategic resource for Resettlement Assistance Program Providers, health providers, settlement and integration SPOs, Sponsorship Agreement Holders, funders, public institutions, and community organizations.
Key Findings

Needs

The findings of the assessment reveal that positive refugee resettlement experiences result from holistic programming which is designed to meet clients’ needs and that is attuned to the barriers and challenges of settling and integrating in a new country.

Assessment participants indicated that the top five refugee needs in Alberta were the following, ranked in order of importance:

1. Language,
2. Housing,
3. Health,
4. Social Integration, and
5. Employment.

The report also examines legal, citizenship, and Age, Gender, Diversity and Mainstreaming (AGDM) needs. It was found that there were many overlapping needs, such as childcare and accessibility, across each identified area. The research also confirmed that needs vary from client-to-client and that considerations of age, gender, and diversity should be made within the context of each area.

i ) Diversity refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics. While the age and gender dimensions are present in everyone, other characteristics vary from person to person. These differences must be recognized, understood and valued in each specific context and operation in order to ensure protection for all people.

ii ) The UN Refugee Agency adopts an Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and operations. The objective of AGDM is to reveal gaps and inequalities in protection, and address shortcomings with targeted actions for disenfranchised groups.
Service Inventory

Overall, the service inventory highlights that Alberta offers a variety of programs and services that strongly reflect the basic needs of refugees, such as language and employment, which have already been identified in other Canadian research.

The service inventory catalogued 1,484 services and programs across Alberta. Nine service areas were examined in the inventory:

1. Children and Youth,
2. Community,
3. Core Settlement,
4. Employment,
5. Health,
6. Housing,
7. Initial Reception,
8. Language, and

Key findings from the inventory demonstrate a rural-urban divide in services, with a clear concentration of services in Calgary. Additionally, the number of Language and Employment offerings greatly outnumbered services in other areas in both Calgary and Edmonton. Rural centres, on the other hand, revealed a greater concentration of services supporting social integration.

Capacity

The assessment found that the outlook on organizational and system capacity to meet the needs of refugees in Alberta is positive, but that there is room for improvement. Respondents reported several strengths that enable them to meet the diverse and complex needs of refugees, such as: collaboration and relationship-building, communication and information sharing in rural areas, adaptability, and quality staff. The findings also speak to the challenges faced by respondents, such as financial sustainability, communication and information sharing in urban areas, coordinating standardized services to promote uniform outcomes when delivering programs and services to meet the needs of refugees.
Recommendations

Participants outlined the following as the most critical areas where stakeholders involved in refugee resettlement in Alberta can improve to better meet the needs of their target population: building capacity; client-centred programming; collaboration, communication and information sharing; community connections; and standardization and coordination.

**Building Capacity** refers to the need for organizations serving refugees to have the sustained capacity to provide high-quality and responsive programs and services. Some of the recommended actions revolved around increased financial support, examining current funding models, and supporting the attraction and retention of qualified staff.

**Client-centred Programming** highlights how programs and services can be responsive to the needs of refugees. Specific strategies include increasing flexible and informal programming, first-language services, culturally-sensitive programing, free childcare, and availability of pre-arrival services.

**Collaboration, Communication and Information Sharing** illustrates how stakeholders can actively engage with each other to promote efficient programs and services to meet the needs of refugees. A centralized database, networking opportunities, and committees were some of the key actions gathered from this research.

**Community Connections** discusses the key approaches to building a welcoming and inclusive province and fostering long-term integration. Specific actions include increasing the use of cultural brokers, community engagement events and initiatives, and wrap-around services.

**Standardization and Coordination** explores the recommendation of developing and implementing a shared strategic vision to meet the needs of refugees in Alberta. The findings indicated that some of the ways in which this could be accomplished is through the sector working more closely with all levels of government, creating shared frameworks, and identifying leading practices to inform models of service delivery.

Ultimately, the research identified that organizational and sectorial enhancement can be accomplished by building on existing capacity and leveraging the strengths of current programs and services.
IV. Introduction

Background

Canada has a long and inspiring history of welcoming refugees to communities throughout the country. In 1951, the United Nations created the Convention on the Status of Refugees of which Canada and 25 other states were signatories. This Convention, as well as the federal Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) guide refugee resettlement policy and practice. The principle objective of the IRPA, as it pertains to refugees, is to provide humanitarian assistance, protection and safe haven to persons facing persecution and statelessness, as well as to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Due to the serious and protracted nature of refugee displacement worldwide, refugee movement has become a persistent feature of global politics. In fact, refugees are increasingly unable to access long lasting solutions, with many living in refugee camps and dependant on humanitarian aid with limited opportunities for self-sufficiency or integration. Research suggests that these factors have resulted in a significant portion of refugees that have “severe psychosocial and physical health concerns, limited or no labour market skills, little or no formal education, and for children: greater developmental challenges.”

In late 2015, the federal government responded to one of the most severe international forced migration crises by initiating a plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees. This historic collaboration among international, federal, provincial and local partners from diverse sectors has called attention to the experience of refugees and their resettlement journey in communities throughout Alberta. Since 1980, Alberta has welcomed a total of 39,412 refugees with an average of 1,126 per year resettling in the reception centres such as Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge. Following the fall announcement to resettle 25,000 refugees before the end of the 2015-16 fiscal year, Alberta welcomed 3,395 refugees by March 31st, 2016. This number represents a significant increase of approximately 66% from previous years.
As refugees resettle in Canada based on humanitarian factors, studies have found that they face distinct challenges when integrating. In fact when refugees are admitted to Canada, key indicators of their ability to settle and integrate to society, such as language skills, are not assessed. This proves to be a contrast against other immigrant categories, such as skilled workers and family class applicants, who are required to prove their capacity for successful settlement and integration. As a result, refugees may experience added challenges during their resettlement journey. To mitigate these barriers, tailored services are vital in facilitating and enhancing refugee settlement and integration.

When resettling in Alberta, refugees are met by approximately 244 organizations offering over 1,400 services that are intended to support and positively impact their integration into Canadian society. While programs and services are an important part of this process, settling and integrating into Canadian society is a process that involves both the organizations that serve refugees and the refugees themselves. The desired outcome of integration is inclusion and the active participation of refugees in society.

The majority of refugees coming to Alberta will go through a settlement and integration process. This process begins at initial reception and may last 18 or more months. The following map outlines the key phases for refugee movement and resettlement in Alberta’s provincial system of care. For detailed program and services listings available for refugees across Alberta, consult AAISA’s service inventory at:

---

iii ) Government Assisted, Privately Sponsored, or Landed-in Canada categories are evaluated based on the criteria of their need for Canada’s protection.

iv ) When discussing the settlement and integration of refugees into Canadian society, many indicators are used as measures of success. Examples include but are not limited to labour force participation, income, home ownership, wealth, language skills and use, education, social capital, physical and mental health, marital status, and attitudes.

v ) The majority of resettling in Alberta are Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs).
Refugee Resettlement in Alberta

When refugees come to a new community in Alberta, they will go through a resettlement process that can last up to 18 months. Professional organizations and service providers such as Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Providers work extensively with refugees during the first phase of their resettlement journey to help orient them to life in Canada and to set them up for success. In the second phase, refugees are supported by additional services that are designed to meet their unique needs and to assist them in learning Canada’s official language, finding employment, and integrating into their communities. The following infographic outlines the key phases for refugee resettlement in Alberta.

Phase 1  (1st Day - 6 Weeks)
Initial Reception

01 Airport Reception
Welcome to your new city
- Arrival and Welcoming
- Assistance with Immigration Process
- Distribution of Winter Clothing
- Transport to Temporary Accommodation

02 Reception Facilities
- Welcome and Orientation: Accommodation, Food, and Emergency/Safety
- Temporary accommodation in Reception Centres or Hotels
- Distribution of Incidental Allowances
- Distribution of household items
Refugees are referred to additional programs in their community to support their individual needs. These programs include:

- Refugee Childre Enhanced Integration Project
- Survivors of Torture Program
- Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)
- Language Training (i.e. Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians or LINC)
- Public and Catholic School Boards
- Mainstream Agencies
Phase 2  (6 Weeks - 18 Months)

Settlement

01 Core Settlement Services
- Information and Orientation
- Needs Assessment
- Outreach
- Settlement Planning
- Skills Training
- ISP Services

02 Language Services
- Settlement Language Training
- Bridging to Employment
- Bridging to Education

03 Employment Services
- Foreign Qualification Recognition
- Career Planning
- Labour Market Knowledge
- Essential Skills Training
- Technical Skills Training
- Job Search and Job Training
- Job Retention
- Self-Employment
04 Community Services
- Outreach
- Newcomer Information
- Orientation to Public Services
- Connections to broader community supports
- Bridging to Public Services
- Capacity Building for Public Services and Structures
- Civic Engagement
- Community Partnerships for Local Planning and Coordination

05 Support Services
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Crisis Counselling
- Provisions for Disabilities
- Loans and Grants for Newcomers

To access the inventory and find services near you, please visit: refugeealberta.ca/find
Rationale

AAISA’s mandate is to build the capacity of organizations that work with newcomers and refugees in Alberta. Accordingly, AAISA proactively addressed the necessity for up-to-date research on the existing programs and services available to all refugees through the Provincial Needs Assessment on refugee resettlement. For the purpose of this study, a needs assessment is defined as a “systematic effort to collect objective data or information that brings to light or enhances understanding of the need for services or programs.”

The assessment was conducted between February and May 2016. It aimed to better understand the need for programs and services designed to support refugee settlement and integration, and the corresponding organizational and system capacity in Alberta. For this reason, the primary focus of this research is to:

- Understand the existing settlement and integration services and sectoral capacity as it pertains to refugee resettlement needs;
- Examine existing programs and services already in place to support refugees in each city such as Resettlement Assistance Programs, health services, and language training, as well as other core settlement and support services while identifying gaps; and
- Generate evidence to guide decision-making and improve program and service planning.

As a strategic resource for a variety of stakeholders such as Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Providers, settlement and integration service providers, community organizations such as faith-based organizations, Sponsorship Agreement Holders, health providers, community members and funders, this needs assessment is designed to empower stakeholders with information that will guide decision-making on refugee resettlement policy and programming by:

- Improving service planning as settlement and integration service provider organizations work to support refugee settlement and integration during an influx of Syrian and other refugees throughout 2016 and beyond
- Empowering policy makers to allocate funding and design institutional supports with the needs of refugees in mind; and
- Providing evidence to support the design of a comprehensive refugee resettlement roadmap for Alberta.
V. Methodology

In order to undertake an exploratory yet comprehensive study that examines the programs and services available to refugees resettling in Alberta, this provincial assessment aligns with the comprehensive, multi-tier, targeted community needs assessment model. Referencing the practices outlined by Finifter, Jensen, Wilson, and Koenig⁸ and methods detailed by Soriano,⁹ the aforementioned model was chosen as it works to mitigate the limitations of the commonly used human services needs assessment tool. It also employs a mixed-methods approach that draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to generate information that is descriptive, personal and detailed while aiming to be generalizable and objective.¹⁰ The methods used to collect data include a literature review, program and service inventory, quantitative survey, focus groups and mixed-method analysis.¹¹

By employing this methodology, AAISA was able to gather a range of first-hand information on the needs of refugees resettling in Alberta as well as organizational and systemic capacity to provide programs and services that meet those needs. However, it should be noted that the assessment is not able to completely quantify each and every need, or all of the specific requirements and offerings of every service provider organization that work with refugees. This gap in knowledge could result from a combination of limitations of the needs assessment methodology. To lessen these limitations, AAISA engaged in the activities listed in Appendix I. Despite an intentional research design and the participation of diverse stakeholders through the survey and focus groups, the sample was not representative and therefore results must be interpreted with caution—they may not represent the experience and perspectives of all organizations serving refugees in Alberta.

