Supporting Syrians in Surrey: Policy Options to Increase the Responsiveness of the British Columbian Settlement System to Refugee Needs

by
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Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Policy

In the School of Public Policy Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2017

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Ethics Statement

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Abstract

According to the United Nations, between 1990 and 2015 the number of international migrants around the world increased by over 91 million, or 60% (UN 2016). As a result, many countries have welcomed large numbers of refugees, including those from Syria. This study examines the response to the arrival and resettlement of Syrian refugees in Surrey, British Columbia, with a focus on how to improve the community’s ability to meet the needs of future refugees. The study addresses challenges that arose from the rapid arrival of Syrians, as well as ongoing and systemic barriers to optimal service delivery. Six policy options are presented flowing from interview results with settlement sector workers and related stakeholders, and evidence derived from secondary research. The four recommended policy options are designed to lower barriers to settlement service access for refugees, while efficiently increasing the communication flows between frontline settlement staff and policy makers.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees; Service delivery; British Columbia; Surrey; Canadian Immigration; Policy Analysis
Acknowledgements

I have immense appreciation and respect for my classmates, professors and staff in the School of Public Policy who have shaped the positive experience I have had during this degree. Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Olena Hankivsky, for challenging my understanding of Canadian multiculturalism, and for greatly supporting me in this endeavour. Thank you to Amer Amer, Sammie Stiavnicky and my parents Aldo and Laurie Caldi, who cheered me on throughout the process of this project, and always. Thanks also to all of the great friends who kindly edited my work and provided helpful feedback.

Throughout this research process I was repeatedly humbled by the number of dedicated individuals I came across who are working hard each day to help integrate refugees and newcomers in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. I have such respect for all those who work with or within the settlement sector, and I wish to thank all of the key informants who graciously offered their experiences and honest insights; I hope that what I have written here captures their sentiments well. I also want to acknowledge the resilience of the Syrian and other refugees who have come to Canada recently, and extend a very warm welcome to them and convey my best wishes for their continued success and happiness.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMSAA</td>
<td>Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>Canadian Council for Refugees</td>
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<td>CIC</td>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</td>
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<td>CSS</td>
<td>Client Support Solutions program</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAR</td>
<td>Government Assisted Refugee</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRCC</td>
<td>Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRPA</td>
<td>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISS of BC</td>
<td>Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIP</td>
<td>Local Immigration Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSOS</td>
<td>National Settlement Outcomes Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCOV</td>
<td>Our Community, Our Voices Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PICS</td>
<td>Progressive Intercultural Community Services</td>
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<td>PSR</td>
<td>Privately Sponsored Refugee</td>
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<td>RAP</td>
<td>Resettlement Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>Refugee Readiness Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSSCHR</td>
<td>Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPO</td>
<td>Settlement Service Provider Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newcomer</strong></td>
<td>Refers to recently landed (three to five years) immigrants and refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refugee</strong></td>
<td>Defined in Canada as per Article 1A (2) in the 1951 Refugee Convention as, “a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him—or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution” (UNHCRa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resettlement</strong></td>
<td>Defined as, “the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement” (UNHCR, 2017). In Canada, resettlement denotes the initial period of time that a refugee arrives in Canada (typically one year in duration), and is receiving support from the government or a private sponsor. Beyond this period of time, the term “settlement” is used (IRCC 2017c)</td>
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Executive Summary

The conflict in Syria has displaced thousands of individuals from their homes and, in response, Canada made and kept its commitment to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to the country between November 2015 and February 2016. Of the 3,050 Syrians who have resettled in British Columbia (BC) as of January 2017, 44% have migrated to Surrey, BC. The key policy problem is that too many refugees in Surrey, BC have experienced waitlists for settlement services, thereby delaying their basic needs from being met and slowing the process of social inclusion. This is particularly problematic for those under the admission stream of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), who tend to have lower economic and integration outcomes than other admission streams of refugees.

This study contributes to a growing body of research on the Syrian arrival to Canada. It examines what the challenges and strengths have been in responding to the settlement service needs of Syrians in Surrey, BC, with a focus on how frontline needs are being communicated to policy makers. This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology, and captures ten key informants’ perspectives through semi-structured interviews. The key results from the interviews are as follows.

The response to the arrival of Syrian refugees has represented a valiant effort across settlement organizations, all levels of government, community organizations, and the public. However, several challenges were identified that relate both to the Syrian cohort’s arrival as well as ongoing and systemic issues in the BC settlement sector. The timing and allocation of settlement sector funding from the federal government was a barrier to meeting the immediate staffing and programming needs for the Syrians. Overall, the funding structure fosters a competitive environment among service providers that tends to present disincentives to closer collaboration among them, and does not enable long-term planning. Despite this barrier, collaboration in fact increased with the arrival of the Syrians, due to the sheer number and speed at which they needed to be welcomed, which created strains on settlement organizations to respond. In addition, improvements could be made in the communication and information sharing between settlement organizations and government representatives. Finally, the Syrian arrival has
placed refugee affairs in the spotlight, and represents a policy window for broader policy change in Surrey, the province of BC, and Canada.

Utilizing this study’s primary research results and other evidence found through secondary research, six policy options were formulated and evaluated against eight criteria. There were two key objectives of the policy analysis. First, barriers should be lowered for refugees to access services associated with supporting their economic, social, political and cultural participation in Canadian society, thereby enhancing equitable human development. Second, refugee perspectives should be communicated upward to settlement organizations and various levels of government more efficiently and speedily.

The highest-ranking options that emerged from the policy analysis resulted in the following recommendations. In the short-term, it is recommended that settlement organizations receive longer-term and combined core funding, and that settlement services are centralized online with waitlists and ranking mechanisms. Together, these options address the major barriers of funding, coordination and information sharing that were identified as impediments to optimal service delivery in the interviews and literature. In the long-term, it is recommended that each GAR receive case management, and that funding increases to facilitate and sustain the Surrey LIP’s ongoing refugee research and strategic planning which have had highly positive impacts. Together these options directly aim to improve both the individual- and community-level responsiveness to GARs in Surrey, BC.

Canada is often lauded as an international leader in newcomer integration, however, there are still significant barriers to accessing settlement services for refugees, and there are also research gaps surrounding what interventions best support optimal outcomes for refugees. The contributions and recommendations of this study aim to suggest how some of these barriers and gaps in Surrey, BC could be lowered for Syrian and other refugees in the future.
Chapter 1. Introduction

The Syrian crisis has driven millions from their homes, and it represents the largest displacement of humans globally since WWII (Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (RSSCHR) 2016). In response, following an election promise from the Trudeau Liberal platform, the Canadian government resettled 25,000 Syrian refugees between November 4, 2015 and February 29, 2016, with 40,081 having arrived as of January 2017 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) 2017a). Their arrival prompted unprecedented responses from multiple stakeholders to assist in the rapid welcoming and resettlement process.

Canada's track record for accepting and resettling refugees stands apart from most other Western nations as being highly inclusive (Seidle 2016). At the same time, resettlement and concomitant integration require effective policies and practices. Accordingly, this study explores policy interventions to support the social inclusion of refugees, defined as participation in social, political, cultural and economic aspects of Canadian life (Omidvar and Richmond 2005). It also aligns with the government objective “to promote the successful integration of [refugees] into Canada while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society” (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) S.C. 2001, c. 27).

Syrian Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) are the focus of this study, as GARs tend to have poorer economic outcomes as compared to Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs). While the focus is on Syrian refugees, and specifically the processes by which their needs have been heard, responded to and met in the city of Surrey in the province of British Columbia (BC), it is estimated that 30% of Canada’s population could be immigrants by 2036 (Statistics Canada 2017). Thus, the findings of this study may also inform improvements to settlement policies more generally.
As of December 2016, 3,050 Syrian refugees have arrived in BC (McElroy 2016). The key policy problem is that too many refugees in Surrey, BC have experienced waitlists for settlement services, thereby delaying their basic needs from being met and slowing the process of social inclusion. This is particularly problematic for those under the admission stream of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), who tend to have lower economic and integration outcomes than other admission streams of refugees.

The main research questions that inform this study are: What has been the impact of Syrian refugees on SPOs and the community in Surrey, BC? How can the settlement sector be strengthened to more quickly respond to refugee needs? How are local needs in Surrey communicated upwards to policy makers and what improvements (particularly using digital media and online information) can be made in this regard? This study used a strengths-based lens (Saleeby 2009), recognizing not only the assets of Syrian refugees but also that the cohort is a non-homogenous group with significant internal group differences.

This study contributes to a growing body of research regarding the Syrian refugees and their resettlement in Canada, and represents one of the first studies to focus primarily on the city of Surrey and Syrian refugee resettlement. The results of this research illustrate that the reactions to the arrival of Syrian refugees represent a valiant effort across all levels of government, settlement organizations, and the public. However, the findings show that improvements to initial arrival processes are important to reduce barriers to optimal service delivery and to enhance refugees' experiences. Importantly, this study does not aim to criticize the dedicated work of those who make welcoming refugees their priority, but aims to identify gaps and suggest policy options to build on existing strengths and improve the response to refugees in Surrey, and potentially other jurisdictions.

The rationale for choosing this particular case example is as follows. The Syrian refugee cohort in Canada has been unique in receiving much media, government, public and research attention in comparison to other refugees. This provides an opportune policy window to assess these processes and seek out best practices for the future. Moreover, Surrey is a jurisdiction that has welcomed approximately 44% of the Syrian
GARs that arrived in BC, due to the lower costs of living as compared to Vancouver (ISS of BC 2016c), and has a history of being open and responsive to researching refugee needs (Dooley et. al 2016).
Chapter 2. Background

Overview

This chapter provides background information for this study’s policy problem, by outlining the statistical trends of refugee movement and the Canadian response to Syrian refugees. Specifically, it describes the policy environment, and the array of stakeholders involved in the response to refugee needs through settlement service provision in the city of Surrey, BC. Social inclusion for newcomers is defined, as well as key social, economic, and other outcomes and trends of resettled refugees in Canada. Finally, policy gaps and opportunities are presented.

Statistical Trends of Migration

According to the United Nations, between 1990 and 2015 the number of international migrants around the world increased by over 91 million, or 60% (UN 2016, p 1); this resulted in there being 244 million international migrants globally in 2015 (UN 2016, p 1) largely due to factors such as “underdevelopment, indebtedness, unequal distribution of resources and environmental decline” (Knight 2016, p 24), as well as political instability and human rights abuses. According to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Report on International Migration Outlook, approximately 4.8 million people migrated permanently to OECD countries in 2015 (2016b).

Of the 1.65 million people who sought asylum in OECD countries in 2015, Syrians constitute approximately 25% of applications. This is the result of the Syrian civil war that began in 2011 (OECD 2016b, p 9) and continues today as a broader international conflict at the time of this writing, sending thousands of Syrians to temporary refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq (Fleras 2016, p 170). In response, Canada agreed to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees between November 2015
and February 29, 2016. As of January 2017, some 40,081 Syrian refugees have been welcomed to Canada (IRCC 2017a).

Over three hundred communities across Canada have welcomed Syrian refugees (IRCC 2017b), prompting nation-wide media coverage and increased public awareness about this population. This has occurred in the context of increasingly volatile political opinions regarding refugees in Western nations, including the ban of Syrian refugees by the United States (BBC 2017). Recently, there has also been a marked increase in illegal border crossings from the United States into Canada (Porter et. al 2017), placing increased pressure on Canada to prepare itself for receiving an even larger number of refugees in the future.

Welcoming large cohorts of refugees within a short timespan such as the Syrian refugees is not the norm in Canada, although there are historical precedents due to previous political and humanitarian crises (Statistics Canada 2016b). For example, between 1955 and 1956, more than 37,000 Hungarians were admitted in less than a year. 10,975 Czechs entered Canada between 1968 and 1969, and in 1980, 50,000 South-East Asian refugees entered Canada (CCR 2016). Since the early 1990s, the number of landed immigrants has been approximately 235,000 new immigrants per year (Statistics Canada 2016b), and refugees have represented approximately 10% of total yearly immigration to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) 2006). Canada’s role and history of settling large or small cohorts of refugees on humanitarian grounds originates from commitments and signed conventions at the international level, some of which have become part of domestic law.

