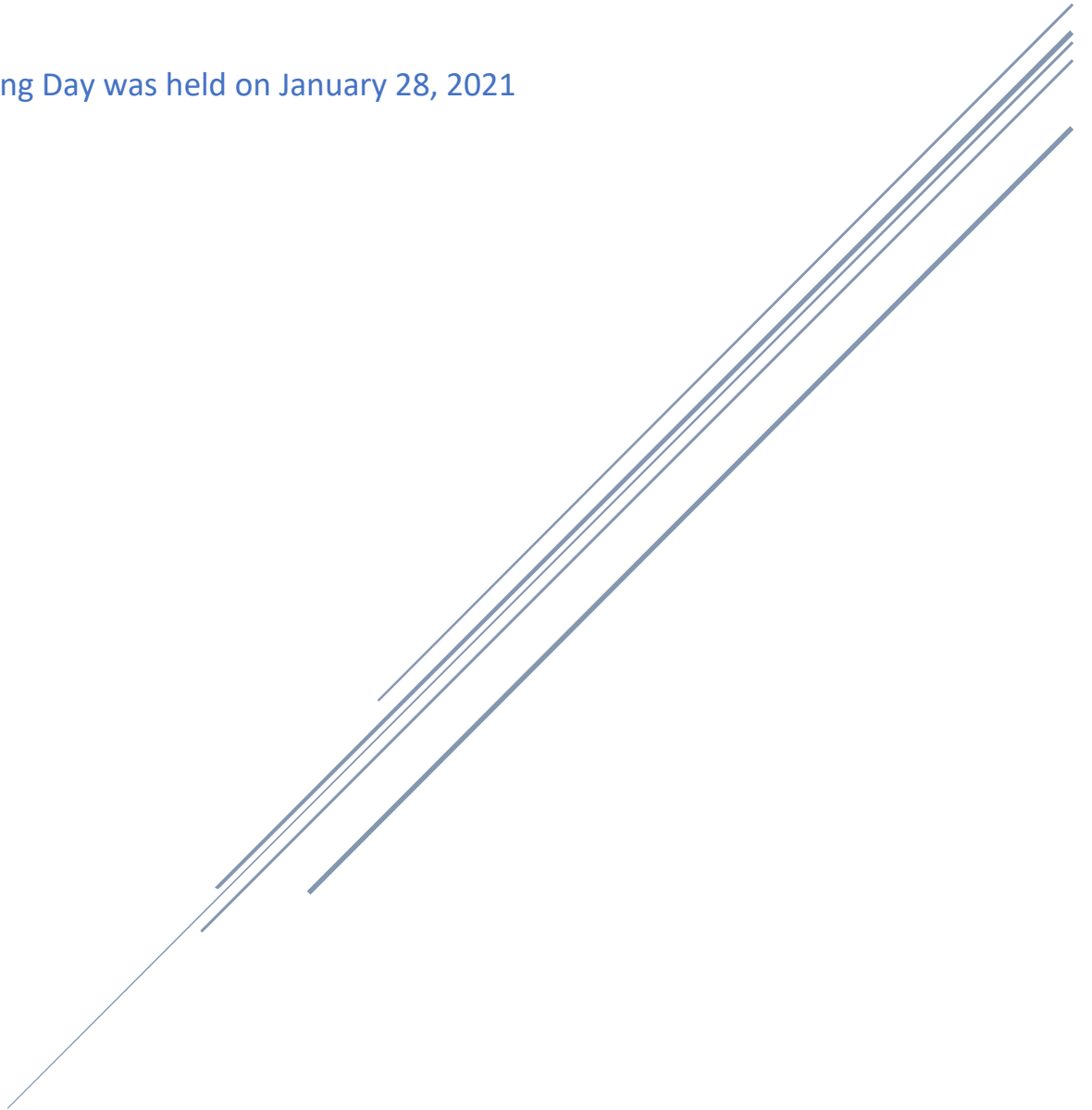# 2021 IRCC PLANNING DAY

Executive Council Report

March 31, 2021

The Planning Day was held on January 28, 2021

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our special thanks to the core Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Planning Day Committee for its dedication to making this day a success.

The committee was comprised of:

Stefany Cutuli	IRCC
Stefanie Isler	IRCC
Marwan Ismail	Polycultural Immigration & Community Services
Sue Sadler	ACCES Employment
Jocelyn Chadwick	Regional Municipality of Halton
Richard Cloke	Halton Newcomer Strategy / Regional Municipality of Halton
Seba Jessri	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Cassandra Bangay	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Rodel Imbarlina-Ramos	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Ryelle Strategy Group	

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land on which we live, work and gather, even virtually, is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

The land on which the Region of Peel and the Regional Municipality of Halton operates is rich in history and modern traditions of many First Nations and Métis peoples. From the Anishinabek to the Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, the Métis and Ojibway/Chippewa peoples, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land, and by doing so, give our respect to its first inhabitants.

We also acknowledge that we are all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers – as migrant either in this generation or in generations past and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We pay tribute to the ancestors of those of African-Indigenous origin and descent.

Ryelle Strategy Group facilitated the event and produced this report.

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Executive Summary

The 2021 IRCC Planning Day was a first as almost 100 participants gathered using Zoom to connect with each other and strategize about continuing to achieve service excellence during an unprecedented time in our history. The change of format did not dampen the enthusiasm of representatives from Peel, Halton, and northern Ontario.

Participants were given the chance to reflect on the challenges and opportunities over the past year in a pre-event survey which was circulated in advance of the event. The outcomes of the survey identified four priorities that laid the foundation for the half day of reflection, discussion, and action planning. The event was structured to emulate an in-person Planning Day, allowing participants to engage in small group discussions focused on opportunities and challenges within the sector with a view to providing solutions to inform moving forward together.

Eleven (11) groups reported back on each of the priority areas, yielding key findings and recommendations under each of the four priority areas including:

<u>Enhancing Service Capacity</u>

- Enhancing service capacity is a critical priority. Although responses varied in terms of how this priority area ranked against the others, it is evident this is an area of concern to meet the ongoing and evolving needs of clients served by settlement organizations.
- COVID-19 restrictions have raised concern that organizations have not been able to be as responsive to their clients as they would wish, despite the swift move to virtual services.
- Increased sector collaboration can support the sharing of best practices, innovative ideas, and key learnings across staff and organizations.

<u>Leveraging Technology More Effectively</u>

- Support for digital literacy needs range from education on functionality of technology, to offering resources in multiple languages to aide learning for those for whom English or French is not a first language.
- Provide education specific resources that include detailed instructions for technology use to support online education in addition to exploration of in classroom and online hybrid learning model.
- Increase funding for investment in technology needs and associated costs.

<u>IRCC Operational Supports</u>

- IRCC's responsive support throughout this challenging year was noted throughout many group discussions as critical and appreciated. One group said "without IRCC support, we cease to exist".
- Invest in activity audits across the sector focused on case management, funding needs, and streamlined knowledge sharing to inform opportunities and gaps that exist/have developed as an outcome of the pandemic.
- Provide flexibility in funding parameters to enable organizations to adjust as needed.

<u>Increased Immigrant Admissions</u>

- Increased immigrant admissions provide sustainability for the programs and services offered by service provider organizations.
- Service provider organizations should work collaboratively to strengthen the sector. Some examples shared were to expand partnerships in the community to increase housing capacity, explore opportunities to work collectively to manage the influx of newcomers to the region and to identify platforms that can crossover among multiple agencies.
- Increase settlement staff across the sector to ensure proper support to new immigrants.

In addition to the many observations and recommendations of the day, a number of opportunities emerged that can be achieved in the short term to build additional capacity in the sector while demonstrating responsiveness to a COVID-19 landscape. These include:

- Creation of opportunities for collaboration across the sector to develop a central source of resources and information to be leveraged by staff including technological supports, marketing and communications, digital literacy resources and more.
- Assess opportunities to build and execute programming on consistent platforms across the sector to improve the client experience and supported by targeted training and support for staff.
- Provide flexible funding opportunities to allow agencies to adjust to the changing landscape and growing demand for supports due to the pandemic, particularly technology and digital literacy.
- Provide professional development and capacity building opportunities for staff to strengthen skills, address mental health challenges, and support them in the effective delivery of programs and services.

Context

This past year has been unprecedented. With the onset of COVID-19, service provider organizations had to quickly pivot and adjust in order to meet the evolving needs of the clients they serve. As a result of the pandemic, the Executive Council of Peel-Halton decided to postpone the planning day originally scheduled for 2020. One year later, the event transitioned to a virtual format on Zoom and took place on Thursday January 28th from 8:30am – 1:00pm. 106 participants registered for the event and 98 individuals joined on the day. Participants were predominantly from the Region of Peel and the Regional Municipality of Halton, with some attendees joining from Sault Ste Marie and North Bay. There was also representation from funders including the Region of Peel and United Way of Greater Toronto, in addition to several representatives from IRCC.

A full list of participating organizations can be found in Appendix A.

A primary objective for the day was to emulate an in-person event as much as possible, providing participants with an opportunity to share their thoughts and insights in a small group setting while benefitting from the presentations in the larger group. Unlike previous years where the sessions were a full day in length, the 2021 IRCC Planning Day was reduced to a half day in order to maximize engagement for participants while being cognizant of the demands of extended participation in a virtual format.

A second key objective as determined by the Planning Day's organizing committee was to document and celebrate settlement sector resiliency.

Gillian Wan, Director, Integration – Settlement Network, Ontario Region, IRCC, Sue Sadler representing Executive Council, and Richard Cloke representing the Halton Newcomer Strategy delivered opening remarks. Rodel Imbarlina-Ramos from Peel Newcomer Strategy Group served as host. All speakers set the tone for the day, highlighting the importance of the sector coming together to address the evolving landscape as a result of COVID-19.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has changed the way we work and has had a direct impact on the settlement sector. Service provider agencies have had to quickly adapt in order to meet the ongoing needs of the individuals and families they serve. Technology has become an absolute essential, forcing staff and clients alike to utilize digital platforms to engage with one another and deliver/access programs and services.

Peel Region

Peel Region is an immigrant-majority population. According to 2016 census data, immigrants account for 51.5% of Peel's population of 1.4 million residents. Among them, 94,105 are

newcomers who arrived in Canada during the 2011- 2016 census period. This means that over this five-year period, Peel welcomed an average of 18,821 newcomers annually.[1]

In 2016, Canada admitted 296,346 permanent residents, and Peel settled about 6.4% of this total. If this proportion holds and the challenges around COVID-19 are addressed locally and abroad, the annual newcomer settlement level of almost 19,000 for Peel Region will increase to 25,600 in 2021, 26,300 in 2022, and almost 27,000 by 2023, representing a 43% increase over 2011-2016 annualized figures – or, an estimated 8,100 more annually by 2023 than in 2016.

Halton Region

Between 2011 and 2016, Halton Region welcomed 20,485 newcomers, an average of 3,414 per year. During this period, Halton's share of immigrants represented 4.3% of 472,170 provincial landings, and represented 1.69% of Canada's 1,212,075 landings.[2]

Canada's 2021 – 2023 Immigration Levels Plan aims to admit 421,000 newcomers in 2023 alone. If Halton maintains its previous share of these landings at 1.69%, Halton would see 7,114 newcomers in 2023, representing an 108% increase over 2016.[3]

Following these projections, 6,776 newcomers will arrive in Halton in 2021, and 6,945 in 2022 for a total of 20,835 to the Region in three years.

[1] Peel Newcomer Strategy Group. (2019). *Report on Peel Newcomers*.
https://www.peelnewcomer.org/site/peel_newcomer_strategy_group__new/assets/pdf/pnsg_2019-report-on-peel-newcomers_v1-6_interactive.pdf
[2] Statistics Canada. 2017. *Halton, RM [Census division], Ontario and Canada [Country]* (table). *Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.
https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed January 26, 2021).
[3] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html

Past IRCC Planning Day consultations

November 17, 2016 IRCC Planning Day

The top priorities identified in the 2016 IRCC Planning Day include:

1. Crisis intervention, specifically in situations dealing with mental health
2. Building capacity and providing training for service providers
3. Challenges securing employment for clients and their relationships with employers
4. The lack of demographic-specific programming
5. The need to share client information while also reducing bureaucracy
6. Improving access to programming and reducing wait-lists

Other issues highlighted include housing, transportation, systemic issues (such as racism, inequity and lack of access to services), as well as the need for outreach, promotion, and engagement of newcomers, partners and employers.

The 2016 report recommended the following high-level next steps:
- Increasing data sharing across communities and government levels
- Professional development and building capacity in specialized areas, like crisis intervention and demographic-specific programming by leveraging the expertise of community partners (such as post-secondary education and business)
- Creating more opportunities for centralization, designating a lead to launch an environmental scan, inventory and increase service provider access to data, training, referrals and system navigation for clients
- Increased virtual offerings for clients and service providers

Since the November 16, 2016 IRCC Planning Day:
- Priorities generated at the Planning Day were assigned to Executive Council and PHD Language & Settlement Partnership sub-committees
- Additional crisis intervention worker roles were added to the settlement landscape, crisis intervention workers' forums were held in January 2018, and a listing of crisis intervention workers across Peel and Halton was developed and circulated
- Francophone service navigation was developed
- Various professional development and capacity-building workshops were planned and conducted
- Strategies to mitigate wait-lists for language training were discussed

Four key priorities were identified during the 2018 IRCC Planning Day:

1. **Exploring a holistic approach to employment services**, acknowledging that essential and diverse stakeholders (employer, government, education) are required to address the complexities of helping newcomers gain employment commensurate with their education, skills and work experience and remove barriers, such as transportation, housing, childcare, etc.

2. **Culturally appropriate mental health supports** as mental health and trauma support continue to feature prominently in community planning discussions, including stigma attached to these issues and frontline settlement's role in identifying mental health challenges and referring to appropriate supports.

3. **Taking a collaborative approach to service delivery and systems navigation** since both Halton and Peel continue to experience high levels of growth while social infrastructure struggles to keep pace. System-level service navigation and coordination as well as limited real-time data continue to be concerns as service providers are not fully aware of the programs and services available in their own and other communities, impacting their ability to make timely referrals or programming choices best suited to client needs.

4. **Building the capacity and knowledge of service providers**, as investment and continuity in robust professional development and training for service providers would lend exponential benefits to service providers to help them deliver high-quality services.

Since the September 18, 2018 IRCC Planning Day:
- Settlement-sector insights were reported in PNSG's *2019 Report on Peel Newcomers*
- A survey was administered in 2018 and 2020 to help rank newcomer and service-provider priorities
- A list of settlement workers by languages spoken (over 300) was developed
- Mental health referral resources were developed by crisis counsellors, and related training were provided to settlement workers
- A second crisis counsellor forum was held in 2019
- Advocacy for more crisis counselling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Employer concerns were relayed from sub-committees to Executive Council, and an anticipated transformation of Employment Ontario was discussed
- Professional development and capacity-building workshops continued to be planned and offered on various topics, such as employment, technology and youth. Renewed workshop capacity was coordinated by PNSG to respond to new needs resulting from COVID-19 (virtual service delivery supports, client and service provider resiliency and mental health, strengthening a client-centered perspective)

Resiliency Throughout COVID-19

Unquestionably, COVID-19 has had a profound impact on individuals, organizations and communities alike. Over the past year, people have been isolated from friends and family, many have lost their jobs, children and families have had to adapt to online learning, and many have struggled with new or heightened mental health challenges.

