

Summary Report for Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees Provincial Consultation



NOVEMBER 17, 2021



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Territorial Acknowledgement: As a provincial umbrella association, AMSSA acknowledges that BC is on the unceded homelands of First Nations who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize the privilege that we have as settlers on this land. We acknowledge that AMSSA’s operations is on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Executive Summary

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies (AMSSA) is BC's province-wide umbrella association with over 80 member organizations, which build culturally inclusive communities. First established in 1977, AMSSA provides opportunities for its members and others in the settlement and integration community to exchange knowledge, build connections and engage with government with a unified voice. With a BC-wide perspective, AMSSA works to address emerging issues and build capacity for the BC Settlement sector. AMSSA has multiple funding streams including Immigration, and Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), in the Province of British Columbia (BC).

The new Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees Provincial Consultation on November 17, 2021 will help enhance services and supports for families resettling in BC due to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Through this consultation meeting, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, obtained input on how the fund could best be used to support the Afghan refugees.

Discussions at the meeting identified and considered the extensive implications for the RRF for the Afghan refugees across communities and government and impacts to the settlement sector and service providers.

The meeting commenced with welcoming remarks, introductions, and territorial acknowledgement. Presentations consisted of: Consultation Survey Results, and the BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, which were followed by questions and answers. Throughout the meeting, participants were offered opportunities to participate in breakout groups to share their thoughts and experiences using Jamboard, a virtual, interactive whiteboard, and considered: existing strengths that we can capitalize on; direct and indirect service gaps; and opportunities we can leverage through the RRF.

Key themes emerging from the consultation were:

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- Leverage existing collaborations and partnerships to fund/resource existing partners and programs adequately
- Ensure new partnerships are coordinated and do not duplicate efforts
- Draw on the learnings and tools that developed in 2015
- Have more involvement from the community in the development of the action plans
- Utilize the existing Afghan community in BC for cultural and translation services
- Use technology to support communities that are not necessarily in the area
- New tools i.e. the Arrival app, could be translated into additional languages
- Partner with other subcontractors or agencies connected directly to the community
- Prioritize mental health and well-being
- Utilize trauma training resources created for clinicians, i.e. through VAST
- Trauma-informed approach to settlement work and a settlement informed approach to trauma work
- Grassroots organizations partnering up with larger organizations
- Cultural interpreters could provide peer tutoring or language support

- Utilize a host program model – the host could be the cultural interpreter or broker who can support the family through navigating in their community
- Willingness of the Afghan community to engage in these solutions and to help
- Encourage private sponsorship.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- Training on how to identify trauma symptoms and responses to help work with frontline settlement teams feel more equipped
- Support refugees to transition their employment skills to Canada
- A centralized source of information giving regular and timely updates on what is happening at the national, provincial and community levels in terms of when refugees are coming, how many there will be, etc.
- Be strategic about funding allocation and focus, and to consult and coordinate
- Programs for language, trauma, counselling, employment, pro bono legal services, mental health and food and nutrition
- Extend funding to groups beyond settlement agencies
- Hire and increase capacity of frontline staff
- Health services and mental health support does not include children and adolescents and/or are for only one year
- Digital literacy
- Youth support for language
- Frontline workers need more training on how to use interpretation apps
- Focus on more human translators, which is important to community building
- Include mental health and trauma issues in the settlement plans
- Arrivals need access to services in a dialect and accent they recognize
- Interpretation services in hospitals and more timely access to care
- Gender specific programming
- Recognize that not all Afghan families will have the same experience or reasons for resettlement
- More newcomer focused counselling groups
- There should be an opportunity for newcomers to express their restrictions and what they are or are not comfortable with when it comes to counselling services
- A more structured approach to supporting refugees in gaining the knowledge and skills to transition from RAP to employment
- Childcare and options for women to be in the classrooms with children
- Mental trauma support – all in the context of the pandemic
- Tablets and partnerships for access to technology
- Supports for youth and adolescents with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other mental health issues
- Culturally appropriate language support
- In-person interpretation services
- Community building within local neighbourhoods
- Training on technology via zoom to show how to add apps and how to use programs
- There is a gap in trans-identifying, LGBTQI folks who are more likely fleeing Afghanistan; it is important to have a wide array of cultural brokers and cultural interpreters
- Coordination of efforts with more centralized resources, rather than in separate pockets, and also accessible in a way that is in line with their settlement process

- Coordination between federal and provincial government programs, i.e. MSP and the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)
- Housing challenges, including lack of stock, the expense, the size of available places, and access to public or publicly supported housing – there is a lot of competition and not enough space
- Build capacity for settlement workers to help with housing, especially for navigating private market rental housing opportunities in terms of reference checks, etc.
- There is a gap for legal advocacy services and access to culturally sensitive services like assessments, developmental assessments, specialized services, deaf and hard of hearing, etc.
- Education is a challenge – talk to the schools about school-age refugee children attend school in their area so that there is some semblance of routine
- Create systemic changes and not just band aid solutions
- Capacity building in the community; people know how to support people with dignity; it will not stigmatize further but will create positive opportunities to be integrated into the community
- Housing literacy is a gap; refugees do not understand the language and need help with reference checks, security deposit, tenancy agreements, etc.
- Community building is needed for the clients; for them to integrate into the Canadian life, they need to know how to access these services and not live in isolation.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

- A strategic and coordinated approach amongst existing service providers
- The Refugee Readiness Network, which in 2015 met to discuss work of the RRTs and to ensure there was provincial level coordination and information sharing
- Subcontract/partner with small agencies for direct services
- Increase funding to existing services and new ones
- Enhance early years programming to ensure a wraparound approach
- Include the private and not-for-profit sectors and others interested in supporting refugees
- Capacity enhancement for LIPs, most of which have relationships with grassroots; enhance their capacity because there is a lot of burn-out
- Help frontline staff increase their understanding of trauma informed support
- Build new and more external partnerships for technology access; one tablet is not enough for one family to access the services they need
- More spaces for daycare – build on the programs that exists
- Connect with leisure centres and churches regarding using their spaces to provide a place where refugees can connect
- Greater inclusion from grassroots organizations that may not necessarily be part of the LIPs today
- Pivot to virtual services – leverage the online platform to provide further services like education and training
- Utilize a cross-ministry committee to coordinate what needs to happen at various levels
- Ensure that direct services, like service providers providing culturally appropriate food services, are receiving funding
- Talks with developers need to happen; include them as contributors to the collaborative tables
- Employment services for Afghan refugees, i.e. Skilled Newcomers and Professionals Partnership (SNAPP), which provides newcomers and refugees with networking opportunities with professionals
- Look at the for-profit industries; the technology sector is very open to helping.

General considerations...

- More information is needed about the volume of refugees and when they are arriving
- Public messaging or regional or provincial narrative is important and needs to be emphasized
- Suggestion to consider Vancouver, Surrey and Langley and the Fraser Valley as three separate regions
- Mitigate confusion in the target audience on how this fund can help them.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies (AMSSA) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) welcomed participants to the Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees Provincial Consultation at 10:00 a.m. It was acknowledged that the AMSSA office was on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

The Province of BC, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, was thanked for funding the Consultation, and the Ministry's partnership with AMSSA and the sector as a whole was acknowledged.

The features of the event platform were reviewed, with note that messages, comments, and questions could be submitted through the chat function, which would be closely monitored. It was additionally noted that the Consultation was being recorded and would be available on the AMSSA website following the event. Content from the Consultation would be brought forward to the Ministry in a Consultation Report.

The Consultation agenda, and objectives were reviewed, and it was encouraged that participants would be invited to provide information and feedback that was as specific as possible throughout the Consultation.

It was noted that the Government of Canada has committed to resettling 40,000 Afghans; however, the timeframe is still unclear. Some refugees are arriving through private sponsorship groups and settling in communities across the country. Canada has also developed a special integration program under Immigration and Refugee Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for Afghans who assisted Canada. As of November 12, 2021 under this program, 14,455 applications have been submitted; 9,505 have been approved; and 3,385 have arrived in Canada.

Afghan Refugees will be resettled in 34 communities where there are Refugee Assistance Programs (RAPs). The Province of Quebec receives separate funding for similar services.

BC is preparing to welcome thousands of Afghan families and individuals over the coming months and years. Between August 23, 2021 and November 12, 2021, BC has received 390 individuals, including 110 family units. All government sponsored refugees have settled in the Metro Vancouver area thus far. However, there is an intention for some refugees to go to other communities and BC is working closely with the federal government in this regard.

