



Reflections on the Importance of Local Research and a Lack of Resources and Interest by Funders

Pathways to Prosperity 2015 National Conference

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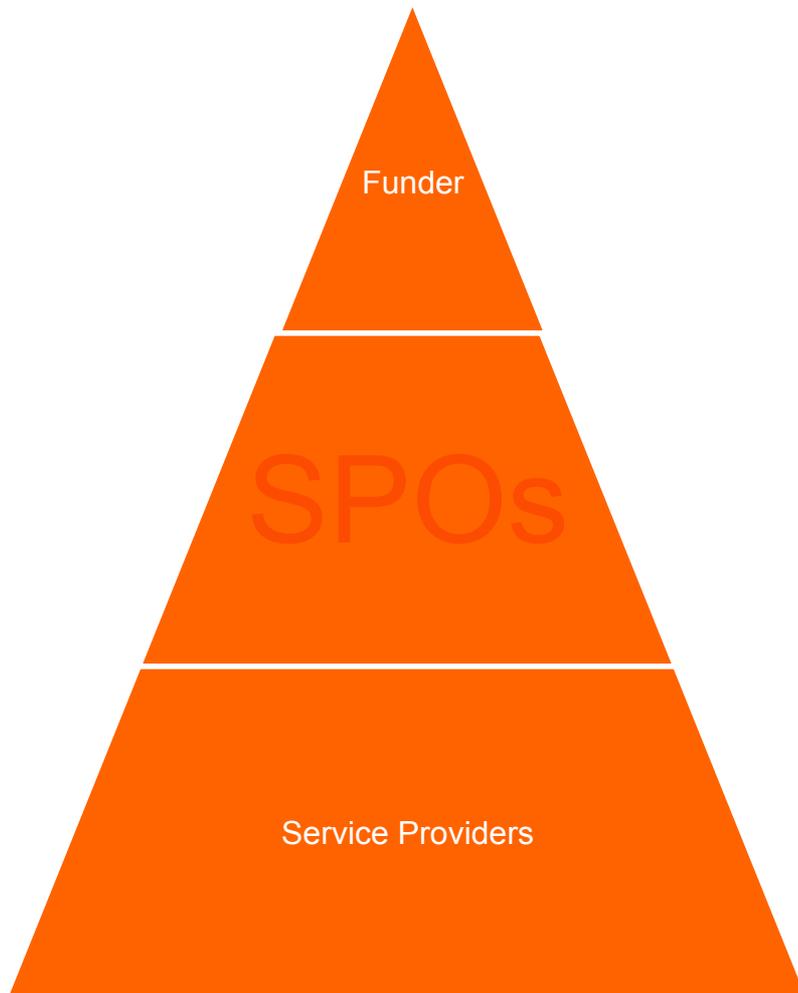
How do we make informed decisions as a sector?

How do we know if the interventions we undertake result in social change?

Funding

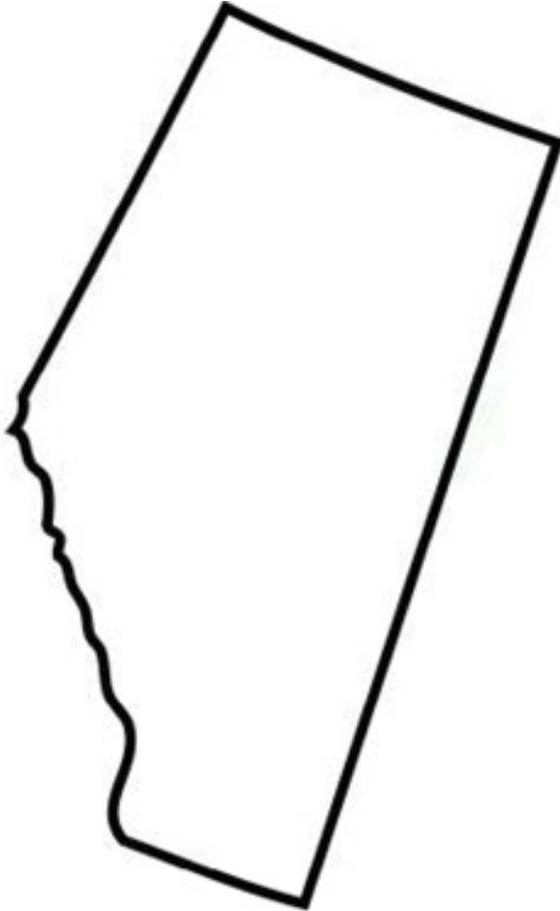
- Diverse literature points to a multitude of constraints and challenges related to the current settlement funding model (Burstein 2010; Burstein and Esses 2012; Meinhard 2012; Türegün 2013):
 - Increased use of short-term project-based funding models = lack of long-term/core funding
 - Absence of viable alternative resources
 - Rigidity associated with accountability and reporting

Impact on Research



- Driven by government priorities with little input from SPOs
- