Alberta Settlement and Integration Two-day Participatory Event Report

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Acknowledgements

The Consultation Advisory Committee, IRCC, and AAISA would like to acknowledge and thank the Co-chairs, speakers, participants, volunteers, and AAISA staff for their valued participation during the event and contributions to this report.

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- Mamady Camara, Centre Accueil Nouveaux Arrivants Francophones
- Marc Colbourne, Alberta Ministry of Labour
- Margaretha Ebbers, Government of Alberta, Department of Education
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAISA   Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies

BVOR   Blended Visa Office-Referred

ESL   English as a Second Language

GAR   Government Assisted Refugee

GoA   Government of Alberta

HIS   Helping Immigrants Succeed

iCARE   Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment

IFHP   Interim Federal Health Program

IRCC   Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

LINC   Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

LIP   Local Immigration Partnership

PSR   Privately Sponsored Refugee

PTSD   Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RAP   Resettlement Assistance Program

SAH   Sponsorship Agreement Holder

SPO   Service Provider Organization

SWIS   Settlement Workers in Schools

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are commonly used in the report. Definitions provide a basis for common understanding and are intended to foster dialogue.

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, summer programming, 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 contribute to strengthening municipalities as welcoming communities for newcomers. Initiatives such as LIPs are included within this stream.

Dashboard is a tool created by IRCC that was initially designed to ensure that relevant stakeholders had reliable information on Syrian refugee landings and the needs of this population; they are now being generalized to track the (re)settlement trajectories of each newcomer cohort to Alberta. Information on the Dashboard includes (but is not limited to) demographic indicators like family size and age, language waitlists and statistics outlining the average stay in temporary housing.

Demographics are statistical data of a population. They could include family size, gender, age, ethnicity, or first language.

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, 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. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) currently supports six Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organizations in Alberta. These are: CCIS, Calgary; CSS, Edmonton; SAAMIS Immigration Services Association, Medicine Hat; Lethbridge Family Services-Immigrant Services, Lethbridge; and Brooks & County Immigration Services, Brooks. 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 services, and provisions for disabilities. Examples include: crisis counselling, sexual health, and health clinics.

Helping Immigrants Succeed is a joint plan developed by the 14 federal, provincial and territorial governments. The plan covers three areas: language, social connections and labour markets, and seeks to create a client-centered approach to service offerings for future newcomer arrivals.

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

iCARE or Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment is an IRCC reporting tool used to manage information regarding service access for clients. Agencies are required to input data to help create a cohesive story of the settlement process.

Labour Market refers to the participation of all refugees and immigrants within the Albertan labour market, as well as the services offered to newcomers that help prepare them for entrance into the labour market. Programs include foreign credential recognition, work placement programs, and resume building workshops.

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.

Needs Assessment 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.

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.

Social Connections involve the link between the greater community area and migrants. Programs that work to create an inclusive environment that assists in successful integration are considered to be a part of social connections. These could include community events, volunteer opportunities

and other approaches that work to involve migrants in their individual communities.

Executive Summary

With the financial support of IRCC, AAISA convened a two-day participatory Consultation on June 27th and 28th in Calgary, Alberta. The Consultation was attended by 164 participants and supported by 48 volunteers. The event provided a space to engage in a meaningful discussion around the current priorities for the Syrian refugee resettlement and for immigrant settlement and integration in Alberta. The Consultation included participants from all levels of government, and representatives from organizations and institutions in the areas of refugee resettlement, settlement and integration, social services, education, health, community services and various others that engage with newcomers. It resulted in increased collaboration among multiple stakeholders and movement toward the creation of standardized outcomes in Alberta.

The Consultation saw a broad range of stakeholders present their own insights through plenary sessions, followed by facilitated workshops to engage participants in complimentary practice-oriented discussions. The first day of the Consultation was organized around the topics of promising-practices, challenges and opportunities, and the Alberta Dashboard and RAP Experience as they relate to the historic effort to resettle Syrian refugees in Alberta. Expanding the conversation to include all immigrants in Alberta, the second day was divided into the themes of lessons learned and next steps in settlement and integration, evidence to guide action, and creating effective tools such as the Dashboard.

The learnings discussed in this report are based on a qualitative approach which involves intentional qualitative analysis underpinned by detailed notetaking and coding. Through this approach, key themes and recommendations discussed during the event were identified in order to guide decision making on policy and programming for refugees and newcomers. The findings of the report reveal the overall priorities and recommendations for the future of Alberta's settlement and integration sector. Participants outlined the following as the most relevant areas of discussion on successes so far, challenges, and lessons learned: organizational capacity, client-centered programming, collaboration, communication, information sharing, standardization and coordination.

Participants recognized the need for sustained capacity to provide programs and services, highlighting the need for continued funding and a wider variety of client-centred programs and services. The collaboration, communication, and sharing of information between stakeholders demonstrates how various sectors and organizations can engage with each other to pool their resources and further their own capacity to provide efficient programs and services to newcomers. Finally, participants recognized the need for standardization and coordination to deliver efficient programs and services engage and implement a shared strategic plan, such as the Helping Immigrants Succeed initiative, in which organizations will work more closely with all levels of government and adopt standardized outcomes and tools such as the Dashboard and iCARE.

This report will first provide an introduction to the Consultation and a description of the facilitation and reporting processes. The report will continue by detailing the presentations and key themes and challenges, gaps, and recommendations identified in the plenary and workshop discussions. Next, the report will follow by summarizing an evaluation of the Consultation by the participants. Lastly, the

report will finish with the overall priorities discussion by participants, concluding with remarks on the key recommendations and priorities for the enhancement of policies and programming at the local and provincial levels going forward. The role of the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies to support the sector will also be explored.

Introduction

On June 27th and 28th, 2016, AAISA convened a two-day participatory event in Calgary, Alberta to capture the lessons learned from the resettlement of Syrian refugees in early 2016 and improve service delivery and the settlement and integration system in Alberta. The event was generously funded by IRCC and served as a forum to share perspectives about the Syrian refugee resettlement experience to date, open dialogue about successes and challenges, and discuss the management of shared priorities for the future of Alberta's settlement and integration sector. The Consultation was designed to facilitate meaningful exchange between stakeholders and government on how to improve refugee resettlement as well as the overall system of care for newcomers by identifying the sector's collective impact and opportunities to improve the use of shared resources.

Through a carefully designed facilitation and reporting processes, the event worked to increase collaboration among multiple stakeholders and movement toward the creation of standardized outcomes in Alberta. Collaboration was made possible by ensuring that a diversity of perspectives were invited and valued. Furthermore, the most current information and research on refugee resettlement, immigration, programming and services use, as well as promising practices and challenges, particularly in the areas of social connections, language and labor markets framed an informed discussion. The intention of this report is to compile key learnings from the event so as to guide the development of priorities for future policies, programs, and funding at both the local and provincial level.

Facilitation and Reporting Processes

To facilitate meaningful dialogue while uncovering discover key learnings and future priorities around refugee resettlement and newcomer settlement and integration in Alberta, structured and intentional facilitation and reporting processes were developed. The Consultation Advisory Committee helped to develop the Consultation agenda and provided guidance and expertise on the plenary and workshop themes as well as the facilitation and reporting processes.

Consultation participants were invited to attend the event through an online registration platform. The online invitation and sign-up form was shared digitally via newsletter and direct email with invitees. Participants were identified by the Advisory Committee as IRCC funded organizations and multiple, key stakeholders within Alberta in the areas of refugee resettlement on Day 1 and settlement and integration on Day 2. All participants registered online and informed consent was obtained from participants to use information shared during the plenaries and workshops as part of the report. The confidentiality of all participants and associated institutions and organizations has been strictly maintained.

The facilitation process consisted of the following:

- Participants for each workshop were randomly assigned to a topic and table. Participants were also given backgrounders for each topic that helped to equip them with a foundational knowledge of each topic that was discussed.

- Participants spent approximately 45 minutes discussing their topics, with a 15 minute summary session to review concepts discussed at each table. Moderators from each table would then summarize the discussions that took place at their individual tables and highlight key points. Each moderator was either a volunteer from AAISA's member agencies or students from post-secondary institutions in Canada.

- Each table also had a moderator to help facilitate conversation. Each moderator worked to establish a comfortable space where participants could equally share perspectives and ideas with one another, while keeping in mind the themes of the discussion.

- On Day 1, 79 participants participated in two workshops sessions. The first workshop divided the participants into 3 themes with approximately 26 participants each. The second workshop divided the participants into 4 themes with approximately 20 participants each. Thematic working group tables had a moderator to facilitate discussion, as well as a note taker to keep notes. On Day 1, participants discussed the workshop topics while keeping 7 questions in mind. These questions were:

  a) What is the sector doing that is working well?
  b) How can the sector improve at both the program and system level?
  c) What can we do to proactively engage as a sector?
  d) How can the sector work together to achieve uniform, client-focused results?
  e) What are the next steps of refugee resettlement?
  f) What roles do SPOs, community members, organizations, funders, and government play in successful refugee resettlement?
  g) What are our shared priorities for the future?

- On Day 2, 118 participants engaged in 2 workshop sessions. The third workshop session divided the participants into 3 themes, with approximately 39 participants each. The fourth workshop session divided the participants into 4 themes; with approximately 30 participants per theme. Thematic working group tables had a moderator to facilitate discussion, as well as a note taker to keep notes. On Day 2, participants discussed the workshop topics while keeping 10 questions in mind. These questions were:

  a) What are the emerging issues and trends facing our clients and the sector?
  b) What approaches/partnerships could be useful to respond to these issues?
  c) What is the sector doing that is working well?
  d) What are our shared priorities for the future?
  e) How can the sector improve at both the program and system level?
  f) What can we do to proactively engage as a sector?
  g) What initiatives/projects have you seen emerge in your community?
  h) How is success measured or defined?
  i) How do we set clear and realistic expectations for successful settlement and integration?
  j) Which stakeholders are responsible for identifying desired outcomes?

- In order to capture the highlighted outcomes, note takers were asked to take notes for all workshops and plenary discussions. Note takers were also made up of volunteers from AAISA-member agencies or students from post-secondary institutions in Canada. Upon orientation, note takers were given a detailed notetaking framework by AAISA. Note takers were also asked to sign a data-disclosure statement. After the Consultation, note-takers completed, cleaned up and sent notes to AAISA via email.

The methodology used to develop this report is as follows:

- AAISA designed the data collection framework for the Consultation. Qualitative notes from all 7 plenaries and 14 workshops are the main data sources. The PowerPoint presentations from the plenary speakers also helped to inform the report.

- The analysis and writing process of the report involved three stages. The initial stage involved the careful review of notes from each workshop and plenary in order to organize the report into common themes.

- The second stage of the report involved editing, collating and analyzing the data using Microsoft Excel to further identify key themes within the framework above.