International Conventions and Refugee Policy

The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951 and was amended in 1967 to expand beyond those fleeing Europe to apply universal coverage (Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 2010, p2). Canada belatedly became a signatory to this convention on June 4, 1969 (CCR), and the 1976 Immigration Act formalized the procedure for distinguishing refugees and immigrants (Knight 2016, p 17). With the passing of this Act, elements from the Geneva Convention were added to Canadian law surrounding the necessity for recognizing and
sheltering people. Since the passing of this Act, criteria for refugee admission has continually broadened (Canadian Council for Refugees 2009c), meaning that refugees with increasingly diverse backgrounds, abilities and service needs arrive in Canada and create new challenges for SPOs. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) came into effect on June 28, 2002 (IRCC 2015, p 3) and is the most recent change in immigration and refugee law. The act places greater emphasis on the selection of refugees based on protecting individuals with vulnerabilities and high barriers to settling, as opposed to their ability to resettle in Canada (CIC, Ontario Region 2009). This change has resulted in more complications in integrating GARs, which are discussed below.

**The Canadian Response to Refugees**

It is within federal jurisdiction to implement Canada’s international commitments, and to oversee the national intake of refugees. Indeed, throughout its history Canada has defined itself as a nation of immigrants (Castles and Miller 2009), and in 1971 Canada was the first country in the world to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism (Fleras 2015, p 328). Another motivating factor for Canada’s greater immigration intake as compared to other developed nations, is the need to increase population growth, since the replacement-level of fertility of 2.1 children per woman has not been reached since 1971 (Statistics Canada 2016a). The current Liberal government has been vocal about intentions to reinvigorate Canada’s humanitarian role on the world stage, which includes the Syrian refugee pledge (Zilio 2016). Despite disagreements in the literature about Canada’s success with multiculturalism praxis (Cui 2015, Fleras 2015, Fraser 2000, Taylor 1994), the fact remains that, over certain periods of time, Canada has been a world leader for its refugee intake on a per capita basis (Adelman, 1982). Certainly, the country’s pledge to permanently resettle Syrians differs from many Western European nations, where political opinion diverges from that of Canada (Seidle 2016). This is true even in the comparative case of Germany, which received 1.1 million asylum seekers in 2015 and were able to file 476,659 for asylum (Mayer 2016), yet even this classification is not equal to resettled refugee status, which allows for the ability to permanently remain in the country (Library of Congress, 2016), as is the case with Canadian GARs.
There are currently three refugee admission categories for Canada: PSRs, GARs and blended visa office referred refugees (IRCC 2015, p 14). Syrians may be admitted as PSRs, who are supported by their sponsors for up to one year in terms of lodging, assistance and social support. Syrians may also be admitted as GARs, who are selected externally in partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and are resettled through IRCC’s Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) (Elgersma 2015, p 2) for their first year after landing, in alignment with provincial and territorial social assistance rates (IRCC 2017b). Support services include: temporary housing, help with finding permanent housing, help with registering for mandatory federal and provincial programs, orientation to the community, support for high needs clients, and referrals to other refugee programs (ISS of BC, 2016b). Beyond this year of support, refugees will go into settlement services as do other immigrants, and some will transition to provincial income assistance, as depicted below. The entire process of bringing Syrians to Canada represents an investment of up to $678 million dollars over six years, with $325M to $377M earmarked for settlement and integration (IRCC 2017b).

Immigration policy and funding arrangements between the federal government and provinces is complex (McGrath and McGrath 2010, p 1). Section 91 of the Constitution Act awards legislative authority over “naturalization and aliens” to the Canadian Parliament, although Section 95 provides shared authority in immigration to federal and provincial governments with ultimate oversight resting with Ottawa (Constitution Act, 1982). In 2014, BC signed its third and most recent immigration agreement with the federal government entitled the Canada-BC Immigration Agreement. This agreement transitioned the province from a “devolved” model where BC could manage its own settlement and integration services (Seidle 2010), to one in which the federal government directly liaises with SPOs, thereby signalling a repatriation of immigration jurisdiction. Despite the province of BC not playing as active a role in immigration funding coordination as in pre-repatriation, refugees in BC continue to access several social services provided by the province, such as health services, education services, social assistance, and benefits such as the Child Care Subsidy, the BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit, and the BC Basic Family Bonus (BC Government News 2016). In addition, as part of the response to the anomalous speed and size of the Syrian arrival, the provincial government offered $1M for the creation of five regional
refugee readiness teams (RRTs) across the province with funding that will last until March 2017, as well as for the creation of online and other resources (Metro Vancouver Refugee Response Team 2016).

**Municipal and Other Community Stakeholders in the City of Surrey**

Municipalities in Canada are increasingly taking on more responsibilities (Good 2009), including leadership roles in immigrant and refugee settlement (Maytree Foundation 2012, Andrew and Hima 2011 and Tolley and Young 2011 in Shields et. al 2014). The city of Surrey, BC is no exception to this trend, and it is a particularly strong case study of managing diverse populations at the local level. Surrey is one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, and welcomes approximately 800 new residents each month (City of Surrey website, 2016), and according to the latest National Household Survey immigrants and non-permanent residents accounted for 54.3% of Surrey’s population (NHS 2011).

As of December 2016, 3,050 Syrian refugees arrived in BC (McElroy 2016), and approximately 44% settled in Surrey in part due to the lower costs of living as compared to Vancouver (ISS of BC 2016c). This is part of a larger trend in Canada, wherein newcomers are increasingly settling beyond the traditional urban core cities such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, where many newcomer-oriented services have traditionally been located (Lo et al. 2010 and Peel Newcomer Strategy Group 2010 in Shields et. al 2014). Approximately 90% of the Syrians who have settled in the Fraser Valley area, which includes Surrey, are GARs (Fraser Valley RRT 2017b). The municipality of Surrey is also home to progressive community planning, which this study highlights. In 2014 the city of Surrey and CIC signed a contribution agreement to create a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), which is federally funded. The Surrey LIP defines itself as, “a consortium of government, public and private institutions, business, non-profit and community agencies working together to strengthen Surrey’s integration of newcomers and build a more inclusive and welcoming city” (Surrey LIP 2016). Notably, it is currently the only LIP in Canada to have created a refugee strategy, in addition to their immigrant strategy (Surrey LIP 2016).
Along with the municipal government, several other stakeholders are involved in refugee resettlement in BC. These include SPOs, refugees and the families of refugees, refugee research and advocacy organizations such as the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), the Pathways to Prosperity research network and the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA), volunteers, and specialized counselling and mental health service providers such as the Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture and Bridge Community Health Clinic. Among these, SPOs play a large role in assisting refugee clients in accessing services and resources community-wide, such as settlement and refugee services, health and nutrition services, English language classes, employment and education supports, community integration services, and individual and family social support services (Surrey LIP, 2015a). Some of the SPOs in Surrey include: MOSAIC, DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS of BC), Options Community Services, Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS), Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS), and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

The Complexity of Refugee Resettlement and Social Inclusion

According to the CCR’s widely-cited Best Settlement Practices (1998) guide, key areas in the integration process that need to be addressed by members of a host society in order for newcomers to successfully integrate include: “language, access to employment, cultural orientation, recognition of qualifications and experience, family reunification, immigration status, and building community,” (CCR 1998, p 14). Social inclusion is a useful lens for encompassing such optimal refugee outcomes, and is defined as, “requiring the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in [newcomers’] new country” (Omidvar and Richmond 2005, p 17). Furthermore, successful social inclusion entails the “dismantling of barriers that lead to exclusion in [economic, social, cultural and political] domains” (Omidvar and Richmond 2005, p 155). Thus, for refugees to have the opportunity to fully participate in Canada, traditional barriers to integration such as language, employment, and health concerns including mental health issues must be overcome. Discussion of some of these barriers and key outcomes of refugees follows.
There are several approaches to measuring outcomes of refugee integration, although the most commonly available and cited in Canada tend to focus on economic and labour market-based indicators. Focusing first on economic variables, a 2011 evaluation of the GAR program by CIC found that, between 1992 to 2012, GARs had “lower incidence of employment, lower employment earnings and higher social assistance reliance” than PSRs (CIC 2011 p 32). Notably, this trend worsened post-IRPA implementation, wherein GARs no longer would “catch up” economically to PSRs after 7 years as was previously the case (IRCC 2011). This is likely due to the fact that GARs receive support from SPO caseworkers who are simultaneously managing several other files (RSSCHR 2016), whereas PSRs are supported by their sponsors and connected to community networks more rapidly. Notably, labour market outcomes from newcomer women (including refugees) in Canada tend to be lower than men’s outcomes (Shields et. al 2010), and among other newcomer groups (skilled worker/professional, Provincial nominee) in the four Western Canadian provinces, refugees have been found to have higher unemployment rates (Wilkinson et. al 2014). As Figure 1 depicts below, the majority of GARs in BC with landing years of 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010 are on provincial social assistance after one year, and with each year since the start of the refugee claim, this percentage decreases (Statistics Canada, 2015).

![Social Assistance Rates of Government Assisted Refugees in British Columbia, 1 to 5 Years After Landing in Years 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010](image)

Source: Statistics Canada 2014a, Table 054-0004
Figure 1: Social Assistance Rates of Government Assisted Refugees in British Columbia, 1 to 5 Years After Landing

In contrast, the following graph (Figure 2) displays that PSRs tend to have far lower social assistance uptake rates than GARs over the same landing periods. It is important to clarify that policy solutions should not be predicated simply on reducing the number of GARs, which represents a government commitment, and increase the number of PSRs, which are supported by private individuals or groups in Canada; this is addressed further in the Recommendations chapter.

![Graph showing social assistance rates of privately sponsored refugees in British Columbia, 1 to 5 years after landing.](image)

Source: Statistics Canada 2014a, Table 054-0004

Figure 2: Social Assistance Rates of Privately Sponsored Refugees in British Columbia, 1 to 5 Years after Landing

Beyond economic measures, there are several other indicators for integration. An October 2016 Statistics Canada Research Paper on immigrants’ sense of belonging in Canada found that, although immigrants’ success in the labour market contributes to their material well-being, “their sociocultural and psychological integration are key to the receiving society’s social cohesion and immigrants’ own well-being” (Statistics Canada 2016b). The study found that 93% of immigrants had “a strong or a very strong sense of
belonging to Canada”, and that the key determinants for improved sense of belonging were: “source-country socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, immigration entry status, post-migration experience, and demographic characteristics” (Statistics Canada 2016b). This study is clearly focused on interventions to improve the post-migration experience of refugees. In contrast, in previous studies, immigrants in Surrey have reported experiencing discrimination or racism, although the respondents tended to frame it as “an exception to the norm” (Surrey LIP, 2015b, p 4). Although Canada is often lauded as being an international leader for its religious and ethnic diversity (Seidle 2016), it should not be taken for granted that discrimination is absent from refugees’ integration experiences in Canada. Hate crime data from Statistics Canada indicate that Muslim populations, many of which are also visible minorities, are targets of hate crimes. There were 99 police-recorded hate crimes against Muslim populations across Canada in 2014 (Statistics Canada 2014b), and Muslim populations had the highest percentage (47%) of hate crime victims who were female in 2013 (Allen 2015). Research that longitudinally captures this at a local level should continue to be collected. Opportunities and challenges of integration for Syrian refugees settling in BC are discussed below.

**Notable Characteristics of Syrian Refugees**

Syrian refugees in Surrey are not a homogenous cohort. Malkki (1995) aptly notes that plurality in refugee populations does not always become part of the media and academic discourse, while a one-dimensional perspective focusing on “infantilized images of ‘pure’ victimhood and vulnerability” tend to dominate. Bearing this point in mind, it is also true that demographic information and statistics of the Syrian cohort reveal the potential for substantial integration challenges, in terms of mental and physical health, language barriers, the cost of living with larger family sizes, and others.

