Access to Services for Immigrants and Refugees in Metro Vancouver

SITUATION ANALYSIS
BACKGROUND

In the coming years, immigration to Canada is expected to be higher than ever. Streamlining the flow of information for all stakeholders will help to make more effective use of the available resources.

Over the past year, federally-funded Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) across Canada have developed strategies based on common understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for strengthening settlement in the years to come. These LIPs have created conditions for strong cross-sector collaboration on projects that can help to streamline information flows across the settlement sector to address key challenges.

All Metro Vancouver LIPs identify Access to Information and Access to Services among the most critical priorities to strengthen local settlement. Using funding from the Google Impact Challenge, PeaceGeeks aims to undertake the development of a web application, Services Advisor Pathways, to address these two priorities by improving the flow of information on services to immigrants and to service providers in Metro Vancouver.

Services Advisor Pathways is expected to be comprised of two key components:

1. An existing PeaceGeeks tool called Services Advisor, which is a directory of all services available to newcomers. This tool is to be redeveloped from scratch in order to make it more scalable, configurable and flexible for interaction with future Services Advisor modules as well as third party applications.

2. A new tool called Pathways, which is to be a tool that helps immigrants and potentially settlement workers to develop personalized pathways for immigrants on the services that are most relevant to them.
To develop and ensure buy-in from stakeholders at all levels for Services Advisor Pathways, PeaceGeeks is undertaking an extensive two-year community consultation process. The following Situation Analysis comprises one of four key components of this process. The other three components of the community consultation process include: Online Stakeholder Surveys, a Project Advisory Committee, Community Consultation Workshops and an Immigrant & Refugee Advisory Committee.

This Situation Analysis assesses Local Immigration Partnership findings with respect to Access to Information on Services and Access to Services in the Metro Vancouver area. It summarizes the key commonalities of these reports to act as a baseline for the Services Advisor Pathways project, and reviews BC211 data in order to determine which information is already collected and available, and which is not and requiring further steps and processes. We will validate the Situation Analysis through the consultation process to ensure that we are using the most current and appropriate context for framing the key challenges/problems we seek to address.

The following summary draws from the LIPs’ strategic reports:

- **New Start 2016–2015, A Settlement and Integration Strategy for Immigrants and Refugees in Vancouver** (Vancouver Immigration Partnership, May 2016)
- **Burnaby Settlement and Integration Plan 2016–2019** (Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table, June 2016)
- **Surrey Immigrant Integration Strategy 2016–2019** (Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, June 2016)
- **Local Immigration Partnership Strategic Action Plan 2015–2020** (Welcoming and Inclusive New West, June 2015)
- **North Shore Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan 2016–2019** (North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership, 2016)
- **A Community Response: Richmond Immigrant Settlement Strategy and Implementation Plan 2016–2019** (Richmond Community Collaboration Table, July 2016)
- **2016–2019 Strategic Plan** (Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership, March 2016)
Situation Analysis: Immigration in Metro Vancouver

Canada welcomes about **250,000** immigrants and refugees every year, with over **40,000** arriving in BC yearly.

**Number of persons immigrated from 2006-2011, living in Metro Vancouver’s 5 largest cities** (VIP, 2016)

- **Vancouver**: 42,225
- **Surrey**: 34,880
- **Burnaby**: 19,530
- **Richmond**: 18,685
- **Coquitlam**: 8,350

**Top countries of origin of immigrants** (2011 National Household Survey)

1. **China**
2. **India**
3. **Philippines**
4. **Hong Kong**
5. **United Kingdom**
6. **Taiwan**
7. **South Korea**
8. **Iran**
9. **United States**
10. **Vietnam**

**Top non-official-language mother tongues** (2011 Census of Population)

1. **Punjabi**
2. **Cantonese**
3. **Chinese (No Specification)**
4. **Mandarin**
5. **Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)**
6. **Korean**
7. **Persian (Farsi)**
8. **Spanish**
9. **German**
10. **Hindi**

**% Population comprised by immigrants**

- **Vancouver**: 48%
- **Burnaby**: 50%
- **Surrey**: 41%
- **Richmond**: 60%
- **Tri-Cities**: 37%
- **North Shore**: 35%
- **New West**: 33%
- **Metro Vancouver**: 40%

**Imigration projections** (Statistics Canada, Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy)

By 2036, the proportion of immigrants in Metro Vancouver is expected to increase to **42.1–48.5%**, comprising **12.4–13.1%** of Canada’s immigrants.

76.7–77.8% of immigrants in Metro Vancouver will be from **Asia** by 2036.

**More than 1 in 2 people** will be an immigrant or child of an immigrant in Metro Vancouver (69.4–74.0%) by 2036.

**Surrey is projected to be Metro Vancouver’s largest municipality by 2041**, with a population of 770,000, due to growth largely attributed to new immigrant settlement.
Situation Analysis: Understanding Access to Services

All 7 Metro Vancouver LIPs identify access to settlement services and information as a key challenge faced by immigrants of all types and stages, despite the abundance of settlement programs available.

