



SURREY
LOCAL IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIP

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Needs Assessment for Newcomer Services in Surrey



May 2023 | Conducted by:



FLOW SOCIETY
Collective Learning and Wellbeing

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Executive Summary

The Surrey LIP Needs Assessment for Newcomer Services in Surrey is intended to determine the current needs of newcomers and raise awareness of those needs with Surrey LIP members, other partners and stakeholders, and the wider community. Activities were undertaken from October, 2022 to March 2023, and included an overview of the immigrant demographic profile, a scan of existing services, and several stakeholder engagements. Focus Groups, Key Informant Interviews, and Surveys provided information and insights from service providers, newcomers and other stakeholders, while meetings with the Surrey LIP community provided further context on settlement and non-settlement services for newcomers in Surrey.

Information from the various activities indicates a very comprehensive range of services responding to the needs of newcomers. Strong collaboration and cooperation is in evidence, particularly across settlement and public services. Several challenges and gaps were also identified. They included: need for a user-centered system to help newcomers access services; more capacity for service providers to meet the growing and increasingly complex needs of immigrant populations; more services and support for

international students and refugee claimants; and more work needed to prepare the broader community to be welcoming of newcomers.

Several areas of need were also identified outside of settlement services. Housing supports, access to mental health services, supports for families and newcomers with disabilities, language and legal services for refugee claimants, and employment supports for international students are all critical challenges facing newcomers and the organizations supporting them.

Strategies and recommendations for the Surrey LIP include:

- Clearly articulated and more intentional strategies in its roles of advocacy, collaboration, and education.
- Application of these strategies to priority areas including supporting newcomer access to services, supporting the capacity of the settlement sector, addressing needs of international students and refugee claimants, and preparing the community to be welcoming of newcomers.

Introduction

Surrey Local Immigrant Partnership

The **Surrey LIP** is a community partnership funded by **Immigrants Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC)**. Its **primary purpose is to bring diverse perspectives and resources together** to build an **equitable and inclusive city** where all immigrants, refugees, and citizens thrive. It is made up of community agencies and institutions representing local government, settlement and community agencies, health authorities, educational institutions, business, parks, recreation and culture, policing, libraries, volunteerism, and others. Through dialogue and research, Surrey LIP's **40+ members** collaborate on innovative and community-driven strategies to meet the changing needs of Surrey. The Surrey LIP is coordinated by a project management team led by contract Manager from **Diversecity Community Resources Society, holders of the Surrey LIP contract**.

Surrey is **on track to be the fastest-growing city** in BC. As Surrey grows, so does its cultural diversity and along with it the need to review and refine policies, practices, services, and programs that support the community. The Surrey LIP is in a unique position **to innovate in this space**, and works with external consultants, partners, and volunteers to conduct community-level research and consultations.

The membership of the LIP identifies **research purposes and guides work from inception to completion**.



These findings are developed into reports and presented to **the LIP members to inform the development of the immigrant and refugee strategic plans and for the larger community of stakeholders** to use in program and service planning and policy and practice reviews.

The Surrey LIP is supported by a number of Roundtables, including the **Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory Council**. Representing the lived experience of immigrants and refugees, 6 members from diverse backgrounds provide input to the Surrey LIP Council's research and planning processes.

The Environment Scan and Needs Assessment

The Surrey Local Immigrant Partnership (Surrey LIP) Environment Scan and Needs Assessment was undertaken **from October 2022 to March 2023**.

The purpose of the project was to:

- Determine the **current needs** of newcomers in Surrey; and
- **Raise awareness** of those needs with Surrey LIP members, other partners and stakeholders, and the wider community to fill any gaps

A consultant team representing **FLOW Society** for Newcomers was engaged to undertake the Surrey LIP Environment Scan and Needs Assessment.

Key processes and deliverables to be provided by the consultants included: an environmental scan **to seek and compile information** about **various groups in Surrey, BC**, and the programs services, and resources offered to serve them; consultations with stakeholders and immigrants and refugees through **focus groups, 1:1 interviews, and surveys**; a community needs assessment through online surveys; identification of an immigrant **demographic profile** for Surrey, BC; and **data analysis and determination of 3 priority areas of focus and recommendations** to address identified needs.

Services provided would be supported by Surrey LIP Manager and the Surrey LIP by providing **data, documentation, and ongoing collaboration** to ensure that the project is conducted consistently with standard practices and follows the agreed-upon conditions.

This report is intended to inform and support the work of the Surrey LIP and other stakeholders in **strategic planning and working collaboratively** to address the **most pressing issues facing newcomers and service providers in Surrey**.