In BC at this time, over 50% of the government-sponsored refugees are now in permanent housing, with the largest percentages being in Surrey (66%) and Burnaby (24%). There are slightly more women than men, and the majority of newcomers are between the ages of 19-64 years old.

To support the resettlement of Afghan refugees, BC is developing the RRF, which will be a one-time investment of \$2 million to ensure BC communities are ready to welcome and respond to the needs of Afghan refugees. The RRF is modelled after Operation Syrian Refugee, which was in place in 2015. The RRF will compliment services already in place to support community capacity to successfully welcome Afghan refugees. Communities play a very important role in helping refugees build new lives. The RRF will assist communities by enhancing and coordinating community level supports. A procurement notice for the RRF will be posted on BC Bid in early December 2021.

This Consultation is with service providers and community organizers to discuss how the RRF can be best utilized to support Afghan Refugees, and to understand emerging issues and gather feedback. It will consider the extensive implications of refugee resettlement. The Consultation will help to determine how the fund can best be used and is an opportunity to understand emerging issues and challenges to communities.

CONSULTATION SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION

The AMSSA CEO reviewed a presentation titled, “Refugee Readiness Fund for the Afghan Refugees Pre-Meeting Participant Survey Results” and highlighted:

- Respondent Sector of Operation:
 - 38 respondents in total
 - 56% Settlement Service Providers and others
- Respondent Operating Region, the majority of which are in Metro Vancouver
- Ranking RRF Priorities – the top-three were identified as trauma and mental health, housing, and coordination of resources and network building
- Other RRF Priorities, including financial literacy and coaching, LGBTQI and trans competency training, gender violence prevention and response, and gender-specific programming
- Other RRF Comments regarding priorities, including ensuring there is a focus on LGBTQI in all priorities
- Existing strengths, with an overarching theme of leveraging existing collaborations and partnerships to fund/resource existing partners and programs adequately, and ensuring that the new partnerships are coordinated and do not duplicate efforts
- Existing strengths that could be leveraged including BC Housing, AMSSA, LIPS, pro bono legal clinics, Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants Program, language services, etc. and ensure the existing Afghan community is meaningfully supported
- Existing gaps relative to collaboration and partnerships, and the need to be strategic about funding allocation and focus, and to consult and coordinate
- Specific suggestions for addressing existing gaps, including affordable housing, funding for programs for language, trauma, counselling, employment, pro bono legal services, mental health and food and nutrition, and extending funding to groups beyond settlement agencies
- Other opportunities for addressing existing gaps, including the need for a strategic and coordinated approach amongst existing service providers
- Opportunities that the Ministry can leverage through the RRF, including specific resources and a strategic approach to partnerships.

BC MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS, IMMIGRATION POLICY AND INTEGRATION BRANCH

The BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration and Integration Branch, Senior Program Advisor reviewed a presentation titled, “Proposed Model – Refugee Readiness Fund 2021”, and highlighted:

The RRF Fund 2015 for Syrian Refugees:

- The RRF had three components: Refugee Response Teams (RRTs), Provincial Supports, and the Refugee Response Network
 - Complimentary to existing services
 - Regionally focussed
- The RRF had five RRTs: Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Thompson Okanagan and Cariboo, which built multi-disciplinary teams to identify key issues in the community and developed action and implementation plans
- Provincial Supports, led by ISSofBC, including:
 - Information hub, which provided resource materials
 - RRT training, with a two-day training event in each community
 - Trauma support, for clinicians, links to resources and presentations and training on refugee mental health and primary healthcare
- The 2015 Refugee Readiness Network met to discuss work of the RRTs and to ensure there was provincial level coordination and information sharing; there was a representative from each RRT, from the ISSofBC, IRCC, the Ministry, and guest speakers
- Positive outcomes of the RRF:
 - Positive community capacity building
 - Regional approach allowed for different actions depending on regional needs
 - Refugee Hub and Microsites were a positive outcome
 - Resources and training built around mental health and trauma are still being used
 - Relationships built amongst communities and government cannot be underscored
- Challenges of the 2015 RRF relating to health, service access, public education, employment, housing and small communities

The New Draft Proposed RRF for 2021

- Four key priorities:
 - Build community capacity
 - Support the coordination of resources
 - Support information sharing, education and data collection
 - Provide temporary direct services to Afghan Refugees
- Draft Intended Outcomes of the RRF 2021 relating to communications, increased capacity, successful integration, leveraging shared knowledge and expertise, and data and a legacy of resources to inform future initiatives
- Draft Model at a Glance:
 - Increase fund to \$2 million: Approximately \$600,000 is invested in the stakeholder consultation process with the majority going to temporary contract lifts to support impacted existing provincial services with a top-up. \$1.4 million will be put into an open procurement for a province-wide resource network and five regional RRTs.
- Provincial Refugee Resource Network (RRN):
 - Centralized data collection
 - Information, resource sharing and networking events for all stakeholders
 - Education to stakeholders
- Five RRTs:
 - Identify regional needs
 - Community capacity, education, resource coordination, information sharing and data collection at a community level
 - Direct temporary services to refugees
 - Staggered starts dependent on the destining of refugees and sufficient numbers

- Temporary lifts to provincial services
 - Temporary BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS) lifts
 - Temporary supports to other BC Ministry services, i.e. translation of information or creation of new resources
 - Encouragement to share feedback and rationale on how the lifts should be administered
- Differences between the 2015 and 2021 models:
 - More funding for 2021
 - Open procurement for both provincial and regional teams
 - Provincial level team will also lead the network
 - Funding lifts for BCSIS and other BC funded services
 - RRTs can propose to fill temporary services gaps
 - Staggered start for RRTs
- Proposed timelines:
 - Hope to post the procurement in early December 2021 for two weeks, so long as there is not need for big changes to the model
 - Notify respondents of award and put contracts in place in February 2022
 - Contractors start work in March 2022
- Feedback:
 - The Province is very interested to hear feedback on the proposed model and understands the proposed timelines are very ambitious.

Discussion

The following questions/comments (Q/C) from participants and *responses (R)* were provided:

Q/C: BC's approach to creating systemic changes in terms of retaining a lot of the learnings and tools that were developed in 2015 is welcomed. It is a good way to go forward especially with the amount of expertise and knowledge resident. Also applaud that the increase in funding will go a significant way. With regard to the comparison between the two models (2015 and 2021), as a RRT contract holder we did a lot of engagement with non-member organizations, i.e. health authorities, we would expect that again too. What is the scope of partnerships envisioned in this model?

R: *It would be imperative to include the health authorities and others, especially given the pandemic. The Ministry will be looking for a broad spectrum of players to be brought to the table for each RRT. The RRTs will determine the scope of what they are doing. The Ministry will provide some guidelines, but the RRTs will do an action plan that is approved by BC. The Ministry will work with each RRT to develop a robust plan. The scope of the plan can vary in response to regional needs.*

Q/C: It is really important to look at the different dynamics in terms of community support. We do not know when the refugees are coming. The public does not seem to be excited. It is important to work with IRCC to learn more about the volume and when people are arriving. The public messaging or regional or provincial narrative is important. That needs to be emphasized. With the private sponsored refugees, we need to work closer with them to make sure we have volunteers and support for them.

R: *The Ministry does not know when the arrivals will happen. We have a bit of time. By the time we are ready to do contracting we will have a better sense. It is a dynamic situation we will have to respond to and involve IRCC and the networks so we are kept informed of changes and developments.*

Q/C: You mentioned 40,000 as a national target. How many of those Afghan refugees will come to BC?

R: *We typically see 10% but it is hard to know what to expect.*

Q/C: As someone with fond memories of the process and outcomes from 2015, this seems really beneficial. I am curious about the two-week turnaround to create a proposal. Is it \$2 million for 2022-23 fiscal or over the next two years? We are looking at probably the next 2-5 years for the arrivals.

R: *Similar to what we did with the RRF 2015, the intent is to make the proposal very simple because the action plan will be the majority of the work. The proposal is really about the structure of the team that is envisioned. We understand that the December timeline is tough but we want to have the contracts in place before the end of the fiscal. Hope is to extend this out to 2022-23.*

Q/C: Surrey has become an entity of its own, was there ever any thought to Surrey being its own region with Langley and then eastern Fraser Valley being separate? Some of the large organizations are operating in both Surrey and Vancouver, which have more similarities. There could be three separate regions with provincial coordination.