But despite these impacts, the sector has seen incredible stories of resilience. Organizations have demonstrated their ability to quickly respond to change to meet the emerging needs of their clients. Service provider organizations in the Region of Peel and Regional Municipality of Halton transitioned services to a digital platform, adjusted programs, and even created new programs, to respond to the new reality for newcomers in the community, all done with a demonstrated commitment to ensure that the incredible clients they support have what they need to thrive.

A key objective for this event was to share stories of resilience and demonstrate the sector's ability to deliver critical supports. It was an opportunity to show how innovative, nimble and determined theyare, in the face of adversity, to ensure clients receive what they need, when they need it. It was imperative to dedicate time on the agenda to hear these stories not only to motivate, inspire and celebrate significant contributions in the sector over the past year, but to provide a learning opportunity for one another about successful strategies born out of necessity.

As part of the pre-event survey, respondents were asked to share their stories of resilience and a snapshot of these are shared below. See Appendix B for all stories of resilience shared via the pre-event survey.

> **Chinese Association of Mississauga:** *"At the beginning of the school closures, our teachers tried to teach online but since it was a new task for all the teachers, they did not know how to teach online. We registered our teachers for online courses such as LearnIT2teach and some online training from Tutela. After learning, our teachers were confident with online teaching."*

> **Catholic Cross-cultural Services:** *"We have also adjusted our service delivery approach to match the new remote delivery environment (more visual content, flexible service hours, interactive engaging activities, allowing for additional time for newcomers to engage with other newcomers attempting to foster connections, and always keeping in mind the negative impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of newcomers and staff)"*

> **Vietnamese Community Centre of Mississauga:** *"COVID-19 is indeed a serious challenge since it came without much warning and we had to hit the road running. It was only because of the experience and professionalism of the staff members who made a concerted effort as team and came to each other, to support and help to set up a digital platform to deliver the lessons online. The students show their appreciation that we have been trying out new ways to establish a better learning platform. We have tried our best to assist all clients. We inform clients about services available in the*

area and help them choose what and where they want to receive services. Depending on the individual cases, we also provide free interpreter service directly with our staff or over the phone, or we refer the rest in according to the needs of clients."

Newcomer Centre of Peel: "*At the onset of the pandemic, many of our students did not make the switch to the online module. They would not show up to the classes. The administrative team worked hard and called every single missing student to draw them back to the class. Our teaching staff redesigned their classes and material to create exciting new online lessons. As a result of the collaborative and innovative hard work, our registration numbers are higher than they were in the pre-pandemic days."*

Halton Multicultural Council: "*Management came together with all hands-on-deck – delivering cell phones, shopping for masks, arranging for acrylic shields. IT supported us throughout the transition with a smile on their face although they carried many heavy pieces of the transition. Front line staff stayed safe and focused on supporting people in the best way possible and supporting their colleagues until everyone got the basics of the new tech environments. And our funders have all been superbly supportive so we can focus on the important work of supporting people."*

On the day of the event, participants had the opportunity to hear stories from six (6) of their peers to celebrate resiliency in the sector. A common theme among all of the speakers was one of hope for 2021 – staff and organizations have acclimated to the COVID-19 context, new and exciting ideas have come to fruition, and clients continued to receive the supports and services they need.

The creativity shared by organizations demonstrated a forward-looking vision during an unprecedented time in our history. Not only did organizations quickly pivot to the new COVID-19 reality, but they also built new tools, and events to celebrate and support their work. It was evident that this initiative will continue to see continued evolution of services to clients, staff and the communities in which they operate.

Participants heard stories of resilience and hope. These included:

- Students at Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir creating a calendar as a visual expression of hope to inspire others.
- Caledon Community Services transitioned their 50-year anniversary celebrations to a virtual platform after the resounding success of their multicultural day.
- ThePeel District School Board shared that instructors and newcomers alike have become very tech savvy after participating in upskilling opportunities to increase their technological knowledge.
- YES Employment has developed a "Welcoming Workplace" program, creating brand recognition that is building trust with the community.
- The Syrian Canadian Foundation has been able to expand their geographical reach with the increased usage of technology to deliver programming.

One of the stories of hope that was submitted by Achēv focused on the "ongoing technology advancement at the organizational level to adapt to a blended/hybrid service delivery model during and post COVID. "We're looking forward to delivering services to our clients in the manner they want, in person, on-line or a hybrid". This is an excellent example of the opportunities the pandemic has created for the sector and will provide options in program delivery that will best suit the clients being served, reinforcing once again the resilience that exists in the sector.

Pre-Event Survey

In preparation for the event, each Executive Council member organization was asked to complete an online pre-event survey. The survey results informed the IRCC Planning Day agenda while also documenting member organization's strategies and practices in response to service delivery challenges brought on by the pandemic.

The survey was issued to 42 Executive Council organizations and had a response rate of 45%. One additional organization did complete the survey after the close date and their responses were integrated into the survey analysis.

The following information was shared with the IRCC Planning Day participants as part of a pre-event package and represents the aggregated outcomes of the survey data.

How has your organization adapted to challenges posed by COVID-19?

Organizations say they have adapted well to the challenges posed by COVID-19, and funders were commended for their support and flexibility around the set-up costs.

Overwhelmingly, responses focused on the transition to virtual service delivery. Organizations report smooth transitions and spoke of creativity and innovation in service adaptation. Existing skills and experience by those who provided some online programming were leveraged to make a full transition to virtual service. Some start-up challenges include:

- o Upskilling of staff on use of various platforms
- o Securing enough laptops and phone connections for home use
- o Ensuring access for clients

These challenges did not appear to have a significant impact on organizations' ability to execute alternative methods for service delivery. To enable staff to work remotely and continue delivering critical programs and services safely, COVID-19 specific measures were implemented and included the acquisition and distribution of PPE, revised procedures around working from home, time-off and work refusal polices.

Some respondents also highlighted their efforts in developing policies and procedures specific to COVID-19. One agency organized a pandemic task force with representation from all levels of the organization to provide a well-rounded approach to their work and address any potential challenges and/or gaps that surfaced. In addition, information from ongoing check-ins with public health authorities were communicated with staff and clients.

Based on what you have learned over the past year what gaps still exist in your ability to operate in this new environment? e.g. program and service delivery need to be adapted to on-line format, upskilling of clients on how to use virtual services, drop-in clients because of service disruption, clients lack access to technology

The biggest gap identified by most respondents was access to technology and training for clients, many of whom have limited English language skills. Some clients only access to technology is through a phone. Many are facing challenges in accessing technology in the home and will put their children's needs for learning before their own. Language barriers also impact one's ability to access up-to-date information from news or government sources.

Crisis counselling and a lack of resources for mental wellness assistance are areas in need of greater attention and support for clients and staff. Also highlighted was the fact that certain supports and interventions do not lend themselves well to online interactions, particularly in the early stages when trust needs to be established.

What is working well?

The commitment to client service drives the spirit of adaptability and innovation amongst staff. Respondents cited a solid level of staff comfort with technology, that enabled their ability to quickly move in-person services such as education, online counselling, online employment and settlement webinars, and LINC classes to virtual delivery.

Connections, shared programming, and referrals amongst community agencies demonstrate a spirit of collaboration that improves service delivery and support mechanisms for clients.

The experience and professionalism of staff members, the flexibility and support of funders to adjust programming as needed, and the recognition that this was not the time to 'wait for the perfect solution' also resulted in success in:

- o Remote synchronous lessons, connections and shared programming/referrals
- o Higher virtual attendance in some programs
- o Group activities, digital literacy support and adjustments in how to meet people
- o Free interpreter services

What is not working well?

Equity of accessibility to technology dominated the results of this question. This ranges from the quality of home internet, low levels of digital literacy and the catch-up required on the technical side to meet virtual service delivery needs.