Project Activities

Project Activities

Environment Scan

An Environment Scan was conducted to provide an overview of newcomers to Surrey and the services available to them. Special consideration was given for specific populations previously identified as being under-served. These included newcomers with disabilities, LGBTQ+ newcomers, newcomer women, newcomer youth, refugee claimants, and international students.

Surveys

Three surveys were conducted: surveys of Surrey LIP Council Members and Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory provided early stage direction in the project; and a public survey directed to a range of newcomers focused on their experiences as newcomers accessing services, types of services they had accessed, and services they needed but were challenged to access.

Consultations

Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

were conducted to hear from newcomers, settlement and non-settlement service providers, and other stakeholders. Newcomers not typically eligible for services were targeted (e.g., refugee claimants, international students, and temporary foreign workers). Service Provider Focus Groups included settlement service providers, City of Surrey staff (administrative, parks and recreation, libraries), and representation from education and health sectors. Key informant interviews were conducted to represent unique sector or leadership perspectives.

At the Surrey LIP Forum, priority themes were presented to an audience of 60+ stakeholders including representation from all the major settlement service providers, Surrey Parks and Recreation, City of Surrey administration, partners in the education, employment, health and green sectors, funders, indigenous partners, activists, and artists, representing a broad range of issues and programming across Surrey.



	EVENT	DATE/LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS
1	Surrey LIP Council Meeting	October 26, 2022 Surrey City Central Library	Approx. 35 Council Members
2	Surrey LIP Council Member Survey	October 15 - November 25, 2022	9 Respondents
3	Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory Survey	October 15 - November 25, 2022	4 Respondents
4	Focus Group for International Students	November 15, 2022 Surrey City Central Library	7 Registered 5 Participants
5	Focus group for Temporary Foreign Workers	November 16, 2022 Online/Zoom	9 Registered 3 Participants
6	Focus Group for Service Providers	November 21, 2022 Surrey City Central Library	7 Registered 6 Participants
7	Focus Group for Service Providers	November 23, 2022 Online/Zoom	11 Registered 9 Participants
8	Focus Group for Refugee Claimants	November 29, 2022 Options	21 Registered 26 Participants
9	Key Informants Interviews: City of Surrey, Settlement leaders, MAP Coord.	November 2022 - January 2023	4 Interviews
10	Newcomer Survey	November 2022 - January 2023	71 valid respondents
11	Surrey LIP Forum	January 20, 2023	Approx. 60 Attendees

Summary of Findings

Overview of Immigrants in Surrey

Immigrant Trends

According to the latest census Canada release, the city of Surrey experienced an increase in both the general and immigrant population between 2017-2021. Immigrants represent about 45% of the total population of Surrey. The overall immigrant population grew by 14% and the community received a total of 39,905 new immigrants which represents 9% more compared with the previous census period. 67% of the population identified as a visible minority (377,235) and indigenous people represent 2.1% of the population (12,180). In 2021, 20% of the recent immigrants to BC lived in Surrey. Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has recently announced increased targets for immigrants to Canada to between 465,000-500,000 per year over the next 3 years. Surrey can expect to see a significant portion of these.

Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs)

According to the arrival statistics report provided by the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) of ISSofBC, Surrey is the main destination in Metro Vancouver for GARs (from August to November 2022, 66% of GARs who found housing did so in Surrey). The highest number of GARs to Surrey came from Afghanistan (777 between August 2021 and November 2022). Surrey received 125 immigrants from Ukraine between 2017-2021.



Over the coming year, 2,650 GARs are expected to be welcomed through ISSofBC's Vancouver and Surrey contracts. This represents approximately an 18% increase over last year.

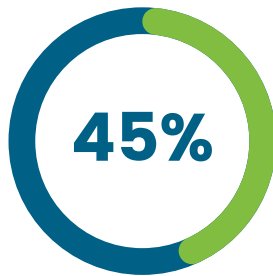
Refugee Claimants

Anecdotally, the number of refugee claimants in Surrey is rising, especially from Afghanistan and Latin countries. A recent publication released by AMSSA outlines the different categories of refugees in Canada: Pathways for Re-settled Refugees, Refugee Claimants and Displaced Ukrainians.

International Students

Surrey is a popular destination for international students. In British Columbia, there are more than 143,000 international students according to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (2022). India ranks as the top source country, making up more than a third of the demographic.