R: *The Ministry will definitely take that into consideration. I am hearing two things: you want it to be one region or three regions. We can discuss that more. Please provide your specific rationale so that can be captured.*

Q/C: I would like to acknowledge all the great efforts of BC and others at this Consultation. The work you all are doing helps with addressing feelings of abandonment. This crisis facing the Afghan community is quite global. Did BC turn its mind to the definition and scope of who this would be targeting? Do Afghans physically need to be in BC? How do we mitigate confusion in the target audience on how this fund can help them?

R: *The scope of the RRF is the refugees who have arrived within BC – all refugees. The RRF was created to support the increased pressure due to the refugees landing. We are not supporting refugees overseas but will take it under advisement.*

Q/C: I am representing a small community organization that is providing support to new arrivals – finding them housing and talking to them and bringing them to places they can meet other Afghans. Based on my experience, small organizations have challenges getting direct funding from government because of the bidding system. Does government have any measures to provide direct financial support to the Afghan community organizations, which are purely volunteers?

R: *Look to partner with one of the larger organizations and be part of a submission and look at how you could leverage that partnership. That would be one of the best things to look at. The RRTs will want representation from the Afghan community and it is important for organizations such as yours to be part of those RRTs. It would be a subcontract from them to you if they decide you are providing services that could address a gap, that would be approved through the action plan.*

Q/C: Is the timeline for the lift the same timeline as the procurement or would be before that?

R: *The timeline would be before the end of fiscal, but it might not be exactly in line with the procurement. We are looking at you to provide your input on the Call for Responses, what you would want the lift for, etc. That is the information we are hoping to gather today.*

We are not meaning to duplicate federal RAP or other programs. We are looking at how to compliment services and look towards addressing true gaps in services where there is not a presence.

Q/C: Is there an opportunity to develop the action plan after the contracts have been awarded so that we would talk about structure in that call for proposal, because it does take a lot of time? It would be great to have more involvement from the community in the development of the action plan – that would make a really big difference in its success and outcomes.

R: *Very much like we did in 2015, it was the first four weeks of the contract that you were given to develop the action plan. If you think you need more than four weeks to develop the plan, please let us know. That is what I meant about making sure the work is not too onerous to respond to. The work will really begin once the contracts are in place.*

BREAKOUT GROUPS

Participants were moved into breakout groups facilitated by AMSSA where they participated in discussions and used Jamboard (a virtual, interactive whiteboard) to consider the following:

- Existing strengths that we can capitalize on
- Direct and indirect service gaps
- Opportunities that we can leverage.

For detailed notes of the breakout sessions, refer to Appendix A.

DEBRIEF OF BREAKOUT SESSIONS AND Q&A SESSION

During a reporting out on breakout sessions, the following key themes were noted:

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- The existing Afghan community that has been settling in BC for some time can provide cultural and translation services
- Offering training to help enhance existing skills
- Partnerships with established networks and building on resources that have already been created, i.e. Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST)
- Previous experience people have had with settling refugees
- Existing supports in community
- There is now a better grasp of digital literacy and the ability to support communities that are not necessarily in the area
- Access to technology and new tools that have been developed, i.e. the Arrival app, which could be translated into additional languages
- Collaboration tables, i.e. Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)
- Partnership with other subcontracts or agencies connected directly to the community
- Trauma training for service providers.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- Housing – some Afghan families were placed into permanent housing three months after arrival while some Syrian refugees who arrived five years ago are still waiting for housing
- Hire and increase capacity of frontline staff
- Need for legal advocacy support services
- The landscape is different than five years ago; we need to look at where we are today
- Lack of housing and barriers to housing, i.e. completing credit checks, reference checks
- Health services and mental health support does not include children and adolescents
- A lot of health services are for only one year; longer term is imperative
- Digital literacy
- Youth support for language
- Frontline workers need more training on how to use interpretation apps
- Focus on more human translators, which is important to community building
- The community is not homogenous; there is need for supports for LGBTQI
- Mental health – the need for more tailored interpretation support
- Arrivals need access to services in a dialect and accent they recognize, which can support feeling connected
- Interpretation services in hospitals and more timely access to care; many disabilities could have been supported/cured had there been quicker/earlier access to care
- Gender specific programming
- Affordable and rental housing – inform new families of their rights
- Employment
- Recognizing not all Afghan families will have the same experience or reasons for resettlement.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

- Subcontract/partner with small agencies for direct services
- Increase funding to existing services and new ones
- Enhance early years programming to ensure a wraparound approach
- Include the private and not-for-profit sector and others who are interested in supporting the refugees
- Capacity enhancement; most LIPs have relationships with grassroots but there is an opportunity to enhance their capacity because there is a lot of burn-out; build on what exists
- Help frontline staff increase their understanding of trauma informed support
- Build new and more external partnerships for technology access; one tablet is not enough for one family to access the services they need
- More spaces for daycare – build on the programs that exists
- Centralized source of information with regular updates so that organizations can get their team on board in advance to offer responsive services.

Discussion

The following questions/comments (Q/C) from participants and *responses (R)* were provided:

Q/C: Has there been studies of how effective certain services have been or the challenges that were faced with the 2015 Syrian refugees about what did not work? How many are doing well in the workforce? Being treated for mental health? Have disabilities? Sometimes knowing what did not work will help us to address what we need to improve.

R: *There are probably a lot of issues that could fall under that. The information could be provided by a service provider potentially.*

There was a four year long attitudinal study of Syrians who arrived in BC and nationally, but that information is not readily available. It is important to work on what worked and did not work. The situation of Operation Syria as compared to this situation is vastly different. There are periods of 4-8 weeks where they do not have the permanent resident status, which is delaying people from moving out of housing, there is a global pandemic and quarantines. We to look at not skewing the process itself and our expectations.

The Ministry did a deep dive of the RRF in 2015 and looked at the learnings, and how we could structure things differently this time. We have definitely looked at what was effective, but we are in a different world and need to look at how we can be flexible. The structure of allowing the action plan to be developed after contracts are awarded will allow the flexibility to be responsive to community needs.

Q/C: With the BCSIS services that would be receiving the lift of \$600,000, are those already established partnerships?

R: *Those are contracts that are already in place. Right now, the BCSIS program provides services under Stream A and Stream B. So, it would be looking at what services under those contracts would need to be topped up. Currently the #1 service delivered to refugees is trauma services. We need to look at other services where there are gaps that can be addressed. We are looking for direction from you on what would benefit from a lift. (As additional clarification, Stream B trauma services are delivered by MOSAIC and ISSofBC and each subcontract to other agencies. The 1.4M will be openly procured for – both the regional teams and the provincial team.)*

Q/C: One of the things that did not work last time was that our teams were knee deep when the support started in terms of training, etc. Can there be a two-prong process with training and professional development up front? Last time it was a flaw of the process – that it came a little too late.

R: *We can look at having a provincial resource level network up and running before the RRTs. We will always have a challenge with the timelines and we do not know what will happen in the next few months. It is a bit of a crystal ball situation but will think about your suggestion for sure.*

Q/C: Will you be looking to match applicants with one another so they can form a strong team or will each but judged on their own merit?

R: *Legally we have to look at each application on their own merit, but we really want to encourage you to partner if you feel that your organization cannot meet the scope of the call. It is an important time to start building relationships with other organizations in your area that might be submitting a proposal.*

Q/C: If you are interested in having Afghans settle in your community, please let ISSofBC know about it. It is about actively and proactively engaging in client engagement.

CLOSING REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS

The BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch Senior Program Advisor appreciated the results of the robust discussion, which would provide a rich foundation to build a call around.

The AMSSA Provincial Integration Program Manager indicated that the Consultation information would be posted on the AMSSA website. A survey link would be sent to the participants for their feedback on the Consultation itself.

The Refugee Readiness Fund for the Afghan Refugees Provincial Consultation concluded at approximately 12:32 p.m. on November 17, 2021.