- The third stage involved reviewing the data as a whole to identify the overarching learnings and recommendations gathered during the Consultation.

There were a few limitations in terms of data collection. In the majority of sessions note-takers were typing or writing notes during the discussion without the assistance of recorders. As a result, it could be possible that some information was not captured during certain discussion points. AAISA based the report on detailed qualitative notes received. However, the report may not capture all the key issues brought forth by Consultation participants due to notetaking limitations.

Day 1 Overview

The first day of the Consultation brought together 79 participants representing stakeholders directly involved in the resettlement of refugees, particularly from Syria.

The day's events began with a welcome message and introduction from Milton Alfonso Ortega (AAISA) and John Biles (IRCC). This message was followed by opening remarks given by Consultation Co-chairs, Deborah Tunis (IRCC) and Fariborz Birjandian (AAISA & CCIS). Both highlighted the creativity involved during the initial resettlement phases of the Syrian initiative, as well as the level of cooperation and partnership present throughout the sector. Following these remarks, the first of three plenary presentations began.

Plenaries invited speakers from a wide range of organizational perspectives to share their experiences and learn more about promising practices, challenges and opportunities during the resettlement of Syrian refugees, as well as to discuss ways to improve Alberta's settlement and integration system through the Dashboard tool during formal presentations followed by a question and discussion period.

Complementing the plenaries, facilitated workshop discussions provided a space for participants to break into smaller groups and discuss lessons-learned and priorities for future action related to two core phases of refugee resettlement: initial resettlement and settlement. The initial resettlement workshops examined the following themes:

a) Coordination and Engagement;
b) Resettlement Services; and
c) Communication and Capacity.

During the second workshop session on settlement, participants explored the themes of:

a) Housing;
b) Health Services;
c) Needs Assessment and Referral Processes; and
d) Language Assessment and Training.

The first day was adjourned with concluding remarks by Co-chairs, Deborah Tunis and Fariborz Birjandian, who summarized the learnings from both the plenaries and workshops sessions. The Co-chairs highlighted how complex the refugee journey is, and re-emphasized the creativity and flexibility demonstrated by the sector during a time of such immense pressure. Both Co-chairs spoke about the objectives for the next day, and outlined the need for a conversation to expand past the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative to the wider settlement and integration sector's priorities.

Plenary 1: Promising-Practices

The first day of the Consultation began with a plenary facilitated by the Co-chairs, Deborah Tunis and Fariborz Birjandian, where presenters discussed promising-practices used to resettle refugees. Discussion focused on new opportunities and initiatives, as well as unique approaches to service delivery that were developed as a result of the Syrian initiative.

Alice Colak, Catholic Social Services (Edmonton), spoke of the successes in the Alberta settlement and integration sector, highlighting the needs faced by agencies and refugees during the initial resettlement phases of the Syrian initiative. She emphasized how knowledge sharing within the sector was instrumental in the success of the large scale initiative to resettle the incoming Syrian refugee population. Alice highlighted how health, housing, and social needs became apparent upon arrival, and the various practices used within the sector to meet these needs. In particular, Alice raised the issue of affordable housing, and how this affects all vulnerable groups, not just refugees. She concluded her presentation by asserting that the sector must use this time of calmness to analyze the tools used during the initial arrival of refugees, and how these tools fit into the future of resettlement in Alberta.

Danielle Comeau, Government of Alberta, began her presentation by recognizing the Alberta settlement and integration sector and the success of the partnerships within the sector. Danielle went on to outline the lessons learned and best practices that will be used in preparation for the next wave of arrivals. She went on to discuss the need for timely and efficient agency funding, information sharing and comprehensive programs and services to address the full experience of refugees arriving in Alberta. She pointed out that data present on socio-economic outcomes for refugees is lacking. However, work has been undertaken to increase awareness of outcomes in this area through a commissioned study set to be released in the near future. Lastly, she described that the Alberta Government's call for proposals has been met with a great response from agencies.

Nicole Gleeson, MOSAIC Refugee Health Clinic, discussed the current situation in the health sector and the effective measures used by health care service providers during the initial arrival of Syrian refugees. Nicole highlighted the chronic health needs of recent arrivals. She communicated that many refugees have not received treatment of their chronic diseases in refugee camps. It was reiterated that the key to success in meeting these rising demands were strengthening community partnerships. Nicole presented the short term goals of the health sector as treating immediate needs and providing help with chronic illnesses, while emphasizing the longer term goal of building the capacity of refugees to access care themselves. The success the health sector had in treating the

initial arrivals was influenced by two main factors: the recent reimplementation of the IFHP, as well as the health sector's ability to provide flexible services to refugees.

Rod Olson, Canadian Baptists of Western Canada's closing presentation touched on the theme of creativity under stress and how private sponsors acted under these circumstances. He described the unique ability that Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) have to be able to reduce stress on the federal government funded programs. The challenges in selecting candidates for sponsorship, he shared, was prioritizing people by vulnerability. However, Rod highlighted the public's overwhelming interest in sponsorship, and spoke of how capacity can be built to meet this interest. The presentation ended with a description of the user friendly website that was created to help educate the public about private sponsorship and its success so far.

Plenary 2: Challenges and Opportunities

The second plenary, also facilitated by the Co-chairs Deborah Tunis and Fariborz Birjandian, provided a forum for presenters to continue the conversation on refugee resettlement by discussing local challenges and opportunities. Discussion centred on how challenges and opportunities related to services delivery during the Syrian initiative in Alberta can be better understood and leveraged to improve resettlement.

Sarah Aimes, Lethbridge Family Services, began the plenary by describing the variety of challenges faced by the sector upon the arrival of Syrian refugees. Outlined were issues of providing housing that can accommodate larger family sizes, trying to meet their diverse physical and mental health needs, transportation costs, cultural conflict, and the rate of poverty among newly arrived refugees. Unfortunately, these issues have created barriers to successful integration. Sarah spoke about the significant need for language services and building capacity in the sector for successful settlement. Despite these issues, Sarah spoke of the success the sector had in resettling Syrian families, as well as being much more prepared for the next arrival of refugees.

Paulette Johnson, Catholic Social Services (Edmonton), discussed the current caps placed on PSRs. Paulette emphasized the importance of this cap in helping the sector ensure proper programming. Paulette also highlighted the vast interest in the program by many Canadians. She suggested that this public interest should be harnessed and shifted to focus on refugees more broadly, as the cap only affects the Syrian population of refugees.

Margaretha Ebbers, Alberta Ministry of Education, outlined some of the priorities facing the school system with the arrival of Syrian refugees. She described areas for improvement such as building the capacity of the system to provide access for students to support systems and mental health programs. Margaretha spoke of students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen being difficult to engage, and that schools should attempt to integrate them with other students, especially during times between classes.

Jennifer Fowler, City of Edmonton, began her presentation by discussing the importance of communication and coordination in the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and that cooperation, partnerships and dialogue were integral in overcoming many of the challenges during this process. Jennifer mentioned the importance of including municipalities during the initial phases of planning as the media and residents often look to the cities for information. She also spoke of the need to find an effective method to attain information regarding PSRs. Jennifer finished by discussing how new

residents do not arrive with the necessary information to quickly integrate into society, and that those involved in the orientation process can meet this knowledge gap.

Darren Reedy, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, ended the plenary by discussing some of the obstacles that municipalities faced during the resettlement of Syrian refugees. He reiterated that many citizens and media looked towards municipalities for information regarding Syrian refugee resettlement, and that going forward municipalities should have a more grounded knowledge in this area. Darren spoke of the need for municipalities to prepare for future secondary resettlement, and resident involvement to create an inclusive environment. The plenary concluded with a discussion on how information may be used to help tackle Islamophobia and misconceptions present in public attitudes.

Workshop 1: Initial Resettlement

In consultation with Alberta's settlement and integration sector, the first workshop session provided a space to discuss lessons learned and priorities for future action regarding initial resettlement. Three topics of discussion were created to discover the underlying challenges, needs and promising practices present within the sector during the initial resettlement phases. These included:

    a) Communications and capacity;
    b) Coordination and engagement; and
    c) Resettlement services.

Each topic was discussed by up to 26 participants. The workshop themes are shared below, along with the thoughts of those participating within the workshop.

Communications and Capacity

During the initial resettlement of Syrian refugees, communications allowed for key stakeholders such as Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) providers and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) to collaborate, and speak with the public through media and public relations. Workshop participants discussing this topic elaborated on the communication practices used by agencies, highlighting the need for clear and concise messaging channels to disseminate information throughout the sector. Communication with the media and public were another common area of discussion. Many participants noted the need for strategic media practices, like similar messaging throughout the sector, in order to provide a clear story. Considerations of building organizational and system capacity were also fundamental in order to adequately meet the needs of refugees, as participants elaborated on the needs for the sector to be adaptable and efficient for future arrivals. Volunteer capacity was another area of interest for discussion, as many viewed the need for proper, standardized training to balance the need to help with safety.

Coordination and Engagement

In advance of the arrival of the Syrian refugees, the sector, particularly RAP providers, multiple levels of government, and AAISA, engaged in an extensive pre-planning process involving the local community and key stakeholders that informed the initial reception phase. Community engagement sessions were held with key stakeholder groups. This supported RAP providers in meeting client needs, bringing Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) to Alberta, and fostering welcoming and inclusive communities. Participants worked together to identify constructive practices used by the sector to engage the community, and the results from previous initiatives. Groups involved in this discussion deliberated the effectiveness of information sharing processes, and the new and

innovative partnerships created to manage the initial resettlement phase. Many reflected that the Syrian initiative helped to bring increased collaboration from all agencies, as well as the various levels of government involved. Participants noted that the sector, as a whole, has become more responsive due to the initiative, and better prepared to handle future waves of refugees.

Resettlement Services

Resettlement services are the first point of contact with Canadian society for many refugees. They were essential to the success of the Syrian resettlement initiative. They encompass: airport reception, resettlement facilities, Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) services, and Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) relationship building. Access to resettlement services varies depending on refugee category as PSRs and GARs receive different sources of funding. Discussants deliberated on the ways to better optimize services, and talked about the beneficial services offered during the initial resettlement phases that contributed to the sector's success. Language assessments were noted to be a significant success, as discussants described the process as being efficient and timely considering the volume of clients. Participants also remarked that basic needs must be met before successful integration, like those associated with health and accommodations. Initial orientation services were deemed crucial by many participants; with many discussing possible curriculum changes to ensure refugees are not receiving too much information at once.