Funders are encouraged to review some policies and procedures that hamper effectiveness in the virtual world, such as the need to accept e-signatures, thus speeding up access to service. The element of trust in receiving virtual services from government can be a factor as clients do not always trust government given their experience with government in their country of origin. The need to operate in a virtual environment was also cited as a challenge in building trust if there was not an opportunity to develop a relationship in-person pre-COVID-19.

Time management challenges on the part of clients, particularly for those whose children also needed internet access for school, low English language literacy amongst some clients, and limited access to online supports were among the biggest challenges raised.

Isolation, high levels of stress and depression, and lack of human contact are issues raised by clients, especially seniors, women and youth. Clients are mentioning their frustration over the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and well-being due to different factors including loss of all or some income and staying home with family and children 24/7.

Mental health issues exacerbated by stressful environments when everyone is home trying to work or go to school is an issue for clients and staff alike.

One respondent reported an increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic. Where able, support counselling was provided and referrals were made. Custody battles and visitation schedules were among some of the issues cited that added to the stress level of clients and their children.

When you look back over the past year what changes would you like to keep and embed in your organization?

Overwhelmingly, respondents intend to keep online service delivery in place, including online courses, LINC classes, counselling and program delivery post pandemic. In some cases, blended formats will be explored with some clients meeting in-person and some meeting online. This will allow clients a more flexible method to participate in class in "real-time". Blended learning is seen to encourage stronger digital skills and improve accessibility. The need for hybrid services extends to workshops, commissioner of oaths services, and hybrid 1:1 counselling.

Ongoing online services can work well in areas with poor access to public transportation or challenges with accessing childcare. On the staff side, there are things that can be done from home going forward, like data entry and phone call follow-ups. An ongoing mix of in-office and in-home work may become more permanent depending on the job function.

Assessing a client's ability to engage online will be an important criterion in determining how best to provide service in the future – for example, access to online mediums, internet and devices at first point of contact and offering digital literacy skills building. Newcomer learners could be equipped with learning devices.

There is a strong desire to provide staff withopportunities to share best practices and training internally and with other organizations in a virtual setting. This will ensure continued mutal support and positive connections. Respondents said open and transparent communication will continue to be essential, particularly when people are interacting virtually.

Organizations have quickly moved to learn and apply many IT tools such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom or Zoom meetings and want to continue to use them in their work.

What support will you need to achieve these priorities?
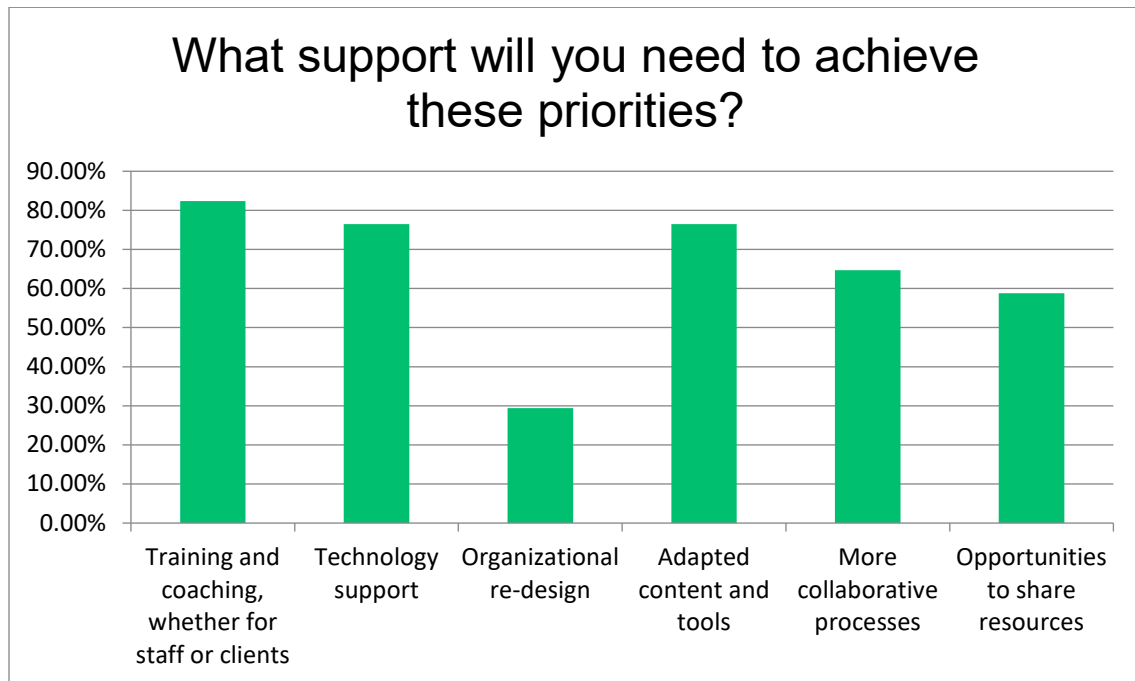
Other:
- o Funding flexibility and support for customized service delivery
- o Program delivery targets and outcomes
- o Policy re-design

What supports would you like to see provided by the funder?

Technology

- o Funding to buy IT hardware, such as tablet computers and licenses for software such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams

Information and Best Practice Sharing

- o Continued support for staff to network, opportunities for collaborative development, and best practices
- o Greater support for virtual classes - focusing on mental health, self-esteem, fun, community connections

Budget Flexibility/Program Support/Funding

- o Flexibility to implement changes within existing budgets and program parameters to reflect the new reality, including dedicated funding for content redesign
- o Funding for new employment-based programs to support clients struggling with the job market
- o Reconsideration of direct-cost eligibility for things like honoraria, recruitment, communications, etc.
- o Ability to carry slippage over to 2021-22 budgets
- o Streamlined administration of jointly funded projects
- o Updating of policies, procedures and requirements (such as PBLA)

Identifying Emerging Issues/Critical Need

Approach

The goal of the IRCC Planning Day was to bring representatives from across the sector together to discuss challenges and gaps, identify solutions, and provide IRCC with both a "state of sector" report and recommendations for IRCC in how best to work with the sector during such a challenging time.

Consistent with past planning days, the following philosophical approach was carried through to 2021:

Client Focused	Outcomes Driven	Responsive to Needs	Effective Use of Resources

Format

Event participants were segmented into eleven (11) groups and provided the opportunity to speak with one another using the breakout group feature in Zoom. In order to maximize conversations, worksheets (Appendix D) were created and distributed in advance of the event. Participants were asked to select a facilitator/scribe and timekeeper to ensure flow of conversation. Scribes were to upload their completed worksheets to a cloud based program so the input could be fully captured in this report. In addition to recording the large group sessions, participants were also asked to record and upload their breakout room discussions, however, recordings were received from two (2) groups only.

Identified Priorities

The findings of the pre-event survey identified key priorities and challenges being faced by the sector, enabling both a "deeper dive" during the day's discussions and an opportunity to strategize for the future. The top four priorities were:

- Enhancing Service Capacity
- Leveraging Technology More Effectively,
- IRCC Operational supports
- Increased immigrant admissions.

The interdependence of all four priorities was a key reflection of many of the breakout groups. One group noted "We believe all of these priorities are overlapping and interchangeable. Each one influences the other". Many groups had difficulty identifying one priority area as the most important. Groups highlighted the importance of looking at sector needs from both the organizational and client perspective, as priorities may shift depending on individual service focus. For example, some organizations may prioritize increased immigrant admissions as most important as it lends to sustainability of programs and services, whereas enhanced service capacity may be the most critical element for the clients.

The outcomes that follow are aggregated from discussions held during Breakout Session #1 and are presented by priority area.

Enhancing Service Capacity

Overall, enhancing service capacity is a critical priority for the sector. Although group responses varied in terms of how this priority area ranked against the others, it is evident this is an area of concern in order to meet the ongoing and evolving needs of clients served by the settlement sector organizations.