APPENDIX A – DETAILED NOTES OF BREAKOUT GROUPS

The following are detailed notes of the verbal feedback provided during the breakout groups facilitated by AMSSA staff:

Breakout Room 1

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- Established partnerships
- Networks and resources secured during the Syrian refugee crisis
- Relationships with Fraser Health and others, i.e. the New Canadian Clinic
- Relationships with Muslim and other food banks, and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Supporting refugees to transition from RAPs to income assistance
- Relationships with BC Housing, co-ops, and ISSofBC, which finds permanent housing for clients
- Options' housing services and programs and settlement housing outreach workers, which were established very quickly after the Syrian influx because of the continued high demand and the challenges with landlords, evictions and misinterpretation of lease agreements
- We now have a better idea of the services that should be prioritized; mental health was not prioritized enough in 2015 – it made it more difficult for the refugees to meet goals in terms of job opportunities, learning language and settlement; refugees tried to push themselves to move forward before they were ready and it ended up setting them back
- VAST did a lot of good work creating resources for clinicians and had 1-800 line to provide supports for staff.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- Part of enrollment should include someone who can identify and address these mental health and trauma issues in the settlement plans that are set up; i.e. many of the people who arrive are still on a mental high and think they are ready to start work, and learning the language, but six years down the road many refugees are still at home with disabilities because they had so many expectations that they have not been able to achieve; many of them say that they were perfectly healthy until they came here
- We need training to identify ways of giving refugees supports without calling it counselling or mental health aid
- Mental health supports; we draw a lot on Operation Syrian Refugee but the Afghan initiative has more things that are dissimilar than are similar; the Afghan refugees were not in refugee camps or transient countries – it was about rapid evacuation from their homes
- In hotels we had a registered clinical counsellor who did sessions that were really well received
- Mental health will be more of an issue in part because of the global pandemic
- We need trauma and mental health supports for staff who are exhausted in dealing with this ongoing, long term
- For all refugees who have seen a lot of horrible things, mental health should be a priority; if a person does not have stable mental health they will not be able to achieve anything
- Sometimes a refugee just needs to talk and have someone listen, which gives you a sense that you are not alone and that someone cares about you and your mental health and success

- There is need for more newcomer focused counselling groups, which would fill the gap of connecting people together and addressing issues that are mainly newcomer related; the counsellor would need access to information that can help address the challenges
- Finding family doctors for clients
- Interpretation services are a huge gap; what we are currently receiving does not address different accents or dialects
 - When you go to a specialist/hospital they usually do not provide an interpreter, which takes up time from support workers who could be more effective doing the job they are supposed to do instead of going to medical appointments
- Support groups for men and for women and the specific challenges that they have; we need to consider the struggle that women would have with a male counsellor or the struggle men would have with a female counsellor
 - There should be an opportunity for newcomers to express their restrictions and what they are or are not comfortable with when it comes to counselling services
 - It would save us a lot of time and funding if we knew those restrictions from the beginning
- A lot of Syrian refugees came with disabilities and wounds and injuries but it took years for those to be seen to, and as a result many are permanently disabled
- Housing is a continued gap with the housing prices; our existing newcomer communities are struggling to cover their rent and survive beyond that
 - There are huge gaps in housing resources
 - BC Housing only has so many affordable accommodations and they are limited for large families; there are years of wait lists
 - Rental costs are ridiculous
 - There are illegal evictions and reno-evictions happening
 - There is need for more proactive work informing our families of their rights as tenants
 - There is need for additional staff supports around housing
- There needs to be a more structured approach to supporting refugees in gaining the knowledge and skills to transition from RAP to employment
- Continuing to build the relationship with WorkBC to access supports for refugee clients
- Language specific employment support, which incorporates mental health without calling it that
- 17% of the people who have arrived to date are under the age of five; many of the women have little or no English and are not literate in their own language; we will need childcare and options for women to be in the classrooms with children and we need mental trauma support – all in the context of the pandemic
- We need tablets and partnerships for access to technology or this could be a major challenge to integration
- Access to childminding services; there are already waitlists for daytime classes
- A lot of students have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other mental health issues and cannot focus and learn; and resources are often cut off within one year
- It is a challenge to not have settlement services; we are looking for partnerships with Link Canada Immigration
- There is need for a centralized source of information giving regular and timely updates on what is happening at the national, provincial and community levels in terms of when the refugees are coming, how many there will be, how many are coming to Surrey, etc.
- A service map by region and beyond providing information on what is available in terms of supports for the refugees in order to provide quality services to clients
- For 99% of Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) we have two weeks-notice about the number that are coming; in this instance we (ISSofBC, IRCC, BC) have zero information on

the timeline or how many, etc.; we have had 112 households arrive in BC so far – 76% of which have secured housing.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

This topic was not considered.

Breakout Room 2

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- Improve coordination between agencies in different sectors
- Create a hub that provides all services under one roof
- It could take a long time for people accessing counselling services; it could be as simple as bringing people together to share their stories and experiences; it could help with the settlement pieces
- We have two community members who were licensed counsellors
- Trauma-informed approach to settlement work and a settlement informed approach to trauma work
- There is the vulnerability assessment tool available for the settlement agencies to help determine the next steps with an individual or families
- There is training on how to identify trauma symptoms and responses to help work with frontline settlement teams feel more equipped
- Create more opportunities for trauma-informed training for front line staff; this is crucial to address what is happening with the clients that they are supporting
 - There is a lot of work being done in these organizations, but there is a lot of turnover of staff
 - There needs to be further training and webinars for staff to prepare them for the arrival of refugees
 - There are gaps with front line workers in obtaining updated information and resources
- Refugees are arriving with different skills; the Ministry needs to support them to bring their skills over; the refugees have gone through a lot of trauma; we need to focus on employment and training, including computer skills.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- Culturally appropriate language support can be a gap during the collaboration process
- Housing costs; individuals and families do not have enough money to pay for things after paying their rent
- The cost of transportation is an issue; Chilliwack has provided the refugees with bus passes but that was temporary
- Provide leisure and recreation centre passes to refugees
- Have a way for individuals and families to gather in a space to connect, network, and build community
- There is a lot of extra costs involved when families have to take their children to four different schools; it also becomes frustrating when there are multiple schools sending out their communications
- Connect with leisure centres and churches regarding using their spaces to provide a place

where refugees can connect

- In-person interpretation services are needed; interpretation, especially when it comes to health-related issues, is not covered under MSP; we spend a lot of time and money getting the wrong supports and this builds further frustration; this is necessary for health and mental health but also for settlement
- Community building within local neighbourhoods; supports are needed to take advantage of community building
- Using existing skills of Afghans; this is the biggest need and biggest strength
 - See where they are skilled and who is available to be that cultural broker
 - Afghans have been one of the top five groups of refugees and refugee claimants; they have come here and have gone through the settlement process
 - Involve those individuals and create interpreter job opportunities
 - Settlement workers and Afghan agencies would be the ones who would identify who would be the cultural interpreters
 - VAST is a small agency but we have four individuals who arrived as refugees
- Grassroots organizations partnering up with larger organizations
 - Let the larger organization know what services you can provide
 - Many of these grassroots agencies will not be able to identify or define the services that they can provide that meet the criteria of the proposal that the larger agency is writing
 - It does not mean that they do not have people within their network who have these skills
 - Conversations between small and large agencies could be difficult in regard to legal and insurance positions, but this is also a missed opportunity to involve smaller organizations
- It would be great to pick up the phone and have an interpreter ready to go and help; we have been trying to recruit volunteers that speak the language; we currently have one available, but they also have three young children, and we are trying to figure out how that will work out; the gap is having available interpreters
- There are many tools available to translate emails and communications, like Google Translate
- Training on technology via zoom to show how to add apps and how to use programs online would be beneficial
- Digital literacy; a lot of services are done in a hybrid format but not all clients have access to laptops or tablets to use; there should be support for clients to secure access to internet and digital devices
- Language training classes are still online but clients may not be able to attend due to lack of resources or training on how to use technology; hire a digital navigator who can assist refugees who and is focused strictly on digital literacy
- There is a gap in trans-identifying, LGBTQI folks who are more likely fleeing Afghanistan; it is important to include Rainbow Refugee and others into this kind of work; it is so important to have a wide array of cultural brokers and cultural interpreters; we should not assume that just because someone is from Afghanistan they will be able to work with other minority groups or ethnicities or sexual identities
- If the youth is still under 18, they can go through the school system, but it could be a short window; they are still left without the education piece; we have seen youth go through the school system for a few years and they have been assessed but are not hitting the markers due to the trauma; they need that interaction with their peers but need more support for language building; tutoring supports and training in language to get them to a level where they can build on.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