Workshop Recommendations

The following observations and recommendations, put forward by participants, emerged during the workshop discussions as ways to leverage the sector's strengths and improve outcomes for refugees resettling in Alberta:

- Increasing public awareness and media attention.
- Increasing volunteer capacity and training.
- Maintaining effective communication between the sector, province, and federal government during the preplanning stage.
- Effectively using information sharing strategies between agencies and governments.
- Building client capacity and an approach centered on their needs.
- Communicating with and between the PSR communities.
- Implementing standardized tools to share information regarding resettlement (i.e. the Dashboard).
- Promoting best practices throughout the sector in order to adapt and handle crisis like those experienced during the Syrian initiative.
- Structuring orientation sessions to provide information over a period of time, and not all at once.
- Building on public awareness of Syrian refugee resettlement to increase the scope from only Syrian refugees to all refugees.
- Developing standardized practices to communicate with the media and ensuring that an accurate settlement story is told.

Workshop 2: Settlement

As a part of the Syrian resettlement effort, the province of Alberta has welcomed over 3,431 Syrian refugees to the province. Assisting these refugees are approximately 244 organizations that offer

1,400 services designed to positively impact their resettlement as identified during AAISA's Provincial Needs Assessment. In consultation with Alberta's settlement and integration sector, this workshop provided a space to discuss lessons learned and priorities for future action regarding services and programs aimed at building a client's capacity to function in everyday society. The workshop was separated into four themes:

a) Housing;
b) Health Services;
c) Needs Assessment and Referral Processes; and
d) Language Assessment and Training.

Each topic was discussed by up to 20 participants. The workshop themes are shared below, along with the thoughts of those participating within the workshop.

Housing

The large influx of refugees throughout the province highlighted the needs of affordable housing for refugees in Alberta. Participants discussed issues surrounding temporary accommodation, providing appropriate housing, community-wide effects, and concerns with funding housing needs. Discussants contemplated expectations of both refugees and landlords, emphasizing the need for communication between all those involved. One of the main concerns raised was providing housing that is appropriate for larger families.

Health Services

As Canada continues to resettle a large number of refugees from countries where protracted camp situations are common, greater attention must be paid to health-related settlement and integration services. Providing access to health services oriented toward the needs of refugees continues to be an area of learning for the sector. In this regard, participants spoke of education and province-wide information and resource sharing, as a key goal in improving the sector's ability to meet the health needs of new arrivals. Mental health was a leading theme raised in the workshop, with suggestions for culturally sensitive and approachable programs and resources. Translation services were identified as a need within the sector, with calls for more funding out of concern this may create a barrier in accessing other health services.

Needs Assessment and Referral Processes

In order to connect refugees to necessary services, a needs assessment takes place. This 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. Many participants maintained that communication and establishing effective information sharing is vital in increasing efficiency and meeting client needs. Flexibility of the agencies and a client-centred approach were identified as an integral aspect of successful assessments and referrals. The difference in the needs assessment experience between GARs and PSRs was raised as an issue; as many PSRs have difficulty in connecting with agencies. A reoccurring theme discussed was cross-sectorial standardization, communication and information sharing to establish best practices for assessing client needs.

Language Assessment and Training

Language is the bridge that connects refugees to community, employment and social services. Settlement services play a key role in providing language services and supporting language

instruction. These language programs include: pre-literacy support, bridging programs, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL), and specialized employment-focused language training and population-specific language education. The most significant issues raised in this workshop were course coordination, waitlist management and program funding. Best practices from locations like Edmonton which has small waitlists or Medicine Hat which has no waitlists were suggested, as well as flexible, client-centred programming were proposed.

Workshop Recommendations

The following observations and recommendations, put forward by participants, emerged during the workshop discussions as ways to leverage the sector's strengths and improve outcomes for refuges resettling in Alberta:

- Developing a multi-stakeholder approach that facilitates information sharing between assessment agencies, housing and health services, and training centres.
- Providing sustainable funding and resources for affordable housing and health provisions.
- Providing appropriate housing to accommodate large families.
- Managing differing expectations upon arrival.
- Increasing information given to refugees to make informed health decisions, possibly through orientation sessions and targeted programming.
- Understanding cultural sensitivity when dealing with newcomer mental health issues.
- Standardizing assessment, training, and referral processes across the sector.
- Using client-centred approaches, such as online or evening and weekend program delivery.
- Bridging the gap between GARs and PSRs needs assessment experiences.
- Sharing best practices between locations to reduce waiting times.
- Creating a centralized information database to strengthen the settlement sector.

Plenary 3: Improving Alberta's Settlement and Integration System: Alberta Dashboard and the Resettlement Assistance Provider (RAP) Experience

Moderated by John Biles (IRCC), this plenary examined the shared outcomes and advantages of improving and scaling standardized tools such as the Dashboard in order to support the work of service providers. The discussion engaged RAP providers and SAHs in order to orient tools such as the Dashboard towards their needs during the initial resettlement phase and over the long-term as refugees transition to accessing broader settlement and integration sector supports.

John Biles, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, began the session by looking at how the Dashboard will be essential to the future of the settlement and integration sector. John went on to discuss the sector's need for reliable and consistent data, and how the Dashboard is effective at meeting this need. The Dashboard's features were highlighted, such as the ability to provide system-wide information on the sector, and how it relates to funding and programming. John noted that in its current form the Dashboard shares information regarding families and social connections but has the potential to be a living document that includes data on all refugees, the labour markets, and mental health. John finished the plenary by answering several questions from the audience, highlighting issues around gender metrics the collection of PSR data, and how assessment centres may play a role in data collection due to their position as the first point of contact for many refugees.

Alice Wong, Alberta Ministry of Labour, discussed the importance of high-level, consistent data, and how the Dashboard works to provide this information so vital to planning and supporting the refugees. Alice spoke of the need to include PSRs in the Dashboard, as it will help the sector understand all types of refugees and the challenges and needs they may have. She summarized further areas to include on the Dashboard such as; employment, mental and physical health, literacy levels, housing and education. Alice concluded by emphasizing how important the Dashboard was in the first year of development.

Bindu Narula, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, raised the issue of how to obtain information regarding PSRs. She identified that there is a need to bridge the information gap between PSRs and GARs. Bindu recommended that services between these two groups should become more comparable to gain a complete picture of the refugees settling in Alberta. The discussion finished with Bindu recommending a holistic approach, as it will help to cover all the important issues faced by the settlement and integration sector.

Antonio Samayoa, Saamis Immigration Services Association, began by praising the user-friendliness of the Dashboard. Antonio discussed how it would be beneficial for public schools and municipalities to access this information as it is useful in helping refugees make educated settlement decisions. Antonio reiterated that, like others, he would like to see the dashboard include all categories of refugees going into the future.

Krystyna Biel, Immigrant Services Calgary, detailed how the Dashboard is a versatile tool that helps define which programs need to be put in place, and shows how stakeholders can contribute in unique ways. Krystyna emphasized the need for the Dashboard to include all categories of refugees, and the implications associated with gathering more data, as the source and frequency of information would need to be further discussed. She finished by elaborating on how the Dashboard may support government and stakeholders during planning processes, and addressing specific needs, such as those of children and youth.

> ## Did you know?
>
> **3,645 Syrian refugees** have arrived since November 4th, 2015.
>
> There have been a total of **1,394 Language Assessments** with an **average wait time of 2-3 weeks**.
>
> **73.6%** of Syrian refugees have **accessed at least 1 settlement service** by March 31, 2016, with **23%** in the first **4-6 weeks of arrival.**

Day 1: Lessons Learned

The first day of the consultation brought together a variety of participants to share their experiences on the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and the promising practices, challenges, and opportunities that arose during the influx. The following lessons learned were identified as the key learnings observed during the plenary sessions and workshops:

Collaboration and Information Sharing

1. Knowledge sharing and coordination is key for a successful settlement sector as organizations can engage with each other to pool their resources and further their own capacity to provide programs and services to newcomers.
2. Collaboration between agencies and sectors increased during the Syrian initiative and many hope that this will be continued in the future.
3. The sector and civil society gained experience from the Syrian influx and are now more equipped to receive future arrivals.
4. Municipalities would like greater involvement and knowledge in Syrian refugee resettlement as they are often looked towards by the public and media for more information.
5. Strengthening community partnerships are important in meeting the rising demands of refugees across the settlement and health sectors in particular.
6. Strategic messaging is needed when communicating with the media to be clear, concise, and to reduce any misconceptions concerning refugees.

Capacity Building

1. SAHs have a unique ability to be able to reduce stress on the federal government funded programs and should be used more proactively.
2. Standardized training and assessment is needed to build organizational and staff capacity to adequately meet the varied needs of refugees.
3. There is great public interest and support for refugees that should be utilized, but organizations need to be aware of the xenophobia that some of their clients may be facing.
4. Basic needs such as health and accommodation need to be met before successful integration can take place.
5. Affordable and appropriate housing is an issue for all immigrants and other vulnerable groups due to large family sizes, funding, and limited availability.

Client-centered Programming

1. Client-centered programming is vital to meet the diverse needs of refugees, especially in terms of gender, mental health, special needs, flexibility of services, and cultural sensitivity.
2. Children and youth represent a very vulnerable group of refugees with specialized needs that need to be targeted both in schools and their communities.
3. Many refugees have limited access to information prior to their arrival in Canada and would benefit greatly if they had a greater understanding of what to expect upon their arrival.

Data Collection and the Dashboard

1. There is an information gap between PSRs and GARs such that information is not as easily attained on PSRs.
2. A standardized and strategic plan is needed to reduce the informational gap on the socio-economic outcomes of refugees.

3. The Dashboard is effective in providing system-wide information on Syrian refugees during their resettlement in Alberta. It should become more comprehensive by tracking PSRs and all newcomers.

Day 2 Overview

Broadening the conversation from refugee resettlement to immigrant settlement and integration in Alberta, the second day of the Consultation convened 118 participants representing multiple stakeholders involved in settlement and integration in Alberta. Participants represented organizations involved in the resettlement of refugees as well as organizations and services providers funded by IRCC, provincial and municipal governments, educators, post-secondary institutions, and researchers.

The second day began with a welcome message and introduction from Milton Alfonso Ortega (AAISA) and John Biles (IRCC). This message was followed by opening remarks given by Consultation Co-chairs, Deborah Tunis (IRCC) and Fariborz Birjandian (AAISA & CCIS). During these remarks, the Co-chairs welcomed new stakeholders and thanked participants from the first day for their contributions. The Co-chairs laid the foundation for the day's events by summarizing learnings from the first day on Syrian refugee resettlement, and setting objectives for the second and final day of consultation. Remarking on the goals for the second day, both Co-chairs acknowledged the participation of newcomers in society as a priority for the whole sector. Following these remarks, the first of four plenary presentations began.

Plenaries invited speakers from a wide range of organizational perspectives to share their tools, research, and expertise on the current state of settlement and integration in Alberta while envisioning priorities for future action during the following formal presentations:

a) Settlement and Integration in Alberta: The Path Forwards;
b) Settlement and Integration: Evidence to Guide Action;
c) Helping Immigrants Succeed; and
d) Building an Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard.