Common barriers to accessing services:

1. NOT KNOWING ABOUT THE SERVICES AVAILABLE

Newcomers often do not access Canadian social support systems and community services available to them due to the lack of support networks to help them learn about such resources (A Study of Iranian Immigrants’ Experiences of Accessing Canadian Health Care Services: A Grounded Theory, Dastjerdi, Olson and Ogilvie, 2012).

LIPs’ immigrant survey findings:

- VIP: 33.3% NSIIP: 36.1% % NEWCOMERS UNAWARE THAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM
- WINS: 39% % NEWCOMERS REPORTING DIFFICULTY FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT RESOURCES AND SERVICES
- BIPT: 48.7% NSIIP: 61% % SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO DO NOT BELIEVE NEWCOMERS ARE COMFORTABLE ACCESSING SERVICES

2. POOR COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Service providers across all Metro Vancouver LIPs point to a lack of integration, communication and coordination between services being a barrier to effective service delivery. As such, employers also report being unable or unclear on how to access the recent immigrant pool, presenting a missed opportunity for immigrants’ gainful employment (Surrey LIP, 2016; TCLIP, 2016).

3. BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES

Immigrants are frustrated by the procedural processes and paperwork involved in accessing community agencies, despite positive experiences using the services once accessed (Taking the Long View of Integration Services, SPARC BC, 2009).

LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (LIP) ACRONYMS

VIP: Vancouver Immigration Partnership
BIPT: Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table
Surrey LIP: Surrey Local Immigration Partnership
WINS: Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster
NSIIP: North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership
Richmond CCT: Richmond Community Collaboration Table
TCLIP: Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership
Situation Analysis: Understanding Access to Services

According to the 7 LIPs’ strategic priorities, settlement information and resources need to be:

• meaningful & engaging
• understood & accessible
• streamlined & integrated
• current & relevant
• robust & fully resourced
• specific to immigrant needs

4 LACK OF TRANSLATION
Non-official language speaking immigrant respondents are most likely to suggest having more information about key services in different languages and better interpretation services (NSIIP, 2016).

Total population that cannot speak English or French
(2011 National Household Survey; IRCC, 2017)

According to 2011 data, 5.6% (128,460) of Metro Vancouver’s population cannot speak English or French.

NEITHER ENGLISH/FRENCH (ALL AGES) MOTHER TONGUE
ARABIC*: 910
HINDI: 1,070
JAPANESE: 1,175
SPANISH: 1,680
PERSIAN (FARSI): 2,505
VIETNAMESE: 3,545
KOREAN: 5,750
PUNJABI: 26,395
CHINESE: 75,810

*As of April 30, 2017, 3,810 Syrian refugees have settled in British Columbia. 76% (2,910) speak neither English nor French, and 92% (3,520) speak Arabic as their mother tongue. 73% of Syrian refugees in B.C. live in Metro Vancouver (IRCC, 2017).

5 INADEQUATE SERVICES
Inadequate funding and rapid growth of immigrant populations have contributed to service shortcomings, particularly evident among language skills training. In Surrey, the LIP’s Service Mapping Project found that over 75% of 235 identified no-cost immigrant services were deemed inadequate by service leaders (Surrey LIP, 2016). At the same time, services can be geographically difficult to reach as they are concentrated in a few central areas, while settlement is dispersed (Surrey LIP, 2016).
Many social services and programs are unable to cater to the diverse needs of refugees and immigrants that come from different cultural backgrounds and experiences (Recent Latin Americans in Vancouver: Unyielding Diverse Needs versus Insufficient Services, Recalde, 2002). Cultural barriers can hinder access to services like health, education and public safety (Surrey LIP, 2016). Refugees may face additional barriers to accessing services due to issues like trauma, physical and mental learning disabilities, demanding family responsibilities, poverty and more.

In 2013/2014, 63,679 clients used settlement information and orientation services and 21,284 clients used English language training services available across B.C. (VIP Access to Services Conversation Starter, 2015).

**Newcomers learn about services through:**
- Friends & Family 62.7%
- Internet searching 34.4%
- WelcomeBC 24.5%
- CANN+ Package received at airport 34.4%
* Community Airport Newcomers Network

**The majority of students enrolled in English language classes were referred by:**
1. Family and Friends
2. Community Centres
4. Websites

(Western ESL iCare, CIC, 2014)

**Existing portals to learn about services online:**
- NewToBC (online directory, unites 10 Metro Vancouver public library systems)
- AMSSA’s online settlement service provider directory
- WelcomeBC (provincial welcome guides in different languages with specific local info)
- bc211 (Vancouver-based nonprofit providing info and referrals on community, government and social services across B.C.)
- Newcomer’s Guide to the City from the City of Vancouver
- Surrey LIP Settlement Services Map
Situation Analysis: Top Service Needs Identified by LIPs

70% of recent immigrants (5 years or less) and 40% of immigrants who have been here for more than 5 years identify language barriers as an ongoing challenge (TCLIP, 2016). As well, immigrants who have become naturalized citizens, but still struggle with English, find themselves ineligible for settlement language courses (VIP, 2016).