- The pieces where we are missing information is not always clear
 - Many of the GARs are being provided with tablets
 - In terms of the language training, what other supports could exist that do not?
 - The RAP is already providing some supports, but what supports do not exist or are insufficient?
 - Regarding LGBTQI newcomers, just because you are from Afghanistan, does not necessarily mean that you are well situated to support or work with others from Afghanistan – how do we get these cultural brokers or cultural interpreters? Is this coordinated through a centralized hub? This is the largest gap, but it is also the largest asset. What are the practical pieces to marry these two nicely, where the largest gap and the largest asset can come together? Does it make sense for each table to create their own cultural interpreter?
 - It could be centrally developed and administered or part of the RFP process
 - There is an expectation to include this piece
 - It would be good to have some cohesion on what we are trying to do
 - There would be an expectation that the large organizations include these in their proposals and explain how they envision what and how they will do this in their own communities
 - The province could outline the standard description for the role and the agency could make its own modifications
 - Cultural interpreters could provide peer tutoring or support for the language piece; utilize a system that is already existing to build on
 - Look at the host program model; a host could be the cultural interpreter or broker who can support the family through navigating in their community; that is a way for them to remain connected to their community and reduce social isolation, but it will also provide appropriate language support; we had this existing in the past with the settlement sector; this is something that service providers did with the funding they received.
-

Breakout Room 3

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- Past experience from 2015 RRF is not to be overlooked; we need to capitalize on those learnings
 - Willingness of the Afghan community to engage in these solutions and to help is a strength we can capitalize on as well
 - Many of the community members are concerned about how to bring their family from abroad to Canada; the government needs to have a really clear scope on what we can/cannot do
 - Many of the previously arrived Afghan refugees are having a really difficult time; everyday Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees receives the most heartbreaking letters from people who are in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, but in those cases we cannot do much to assist them
 - We have all the structures set up and the connections with other organizations because we learned a great deal from the Syrian and other refugees; what we need is more funding to serve the incoming Afghan refugees
 - For the children, we have the structures, but we need more funding to continue with this new group of people
-

- The refugees are looking to sponsor their relatives – a lot of people are still in Afghanistan so it would be nice to hear something in the Throne Speech around this; we need to ensure their understanding how the private sponsorship works
- Encouraging private sponsorship or having people contribute in various ways would be a strength; there was a lot of awareness raising with the Syrian refugees, which may be something we can build on – that is also a strength, that kind of support
- Due to the pandemic we became very efficient with working with telehealth and have been able to assist families that live in other communities that are much smaller and not so resource rich so we can help families to settle in more outlying areas, they do not have to be in the immediate areas.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- BC4Afghans has organized in response to what has happened; we have heard that there is a lack of integration between the different services provided; what is needed is a coordination of efforts with more centralized resources, rather than in separate pockets, and also access in a way that is in line with their settlement process
- Capacity building for frontline workers in settlement agencies; people are often hired based on language; but people need to be more invested with trauma informed practice, motivation, etc.
- Coordination between federal and provincial government programs, i.e. MSP and the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)
- Have the voices of the Afghan refugees heard to enrich the whole exercise
- New refugees were quite dependent on IFHP for the first year but it is difficult to access because they do not accept registered counsellors, and they do not cover the services we give to children
- Many of the children are in need of mental health assistance; this whole area is extremely troublesome; it is helpful to get payment for 10 to 20 sessions, but most need longer term services so funding is a very clear issue; we need funding to provide services to adults, children and adolescents
- It is quite cumbersome to try to find appropriate housing for the refugees with the number of people in the family units; some of the housing has a specific mandate; we should look at how to make some units available to people; it is effective to educate and share information with the community, which can come up with ideas for where families can go
- The challenges are everything when it comes to housing; increasingly across the country (and in the lower mainland, Victoria and Kelowna) it is a lack of stock, the expense, the size of available places, and access to public or publicly supported housing – there is a lot of competition and not enough space; all government and privately sponsored refugees are facing this – its highly competitive
- The gentrification of cities in the urban areas has been exacerbated by the pandemic; it is a housing issue within a housing crisis; there are vacancy rates at a high time low and rents at an all-time high; government needs to step in on this; there is an increasing gap in what we need for specialized newcomer families that will not fit into one- and two-bedroom condos
- The newcomers do not have enough resources to look at the housing; that is a huge gap – providing more support for the families to make and go to appointments is an issue
- Other agencies were called in with the Syrian refugees to find housing; with private or refugee claimants they are even more challenged; they are being housed in housing that does not meet the housing standards; in 2015 there were other refugees who were concerned that the Syrians were housed much faster than other Arabic speaking communities that had been on

the waitlist for years in some cases; that created some conflicts – we have to manage the community's expectations

- The gap is that a lot of our services are action oriented without looking at the trauma before we start to move people into the services we offer
- There is need to build capacity for settlement workers to help with housing, especially for navigating private market rental housing opportunities in terms of reference checks, etc.
- It is important to look at the enhancement of working with IRCC in terms of settlement workers and case management for refugees; it is a good way to make sure that people get a good case management plan
- If this is extended to Afghans in other countries then the need for pro bono legal services is much greater; the needs of the refugees are quite tied to the situation of their friends and family overseas.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

- Sometimes the institutions we need to work collaboratively with have severe capacity issues, i.e. health authorities and school districts, which are tapped out; there are great resources in the sector and there is an interest to connect but they do not have capacity to connect; the opportunity is to have some dedicated resources that would be a linkage/liaison from the health authorities and school districts
- Look at where the gaps are; every region has different needs; focus on directing the resources where we are already stretched
- Collaboration and experience of organizations in the region is really important
- LIPs will be critical in this process; there is good potential for engagement directly with the Afghan community; Surrey has active working groups comprised of citizens we are trying to ensure are seeing the most positive impact; have them spread across the existing working groups we have; help inform us and take a look at peeling back what the issues are; would like to see greater inclusion from grassroots organizations that may not necessarily be part of the LIPs today
- When we ask people to be too many places at once we start to lose momentum; if we already have a table that is looking at health, work with that table rather than start a new table or people will face burnout – build on what is already there rather than start something entirely new
- This should be not just about Afghans but all refugees, which was an issue raised with the RRF 2015
- There is a lot of money going into LIPs right now so try to build on that
- It is unlikely there will be Afghan refugees who speak French, but French organizations would be ready and supportive.

Process for selecting the RRF model and the timeframe...

- Will AMSSA be looking to match some of the applicants that did not connect to one another but that could form a strong team, or will each application be just considered on its own merit?
 - AMSSA will not receive the proposals; they will go the Ministry, but we can bring that suggestion forward to the Ministry

Breakout Room 4

Existing strengths that we can capitalize on...

- Utilizing technology and smartphones; there is an existing app called Arrival Advisor, which helps newcomers to Canada connect to service providers; the app is currently translated into eight different languages and is looking to add Pashto and Dari
- Has there been any discussion with the province on involving RAP?
- Capitalize and leverage on existing collaborations such as: Sponsorship Agreement Holders and LIPs
- Muslim Food Bank provides several services to the Afghan community; there is an existing partnership with ISSofBC to provide information to refugees about the RAP program; connecting refugees to culturally appropriate food is important
- The Muslim Food Bank connects case workers to work with refugees one on one; the organization also connects refugees with counsellors; we rely on donations and fundraising; recognize the support provided by other smaller groups and provide funding to those who are currently providing services
- VAST is providing trauma informed services to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health; strengths include group services for clients, trauma informed training for workers, and individual counselling; VAST is referring clients to settlement services for programming that we do not provide
- Willingness and readiness to collaborate; we have evidence of the greater impact when collaborating; we have an integrated holistic approach to the work; we offer continual services from case management, employment, mental health services, and violence prevention; it helps connect and create a pathway for people to know where to go when there is a one stop shop location
- We have coordinating programs; whatever we do link refugees to those systems; it becomes localized as it is difficult to have individuals travel up to 45 minutes to network
- We have strong multi-disciplinary, interconnected organizations delivering settlement services in our communities; we are able to bring in a variety of programming depending on the funding source such as infant development and early intervention therapy programs; it is well coordinated in our communities and is a strength; families are connected to the food bank and other programs; those connections are important
- We have some knowledge on the issues and needs of the refugees; we have the experience providing services to the refugees and refugee claimants
- We have staff that are former Afghan refugees, which is an asset
- My concern is that support will be there initially but will drop due to various reasons, i.e. the housing crisis; there is fatigue happening with service providers trying to rally support
- Comments from the chat:
 - A cultural approach is critical to any client
 - Culturally responsive and agile services (re/settlement, clinical, prevention, etc.) that go beyond language.

Direct and indirect service gaps...