Many groups indicated that additional support for case management is important as family struggles have increased due to COVID-19. Furthermore, service provider organizations report their clients experience new issues as a result of the pandemic that must be addressed. These include social isolation and technological challenges, and on the staff side, an increased focused for counsellors on settlement and employment.

Some group participants felt that action taken in this priority area will have the most immediate, visible results, although many highlighted that enhanced service capacity needs go hand in hand with addressing the significant increase in technology requirements arising from the pandemic.

When Planning Day participants were asked to identify which priority area clients would respond to and value most, the majority of groups said enhanced service capacity is crucial and is directly connected to greater access to, and familiarity with technology, both for clients and service provider organizations.

Clients report an increase in stress and anxiety due to pandemic induced isolation. Building staff capacity to support clients experiencing COVID-19 induced loneliness is a new challenge for organizations combined with the need to deliver more one on one coaching in support of those seeking employment.

Concern was raised that staff and organizations may be unable to be as responsive to their clients as they would wish because of COVID-19 imposed restrictions. These include the inability to have face to face discussions, increased technological challenges, and clients prioritizing their family's needs over their own, has magnified demands on service provider organizations.

Leveraging Technology More Effectively

COVID-19 has forced organizations to quickly pivot program and service delivery to clients and technology plays a key role in the success of this re-orientation. Requirements include accessing technology supports, training for clients and staff and improving digital literacy. All groups discussed the impact of technology on the sector with the majority of groups highlighting the role technology plays in the across all priority areas.

Amongst groups who indicated leveraging technology more effectively was the top priority, issues included:

- Technical issues for clients due to low bandwidth, internet connectivity, lack of availability and/or access to up to date technology.
- The need for digital literacy supports – many clients, particularly older individuals, have a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding how technology works and how it can be used. This include device use as well as the application of various platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. Additionally, many seniors rely on more traditional communication devices such as printed flyers/newsletters to access their information.
- Increased feelings of isolation resulting from the inability to engage with peers and access programming face to face.
- Gaps in standardized processes and procedures that can be accessed by service provider organizations across the sector.
- Addressing privacy and security concerns including the ability to use digital signatures for required documentation.
- A need for increased funding to address technology needs.

Groups expressed a sense of urgency to address technology issues as necessary to support positive immediate and lasting impacts for clients, students and organizational staff alike. Training on the use of technology to support discussions, programming, education and more, is needed to ensure that service provider organizations can effectively support their clients. One group noted that "with training and access to technology, we will be able to offer blended services which is cost-effective and client-centered". It is critical to note that it is not just clients of organizations but employees themselves, who will benefit from action being taken under this priority area. By accessing technology specific training, staff will be able to better serve and coach their clients. Furthermore, this will help to establish trust and comfort online for learners, educators, clients and staff.

Finally, there was a resounding consensus among participants to identify opportunities where traditional tools and training can be modified to function on digital platforms. Some examples include evolving IRCC documentation to be mobile friendly, aiding clients in improving their employability skills by learning digital/technological skills to navigate through the our current COVID-19 dominated environment, and digital one-on-one coaching.

IRCC Operational Supports

IRCC's responsive support throughout this challenging year was noted throughout many group discussions as critical and appreciated. One group said "without IRCC support, we cease to exist".

The role IRCC plays is foundational, providing valuable insights, direction and funding to service provider organizations to deliver meaningful and impactful programs and services to newcomers in our community.

Many groups spoke about the need for IRCC to be flexible in its funding distribution in order to adapt to the continually evolving COVID-19 landscape. Many families are experiencing greater income inequality and becoming increasingly vulnerable. As a result, there is a desire to modify programs and their accompanying metrics to be responsive to client need. Some also felt that services connected to employment should be "tweaked" to support clients in their job search while also helping them navigate through the stress and anxiety they are experiencing. Many families require financial supports to sustain them through the pandemic with needs ranging from accessing basic necessities through to education for their child(ren).

There is an opportunity for IRCC to play a role in creating a united voice for everything from technological platforms accessed by staff and clients, to enabling more consistency in programming and services across the sector. One group felt that IRCC has a strong voice and can "help negotiate more complex and comprehensive support for newcomers/immigrants" as it pertains to accessing technology needs, more specifically internet connections in remote communities, and staff recruitment.

Ultimately, IRCC operational supports will play an important role in both the short and long term, being uniquely positioned to have a big picture view of the successes, challenges and trends happening throughout the sector.

Increased Immigrant Admissions

Although participants acknowledged increased immigrant admissions as a priority, their primary focus and conversations leaned heavily to the above three priorities. One group did specifically indicate that increased immigrant admissions provide sustainability for the programs and services offered by service provider organizations.

Additional Considerations

Over and above the four priority areas identified, participants shared additional considerations necessary to provide the best care and support for the clients they serve.
These include:
- o Increased collaboration across the sector to foster opportunities for service providers to have a united voice.

- Crisis support for settlement, housing, mental health, culturally specific needs, human trafficking, and crisis management.
- Ongoing support and staff training in dealing with trauma, and mental health of clients.
- Ongoing support and staff training in effective technology use.
- Providing staff specific supports in the areas of mental health and wellbeing.
- Culturally customized services including language supports, multilingual videos and "online courses to learn English skills to be better equipped to deal with consequences".
- Increased involvement and vision from IRCC that provides flexibility where needed for service provider organizations to deliver on needs of their clients.
- Case management support.
- An increase in IRCC's budget allocation to service provider organizations.

System-Wide Solutions: Recommendations/Opportunities

The half day virtual session was full of robust discussion in each breakout group. Not only were participants asked to discuss emerging issues and critical needs, they also discussed system-wide solutions that will further strengthen the sector and ultimately, provide critical programs and services to support clients.

Participants were asked to identify three (3) activities under each priority area that need to happen over the next year to position the sector for success and to identify what resources and tools were needed to ensure these activities are achieved.

Enhancing Service Capacity

The recommended activities identified in this priority area are:
- Expand employment support for clients as they navigate through the pandemic. Additionally provide supports for precariously employed staff.
- Enhance capacity of staff to help them manage their workload, assess level of technological skills and provide professional development opportunities to further advance knowledge and skills.
- Investigate the expansion of services to include complex needs, mental health, crisis intervention, programming specific to families with children under the age of four, including interactive and engaging online resources.
- Increase collaboration across the sector to:
  - share best practices, successful innovative ideas, and key learnings
  - assess opportunities for partnership that can streamline services
  - identify efficiencies
  - explore communication tools and their impacts on delivering service
- Conduct needs assessment(s) and leverage existing data to:
  - map available services
  - identify opportunities/challenges connected to the transition to digital platforms including standardization of intake forms and digital signatures
  - build sustainable hybrid service delivery models
  - evaluate and improve quality of online services
- Work with IRCC to consult with contract holders on service redistribution that aligns with current and future growth patterns across Peel
- Review eligibility criteria for international students and identify opportunities to support individuals and families who do not meet IRCC directed criteria for support.

To support these activities, the following tools and resources are recommended:
- Provision of staff training to build internal capacity for new modes of program and service delivery.
- Volunteer training and coordination.

- Technology supports including protocols for tracking electronic resources, access to the technology, and provision of a safe and secure digital environment for sharing information.
- Capacity building and professional development opportunities for staff.
- Efficient and effective online language tools that can be modified to meet the needs of clients as well as a repository of agency developed, language specific resources.
- Set of standards across the sector to support recruitment along with additional settlement and employment workers to help execute the work.
- Accessible and user friendly reports from IRCC to support information gathering and implementation.
- Focus on data including real time data to inform service provider organizations' work, e.g. to help agencies understand where newcomers are settling
- Funding to support childcare

Leveraging Technology More Effectively

Recommended activities are:
- Working collaboratively across the sector to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of what, and how, technology is being used to further program delivery. This includes:
    - Sharing best practices and tools
    - Creating a shared database of resources that can be leveraged across the sector
    - Exploration of volume procurement efficiencies to support the sector as a whole
- Increase accessibility of technology (internet bandwidth through to actual devices) for clients including those who live in remote communities.
- Support digital literacy needs from education on functionality of technology to offering resources in multiple languages to support learning for those for whom English or French is not a first language. A suggested example was to "leverage LINC learning environment to build technology literacy for transitioning clients to digital".
- Explore the possibility of creating an app to support system navigation for clients and provide educational opportunities to help newcomers understand the Canadian landscape (e.g. Black Lives Matter movement).
- Provide education specific resources that include detailed instructions for technology use to support online education in addition to exploration of an in-classroom and online hybrid learning model.
- Review and assess opportunities to streamline online forms and documentation that are safe and secure, while enabling clients to use digital signatures. Where possible, provide forms and documentation in a variety of languages to support a positive client experience.