Literature Review

The needs assessment began with a thorough literature review which analyses existing academic and sectoral literature. This review grounds inquiry in the relevant theoretical and contextual information, published within the last twenty years, related to the social, political, economic, gender and cultural considerations surrounding refugee resettlement specifically in Alberta. Sources of secondary data such as that collected by Statistics Canada were also examined in this phase. This was used to identify the size of the refugee population in Alberta and their demographic characteristics. Overall, the review of literature serves as the thematic basis for the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data through the online surveys as well as in facilitated focus groups.
Inventory of Programs and Services for Refugees in Alberta

As a way of understanding the existing system capacity in Alberta to meet the needs of refugees, AAISA created an inventory of programs and services. Inclusion in the inventory is based on the following criteria:

- Services/programs that are targeted towards refugees and/or Permanent Residents (PR)
- Services/programs that are Alberta-based

The inventory focused primarily on cataloguing the services and programs provided by AAISA members. Existing directories were also examined, specifically in the area of language and employment. Large organizations with well-established programs and services for refugees and/or PRs were also included, specifically in areas where the AAISA membership might be less involved.

Through internet research, the inventory gathered services and programs from the five (5) RAP centres, as well as from other common rural centre destinations, which are listed below:

- Brooks
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Fort McMurray
- Lethbridge
- Medicine Hat
- Red Deer
- Other Smaller Communities
The inventory also examined nine (9) main service/program areas:

- Children and Youth
- Community
- Core Settlement Services
- Employment
- Health
- Housing
- Initial Reception
- Language
- Support Services

These service/program areas were determined based on the categories outlined in recent research that mapped the settlement service system in Calgary. Initial Reception was developed as an area for the purposes of easily locating services/programs dedicated to newly-arrived refugees, such as RAP, airport reception and reception centres.

Responding to trends in specific services/programs as well as current research, sub-categories were also employed. A list of these sub-categories is provided in Appendix II. Assigning sub-categories to the services and programs facilitated the analysis process by enabling the in-depth exploration of areas with numerous offerings, such as Employment and Language.

---

vii ) People who are sponsored by the government or by a private group to come to Canada are known as resettled refugees. Refugees in these categories are granted permanent residency (landed status) when they arrive in Canada.

viii ) Services and programs from Airdrie, Chestermere, Cochrane, Drumheller, Grand Prairie, High River, Lethbridge County, Lloydminster, Okotoks, St. Alberta, Stony Plain, Strathmore, Taber, and Vulcan were also compiled.
As a complement to the qualitative aspects of the needs assessment, an online survey was conducted to gather more quantitative information from organizational stakeholders that provide programs and services to refugees across the province. The target respondent was management level staff at SPOs and individual sponsorship agreement holders involved in settlement and integration of refugees in all categories:

- RAP Providers;
- Settlement and Integration SPOs (in the areas of Core Settlement Services, Language, Employment, Community and Support Services);
- Health Providers; and
- SAHs.

Respondents were asked to answer thirty-four (34) open-ended and semi-structured questions.

To increase the number of stakeholders providing input on the survey, a snowball sampling method was used. This method entails engaging with a small group of accessible and receptive respondents who can then be engaged to recruit additional respondents who also meet the selection criteria for the needs assessment. The intention of using this sampling method is that a carefully identified initial sample leads to a more representative sample and higher participation rates. Stakeholders were asked to share the survey with others who would meet the criteria for participation. Overall, sixty-nine (69) organizations responded to the survey.

With the intention of gaining deeper insight, four semi-structured focus groups were held with organizational staff at the program and management level in the following areas of refugee resettlement:

1. Employment (n=9)
2. Health (n=10)
3. Housing (n=7)
4. Language (n=7)
Focus group participants were self-selected through the online survey and sign-up forms. Preceding the survey, an online sign-up form was shared digitally via social media, AAISA’s website and newsletter, and with other stakeholders that expressed interest in participating. Each focus group lasted one hour and was conducted online and with teleconference capability using the Adobe Connect platform. The confidentiality of all participants and associated organizations has been strictly maintained.

Analysis

The findings reflect a mixed methods approach to the analysis of data collected during the needs assessment. The analysis of qualitative data is aligned with the grounded theory approach. This approach is best understood as a method for analysis in which data collection, analysis and theory are closely related. That is, conclusions are grounded in data and the approach is iterative, which means that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and refer to each other.

Quantitative data was interpreted using univariate and bivariate analysis. The purpose of this approach to analysis is to capitalize on the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative data so as to generate information that is descriptive yet widely applicable to organizations that support the resettlement needs of refugees in Alberta. Qualitative data was interpreted through thematic analysis using a coding framework. To understand the quantitative data, the assessment used descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics describe the basic features of data in this study. This analysis is intended to provide easy to understand summaries of the quantitative information.

ix ) This approach is best understood as a method for analysis in which data collection, analysis and theory are closely related. That is, the development of theory is grounded in data and the approach is iterative, which means that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and refer to each other. Quantitative data was interpreted using univariate and bivariate analysis.

x ) Coding is a process by which data is labelled, separated, compiled and organized. The coding framework was developed through three complementary processes: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The process of open coding is designed to reduce, examine, compare and conceptualize data. Axial coding is a procedure by which data is regrouped in new ways after open coding by connecting data through context and other patterns. Lastly, selective coding is the refining stage when the core categories are chosen and other sections of data are refined in relation to these leading categories.

xi ) Univariate and bivariate quantitative analysis, using Microsoft Excel, focused primarily on the following approaches: frequency tables which provide the number of respondents and percentage of pertaining to each category for the variable being examine, diagrams such as pie and bar charts to interpret and understand data, and measures of central tendency such as means and medians which facilitate an understanding of the average distribution of a variable. Bivariate quantitative involves the analysis of two variables to examine and compare relationships between variables.
VI. Results

This section summarizes findings using all methods including the literature review, service inventory, survey and focus groups employed during the needs assessment. Thematically, the following section is organized around the information collected on refugee resettlement needs, available services, and capacity.

Refugee Resettlement Needs

Research on refugee resettlement in Alberta has been conducted by several prominent institutions, including the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration. This research examines services available to refugees in the province and their resettlement experiences from a sociological perspective. Experts discuss the variation of service and program offerings, uptake and demand from city to city, as well as refugee perceptions and the importance of addressing language and employment concerns. A key finding from Abu-Laban et al.’s 1999 study was that uptake of services varied in Alberta. While the majority of refugees access language training, housing, and orientation services, only a small percentage of refugees used such services in Calgary and Edmonton compared to other cities. Language services were found to be in high demand and believed to be an integral component of successful integration.

By and large, current literature addresses some of the challenges of programs and services as they relate to meeting the socio-economic needs of refugees. In general, refugees were least satisfied with employment-related services and over half of those that were secondary migrants emphasized insufficient employment or educational opportunities in the initial city of settlement. Social factors such as the presence of contacts from the same ethnic/cultural background and availability of places of worship are also significant factors reported by refugees when it comes to influencing their adjustment to new communities.
In light of the current literature, this study focuses on the following central resettlement needs to guide understanding of the programs and service offerings that support refugees in Alberta:

- Age, Gender, Diversity, and Mainstreaming (AGDM)\textsuperscript{15},
- Health,
- Housing,
- Language,
- Legal/Citizenship, and
- Social Integration.

AAISA’s survey discovered that respondents believe the most important needs that should be addressed by programs and services in Alberta are (in order of importance): Language, Housing, Health, Social Integration and Employment, followed closely by AGDM and Legal/Citizenship in fifth and sixth place respectively. The next sections will delve deeper into these priorities and how programs and services reflect them.
Language

Language is the bridge that connects refugees to community, employment and social services. Without the ability to operate in their new community’s official language, refugees are vulnerable to marginalization and isolation. It has been repeatedly shown in the literature that language training is critical to the successful settlement and integration outcomes of refugees.

Language acquisition is particularly important for refugees as they typically have lower official language skills than other immigrant classes. Since refugees are not selected based on their language ability like economic immigrants, refugees have been found to have the lowest Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) scores of all the immigrant categories. 80% of GARs who arrive in Canada have limited language skills in either of the official languages. 70% of Syrian refugees in particular have no language abilities in either French or English. As a result, it is not surprising that survey participants identified language acquisition as the most important refugee need in Alberta, with 82% of respondents rating language as “Very Important.”

Refugees can increase their proficiency in the English language by accessing either formal or informal training. Formal opportunities are typically provided by SPOs and academic institutions and provide instruction around settlement, employment, bridging to education, and literacy. One of the formal programs highly accessed by GARs is the Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians (LINC) program. Informal language training, such as conversation circles or drop-in ESL programs, is offered by a wide range of actors in the settlement system. Some of these players include: SPOs, faith-based organizations, community organizations and libraries.

However, refugees have several needs that should be reflected in the program design and delivery. The most common refugee needs for language training found throughout the literature and AAISA’s research has been the need for more language training offerings, low-literacy programming, and childcare provision.
Increased Services

Needs assessment participants confirmed the need for the development of more formal and informal language training offerings. The findings point out that language is the top priority among several program areas to address refugee needs. With language providers seeing long waitlists, it is not surprising that 82% of respondents advocated for the expansion of current language services.

Programs that Match Language Ability

Refugees usually arrive to Canada with low levels of comprehension in either of the official languages as well as limited literacy competencies. Refugees can be discouraged from utilizing available programming if they believe it is not matching their current language abilities, which may impact their integration in the long run. A Calgary informant confirmed this issue by stating that: “We do see refugees coming to some of our conversation circles and most of our conversation circles are at an intermediate level. So if they’re coming in with low literacy, they may come experience a program and understand that they are not at that level yet, so may not return.”

Childcare

Refugees are also in need of programs with complementary childcare offerings or instruction that is offered various times throughout the day. This is particularly important for refugee women who come from cultural backgrounds with traditional gendered divisions of labour in the family. One focus group participant would address this issue in the following way: “More informal types of language training would help so mothers can come with their children and not be stuck trying to find a caregiver.” The issue of childcare intersects across the different need areas, and will be further explored in the AGDM section.
Housing

Affordable and appropriate housing is frequently named as a prerequisite to integration in that it enables refugees to access other social and settlement services. The survey showed that housing is ranked as the second most important need by service providers. 74% of respondents ranked housing as “Very Important,” following closely behind language training.

In Alberta, GARs are supported by the Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program. The Program can last up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada and assists in accessing accommodation. Privately sponsored refugees receive housing support from sponsors while refugee claimants are not directly supported by the government. Among the refugee categories, housing vulnerability is highest for refugee claimants who arrive in Canada alone and are socially isolated.

The Canadian housing market is experiencing a period of unsustainable growth characterized by the overpriced real estate market and high levels of housing unaffordability. At the same time, affordable housing was devolved as a federal priority. This precarious situation has attracted international response.

In March 2016 the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR) released its ten-year review of Canada for compliance with International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. The Committee expressed concern for the persistence of a housing crisis, and recommended the state adopt a rights-based approach to housing. The Canadian Council for Refugees recognizes an overall shortage of suitable affordable units in major Canadian urban centres, which impacts refugees. Most recently, the Syrian influx drew public attention to the crisis. A proportion of GARs were housed in hotels in the five resettlement communities across Alberta until they could receive permanent accommodation. Participant also noted that a lack of affordable and appropriate housing backlogged the settlement effort in many cities. Encouragingly, this year the new provincial and federal governments have both responded with significant investments to affordable housing. In fact, the federal budget will inject more than $2.3 billion over two years into affordable housing measures. Provincially, the Alberta budget will spend $892 million over five years by investing in planning, building, and maintain housing for vulnerable groups; this will double spending in this area.