- We have programs that are around food security and culturally safe food; we have programming for trauma and counselling and legal advocacy supports; the challenge is that the capacity is not there; there needs to be more targeted support to leverage it; we have food banks and religious communities providing services – these are strengths, but there is not

enough support

- We need to be asking what did not work five years ago; if we have the knowledge of what happened and how the funds were distributed, we can utilize this information to move forward
- The landscape has changed, especially with the pandemic; services are being delivered virtually
- We are seeing the flooding, forest fires, and shortage of food – we should take these into consideration; there are no roads beyond Abbotsford and Chilliwack; consider those regions as separate for refugee response or provide special consideration regarding access to services and programs for the affected areas
- Regarding the indirect service gaps, there is a lot of coordination involved; there should be more focus on funding toward direct services provided to refugees; look at the practices and services to be considered as a model; see how funding could be increased for direct services
- There have been a lot of tables involved – how much direct services were done before?
- A large portion of funding was for the coordination of services and indirect services; there have been other working groups created; there were partnerships with members who were providing services
- The direct services are the ones meeting the client's needs; we could give feedback on how refugees are doing; we could hire more workers to help clients
- There is a gap for legal advocacy services and access to culturally sensitive services like assessments, developmental assessments, specialized services, deaf and hard of hearing, etc.; we are doing better with mental health and trauma areas, and we are bridging these areas, but there are still challenges
- Housing is a big challenge; we have had families arrive in July and they have been living in temporary housing; this is a table that is needed; as more refugees come, this is going to continue to be an issue; federal, provincial, and municipal governments need to be talking to each other on how to resolve the housing crisis
- Education is another area; as refugee families are placed in temporary housing, they do not have a permanent address for school catchment areas; we have had families who cannot put their children into public schools; ISSofBC has spoken with the Ministry of Education, but there has not been much movement – what have we learned over the past six years? Is there any way that the Ministry of Education could talk to the schools about school-age refugee children attending school in their area so that there is some semblance of routine? Can this be discussed at the higher levels and create actions?
- Create systemic changes and not just band aid solutions – what are the best practices from what we have learned? Capacity building in the community; people know how to support people with dignity; it will not stigmatize further but will create positive opportunities to be integrated into the community
- Hiring and onboarding of staff members – how can we engage and help new staff? Could we have coordinated support for these individuals who have arrived? People on the front line need to be supported as well
- Housing literacy is a gap; refugees do not understand the language and need help with reference checks, security deposit, tenancy agreements, etc.; refugees do not understand the terms of these agreements
- GARs arrive as permanent residents and have access to MSP coverage; MSP does not provide interpretive services; there are too many PTSD symptoms that are not being diagnosed properly due to the lack of interpretation
- Community building is needed for the clients; for them to integrate into the Canadian life, they need to know how to access these services and not live in isolation.

Opportunities that we can leverage...

- LIPs tables are community-based networks; it would be great to enhance and engage these tables
- We have had to pivot to virtual services; leverage the online platform to provide further services like education and training
- There was a cross-ministry committee during Operation Syria that coordinated what needed to happen at various levels; leverage on the work that they were doing or initiate it again if it is not currently operating
- Leverage the services available for hospitals to provide translation services; an opportunity could be raised as more Afghanis are arriving
- There is a need to have more direct services; this is an opportunity to have further funding appropriated to services providers
- The funded settlement organizations are already receiving sufficient funding; the remaining funds should be split to include the non-funded service providers
- Ensure that direct services, like service providers providing culturally appropriate food services, are receiving funding
- We have seen movement and more international students coming into our communities
- Talks with developers need to happen; include them as contributors to the collaborative tables
- Employment services for Afghan refugees; technology could be utilized; we currently have a platform called Skilled Newcomers and Professionals Partnership (SNAPP) where we provide newcomers and refugees with networking opportunities with professionals
- Look at the for-profit industries; the technology sector is very open to helping; we have asked questions surrounding how to connect refugees to their organization to work for them temporarily; include the for-profit sector to help us
- We learn a lot from the many years of providing services to the refugees; the support needed is to access mainstream services; this has helped other refugees in the past; customize services to the client as it depends on their education level; this could be done as a form of pre-employment assessment specific to the needs of the employer.

Attachments

The following items are attached to these notes or may be available through the AMSSA office:

1. Refugee Readiness Fund for the Afghan Refugees Pre-Meeting Participant Survey Results
2. Proposed Model – Refugee Readiness Fund 2021

MEETING AGENDA



Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees Provincial Consultation

AGENDA

November 17, 2021 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. PST
Zoom

MEETING PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:

- The new Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees will enhance services and supports for families resettling in British Columbia due to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Through this consultation meeting, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Immigration Policy and Integration branch will obtain input on how the fund can best be used to support the Afghan refugees.
- Discussions will identify and consider the extensive implications for the Refugee Readiness Fund (RRF) for the Afghan Refugees across communities and government and impacts to the settlement sector and service provision.

AGENDA

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome, Introductions, Territorial Acknowledgement – Katie Crocker, AMSSA
- 10:10 a.m. Consultation Survey Results Presentation – Katie Crocker, AMSSA
- 10:25 a.m. BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch Presentation and Q&A Session – Joni Rose, Senior Program Advisor
- 11:05 a.m. Breakout Groups – Facilitated by AMSSA
 - Existing strengths that we can capitalize on
 - Direct and indirect service gaps
 - Opportunities we can leverage through the RRF
- 12:05 p.m. Debrief of Breakout Sessions and Q&A Session
- 12:25 p.m. Closing Remarks and Next Steps
- 12:30 p.m. Meeting Adjourned

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The content from the plenary sessions and breakout discussions will be brought forward to the B.C. Ministry of Municipal Affairs in the Consultation Meeting Report.

PREPARATION:

Please review and prepare for breakout session discussion topics.

MEETING ATTENDEES

Representatives of the following organizations attended the Consultation:

Afghan Canadian Society BC
AMSSA
Back in Motion
Burnaby Family Life
Canadian International Council
Chilliwack Community Services
DIVERSEcity Community Resources
Government of BC
Immigrant Services Society of BC
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch
Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Muslim Food Bank
Options BC
PeaceGeeks
Share Society
Simon Fraser University
South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
Success BC
Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture
Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society
Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society
YWCA Vancouver

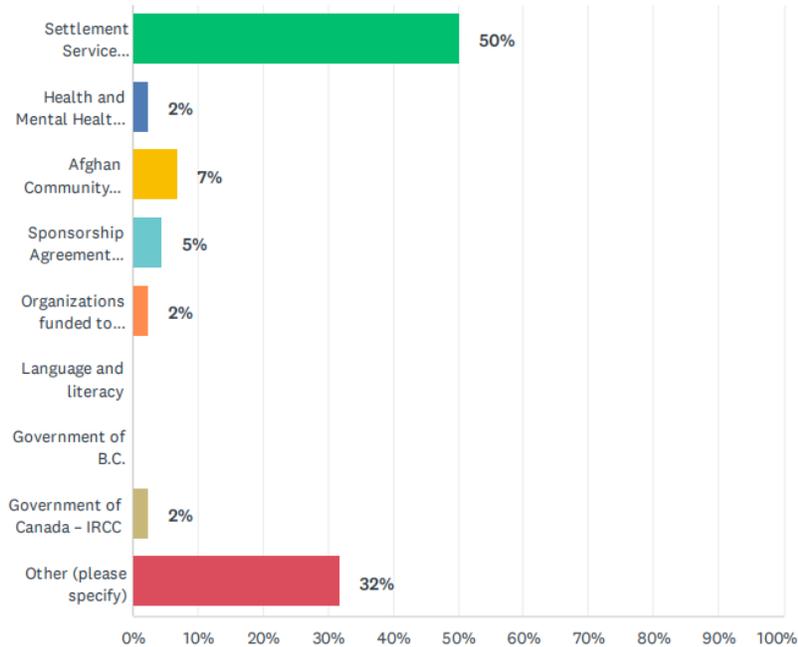
LIST OF ACRONYMS

The following acronyms are used in these notes (in alphabetical order):

AMSSA	Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies
BC	British Columbia
BCSIS	BC Settlement and Integration Services
GARs	Government-Assisted Refugees
IRCC	Immigration, and Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IFHP	Interim Federal Health Program
LIPs	Local Immigration Partnerships
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAPs	Refugee Assistance Programs
RRF	Refugee Readiness Fund
RRN	Refugee Resource Network
RRTs	Refugee Response Teams
VAST	Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture

PRE-EVENT SURVEY

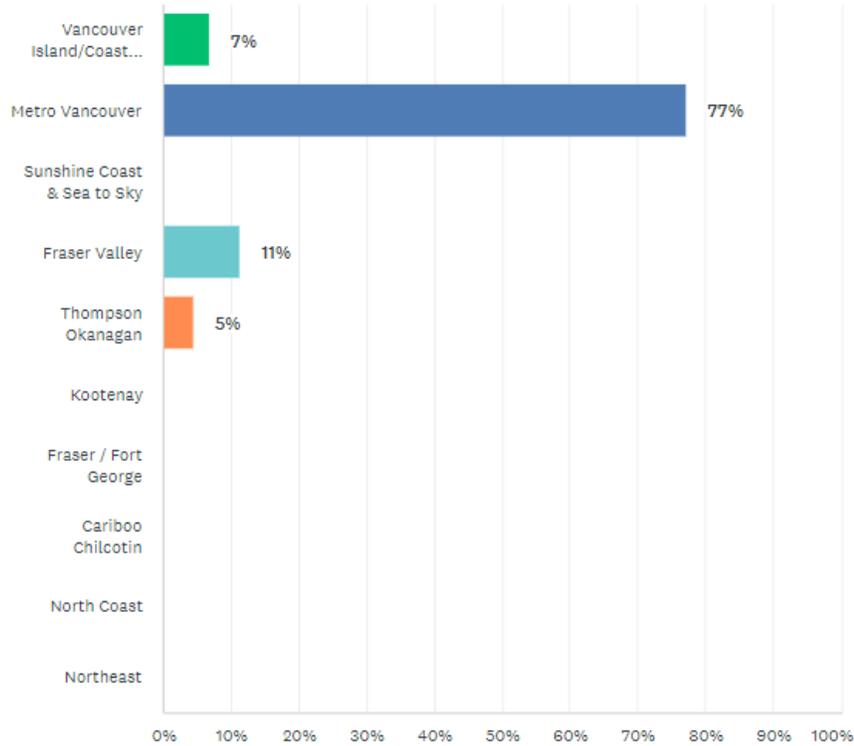
RESPONDENTS' SECTOR



“Other” Sector Description:

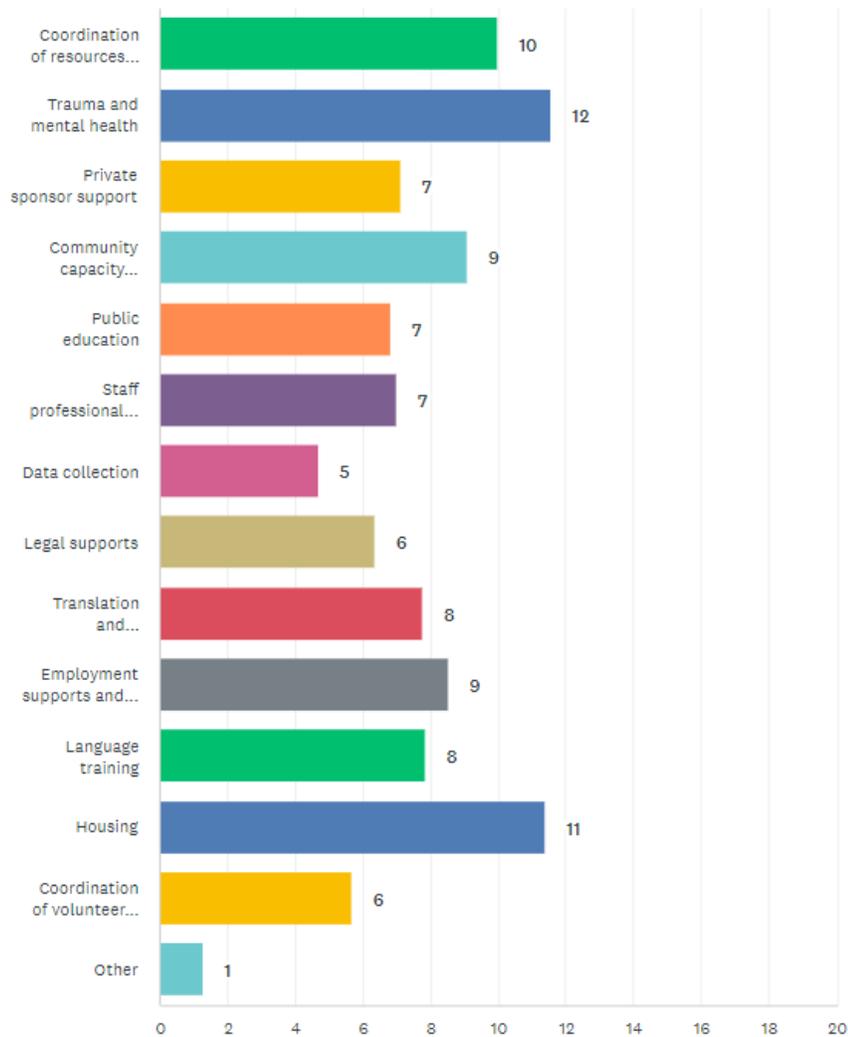
- University
- Community Services organization - working with many newcomer clients
- Community based LGBTQ refugee serving organization
- Multi Service Charity
- BC Francophone Immigration Network
- LGBTQI newcomer support & community building
- Employment Services for Immigrants
- Legal advice and advocacy
- Settlement, Language, Refugees, Provincial, and Federal
- Official Faith Community Convener for BC (Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network)
- Neighbourhood House
- The top 6 bullets apply to us as an organization

RESPONDENTS' PRIMARY OPERATING AREA



RRF PRIORITIES RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

Trauma and mental health	12
Housing	11
Coordination of resources and network building	10
Community capacity building and creating a welcoming environment	9
Employment supports and credential recognition	9
Language training	8
Translation and interpretation	8
Private sponsor support	7
Staff professional development and information sharing	7
Public education	7
Legal supports	6
Coordination of volunteers and donations	6
Data collection	5
Other	1



“Other” Priorities Descriptions:

- Financial literacy and coaching is also crucial - connects to food security, stressors etc.
- LGBTQI and Trans competency training and care staff providing services to newcomers (this can be included in priority 5)
- Gendered violence prevention and response as part of trauma and mental health
- Gender specific programming as well as children and youth services.
- Affordable housing is key - as many refugees’ rent is such a large portion of their funds that they do not have enough for other necessities. This list has been put in order of SPO support needed, rather than client needs.
- Liaise with families
- I would just add resources for Physical health as well.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RELATED TO RRF PRIORITIES

Note: Comments from the survey are copied as submitted. However, comments that identify a specific service provider agency name have been changed to [our organization] to safeguard the writer's identity.

- It is great that the Province is making this funding available.
- Too difficult to order these. Eg. Data Collection needs to happen throughout, translation needs to happen throughout, etc.
- I do not have any additional comments
- It is hard to rank the priorities, since lots of them are inter-related.
- Eager to know more.
- Access to both official languages
- this will be extremely helpful to add to already existing services, both GSR or PSR refugees. will there be financial contribution to individual sponsorships?
- Please ensure that Gender and LGBTQI/SOGIESC diversity are considered in all initiatives - -safer reception centres, employment supports language training etc. You are welcome to reach out to [our organization] on this.
- I have prioritized services, etc. that are not funded by IRCC. While language training is important, individuals arriving will be eligible through IRCC
- It will be critical to have an intersectional approach when deciding on the RRF priorities to ensure that critical pieces such as gender, age, sexual orientation and religion affiliation, to name a few, are front and center in the development and delivery of services for the incoming individuals and families. It would be ideal to have specific streams determined in order capitalize on the existing competencies and focus of existing providers as well as to encourage partnership and cross-sectoral support.
- A lot of refugees are tired or exhausted and distressed and they are in isolation when they arrive, they may need some immediate counselling services who can speak their own language
- Resources to help establish a pro bono legal services to Afghan newcomers, their families in Afghanistan, and other Afghan nationals in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.
- Housing continues to be a challenge for refugees, especially for large families. Employment provides a sense of belonging and well-being to refugees. Employment support should be a priority.
- It would be helpful, efficient and more effective for the ministry to provide an excel type data collection system to support Service Providers, rather than each organization creating a system on there own. It would be helpful to have the document roll up information, rather than the SPO having to transfer the info to another document.
- Important to take into account specific Rehabilitation supports for Survivors of Torture and War, according to Canada's obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and following the Global Rehabilitation Standards of the International Rehabilitation Council for Victims of Torture ([our organization] is an active member)
- The first and important area of need is Housing. Once housing is looked after, Employment would be the second most needed support and then Language training and access to language training and most important if its funded training.
- Secure housing

- although it was important to rank these priorities based on stakeholder perception, it is imperative that the Afghan refugee perspective is also taken into consideration to better understand what are their priorities.
- housing and volunteer coordination are the biggest gaps not addressed via federal funding.
- Take into consideration regional approach and organizational experience providing support to refugees
- It should be an open process and not duplicate efforts. Last time it was a bit confusing.