Overview of Immigrants in Surrey



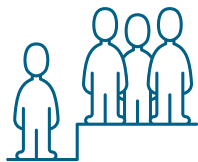
Immigrants in Surrey represent about 45% of the total population



The city continues to be home to the second largest immigrant population in Metro Vancouver (Vancouver is #1)



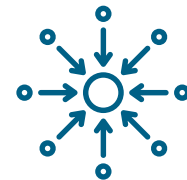
The overall immigrant population grew by 14% and the community received a total of 39,905 new immigrants which represents 9% more compared with the previous census period



67% of the population is identified as a visible minority (377,235)



The community is home of 23,605 refugees (successful claimants, GARS and private sponsored)



increasingly popular hub for young International Students and large newcomer families

Immigrant Population Age Distribution

(Age at immigration)



According to the latest census 2021, the majority of the population in Surrey is 44 years and over; however, only 14% of immigrants belong to this age range. The immigrant population is significantly younger with 42% of them being between 25-44 years

Top 10

Places of Birth Total immigrant population

1. India 95905
2. Philippines 29510
3. China 23850
4. Other places of birth in Asia 9445
5. United Kingdom 8320
6. South Korea 6995
7. Vietnam 6425
8. Pakistan 5710
9. Taiwan 5540
10. Other places of birth in Africa 4070

Places of Birth Recent Immigrants

1. India 18235
2. China 4425
3. Philippines 4000
4. Syria 1360
5. South Korea 1005
6. Pakistan 905
7. Other places of birth in Asia 800
8. Iraq 760
9. United States of America 655
10. Other places of birth in Africa 540

Languages

1. Punjabi 164.825
2. Hindi 61.500
3. Mandarin 36.980
4. Tagalog 29.750
5. Spanish 13.335
6. Cantonese 11.875
7. Urdu 11.290
8. Korean 9.835
9. Arabic 9.150
10. German 4.535

Recent Influx

The community is experiencing an increase in Arabic-speaking and African newcomers (recent influx: Syria - starting 2016 - Afghanistan, Eritrea)



Some national trends related to newcomer access to settlement services

According to the Settlement Outcomes report issued by IRCC in 2020, the number of people accessing IRCC settlement services rose by 26% between 2015/16 and 2018/19 (ref: ICARE).



10

Settlement clients received an average of 10 services each, with the number of services received by sponsored refugees being much higher: 14 for PSRs and 36 for GARs.

Only 23% of all newcomers accessed settlement services in their landing year. Sponsored refugees, particularly GARs, had the highest rates of support service usage of all immigration categories, with 64% of all sponsored refugees and 75% of GARs using them.



Data also suggests that both both clients and non-clients of IRCC-funded settlement services were not as aware of how or where to get services as they would have liked.

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/publications-manuals/settlement-outcomes-highlights-report-2021.pdf>

Challenges for Settlement Services in Surrey

Lack of capacity for settlement services

There is a strong need to increase the capacity for service delivery in the community. Service providers are facing increased demand for services, both from increased numbers of newcomers to Surrey, and because of multiple and complex needs. At the same time, service providers are challenged by workforce shortages, due to an exit of many women service workers during the COVID pandemic.

There is a mismatch between what the federal government policy and the ability of service providers to keep up with the services required. For example, recent Ukrainian arrivals have open work permits for 3 years but are not eligible for most programs. Services for government and privately sponsored refugees are not funded at levels adequate to meet the waves; some refugees in Surrey are wondering why they've been brought here because there are not enough services to help them with basics. Many of the Afghan families coming to BC are ending up in Surrey, where the cost of housing is relatively less expensive. Similar to the Syrian influx, they need hands-on extensive support in the first year with housing, education and employment support.

' We're dealing with huge waves of newcomers and don't have the staffing to respond quickly enough - considering language, cultural sensitivity to issues, gender-specific services, addressing multiple and complex barriers ... '

Quote from service provider

More generally, there is a need for increased funding from Immigrants Refugees and Citizenship Canada to respond to the increased number of newcomers. More investment into direct supports for newcomers as well as capacity building within the sector are key. In the case of provincial funding (provided by BC Settlement and Integration Services – BCSIS), there is widespread agreement that it does not meet the current demand for services for refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers and international students, and that staff teams are simply unable to get to the all the clients seeking services.

Lack of capacity is widely identified as limitations in service delivery in first language, particularly in response to the increase in Surrey's Arabic-, Spanish-, Pashto-, and Tigrinian- speaking newcomers. Minority languages are also under-served.