It is also important to note the unique features of refugees’ experience in the rental market. For this purpose, the results of a longitudinal study from 2006 to 2008 on refugee resettlement in Winnipeg are illustrative. Most respondents in the study were visible minorities and reported discrimination in the
housing market. Larger households were often passed over in these situations, and a range of other characteristics may also intersect and create a basis of discrimination, e.g. race, ethnicity, lack of references from previous landlords, and perception of "problematic tenants." Further research supports a lack of knowledge around tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities.

Accessibility

AAISA’s findings support the literature: the largest housing issues impacting this population are at the system-level, predominantly in the areas of affordability and accessibility. On the topic of an affordable housing crisis, a focus group respondent stated, “It is the whole system of subsidized housing...the system needs strategies to improve as a whole. It doesn’t just impact refugees. In that way, the strategy needs to be much broader and encompass all the people....”

Generally, participants noted that a lack of affordability has consequences for quality of life. They find it is a necessity for refugees to prioritize the cost of rent over other necessities including food. For example a housing expert commented that, “Housing has been and continues to be the biggest challenge for the people we serve. We are limited in the services we can provide to people regarding housing because the biggest issue is affordability. We do support people with budgeting orientations, referrals to the food bank, application and advocacy for subsidized housing, and dealing with landlord relationships.”

Accommodation Size and Requirements

Refugee families that do not conform to average Canadian household sizes experience even greater challenges in the housing market. Large families require larger accommodation and flexible housing requirements. However, there is limited infrastructure to support this need and the multi-bedroom rentals that do exist are too expensive. Moreover, Alberta housing regulations limit the capacity of people to share rooms, which means families are forced to acquire larger units even if they plan to have this type of shared arrangement (i.e. a mother sharing a room with her child). The impacts of these policies are exemplified by the recent experience of Syrian refugee families of which 43% arriving in Alberta are composed of ten to twelve (10-12) members. For Syrians, it is also common for extended family members to live together in a single dwelling. Similarly, single refugees have special housing needs, and often struggle to find adequate and affordable housing; one-bedroom apartments are proportionately more expensive per person than two-bedroom apartments.
Sponsorship Breakdown

Support for refugees who have experienced sponsorship relationship breakdowns was identified as a significant PSR need. Participants noted that when relationships breakdown, additional support is necessary and finding another sponsor is often difficult. In this unfortunate circumstance, refugees may experience a large financial barrier, and as they are unable to pay a security deposit on rent, may become at risk for homelessness.

Language and Culture

Respondents discussed the importance of increasing organizational capacity to provide case management and orientation when refugees have marked language barriers. For instance, refugees without language skills require extra support from settlement workers when signing rental agreements.

In addition, respondents expressed that refugees require assistance learning the cultural norms of living in an apartment or townhome in Canada. Examples of this may include understanding cultural perspectives, as well as bylaws associated with acceptable noise levels. Service providers equally emphasized the importance of managing the expectations of refugees around the housing and rental market. In the experience of settlement workers, there were instances in which refugees did not understand that a rental property was temporary.

Health and Safety

Participants communicated that there are health and safety concerns that must be addressed when seeking housing for refugee clients. By way of example, the presence of bed bugs was identified as a health and safety concern associated with rental housing. Bed bugs were encountered by refugees and became a costly and long-term problem managed by SPOs. A participant also indicated concern over some refugees renting in urban neighbourhoods with higher levels of crime because rental rates are not in line with assistance payments.
Social Housing

Finally, respondents identified that Syrian refugees will require access to social housing in the future; however, it was noted that few GARS have applied for social housing and prohibitive restrictions exist that limit access. For example, individuals who receive income support including refugees on RAP do not meet the low income requirement for social housing. This is especially challenging for GARs once the RAP program ends, because they are not able to benefit from social housing while they are receiving government support. It is only when the program ends that they may be placed on a social housing waitlist.

Health

The Public Health Agency of Canada lists twelve (12) key determinants of health, including but not limited to income and social status, education and literacy, employment and working conditions, social and physical environments, healthy child development, health services, gender, and culture. These determinants emphasize the vital role played by the settlement and integration sector in promoting newcomer health. In other words, the intersection of race, gender, identity, age, sexual orientation and immigration status points to the need to provide client-focused support for refugees’ well-being as they resettle in Alberta. This need has been recognized by the federal government through their recent reversal of changes that limited access to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). The IFHP provides refugees with limited, temporary, taxpayer-funded coverage of health-care benefits to protected persons, including Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), and refugee claimants.

Previous changes to the IFHP created differential access and health outcomes for refugees of all categories. It has been reported that both refugees and health care providers do not understand the complex coverage rules, which often leads to a refusal of service or the demand that clients pay up-front for costs that may be eligible for reimbursement. In Alberta, refugees have supplementary coverage if they are eligible for the Alberta Adult Health Benefit and the Alberta Child Health Benefit Program. These

---

xii ) The Interim Federal Health Program provides coverage to the following: protected persons, including resettled refugees; GARs who are or were receiving monthly income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program, Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program, Visa Office- Referred Refugees who are nominated for blended funding, Privately Sponsored Refugees who do not receive and have not received monthly income support through the RAP, Pregnant Women, Victims of Human Trafficking, Refugee Claimants, and certain other groups.

xiii ) Since only registered health care providers can access client file information with the IFH service provider, settlement workers are unable to assist their clients and their medical providers in interpreting the IFH system. Health care professionals and providers have equally been shown to demonstrate confusion and misunderstanding surrounding the IFH process and coverage.
programs provide benefits like access to prescription and non-prescription drugs, nutritional items, dental and optical care, ambulance services and diabetic supplies. Refugees who move to Alberta from other provinces often lose coverage they were able to access in other provinces.

As Canada continues to resettle a large number of refugees from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East where protracted camp situations are common, greater attention must be paid to health-related settlement and integration services. This includes support for mental health needs that are associated with the unique experience of refugees, such as trauma. Current research discusses the importance of refugee mental health and emphasizes that programs and services should be culturally appropriate and continue to evaluate and demonstrate reduction in symptoms over the resettlement process. Equally important, the Canadian Medical Association’s clinical guidelines for immigrants and refugees stress that forced migration, income levels, and limited official language proficiency increase the risk of a decline in health and must be considered in both the assessment and delivery of preventative care.

Based on the survey, health was ranked as the third most important refugee need with 69% of respondents ranking it as “Very Important.” As with other refugee service needs, the findings of this study affirm research that cites health as a key component of settlement and integration, particularly in the initial reception period of resettlement.

**Urgent Care and Initial Assessment**

The study findings point to the urgency of assessing and treating refugees’ immediate physical health needs as soon as possible, preferably within one week of arrival. The need to quickly transition refugees to long-term health care providers was also identified as a significant priority. One focus group participant attests to this: “We try and focus on an initial assessment, really addressing their most urgent physical health needs and to ensure proper screening is done based on where they are coming from... There are definitely urgent physical needs for refugees that are unique to the refugee population wherever they come from.”

The recent resettlement of Syrian refugees has highlighted the urgency of addressing these needs, particularly dental health concerns, by working collaboratively with other providers and community organizations.
Mental Health

The Canadian Council for Refugees asserts that “separation from family, loss of social support, language barriers, cultural adjustments and challenges in finding a home, work and community all contribute to stress and make a person more vulnerable to mental health issues.” The assessment complements the current literature’s marked emphasis on the importance of providing refugees with support in the area of mental health. A diverse range of organizations, not just those providing health care services, frequently commented on this requirement and the ways that programs and services are responding. One focus group participant observed, “It is important that mental health is addressed at some point and not overlooked in the resettlement process.”

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) emerged as one of the most common mental health challenges facing refugees. The Canadian Mental Health Association defines PTSD as a mental illness that arises from exposure to trauma. A refugee remarked that, “...since I came here, nobody talked to me about even [sic] post-traumatic stress.”

Overall, cultural values, assumptions and stigma play a significant role in how refugees and the organizations that serve them approach and respond to mental health. Consequently, organizations expressed the need for increased capacity to deliver services that improve comfort for refugees such as programs that are culturally-appropriate and offered in the first language by staff with training related to trauma and mental health.

Accessibility

A crosscutting issue identified during this research was the need to promote accessibility of health programs and services in a number of ways. Improved accessibility ensures that refugees do not face unnecessary barriers to receiving care and can navigate the health care system, which can often seem complex. In fact, a refugee commented that “... these are some of the challenges we are having by our people, actually accessing the proper medical care when they come here as refugees.”

xiv) The Canadian Mental Health Association defines PTSD as a mental illness which arises from exposure to trauma involving serious injury, death or the threat of death, or sexual violence.
The most significant issue noted by organizations was support designed to improve accessibility by reducing barriers for refugees. Accessibility was discussed in the following contexts:

- **First Language Offerings:** Offering care in the client’s first language through a variety of options such as multilingual staff or translation and interpretation services
- **Gender-Specific:** Providing care that is mindful of gender and expanding the number of female physicians and practitioners in communities across Alberta, especially in rural areas
- **Transportation:** Assisting refugees to navigate complex transportation systems and improving access to services in rural areas so that clients do not have to travel to urban centres
- **Refugee Specific:** Understanding the personal health issues related to clients who have been exposed to conflict, as well as the unique concerns of different refugee categories such as GARs, PSRs, BVORs and refugee claimants
- **Affordability:** Clarifying IFH coverage and advocating on behalf of refugees as they navigate the IFHP program. Organizations also identified the need to offer medical products and services at an affordable rate for those who do not have coverage

**Social Integration**

A number of programs delivered by SPOs support economic and cultural adaptation for GARs such as the Integration and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC), Job Search Workshop (JSW), Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), and HOST. HOST promotes integration as a “two-way street” where immigrants learn about Canadian values at the same time as Canadians understand the diverse backgrounds of newcomers. Research points out that this kind of “multifarious multiculturalism” may be another critical indicator of refugee integration in the Canadian context. Similarly, this demonstrates that integration can be best understood in a multicultural framework where migrants can hold onto their heritage and culture as well as a Canadian identity.42

This assessment revealed a number of ways that programming addressed social needs. As a first step in the integration process, some service providers offered courses in the same language as similar cultural groups and found this to be effective. They found that social support is helpful for refugees in the initial stages of adjusting to life in Canada. For example, a participant noted that, “We have the computer classes for Arabic speaking clients, because it’s less frightening for them when they are in their own cultural group. I know one of our goals is to get them out of their comfort zones and to get them to integrate, but I think at the beginning it’s very helpful.”
Respondents also identified that culturally sensitive programming is essential in creating cultural bridges and to assist with public education needs. For example, cultural brokers, members of the community who know the language and the culture are best positioned to educate on matters like dental care and mental health, and feel a significant need for communities. “We use these community members who actually know the culture, know the language, to go teach moms and children about dental care and how that is important to them. That is one of the fundamental things that we do.”

The assessment revealed that creating a sense of belonging among their clients is a priority for service providers in Alberta. The efforts of service providers enable refugees to feel welcome in Canada. One respondent explained their approach as follows:

> When we had a wave of refugees from Somalia, Sudan, and the former Yugoslavia at the same time, we had some funding options for them, and we never tried to create different classes only for them, they were always incorporated into existing programs, and that was quite a big success because they never felt they were different in any way than other people. It was a crucial approach, we had – everyone working together to help these people feel welcome in Canada.