HOW CAN EXISTING GAPS BE ADDRESSED?

coordination mental health community i.e refugees capacities
 housing service providers support counselling
 services programs funding work need gaps
 provide trauma organizations agencies language

- Coordination of services needs to be a key aspect in the conceptualization and delivery of services and supports, to ensure that there is "no wrong door" for people accessing services. Departing from a baseline of offering integrated cross-sectoral services and supports, gaps could be reduced by ensuring that information is actively shared and a collaborative framework is established from the beginning. Creating a referral and consultative pathway alongside a data collection approach, will go a long way towards minimizing the existing and soon to emerge gaps.
- Here are too many settlement agencies currently working in BC and there is a real need for active coordination between these all settlement agencies. The quantity of the current services are fine and there is a real need on quality of the services which need to be provided for newcomers.
- More funding for pro bono legal services for Afghans.
- Coordination and funding to do the community work to ensure communities have capacity to successfully welcome refugees.
- Provide customized support/case management support to ensure clients receive individualized services. Funding to allow agencies to provide in-house Mental Health coaches to have easy access to support. Referrals to Mental Health providers sometimes take so long for clients to start receiving services. English classes for Refugee claimants from Afghanistan, the claimant doesn't have access to formal English language training. Immigration support to submit an immigration application Customized employment programming for Women. Enhance programming for Parents with young children
- We need to deal with the housing crisis as Afghan refugees arrive, housing is needed for them to settle into their new community. We need the provincial government to speak with

municipalities, developers, property managers, etc. to garner support for permanent housing for refugees.

- We believe that one of the biggest gaps is the coordination and alignment of several different agencies and organizations. We recommend to have a biweekly meeting amongst key organizations that are supporting these efforts.
- Work with Afghan community.
- Funding service providers to provide customized, needs-based supports
- Support with volunteer management including supporting sponsors, access to online interpretation and translation services, group sessions for refugee counselling online - accessible by all service providers as last time [our organization] and counselling was not available to all due to demand; also clients do not want counselling and open more to these group sessions.
- Need additional support groups, individual counselling, and outreach
- The biggest issue is Housing in our province. Focus on long term housing and I know there are a lot of housing-related initiatives underway.
- Housing is the most pressing. Make availability through BC Housing
- Funding for community grass roots organizations
- Pulling resources together to provide address trauma and mental health using anti-oppression approach
- With capacity building, advocacy and appropriate funding
- Flexibility of funding to be able to adapt services/program according to needs, not so much on eligibility of clients.
- service coordination and communication amongst agencies. Opportunity for sharing best practices and knowledge sharing
- By Involving the Afghan-Canadian organization in the process
- Better coordination among regional service providers to avoid duplication of services and initiatives. Language and interpretation services will be needed.
- Professional Development of language specific staff is a critical ongoing component which is required as the demand for different languages develops based on where we are accepting refugees from
- This funding can be used in a flexible way to support the very structured and specific funds being provided by IRCC i.e. mental health supports beyond settlement related services to address deep trauma.

EXPLAIN OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE MINISTRY CAN LEVERAGE THROUGH THE RRF

newcomers support Afghan need existing community opportunity
programs help services Afghan refugees
capacity provide live support Use funding housing

- This is a perfect opportunity for the ministry to support community groups that haven't traditionally received funding from the Ministry and continue to provide essential services.
- COVID times have made it harder for our sector to do what we “normally” have done. This may be an opportunity to forge more significant, deeper opportunities to get things done collaboratively by partnering up, ensuring we have the resources (energy/ people power), facilities, etc. to help out the best that we collectively can.
- I believe that UNHCR can help reach many refugees in need in many countries of asylum. These refugees live in misery. Their lives are very difficult and they lack the most basic means of livelihood. So they really need help and a chance to live a normal life again. I have been a refugee for 5 years and my family is still a refugee in Jordan so I can see how initiatives like this can change their lives and bring back smiles for them.
- Consulting with the grassroots and adapt policies, structures and systems to be equitable and inclusive.
- Housing research was done not so long ago about the needs of LGBTQI newcomers. Use results in program and policy designs
- Adding more staff speaking the refugees' native languages. Improve the capacity of refugee serving organizations
- look at existing services / supports in the community - encourage current government funded programs to be able to be flexible to provide supports to these clients - may require opening up and creating flexibility in existing programs.
- Get BC Housing to contribute housing and Bed and breakfast commitment to set aside housing for refugees. private companies to make refugees aware of possible jobs.
- Help make schools more welcoming-Expand SWIS program with Dari capacity. Engage Teachers colleges (SFU/UBC) in providing pre-service and in services training for teachers--
2) [Our organization] will be recruiting private sponsors and providing support for Afghan LGBTQI refugee newcomers including training for SPOs. We would be able to provide capacity building training to interpreters other services providers on LGBTQI competence.
- For e.g. IRCC funded services
- educate Afghan refugees about sectors that experience shortage of workers and provide them information on career choices
- Each agency has it's specialty, best to capture on it. For example, [our organization] has extensive multiple Housing programs.
- Providing additional funds to agencies who already have staff capacity and experience (i.e. [our organization] has extensive housing experience)
- Interest in the potential to convene a roundtable to discuss a Provincial Refugee Housing Strategy.
- Prioritizing integrative services and supports * Ensuring a coordinated and collaborative approach is implemented * Systems navigators are one of the most salient opportunities that could be captured through this RRF as there has never been a more critical time to ensure that newly arrived people are meaningfully connected and able to start building community in a swift way.
- My answer might be somehow similar to question #5 and we need to focus more quality of the current services being offered for newcomers 2 The services need to be provided by those who are Afghans /Canadians or somehow know the culture of the newcomers
- Resources to help establish a pro bono legal services to Afghan newcomers, their families in Afghanistan, and other Afghan nationals in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

- I am unsure what information you are looking for.
- Ministry can continue to work together with BCSIS providers to provide support to Afghan refugees.
- The Ministry should be using the RRF for already established Resettlement services and collaborations with Resettlement Service Providers.
- The Ministry should use these funds to support alignment and coordination of organizations supporting Afghans. Furthermore, they should also support the existing Afghan community in BC that have been supporting the newcomers.
- Work with Sponsor Agreement Holders
- Increased partnerships with health units and counsellors for service delivery
- Monthly zoom meetings to support front line workers... settlement worker meetings and debriefing for potential case management trauma... rather than focusing on managers and director meetings only.
- mental health supports
- By hiring settlement workers dedicated to the Afghan arrivals
- Providing funding to provide multilingual counselling service
- Settlement staff skill
- Need for counselling and trauma-informed services using first language
- Partnership and community at large relationships. our ability to provide rep around services to new families
- The MAP programming, the newcomers employment program and WorkBC programming are 3 programs that come to mind. Both programs are well established and understand the needs of Refugees in their particular area of expertise. However, these programs will benefit from extra funding to increase capacity to serve clients with low or no English competency.
- Use existing networks. Perhaps through LIPS, set up subgroups for system coordination in refugee receiving communities and perhaps AMSSA can pull together knowledge building provincially from these groups.
- Multiple settlement agencies and multiservice orgs delivering one contract together to lessen duplication of services in communities.

ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

- [Our organization] is an leader in trauma informed counselling, food security programs and financial literacy programs. While we are not an Refugee serving agency, we believe we are well positioned to partner/collaborate with Immigrant and Refugee serving agencies to share expertise and knowledge, working together to fill gaps.
- [Our organization] will be recruiting private sponsors and providing support for Afghan LGBTQI refugee newcomers. We would be able to provide capacity building training to interpreters other services providers.
- Thank you!
- The Afghan Special Initiative is radically different than Operation Syrian Refugee. Although both involve large numbers, OSR involved a short-term - albeit large - increase in arrivals through PSR and GAR programs. ASI is far more complex owing to mixed arrivals (GAR, Temporary Protection, Canadian Citizens and PR, all of which have different eligibility),

limited ability to plan, centralized quarantine, and an unknown timeframe all coming at the same time as increased arrivals through the levels plan.

- I would like to know whether there has been conversations regarding the provision of funds to support current inland or soon to arrive Afghan refugee claimants?
- Thank you for this survey. It helps to put thought into this now and to start preparing. Thank you for the opportunity of these funds.
- Thanks.