Responding to increasingly complex needs

Service providers report that newcomers are arriving in Surrey with increasingly complex needs and multiple barriers including pre-existing medical conditions, poor mental health, disabilities, and limited language and digital literacy. As various waves of refugees enter the community, there is a need to pivot funding to respond to specific and changing needs. Case management services targeted for those newcomers and newcomer families (including many single-parent homes) with more complex needs and requiring referrals are completely overwhelmed, with wait lists of 1-2 months. Some newcomers are requiring mental health support beyond a year. Trauma-informed and wellness-focussed training and support for service providers is needed to help frontline workers effectively support the complex traumas and challenges experienced by the people they are serving, and to address burnout and compassion fatigue which is threatening to diminish the capacity of the sector further.

Limited reach of services

According to the 2020 Settlement Services Review conducted by IRCC, settlement services only reach 23% of newcomers.

Many newcomers report that accessing services in Surrey is confusing and frustrating. There is a perception that “everyone offers everything”. Further, some groups of newcomers are experiencing lack of institutional trust. Word of mouth may be their primary source of information, especially for refugee claimants. Service providers’

lack of connection to some communities means that the information refugee claimants are receiving may not be accurate.

To improve newcomer access to information, a one-stop, centralized website that service providers regularly update is seen as important. One service provider elaborated further on a user-friendly information search (e.g. I have a need for.. I want to learn more about) to connect newcomers to services by needs and language. Names of programs and organizations would be offered in response, giving people choices based on their needs.

Building on partnerships with libraries and other public services are also important as potential primary contact points for service. Improving the system of service referrals, including to non-settlement services, and engaging immigrants in peer-to-peer and culturally sensitive models to address lack of institutional trust and increase connectivity are ways to improve outreach.

More targeted programming for international students and refugee claimants is needed

The numbers of international students and refugee claimants are increasing in Surrey, and they are widely reported both by service providers and newcomers as under-served. Other issues are arising from unmet needs such as precarious housing, poor mental health, and delayed settlement and employment. Both groups report needing support finding housing, dealing with landlords, mental health, access to health services, and employment information and support.

Food security is also precarious for both groups. Lack of support systems, disreputable employers and experiences of racism and discrimination were also commonly reported by both groups. No systems are in place for integrated, informed service delivery and information to either group.

Both groups experience a low sense of inclusion and belonging.

Experiences unique to international students include:

- Feeling “exploited” and a “low return on investment”: while they are contributing to the economy, there is little invested in them in return
- Limited employment services and job training opportunities are impacting employment stability
- Very low sense of belonging: 6 out of 6 participants don’t feel part of the community; several reported being discriminated against by some bus drivers
- and, some of them reported experiencing discrimination at work based on their ethnicity
- Misrepresentation of educational institutions’ websites showing diversity when in fact that program is primarily people from India
- Being taken advantage of by same-culture employers who exploit understanding of their sense of honour
- Delays in government processes (e.g. 2 months waiting time for appointments and understaffing at Service Canada) and lack of employment opportunities and supports critically undermine their ability to support their lives and fulfill their goals in coming to Canada.



International students report a very low sense of belonging, with 6 out of 6 focus group participants saying they didn’t feel part of the community. Several reported being discriminated against by some bus drivers and, some of them experienced discrimination at work based on their ethnicity.

Experiences unique to refugee claimants include:

- Lack of support and services, exacerbated by an uncertain and confusing network of information
- Low awareness of support available; many rely on word-of-mouth
- Many refugee claimants are coming across the border to Surrey; no Welcome Centre or shelter; transition houses are re-traumatizing
- High levels of concern and stress over mental health of their children
- Limited services to support essential needs before the hearing, including English classes, legal aid and employment
- Lack of interpretation services in Farsi and Dari in settlement and public services
- Lack of access to language classes; 70% are getting positive result in hearing so are staying; it would serve everyone well to start language classes sooner
- Perceive lack of language literacy as the reason for experiencing discrimination at some public service agencies

Service providers indicate that no one has “stepped up” to respond to the increasingly urgent need to support international students, and that a concerted effort is required.

They further recognize that international students are making valuable contributions in Surrey (economically, culturally and as part of the labour force), and their interests and value should be championed. The public sector and employers need to be invited to conversations about international students and how to leverage the attributes they bring to communities and the workforce. Refugee claimants are also identified as a skilled groups that could provide translation support, and peer support.

Service providers identify a strong need to respond to the influx of refugee claimants to Surrey with increased funding from BCSIS. Further, a more linear direction for services needs to be provided for refugees, with MAP (Multi-Agency Partnership) playing a role in leading this.

Increased organizational membership with MAP as well as with the Canadian Council for Refugees are seen as important sources of information and avenues for greater advocacy.