Each presentation was followed by a question and discussion period.

Complementing the plenaries, facilitated workshop discussions provided a space for participants to break into smaller groups and discuss the themes first explored during the plenaries on the Helping Immigrants Succeed initiative and the Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard.

The first workshop session invited attendees to review the Helping Immigrants Succeed templates and participate in a dialogue about three cross-cutting priorities for the sector:

a) Labour Markets;
b) Language; and
c) Social Connections.

During the second workshop session, participants were encouraged to review and explore the Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard tool and areas of enhancement. In alignment with provincial and federal collaborative priorities outlined in the HIS template, the facilitated discussions focused on the following themes:

a) Demographics;
b) Labour Markets;
c) Language; and

d) Social Connections.

Plenary 4: Settlement and Integration in Alberta: The Path Forwards

Opening the second day of consultation, plenary presenters expanded the discussion from refugee resettlement on the first day to deliberate the settlement and integration of all newcomers arriving in Alberta with particular emphasis on collaboration, client needs, and priorities for the future.

John Biles, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, outlined five areas of importance within the settlement and integration sector: outcomes, proposals, the path forward, partnerships and leadership. He emphasized the importance of reporting on outcomes, and the need for increased use of iCARE as a way to inform funders of the success in the sector. Moving forward, he discussed the significance of descriptive statistics to show the successful stories of arrivals. He noted the current partnerships in Alberta provided a successful framework to handle stress, and acted as an incubator for new approaches to settlement issues. To finish, he highlighted the increased leadership capacity seen in Alberta and the need to build upon the momentum to increase Western Canada's presence in the national immigration sector.

Alice Wong, Alberta Ministry of Labour, started her presentation by discussing the changes to programming required to meet the needs of a new class of immigrants, as they are no longer arriving under the economic class. Alice spoke of understanding the diversity and changing landscape present in the immigration and labour systems, calling for the design of programs that recognize language and employment go hand in hand. She finished by suggesting that the sector could make use of the knowledge gained from previous arrivals. This knowledge would help to develop a more flexible multilateral approach that is effective at confronting issues like discrimination, mental health, language and other economic barriers.

Jennifer Fowler, City of Edmonton, spoke of the ways in which municipalities are improving training to increase awareness about the issues facing newcomers and to build their working capacity. This training, along with multi-sector efforts, has worked to create a culture in the city of Edmonton that is educated, inclusive and supportive of diversity. Jennifer noted that the inclusion of newcomers in the process of decision making is vital, as they provide a lived experience that can be called upon. She also highlighted the involvement of LIPs, and how beneficial their presence was in supporting multi-sector programs. Understanding how these initiatives work to help all immigrants is important, as they can benefit all municipalities by creating engagement between diverse cultures and work to promote settlement.

Beba Svigir, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, outlined the issues faced by many immigrant women trying to integrate into Albertan society. She spoke of the achievements in welcoming women to Calgary, but indicated that programming could be improved by tailoring it to the specific challenges faced by immigrant women, as many face gender-specific barriers remain. Beba mentioned that although there has been notable use of breastfeeding and parenting programs, there has been limited interested in entering the labour market. Beba concluded her presentation by recommending an increase in educational programs and services for woman regarding Canadian life, and by stating that access to such services is integral to equal integration of newcomers.

Mamady Camara, Centre Accueil Nouveaux Arrivants Francophones, spoke of Alberta's great potential to become a major centre for Francophone arrivals outside of Quebec. Mamady discussed the significant number of Francophone services available in Alberta, which are not widely known. He

called for increased efforts to connect Francophone newcomers to French services, and reducing competition between Anglophone and Francophone services. Mamady finished by conveying the need to increase international awareness that Quebec is not the only Francophone settlement destination in Canada.

Plenary 5: Settlement and Integration: Evidence to Guide Action

During this plenary, the Consultation conversation highlighted evidence-driven tools that can be used to inform future priorities in the areas of policy, planning and service delivery throughout Alberta.

Dr. Joseph Garcea, University of Saskatchewan, started the plenary with a brief introduction to the new evidence-based mapping tool his team has developed in collaboration with IRCC. The projects purpose was to develop an easily accessible, online mapping tool that western provinces can use when tracking settlement patterns in their communities. His colleague, **Jason Desano**, then provided a brief demonstration of the tool to the audience. Jason detailed how the tool has the ability to break down data into various categories, and can generate numerous maps that are downloadable.

Dr. Paulin Mulatris, University of Alberta, Campus St. Jean, spoke of the recent work done, in conjunction with IRCC, to address the needs of Francophone newcomers in northern and western Canada. He described the results of surveys completed by the francophone service providers that illustrate more information are needed around Francophone services, and that many francophone immigrants are not accessing these services. The findings of these surveys have been compiled in a report, along with recommendations to help strengthen the Francophone immigration sector.

Dr. Michael Kariwo, University of Alberta, elaborated on the challenges faced by refugees arriving in a new environment, and various methods to support successful integration. In particular, Michael spoke of the challenges associated with gaining language skills and employment as well as reunifying families. He recommended the implementation of support frameworks that help to teach stress management, and share social and informational support. These frameworks are effective at helping to deal with trauma-related stress faced by many refugees fleeing conflict zones, as well as promoting an inclusive and safe environment for information sharing.

Susan Coughlan, Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada, discussed the need for a real-time tool to share information within the sector. Susan spoke of the role information sharing tools play in tracking settlement patterns within and outside the province. She detailed how managing demographic information for these groups would be beneficial in preparing tools and services, such as those to help with accounting for the increases of funding being received by the sector. Susan finished by highlighting the benefits of research projects like those discussed, would provide in creating and strengthening programs throughout the sector.

Plenary 6: Helping Immigrants Succeed

During this joint presentation, the federal and provincial governments outlined their commitment to welcoming and supporting newcomers. The presenters discussed their collaborative vision and shared objectives, key actions, and expected results for immigration over the next three years.

Marc Colbourne, Alberta Ministry of Labour, started the plenary by discussing the *Helping Immigrants Succeed* action plan and its shared priorities across 14 governments in Canada. He expressed how the template reflected the surveyed views of 20,000 newcomers, regarding how settlement processes occur in their own province. The survey feedback, he shared, has been

organized into a plan to improve three areas within the sector: social connections, labour markets and foreign credential recognition, and official languages. The templates being developed will be used by the sector to help facilitate multilateral approaches and to discover areas worth duplicating. He finished his presentation by elaborating on the importance of establishing similar outcomes for the sector, and how stakeholder engagement can promote efficiency and provide future recommendations.

John Biles, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, went on to further discuss how important the Helping Immigrants Succeed action plan is to the sector. John highlighted how front end engagement provided by the sector helps to guide government direction in the areas of social connections, labour market integration, and official languages. He shared various methods the template could be used to communicate Alberta's settlement stories and practices. John finished the plenary by sharing the role of umbrella organizations, such as AAISA, in the action plan, and how they will engage the sector to develop strategies to guide program development.

Workshop 3: Helping Immigrants Succeed

Helping Immigrants Succeed is a collaborative initiative between the 14 Federal, Provincial, and Territorial governments. This initiative is a shared commitment to welcome and support newcomers. From a survey of 20,000 newcomers, three areas for improvement recognized were: language, labour markets, and social connections. The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Settlement Working Group compiled asset maps of existing services to guide the development of an action plan. The Alberta Settlement Sector had an opportunity to validate these asset mappings at this event to ensure they are accurate and reflective of existing services. The outcome of these discussions can be used to inform the settlement and integration of future newcomers to Alberta. The workshop was separated into three themes:

a) Language;
b) Labour Markets; and
c) Social Connections.

Each topic was discussed by up to 39 participants. The workshop themes are shared below, along with the thoughts of those participating within the workshop.

Language

This initiative outlines the importance of language skills in the settlement and integration of newcomers within Canadian society. Given the acute language needs of many immigrants and considering language is a primary settlement tool to successful integration, language assessment and training matters greatly. Participants outlined various areas for improvement in developing the language skills of new arrivals. One particular development area that was identified was accessibility to language courses which has been affected by large waitlists, cultural issues around gender roles, and childcare provision. It was highlighted that these issues have become exacerbated due to issues surrounding human resources and funding. Many noted that they had now learnt to **recognize the diversity of the classes, their variety of needs, and levels of ability; but acknowledged that more support was still needed for those with special needs.** A range of methods to measure success and to follow up with students were outlined and shared between participants of the workshop.

Labour Markets

This initiative outlines the importance of labour market integration in the settlement and integration of newcomers within Canadian society. Employment is a foundational indicator of integration. Participants spoke of the success of job training programs, calling for increased accessibility and an expansion of programming. Many in the workshop recommended **concurrent language training class attendance with labour programs in order to achieve successful labour market integration**. Further suggestions involved **exposure to the job market during training, gender specific programming, employer collaboration, participant recognition, childcare services, and information and best practice sharing between all programs.**

Social Connections

This initiative outlines the importance of social connections in the settlement and integration of newcomers within Canadian society. For immigrants, an important part of fostering social connection is the presence of a welcoming community that has the capacity to meet the newcomer's needs and promotes inclusion. Discussions outlined the **vital role that schools, religious institutions, health services and community events have had in connecting new arrivals with the community and each other.** Participants also spoke of the collaboration between organizations during the Syrian initiative, hoping that this collaborative effort will continue into the future. Public attitude towards refugees was raised, with discussants indicating **the importance of education and the media in breaking down cultural stereotypes and creating a welcoming environment. Connecting cultural leaders of immigrant populations to available settlement services was recognized as an effective method to direct arrivals to appropriate services.**

Workshop Recommendations

The following observations and recommendations, put forward by participants, emerged during the workshop discussions as ways to leverage the sector's strengths and improve settlement and integration outcomes for immigrants in Alberta:

- Improving integration of language and employment training.
- Reducing waitlists.
- Creating gender-specific programming.
- Focusing on cultural sensitivity to ensure successful programming and participation.
- Providing childcare for those enrolled in programming.
- Sharing best practices between agencies and programs.
- Exposing clients to the labour market during programming to facilitate their entrance into the labour market.
- Increasing agency collaboration with employers and local businesses.
- Increasing client recognition to incentivize and increase the participation of newcomers in labour market programs.
- Promoting schools, religious institutions, health services and community events as effective connection points.
- Strengthening support and contact throughout programs for clients to assure success in the labour market.

- Educating the public media to break down cultural stereotypes.

Plenary 7: Building an Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard

Concluding the Consultation's plenary presentations, IRCC lead a facilitated discussion on the design and use of the Alberta Provincial Dashboard tool. Shared outcomes and areas that can be enhanced and expanded were evaluated from the perspective of diverse provincial stakeholders.