Pre-arrival demographic information of Syrian refugees suggests that many may have experienced health conditions such as hypertension, and have endured traumatic events such as loss of family, witnessing violence, physical disabilities, being a victim of sexual violence, and others (CIC 2015). In a 2016 survey of Syrian families in the Lower Mainland, 34% replied that their family’s overall physical health was fair or poor (ISS of BC 2016c). Language barriers are often cited as a key obstruction to refugee integration, for example in the 2013 National Settlement Outcomes Survey language outcomes were
rated as a key challenge by unemployed newcomers (NSOS 2013). Languages spoken in Syria include Arabic (official language), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, and Circassian (CIC 2015), and of the Syrian refugees resettled to Canada 60% of Syrian PSRs arrived with English language skills, as compared to 10% of Syrian GARs (RSSCHR 2016, p 26). Families in Syria tend to be quite large, and the majority of resettled Syrian refugees are families of a couple with three or many more children (CIC 2015), leaving many with childcare and larger housing expenses (ISS of BC, 2016b, RSSCHR 2016). Housing affordability issues have forced many to settle in Surrey instead of Vancouver, and in general, the cost of living in the Lower Mainland of BC may present ongoing challenges. Some of these challenges will affect Syrian men and women’s social inclusion process in Canada differently.

Gender is an important dimension to consider when investigating the social inclusion of Syrians in BC, and while limited data exists on the outcomes of Syrian women thus far, there are some important considerations to take. For example, settlement service, healthcare or education providers ought to consider the provision of childcare for refugees, as this is likely to disproportionality add barriers to accessing services, for example language classes (RSSCHR 2016), for Syrian women who tend to bear child caretaking responsibilities and must otherwise stay at home (ISS of BC 2016c). Indeed, two of the UNCHR’s criterion for ‘vulnerability’ which fuelled GAR selection are single mothers and families with young children, and 50% of Syrian GARs are under 12 years of age (ISS of BC 2016c). Some service provision in Canada therefore is tailored to women only, and other countries also follow this model to overcome barriers for women, such as Germany (Shields et. al 2016). Additionally, some witnesses in the Standing Senate Committee for Human Rights report drew attention to the potential for gender-based violence to occur among the Syrian population in Canada, and the need for educating women that their independent status in Canada will not be threatened should they choose to leave their spouse, for example (RSSCHR 2016). Settlement services can be structured to serve men and women to best suit their cultural and personal circumstances, which is discussed below.
The Imperative of Settlement Services

Stewart et. al (2008) suggest that inadequate social support can induce social isolation, depression, and difficulty seeking employment for newcomers, whereas adequate social support through settlement services positively impacts newcomers, through enhancing integration and network building, reducing stress and despair, and improving physical and mental health. GARs have the highest overall uptake of settlement services among newcomers (Hyndman 2011). Further to this, Figure 3 below shows that, of those GARs taking up services, information and orientation services and needs assessments and referrals are most utilized, and employment related services the least. This graph arguably conveys the need for measures and services beyond only employment, as it makes a statement regarding refugees' primary needs.1 Another example of the need for services in the Lower Mainland that are not singularly employment-specific, is the recent ‘Hope To Work’ pilot program operated by MOSAIC (2017). This innovative two-week program was delivered to Syrian refugees in Arabic, and wove career planning into the program’s broader themes of encouraging optimism, self-reflection and personal development among the participants.

1 Note: Unfortunately, the settlement service uptake data disaggregated by age, gender and/or family structure were not available.
Unfortunately, the concentration and rapid arrival of Syrian refugees across Canada prompted months-long wait lists for at least some settlement services (Buchanan-Parker 2016, RSSCHR 2016), including in Surrey (ISS of BC 2016c), thereby delaying the social inclusion and integration process. In a recent survey of Syrian GARs, 76% were attending a federally funded adult English language class, however 51% of those not attending language classes have been on a waitlist (for an average of 4 months (ISS of BC 2016c, p 6)). The survey report further noted that BC has the longest waitlists for English language classes in Canada (ISS of BC 2016c, p 23). These waitlists translate into key opportunities for the settlement system to be more responsive to refugee needs.

**Policy Gaps and Opportunities**

Currently, there are significant gaps in understanding the experiences of refugees (Dooley et. al 2015, Hyndman 2011, Yu et. al, 2007). Two examples relevant to this capstone are the, “potential relationship between uptake levels of settlement services among refugees and their access to social assistance”, and the potential to
develop a pan-Canadian GAR case management system similar to that of Ontario, which successfully and comprehensively tracks the needs and services accessed for each [refugee] client (Hyndman 2011, p 32). Other examples include exploring which interventions benefit refugees with various characteristics most, and how those programs and SPOs can be strengthened (Hyndman and Hynie 2016). Research that collects information from refugee clients about their perspectives, decisions, and experiences with services to “[adapt] government and international policymaking to reflect lived reality” (Selm 2014, p 522) is a gap not only in Canada but also across other refugee-welcoming countries (UNHCR 2012c). Despite there being few systematic efforts in regional, provincial or national scope, the city of Surrey and its LIP and SPOs have made steps toward greater information collection from refugees in their community.

The Surrey LIP is unique in that it has shown leadership in conducting research on refugees. To provide examples, the Surrey LIP coordinated research in 2015 in four key projects: Immigrant Integration Research, Service Mapping Project, Refugee Settlement Priorities Research, and Labour Market Integration Research (Surrey LIP 2016). The city was also part of the Spring 2015 Our Community, Our Voices (OCOV) research project, which used an ‘Active Community Engagement Model’ and involved focus groups with 104 stakeholder participants, including refugees, SPO staff, policy leaders and others (Dooley et. al 2015). The Syrian refugee cohort in Surrey has also been unique, in that there have been some key efforts by researchers and various levels of government to collect feedback and experiential perspectives. For example, the Syrian refugee Operation to British Columbia: One Year In—A Roadmap to Integration and Citizenship (ISS of BC 2016c) focus on Surrey and the Lower Mainland, and aim to provide more detail about the needs of clients. Although these research projects have assisted in city planning and community development, instruments that provide more agile, continuous and real-time information are still lacking.

This research study aims to uncover the key challenges and strengths associated with resettling Syrians in the case study jurisdiction of Surrey, which has shown promising signs of progressively planning for and researching its diverse population. It aims to capture frontline settlement workers’ perspectives on the research questions, which are oftentimes discounted and unheard over higher-level executives or
policy makers. Finally, this research study aims to add to settlement literature by identifying the current communication channels between frontline workers and policy makers, and explore policy options that include efficiently conveying information through digital media alternatives. Ultimately, the key policy objective is to lower barriers to services in an efficient manner, in order to promote the human development of refugees consistent with social inclusion.
Chapter 3. Methodology

**Conceptual Framework: Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion frameworks informed the design, data collection and analysis of this study. Omidvar and Richmond (2005) have created a social inclusion framework for immigrants and refugees where social inclusion is defined as, “requiring the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in their new country” (Saloojee 2005, p 17). Furthermore, successful social inclusion would entail the “dismantling of barriers that lead to exclusion in [economic, social, cultural and political] domains” (Omidvar and Richmond 2005, p 155). Omidvar and Richmond’s (2005) theoretical approach to social inclusion was selected because it is multi-dimensional. It takes a holistic view of settlement including considerations of: the life cycle and generational impacts of settlement, individual and community needs, the need for activating all relevant actors and agencies, addressing discrimination, exclusion and racism, and the imperative of addressing these challenges with evidence-based policy formulation.

The four areas of participation that Omidvar and Richmond outline also correlate with the CCRs’ four “possible indicators of settlement and integration” (CCR 1998, p 11), which also inform the conceptual direction of this study. Their indicators include short-term (settlement) indicators such as financial independence, established social networks, and voting, and long-term (integration) indicators such as income parity and participation in political parties (CCR 1998, p 11). These indicators have been selected to inform this study because they recognize the importance of both short- and long-term integration challenges for refugees.

**Acknowledging Power Dynamics and Complexities**

To complement the social inclusion framework, I approached this study in a self-reflexive manner, recognizing the various power dynamics between the researcher and
the participants, including with individuals who hold power (to change policy, and those who have access to refugees (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 2007, Eastmond 2007, Bakewell 2008, Marlowe 2010, Briggs 2003, p 246, in Sigona 2014, p 397). Sigona (2014) also asserts how Western humanitarian organizations frequently utilize a vocabulary of trauma, vulnerability and victimhood to describe refugees who have survived conflict and persecution (Malkki 1995 in Sigona 2014, p 372). This study aims instead to recognize the complexity and non-homogeneity of the Syrian refugee cohort and that, “there are a thousand multifarious refugee experiences and a thousand refugee figures whose meanings and identities are negotiated in the process of displacement in time and place,” (Soguk 1999, p 4 in Sigona 2014, p 370). For this reason, a strengths-based lens was taken, recognizing the inherent resilience and strength that each individual holds (Saleeby 2009) amidst the challenging reality of forging a new life in a new country.

Research Framing Discussions

Prior to the formal interviews that took place, a number of informal discussions occurred, in order to help frame the study to address the policy problem and establish research partnerships of this study, as per Article 10.1 of TCPS2. Discussions took place with individuals working at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, as well as those working in the settlement sector.

Key Informant Interviews

This study was qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews ranging from thirty to sixty minutes in length were conducted with ten key informants working in the fields of refugee and immigrant settlement (8), Surrey municipal governance (1), and dialogue and communications (1) (please see Appendix A for Interview Question Themes). Key informants from the settlement sector held positions across a broad range of functions, from frontline to higher management sector employees.

Ethics approval was granted prior to interview recruitment and data collection. The inclusion criteria for key informants were as follows: participants had to be professionals who work in immigration and settlement policy, SPOs, refugee/immigrant advocacy or public engagement, and work in Canada. Prospective interview participants were recruited via email with an informational sheet (please see Appendix B), and each
signed a consent form prior to the interview (please see Appendix C). Interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to clarify direct quotes before this study became publicly available, and they had the option of being identified by name or remain anonymous in the study.

**Data Analysis for Stakeholder Interviews and Transcribed Data**

The data was analyzed using a qualitative data analysis framework created by Jane and Liz (2011). This framework was selected as it is designed specifically for applied policy research. This process involved reading and becoming familiar with the transcription material, identifying themes, indexing each transcript by theme, charting the results and mapping and interpreting the outcomes of the research (Jane and Liz 2011, p 7).

**Research Limitations**

The small sample size of the key informants of this study is a limitation, as they are not fully representative of the population of SPOs and policymakers in Surrey, BC. Additionally, of the key informants were women, which was non-intentional but likely due to the fact that the majority of settlement sector workers in Canada are women (Jayaraman and Bauder 2013). Nevertheless, the results of the interviews reveal an important cross-section of insights into this policy area, and contribute particularly novel information on the case study of Surrey. This study also does not seek to critique or analyse policy decisions made surrounding the number, refugee stream or speed at which refugees have been or will be accepted to Canada, as these are largely politically-driven decisions.
Chapter 4. Results

Overview

This study began in August 2016. During this research, important reports and research studies were produced that directly pertain to this study’s research questions, many of which illustrate synergistic findings with this study’s results. These included the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (published in December 2016) that investigated the pan-Canadian response to Syrians, ISS of BC’s telephone survey of Syrian refugees in the Lower Mainland of BC published in December 2016, the IRCC-funded report entitled External Partners Lessons Learned Exercise on Syrian Refugee Resettlement in Canada (Buchanan-Parker 2016), and Syrian Refugee Operation to British Columbia: One Year In—A Roadmap to Integration and Citizenship, also published in December 2016. The confluences of these and other recent publications, particularly relating to funding issues and the competitive settlement sector environment, are referenced in the sections below. Although there is growing recognition and consensus on key issues that need to be addressed regarding services for Syrian refugees, there are unique contributions that this study offers.

First, the foci of this study are novel. This study is among the first to investigate the impact that the Syrian refugee cohort had on the BC settlement sector, which represents a watershed event in Canadian refugee history and resulted in collaboration between SPOs, which is currently largely undocumented. Second, this study’s interview questions differ from other research projects’, in that they probe beyond particular service gaps and attempt to investigate the functioning of the entire multi-jurisdictional response to refugees, with a particular focus on capturing experiences from SPO frontline staff. In addition, the granular details of modes of communication between refugees, settlement workers, and government representatives are explored in the interviews. This is done with a focus on digital communications, to explore how frontline needs are translated upward to policy and operational planning decisions. Next, this
research adds to existing literature by focusing specifically on the arrival of refugees in the case study municipality of Surrey, which is a jurisdiction with a history of innovative approaches to welcoming diverse populations. Other research tends to focus on immigrant populations in Canada’s largest cities such as Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. Finally, this study captures the on-the-ground experiences of the post-2014 repatriation of the immigration coordinating function, back to the federal government from the province of BC, which several other studies predate. The unique findings from this study’s approach, as well as its contributions to the existing literature are elaborated on below in the analysis.