Advocacy and funding around housing, mental health, legal support and language services (translation and English language classes) are particularly needed. Better connections with diasporas of various communities would also be helpful to ensure word-of-mouth information is accurate, timely and complete.

Service providers saw shifts in IRCC priorities and recently introduced measures that accelerate work permit issuance for asylum claimants and international students in Canada as an opportunity to advocate for the needs of international students and other non-permanent resident newcomers in the next round of funding (2025). Advocacy on behalf of international students and refugee claimants at other community and government tables to increase awareness and reduce barriers and limit bureaucratic processes was also seen as important.

More supports for newcomer youth, newcomers with disabilities, and other intersectionalities

Although several newcomer youth initiatives have been developed in the past few years in Surrey, there is still an unmet need. The Surrey Welcome Centre (ISSofBC) has wrap-around services for teens and young adults, but the capacity of the program is not enough to meet current needs. Many teens do not access the program, and those that do are only able to stay for a limited time. Many youth end up in the high school system before they have the language ability to be successful. Further, mental health support for youth is particularly in high demand. According to a member of the Surrey LIP Advisory, for youth newcomers, online school made it hard for them to make friends so there is a need for youth immigrants to find friends and connections in their own community.

Within the youth immigrant community, services to LGBTQ youth tend to concentrate in Vancouver rather than Surrey. There is a need for more LGBTQ-friendly housing. One focus group participant reported that LGBTQ in Metro Vancouver do not want to go to Surrey to live - "Anywhere but Surrey".

The service sector is also challenged to meet the needs of newcomer families with increasingly complex health issues including pre-existing medical conditions, disabilities and mental health challenges. Meeting the needs of families with children who have developmental issues is also a major challenge. Families of children with disabilities may wait 2 years for an assessment, and applications for eligibility for financial support are multiple pages long, creating barriers for those with low levels of language, or access to systems of support. Clients with physical disabilities face challenges and extensive delays accessing support and services such as obtaining a driving license. In many cases, the wait times and other barriers are such that people "give up" and become at risk for depression and experience increasingly poor mental health.

The increase in single-parent families coming to Surrey creates an unmet need for the service sector. Single moms with children, in particular, need support to navigate anxiety and depression. It was noted that it takes time to build a relationship of trust with workers, and often workers don't have the time to spend with clients to build that trust. Childcare support for single moms who are refugee claimants was identified as a way to increase women's access to employment.

Need for specialized services

The Surrey LIP indicated a strong need for information and services that respond to needs beyond settlement services. As well, the current housing crisis, healthcare shortages, isolation and well-documented mental health challenges many are facing point to specific areas where newcomers need services.

Employment: While employment programs have long been developed alongside the changing newcomer populations, targeted specialized programs related to employment are still needed to understand and act upon the skills that immigrants are

bringing to their communities, what supports are needed to leverage their potential, and how the private sector can be engaged to support the hiring and retention of newcomers.

Health: According to a service provider from the New Canadian Clinic, access to healthcare services and primary care is a major challenge facing newcomers in Surrey. For example, there is more need of pre- and post- natal care and limited access, especially for sensitive populations. Language poses an additional barrier to health services, due to lack of translation services.

There are several programs that support newcomer families with members dealing with mental health challenges and special needs, but barriers to service is a concern. Newcomer kids with developmental challenges may not be accessing services due to stigma, and there are gaps in outreach and education on early intervention. A participant of the Temporary Foreign Worker Focus Group reported navigating ministries and programs as very challenging, despite his excellent English and strong community support.



Service providers identified the following as top priorities for service delivery: housing, health (including mental health), language, targeted employment, and digital literacy. There is both a need for additional services in these areas, as well as a need for greater collaboration with non-settlement services.

On the service end, more programming that addresses the mental health challenges that newcomers are facing includes trauma-informed and wellness-focused training and support for service providers to respond to the mental health of the people they work with, as well as to take care of their own wellbeing.

Housing: Housing is a challenge faced by all newcomers, due to the well-documented lack of housing infrastructure. Permanent Residents and other newcomers have difficulty getting into suitable rental housing or buying markets. Suites being built are unsuitable, especially for large families. The Newcomer Survey surfaced the need for specialized support in housing searches and access to affordable housing, as well as increased literacy to navigate housing/rental issues.

Literacy: The Newcomers Survey and the Focus Group for Refugee Claimants both surfaced a strong demand for English classes for refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers. Recognizing that hybrid models of service delivery are likely here to stay, there is a need for technology supports to be embedded in service delivery. There also needs to be an increased focus on digital literacy skill development in newcomers, as this is quickly becoming an additional barrier to language learning and accessing other supports and programs.