Respondents find community engagement and workplace training to be significant in the development of a welcoming and accepting community environment for refugees. These avenues combat harmful myths against refugees. One participant recounted their experience, “We recently co-funded a symposium that invited the community to learn about anti-hate, discrimination in the workplace, dispelling myths about refugees, understanding cultural attire, so this work has been done on top of the regular employment programming and networking.” Finally, respondents identified matching refugees with established Canadians to be effective in connecting with the community, as it enables them to learn about Canadian culture while sharing parts of their own home culture with Canadians.

xv) Cultural sensitivity is defined as being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behaviour.
Access to Employment

While Canada’s refugee resettlement program is primarily humanitarian in nature, access to employment is a significant need among refugees. In fact, AAISA’s survey showed that employment is ranked as the fifth most important need by service providers, following closely behind social integration. In fact, 54% of respondents reported that employment was “Very Important” to refugees. As previously mentioned, employment and working conditions are key social determinants of health. In addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees finds employment to be a foundational indicator of short and long-term refugee integration. Successful transition to the Canadian labour force can be trying for refugees. Accordingly, a 2013 Review by UNHCR on the labour market integration of resettled refugees in countries like Canada, found there to be a “refugee gap” in terms of how refugees perform compared to other citizens and immigrant groups. Language barriers, difficulty obtaining Canadian work experience, and gaining foreign credential recognition are often cited barriers to labour integration. These barriers were reinforced by this assessment. There is a need to improve refugees’ ability to meaningfully participate in the labour market, especially in light of the potential impacts of the current economic downturn in Alberta.

Language Requirements

As shown above, language is the top priority for refugees and a bridge to employment. Some respondents would describe proficiency in language skills as a prerequisite to gain entry to the labour market, regardless of skill level. However, as one respondent suggests, refugees are able to circumvent this language barrier by, for example, working with local businesses that speak the same language. However, this approach has its disadvantages in terms of lost opportunity to build language skills in the long-term. Furthermore, literacy and computer skills were trends recognized among respondents with refugee populations. These skills may require upgrading to meet the demands of the Canadian workforce.

Canadian Credentials

In addition to language, respondents identified Canadian credentials and credential recognition as a core requirement to gain jobs in the areas where they worked in their country-of-origin. The focus groups revealed that the experiences of the Syrian influx will likely bring attention to this need among refugees. One respondent described the situation as follows: “In the last two months, the refugees who came to us, mostly government sponsored, [sic] eighty per cent of them are in trades from their home country. The problem is they are trades by experience, no formal education.”
The study emphasizes the importance of the provincial foreign credential recognition process, and the need to make it more accessible. This has the potential to help address skills shortages while increasing responsiveness to the employment needs of refugee populations. Interestingly, very few respondents surveyed provide programmatic support for this process.

**Canadian Work Experience**

Without Canadian work experience, refugees often experience difficulty competing in the labour market, contending with what respondents view as an “employer’s market.” They encounter prohibitive hiring processes, and at times reluctance among employers to hire employees who require more training. For example, as one respondent pointed out, the use of online applications among some large retail establishments can unduly hinder individuals with low language/literacy levels, as the requirements of the application process may actually be incommensurate with the skills needed to perform the job. Unfortunately, respondents also expressed that there may be a lack of awareness of key employment programs among employers. More employment bridging programs such as internships and co-op placements would be useful to “upskill” refugees, as well as stronger government relations with employers could help facilitate more opportunities for refugees to gain Canadian work experience.

**Current Employment Service Offerings**

![Diagram showing current employment service offerings](Figure II)
Trauma

Lastly, the impacts of trauma on labour market integration of refugees must be acknowledged. Respondents expressed the need for ongoing employment support not only for clients but employers. One respondent framed this issue in the following way, “We’ve been kind of focusing on getting them to work and I assume getting them into a survival job, it’s going to be a shock, because you know they’ve gone through a lot, we have to give employers and refugees ongoing support to do that.”

AGDM

The majority of the assessment focuses on the top need categories; nonetheless the areas of Age, Gender, Diversity and Mainstreaming (AGDM), and Legal/Citizenship are also significant in ensuring positive refugee resettlement outcomes. The UN Refugee Agency adopts an Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) perspective for the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and operations. The objective of AGDM is to reveal gaps and inequalities in protection, and address shortcomings with targeted actions for disenfranchised groups.

Similar to the UNHCR’s use of AGDM, the Government of Canada employs Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs or initiatives on diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys, taking into account gender and other identity factors, such as age, education, culture, ability, income and so on. Gender mainstreaming has been applied to immigration and refugee policies in Canada; however, research suggests it could benefit from greater application and consideration of intersectionality in its approach, as well as improved coordination across the settlement sector.

AAISA’s assessment measured for AGDM, which was ranked sixth among refugee needs. However, AGDM themes emerged across the focus groups on health, employment, and housing. Generally, it was noted by participants that there are tailored programs and services available in the settlement and integration sector, such as for LGBTQ refugees, but that there is a limited level of awareness of these offerings in the community. This section will explore some of the specific AGDM needs among Alberta’s refugee population.

---

xvi Diversity refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics. While the age and gender dimensions are present in everyone, other characteristics vary from person to person. These differences must be recognized, understood and valued in each specific context and operation in order to ensure protection for all people.
Age

Changing demographic trends in Canadian settlement and integration are characterized by increased levels of resettled youth arriving since the 1990s, while more recent refugee cohorts are younger. For example, half of all refugees in the Syrian cohort are below the age of 18 years old. As a result, it is important to understand young refugees’ specific needs. Refugees who are children and youth or elderly require tailored support to settle and integrate. Throughout the study, respondents expressed urgency to engage the refugee youth population in settlement services and the importance of addressing youth needs. Largely, they identified a general lack of targeted youth program funding. Additionally, one respondent called for intentional programming in collaboration with school boards, and another noted a need for greater refugee youth employment opportunities, as well as improved matching between youth skills and employer requirements. This last point is supported by research that finds lack of access to employability programs for GARs who are young adults, and challenges building their skillsets.

The research conducted by the Centre for Refugee Studies also demonstrated another noticeable trend with respect to seniors: the immediate elders who are refugees and have landed in Canada within five years fare far worse than any other immigrant class. Reasons for this include integration to the labour market being more difficult for this population due to limited use of English/French and/or fragile health. This research did not reveal findings related to this population except for a greater need for language training funding for seniors, as well as children and youth; hence this is an area that should be examined closer in the Alberta context.

Gender

Gender roles and gender inequality impact refugee needs in a variety of ways. The following summary highlights a number of key needs that emerged in this area. The United Nations recognizes that the inequality faced by women is exacerbated by displacement, and they experience increased levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Respondents emphasized the importance of programming to promote the understanding of definitions of domestic violence and abuse among refugees, as well as programming to support refugees who are victims of domestic violence. For example, one survey respondent described the work their organization had done to help a mother and two children settle and integrate after fleeing a domestic violence situation upon arrival in Canada. The organization provided culturally sensitive support, food and housing, while bridging the relationships with external service providers. In addition, they were successful in contributing to the safety, legal, housing and food security of this family.
Another key intersecting theme expressed by organizations was the need to support women by providing childcare. It was identified that the absence of this service is impacting women’s ability to attend orientation, language and skills training. Service providers indicated that it was available inconsistently across services. As a result, providers had adopted flexible programming options, while calling for more funding in this area.

Diversity

The importance of understanding the cultural backgrounds of refugees is also essential, and intersects with other forms of identity such as gender. Respondents found that flexible programming was essential to increase the participation in the settlement process and meet cultural needs. For instance, respondents offered programming with/for women only, and home visitor programs specifically for women, which have been successful in breaking the isolation experienced by refugee women. One participant explored this topic, reflecting that:

"Out of the culture, there’s some issues...women would not be pushed to go to school, or they will not even be allowed to go to school. They would rely mostly on their husbands or their children and we had quite a few success stories where these ladies managed to be really independent and actually find employment. So I think it’s crucial to make a point to remember that sometimes we have to kind of think in a different way of how to approach it so that everyone will have equal opportunities to access the services."

Another gap was identified by respondents with respect to the needs of refugees with disabilities. Overall, respondents expressed feeling ill equipped to meet these needs. For example, one private sponsor participant reported that an individual required housing without stairs. While they did their best to accommodate the request, ultimately a compromise had to be made.
Legal and Citizenship

Respondents consider legal and citizenship needs to be important to refugee resettlement, but ranked this area last. In fact, the need for robust orientation offerings was widely expressed by respondents. For GARS, orientation is performed by refugee reception centres that assist scheduled arrivals with health and social insurance applications; life skills training such as shopping, safety, and responsibilities; the opening of bank accounts; entering language classes; the search for permanent housing; and referral to other available settlement programs. Specifically, the need for strong orientation in the following areas was identified: general citizenship and community education, culture, law/rights/responsibilities, gender roles, and parenting for living in Canada. The course “You and the Law” offered by the Calgary Police Service was used as a successful example because it provided the opportunity to build trust in Canadian law enforcement among the Syrian population.

Broadly, concern was expressed by organizations over whether the orientation needs for PSRs are being adequately met in Alberta. One respondent said, “I think there may be a disconnect between these organizations...settlement agencies... and the PSRs. On the PSRs, I don’t know if every well-intentioned person who says they will help the refugees, I don’t know if they will have the knowledge or skills to orient the refugees that the GARS receive through the agencies.”

Although it was not mentioned by assessment participants, it should be emphasized that research proves that the initial task of paying back travel loans impacts refugees’ initial settlement process. Transportation loans were eliminated for Syrians, but no other countries of origin. Coupled with unemployment and language training tasks, some refugees’ circumstances make payment schedules unrealistic. For GARs, if an applicant is unable to pay for the cost of travel to Canada, the burden is covered via an immigration loan granted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Refugees are then expected to start paying these loans immediately after landing, which often puts them in debt upon arrival and hinders financial independence. In some cases, refugees end up re-paying the immigrant loan while on social assistance.
Programs and Services Offerings in Alberta

Overview

In addition to developing a baseline understanding of refugees’ needs from the perspective of service providers, the assessment also endeavoured to understand the landscape of available programs and services designed to support the settlement and integration of refugees and permanent residents (PRs) in Alberta. This was achieved by gathering 1,484 offerings across Alberta from 21 municipalities and 244 organizations. Analysis also focused on AAISA member agency (SPO) offerings, as well as services in each location and Alberta as a whole. On the whole, the inventory revealed a rural-urban divide in services, with a clear concentration of services in Calgary. For the purpose of this study urban centres are defined as areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants, with an urban core of at least 50,000. Examples of urban centres in Alberta include Calgary and Edmonton. Rural centres are classified as those with less than 100,000 inhabitants. Example of rural centres include the municipalities of Red Deer, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. Table I provides the distribution of the services collected for the inventory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>SERVICES GATHERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort McMurray</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethbridge</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine Hat</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Deer</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I
The inventory catalogued settlement and integration offerings according to 9 key service areas: Children and Youth, Community, Core Settlement, Employment, Health, Housing, Initial Reception, Language, and Support. It was found that from the services collected, the largest concentration of programs was in Language and Employment, both of which are commonly listed as funder priorities. Employment programs seek to promote economic well-being and self-sufficiency through access to employment opportunities and language programs supporting both economic and social integration. Figure III illustrates the distribution of service categories available in Alberta, based on the services gathered for the inventory.
All of these categories play a crucial role in the social and economic integration of refugees and are part of the larger settlement system. Multiple actors, including SPOs, academic institutions, community organizations, faith-based organizations, the public sector, and other non-profit organizations, provide services within these categories to meet the needs of refugees in Alberta. SPOs not only provide Core Settlement and Initial Reception services for refugees, but also provide numerous services in all the categories listed above. Since all of the categories serve to improve the settlement and integration outcomes of refugees, the definition of Core Settlement and Initial Reception services is quite specific. Core Settlement includes Outreach and Support, Information and Orientation, as well as Settlement Planning services. On the other hand, Initial Reception services consist of RAP, Reception House, Refugee Sponsorship Support, and Airport Pick Up. As a result, the percentages and numbers of these two service types may seem low relative to the other categories.
AAISA Member Offerings

As mentioned, organizations provide a multitude of services to improve the resettlement/integration outcomes of refugees. AAISA members have been found to provide 465 services across Alberta in the inventory. This constitutes 31% of the 1,484 services that were gathered for the service inventory. The offerings fall under all of the service categories, with Language being offered in the greatest numbers. The two charts below illustrate these points. The first chart indicates the proportion of services in each category, offered by AAISA members. The second demonstrates the percentage of services offered by AAISA members out of all of the services found for each municipality.