The major themes from the interviews included: communication and knowledge transfer among refugees, settlement workers and policy makers, settlement sector funding challenges, the Syrian arrival prompting collaboration in the BC settlement sector, and Syrians having placed refugee affairs in the spotlight. Other themes that emerged from interviews included the non-homogeneity and resilience of refugees in general, and the trauma that many Syrians have experienced, however, these are not discussed because they are not directly linked to this study’s scope and core research questions. Many interviewees spoke about key issues or opportunities of the settlement sector regarding the Syrian cohort, but also provided policy intervention ideas for the broader context of refugee settlement in BC. These insights helped inform the possibility of applying some of these recommendations to other refugee groups in other jurisdictions in Canada.

**Communication is Strong Between Refugees and Settlement Workers, yet Opportunities Exist for Better Knowledge Exchange Between Settlement Workers and Policy Makers**

The communication channels between refugees, settlement workers, and government representatives were explored in the interviews, a topic often overlooked in refugee integration literature. Key informants noted that Syrian refugees are quite well-connected to one another across Canada, and particularly through their use of digital and mobile modes of communication. As Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director, Settlement at ISS of BC explained, “What it’s meant for us on the ground, is you’re not providing services in the context of BC or Vancouver, you’re doing it in the context of Canada and
sometimes globally…. [the Syrians will say] “my friend, my brother, my sister, my cousin, in Halifax, St. Johns, Toronto, Montreal they received this, this is what their housing looked like.” Despite the fact that cross-Canadian comparisons of services may pose a burden to individual SPOs, perhaps the use of mobile apps also represents an opportunity to connect Syrians with online information about services, or methods for providing real-time digital feedback on services they receive. For example, Najah Hage, Manager of MOSAIC Employment Programs, noted Syrians’ use of group chats on the mobile app WhatsApp, allowing organizations like MOSAIC to connect with the Syrian community through that platform.

All of the settlement sector workers interviewed emphasized how their organizations’ services were client-driven, and involved frequent check-ins, settlement plans and needs assessments with clients. Jennifer York, Senior Manager, Settlement Services at ISS of BC said, “We don’t dictate to clients what they need. It’s what the clients feel that they need, because then they feel that they’re being served, and from there they’re making that connection and engaging with us.” Several key informants who work directly with Syrians explained that word of mouth, telephone and in-person communications, as well as communicating in the clients’ own language, are critical when initially connecting with new clients, and conveyed the importance of building trust and rapport. According to Najah Hage, Manager of MOSAIC Employment Programs:

“[Refugee clients] have to trust individuals (Employment Counsellors/ Facilitators and other programs’ staff) they’re working with before they’re able to respond positively to the support/services clients are being offered. It’s really about building a rapport with this group of clients. The one to one relationship they build with our staff has proven to be the most effective method to engage these clients in services they can and are benefiting from… that method has demonstrated to be way more successful than reaching them by marketing activities, such as advertising, or general flyers about services. They come from a society where it’s hard to trust the government, it’s hard to trust their society, so it’s extremely important for refugees to be able to build that trust before accepting support from service providers.

Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director, Settlement at ISS of BC provided another concrete example of the trust and religious/cultural considerations clients need to feel comfortable. She explained: “In the Arabic Syrian girls’ group, one of the outcomes is, not only did we see an increase in young women coming in for service, but by structuring
it in a space that we can close the door, that you can’t see in. They have a space they can learn, they can laugh, they can reduce social isolation, and in some cases what we’re seeing is some of the youth will come in and the door gets shut and the hijab comes off.” In a related point, Shauna Sylvester, Director of Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue, noted that cultural considerations are key for engaging populations, including for example an understanding of a population’s notion of authority, and their community discourse habits. Furthermore, many key informants conveyed the importance of viewing each individual client as having unique opportunities and strengths. For instance, Olga Shcherbyna, Social Planner at the city of Surrey explained, “It’s unfair and inaccurate, I believe, to speak about refugee groups as a homogenous group, because, as other immigrant groups, they’re so different.” These new insights on the population are important considerations to inform the evaluation of policy options in this study, which aim to efficiently gather client needs and convey them upwards to higher levels of government.

Key informants described their communication channels to government as primarily through formal reporting, speaking with federal representatives, utilizing an electronic system called “ICARE” to report each service provided, through disseminating research, and sending reports to MLAs, MPs and Mayors. Regarding ICARE, Laura Mannix, Manager of Refugees and Specialized Programs at DIVERSeCity argued that, “[ICARE] does not reflect at all the amount of work and the nature of the activities that we do.” This is because there are pre-generated options that at times cannot capture delicate or complex issues; Ms. Mannix provided the example of assisting clients with thoughts of suicide. Another key informant noted that ICARE data was not accessible to SPOs themselves but only to government—this presents another administrative burden. Key informants that were below the managerial level did not report having any direct communication lines to government, which is interesting because they are intermediaries with perhaps the richest information on refugee clients. Therefore, these findings suggest there are certainly opportunities for enhanced communication to increase government responsiveness to refugees’ needs, if the broader set of funding and collaboration challenges discussed below, are addressed.
The BC Settlement Sector Faces Major Funding Challenges

The most common thematic challenge from the interviews is that the structure of government funding presents a multiplicity of challenges to SPOs. This was particularly true for those in managerial or executive positions within SPOs, which are non-profit organizations that rely on such funding to operate. The specific aspects of the funding challenges are the timing of funding disbursement, the allocation and inadequacy of funds, and competition for funding in the settlement sector.

The timing of funding disbursements from the federal government to organizations was cited as a key challenge, both before and during the Syrian cohort’s arrival. Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director, Settlement at ISS of BC noted that, “Not only did [funding] come late, it came piecemeal, but it really is inadequate to meet the needs of the many people who were coming.” To provide a concrete example, several key informants pointed out that Surrey had received nearly half of the Syrian refugees, yet the funding disbursements did not reflect those numbers. Only $135,000 of the $500K provided to Refugee Readiness Teams across BC from the provincial government was given to Surrey. Tamam Hasan, Arabic Settlement Counsellor at Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) in Surrey, explained how a lack of funding translates into settlement workers often getting asked to go above and beyond their roles, for example to accompany Syrian clients to health appointments for translation purposes. The funding limitations associated with the Syrian arrival greatly contributed to the widespread waitlists for refugee clients across BC.

Tahzeem Kassam, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of DIVERSEcity shared that the province of BC used to operate a centralized waitlist, which was accessible to SPOs, but that this unfortunately is no longer the case with the federal government, save for individual organizations keeping track independently. To reinstate the crucial point made above in the Background chapter, an ISS of BC report noted that BC has the highest waitlist in the country for LINC classes, with 5,000 permanent residents on the waitlist, the majority of whom live in Surrey (ISS of BC, 2016b). These findings align with part of the recommendations from the “Finding Refuge in Canada: A Syrian Resettlement Story” report, which was quite clear in stating that, “the Government of Canada [should] provide
sufficient funding to meet the needs of the number of refugees arriving.” (RSSCHR 2016, p 44) with a particular emphasis on English language classes.

The piecemeal and syncopated disbursement of the Syrian funding is symptomatic of larger funding challenges in the province. In the OCOV report, it was reported that before the 2014 repatriation, when funding distribution fell under the province of BC, SPOs were reportedly given contracts up to 5 years in length (Dooley et. al 2015), whereas with the federal government it is now every year according to key informants, with many in the sector advocating for every three years. The diminished funding period negatively affects planning and staffing decisions, as well as restricts the incentives for collaboration. Tahzeem Kassam, COO of DIVERSEcity explained that, “the [BC] provincial government’s contracting model makes it more possible to have multiple agencies working together within one contract.” On a related point, Laura Mannix, Manager of Refugee and Specialized Programs at DIVERSEcity noted, “An administrative burden occurs every time we receive more money—we have to go through changes to contracts, budgets, recruitment, hiring…all for three months.” This study’s results confirm that underlying funding shortages regarding the settlement sector previously noted and found in the literature (e.g. Shields et. al 2016, Meinhard 2012, Sidhu and Taylor 2009, Richmond and Shields 2005) were merely exacerbated with the arrival of Syrian refugees in Surrey.

More broadly, settlement sector executives interviewed noted that IRCC’s funding formula and negotiations for the current year are based on the previous fiscal year’s permanent landing numbers, meaning that funding calculations are often a year and a half behind, and thus at times inadequate. Even before the Syrian arrival, since the change in 2002 legislation which saw Canada taking on GARs with increasingly high barriers and needs (Dooley et. al, 2015), funding for refugee programs through transfer payments from the federal government to the province of BC (pre-repatriation) remained unchanged between 1996-2013 (McGrath & McGrath, 2013). In addition, a former Director General of CIC called for modernization of the funding model, and wrote, “Many settlement service providers have been in business since the arrival of the Indochinese refugees 35 years ago. Many continuously deliver the same services, yet they receive their funding as if it were for a time-limited, one-off project. As a result, service providers
often don’t know if CIC funding will be forthcoming until April 1, and are forced to issue layoff notices to staff at Christmas time;” (Vineberg 2014). Jennifer York, Senior Manager, Settlement Services at ISS of BC suggested that, in the future, it would be beneficial to have longer-term planning horizons for funding beyond the current timelines, which can range from 3 months to 2 years of funding disbursement, as part of organizational planning and the government funding model. It is important to note that, despite funding challenges, many key informants expressed that SPOs were creative and dedicated in their approaches to meeting their Syrian clients’ needs.

Another challenge reported frequently by settlement workers was the competitive nature or “rivalry” for government funding among SPOs in BC, which was linked to lower collaboration between organizations. This finding is similar with the results from the OCOV research project conducted in 2015 in Surrey, wherein focus groups reported that the competitive structure of the funding cycle for SPOs in BC was a barrier to integration and coordination (Dooley et. al, 2015). Laura Mannix, Manager of Refugee and Specialized Programs at DIVERSEcity, noted, “The funding nature is what destroys any sense of true collaboration. At the end of the day...you’ve got targets to hit, clients to process, to meet the outcomes of the funder to get more money.” Although many settlement workers reported being open to referring clients to other SPOs if there was a client need that could not be met within their own organization, many drew attention to the fact that the competitive funding structure presents an inherent disincentive to collaboration. Marina Gherman, Project Coordinator in Employment and Language Services at MOSAIC noted, “I would say all organizations are doing their best to communicate to each other, but we are all human so there is always going to be a little bit of “this is my client, this is your client.” The literature supports the fact that disincentives to collaborating affect longer-term partnerships and organizations’ capacities to best serve clients (Cullen 2009, Shields et. al 2016). This trend calls into question whether or not the funding structure is best serving the needs of refugees, which is its key objective.

It is interesting to note that, Tahzeem Kassam, COO of DIVERSEcity shared that without a community-wide resourcing planning and perspective, SPOs are forced to act mainly as individual agents. Efforts to incentivize collaboration might help to avoid this
trend and allow for more effective responses to broader community needs. This theme aligns with many of the findings from the *Finding Refuge in Canada: A Syrian Resettlement Story* report, which recommends increasing coordination between SPOs, civil society organizations, and governments of all levels (RSSCHR, 2016). Although the typically competitive nature of settlement funding presents barriers to collaboration, many key informants noted that the large scale and swift arrival of Syrian refugees in BC in fact necessitated a burst of inter-organizational collaboration in the Lower Mainland settlement sector, and specifically in Surrey.

**The Syrian Arrival Prompted Collaboration in the BC Settlement Sector**

The arrival of Syrian refugees increased instances of collaboration between SPOs as they all dealt with a ‘crisis management’ situation, which represents an anomalous circumstance as compared to the competitive status quo in the sector, and may fade as the Syrian “crisis” lessens. Many key informants were surprised and impressed with IRCC’s rapid processing of Syrian refugees, and they appreciated the Canadian government keeping its commitment to bring Syrians to Canada. However, due to the short timeline for planning, the post-arrival response and the unusually high volume of individuals arriving, SPO staff reported an “all hands-on deck” mentality.