John Biles, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada opened the plenary by discussing the value of creating a Dashboard that involves the entire settlement and integration sector, based on the best practices observed during the Syrian initiative. John listed a variety of metrics that should be included in the Dashboard, such as family size, settlement patterns and language waitlists. He expressed his belief that the information included in the dashboard can be used to help provide the sector with descriptive analysis to support the design of programs and services. Lastly, John emphasized the importance of input from the sector in order to better plan how the dashboard will look in the future.

Frank Bauer, Central Alberta Refugee Effort, spoke of how useful the Dashboard is in helping with government priorities, and the allocation of resources within the sector. He made it clear that numerous stakeholders should be involved, not just agencies, but also clients, as their needs are ultimately what the sector should strive to support. Frank underscored how meaningful indicators that demonstrate both long and short term outcomes put forward by the sector should be included on the Dashboard.

Bozana Sljuka, Lethbridge Family Services, highlighted that the logistics of gathering data will need to be more thorough. She noted that assigning and specifying who collects data may require increased capacity for agencies. In particular, Bozana expressed that communities who do not receive IRCC funding, and other rural areas, should be analyzed to see which services are present in these areas, and what are the community's current needs.

Anne-Marie Hagel, Calgary Catholic School Board, highlighted some of the benefits of the Dashboard and made several recommendations for improvement in the future. She asserted that previous outcomes should be analyzed, as they may be able to provide support for the systems future. Anne-Marie also maintained the potential the Dashboard has in impacting senior administration, and how age categories and language assessments in particular worked well when planning programs in school systems. She finished her presentation by reiterating the benefit of increased knowledge around medical care, disabilities and mental health to meet the needs of families coming to Canada.

Shiraz Amiry, Calgary Immigrant Services, concluded the plenary by acknowledging the positive reception the Dashboard received. He emphasized how building on the momentum of the Dashboard should be a major priority in helping the sector. Shiraz mentioned how helpful the summary of needs and trends was, suggesting that this information and the Dashboard itself should be shared with all the stakeholders in the sector. Lastly, Shiraz suggested dedicating a specific section to youth ages 14-18, as many consider this group highly vulnerable.

Workshop 4: Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard

In early 2016, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) created the Alberta Settlement and Integration Dashboard to provide up-to-date information on the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

Initially, the Dashboard compiled information about refugee resettlement patterns within the province, while providing an overview of the progress made by the settlement and integration sector. Learning from the Syrian refugee resettlement effort, the Dashboard can serve as a vital information-sharing tool which will allow for improved resource allocation, coordination, and tracking of standardized outcomes across the province. Moving forward the sector will evaluate how the Dashboard's scope can be broadened to track outcomes related to the whole settlement sector, not only refugees but all types of immigrants. In consultation with Alberta's settlement and integration sector, this workshop provided a space to discuss how the Dashboard works, and the measurements to improve service delivery for all newcomers and programming areas. The workshop was separated into four different topics:

a) Demographics;
b) Language;
c) Labour market; and
d) Social connections.

As a part of the Helping Immigrants Succeed initiative, an emphasis was placed on understanding how language, labour market and social connections are represented on the Dashboard.

Each topic was discussed by up to 30 participants. The workshop themes are shared below, along with the thoughts of those participating within the workshop.

Demographics

Moving forward from the initial Syrian Dashboard, participants noted how beneficial the tool was in program and service planning. Information regarding family size, gender and age groupings helped in confronting issues that arose during the resettlement phase. Indicators discussing family size were helpful, for example, when trying to find appropriate and affordable housing for large families. To increase the scope of the Dashboard, participants commented on understanding the various social groups that exist within the immigrant population. Information around individuals identifying within the LGBTQ community, those living with a disability and other marginalized groups were discussed as possible indicators to include. Concerns about capacity to collect the required data were raised, as participants reflected on who would have the most capacity to collect and analyze the data gathered.

Language

Language service offerings are crucial throughout the resettlement, settlement and integration processes. Participants noted that including language services on the Syrian Dashboard was helpful to establish where capacity building was needed for the sector. Possible data collection tools were discussed, as many noted that iCARE has the potential to become a useful instrument in presenting data to be used in the dashboard. Participants also recognized the need to create an easily accessible database for the whole settlement and integration sector in Alberta, in order to help inform all members during the settlement process. Establishing standardized indicators to analyze is another area of importance as participants discussed the need to create concise data gathering techniques for the sake of efficiency.

Labour Market

Successful integration into the labour market is a top priority for the sector, as it provides newcomers with the ability to become more independent and self-sufficient. Workshop participants noted that the Dashboard currently features little information regarding labour market integration. Discussants

promoted the notion of knowledge sharing between the provincial and federal levels of government. The groups also expressed an interest in further understanding the barriers many immigrants face when trying to participate in the labour market. It was mentioned that the most notable challenges faced by newcomers are foreign qualification recognition and discrimination.

Social Connections

With the unveiling of the new Helping Immigrants Succeed initiative, the federal government has placed an emphasis on understanding the types of communities where immigrants settle, as well as their roles within the community. Participants noted that the heat maps on the current Dashboard have been helpful in showing settlement patterns in urban areas. The heat maps, discussants noted, helped in planning services in close proximity to areas within Calgary and Edmonton that have a higher number of resettled migrants. Workshop participants described a need to establish a standardized meaning of what success looks like for social connections, and from there to establish such indicators to measure that success.

Workshop Recommendations

The following observations and recommendations, put forward by participants, emerged during the workshop discussions as ways to leverage the sector's strengths and improve settlement and integration outcomes for immigrants in Alberta:

- Standardizing indicators and data collection methods across the settlement and integration sector.
- Improving data sharing and data collection between the different levels of government.
- Improving data collection on social connections and labour market participation.
- Strengthening indictors already present on the Dashboard, like those associated with language and demographics.
- Sharing the Dashboard across the entire settlement and integration sector.
- Improving sectorial capacity to collect data for use on the Dashboard.
- Strengthening pre-existing data collection tools to assist in collecting data (i.e. iCARE).
- Increasing the attention given to social connections, possibly through funding and increased awareness, in order to understand what better successful integration is in this area.

Day 2: Lessons Learned

The second day of the consultation brought together a variety of participants to share their experiences on immigrant settlement and integration in Alberta, the HIS action plan, and the Dashboard. The following lessons learned were identified as the key learnings observed during the plenary sessions and workshops:

Future Priorities

1. The five greatest areas of importance within the settlement and integration sector are:
    a) Placing greater importance on reporting on outcomes such as through iCare to effectively tell the settlement story and inform funders of the success in the sector.
    b) Meeting the government's call for proposals.
    c) Using descriptive statistics to guide the path forward and demonstrate the success of arrivals.
    d) Using current partnerships in Alberta as a successful framework to handle stress and support new issues
    e) An increased leadership capacity in Alberta to strengthen the West's presence in the national immigration sector.
2. Umbrella organizations, such as AAISA, will play an important role in engaging the sector to develop strategies to guide program development.
3. LIPs are well positioned to support multi-sector programs as they are able to engage various stakeholders such as employers, school boards, health centres, professional associations, ethno-cultural organizations, and the community and social sectors.
4. Newcomers' lived experience is an important resource that should be utilized during decision making as it can provide a unique and valuable perspective, and creates engagement between diverse cultures.
5. Alberta has great potential to become a major centre for Francophone arrivals outside of Quebec, and has a significant number of Francophone services which are not widely known or accessed.

Collaboration and Information Sharing

1. Public education and the media are important in breaking down cultural stereotypes and building welcoming and inclusive communities.
2. Schools, religious institutions, health services, community events, and cultural leaders are vital in connecting new arrivals with the community and appropriate services as they are often the first point of contact for newcomers and the one in which they are most comfortable approaching.

Client-centered Programming

1. The largest challenges that newcomers face in entering the labour market are foreign credential recognition and discrimination.
2. Large waitlists, cultural issues around gender roles, and childcare provision has affected accessibility to language classes.
3. Language classes are very diverse and many students have special needs that could be better addressed.

4. Language and employment training were identified as integral to each other to achieve the successful integration of newcomers due to the significant need of language in the labour market.
5. Successful employment class participation is greatly supported by gender specific programming, childcare provision, labour market experience, employer collaboration, and participant recognition.
6. Immigrant women face many gender-specific barriers, such as traditional gender roles, family pressure, childcare, and restricted mobility which have resulted in limited labour market participation.
7. Many refugees face unique trauma-related stress that requires an extensive support framework.

Data Collection and the Dashboard
1. More data on immigrants should be collected and utilized in various tools such as the Dashboard to track settlement patterns, inform decision making, and meet the needs of families coming to Canada.
2. The Dashboard is useful in guiding evident based decision making by tracking standardized outcomes, and identifying key trends and priorities. The Dashboard should be shared with a broader audience, and expanded to include meaningful indicators that that are able to demonstrate both the long and short term outcomes of the sector.

Evaluation

Following the Consultation, a post-event survey was shared with participants to give them an opportunity to provide feedback and evaluate the event. The feedback and comments summarized here will be used to improve the execution and planning of future stakeholder engagement events and consultations so as to tailor them to meet the sector's needs. Participants reflected that the Consultation was an effective way to engage the community around refugee resettlement and sectorial priorities, share knowledge and best practices, and that it provided a space for networking with organizations and individuals from various backgrounds.

Participation

The Consultation consisted of a broad range of representatives from different backgrounds. Predominantly, the settlement and integration sector represented 43.5% of participants, the government 14.5%, and other non-profit or community organizations 11.6%. The full representation of different sectors can be seen below. Of the organizations and agencies that attended the conference, 82.6% of them currently provide services to refugees.