![Chart of Service Types Offered by AAISA Members]

**LEGEND**
- Children and Youth
- Community
- Employment
- Health
- Housing
- Initial Reception
- Language
- CoreSettlement
- Support

Service Analysis

This section will take a deeper look at the composition of services in each municipality. It will also examine the wider trends within Alberta. As previously discussed, key findings include an emphasis on Language and Employment services, a marked rural-urban divide, and a concentration of services in Calgary. Additionally, despite the smaller amount of services in rural areas, the inventory revealed strong community networks to provide refugees with the services needed to socially integrate.
The uneven distribution of services in Alberta can clearly be seen between the amount of services dedicated to the urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton in comparison to the more rural areas of Fort McMurray, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Brooks and other smaller centres. The combined total number of services provided by these rural areas is 323, smaller than either Calgary or Edmonton in comparison to their respective 719 and 442 services. This disparity between the number of services provided between the urban centres and rural areas is likely a direct result of the variance in population.

Second, the difference between the number of services in Calgary and Edmonton is also worth noting. Although Calgary and Edmonton may have similar populations, Calgary has a far greater number of services available. This could be due to the fact that Calgary has consistently had more PRs than Edmonton each year from 2005 – 2014, which is outlined in Figure VI.

![Permanent Residents by Urban Area in Alberta](image-url)

**Figure VI**
Urban Centres

Calgary

Calgary has the largest number of services of all the municipalities in the inventory at 719. There is a clear emphasis on employment and language services in Calgary, with these respectively accounting for 40% and 35% of all services. Additionally, Calgary has the greatest diversity of employment and language services, though this may be attributed to the larger number of services it provides. Even though it may seem that Calgary is lacking in areas such as children and youth, community, health, housing, settlement and support services, the total number of these services provided are still generally higher than other locations. This number is overshadowed by the large number of other services available in different categories.

Figure VIII
In terms of employment services, Calgary is the only location other than Edmonton to offer all employment services in all of the identified sub-categories (job search and preparation, training and certification, bridging programs, self-employment and internships/apprenticeships/mentorships). Again, this is likely due to the fact that Calgary, as an urban centre, has a significantly higher population with a wider range of needs than rural areas. In addition, Calgary and Edmonton are the only locations that provide services that support self-employment. This may be attributed to the fact that these urban centres are the only locations that have the funds and resources available to provide support to individuals starting and developing their own businesses. 285 services were compiled for Calgary’s Employment category.

The emphasis on economic integration and labour market outcomes is further magnified when the types of language services available are considered. Calgary’s highest proportion of language services provided is ‘Language for Employment’ at 30%. Despite this concentration, Calgary also provides services in all of the identified sub-categories (Academic Bridging/Upgrading/Adult Basic Education, Computer Classes, Language for Employment, General ESL Classes, LINC, Literacy, Specific Language Skills, Language Assessment, Interpretation and Translation, and Drop-In Classes).
Edmonton

Edmonton has the second largest number of services at 442. Edmonton has a very similar composition of services to Calgary, but on a smaller scale. There is also an emphasis on employment and language services, accounting for 37% and 33% of services respectively.
As with Calgary, Edmonton is the only location that offers employment services in all sub-categories, as well as the only other location offering self-employment services. Over half of the services are around training and certification, which include programs such as technical skills development, as well as professional development for specific industries and occupations. 163 Employment services were collected for Edmonton.

Although Edmonton may be the only other location that offers language services in all sub-categories, “Language for Employment” services are not as emphasized as they are in Calgary at only 14% of total language services. Instead, “Specific Language Skills” takes the lead at 38%, where refugees and PRs can learn about topics such as Canadian pronunciation and preparation for language assessment exams. This reduced emphasis on Language for Employment could be due to Calgary’s larger corporate presence, resulting in more demand for occupation-specific or business English training. A total of 163 language services were gathered for Edmonton.
Rural Centres

Fort McMurray

Fort McMurray has the highest number of services out of the non-urban centres at 70 services gathered. This location has a more even distribution of services with less emphasis on employment and language in comparison to Calgary and Edmonton.

The 14 Employment services collected in this location consist of a 50% split between “Training and Certification” and “Job Search and Preparation”. There is also a significantly higher proportion of ‘Language for Employment’ services (31%), while also having the lowest proportion of ‘General ESL Classes’ services (8%), in comparison to the other non-urban centres.
Lethbridge

Lethbridge has 54 services that were identified, with a similar distribution of service types as other rural centres. In terms of Employment, Lethbridge’s ‘Training and Certification’ account for 50% of all of its Employment services. Furthermore, ‘Job Search and Preparation’ account for only 10% of Employment services – a significantly lower percentage compared to other municipalities. Lethbridge offers a fairly wide range of language services, but has an emphasis on ‘General ESL Classes’, which accounts for 40% of language services.

Figure XIV

LEGEND
- Settlement
- Initial Reception
- Language
- Employment
- Community
- Children and Youth
- Support Services
- Health
- Housing
**Medicine Hat**

Medicine Hat displays a very similar distribution of service types as other non-urban centres, with a total of 56 services identified. ‘Language’ and ‘Employment’ only account for 14% and 11% of all services provided in Medicine Hat. Medicine Hat’s Employment services are not particularly diverse, with ‘Job Search and Preparation’ accounting for 67% of all employment services with the other 33% consisting of ‘Training and Certification’. In terms of Language services, ‘General ESL Classes’ account for 62% of all language services, the highest of any location.

While the percentage of Language and Employment services are not high in Medicine Hat when compared to the urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton, Medicine Hat has a much greater proportion of services accounting for social needs. Children and Youth and Community services comprise the bulk of services at 25% and 20% respectively. For Children and Youth, this includes services such as Outreach and Support, Academic Support, Childcare, Family Services and Settlement in School. For Community, Community Connections was by far the most common type of service, bringing together refugees, PRs, and Canadians through mentoring or social events. Another social service, Housing, is provided by a single organization in Medicine Hat: Medicine Hat Community Housing Society. This concentration of service provision in housing differs from the other locations examined in the inventory.

![Figure XV](image-url)

**LEGEND**
- Settlement
- Initial Reception
- Language
- Employment
- Community
- Children and Youth
- Support Services
- Health
- Housing
Red Deer

A total of 62 services for immigrants were identified in Red Deer. Red Deer offers a particularly even distribution of services between Language, Employment, Community, Children and Youth, Health, Housing and Core Settlement services. This is significant as it is one of the only locations to not show a particular emphasis on one service type. Additionally, it provides one of the greatest diversities in Language and Employment services provided out of the non-urban centres. These findings reaffirm that, as a RAP centre, Red Deer is distinctly well prepared as one of the non-urban centres for the arrival of refugees, having a wide range of services available for their economic and social integration.

Figure XVI
Brooks

The inventory gathered a total of 29 services for refugees and PRs in Brooks. This is the lowest number of services out of all the locations, but it is consistent with its population of 13,676.\(^7\) However, it is unique in that ‘Children and Youth’ accounts for 41% of all services provided, far greater than any other location, clearly showing an emphasis on social services. Language services are significantly smaller, with a single service for Interpretation and Translation accounting for 4% of all services provided. This may be a consequence of having a very small number of newcomers settling in Brooks, therefore not previously requiring many services to meet the language needs of recent refugees. When observing the employment services available in Brooks, it is evident that the proportion of these available services is similar to those seen in Fort McMurray; 10% of services for immigrants in Brooks are directed towards employment, with 67% as ‘Job Search and Preparation’ and 33% as ‘Training and Certification’ respectively.

![Brooks Services](image-url)

**Figure XVII**

**LEGEND**
- Core Settlement
- Initial Reception
- Language
- Employment
- Community
- Children and Youth
- Support Services
- Health
- Housing
Other Rural

The inventory also gathered services and programs in rural areas such as Airdrie, Chestermere, Cochrane, Drumheller, Grand Prairie, High River, Vulcan, Cold Lake, and Okotoks among others as they were linked to AAISA member offerings. A total of 52 services were compiled for the listed municipalities. Several unique trends were identified in these rural areas. For instance, ‘Community’ accounts for 33% of services provided, significantly more than any other location. Furthermore, ‘Employment’ only accounts for 2% of services in rural areas, representing a single service provided by YMCA of Northern Alberta for ‘Job Search and Preparation’, the lowest number of employment services of any location.

Figure XVIII

LEGEND
- Core Settlement
- Language
- Employment
- Community
- Children and Youth
- Health
- Housing

Rural Services

19%
13%
19%
2%
12%
33%
2%
Provincial Trends

As previously discussed, there are several main findings from the service inventory analysis: the concentration of services in Calgary, rural-urban divide, an emphasis on Language and Employment services, and strong rural community connections.

Other than the higher number of PR landings in Calgary, another reason for the greater number of services in this location could be due to Calgary’s relative position in southern Alberta. This area provides a greater number of nearby populous localities such as Okotoks, Banff, Airdrie, as well as being in closer proximity to other listed municipalities of Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Brooks. As a result, Calgary has become the main centre for providing services that are not offered in these rural centres.

One of the most obvious differences between urban and rural areas is the distribution and composition of the services provided. It is apparent that the urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton have a greater proportion of services that contribute to successful social and economic integration: Language and Employment. In the survey that was conducted for this study, both Language and Employment came out in the top four needs of refugees in Alberta.

Language was consistently seen as a need across the four focus groups conducted, in terms of being able to access services and employment opportunities. Interestingly, the inventory has gathered 444 language services, yet survey participants identified language as a top need for refugees. AAISA’s focus groups and survey results revealed long waitlists, low literacy and limited childcare opportunities as barriers for refugees to access language training. Classes dedicated specifically to literacy are particularly low across the municipalities examined in the inventory. Calgary has the most at 13 out of 250 language services and Edmonton running up at 4 out of 147 language services, which could explain the low literacy barrier.

The emphasis on employment services in the urban centres is likely a consequence of Calgary and Edmonton being the economic and business centres of Alberta, resulting in more private investment benefitting employers in addition to promoting the cities’ economic goals. This trend is especially evident in the ‘Rural’ locations where employment accounts for only 2% of services provided, a vast difference to Calgary’s 40%.
The greater proportion of services that provide social support - settlement, initial reception, community, children and youth, support, health and housing – are more prominent in areas with smaller populations. This could be a result of these smaller areas having greater support networks in place due to increased connectivity between residents, greater visibility of vulnerable individuals, and initiatives such as those seen in Medicine Hat to eliminate homelessness. Consequently, these rural areas have a greater emphasis on services that do not necessarily lead to economic integration, but rather provide the networks necessary to integrate into the community and be supported socially. As one rural focus group participant noted, “It is not per say the capacity in our organization, but the capacity of our community partners who are so willing and able to provide those services that we just don’t do at our organization.”

Furthermore, it is noted that in these rural centres, services such as housing and core settlement services are often provided for by a single or select few organizations. As a result, the efforts of these organizations may possibly be better orchestrated and organized to deal with the social issues that they are trying to tackle.
Organizational and System Capacity

Capacity is a critical component of effective policy development and implementation at the program level. One of the principal intentions of the needs assessment was not only to understand the programs and services available to refugees, but the broader organizational and system capacity as it relates to comprehensively supporting their settlement and integration in Alberta communities. By developing a baseline understanding of capacity at these levels, multiple stakeholders will be able to make

Organizational Capacity

The following section will examine capacity as it pertains to the human resources and client focus of the needs assessment participants. Through the survey, AAISA asked 69 organizations to describe their capacity to serve refugees. These agencies were located across Alberta with more than half located in the urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton.