Day-to-day: Newcomers and service providers alike also reported challenges related to inadequate and irregular public transit, as well as delays in government services (e.g., issuing Permanent Residence status) as negatively impacting the settlement of newcomers. The expectation for hands-on programming and orientations to support newcomers in navigating day to day life was also commonly reported throughout the different consultations (e.g., using the SkyTrain, low cost food, banking). Fact sheets in different languages on key topics (housing, health, transportation) was also seen as an important tool in reaching and supporting newcomers.

More collaboration with non-settlement services, public services, and private sector

Service providers call for a community-wide approach to meet the challenges of responding to the increasing numbers and complexities of newcomers. More collaboration is needed between public services and settlement services; City of Surrey staff, school districts and other community services could also be targeted for education about refugees and immigrants.

Service providers also see a need for more collaboration between settlement and non-settlement services, including partnerships

With expert groups (e.g., business and health), and engaging volunteers (e.g., UBC law students). More outreach to the housing sector is needed, including educating landlords on newcomers, and working with non-profit housing providers. Housing and settlement could be more integrated through pairing settlement services with housing workers with access to housing supplements and rental stock.

A collective voice from settlement service providers is needed to inform various levels of government, funders and other stakeholders. Updated, ongoing qualitative and quantitative information about issues related to newcomers is important for advocating for funding, policy change and learning opportunities outside the sector. Subject leader experts and equity-seeking groups should be consulted and included in this collective voice.

Preparing the broader community to be more welcoming of newcomers

Service providers identified the need to expand educational opportunities and anti-racist initiatives to prepare the community to welcome immigrants and create deep and long-term inclusion.

Addressing the “changing faces” in Surrey is important in helping the broader community understand the facts around immigration, the contributions of newcomers, and the experiences of immigrants and racialized Canadians.

' As community organizations, we need to do our homework on how we are presenting newcomers to the broader community- for example, using language that brings people together rather than labeling them apart.. ... '

Quote from service provider

Further, the overall lack of connectedness frequently reported and exacerbated by COVID and home working arrangements signals a need for more opportunities for members of the whole community to connect.

Refugee claimants and international students report discrimination from public service, not feeling part of the community, and wanting more opportunities to connect through two-way exchanges and cultural activities. LGBTQ newcomers not wanting to settle in Surrey, increased incidents of racism, as well as concerns that the broader community may have about the additional pressure that immigration is placing on already stretched resources all point to a need for conversations and education around immigration, contributions of newcomers, and the benefits of a diverse population.

Newcomers' experiences with settlement in Surrey



Public survey showed that 50% of newcomers to Surrey perceive their settlement experience as positive, 33% challenging and 12 % reported having mixed feelings or not sure how to answer.

27 % of survey respondents expressed not being aware of the support provided by settlement agencies in the community. 73% expressed being aware of at least 1 settlement agency.



45% of respondents haven't accessed settlement services. Those who accessed settlement services did it primarily to get support on employment, translation and handling paperwork.

74% of newcomers reported not feeling that their identity is a barrier to access services.



Online search and word of mouth were reported as the most frequent methods used by newcomers to connect with settlement services.

Perspectives on the Surrey LIP



The City of Surrey appreciates the role of the Surrey LIP in flagging the needs of newcomers for consideration in upcoming city planning processes. Information about the issues facing newcomers, who is coming, what's working, what's not working is important to bring to meetings and tables at various levels of government. A collective voice of settlement providers is important.

- Collaboration through the Surrey LIP is valuable for sharing information.
- More research is needed about the issues faced by specific populations (e.g., women, newcomers with disabilities, LGBTQ).
- Cross-agency collaboration is also needed: to support frontline workers with networking opportunities; for effective referrals; to ensure that all agencies have access to information about incoming refugees; and to improve overall access to regional information.



Surrey LIP should be represented in other collaboratives, such as the Surrey housing conference.

- Working groups are a good way to share information and build collective impact.
- Surrey LIP would benefit by creating a clearly articulated reference document or plan that all partners could work on collectively.



Surrey LIP can increase public education to encourage a more welcoming community. Modelling inclusion and promoting the mainstreaming of language used within settlement organizations to avoid othering and exclusion of newcomers is an important part of making a difference in how the community perceives and reacts to newcomers.

Surrey LIP Strategies & Priority Areas

Strategy #1

Surrey LIP serves as a regular channel of information for advocacy



Surrey LIP supports information-sharing and advocacy to bring more resources to support newcomers and the organizations that serve them. More regular and updated information to be used to support conversations with funders, sharing at inter-governmental tables, and cross-sector reporting are important avenues for advocacy.