Sector Representation

- Settlement and Integration
- Government
- Social Services
- Education
- Health
- Sponsorship Agreement Holder
- Other Non-profit or Community Organizations
- Post-Secondary or Academic Institution
- Other
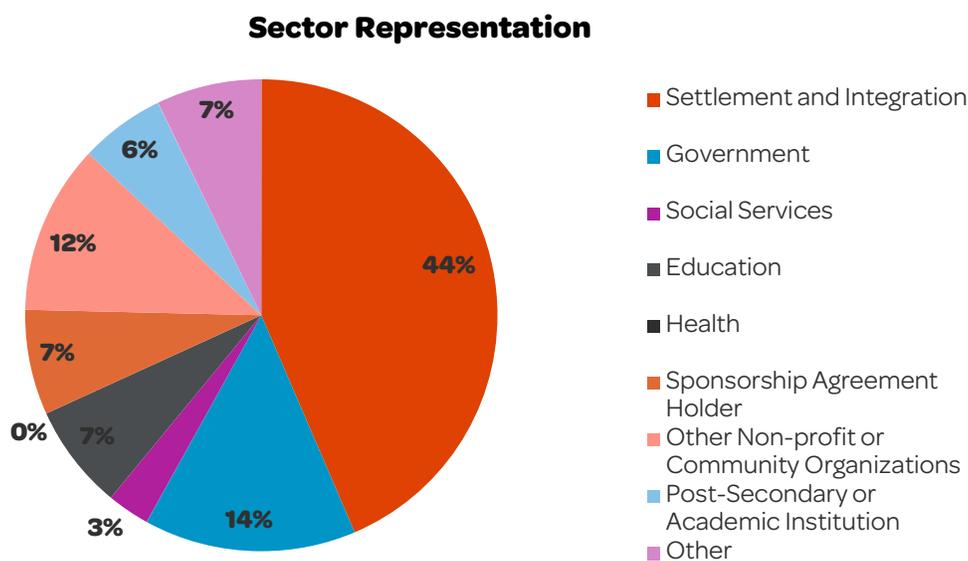
Plenaries

Overall, 87% of attendees for all plenaries were "Somewhat" to "Very Satisfied"; with Plenaries 2 and 5. This corresponds to a satisfaction rate of over 90%. In regards to the performance of the speakers and plenary moderators, the attendees rated their experience at an average of 3.8 and 3.7 respectively on a scale of 1 being poor, and 5 being excellent. In terms of the overall format and amount of plenary sessions, 77% of respondents would prefer to have the same amount of plenary sessions, 14% would prefer less and 9% would prefer more.

The feedback provided puts the plenary sessions in a very positive light, successful in sharing information and providing topics for discussions, resulting in very few suggestions for improvement. It

may be discerned from the responses that the performance of the plenary speakers and moderators was rated marginally lower due to timing issues and discussions moving away from the plenary topic. Furthermore, the number of plenary sessions appeared to be satisfactory with the majority of attendees, with a slight preference for more. This is particularly pertinent as it shows the value that many of the participants placed on the plenaries for sharing information on priorities and trends in Alberta.

Satisfaction with the Plenary Sessions
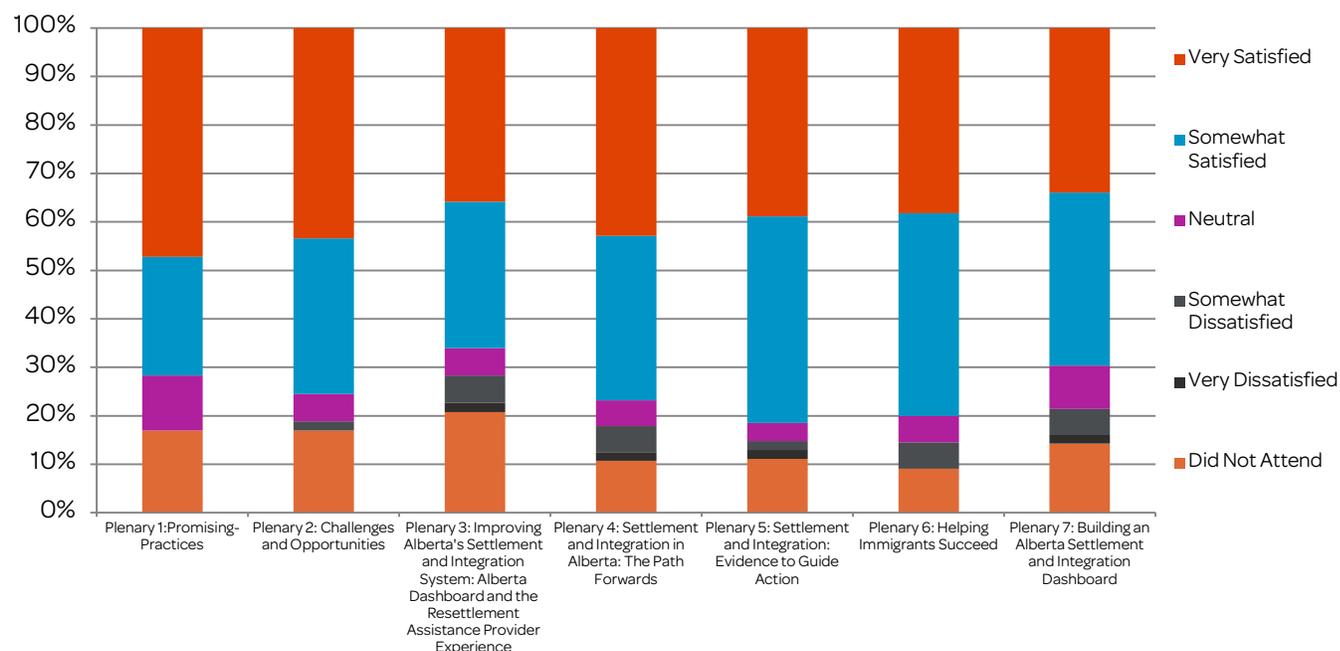
Workshops

Participants evaluated the workshops favourably and rated their overall experience as "Somewhat" to "Very Satisfied" at 84%, ranging from 78% to 87%. On average the performance of the workshop facilitators was rated as 3.5 on a scale of 1 to 5. In terms of the amount of workshop sessions, 61% would like to have the same number of workshops, 16% would like to have less and 23% would prefer to have more.

It is evident there is a greater area for improvement on the amount and overall format of the workshop sessions. Satisfaction rates and workshop facilitators' performance were rated slightly lower in comparison to the plenaries sessions, in addition to a more diverse opinion on the number of workshops during the consultation. Furthermore, respondents were very positive in the way that workshops offered a space to transition from the high level plenary discussions to more practice focused discussions. As one respondent remarked that "the opportunities to discuss in smaller groups the results of the plenary sessions was extremely valuable to take the high level discussions and move them into more localized idea sharing and planning". Although the workshops were rated slightly lower than the plenary sessions, the feedback is evidently still very positive, setting

precedence for future consultations and providing constructive suggestions for areas of improvement.

Impact

Despite any concerns raised during the Consultation, 94% of respondents would be interested in attending more consultations like this one in the future. Several respondents commented on the value of this Consultation in engaging the community, facilitating and supporting collaboration, sharing valuable information, and acting as an important networking event. Comparatively, 69% of participants would be interested in attending online consultations, perhaps showing the importance many of the attendees place on a tangible and dynamic interaction that in-person consultations provide.

This is evidenced in 88% of respondents agreeing that the settlement and integration sector engaged in a meaningful exchange of ideas and practices as a result of this consultation. Some outlined how the relevant sectors were engaged and were able to learn from each other by sharing their resolutions and reflections on challenges and opportunities faced by the sector during the resettlement of refugees and overall settlement and integration of newcomers. In addition, 87% believed that they will use the information from this Consultation in their work and organizational programming.

The most beneficial aspects of the Consultation identified were its role as a networking event, sharing experiences and challenges faced, and providing a diverse range of views from different backgrounds; enabling attendees to gain an understanding of the refugee environment in Alberta. In particular, the opportunity to move the high level discussions from the plenaries to the more localized knowledge sharing in the workshop discussions was highlighted as very valuable. Seating arrangements and workshop assignments were undertaken to manage logistics and to ensure each workshop was equally attended and valued by participants. Suggestions were raised in the feedback for greater freedom in seating options and workshop participation. This may be a possibility for future Consultations and would address individual concerns about the number of plenaries and workshops.

Generally, attendees were satisfied with all aspects of the event. Satisfaction with the registration process and consultation dialogue was rated at 92% and 82% respectively. This lower satisfaction with the consultation dialogue appears to be framed around plenary and workshop sessions moving away from the topic, timing issues and expectations of discussion topics. In particular, there was a call for a greater connection between plenary and workshop sessions and suggestions for best practices going forward. However, these issues are expected when organizing an event that seeks to bring together diverse perspectives and multiple stakeholders as speakers.

Overall Satisfaction with the Consultation
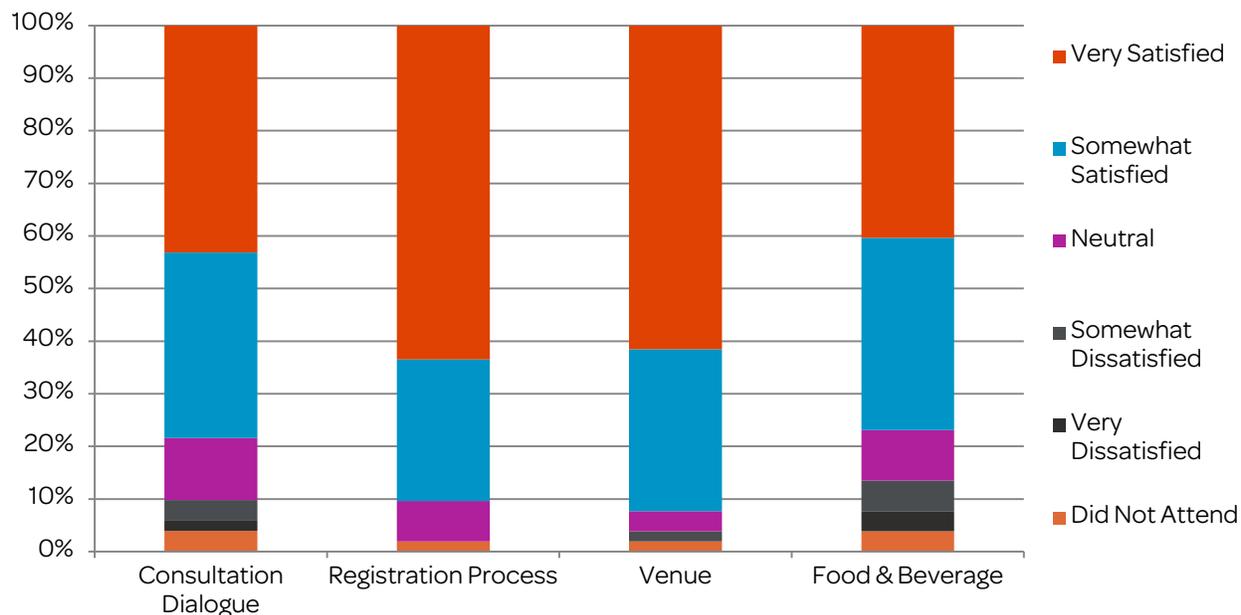
In conclusion, the Consultation can be viewed as a success from the responses received through the evaluation survey. It is evident that the Consultation provided a unique opportunity for a broad range of individuals and organizations from across Alberta to network and share their experiences and best practices. Aligned with the objectives of the Consultation, participants reported that the dialogue and information sharing that occurred during the event would inform their decision making. Moving forward, feedback from participants provides a good basis for AAISA and the sector to improve the execution and planning of future engagement events.