---

xix ) Capacity is defined as the ability of an organization or system to fulfill its goals. Capacity can be expressed in terms of its human, physical and material resources, financial, information, and intellectual resources.
To understand organizational capacity with regards to human resources, participants shared the number of staff employed by their organization and number of staff specifically working with refugees. Over half of the survey participants confirmed that their organizations employed between 0-25 staff. The chart below outlines the range of staff and percentage of organizations falling within that range:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># STAFF EMPLOYED</th>
<th>% OF ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-500</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II

When it came to the number of staff specifically working with refugees, 12% of participants reported that there were no human resources dedicated to this population. Conversely, it was more commonly reported that agencies had 1-5 staff serving refugees in particular. The chart below demonstrates the range of staff and percentages of organizations falling within that range:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># REFUGEE STAFF</th>
<th>% OF ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-300</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III

Interestingly, there was a wide range of organizational capacity in terms of the percentage of staff working specifically with refugees. On one hand, 15% of participating agencies confirmed that none of their staff serve refugees. On the other, 21% reported that all of their staff works with refugees.

Additionally, the majority of organizations serve 0-50 refugees per year, with the most common types being GARs followed by PSRs. The least served refugee type was found to be BVORs. The disparity between refugee categories may be a result of a number of factors including: federal funding designated to support the resettlement of GARs through RAP, sample population demographics, as well as the historically small number of refugee claimants and BVORs settling in Alberta.
Figure XX

Types of Refugees Served

- Government Assisted Refugees (GARs): 46%
- Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs): 37%
- Blended Visa Office Referral Refugees (BVORs): 6%
- Refugee Claimants: 11%

Figure XXI

Average Number of Refugees Served Per Year

- 0-50 refugees: 45%
- 51-100 refugees: 20%
- 101-200 refugees: 9%
- 201-500 refugees: 13%
- 501-1,500 refugees: 9%
- 1,500+ refugees: 4%

LEGEND
Future Service Offerings

As a way of delving deeper into the experience and perceptions of organizations in Alberta, the survey sought to understand their present capacity while looking forward. This was accomplished by gathering information on current and future priorities around program and service offerings.

The survey data highlights some key findings around programming to meet refugee needs such as:

- 86% of participants confirmed that they are planning to offer programs and services to refugees from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017
- 59% of participants said that they will offer programs and services designed to meet the specific needs of Syrian refugees in the future, specifically in the areas of: Children and Youth, Language, Settlement and Health
- 82% of the participants indicated that Language was the top priority in the development of new programs and services, followed by Health, Social Integration, and Housing in order of importance.

These findings show that organizational respondents are strongly committed to facilitating the resettlement of refugees through the delivery of programs and services and are keenly aware of the need to facilitate the resettlement of a large number of Syrians. Ultimately, respondents emphasized meeting language, health, social integration, and housing needs.

Priorities for New Program Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refugee Need</th>
<th>Response Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Training</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGDM</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal / Citizenship</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XXII
System Capacity

As a complement to the community-based organizational perspective, the assessment also sought to understand the provincial landscape in terms of system capacity. Working from the understanding that a system is composed of diverse and interconnected components, this study endeavours to explore systems with people, resources, services, relationships, perceptions, and values/priorities such as accessibility, diversity, communication and availability in mind.59

Overall, the assessment revealed that the outlook on organizational and system capacity to meet the needs of refugees in Alberta is positive but that there is room for improvement. Based on the input of survey participants, there is a slight difference between perception of organizational and system capacity to meet refugee needs. The majority of respondents indicated that their organization’s capacity to effectively meet the needs of refugee clients was “Very Good.” In comparison, when asked to rate their community’s current capacity to effectively meet the needs of refugees, the majority indicated that it was “Good.” In line with this optimism, one respondent reflected that “newcomers are receiving welcoming and compassionate services.” This variance may be a result of the fact that generally, smaller, community-based organizations are perceived as more flexible and adaptable due to size and location.

Figure XXII

Confidence in Community Ability to Meet the Needs of Refugees in the Future

LEGEND

- Yes
- No

87%
13%
More nuanced analysis of current programs and services offered to refugees reinforce this positive assessment and indicate that organizations believe system capacity is satisfactory. Specifically, respondents ranked the accessibility of programs and services in Alberta as “Very Good,” diversity or the range of programming and availability or ease of access as “Good,” while communications and the exchange of information was ranked the lowest as “Fair.”

While organizations and the newcomer populations they serve are diverse, there are several themes that arose during the research which indicate a shared experience of strengths and challenges in the area of refugee resettlement. On one hand, respondents identified developing relationships and collaboration as one of their greatest strengths. Closely related to this was the somewhat contentious capacity to communicate and share information among collaborators and partners. This was identified as a significant strength in rural areas. They also identified the ability to adapt to changing priorities and create programs that are tailored to the needs of their clients as fundamental to meeting the varied and complex needs of refugees. Lastly, successful service delivery is made possible by skilled staff. On the other hand, the challenges discussed by respondents included securing and retaining human and financial resources, communicating and sharing information in urban areas, the lack of standardization of programs and expected outcomes, and increased demand on services.
This following section is dedicated to analysis of system-level strengths and challenges, with regards to refugee resettlement. This analysis is followed by suggestions for future improvement in the Discussion and Summary section.

**Strengths**

Organizational respondents across Alberta identified several strengths that enable them to effectively assist refugees:

![Figure XXV](image-url)

**Organization Strengths in Alberta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>RATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case management</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with partners and stakeholders</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging funding from multiple sources</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and professional development on specific refugee needs</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and information sharing among stakeholders</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and outreach</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and coordination of services and programs</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting to changing priorities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome measurement</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure XXV
Relationships and Collaboration

Survey participants identified building relationships and collaborating as the most important strategic advantage they have when supporting refugees. Organizations foster collaboration by developing partnerships and positive relationships with diverse groups of stakeholders involved in the settlement and integration process, including: health providers, landlords, government and public institutions, community-based agencies, corporate organizations, and community members. One respondent reflected on the significance of collaboration while discussing linking refugees with Canadians: "Matching refugees with established Canadians supports refugees in connecting to the community, learning about Canadian culture while sharing parts of their own home culture with Canadians."

Commenting on the recent effort to resettle Syrian refugees in Alberta, another respondent commented that: “Agencies have collaborated and coordinated programming to best meet need. This has been a collective effort.” It is evident that in Alberta, a leading practice is robust collaboration as well as other relationship building techniques that enable organizations to effectively manage and coordinate programs and services.

Communication and Information Sharing

Communication and information sharing is often named as a foundational aspect of collaborative systems and effective program delivery in the settlement and integration sector. This research reaffirms that communication and information sharing is an approach used in Alberta to foster collaboration among organizations as well as referral to other agencies involved in refugee resettlement. Many organizations identified their use of formal and information sharing channels as a way to support their work and to address the barriers facing clients in a more systematic way. For example a rural SPO shared that,

... we have something called a “Newcomer Interagency Network,” and we meet once a month so if there are any gaps you are trying to fill, there is an exchange of information around the table. And everybody is able to go to his or her clients and say would you like to do this because this is available in our community? So there is a lot of sharing of information that happens and I think that is the reason why there is a lot of collaboration between different agencies in our community when we know what’s going on at different places. We are able to recommend different agencies for different services.
Adaptability

While the assessment examines supports for all refugees, the work done by organizations in Alberta to resettle Syrian refugees exemplifies the large and small-scale capacity needed to quickly adapt to changing priorities and client needs in the social services sector. Organizations frequently cited the importance of versatility of programs as well as policy. For this reason, it is important to highlight the role of adaptability in supporting refugee populations. Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust easily to changing conditions. With this definition in mind, organizations focus on adapting to more client-centred models of care by increasing accessibility through actions such as offering child-care, creating programs in multiple first languages and offering flexible services with translation and interpretation option in locations where clients live and work at times that are most convenient for them. For example, during the focus groups, a participant observed that: “... one of the things that has really worked well for us is making [programming] really flexible in nature, so rather than making a program and expecting people to fit in to it, let’s look at those coming and see how we need to adapt our programming to work with the clients who are waiting to come into the program.”

Staff

Another finding was that while organizations faced challenges in attracting and retaining staff, those that work in the sector are “highly qualified and dedicated staff” with a range of professional abilities including language skills that allow them to better serve their clients. With regards to programs for vulnerable and special population such as seniors, women, youth and minorities, knowledgeable and motivated staff with a strong understanding of positive outcomes was identified as a major component of success. A participant noted that "One success for us with Syrian newcomers is that we have staff (a limited number) who speak Arabic. This has been very helpful in developing trusting relationships. Agencies have collaborated and coordinated programming to best meet need. This has been a collective effort.”

Challenges

The needs assessment reveals that although organizations identified many assets that enable them to effectively assist their clients, they also acknowledged reoccurring challenges that impact them and the settlement and integration system more broadly.
Financial Resources

The most frequently cited challenge for organizations was resource constraints associated with securing sustainable, long-term funding. Organizations expressed challenges with the one-year funding cycle model prevalent in the settlement and integration sector. One respondent remarked that: “For us, funding is always an issue...That certainly limits the amount of programs and capacity we have.” Whereas organizations noted that they had difficulty securing resources to expand capacity by offering additional programs and services for refugees, they also reported an increased demand for these services. Increased demand is particularly acute for language training and housing programs which have long waitlists.
Organizational participants also focused on the impact limited funding has on their ability to deliver services and to recruit, develop and retain staff. Although many SPOs have access to AAISA training, participants disclosed that they struggle to access professional development that can address all of the multiple and complex needs of refugees. The challenge of access corresponds not only to the organization’s ability to afford the training, but to have the required internal capacity available to support clients while staff is out of office engaged in professional development activities. Lastly, securing funding to hire additional staff to provide more personalized services to refugees was identified as a significant barrier during the recent Syrian resettlement initiative.

Communication and Information Sharing

One of the notable results of the assessment of capacity was that communication and information sharing is a strength mobilized by organizations to meet refugee needs, but also a challenge. Communication presents a significant obstacle when organizations need to communicate information that is confidential or private in nature (often health related) to other organizations.

“It’s hard to share information about their appointment times with volunteers and other agencies unless the patient is actually consenting, and they understand the consent that they agree to share information with a volunteer, we cannot engage them to make sure that they actually make it to the appointment or support their using translation services. It is very difficult.”
– Health Care Provider

Organizations also noted that information sharing could improve care and coordination of services, but due to different limitations such as confidentiality law or ineffective processes, they were not able to do so. The challenges faced by participants working in the area of language serve to exemplify the complex nature of the systems within the settlement and integration sector, and the importance of re-examining internal and external communications practices. The language system exemplifies this complexity.

xx) To increase proficiency in the English language, refugees can access either informal or formal language training opportunities. To access formal offerings, refugees are required to go through an assessment process to determine their skill level. One of the assessments that refugees will go through is Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) to determine levels of listening, speaking, reading and writing according to Canadian standards. Once the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels are determined, refugees will be referred to formal language training opportunities by the assessment body, such as Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians (LINC). Refugees can also be referred to informal instruction as well, should the program recommend an assessment prior to participation.
As this chart illustrates, language assessment bodies will refer to multiple providers, including Service Provider Organizations (SPOs). However, focus group participants illustrated that SPOs will make referrals to each other as well. For example, one participant explained: “A LINC staff member at another school will email all of the other programs to say ‘I’ve got seats open in this class, let your clients know’.” Despite collaborative ties among stakeholders, when discussing language, participants revealed that: “When there are seats available at a particular program, there seems to be no central way for clients to easily access the details of the openings.” Presently, there is no system-level approach to sharing both client and organization information among all assessors and providers across the province.
Standardization

Over two hundred organizations and institutions serve refugees across the province. With such a multitude of stakeholders and service offerings, standardization of services and gaps in care emerged as prominent challenges in resettling refugees and promoting uniform outcomes. Speaking on health services for refugees, one agency commented that: “even Calgary and Edmonton have different models of care, not that one is better, but [what is needed is] more of a platform to share provincially what are the best practices.” The assessment uncovered the need for refugees to have access to comparable services regardless of location and refugee category and for organizations to collaborate to share leading practices that have been proven to improve models of service delivery.