The following tools and resources are recommended to support these activities:
- Formal training for staff on how to build, navigate and execute digital platforms to deliver programming.
- Creation of a centralized hub of support for staff. This may include but is not limited to program supports for language instructors/educators/employment workers, client

assessments, digital literacy resources, social media assets, guidelines and best practices around privacy, confidentiality and consent.
- o Increased funding for investment in technology needs and associated costs.
- o Adaptive software that will enable LINC English classes to be taught in other languages.
- o Build more diverse conversation and homework circles to support English Language Development (ELD) students and their parents to practice English

IRCC Operational Supports

Recommended Activities:
- o Assess funding flexibility to include hybrid service delivery and new conceptions of what wrap-around services will look like in future.
- o Review and update policies, procedures and reporting requirements to reflect our current landscape as a result of COVID-19.
- o Invest in the design, development and execution of an effective and efficient digital platform that enables safe and secure transfer of personal client information and signatures.
- o Review existing budgets and identify opportunities to shift funds to support service provider organizations in adapting to the evolving landscape – particularly in terms of digital and technological needs from infrastructure and training to provision of devices for clients.
- o Complete an audit for funding investments to ensure that dollars are being allocated to organizations and regions proportionate to the number of newcomers in a particular area.
- o Be prepared to provide supports and services to newcomers from day one. This includes preparation for mental health needs, education and employment in addition to providing direct links for express entry immigrants prior to their arrival so settlement organizations can begin their work as soon as newcomers arrive in Canada.
- o Explore opportunities to help settlement workers connect with international students and support them until they are permanent residents.
- o Invest in activity audits across the sector focused on case management, funding needs and streamlined knowledge sharing that will inform opportunities and gaps that exist/have developed as an outcome of the pandemic.
- o Review and assess areas of opportunity to increase supports for ESL students and their families.

In order to support these activities, the following tools and resources are required:
- o Additional operational supports at the funder level to support service provider organizations to meet rapidly evolving demands.
- o Access to change management experts to support agencies managing their ongoing evolving environment and to create efficiencies.
- o Flexibility in funding parameters to enable organizations to adjust as needed.

Increased Immigrant Admissions

Recommended activities identified in this area are:
- o Service provider organizations should work collaboratively to strengthen the sector. Some examples shared were to expand partnerships in the community to increase housing capacity, explore opportunities to work collectively to manage the influx of newcomers to the region and identify platforms that can crossover among multiple agencies.
- o Review and assess opportunities to increase the number of pre-arrival services available to foster a smooth transition for individuals and families with a focus on mental health and employment supports.
- o Work collaboratively across the sector to create and execute joint marketing and communications strategies to increase awareness of services available.
- o Focus on family reunification, more specifically, expand the definition of family to support those who have lost their immediate family members.
- o Discourage settlement in major city centres as they are overwhelmed with the demand for service.
- o Expand resources to support service provider organizations to educate newcomers on systemic racism, Black Lives Matter movement, etc.

The following tools and resources are required to support the success of these activities:
- o Increase settlement staff across the sector.
- o Develop materials in a variety of languages to ease the transition for newcomers.
- o Develop a communication strategy that engages newcomers over the long term, so they are not overwhelmed with information when they first arrive.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The 2021 half day virtual IRCC Planning Day was a true demonstration of the sector's ability to adapt to a rapidly evolving environment. Throughout the session, we heard stories of resilience, ideas that fostered flexibility and a resounding commitment from the sector to deliver an excellent client experience to each and every newcomer they serve.

This report provides a detailed summary of discussions throughout the planning day to strengthen the settlement sector. Some opportunities emerging from discussions can be achieved in the short term to build additional capacity in the sector while demonstrating responsiveness to a COVID-19 landscape. These include:

1) Creation of opportunities for collaboration across the sector to develop a central source of resources and information to be leveraged by staff including technological supports, marketing and communications, digital literacy resources and more.

2) Assess opportunities to build and execute programming on consistent platforms across the sector to improve the client experience and supported by targeted training and support for staff.

3) Provide flexible funding opportunities to allow agencies to adjust to the changing landscape and growing demand for supports due to the pandemic, particularly technology and digital literacy.

4) Provide professional development and capacity building opportunities for staff to strengthen skills, address mental health challenges and support them in the effective delivery of programs and services.

The objectives of the 2021 Planning Day were to showcase resiliency in the settlement sector, explore opportunities for continued evolution and growth and to better position the settlement sector not only throughout the pandemic but beyond.

Participants were highly engaged throughout the event and the report back from breakout groups demonstrated a thoughtful and thorough examination of the questions posed. Recommendations are indicative of a high level of commitment and concern of all participants to the individuals they serve.

Photos
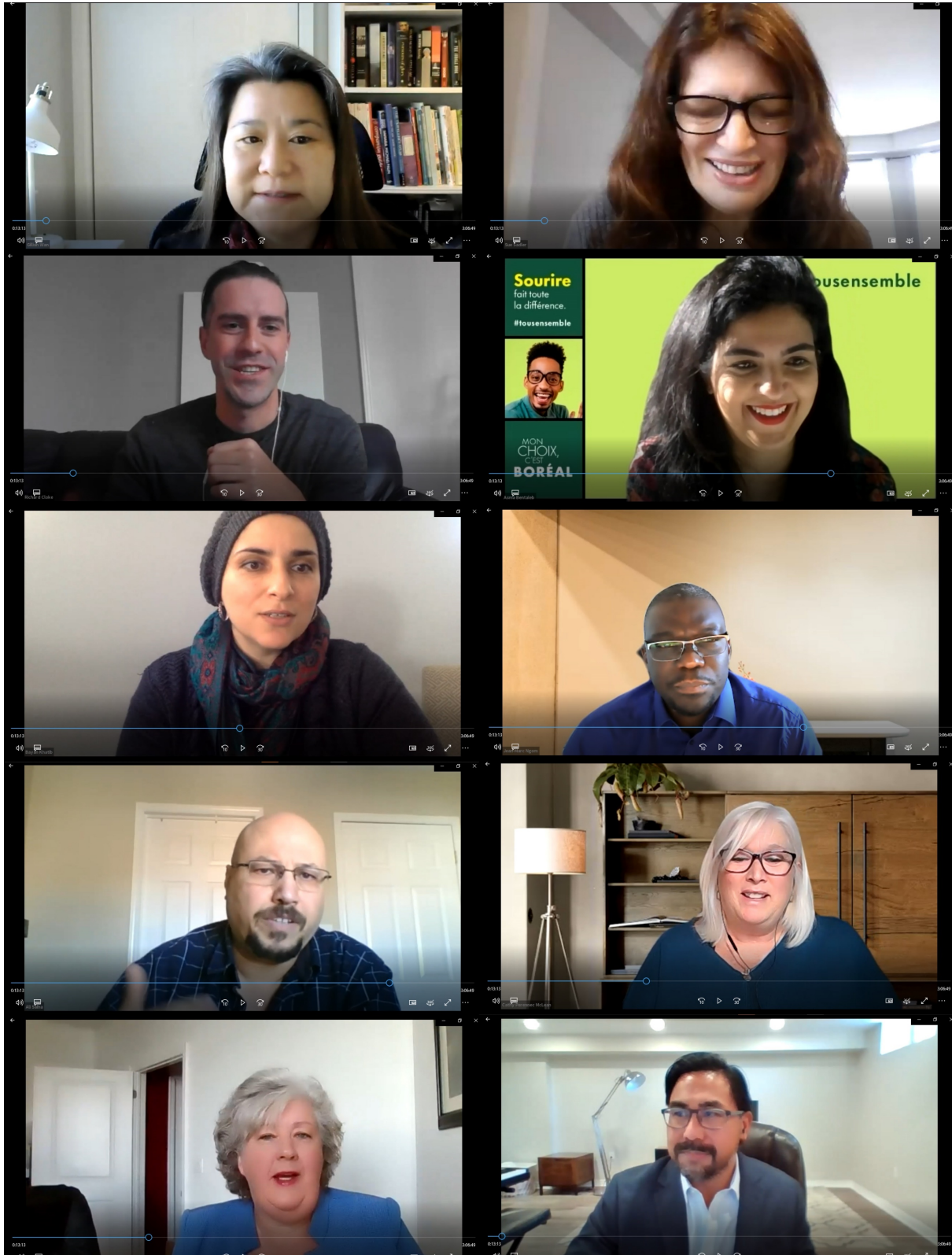
Appendix A: List of Participating Organizations