Overall Priorities and Recommendations for the Future

The report began with the analysis of seven different themed plenaries and four complementary workshop sessions. The overall priorities and recommendations are intended to identify the key learnings from the Consultation and to guide the development of priorities for future policies, programs, and funding at both the local and provincial level. The comments and recommendations in this section are based on the analysis of the participants' reflections gathered during discussions and presentations at the Consultation. The priorities of capacity building, client-centered programming, collaboration, communication and information sharing, as well as standardization and coordination emerged during the analysis, and can serve to orient improvement and enhancement of the collective impact being made by Alberta's settlement and integration sector.

1. Capacity Building

An integral factor in facilitating the integration of newcomers is the provision of resettlement programs and services. Participants at the Consultation frequently spoke of the importance to build capacity in all sectors working with newcomers to sustainably meet their needs. Capacity building

refers to organizations and agencies serving immigrants and refugees having the sustained ability to provide high-quality and responsive programs and services. The necessary provisions identified to meet these needs, particularly those of refugees, included affordable and appropriate housing, as well as services to find it, and mental and physical health provisions. Additionally, timely and efficient agency funding for organizations to provide these provisions was recognized as vital. In particular, the need for sustainable funding and resources was emphasized as integral for successful integration. Participants also emphasized the great public interest in sponsoring refugees and how capacity can be developed to meet this public interest. Notably, capacity needs to be built in the standardized collection of data on refugee resettlement outcomes, to enable the sector to identify where services are available and the current capacity building needs..

2. Client-centered Programming

Although it is important to have the ability to provide services to newcomers, these services also need to be accessible to those they are intended to serve. Consequently, client-centred programming highlights how programs and services can be responsive to the particular needs of immigrants and refugees. The Consultation discussions highlighted the importance of client-centred programming and the need for targeted and flexible services that meet the individual and specialized needs of clients. Foremost, participants emphasized the continued need for language and translation services that match the diverse range of foreign speakers entering Alberta. Additionally, one of the most important issues identified was the need for cultural sensitivity when interacting with newcomers. Participants stressed the specific challenges that immigrant women faced in accessing available services and entering the labour market. Barriers such as cultural conflict, mental health, poverty, and transportation need to be addressed through flexible client-centred programming to meet their specific necessities and assure successful integration.

3. Collaboration, Communication and Information Sharing

Alberta's settlement sector consists of a wide range of organizations from various different backgrounds, all with their own unique perspective, knowledge and resources. Sectorial and inter-agency organizational collaboration, communication and the sharing of information and resources during the refugee resettlement process illustrated how stakeholders can actively engage with each other to promote efficient decision making and program delivery to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees. During the Consultation, this topic was discussed at great length by many of the participants, both of the success of the current work being done and of the importance to continue collaborating, maintaining communication channels, and sharing best practices and information. Participants spoke of how instrumental knowledge sharing was in the success of resettling the incoming Syrian refugee population. Participants reflected that a multi-stakeholder approach facilitated vital and timely information sharing. Umbrella organizations such as AAISA were identified as integral in supporting collaboration between organizations. The best practice sharing, cooperation, partnerships and dialogue between organizations, government bodies, and communities, was integral in overcoming the challenges that arose during the process. Through their collaboration, a concerted effort in which information, unique methods and resources were shared occurred, enabling them to effectively respond to key issues. The shared lessons learned from the initial wave of newcomers shared by different stakeholders and sectors will be essential in promoting efficiency and guiding the direction of future resettlement.

Participants highlighted the significance that information sharing has in promoting an inclusive society by breaking down cultural stereotypes and tackling public attitudes and misconceptions

especially about the refugee community. Information should be used to raise public awareness on all newcomers that have been welcomed into Alberta, utilizing the media to strengthen these community connections while sharing information with a broad audience. Moreover, strengthening community partnerships to meet the rising demands of new arrivals was established as key to success and is seen as a promising practice that can be used in the future.

4. Standardization and Coordination

It became apparent during the refugee resettlement process that there is a variation between the different processes used to provide the same service for immigrants by organizations in Alberta. Consultation participants explored the recommendation of developing and implementing a shared strategic plan to meet the needs of newcomers in Alberta. Following the initial wave of arrivals, the partnerships in Alberta provided a successful framework to welcome arrivals and acted as an incubator for new approaches to settlement and integration issues. This time period allowed the sector to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches used by stakeholders. Participants expressed the need to utilize and benefit from the lessons learned through implementing standardization in assessments, service provision, communication and other work related to refugee resettlement across the sector, and developing a coordinated strategy for future arrivals. Standardization was highlighted as particularly essential in assessment, training, referral processes and methods to communicate to the media and public. Through cross-sectorial standardization, it is hoped that stakeholders will be empowered to work more effectively in tackling major issues like waitlists, data collection, information sharing, meeting client needs, and decision making.

5. Tools

Dashboard

An effective method to share information, coordinate and assist with decision making is through the use of an easily accessible tool. The Dashboard was repeatedly mentioned as an effective tool that fits these criteria by providing reliable and consistent data for stakeholders. Specifically, it was cited as an efficient way to methodically allocate resources and make educated settlement and integration decisions. Many participants discussed how beneficial it would be for this tool to broaden the data and metrics on refugees and immigrants to include more data on factors such as: gender, employment, mental and physical health, literacy levels, housing, education, waitlists and settlement patterns. Through their own experience of the benefits that the Dashboard provides, participants proposed the idea of expanding the availability of the Dashboard information to the entire settlement and integration sector. It was suggested that the sector should build on its momentum through developing indicators that share the successes and outcomes of the settlement and integration sector.

iCARE and Other Centralized Databases

An important aspect of building a more inclusive and cohesive society is the promotion of the integration of newcomers. iCARE plays an important role as a reporting tool which manages information regarding service access for clients. Through agency data input, the tool helps by creating a cohesive story of the settlement process. Participants noted the possible role that iCARE may play in becoming an optimized instrument in presenting data to be used in the Dashboard. The importance of reporting on outcomes was emphasized, and the need for increased use of iCARE as a way to inform funders of the success in the sector. Suggestions included the strengthening of pre-

existing data collection tools like iCARE, as well as creating an easily accessible centralized database for the whole settlement and integration sector in Alberta, as a means to inform all stakeholders during the settlement process.

Summation

The Consultation provided a unique space for a broad range of stakeholders to engage in a meaningful discussion around the successes, challenges and priorities identified during the recent resettlement of Syrian refugees as well as the ongoing settlement and integration of newcomers across the province. The discussion brought forward unique perspectives, key strengths, and gaps in the settlement of refugees that need to be addressed. Participants highlighted the need for communication and information sharing between agencies and all levels of government; continued partnerships and coordinated action plans; standardization of data collection, settlement and resettlement practices; and the need for sustainable funding to maintain and increase capacity to meet the needs of newcomers. AAISA has identified a path forward to support these recommendations below.

AAISA's Path Forward

The following section will identify AAISA's strategic priorities over the next three years and the suggested role it should play to support core learnings that were identified during the Consultation. Five core priority outcomes and the associated activities were identified, which will allow AAISA to fulfill them. The outcomes are: building institutional capacity, developing and enhancing sectorial service standards, strengthening sectorial engagement, focusing on stakeholder informed research and policy development, and improving coordination and communication of Alberta's settlement and integration sector.

Building Institutional Capacity

AAISA's mission is to facilitate collaboration and leadership within the settlement serving sector. In order to effectively engage the sector and move forward with the learnings from the Consultation, it is imperative that AAISA first focus on building institutional capacity to operate effectively as a provincial umbrella organization. To this end, AAISA would begin to operationalize the organizational three-year strategic plan that includes: developing a business model that ensures financial sustainability, a strategic communication and public engagement strategy to promote AAISA services and its role as an umbrella organization, an improved and long-term technology strategy to support the delivery of service and common outcomes reporting for collective impact, and the development of a comprehensive human resource strategy.

Activities

- HR strategy development and implementation will enable AAISA to offer competitive compensation and development opportunities for staff.
- On the job professional development and organizational capacity building can be accomplished through building and deepening partnerships for intentional collaborative opportunities with other umbrella organizations across the country.

- Site visits, consultation and resource sharing among umbrella organizations would enable these organizations to identify and disseminate best practices for settlement and integration in Canada and to identify opportunities for greater collective impact.
- Communications and public relations strategy development and implementation, which includes an emphasis on public relations and leveraging communications technologies, would create a more integrated provincial settlement and integration system. Enhanced marketing and communications would support the success of all organizational initiatives and allow AAISA to more systematically engage with stakeholders and to disseminate the sector's collective impact.

Developing and Enhancing Sectorial Service Standards

Over the next three years, AAISA will focus on enhancing sectorial service standards by providing pre-service training, ongoing professional development, and leadership development, to establish professional and service standards at the organizational level, and expand the professionalization of the settlement field. Through accreditation of AAISA as a recognized learning centre, and the recognition of AAISA certification standards at a national level, all settlement practitioners in Alberta will demonstrate professional excellence in the standards and practice required in settlement and integration sector.

Activities

Provide Certification to a National Standard

AAISA provides certification for settlement practitioners to formally recognize the professional training, skills and experiences of settlement practitioners. AAISA is also currently the only organisation that offers certification to settlement practitioners.

There are several ways in which AAISA plans to further its goal of being recognized as a leader in professional development for the sector in Alberta and advance the standard of excellence in professional practice.

- Over the next year AAISA will develop and advance sectorial standards by reviewing and validating the settlement practitioner competency framework to continue to align with sectorial requirements for professional practice.
- Over the next two years AAISA will develop a leadership development framework to inform a curriculum to support leadership development within the sector.
- By 2019/2020 AAISA hopes to support the establishment of the first professional association of settlement practitioners in Canada.

Training and Professional Development

Over the next three years, AAISA will become a research-informed educational body – the first in Canada, and establish an association of settlement practitioners. AAISA has undertaken a revision of the Settlement Practitioner Competency Framework to validate the competencies demanded of settlement practitioners to align with the current context and sectorial demands.

Through this process, AAISA is developing a Leadership Competency Framework to align with the current Settlement Practitioner Framework to support the dynamic demands being placed on

leadership in the sector. It is anticipated that the development of a Leadership Competency Framework will support the following:

- Examine the performance assessment and development planning practices at the agency level to encourage leadership to be strategic in assigning training and development to settlement staff and following up with application back on the job and impact at the agency level.
- Align measurement of impact of training sessions at the individual, agency and organization level through the alignment of competency ratings, performance reviews and development planning practices.

Additionally, by the end of the 2016-2017 fiscal year AAISA will offer a certificate program for pre-service training for those wishing to enter the sector or a settlement practitioner role. This certificate program would set the base line standard for practice in the settlement sector and expand the eligibility for settlement training to include those professionals not presently working in the sector.