The following discussion and summary section will outline the core findings from the Report, and offer recommendations and next steps to improve the system and program capacity to better meet the resettlement needs of refugees in Alberta.
VII. Discussion and Summary

Through a comprehensive, multi-tiered needs assessment, AAISA intends to build the capacity of the settlement and integration sector by expanding our collective understanding of the need for programs and services designed to support refugee resettlement and the corresponding organizational and system capacity available to do so in Alberta.

This report is designed as a catalytic resource for stakeholders involved in refugee resettlement, such as but not limited to: RAP Providers, health providers, settlement and integration SPOs, community organizations, Sponsorship Agreement Holders, funders, and public institutions. The assessment provides valuable insights, which can serve to facilitate and guide decision making in refugee resettlement at both the policy and program levels. The following section will briefly outline core findings and conclusions, while highlighting desired outcomes and recommendations for future action.

The assessment uncovered several critical findings and priority areas as they pertain to the current and future resettlement needs of refugees, the programs and services that support their success, and the requisite organizational and provincial capacity.

Needs

The assessment focused on exploring the resettlement needs of refugees when coming to Alberta as a foundation for understanding the landscape of programs and service offerings that support their integration. They highlight that positive resettlement outcomes hinge on holistic programming that meet client’s needs and are mindful of the barriers and complexities of the resettlement process. With this in mind, it is recommended that the lesser-understood experiences of BVORs and refugee claimants be further examined through research so that programs and services reflect their specific needs.

Overall, participants’ reflections are consistent with the refugee resettlement experiences across Canada. Respondents believe needs should be prioritized in the following order: language, housing, health, social integration, employment, AGDM, and legal/citizenship.
By exploring further, it was found that needs intersect with each other and vary from client-to-client. What this means is that meeting core needs such as housing and language through targeted, flexible and timely programs will set refugees up for success in areas such as employment, health, social integration and citizenship across the province. This also means that considerations of age, gender, and diversity should be made within the context of each need.

Service Inventory

Through a baseline service inventory, the needs assessment brought to light the range and diversity of programs and services available to refugees in Alberta. The inventory catalogued 1,484 programs and services offered by 244 organizations located in 21 municipalities including Airdrie, Brooks, Calgary, Chestermere, Cochrane, Cold Lake, Drumheller, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grand Prairie, High River, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Okotoks, Red Deer, St. Albert, Stony Plain, Strathmore, Taber, and Vulcan.

The inventory highlighted notable trends in terms of location and the types of services offered to refugees. Provincially there is a strong emphasis on Language and Employment services for refugees, a high concentration of services in Calgary, a marked difference between rural-urban locations, and strong rural community connections. The assessment calls for further examination of why employment programs are strongly emphasized in the urban centres such as Calgary and Edmonton while in rural areas employment services account for a profoundly smaller percentage (2%) of services.

Overall, it is clear that the province’s settlement and integration sector has a variety of programs and services that strongly reflect the critical needs of refugees identified through this assessment, as well as other Canadian research such as language and employment.

Further areas of research could include expanding the field of inquiry to gather more services from nonurban centres and around Community, Children and Youth, Support, Health and Housing. It would also be worth exploring to determine whether there are additional services in Edmonton as the difference in PR numbers is not that wide between Calgary and Edmonton. With IRCC’s head office for the Western Region located in Calgary, further research could investigate whether there is a bias towards funding Calgary or Southern Alberta projects.
Capacity

Seeking to understand the resettlement of refugees from the broader capacity lens and to identify priorities for improvement, the assessment examined organizational and systems capacity in Alberta. As discussed in the previous section, SPOs offer a range of services to meet the needs of refugees. This is accomplished with the support of talented staff and organizational capacity. The majority of respondents reported that they have 1-5 staff serving refugees and that they are most familiar with GAR and PSR clients, with significantly fewer serving refugee claimants and BVORs. The average number of refugees served by respondents per year was 0-50.

Generally, it was found that respondents perception of organizational and system capacity to meet the needs of refugees is positive and that there is a strong commitment by the settlement and integration sector and Alberta communities to work collaboratively in order to promote a positive resettlement journey. Yet, there are strengths as well as challenges that can serve to guide future growth and development.

Respondents pinpointed several strengths that enable them to meet the diverse and complex needs of refugees. Strengths such as collaboration and relationship building, communication and information sharing in rural areas, as well as adaptability and dedicated, qualified staff are the cornerstone of success in Alberta. In contrast, respondents discussed the limitations of securing sustainable resources, communicating and sharing information effectively in urban areas, and coordinating standardized services to promote uniform outcomes as barriers to meeting refugee needs.

Another key point that informant service providers remarked on was that existing capacity should be expanded to better meet the needs of certain demographics, especially with respect to refugees’ ability, gender, age, and diversity. The potential differing impact of policies, programs or initiatives on diverse groups of refugees is important.

These reflections on existing capacity, in particular the strengths and challenges faced by organizations and the provincial system, as well as the overarching refugee needs, will serve as the basis for the recommendations in the next section.
Recommendations for Future Action

Refugees’ ability to thrive in Canadian society rests on how well the settlement and integration sector is able to support their needs. This assessment provides evidence to guide decision-making, and improve program and service planning for refugees in Alberta. The following table explores key areas to build on the existing settlement and integration services, and sectoral capacity as well as program and system strengths. Recommendations concentrate on the areas of:

- Building Capacity;
- Client-centred Programming;
- Collaboration, Communication and Information Sharing;
- Community Connections; and
- Standardization and Coordination.

These recommendations are informed by the suggestions collected from respondents through the survey and focus groups and therefore can be expected to have overlapping benefit across refugee intersecting need categories. The intent is also to inform and empower policy makers to develop funding models and design institutional supports with refugees in mind. Finally, the recommendations will also suggest improvement in areas that present reoccurring challenges.

Respondents identified a number of strengths including collaboration and partnerships, information sharing and communications, and adaptability, which refers to the organizations ability to implement more client-centred models of care. For example, with respect to adaptability, organizations could focus on adjusting to more client-centred models of care by increasing accessibility through actions such as offering child-care, creating programs in multiple first languages and offering flexible services with translation and interpretation options in locations where clients live and work at times that are most convenient for them.

Additional research and exploration is recommended in a number of areas including children and youth, employment, health, and social housing. These recommendations are explored in the table that follows.
Recommendation #1

Building Capacity

Actions

• Attract and retain appropriate levels of qualified personnel through competitive compensation
• Provide ongoing relevant professional development opportunities to promote personal and organizational growth
• Increase emphasis on language support for clients and expand access to complementary interpretation and translation services
• Expand capacity of organizations to provide more services which meet refugee specific needs
• Examine agility and sustainability of funding models and contract timelines
• Improve alignment between policy development and financial accountability
• Increase financial support to add or optimize infrastructure that improves and increases service delivery and uptake
• Investigate regional/municipal differences in program funding to ensure uniform provincial outcomes for clients
• Develop strategies on how best to reform social housing policy for refugees
• Support evidence-based program design to align with target population needs
• Conduct further research on refugee resettlement outcomes

Desired Outcome

Alberta stakeholders have the sustained capacity to provide high-quality and responsive programs and services to meet the needs of refugees
Examples

- Hire Student Support Specialists in language schools to connect students to resources
- Reduce client-to-staff ratios
- Ensure competitive compensation of overtime hours
- Employ Arabic-speaking settlement practitioners and personnel; trained interpreters; early childhood educators and assistants
- Implement reserve funding for emergency hiring
- Increase access to relevant job training and professional development for staff working with refugees
- Offer programs that match client needs such as programs in first language
- Ensure funding is available to organizations serving refugees as needed during prearrival and initial reception phase
- Build larger housing/multi-bedroom units
- Establish agreements with housing agencies
- Increase length of RAP program, and language training to improve integration outcomes
- Implement pre-planning measures to better align services with refugee demographic needs
- Create housing coordination body
- Reduce language and social housing waitlists
- Provide refugees with the supports needed to better manage their appointments within initial settlement phase through improved case management
- Increase transportation support for refugees by ensuring language classes are located in close proximity to where refugees live
- Convene a refugee-focused advisory committee on social housing
- Study impact of PTSD on refugee resettlement outcomes

Target Stakeholders

Government, funders, SPOs, community organizations, public institutions, capacity building organizations, professional development bodies, staff and volunteers.
Recommendation #2
Client -Centred Programming

Actions

- Implement flexible and informal programming
- Design first language services and providing translation/interpretation
- Increase provision of free child-care
- Introduce more culturally-sensitive programming
- Create an employment skill profile of Alberta’s refugee population to inform skills matching and improvements to the foreign credential recognition program
- Eliminate undue burdens on refugees in the resettlement process to improve long term integration
- Advance accuracy and availability of pre-arrival information about life in Canada

Desired Outcome

Programs and services in Alberta are responsive to the needs of refugees and reduce barriers to access
Examples

- Increase the number of volunteer-led conversation groups
- Deliver part-time/summer language classes
- Advance portfolio-based language model (PBLA), where students take responsibility for their learning
- Offer experiential learning and teaching techniques in language training programs to address learning needs of older refugees
- Target programming to meet the diverse needs of refugees based on factors such as category, gender, religion, language, age, experience, etc.
- Administer computer classes and resume workshops in client’s first language
- Upgrade library book sourcing, i.e. acquire more country-of-origin material
- Extend parent-child opportunities for language development, i.e. language classes for women while children attend storytime at library
- Ensure Arabic-speaking female doctors are available in rural communities
- Raise awareness of discrimination in the rental market, and tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities
- Work with professional associations to remove barriers to enter the trades
- Remove barriers to credential recognition system
- Establish quarterly working group/advisory committee, yearly consultations and networking events to connect pre-arrival service providers with organizations serving refugees in Alberta
- Extend repayment of travel loans for up to five years or eliminate this requirement entirely for all refugee populations

Target Stakeholders

Government, SPOs, community organizations, public institutions, and refugees
Recommendation #3
Collaboration, Communication and Information sharing

Actions
- Enhance data management through practices such as centralized databases
- Promote networking opportunities among multiple stakeholders (i.e. events, regular meetings inperson and online)
- Increase number, variety and breadth of formal and informal collaborations
- Share resources and leading practices systematically
- Facilitate communications through various channels such as committees
- Raise awareness of available programs and services among all stakeholders
- Examine confidentiality policies and practices to protect privacy while promoting information sharing and referral
- Conduct further research to better understand the needs and corresponding programs and services designed to support refugee claimants and PSRs

Desired Outcome
Stakeholders actively engage with each other in order to promote efficient programs and services that meet the needs of refugees in Alberta
Examples

- Host employment networking event
- Augment volunteerism in sector, for example, volunteers driving refugees to appointments
- Develop health communication protocols/terms of reference
- Gather more services from non-urban centres around Community, Children and Youth
- Investigate whether there are additional services in Edmonton for refugees
- Expand client awareness about the settlement and integration process, their rights and responsibilities
- Promote PSR’s connection to settlement resources, including orientation
- Raise awareness of prohibitive hiring practices and employment programs among employers
- Share mental health counsellors who speak the language between organizations
- Encourage capacity building organizations to act as a connector between committees
- Promote PSR’s connection to settlement resources, including orientation

Target Stakeholders

Government, funders, SPOs, community organizations, public institutions, advocates and refugees
Recommendation #4

Community Connections

**Actions**

- Leverage and increase use of cultural brokers and community-based volunteers
- Deepen cross-cultural engagement through multiple channels such as events, mentorship programs (HOST), public awareness and education
- Expand support for refugee integration beyond initial resettlement phase through wrap-around services, partnerships and targeted programming
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder municipal systems that facilitate welcoming communities and community engagement
- Produce a current regional study on children and youth integration and capacity in the school system, and broader community structures

**Desired Outcome**

Alberta is a welcoming and inclusive province where refugees and their communities thrive together.
Examples

- Utilize cultural brokers to facilitate public education in ethno-cultural communities (i.e. mental health awareness)
- Improve refugee advocacy in Alberta through community engagement and targeted professional development and training opportunities for refugee-serving organizations
- Offer ongoing career counselling services
- Introduce a RAP and health care liaison role across the province

Target Stakeholders

Government, SPOs, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), public and private institutions, employers, civil society, Albertans, and refugees
**Recommendation #5**

**Standardization and Coordination**

**Actions**

- Reduce duplication and increase efficiency of services through improved coordination at the municipal, regional, and provincial levels.
- Work with all levels of government to develop client and evidence-oriented policies.
- Develop shared or standard frameworks/models of service delivery while respecting local and regional differences.
- Increase cross-sector collaboration to identify leading practices that inform models of service delivery.