ACCES Employment
Achēv
Afghan Women's Organization
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel
Brampton Multicultural Community Centre
Caledon Community Services
Catholic Cross-cultural Services
Centre for Skills Development
Centre Francophone
Chinese Association of Mississauga
City of Sault Ste Marie
Collège Boréal
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
COSTI
Cross-Cultural Community Services Association
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre
Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board
Halton District School Board
Halton Newcomer Strategy
HMC Connections
Indus Community Services
IRCC
Malton Neighbourhood Services
Moyo Health & Community Services
Newcomer Centre of Peel
Peel Career Assessment Centre
Peel District School Board
Peel Multicultural Council
Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
Punjabi Community Health Services
Region of Peel
Sault Career Centre
Syrian Canadian Foundation
The Women's Centre of Halton
United Way Greater Toronto
Vietnamese Community Centre of Mississauga
YES Employment

Appendix B: Stories of Resilience Shared Via Pre-Event Survey

The following represents all of the stories shared via the pre-event survey. Text is shared verbatim.

Question: If you have one example of how your organization has demonstrated resiliency in response to the pandemic, please share that example with us here:

A) We organized a virtual Multicultural Day in October 2020 that highlighted resilience. It was visited by current and past clients. Several clients highlighted in a personal video their experience during COVID. It was a wonderful day!

B) In March 2020, at the dawn of the Province of Ontario's confinement, more than 540 students are participating in 35 LINC and LINC language courses for newcomers at Collège Boréal in the Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, London and Windsor areas. As of March 23rd, barely one week after the suspension of face-to-face classes, all courses resumed in virtual mode thanks to the efforts of the pedagogical and administrative teams. The College, with its multi-site structure, benefits from expertise in online teaching and distance teamwork. A strength that we have been able to count on to make a rapid transition from language courses for newcomers. Combined with real-time (synchronous) classroom sessions via ZOOM videoconferencing, shared learning activities/exercises to do and discussion forum, materials to listen to, view and read through platforms such as ESL Library A team of tutors has been put in place to support students' transition to online platforms. Our Socio-Economic Integration Navigators, settlement workers and employment services teams provided support to clients and students to inform them at all times about, for example, job training and volunteer opportunities, adaptation of other community services, Canadian emergency services, telework techniques, online job search strategies, etc. A satisfaction survey conducted at the end of the course session at the end of June encouraged us to continue offering courses during the summer at all our sites. In a context of extreme social isolation of newcomers due to confinement, we observed a lot of relief and a lot of envy from the students to be able to find familiar faces back (teacher and classmates) and continue their efforts to integrate.

C) We were one of the first boards in Ontario to transition our assessments and intake to an online format

D) It took a bit of time to get up and running virtually. We were able to adjust and continue to provide quality services. We continue to adjust to challenges as they come, but we always maintain and value the client and put their interest first

E) Amazing teamwork and support for each other – we all played important roles. Management came together with all hands on deck – delivering cell phones, shopping for masks, arranging for acrylic shields. IT supported us throughout the transition with a smile on their face although they carried many heavy pieces of the transition. Front line staff stayed safe and focused on

supporting people in the best way possible and supporting their colleagues until everyone got the basics of the new tech environments. And our funders have all been superbly supportive so we can focus on the important work of supporting people.

F) CCS formed a Pandemic Task Force and created a Manual within the first few weeks of lockdown. Staff were subsequently being trained on the manual, safety and virtual platforms and as a result were ready to deliver virtual services without any service disruptions due to COVID-19. This also revealed strength of team unity and commitment despite the circumstances.

G) 1. Key component of resilience are Skills. The organization has provided training to employees to be able to cope and at the same time we reallocated some tasks to those who can get work done. 2. We started to prioritize skills over hiring profiles 3. We updated our procedures to be flexible 4. In terms of programs, the organization developed and adjusted some programs to help families meet basic needs like food, shelter, diapers, etc. We have created a weekly food distribution.

H) We have found resiliency in learning new skills. Instructional staff and learners at PDSB have shown a willingness to learn which has been transformational. We have found a great deal of resiliency in problem-solving. Importantly, a respectful balance of expectation and compassion has helped enormously over the past year.

I) Originally all language assessments across the country were inaccessible during lock down in late March. By late May, Achēv had received approval for, and developed an adapted informal assessment tool "Informal CLBA/OSA" using the online OSA for reading and listening and one of the CLBA speaking forms. Our teams collaborated to develop new procedures and then trained assessors across the country to use the new tool so that it could be accessed from both the assessors' and clients' homes. In late August, the newly released OSA writing tool was added to this tool to create a full CLB-based informal assessment. Our Peel/Halton assessment centres tested and piloted the process prior to roll out. This has resulted in many learners being able to take online and hybrid language training during COVID. By late December, over 8,000 learners across Ontario had taken the Informal CLBA/OSA with many more across the rest of Canada.

J) One of the ways is how we work with our community and our newcomers when they first arrive in Canada as a RAP client. We help our newcomers feel safe, welcome and happy when they come. We do all of this as a team in the community and it is phenomenal.

K) We were able to adapt quicky to virtual platforms and have maintained all services virtually.

L) Developing remote online processes for settlement and orientation with families when the pandemic began

M) All of our services are now available virtually.

Appendix C: PowerPoint Presentation Re: Pre-Event Survey Results

IRCC Planning Day
January 28, 2021

Pre-Event Survey Results

Purpose

- Document and celebrate resiliency in the sector over the past year including:
  - Adaptability to COVID-19
  - Success stories
  - Challenges
  - Gaps
  - Opportunities

- Identify priorities for focused discussion at the IRCC Planning Day

Survey Design and Response

- Initiated by Planning Day organizing committee
- Active Dec. 11th, 2020 – January 9th, 2021 on Survey Monkey
- Issued to 42 Executive Council organizations, 19 responses
- 10 questions
  - What's working, what's not?
  - What changes would you like to keep?
  - What support do you need?
  - Have you established partnerships?

Findings

- Overall, survey results indicate organizations were able to quickly pivot to the challenges posed by COVID-19
- Logistical, technical, workplace shifts and new ways of interacting with clients and colleagues were immediate priorities in early days
- Initiative, creativity, team spirit, and a focus on client service resulted in effective/efficient transition to virtual services
- Flexibility of funders was appreciated
- Organizations report an on-going focus in long-term investment and orientation in virtual and hybrid services

Adapting to COVID-19

- *"We believe our organization adapted well. We quickly transitioned our clients over to on-line studies in March and conducted an entire summer and fall program virtually without changes to class size or time."*
- *"Developed creative and innovative ways to deliver services remotely."*
- *"Extensive marketing/outreach campaigns using social media tools to advise clients of services available to them through remote delivery and modified services when open to the public. "*

What gaps still exist in your ability to operate in the new environment?