Many key informants also spoke of the creative and integrated approaches taken by SPOs to operate the initial welcoming and ensure refugees’ basic needs were met. In Surrey, the Fraser Valley RRT and the Surrey LIP were two coordinating functions that assisted the orchestrated response to refugees, along with several informal working groups. Olga Shcherbyna, Social Planner at the City of Surrey and Surrey LIP Coordinator, said that the BC Government’s $1 Million Dollar fund for RRTs which also funded the refugee information hub that is run by ISS of BC was of great help to the community. This funding has since prompted the surveying of settlement workers and refugees, and according to Shcherbyna, “a new body of knowledge is being created”, which focuses on the localized refugee settlement process and experiences that are unique to Surrey. DIVERSEcity coordinates the Fraser Valley RRT, and Tahzeem Kassam, COO of DIVERSEcity also noted positive impacts of the RRT funding, including the creation of online tools listing refugee services, coordination between SPOs, and other capacity building workshops.
However, when this funding ends in March 2017, there may be a lapse back into a lack of coordinating structures across organizations, prompting the need for extension of some of the best practices from the Syrian experience. Tahzeem Kassam, COO of DIVERSEcity explained that DIVERSEcity was working with the Fraser Valley RRT to explore options such as meeting annually, DIVERSEcity continuing to manage the online tools, and the potential for expanding Surrey LIP’s role. Despite the increased collaboration that occurred between SPOs, few formalized coordinating structures have emerged that would sustain the collaborative momentum within the sector. Thus, it should not be assumed that meaningful collaboration will continue and consequently, new long-term strategies must be pursued.

**The Syrians Have Placed Refugee Affairs in the Spotlight**

Many respondents spoke of how the Syrian arrival has motivated several conversations and placed a spotlight on the settlement sector, and refugees who settle in BC more generally. Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director, Settlement at ISS of BC spoke of the fact that the large-scale arrival of Syrians prompted more inter-ministerial discussion, and more ongoing communications with IRCC, which she hopes to see continue. Tahzeem Kassam, COO of DIVERSEcity added that the Syrian initiative has opened conversations with government about refugees in general with the community, health authority, school districts, businesses, the private sector, and among SPOs and with the federal government. In fact, the Syrians received so much attention that it created a sense of inequality among other refugee groups: Laura Mannix, Manager of Refugee and Specialized Programs at DIVERSEcity said, “Syrian refugees have been referred to now as “celebrity refugees” by our other clients”. In general, key informants noted that increased attention in general has been directed towards the broader barriers to integration that many refugees face, such as housing affordability, language class waitlists, and others. These results suggest that the Syrian arrival may have created a policy window in which larger changes to refugee integration and settlement policy can occur.

**Conclusion**

Initially, this study was primarily concerned with exploring options to gather and respond to Syrian refugee perspectives and needs in Surrey. In the case of SPOs, the
LIP and researchers in Surrey, BC it was found that this is essentially already being done quite effectively for the Syrians in the short-term. However, the continual improvement of these promising practices needs to be actively pursued. As well, the difficulties from the funding structure that each SPO faces individually stand as barriers to optimal service delivery and thus enhanced responsiveness to Syrians’ and other refugees’ needs, and are magnified at a community-level in Surrey wherein organizations in effect compete for clients and settlement dollars. The Syrian cohort’s arrival appears to have exacerbated pre-existing funding issues in the sector, and these tensions forced SPOs to cooperate and coordinate their approaches, which should be extended where possible. In addition, the general ability for the rapid response by government to meet refugee needs stands to be improved by actively engaging with municipal partners, executives and frontline workers of SPOs, and perhaps modernizing some of the current electronic systems that delay rapid updates for frontline staff, such as waitlist information across SPOs. Overall, the Syrian arrival has captured political and media attention, and has created a policy window for change in the settlement sector in Surrey, BC and potentially in other communities across Canada.
Chapter 5. Policy Options

The following six policy options are non-mutually exclusive and are intended to build and extend best practices found in Surrey and other jurisdictions, as well as address ongoing barriers and limitations.

**Option 1: Extend and Combine Funding Period for SPOs**

Extending core funding from one to two years to three to five years would allow for heightened year-to-year security for SPOs, enabling them to make longer-term human resource decisions, for example. This option also has the potential for permitting enhanced inter-organizational cooperation, which could be incentivized during the contract negotiations by awarding multiple organizations joint funding, thereby diffusing the currently competitive environment. This option would address issues that the interview key informants and studies have identified regarding the funding strain and barriers to cooperation between SPOs in BC (De Luca 2016, Dooley et. al 2015, Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2011, Shields and Richmond 2005).

**Option 2: Increase Surrey LIP Funding**

This option would increase and extend Surrey LIP funding, in order to sustain refugee strategic planning and research endeavours. This option recognizes the enhanced role that some municipalities in Canada such as Surrey now play vis-à-vis refugee settlement (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2011). It would equip the Surrey LIP with enhanced capacity to support more refugee-specific engagement, research and refugee settlement strategic planning. Municipalities have a comparative strength in settlement because they can “find innovative ways to assist newcomers in ways that suit their regional and local infrastructure and available resources” (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2011, p 4). LIPs have expanded to 66 communities across Canada since the first pilots in Ontario in 2008 (IRCC 2016b). Surrey is the only LIP to have created a refugee strategy for its community alongside an immigrant strategy, and
it has also engaged in multiple research projects, as aforementioned. This policy option would thus provide funding for expanding the Surrey LIP’s activities, such as utilizing similar research models longitudinally.

**Option 3: Centralize Service Offerings Online in BC, and Include Updated Waitlists and Ranking Mechanisms for Clients**

This option would centralize the settlement and other service offerings in one website online, and include ranking mechanisms for clients to rate the services. This form of digital engagement would solicit feedback from refugees on the services they receive, and employ human-centred design methodology. This refers to when planning and service delivery improvement is designed with clients or ‘end-users’ themselves, as opposed to merely for clients (Longo 2014). Such an approach is also known as a “participatory mode of governance” (Shan 2015). Applying human design methodologies to improving service delivery is a practice gaining momentum and prominence in the realm of governance in Canada, such as in the Government of Canada Information Technology Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (Government of Canada 2015). One digital engagement example related to the Syrian refugee crisis is an application called Services Advisor, which was built by a Vancouver-based company called PeaceGeeks and provides a complete and updated directory of humanitarian services being offered to refugees (Sheppard 2016). The app was launched with the UNHCR for Syrian refugees who arrive in Jordan, but plans to expand and be translated into several other languages. Another example is the Red Cross Refugee Buddy, which provides relevant information to refugees and asylum seekers in The Netherlands and Canada.

In addition, using the federal government’s electronic database of service provision called ICARE populated by frontline settlement workers, waitlists across various SPOs and their own organizations’ data could be made available for frontline workers, which currently are not. This would help with referring clients to organizations with no or lower waitlists. This option could be financed by grants that municipalities such as Surrey could apply for, such as the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2015).
**Option 4: Implement Case Management for GARs (Ontario CSS Model)**

The case management Client Support Solutions (CSS) for GARs is a program that is used in Ontario in organizations where the RAP program is being provided (YMCA of Greater Toronto 2017). The CSS is centrally coordinated by the YMCA in Toronto, runs for one year in length per GAR and includes province-wide coordination, case management services (client centered assessment, planning and support to all GAR family members) and community capacity building, which includes strengthening the receiving community’s capacity to provide appropriate supports (CIC, Ontario Region 2009). The case management approach was selected to veer away from the standardization of RAP contributions, and instead create client-based support in recognition of the complex needs of GARs and their families. This option would include developing a plan with clients based on goals, service, delivery for accompanying clients to appointments and other events, supports for daily living, linking and coordinating with other supports in the community, providing supportive counselling, and building strong relationships with a consistent worker over time (CIC, Ontario Region 2009).

**Option 5: Implement an Expanded National Outcomes Survey Tailored to Refugees**

In 2013 a National Settlement Outcomes Survey was conducted involving 20,818 randomly selected newcomers across Canada (Kumar et. al, 2013). It contained 58 questions and was translated into 12 languages. This was created after FPT Ministers requested that the Settlement Working Group develop the first ever pan-Canadian framework for settlement outcomes, in order to establish measurement on settlement that was nationally cohesive. The 2013 survey would serve as a pilot version of an expanded model, perhaps similar to one that the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship disseminated (Australian Survey Research Group 2011), adding several components of data collection. Some of the new features could include dis-aggregated data that would capture newcomers who have received settlement services versus those who have not, the immigrant admission class (in order to determine differences between GARs and PSRs, for example), and asking expanded questions surrounding specific settlement services received (this would include naming the SPOs).
Option 6: Specialize Service Offerings among SPOs and Extend RRTs

This option would entail pooling specific services into specialized SPOs to reduce the duplication of services offered that currently exists across organizations in the same community. In addition, five RRTs across the province were supported by a $500,000 investment from the Government of BC Columbia as of late 2015, with the goal of identifying and prioritizing short-term community needs and providing a coordinated approach to helping refugees. These teams could be expanded and provided with additional funding. This would ensure that community coordination for mid- to long-term integration is secure for Syrians and other refugees. Alternatively, perhaps this could take place in the form of councils, to continue inter-organizational cooperation that is primarily refugee-focused.
Chapter 6. Evaluative Criteria

Overview

This chapter provides an objectives, criteria and measures matrix, which frames the analysis of the policy options and informs the recommendation of this study. The evidence derived in the background research, primary and secondary data collection informed the crafting of relevant objectives, related criteria and measures. Table 1 provides specific objectives and the corresponding criteria and measures to illustrate how each policy option might change the status quo of the settlement system’s responsiveness to refugee perspectives.
**Table 1: Objectives, Criteria and Measures Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Measure Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Societal Objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human development/Equity</strong></td>
<td>Does the option promote human development among Syrian refugees by supporting social inclusion (economic, social, political and cultural participation in Canadian society)?</td>
<td>The extent to which it lowers barriers for refugees to access resources associated with economic, social, political and cultural participation in Canadian society. This includes short- and long-term impacts per option. 3= Very effective at lowering barriers 2= Effective at lowering barriers 1= Somewhat effective at lowering barriers 0= Not at all effective at lowering barriers/Not applicable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency</strong></td>
<td>How quickly and thoroughly will the option allow refugee perspectives to be passed upward to settlement and integration organizations and various levels of government?</td>
<td>Speed at which refugee perspectives can travel upward to settlement and integration organizations and various levels of government. 3= High Speed 2= Medium Speed 1= Low Speed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>How effectively does the option enhance the settlement system’s responsiveness to refugees’ needs?</td>
<td>Relative change in the responsiveness of the settlement system, based on new information about refugees’ needs being gathered. 3= Large Change 2= Medium Change 1= Low Change</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How effectively does the option incentivize or directly operationalize inter-settlement organizational cooperation?  

Relative increase in potential for inter-organizational cooperation.  

3=High increase in cooperation  
2=Medium increase in cooperation  
1=Low increase in cooperation  
0=No change in cooperation  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governmental Objectives</th>
<th>Stakeholder Acceptance</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Would refugees accept this option?</td>
<td>The relative level of acceptability from Syrian refugees' perspectives and preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Would settlement service employees and executives accept this option?</td>
<td>The relative level of acceptability from settlement service employees' and executives' perspectives and preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>What is the additional cost required or saved as a result of the policy option?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Estimated Amount in Canadian Dollars Per Year ($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3= $0-$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2= $500,001-$1.5M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1= $2M+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Complexity</td>
<td>How relatively complex is the option to implement for government?</td>
<td>Estimated implementation complexity for government associated with introducing the option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3= Low implementation complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2= Medium implementation complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1= High implementation complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Human Development and Equity**

   This criterion seeks to assess the extent to which options promote human development among Syrian refugees by supporting social inclusion. Specifically, the measure for this criterion is the extent to which barriers to accessing settlement services are lowered in order to advance these human development goals. As described earlier, social inclusion involves promoting the economic, social, political and cultural participation in Canadian society and reducing racism, discrimination and exclusion. This criterion addresses the key policy problem in this study, which is that too many refugees in Surrey, BC have experienced waitlists for settlement services, thereby delaying their basic needs from being met and slowing the process of social inclusion. It is therefore the first of two key objectives.