Surrey LIP monthly meetings, advisory tables, working groups are opportunities for Surrey LIP to tackle cross-sector information-sharing and develop stronger pathways for advocacy. Funders should be invited to the Surrey LIP council meetings. Priority issues include: housing, health, food security, language, and digital literacy. Identifying the areas that aren't yet being covered is important to consider, although equally important is bringing the unique perspectives of newcomers to broader conversations (e.g. the need for housing for refugee claimants). Information-sharing and advocacy should also include and highlight the experiences and perspectives of front-line workers.

A broader range of stakeholders needs to be included in regional conversations and information-sharing, including frontline workers and newcomers. This is particularly true in light of the absence of a provincial-wide table for non-profits. To address the complexity of needs and achieve systems level impacts, partnerships between settlement and non-settlement organizations are critical and should be approached on a reciprocal basis, e.g. inviting housing experts to the Surrey LIP table, and also having Surrey LIP representation in the City of Surrey Housing Committee.

Strategy #2

Surrey LIP serves as a vehicle for collaboration for settlement, non-settlement, and public & private sectors



Surrey LIP's 40+ members collaborate on innovative and community-driven strategies to meet the changing needs of Surrey. Building on established connections and relationships of Surrey LIP members and further engaging the Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory Committee, the Surrey LIP is in a position to effectively provide support to increase the capacity of the settlement sector in Surrey.

Providing a collaborative table to Improve the service referrals system, including non-settlement services, is key. Increasing newcomer participant in responding to needs can be leveraged through the Immigrant Advisory Committee.

To address the supply side of services, Surrey LIP can support advocacy and honest conversations with funders around capacity, critical to meeting the need for services, both in the case of mainstream services through IRCC, as well as for the provincial funders responsible for newcomers without permanent residency.

Strategy #3

Surrey LIP serves to provide education and awareness building



The Surrey LIP plays a vital role in cultural sharing events and educational resources such as International Refugee Day, the Immigrant and African and Caribbean Advisories, and the Surrey First People's Guide. Such initiatives and those aimed at awareness-building around the contributions that immigrants make are effective ways to broaden perspectives and build stronger, more cohesive communities.

Engaging reciprocity in learning, ensuring that resources are shared widely, and providing educational resources tailored to specific stakeholders are important principles in guiding learning opportunities.

SUPPORT NEWCOMER ACCESS TO SERVICES

There is need for a timely, updated, and user-centered system to connect newcomers to the information and services they need most.

ADVOCACY

- Create information channels that provide regular information to Surrey LIP council members about how newcomers are accessing and experiencing services (e.g. surveys, Immigrant Advisory Committee, comment cards at service provider sites).

COLLABORATION

- Hold a process to identify resources and opportunities to build centralized newcomer access to information and/or a way to better share information across organizations to support referrals.
- Build on existing communication mechanisms such as the Surrey LIP Directory, NewToBC and BC211.
- Engage the Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory as key informants and connectors, expanding Advisory as necessary to represent the current range of newcomers arriving to Surrey.
- Leverage and strengthen working relationships with key contact points for newcomers such as libraries, schools, the City and other public services.
- Work collectively to develop fact sheets in different languages and more translation services; engage newcomers to target a broader range of languages and to increase connectivity to address lack of institutional trust.
- Leverage relationship with MAP (Multi-Agency Partnership) to develop more cohesive and accurate information channels for refugee claimants.

SUPPORT THE SETTLEMENT SECTOR'S CAPACITY TO SERVE

Service providers are facing increased demand for services and at the same time are challenged by workforce shortages.

ADVOCACY

- Create information channels for service providers to share qualitative and quantitative data for advocating to funders and policy makers for more services as well as trainings and support for frontline workers.
- Surrey LIP and membership organizations should include the voices of advocacy groups and subject experts around specific issues that directly impact newcomers such as housing, mental health, and food safety.

EDUCATION

- Support organizations in providing ongoing training and learning opportunities for service providers around skills they need to do their work, trauma-informed practices and taking care of their own mental health.

COLLABORATION

- Host networking opportunities for frontline workers to share information and resources.
- Provide channels for service providers to share information, resources and and make referrals.
- Engage Immigrant Advisory Committee and other immigrant-led initiatives to help provide needed translation and explore peer-to-peer models for settlement.

ADDRESS NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Critically underserved; other issues are arising such as vulnerability as employees, precarious housing and poor mental health.