- *"More training needs to happen about accessing virtual services"*
- *"Clients' access to and knowledge of technology is a barrier, especially for the most vulnerable"*
- *"Lack of standardization in providing language classes across the sector"*
- *"For some parents, English is a tough barrier they must face. They may not understand completely the news or media and messages from government."*

What's working well?

- *"Counselling services are working well over video and phone"*
- *"Educational technology support staff have been critical to the successful transition to on-line learning and continue to be essential to program delivery."*
- *"Delivery of group settlement, employment webinars and LINC classes."*
- *"Moving to virtual services has been a bit of a struggle but progress has been made as we, and the clients become more familiar with the virtual platforms, virtual forms and virtual signatures."*

What's not working well?

- *"Time management and concentration for clients with children studying at home."*
- *"Ability to provide case management for those with complex needs."*
- *"Digital dependence: program delivery and accessibility is now dependent on technology and internet connectivity."*
- *"Services to low technology and low literacy clients is a difficult issue."*
- *"Lack of accessibility by clients to the resource centre."*

What changes have you made that you would like to keep embedded permanently?

- *"Greater virtual services to accommodate those that have issues accessing transportation."*
- *"Hybrid delivery of workshops, commissioner-of-oaths services, 1:1 counselling"*
- *"We have learned and applied many IT tools such as WhatsApp, Google classroom or Zoom meetings and we want to use them as much as we need in the near future."*

Priorities that should inform the Planning Day discussions?

- *"Getting ready for the influx of immigrants when travel becomes more available."*
- *"Technology advancement to function effectively in the new virtual environment."*
- *"Reaching out and engaging with new clients thru on-line engagement best practices model."*
- *"Ability for IRCC to assist in getting clients who do not have computers refurbished or new tech Going forward rethinking how they fund us - broaden the scope and more funding flexibility. We appreciate the flexibility they provided us around funding use and COVID."*

Support needed to achieve these priorities

- Other : funding support and flexibility

What supports would you like to see provided by funders?

- *"We would appreciate continued support for clients and staff connected to technology."*
- *" Continued support for staff to network and discuss different aspects of their work would be appreciated."*
- *"1. Ongoing funding for essential support services. 2. Feedback and direction. 3. Increased understanding of program delivery."*
- *"Funding for new employment based programs because many clients are struggling with the job market. "*

Creation of new partnerships or expansion of collaborative efforts because of COVID-19

- 71 percent of respondents said they created new partnerships
- *"We have created partners around donation of refurbished computers, donation of food for those lack the financial ability to provide what they need."*
- *"We have significantly expanded the depth and breadth of our collaboration with other organizations, locally, provincially and nationally, to help find solutions that will continue to support jobseekers in making connections with employers."*

Stories of Resilience

- *"We organized a virtual Multicultural Day in October 2019 that highlighted resilience. It was visited by current and past clients. Several clients highlighted in a personal video their experience during COVID. It was a wonderful day!"*
- *"Amazing team work and support for each other – we all played important roles."*
- *"We have found resiliency in learning new skills. Instructional staff and learners have shown a willingness to learn which has been transformational. We have found a great deal of resiliency in problem-solving. Importantly, a respectful balance of expectation and compassion has helped enormously over the past year."*

Appendix D: Breakout Group Worksheets Template

Top Priorities for the Coming Year
Summary of responses to the IRCC Planning Day pre-event survey

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1. **Enhancing service capacity**

   Service Delivery
   - Assisting clients who lost their jobs during the pandemic
   - Flexibility to respond to emerging client needs by leveraging non-traditional partners
   - New ways to provide services for clients with multiple/complex needs
   - Adjust tools (i.e. forms, content) to match new service delivery environment, and address potential associated cyber security issues
   - Supporting LINC and language assessment centres with better tools to improve service accessibility (e.g. apps, voluntary assignments)
   - Improved crisis and wrap-around supports (such as housing)
   - Coordinated communications and client outreach

   Staff Capacity
   - Building colleagues' online service delivery skills
   - Supporting staff and clients dealing with uncertainty, anxiety, burnout, mental health challenges
   - Work-from-home supports – managing limited office space, balancing schooling, ensuring consistent communication across organizations

2. **Leveraging Technology More Effectively**

   - Standard online platform for language classes, learner engagement and retention
   - Establishing an e-learning support system (not just a learning management system) comprised of educators, education technology experts, subject-matter experts, trainers, etc.
   - Need for technology advancement to function effectively in virtual environments (new development, tools, access etc.), training using new tools and technology
   - Providing appropriate equipment for remote staff work
   - Supporting clients with limited access to technology, low digital skills, those without computers refurbished
   - Reaching out to and engaging with new clients
   - Online engagement best practices model
   - Promoting greater digital literacy throughout settlement services

3. IRCC Operational Supports

- Centralizing resources to increase standardization within organizations
- Provide new resources for client support that are adapted to the current environment
- Broaden scope of funding, and provide more funding flexibility and continuity, particularly with respect to providing hybrid services
- Updated policies and procedures (e-signature, privacy, etc.)
- Provide funding for technology purchases that support organizational changes where staff continue to work from home or in a hybrid model
- More funding support for employment program initiatives to coincide with economic recovery

4. Increased Immigrant Admissions

- How will aggressive admission levels impact services already undergoing transformation?
- What are the anticipated pressure points?

IRCC Planning Day – Breakout Session Format & Worksheets

<u>Structure:</u>
- Breakout groups will be pre-populated with 8 – 10 participants.
- Participants from the same organization will be placed into different groups.
- Each group will be asked to choose a facilitator and notetaker.
- Notetaker will record group observations on the following worksheets.
- Participants are each encouraged to use the same worksheets to record and submit insights that may not be fully captured in group discussions.
- Notetakers and participants will upload completed worksheets to a designated Drop Box

Four key priorities informing the Planning Day:
- Enhancing service capacity
- Leveraging technology more effectively
- IRCC operational supports
- Increased immigrant admissions

Note takers:
- Serve as timekeepers, allotting about 5-7 minutes to discuss each question.
- With five minutes left, allow participants to jot points in their own worksheets they feel need to be recorded but were not afforded enough discussion time. Encourage submission to the Dropbox folder.

Please upload worksheets to the drop box: https://filerequestpro.com/up/ircc-planning-day

If you are submitting your individual perspective, please indicate your:
Name: _____
Organization: _____

Breakout Session 1 Work Sheet: 10:15 – 11:05
Priorities
- Enhancing service capacity
- Leveraging technology more effectively
- IRCC operational supports
- Increased immigrant admissions

Review each priority and discuss the following questions:
1. Which priorities are most important?

2. Which priority area will provide the most immediate, visible results?

3. Which priority area will result in positive long-lasting results or provide the most significant long-term benefits?

4. Which priority area will clients respond to and value the most?

5. Are there other considerations that should be added to this priority?

Report Back: Share the top insight from each question.

Breakout Session 2 Work sheet: 11:35 – 12:15

- Identify 3 activities under each priority area that need to happen over the next year to position the sector for success, especially in light of increased immigrant admissions.
- What resources or tools are needed to ensure these activities are achieved?

Enhancing service capacity
Activities

Resources or tools

Leveraging technology more effectively
Activities

Resources or tools

IRCC operational supports
Activities

Resources or tools

Increased immigrant admissions
Activities

Resources or tools

Note taker to serve as timekeeper and allot 10 minutes per priority.
Report Back: Share one activity and an accompanying tool or resource from each priority.
Upload completed worksheet to the designated Drop Box.