2. **Efficiency**

   This criterion seeks to measure the speed at which refugee perspectives and needs will be passed upward to SPOs and various levels of government with each option. This criterion addresses the key policy problem as mentioned in the above criteria, and it is therefore the second of two key objectives.

3. **Effectiveness**

   The (I) effectiveness criterion seeks to measure whether or not policy options effectively address making the settlement system more responsive to refugee needs. This connects with some of this study’s main research questions, namely: How can the settlement sector be strengthened to more quickly respond to refugee needs? How are local needs in Surrey communicated upwards to policy makers, and what efficiency improvements (particularly using digital media and online information) could be made in this regard?

   Effectiveness in this context is measured by the balance of quantity and quality in terms of refugee perspectives conveyed, per option. Quality is important to consider, since the literature shows that there are disincentive effects for refugees to report their candid perspectives, for example due to fear or past traumatic experiences with their homeland governments (Yu, Ouellet and Warmington 2007 and Temple and Moran
Quantity alone would likely not ensure quality and ultimate usefulness of what was collected, although increasing current levels of research and feedback are needed to address the informational gap that exist. The second (II) criterion under effectiveness relates to inter-organizational coordination, as responding to refugee needs requires a community of supports and services that are most successful when working in concert.

4. **Stakeholder Acceptance**

Stakeholder acceptance criteria include (i) refugees' and (ii) SPO employees' opinions on the acceptability of each policy option, as their opinions would likely be crucial to successfully engaging perspectives about the opportunities and challenges of settlement and integration.

5. **Cost**

This criterion seeks to assess the estimated additional budgetary cost per option in Canadian dollars, which includes human resource and other costs. Estimations are based on analogous programs or policies.

6. **Implementation Complexity**

This criterion aims to assess the relative implementation complexity associated with each option for various levels of government.

**Note on Criterion Weighting**

Human Development and Equity and Efficiency have been doubly weighted, as these most directly address the key objective of increasing the responsiveness of the settlement system, primarily through lowering barriers to accessing services and efficiently conveying information from frontline staff to policy makers. Political acceptance/Implementation Complexity has been weighted half, as it represents an important consideration, yet should not heavily impact the recommendation.
Chapter 7. Policy Analysis

Overview

This evaluation is based on the results of the research and the subsequent policy evaluation. The matrices below (Table 2 and Table 3) summarize the key strengths and weaknesses of each policy option in relation to the criteria outlined above. A written analysis for each option follows. The four strongest options as per the analysis are options 3, 1, 4, and 2, as shown in the far-right column of Table 3.

Table 2: Policy Option Analysis Ranking Summary Matrix (Societal Criteria and Measures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Criteria and Measure Matrix</th>
<th>Criteria: Human Development and Equity</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Effectiveness (I)</th>
<th>Effectiveness (II)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighting:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 1: Extend and Combine Funding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2: Increase LIP Funding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3: Centralize Online Services with Waitlists, and Rankings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 4: GAR Case Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 5: National Settlement Outcomes Survey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 6: Specialize Service Provision and Extend Refugee Readiness Teams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria:</th>
<th>Stakeholder Acceptance (I)</th>
<th>Stakeholder Acceptance (II)</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Implementation Complexity</th>
<th>Total Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighting:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 1: Extend and Combine Funding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2: Increase LIP Funding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 3: Centralize Online Services with Waitlists, and Rankings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 4: GAR Case Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 5: National Settlement Outcomes Survey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 6: Specialize Service Provision and Extend Refugee Readiness Teams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy Analysis for Option 1: Extend and Combine Funding Period for SPOs

The key strength of this option is that it would directly address the major funding challenges that were highlighted in the interviews. Offering combined funding opportunities may lessen the current disincentives to collaborating among SPOs, which may in turn increase the sharing/referral of refugee clients. Lengthening the funding cycle for SPOs’ core funding would also allow for better human resource recruitment, hiring and training, which was a key drawback of the current system as the Results chapter attests, while not necessarily requiring an increase in funding. As Tahzeem noted, the province of BC previously approached SPOs as “a community of contractors, as a collective”, instead of as individual agencies; this option would return to such an
approach. Overall, providing longer core funding periods would better balance the trade-off between quality of services and efficiency; currently, SPOs are highly focused on ‘covering their bases’ such that it arguably undermines optimal service delivery.

This option does not necessarily increase the speed at which client needs translate to funding dollars from the government, and in fact it may delay required funding “top-ups” as a cycle that is under-funded may continue for longer. However, this could be mitigated by providing core funding for more than 1-2 years, and building in flexible funding top-ups frequently with shorter timelines. Another key drawback is that shared contracts may make it more complex for government to account for which client outcomes should be attributed to each organization. However, to mitigate this shortcoming, ICARE could potentially be utilized to track both referrals from other organizations as well as services provided.

Policy Analysis for Option 2: Increase Surrey LIP Funding

LIPs have been found to successfully enhance local engagement and coordination of services among service providers and other stakeholders related to newcomer integration, support knowledge-sharing and local strategic planning (CIC 2014), as per the LIPs’ mission. They have also increased accessibility to services for newcomers (CIC 2014), thereby aligning with the key objectives of this research study. When surveyed, 86% of LIP respondents reported that services are better coordinated in their communities as a result of the LIP, and 62% of LIPs reported improvements in cultural competence among mainstream service providers (IRCC 2016b). However, the apparent “downloading” or “rescaling” (Good, 2009) of settlement and integration responsibilities to the municipal level in Surrey was also said to not be sustainable by some key informants in this study, and this option would allow for the Surrey LIP’s work to be recognized and compensated.

This option would likely have high acceptability from both refugees and SPO stakeholders, as engagement techniques used by the Surrey LIP were developed to be inclusive to refugees of different literacy and language-speaking abilities, and ultimately gives a voice to individuals who may not otherwise get an opportunity to provide direct input.
This option is also perhaps the strongest in collecting in-depth, qualitative information from refugees themselves. Furthermore, it does so in a forum that provides the opportunity for individuals to bring up key questions or areas of concern, which is something light-touch options such as surveys or service ratings cannot achieve. The UNHCR identifies that, “Refugee participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of integration programmes helps to identify and address challenges” (UNHCR 2013 p 26). This option would help to encourage refugee participation in local integration planning. One key consideration is that, although the Surrey LIP research reports included detailed recommendations for SPOs and various levels of government (e.g. Dooley et. al 2015, p 71), they do not provide real-time updates to government officials. For this reason, research projects focusing on refugee needs are more helpful for longer-term city planning than for enhancing the short-term responsiveness of service provision.

Policy Analysis for Option 3: Centralize Service Offerings in BC Online, and Include Updated Waitlists and Ranking Mechanisms for Clients

The ranking of services by clients would provide anonymous and newly gathered information across organizations and regions within the province of BC directly from refugees, among whom this option would likely have high acceptability. The centralized waitlists would also be of great help to SPO workers who wish to refer clients to other organizations, for example if their waitlists are longer than other agencies, thereby increasing inter-organizational cooperation. If online service offerings and waitlists could be combined for public use, clients could more easily navigate between service providers, which has been documented as a barrier for clients in recent reports (Dooley et. al 2015, ISS of BC 2016c). The digital aspect would also likely be preferable for refugees, barring those with literacy challenges and as long as language translation options are provided. Furthermore, this option is aligned with one of the Treasury Board Secretariat of the Federal Government’s Strategic Goals from their 2016 Plans and Priorities surrounding service, to “adopt emerging technology to improve service delivery” (Government of Canada 2016).

The cost of this option is between $500K-$1.5M, (Metro Vancouver RRT, 2017). The funding for this option could come from a program similar to that in Ontario, which
provides provincially-funded grant opportunities for municipalities to fund the creation of online recruitment and retention tools for newcomers, which is called the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program (Government of Ontario, 2015). In her interview, Olga Shcherbyna, Social Planner at the City of Surrey said of this fund, “[Ontario Municipalities] have a resource to apply to and get funding and be more involved in terms of assisting their new residents to be welcomed in their communities. I think it’s a big step, and we don’t have it in BC.” This option would therefore lessen the burden on municipalities for having to manage the listing of services online, and support them in expanding their online presence.

The key implementation complexity for introducing this option would predominantly lie in creating a public interface for viewing waitlists and ranking services, as there are pre-existing online databases of services that could be utilized (RRT websites, Surrey LIP mapped services web page, New to BC website, IRCC’s #WelcomeRefugees website, etc.). Another benefit would be decreased duplication of efforts in creating online resources, which were found to exist through Internet searches. This interface could connect to the pre-existing ICARE system that SPOs are currently using. The main risk of this option is that it could potentially tarnish some SPOs’ reputations through the online platform with negative reviews, which would likely somewhat diminish the SPOs’ stakeholder acceptance of this option.

**Policy Analysis for Option 4: Implement Case Management for GARs (Ontario CSS Model)**

The CSS Model includes a central coordinating function (in the case of Ontario, the YMCA of Greater Toronto), client-driven case management for GARs spanning one full year after arrival, and community capacity building by educating stakeholders about GARs and collaborating with community partners (CIC, Ontario Region 2009). An evaluation was done with GAR individuals who receive CSS services, uncovering positive findings such as 66% reporting that they have a regular doctor or health care provider, 75% feeling that they could speak one of the official languages, and 50% reporting feeling at home in Canada (CIC, Ontario Region 2009, p iii). Indeed, one key strength of this option is the speed at which individuals’ needs can reach a government-funded case manager and receive a direct response. In addition, this option would
address the issue that key informants in the interviews brought up surrounding settlement counsellors’ inability to accompany GAR clients to appointments and assist them beyond the scope of accessing services, which are often all within their home SPO. Case managers’ independence from particular SPOs would likely enable them to make more referrals across organizations, as the disincentives for collaboration, namely through the competitive funding structure as found throughout the interview results, would not be present. This option therefore has the potential to reduce horizontal inequality between GARs and other refugees in BC and also between BC GARs and Ontario GARs. Currently, RAP workers in BC have, “Very high client ratios”, according to some key informants interviewed.

It is important to note that when SPO workers were asked about case management at the OCOV research event, some raised concerns that privacy and confidentiality issues would make the approach “untenable” (Dooley et. al 2015, p 12). However, best practices from Ontario’s program could be harnessed to avoid any such issues, and in fact an evaluation of the CSS found that the privacy and confidentiality of GAR families was not a concern, and merely recommended that case managers take care not to make private calls in public places, such as on public transit (CIC, Ontario Region 2009, p 58). Other key trade-offs associated with this option are the cost to government and the high implementation complexity. According to an evaluation of the Client Support Services 2-year (2007-2009) pilot program in Ontario, an investment of $5.2M was required from CIC, ranging between $686 to $2571 per GAR, depending on the client to worker ratios (CIC, Ontario Region 2009, p 2), a cost which represents the key trade-off for this option. Although introducing case management would present an increased short-term investment in GARs, it may have long-term return on investment if social inclusion outcomes are improved, in terms of potentially decreased provincial income assistance and other government supports. Finally, SPOs are currently staffed to essentially fulfill a CSS case manager’s functions, albeit in a more overextended fashion, and the human resource implications of shifting this would likely be quite difficult to implement.
Policy Analysis for Option 5: Implement an Expanded National Outcomes Survey Tailored to Refugees

An expansion of the National Settlement Outcomes Survey (NSOS) would supplement the Longitudinal Immigration Database run by Statistics Canada which currently only captures economic outcomes of immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). Data collection needs to be expanded to capture all aspects of social inclusion—that is political, social, and cultural dimensions (in addition to economic measures). It is particularly important for understanding the experiences of refugee populations for whom entry to Canada does not solely revolve around economic integration. Gathering this information could provide more comprehensive insights into specific social inclusion barriers.

This option would also likely be acceptable to refugees, who could remain anonymous in the data collection process. However, key implementation complexities to consider are that, without proper supports such as translation and assistance with filling out the survey, some refugees may be excluded from participating. This option would also not provide real-time information about service delivery outcomes, and would thus be more suitable for longer-term planning surrounding refugee integration than assisting in the immediate response. In addition, it would not directly enhance inter-organizational coordination, and would likely have a limited ability to successfully remove barriers to accessing services and resources for refugee clients.