**Desired Outcome**

Stakeholders collaborate to develop and implement a shared strategic direction to meet the needs of refugees in Alberta.
Examples

- Hire coordinators to manage LINC class availability
- Develop a comprehensive refugee resettlement roadmap for Alberta
- Bring key policy makers to the table to identify and share best practices
- Create or deepen culture of impact practice
- Collaborate with Alberta Health Services to ensure each refugee family is connected with a doctor within 24 to 48 hours of arrival
- Install additional Newcomer Agency Network in rural communities
- Establish "one stop shops" for primary care networks with multidisciplinary health team with mental health workers, social workers, nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, dentists
- Partner with university dental departments to train cultural brokers

Target Stakeholders

Government, Funders, SPOs, community organizations, public institutions, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), capacity building organizations, and associations
Next Steps

The study recommends that the next phase of this work at the provincial level be focused on improving standardized and coordinated service delivery through the design of a comprehensive refugee resettlement roadmap for Alberta. This roadmap could be developed in consultation with all stakeholders at sector-wide event similar to the Alberta Settlement and Integration Consultation held in June 2016. This exercise will help to connect and inform programs and services and policy development as well as to outline an ideal pathway for refugee resettlement. Locally, the targeted needs assessment recommendations can serve as strategies to motivate and guide SPOs, SAHs and community organizations as they advocate for enhanced capacity and continually improve service delivery alignment with refugee needs. Future steps for AAISA could include an up-to-date study on experiences of refugees in Alberta. The overwhelming emphasis on client-centred approaches would reinforce this perspective.
VIII. Glossary of Terms

**Capacity** is defined as the ability of an organization or system to fulfill its goals. Capacity can be expressed in terms of its human, physical and material resources, financial, information, and intellectual resources.

**Children and Youth Services** seek to support the settlement and integration outcomes of children, youth and their families. Examples of programs include: academic support, afterschool programming, mentoring, childcare, childhood development, family services, outreach and settlement in school.

**Community Services** are aimed at building social capital for newcomers, facilitating connections between newcomers and public services and structures, and contribute to strengthening municipalities as welcoming communities for newcomers. Initiatives such as LIPs are included within this stream.

**Core Settlement Services** provide information and support to address general settlement needs outside of language training and employment needs (i.e. basic needs, knowledge and skills for life in Canada and access to community resources). Examples of programs include: in school settlement, mentorship, computer services, health orientation, parenting and family support, children’s resettlement program, citizenship preparation, senior’s programs, volunteer development, legal assistance, youth development academic tutoring, summer and after school programs.

**Employment Services** provide information and support to newcomers to acquire knowledge, skills, and connections to the Canadian work environment. Examples of programs include: mentorship, bridging, CORE skills, upgrading and certification, employer hubs and forums, low literacy modular employment, office administration program, sharing circles and food industry projects.

**Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)** are Convention Refugees Abroad whose initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada or Quebec. This support is delivered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) supported non-governmental agencies such as CCIS, CSS, SAAMIS Immigration Services Association, and Lethbridge Family Services-Immigrant Services. Support can last up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada, or until the refugee is able to support himself or herself, whichever happens first. This support may include: accommodation, clothing, food, employment, and other resettlement assistance.

**Health Services** provide counselling, health literacy, mental and physical health, and provisions for disabilities. Examples include: crisis counselling, sexual health, and health clinics.

**Housing Services** facilitates affordability of accommodation, and other support such as furniture referrals, mediation, information, installation, application for subsidized housing.

**Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)** The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) provides the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) with jurisdiction to hear and decide cases on immigration and refugee matters. The IRPA sets out the core principles and concepts that govern Canada’s immigration and refugee protection programs, including provisions relating to refugees, sponsorships and removals, detention reviews and admissibility hearings, and the jurisdiction and powers of tribunals. The IRPA came into force on June 28, 2002.
Integrated Services Program (ISP) is a partnership between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and Alberta Employment and Immigration to support community-based programs and services that assist newcomers to settle and integrate in Alberta. ISP coordinates the funding and accountability processes for contracted, community-based, and non-profit organizations to provide services and activities that increase newcomers’ ability to access information, services and resources, and enhance their labour market participation and economic independence. ISP programs are available to government-assisted refugees and privately-sponsored refugees.

Language Services provide language and literacy assessment and training in official languages for settlement, education, and employment purposes. Examples of programs include: ESL Programs, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), Learning support services, conversation cafes, and home instruction.

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is the mechanism by which the federal government supports the development of community-based partnerships and planning around the needs of newcomers. LIPs engage various stakeholders such as employers, school boards, health centres, professional associations, ethno-cultural organizations, and the community and social sectors in locally-driven strategic planning. A Needs Assessment (in the system of care) forms part of a systematic process to determine and address the needs or gaps between a client’s current conditions and the desired conditions or outcomes in the settlement service continuum of care.

Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) are refugees and persons that meet the definition of one of the refugee classes: the Convention Refugee Abroad Class and/or the Country of Asylum Class as defined by Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, Canadian citizens and permanent residents help settle PSRs from abroad in Canada. In most cases, PSRs receive financial help from their sponsor, not the government. PSRs are eligible to access the same settlement support services as other permanent residents.

Refugee Claimants are persons who have fled their country and who ask for protection in another country. Refugee status is not known until their case has been decided upon by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is provided by the Government of Canada to Convention Refugees Abroad and, in some instances, to members of the Country of Asylum Class who have been identified as refugees with special needs and who have been admitted to Canada as government-assisted refugees (GARs). Refugees who claim refugee protection from inside Canada are not eligible for this program. These funds are used to help pay for: meeting the refugee at the airport or port of entry, temporary accommodation, help in finding permanent accommodation, basic household items, and general orientation to life in Canada. This money is also used to give the refugee income support for up to one year or until that person becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

Service Areas Information and Orientation as well as client Needs Assessment are common offerings within each service area.

Support Services provide provisions and resources, transportation, legal services, and financial services to newcomers. Examples of program offerings include: clothing and food, computer labs, low income support for transit, financial literacy, tax clinics, grants, loans.
## IX. Appendices

### Appendix I: Research Limitations and Mitigation Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Mitigation Technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of disclosure or reluctance to disclose by participants</td>
<td>Built rapport with survey and focus group participants by ensuring anonymity and comfort through survey instructions and question design, as well as focus group facilitator guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative sample of respondents</td>
<td>The sample was not representative of the organizational population serving refugees in Alberta. However, AAISA ensured that participant sample was as comparable to publically available information on organizations that provide settlement and integration services during the inventory of services as possible. An increased sample size would improve the application of the needs assessment results to a wider population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design does not employ random sampling</td>
<td>Employed Snowball Sampling Method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of incomplete surveys and response rate</td>
<td>Encouraged survey respondents to complete surveys through multiple calls to action using email and newsletters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of participation or unwillingness to participate in survey or focus group</td>
<td>Systematically communicated about the assessment to a wide range of stakeholders via channels such the organizational website, social media accounts, newsletters, and in-person networking to increase awareness and interest prospective participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate populations not included in the assessment</td>
<td>Refugees participants have not been included in this needs assessment due to limited resources and time. This may represent a gap in knowledge that can be addressed in further research on resettlement experiences being conducted by AAISA in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing or poorly constructed questions</td>
<td>Edited and pre-tested survey and focus group materials for clarity and tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive responses</td>
<td>Unable to address this limitation directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of dated program/service information online</td>
<td>For the development of the inventory, internet research was conducted to collect programs and services offered by organizations working with refugees and PRs. However, the limitation of potentially dated information was not addressed directly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An example of this includes the inability to further explore and catalogue Children and Youth, Community, Health, Housing and Support Services in the service inventory. These constraints were addressed by limiting the scope of exploration to reflect the core themes of refugee resettlement needs in Alberta and adding additional volunteer capacity.

Developed coding frames for qualitative analysis. Used Microsoft Excel for quantitative analysis. 4 separate readers reviewed mixed method analysis processes and results. For ease in analysis and to avoid duplication, inventoried services were coded under only one category and sub-category, even though they might have fallen under multiple codes.

While the researchers involved in the assessment have biases, expectations and subjective perspectives which may impact both the design and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. For example, bias in categorizing and sub-categorizing service inventory data. To reduce bias, the needs assessment strives for consistency in the analysis and remains open to new interpretations and findings that differ from expectation or the possibility that the findings are incomplete. Lastly, findings were shared with multiple readers so that alternate interpretations can be included in the final analysis.
## Appendix II: Service Category Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Category</th>
<th>Service/Program Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children and Youth</td>
<td>Academic Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afterschool Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children and Youth Community Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children and Youth Outreach and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlement in School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Bridging to Public Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Outreach and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Settlement Services</td>
<td>Information and Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlement Outreach and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlement Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Bridging Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internships/Apprenticeships/Mentorships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Search and Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provisions for Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Reception</td>
<td>Reception House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugee Sponsorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Airport Pick Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Academic Bridging/Upgrading/Adult Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drop-In Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General ESL Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation and Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language for Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians (LINC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific Language Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Services</th>
<th>Provisions and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


XI. Endnotes


2 Ibid. 48

3 Ibid. 48


10 Ibid., 67.


12 Ibid.


14 Baha Abu-Laban et al., The Settlement Experiences of Refugees in Alberta, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration and Population Research Laboratory, 1999), 1. 80.


17 Ibid., 12.


19 Ibid., 4.

20 Ibid., 16.


22 Hyndman, Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration in Canada, 15.

23 Ibid., 16.


26 Canadian Council for Refugees, Refugee Integration. Key Concerns and Areas for Further Research, 8.


33 Carter and Osborne “Housing and Neighbourhood Challenges of Refugee Resettlement in Declining Inner City Neighbourhoods: A Winnipeg Case Study,” 308-327.

34 Ibid., 322.


40 Beiser, “Resetting Refugees and Safeguarding their Mental Health: Lessons Learned from the Canadian Refugee Resettlement Project,” 546.


42 Hyndman, Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration in Canada, 11.


45 Hyndman, Research Summary on Resettled Refugee Integration in Canada, 1.

46 Canadian Council for Refugees, Refugee Integration: Key Concerns and Areas for Further Research, 11.


48 Abu-Laban et al., The Settlement Experiences of Refugees in Alberta, 1.