ADVOCACY

- Create an ongoing information channel to regularly update Surrey LIP members with qualitative and quantitative data on the needs and challenges of international students so that they can report to funders and lobby policymakers for increasing inclusion in funding streams (provincial and federal).
- Provide recommendations and letter templates to service providers for the upcoming 2024/2025 call for proposals process from IRCC to expand eligibility for settlement services to international students and other non-permanent resident newcomers.
- Engage the energy and knowledge of international students to promote greater inclusion.
- Advocate particularly for the provincial government to take more responsibility for the well-being of International Students.

COLLABORATION

- Create a working table or hold a summit to address issues related to international students, including post-secondary institutions, BCSIS providers, libraries, schools and private sector employers.
- Expanding its membership to include more employers and private sector providers can help Surrey LIP promote and support international students as a skilled labour pool, needing and wanting to work.

EDUCATION

- Through events and campaigns, provide opportunities for cultural sharing and learning about the contributions that international students make to the community.

ADDRESS NEEDS OF REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

Critically underserved; other issues are arising such as precarious housing, poor mental health, and delayed settlement and employment.

ADVOCACY

- Create an information channel to regularly update Surrey LIP members with qualitative and quantitative data on the needs and challenges of refugee claimants so that they can report to funders and lobby policy makers for increasing inclusion in funding streams (provincial and federal).
- Include the voices of refugee claimants in advocacy campaigns, including their challenges and their strengths to contribute to better services.
- Support MAP in advocating for a shelter in the Surrey dedicated to refugee claimants.

EDUCATION

- Work with MAP and the Refugee Readiness Team (DIVERSEcity) to create awareness around the challenges, barriers and conditions refugee claimants face, as well as around the contributions refugee claimants make.
- Explore opportunities to provide language classes for refugee claimants (e.g. volunteer programs)

- Membership with the Canadian Council for Refugees can also support the Surrey LIP in a collective, informed response to migration issues in communities across Canada

COLLABORATION

- Create a working table to address issues related to refugee claimants, including representation from MAP, BCSIS providers, libraries, schools, health sector and legal advisory.
- Work with MAP and the Refugee Readiness Team to explore possibilities around building a geographic hub for information about services available for refugee claimants.
- Share My Refugee Claim and BC Charms websites widely with Surrey LIP council members and other service providers.
- Strengthen communication channels with MAP and those providing services to refugee claimants to ensure that accurate information is flowing in all directions, thus building understanding and trust with all stakeholders.

PROMOTE INCLUSION

Prepare the broader community to welcome newcomers

ADVOCACY

- Work with RAMP (DIVERSEcity) to create an advocacy campaign to curate resources for an anti-racism initiative in Surrey

COLLABORATION

- Work with the City of Surrey's newly named 'Social Equity and Diversity' department on emerging social development strategies

EDUCATION

- Create events and cultural sharing opportunities for awareness-building and connectivity with broader community that highlight the contributions of immigrants
- Build a collective vision and effort towards how service providers can model inclusion of newcomers (e.g. the language we use) and champion diversity
- Work with RAMP and build anti-racism education tools
- Engage more settled immigrants through the Immigrant Advisory to take part in facilitating conversations with newcomers to ensure their voices are part of all learning for service providers and employers

Conclusion

The purpose of the Surrey LIP is to bring diverse perspectives and resources together to build an equitable and inclusive city where all immigrants, refugees, and citizens thrive. One of its key activities is to inform the development of the immigrant and refugee strategic plans for the larger community of stakeholders to use in program and service planning and policy and practice reviews. It is the hope that the information, strategies and priority areas identified in this report can inform such processes and support the Surrey LIP in its ongoing leadership of service provision for newcomers in Surrey.

The Surrey LIP can consolidate and articulate Surrey LIP efforts through three key strategies:

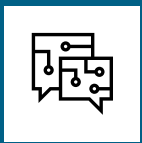
1. As a regular channel of information for advocacy;
2. As a vehicle for collaboration for settlement, non-settlement, and public and private sectors;
3. To provide education and awareness-raising across communities

The Surrey LIP is already leading in these areas through its many innovative and community-driven initiatives. By more intentionally implementing these strategies within Priority Areas, a more multi-faceted, resourced and effective approach can be developed. In light of the breadth and depth of challenges facing both newcomers and the organizations and people that serve them, nothing less than a precisely articulated, collaborative, committed effort is required.




2023 Needs Assessment for Newcomers Services in Surrey

For Surrey Local Immigration Partnership



Flow Society for Newcomers

1801-909 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2N2

 604 786-6402

 andrea@flowsociety.ca

 www.flowsociety.ca