Another key weakness of an expansion of the NSOS is that there are several related surveys with similar objectives already in place. Some examples include the Alberta Settlement Outcomes Survey, the Western Settlement Outcomes Survey, which were both created to address some of the non-economic outcomes information gaps. The Western Settlement Outcomes Survey took place in 2013 with 2936 immigrant respondents in the four western provinces of Canada, however, it unfortunately did not capture any respondents from the BC refugee stream. In addition, the Settlement Client Outcomes Survey was run by IRCC in February 2016 for evaluation purposes, but in this case, only 10% of the respondents were refugees (IRCC 2016b, p 20). Despite these surveys not having captured many refugee experiences, it would appear that conducting
yet another survey may not be as effective as bolstering the pre-existing surveys and supporting them to recruit more participants.

**Policy Analysis for Option 6: Specialize Settlement Services Among Organizations, and Extend RRT Extension**

In the interviews, some frontline staff key informants suggested that centralizing specific services within SPOs might be more efficient, as opposed to each organization providing a host of services to clients. The key strengths of this aspect of the option would be the potential for eliminating services overlap, and in reducing competition for clients between organizations. An element of the latter strength is, in fact, currently already in place with specific programs such as LINC classes which are offered at particular locations across the Lower Mainland and the Moving Ahead Program which is centrally coordinated by DIVERSEcity.

However, there are several reasons that this is not a tenable option for all settlement services. First, implementing this scale of a shift would be costly for the sector. Second, secondary research and the interview results indicate that BC’s settlement sector revolves around client-centric management, with a focus on holistic settlement planning that often involves one client attending many services within the same SPO. The essential “devolution” of some SPOs would provide barriers to locating and travelling to various locations to receive services for some clients, which could be inefficient and would likely lessen SPOs’ ability to provide ‘in-house’ holistic and multi-faceted services to individuals and families. This option would also be highly inconvenient for clients who would need to use transit around the municipality to attend services, which would be difficult due to language barriers coupled with the large geographical size of Surrey, which is 2.5 times that of Vancouver. Finally, Tahzeem Kassam, COO at DIVERSEcity, noted that, “People should have a choice. If they want to go to Options to get settlement services versus DIVERSEcity, then they should have that choice.” For these reasons, the specialization of services is not a strong option.

The RRTs were put in place to coordinate pan-community responses to the Syrian arrival, and other refugees could arguably benefit from having similar bodies in place permanently. Key informants suggested that the presence of RRTs positively
assisted in responding to the Syrian cohort’s arrival, and thus settlement workers would likely accept this option. In terms of cost, the five RRTs across BC represented a cost of $500,000 over one year from the provincial government, which was quite cost effective for the role of the RRTs after the arrival of the Syrian refugees. However, there are several coordinating councils and associations currently in place that serve a similar function. These include the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSAA) and its Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee and the informal Metro Vancouver LIP working group. Although these organizations do not focus on refugees specifically, a new organizing body or council may be duplicating efforts LIPs aim to achieve, which may in turn deter IRCC’s or the province of BC’s willingness to fund this type of option and lower the effectiveness of this option.
Chapter 8. Recommendations

This chapter puts forward short- and long-term policy recommendations for Surrey’s settlement system, based on the policy analysis. Although the recommendations are specific to the case study of the City of Surrey, they are geared toward the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which holds jurisdictional authority over immigration and settlement. The implementation of these options, however, should be informed by several considerations. First, the arrival of funding to SPOs for both RAP contributions and settlement programming must precede the arrival of the refugee population it is meant to serve, which was reported by key informants to not universally be the case for the Syrian arrival. This would help to avoid a disruption of continuity of programming for clients. Second, funding must flow to organizations in communities where refugees settle, and not merely where they arrive off the plane initially. This is particularly important in the context of expensive housing and high cost of living in cities such as Vancouver, which drive out refugees to nearby cities such as Surrey. Next, SPOs have abundant expertise coupled with strategic expediency when assisting their clients; many key informants voiced consternation about the apparent lack of trust between the federal government and these organization, and this is an issue that needs to be considered with any policy changes.

**Short Term Recommendation #1: Extend and Combine Funding for SPOs**

Extending the core funding for SPOs and incentivizing collaboration between organizations by offering combined funding contracts could assist in decreasing the competitive rivalry reported by settlement workers. It would also allow for settlement sector leaders to focus on the primary goal of enhancing service delivery for refugees, as opposed to being constantly concerned about funding and operations-related planning, which was frequently noted throughout the interviews and in other research.
One approach to mitigate any risks associated with implementing longer-term funding is to perhaps align a longer length of funding contract as a function the number of years that each SPO has successfully worked with IRCC. This would reward long-term sector partners, and perhaps help to build more of a trustful partnership between the sector and the federal government. Another implementation complexity to this option is the need to strike a balance between the level of core funding allotted, in order to allow for human resource stability, operational planning, and reduced competition in the sector, as well as flexible funding, in order to add or remove funding from organizations as per client needs in an agile fashion. This complexity could be partially mitigated by having this option implemented in tandem with the following recommendation, pertaining to the advancement of real-time data from clients to government.

**Short Term Recommendation #2: Publish Online Services Listings, Waitlists, and Client Rankings**

This option represents the most promising method of conveying client needs to higher levels of government, as well as other refugee clients and SPO workers, in an efficient yet thorough and accessible manner. If simultaneously implemented with Recommendation #1, SPOs may be more willing to embrace this option, as there would likely be less competition for clients and rivalries between the agencies, leaving the focus on refugee needs and their integration. This option would have greatly improved the response to the Syrian refugee arrival in Surrey, BC if it had been implemented pre-arrival. However, it also poses the positive externality of enhancing the responsiveness of the settlement system to other large groups of refugees, and other newcomers to the city or province as well. Furthermore, this option leverages upon pre-existing digital products such as ICARE and online service listings created by the RRTs, and seeks to expand their capacities for the benefit of refugees’ process of integrating into their communities.

Beyond these immediate short-term recommendations, which largely address coordination and administration concerns with the entire settlement system, there are two long-term recommendations which specifically target the improvement of refugees’ inclusion over time, at both individual and community levels.
**Long-Term Recommendation #1: Implement Case Management for GARs in BC**

Since the 2002 IRPA legislative change, GARs have been admitted to Canada on the grounds of protection of vulnerability, as opposed to their ability to resettle (CIC, Ontario Region 2009). Consequently, the Ontario case management program was put in place to respond to the increased barriers GARs were arriving with, and BC GARs could similarly benefit from personalized case management. In the OCOV research project, refugee clients in Surrey generally expressed appreciation for the services they had received, yet many described confusion and anxiety in booking appointments and understanding what benefits they were entitled to (Dooley et. al 2015). Given that settlement counsellors in Surrey are overstretched with their clients, this option would allow GARs more time and assistance in areas such as attending medical appointments, and being connected with provincial services such as education and health. Moreover, based on the CSS pilot outcomes they could also enhance individuals’ social integration to their new communities. If GARs had a dedicated worker with more time to spend with them than current RAP workers can, perhaps the outcomes of GARs would become closer to those of PSRs, who benefit from their individual sponsors’ attention in their initial year of resettlement. This is preferable over scrapping the GAR program altogether and favour the PSR program, as GARs represent some of the most vulnerable populations in the world, many of whom many not be capable of communicating with potential sponsors in Canada while abroad.

Although this option would require a significant funding increase per GAR, it has the potential to decrease future government expenditure by quickening the social inclusion process and enabling them to be independent from government assistance, when possible. Examples include assisting refugees to gain English skills, enter the labour force, and gain new Canadian social networks, which would all work to counteract the current economic trends as shown in the Background chapter that GARs experience. To mitigate the risk of inefficient implementation, a pilot project of GAR case management could occur in Surrey, where settlement counsellors are particularly overburdened with clients. Eventually, it would need to expand across the province, so that there is not a high incentive for all GARs to settle in Surrey.
Long-Term Recommendation #2: Enhance LIP Funding for Municipality-Led Refugee Strategies and Research Endeavors

Since their inception in 2008, LIPs across Canada have been found to improve coordination of service offerings in their communities, improve information gathering and sharing, and lower barriers for immigrants and refugees attempting to access services (IRCC 2016b). Surrey’s LIP has shown leadership by developing an immigrant strategy, a refugee integration strategy and moreover, has spearheaded research efforts that focus on refugee perspective and needs. Olga Shcherbyna, Social Planner at the City of Surrey, noted that the City of Edmonton’s LIP was investigating a similar model to the OCOV report, further testifying to the success that the Surrey LIP has experienced. Therefore, perhaps as opposed to extending the RRTs (Option 6), the province of BC and the federal government should ensure that adequate and ongoing support is given to existing organizations such as LIPs and AMSAA, so that refugee-specific research and outreach can continue to occur for both Syrians and other refugees. This option would also align with recommendations from the CCR following the arrival of the 25,000 Syrians to Canada, including greater communication between government, community organizations, SPOs, and municipalities (CCR 2016, p 6).

45% of the organizations hosting the LIPs are municipalities or regional administrations (CIC 2014), and it is critical that local governments are provided with adequate resources to take on increased LIP activity. Some of the interview key informants noted that there were unpaid meetings and working groups being struck, such as with LIP coordinators in Metro Vancouver and SPO workers. This option would better compensate individuals who are accomplishing this important coordination work.

Implementation Notes

These recommendations are being put forward because they lower barriers to refugees accessing services and efficiently convey individual refugees’ needs to SPOs and to government, including needs which may widely vary across experiences and points of identity such as gender. In fact, Gender Based Analysis Plus was recommended by witnesses providing evidence for the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (2016). In alignment with this, the centralized online service listing and ranking option and the long-term recommendations, could specifically
be used to ensure that gender sensitivity to men, women and non-binary individuals is built into service provision and communicating frontline needs to government, by gathering feedback from refugees. Key informants of this study noted that their refugee clients, including women, dictate whether they wish to begin with employment services versus counselling or other services, as the process of integration and social inclusion is different for each individual. If implemented, these recommendations would allow female Syrian refugees, for example, to also convey their particular circumstances, such as needing childcare in order to attend language classes or preferring women-specific or culturally-sensitive services, which could be managed and responded to directly by case managers and captured through the online client ranking mechanisms and Surrey LIP research endeavours. Overall, these recommendations do not prescribe which services are needed for various cross-sections of the refugee cohort in a ‘top-down’ approach, but are meant to be responsive to individuals’ complex circumstances and in alignment with SPOs’ client-centered approach.

In terms of implementation beyond Surrey, communities across BC could also benefit from such refugee planning. The federal government should consider how to expand upon Surrey’s success in other BC municipalities, and standardize the type of information collected for comparative purposes. For rural jurisdictions in the province, perhaps joint research and strategy planning could occur, in order to save costs.
Chapter 9. Conclusion

This research study sought to explore the challenges and best practices associated with the settlement of Syrian refugees in Surrey, BC. This study contributes to a growing body of research regarding the Syrian refugees and their resettlement in Canada, and represents one of the first studies to focus primarily on the city of Surrey and Syrian refugee resettlement. The findings and recommendations apply to improving the responsiveness of the settlement system to future Syrian and other refugees, as well as in part to other newcomer groups.

The specific contributions of the study are as follows. First, communication gaps and funding and coordination challenges were shown to impede optimal responses to Syrian refugees. In addition, the Syrian cohort received unique treatment, including tailored research projects, federal funding for Syrian-specific settlement programming, and more donations and public support than other refugees. This should extend to other refugee groups, taking into consideration the lessons learned to date. Furthermore, Surrey was found to be a progressive and forward-thinking municipality, whose LIP’s promising practices ought to be continually funded, and explored by other municipalities in BC and elsewhere.