**Language**

For 1/3 of newcomers, unemployment or underemployment still affects their daily lives (TCLIP, 2016). Time in Canada and comfort in English are positively correlated with being employed. 40% of employers are concerned that immigrant applicants will not have the language skills and soft skills to do the job (NSIIP, 2016).

**Employment**

Recent research shows that good health status of some immigrant groups shows a downward trend after they arrive in Canada. Researchers attribute this decline to stress and anxiety from the settlement process, changed lifestyle, lower income, diminished service access, changing patterns of food consumption, as well as language barriers and unemployment/underemployment (Dynamics of Immigrants’ Health in Canada, Ng et al., 2005).

**Health & Wellness**

52.5% of newcomer respondents in New West have difficulty finding housing (WINS, 2015). Likewise, a 2005 study found that 49.5% of Metro Vancouver immigrants had trouble securing housing (The Profile of Absolute and Relative Homelessness, Hiebery, Addario and Sherrell, 2005). The transition to independent housing is especially stressful for Government-Assisted Refugees (Our Community, Our Voice, Surrey, BC, 2016).

**Housing**

**KEY BARRIERS:**
- Language barriers
- Lack of units for large/extended families
- High cost, low vacancy
- Lack of subsidized units and assistance to find housing

**Housing**

**KEY BARRIERS:**
- Reluctance to hire immigrants without Canadian work experience
- Reluctance to hire immigrants with ESL
- Difficulty to verify foreign credentials

**KEY BARRIERS:**
- Long waitlists for government-funded language programs
- Inadequate communication and coordination with private and informal language programs

**Language**

**KEY BARRIERS:**
- Lack of translation in health care system
- Intercultural communication barriers

**Health & Wellness**

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Situation Analysis:
Service Needs & Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Newcomer Service Needs</th>
<th>Early Learning &amp; Child Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Social Connections</td>
<td>Recreation Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Food and Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Services</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Specialized Services for Vulnerable Communities</td>
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</tbody>
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From the Tri-Cities LIP’s survey, immigrants have needed help with the following: (TCLIP, 2016)

- **Language training**: 63%
- **Learning about & accessing health care services**: 49%
- **Finding a job**: 38%
- **Adapting to a new culture**: 34%
- **Learning about the neighbourhood**: 30%
- **Finding recreation activities**: 25%
- **Finding housing**: 25%
- **School registration**: 24%
- **Making friends, building social connections**: 23%
Situation Analysis: Ways to Improve Access to Services

Below are common strategies identified in Metro Vancouver LIPs’ reports related to access to services:

1. CENTRALIZED SETTLEMENT SERVICE INFORMATION IN AN ONLINE PORTAL, AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

Almost all LIPs intend to determine the scope for developing a “digital portal” or “virtual welcome centre” to consolidate newcomer services and information, in order to improve dissemination and accessibility (VIP, 2016; BIPT, 2016; TCLIP, 2016; WINS, 2015; Richmond CCT, 2016). Several LIPs also look to position their LIP websites as central sources for newcomer service information (Surrey LIP, 2016; BIPT, 2016).

2. ANNUAL SERVICE MAPPING AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS

Many LIPs recommend and have already launched annual mapping and capacity assessment processes and surveys, to identify service delivery opportunities and challenges, better inform service planning, and articulate community needs (VIP, 2016; BIPT, 2016; NSIP, 2016; Surrey LIP, 2016).

3. PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

All LIPs see a need to better promote existing community services, resources, and service linkages to immigrants and refugees, in person, in print and online. Three of the LIPs aim to develop and launch promotional campaigns (VIP, 2016; BIPT, 2016; TCLIP, 2016).

4. IMPROVED COLLABORATION, COORDINATION AND REFERRALS BETWEEN SERVICES

Almost all LIPs look to develop best practices to increase coordination between settlement and broad-based community service organizations, in order to streamline assessment processes, improve service pathways, and strengthen referral processes (VIP, 2016; BIPT, 2016; WINS, 2015; TCLIP, 2016; Richmond CCT, 2016; Surrey LIP, 2016).

5. PEER-TO-PEER LANGUAGE LEARNING

Many LIPs recommend increasing English language programming in innovative ways to respond to current unmet needs (VIP, 2016; Surrey LIP, 2016; TCLIP, 2016; Richmond CCT, 2016). The Vancouver Immigration Partnership suggests capitalizing on the community’s resources and interest through peer-led or peer-based language training, in which university and college students, retired language instructors or other interested professionals can be recruited to assist with teaching.