The Consultation identified the need for more professional development for staff and organizations, specifically for those working with refugees. Beyond an established curriculum that is recognized as the standard training for certification as a settlement practitioner, over the next three years AAISA will continue to explore opportunities to provide ongoing research-informed professional development which facilitates:

- Sharing best practices between agencies and programs.
- Networking opportunities among practitioners and sector professionals
- Opportunities for meaningful exchange of ideas and practices

AAISA will continue to provide responsive professional development to increase the competency and capacity of all settlement staff working with refugees. In order to help the sector achieve service standards at the organizational level, AAISA has established management training sessions to support the ongoing professional development of managers in the area of impact measurement and program evaluation. It is expected that the research undertaken this fiscal year will support development of an intentional management training and leadership development curriculum to be offered in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Technology to Support the Delivery of Services
AAISA is currently developing a technology strategy which focuses on creating a long term solution to meet current and future sector professional development needs. AAISA has undertaken the development of a Learning Management System in a SharePoint environment, which will launch this fall. This online Learning Management System (LMS) will be a key enabler of AAISA's sustainability, as it is anticipated that having an integrated and efficient LMS system for administrating face-to-face and blended learning will support the learner experience, increase efficiencies and support data gathering for outcomes reporting. Over the next three years, with this strategy, AAISA will continue to offer training and webinars in an increasingly online format, making the training both more accessible and less expensive in the long-term. The online delivery of services forms the main platform for greater reach for training and development for the sector alongside future social enterprise and revenue generation opportunities.

Strengthening Sectorial Engagement

As an umbrella organization, AAISA has the potential to bring a broad range of stakeholders together. According to the CISSA-ACSEI, umbrella organizations play an important role in collecting and disseminating best practices and sharing expertise by convening the sector in pursuit of enhanced service delivery. Community-based organizations do not have the capacity to do this type of work. Umbrella organizations also aid governments in managing its communication and messaging with immigrant and refugee serving agencies and offer governments a mechanism for listening to and gathering information from hundreds of individual service providers across Alberta.

Activities

Sectorial Engagement Strategy Development and Implementation

AAISA will develop a sectorial engagement strategy and engage consistently with the sector around priorities such as the Helping Immigrants Succeed initiative[1], collaborative and strategic committee-work, stakeholder informed research, and learning. As part of the sectorial engagement strategy, AAISA recognizes that the sector includes traditional and non-traditional players such as the members of AAISA but also stakeholders like ethno-cultural communities, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), Sponsorship Agreement Holders, health care providers, and educational institutions that offer language training, and would seek to engage these.

- AAISA should strategically engage with non-traditional actors engaged in settlement and integration work, with the aim to expand sector-wide information sharing, collaboration, and to create welcoming communities.
- Engagement with the sector will include quarterly teleconference with broader settlement sector stakeholders and the provincial and federal governments in order to align provincial priorities.

Consultations

The Consultation identified that AAISA should fill a greater role as the sector's central engagement facilitator as it is best positioned to undertake sector development initiatives. In a fast paced and complex environment, where priorities around settlement and integration are constantly evolving, AAISA is versatile, and can support service continuity and effective implementation of government priorities and programs at the IRCC regional, provincial, and local municipal levels.

- Consultations, such as this one, are noted to provide a helpful opportunity for stakeholders to learn from each other, and for the government to communicate with the sector. AAISA recommends expanding the number of opportunities for the sector to convene around different issues through smaller consultation sessions in additional to an annual sector-wide consultation.

Engagement Forums

To facilitate systematic engagement with the sector around shared and leading priorities, AAISA will create forums, such as: working groups, cross-sectorial planning tables, committees and teleconferences, which can respond to specific priorities and stakeholder needs. For example, in regard to committee-work, AAISA will continue work on the federal-provincial Helping Immigrants

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[1] The Helping Immigrants Succeed, a provincial/federal initiative, will focus on the areas of employment, language, social connections.

Succeed strategy, around the thematic outcome areas of social connections, language and labour. The work of these committees will help to inform standardized data collection tools such as the Alberta Dashboard.

- This year, as part of the social connections committee, AAISA would also convene a Children and Youth sub-committee and seek funding to support this initiative. This will enable AAISA to monitor emerging youth needs and challenges. AAISA will work with children and youth serving member organizations to collaboratively find solutions for their programming. Other sub-committees should be convened around timely issues as they arise. This could encompass any topic considered by stakeholders as requiring action and discussion.
- Refugee resettlement will continue to be a core focus of committee work. AAISA would continue to engage Alberta's settlement and integration sector through a RAP working group, quarterly RAP-government teleconference. The purpose of these teleconferences is to ensure consistency across destination centres, encourage best practice sharing and identify and disseminate key information about needs on the ground.

Focus on Stakeholder Informed Research and Policy Development

AAISA will focus on collaborative, stakeholder-informed research projects and data collection, in order to serve an influential policy voice, as well as to enhance service delivery through professional development. AAISA is best positioned to engage and influence policy makers due to its role as an umbrella organization, and to develop policies that compliment settlement work and are proactive in nature and provincially based. Furthermore, this places AAISA in a suitable position to advocate on behalf of the sector.

The settlement and integration sector policies and programs designed to support newcomers are stakeholder centric. Therefore, it is crucial that research and policy development be stakeholder informed and imbedded in ongoing professional development opportunities for the sector. One learning from the Consultation identified was that greater client-centred programming is needed, which should be informed by research. Stakeholder informed research activities conducted by AAISA will support member agencies in developing project models that are evidence-based and address barriers and needs of both newcomers and communities in an informed and meaningful way. Additionally, research will serve to ensure that policies and programming align with departmental and government priorities.

Over the next three years, AAISA will focus on the mobilization of knowledge through sectorial engagement activities and the development of research priority resources, such as specific topic briefings to keep agencies and other interested organizations up to date on the most current trends and sources of information for newcomers and communities in Alberta. Knowledge mobilization, which includes the dissemination of research and policy publications, will assist member agencies and the sector to make informed decisions at the policy and program level.

Activities

Research on Refugee Resettlement in Alberta
One way AAISA is responding to the need for more client-centred research, specifically with respect to refugee resettlement, is through a Syrian Refugee Resettlement Experience study. This study will address a significant need for knowledge concerning the Syrian refugee population and focus on three settlement and integration outcome areas, including: labour market integration, language training, and social connections. The study aims to develop a body of knowledge on the unique

needs, barriers and reflections of Syrian refugees in order to better understand their immediate settlement and integration experiences within the first six to eighteen months of arrival. This evidence base will serve to inform the development of client-centered programs, services and policies that foster successful settlement and integration. This study will conclude by the end of March 2017.

The Consultation identified that more information is needed on refugee resettlement. This information, or research knowledge, should be mobilized specifically with respect to:

- The needs and corresponding programs and services to support refugee claimants and PSRs
- Demographics
- Frameworks to support refugees in areas such as trauma and gender-specific needs

Increasing the visibility of AAISA's stakeholder informed research in alignment with its communication plan is therefore important.

Impact Measurement and Knowledge Mobilization

Finally, as a capacity building organization, AAISA can provide leadership on impact measurement,[2] data collection, and knowledge mobilization for the sector. By measuring the impact of its members and other stakeholders, AAISA can provide feedback, support, and direction or affirm changes in direction for the sector.

- AAISA can strengthen the sector by creating and implementing a collaborative measurement strategy and framework.
- AAISA will lead the sector on identifying standardized outcomes and indicators which will help formulate a strong picture of success for newcomers settling and integrating in Alberta, supported by quantitative measurements collected through surveys and qualitative data, gathered through stakeholder engagements, such as but not limited to, committees and focus groups.
- Develop a shared or standardized model of service delivery while respecting local and regional differences.
- AAISA will continue to mobilize knowledge by sharing stakeholder informed research and policy resources and best practices systematically via technology our websites and online platforms such as AAISA Learns, www.aaisa.ca and Refugee Alberta (www.refugeealberta.ca).

Improving Coordination and Communications of the Sector

AAISA should increase its reach and profile in the non-profit sector. This would tell the story of Alberta's sector and build the capacity of SPOs using communications channels, such as traditional media, social media, other mobile technology, and websites. Improving coordination and communication serves to increase the efficiency and consistency of the settlement and integration system by promoting key messaging and a strong, unified sectorial voice.

Activities

Communications Strategy

This year a communication strategy should be developed within and outside the sector, and implemented consistently over the next three years.

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[2] Impact measurement refers to a set of practices through which an organisation establishes what difference it makes.

The strategy would have the objective of demonstrating the collective impact of the settlement and integration sector; increasing the visibility of and engagement with all AAISA capacity building efforts such as professional development, stakeholder engagement, and research and policy development initiatives. The overarching goal of the plan would be to develop a welcoming and inclusive society. As indicated by CISSA ACSEI, umbrella organizations help different levels of government attract and retain newcomers to Canada and help public organizations like schools and employers respond to the unique needs of immigrants and refugees. It was highlighted during the consultation that there is a need for information that promotes an inclusive community, by breaking down cultural stereotypes, and tackling public attitudes and misconceptions about immigrants, especially refugee communities.Through communication and coordination, the plan can enable newcomers to develop a sense of belonging and help communities better understand the interests and potential contributions of newcomers.

Part of this strategy includes the management, improvement and expansion of three websites:

- AAISA Learns,
- www.aaisa.ca, and
- Refugee Alberta (www.refugeealberta.ca) which is a multilingual information hub for refugees, organizations and those that support them. The refugee side of this website launched in September 2016 and the Help and Organizations portals will launch by January 2017.

In addition, the Consultation identified that communication within the sector needs to be increased. For example, individuals who are involved in work with refugees should strengthen communication channels to share best practices, challenges and ongoing work. As mentioned, AAISA could organize and facilitate committees and advisory panels in key areas over the next three years, and this would be coordinated between the Sectorial Engagement and Communications strategies.

Standardized Tools and Use of Technology
The Consultation also highlighted the importance of coordination identifying a number of ways to enhance the sector's capacity through the use of standardized tools and use of technology.

- Over the next three years, coordination could be expanded through the creation of a centralized information database. This would serve to fill gaps in cross-sectorial standardization such as managing language waitlists. Already, assessment centres provide information to AAISA, and then AAISA passes this information onto to IRCC. The creation of a centralized database would improve this coordination process. For example, this could be used to improve waitlist management (i.e. identify and share language education history of each client and identify which students are enrolled in each course), share information (share courses provided by each organization), and evaluate the number of courses recommended to clients at assessment.
- Standardized data could be used to better inform research, and improve the ability of the sector to measure their impact and develop successful programming. For this reason, AAISA will integrate and expand standardized metrics for use in Alberta's Dashboard over the next six months and into the new federal funding cycle.
- The implementation of a common intake and needs assessment across the sector would further improve cross-sectorial standardization, and coordination. This would be completed over the next six months. Its implementation would increase efficiency and reduce the amount of intake reports, as well as standardize experiences between PSRs and GARs, and effectively support service standardization across the sector, leading to efficiencies that reduce service costs.