The short-term recommendations of extending and combining SPO funding, and centralizing online services, waitlists and client rankings, acknowledge the systemic barriers relating to funding and real-time information sharing in the sector. The long-term recommendations of GAR case management and enhanced funding and responsibility for LIPs across BC, aim to build upon promising practices for the longer processes of refugee integration and the goal of social inclusion. Notably, three of the four recommendations (excluding GAR case management) would also assist in improving the settlement system’s response to other non-refugee newcomers in Canada.
It is in the government of Canada’s and the government of British Columbia’s interests to become as adaptive and responsive to newcomers as possible, to ensure that newcomers are empowered to achieve the best outcomes across the social inclusion tenets of cultural, political, economic and social participation. A Vancity report estimates that Syrian refugees in BC have the potential to contribute an estimated minimum of $563M to the local economy (Vancity 2016), with many other dimensions of benefit for the fabric of Canadian society yet to be calculated. Capturing the successes of highly diverse and progressively planned communities such as Surrey matter greatly to the country’s ability to succeed in its mission of multiculturalism and social inclusion. Although this study did not seek to critique policy decisions surrounding the number, stream or speed at which refugees have been or will be accepted to Canada, it is important to note that the quality of refugees’ experiences may be affected by large quantities of incoming refugees such as in the case of the Syrian cohort; this also has a significant impact for on-the-ground SPO human resources that must be considered in the future.

This study’s results contribute to scholarship on creating optimal social inclusion realities for Syrians and other newcomers; it will be disseminated to the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies in BC, to all key informants for potential distribution in their respective organizations, and to the city of Surrey and the Surrey LIP for their consideration. An abbreviated version of the results will also be synthesized into an op-ed piece for a newspaper.

**Further Research Considerations**

Several important future research considerations emerged from the process of conducting this study. A fundamental part of this capstone’s original research methodology and design was the inclusion of Syrian refugees’ perspectives in the study’s primary data collection, through focus groups. Unfortunately, and despite best attempts to recruit Syrian refugee participants at DIVERSEcity, there was not enough interest to carry out the refugee focus groups; this may be because they are ‘over-researched’ at the moment. Strategies to avoid this and to optimize future research are discussed below.
There are a few essential elements to be considered in future research. First, it must be recognized that, although gaps may still exist in terms of capturing the needs and perspectives of some refugees in BC, any efforts to capture these needs in the future ought to be well-planned in terms of timing and coordination, to avoid a duplication of research efforts and overwhelming participants. This is particularly important for groups such as the Syrians, who received a flurry of media and research attention which was not completely harmonized and managed cohesively. Second, it is important to design such efforts in a manner that is accepted by refugees themselves; perhaps the design of future engagements can be planned with refugee input, as was the case with ISS of BC’s Arabic Youth Consultation (ISS of BC 2016b). Related to this, research methods and data collection techniques that build-in trust and rapport with refugees are likely to support the success of such endeavours, as is practised by frontline SPO workers. Third, it would be beneficial in future research to consult with members of the incoming refugees’ ethnic diaspora, in this case the Syrian diaspora, that have lived in Canada for several years, regarding their perspectives on best practices for engagement and social inclusion for the recently arrived refugees. Next, the Syrian cohort has received much media, political and research attention over the past year, however, their mid- and long-term integration outcomes should be continually tracked in the future, presenting additional research opportunities. Similar research attention should also be placed on other refugees in Canada, exploring their perspectives and short- and long-term needs and successes. Research that focuses away from the largest Canadian cities to smaller suburban cities is also important, as this is where greater numbers of newcomers are now settling (Lo et al. 2010 and Peel Newcomer Strategy Group 2010 in Shields et. al 2014). In addition, it is important to provide adequate compensation for research participants, which should also extend to compensating professionals who serve on LIPs, RRTs, or in any other working group function who currently are doing so for free.

A final consideration is that key informants spoke positively of the pre-repatriation of immigration funding coordination, which is also supported by the literature. Perhaps an evaluation should take place regarding the former approach of the province of BC and its relationship to newcomer outcomes, as compared to the current approach of the federal government and its relationship to newcomer outcomes.
Concluding Statement

The UNHCR states that, while its primary purpose is to protect the rights and well-being of refugees, its ultimate objective is, “to help find durable solutions that will allow [refugees] to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace” (UNHCR 2017). Similarly, if the Canadian government is to continue accepting refugees, and particularly GARs, this should be done knowing that the capacity to support individuals upon arrival and beyond exists and is properly bolstered by the federal government. In addition, investment should flow from the province of BC and continue to be invested by municipal governments to support refugees’ social inclusion; after all, there are large opportunity costs to bear for local and provincial governments if the integration of refugees is not supported expediently. Refugees and their families become part of the fabric of Canadian society, and contribute in many forms to the advancement and growth of the country. It ought not to be assumed that their mere presence in the country is enough to equip and empower them to live their best lives in the short- and long-term, but rather that they deserve high quality and agile assistance through service delivery on their path to social inclusion and integration.
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Appendix A. Interview Question Themes

A selection of the following questions were utilized in each of the semi-structured interviews of this study.

Theme 1: Post-arrival refugee resettlement questions

- What has surprised you most about the arrival of Syrian refugees to BC?
- What are some of the strengths in Syrian refugees who are settling in the Lower Mainland?
- Since arriving in Canada, do you feel the settlement experience has been responsive to the needs of Syrian refugees? For example, if they needed something, do you believe there are sufficient services for them? What are some areas for improvement?
- What are some strengths of the Refugee Readiness Teams? What are some areas for improvement?
- Are there specific needs of the Syrian refugee community that perhaps differ from other groups of refugees you have worked with?
- Do Syrians mainly receive services only from one organization, or do they go to several settlement organizations?

Theme 2: Information-sharing questions

- Do you think that settlement organizations in Surrey/the Lower Mainland have adequate information sharing practices for the purposes of improving refugee’s experiences? Do you know of any barriers to this information sharing?
- What channels does the government use to connect with you regarding refugee client needs and research?
- When you have needed to communicate with Syrians, how have you gone about doing so?
- Do you witness Syrian refugees utilizing digital methods of communication? What have you observed about Syrians’ communications with one another?
Theme 3: Governance-related questions

- If you were to redesign the system to allow upper levels of government and organizations to be more responsive to individual refugee needs, what might you change? What is working well?

- What level of government, in your opinion, should be doing more to ensure the responsiveness of the settlement system? (Municipal, Provincial, Federal). Why?
Appendix B. Informational Letter to Key Informants

Information Letter: Seeking Expert Participants

Project: Syrian refugees here, but heard? Policy options to engage refugee perspectives as policy evidence

Hello,

I am a second year student in the Master of Public Policy program at Simon Fraser University. I am doing research to find solutions that are meant to help governments and settlement organizations improve the responsiveness of settlement services in Surrey, BC and to improve experiences for Syrian newcomers to Canada. The purpose of this research is to listen, to understand the experiences of refugees, those that work with them and those connected to them, and to form policy recommendations that can be shared with the community and potentially help future newcomers to Canada. My research questions are: what are the challenges and opportunities Syrian refugees face when settling in Surrey, BC, and what are the best methods to engage with them about their experiences in order for the settlement system to become more responsive to their needs? Opinions about new strategies and policy actions to address the policy problem will also be investigated in my research.

I am inviting you to join me for an interview as an expert interviewee. Joining in the interview is up to you, and the things you share can be kept confidential upon request.

The research will take between 30 and 60 minutes, and can be done in person or over the phone. The interview will occur in November or December 2016. During the interview, you will have the chance to share your experiences, expertise, and ideas for how to make BC’s settlement and integration system more responsive to refugee needs. The interview will be conducted by myself, and can be de-identified (meaning that your name will not be printed or published in my study) upon request.

The study may be beneficial to you because you will have a chance to state your opinions and share your knowledge. Your participation in the research may help the greater community, and you will be taking part in research that may assist others who want to help, like non-profit organizations, government and advocates.

The results of the study will be presented in my final report. The report will be available for you to read in May or June 2017. Your preferences about confidentiality will be respected. The finished report will be also shared with members of the community. I also plan to potentially give presentations, write articles and/or materials based on the results. Please note that there will be no remuneration (payment, reward, etc.) for participating in this study.

If you are interested in participating, and/or have any questions or concerns please email me at

Thank you!

Kindly,
Hope Calti
Graduate Student
School of Public Policy
Simon Fraser University
Appendix C. Consent Form for Key Informants

Consent Form for Expert Interview Participants

Project: Syrian refugees here, but heard?: Policy options to engage Syrian refugee perspectives as policy evidence

You are invited to participate in an interview for a research study on the topic of refugee settlement services in British Columbia. The purpose of this research is to listen, to understand the experiences of refugees, those that work with them and those who are connected to them, and to form policy recommendations that can be shared with the community and potentially help future newcomers to Canada. My research questions are: what are the challenges and opportunities Syrian refugees face when settling in Surrey, BC, and what are the best methods to engage with them about their experiences in order for the settlement system to become more responsive to their needs? Opinions about new strategies and policy actions to address the policy problem will also be investigated in my research. I will also be conducting focus groups with Syrian refugees, and focus groups with frontline staff who work with Syrian refugees.

Who’s conducting this study?
My name is Hope Caldi and I am a Master’s student from Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) School of Public Policy, and this study is for a capstone (thesis project) I am currently completing.

Why should you take part in this study?
You are being invited to take part in an interview for this research study because I want to gain understanding about your knowledge and opinions regarding how to communicate through various levels of government Syrian refugees’ perspectives concerning the challenges, services, and information available to them. The results will only be used for the purposes of research, and the capstone report will be a public document once it is published by SFU in May or June 2017.

Your comments and opinions will drive the policy recommendations that I form in my capstone, namely key ideas for how to make policy changes so that programs, services, and protocols are improved for newcomer settlement programs.

Your participation is voluntary
You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time before the capstone is defended in April without any negative consequences.

What will the process be?
If you are interested in participating in an interview, here is how I will do the study:

1. Contact me at: [redacted] to indicate interest in participating.

2. Review this consent form, sign and return to me, or provide verbal consent at the start of our interview.
3. The interview will last around 30-60 minutes, but you can choose to stop it at any time.

4. The interview will be audio recorded so that I can focus on our conversation, but you have the right to refuse it being recorded.

5. Information shared in the interview will be confidential. You can choose to be identified by name in my project, or to have the data de-identified. De-identified means that identifying information such as your name will stripped from the transcripts and not printed in my capstone.

6. The audio recordings will be deleted after transcription, and transcription notes will be after in two years’ time.

7. Interview recordings and notes will be stored securely on a password protected and encrypted USB drive to ensure your confidentiality. The USB drive will be stored in a locked drawer.

8. The information from the interview will be analyzed and the results will be part of the final version of my capstone project.

9. If you are directly quoted in my capstone, you will be given the opportunity for them to review/revise quotes before the capstone is published.

**Is there any way participating in the interview could be bad for you?**
The topics of discussion will not vary greatly from those you encounter in your job, so the risk in taking part in the study is likely very low. You can skip questions, take a break, and/or leave the interview at any time. The interview will be done in person or over the phone and, once again, your confidentiality will be respected and your identity can be protected.

**What are the benefits of participating?**
Your voice and expertise will be heard, honoured, and featured in a policy project on an important issue. Your shared knowledge will also be of benefit to the newcomer settlement community (research, government, and non-profit) by expanding knowledge on this topic.

**Remuneration**
There will be no remuneration provided for participating in the interview.

**How will your identity be protected?**
Your confidentiality will be respected. You have the choice to be identified by name in the capstone, or to have the data de-identified (name removed from transcripts). Audio recordings and transcribed notes will be kept on a password protected, encrypted USB drive. Audio recordings will be deleted immediately after transcription, and transcription notes will be retained for two years’ time and then deleted. Information that discloses
Study Results
The results of this study will be reported in a graduate capstone. The capstone will be available for the public and participants to view on the Simon Fraser University Summit website in May or June 2016 (http://summit.sfu.ca). The researcher may present the findings, write articles for newspapers and peer-reviewed journals, or for non-profits referencing the capstone results.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?
I am available to answer any questions that you might have about the study, at [contact information]. My Faculty Supervisor, Dr. Olena Hankivsky, is also available to answer any questions at [contact information].

Who can you contact if you have concerns about the study?
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, SFU Office of Research Ethics, [contact information].

Future use of participant data
Your data will be used in the capstone, and not for other future purposes.

Participant Consent and Signature
Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving reason and without any negative impact on your access to future services.

My signature below indicates that I have received a copy of this consent for my own records. My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

I grant permission for audio to be recorded at the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
I grant permission to be identified by name in the research study: Yes ☐ No ☐
I grant permission to be contacted in the future by the researcher to clarify or confirm things said in the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐

_____________________________  ______________________________
Participant Printed Name          Participant Signature

_____________________________
Date (yyyy/mm/dd)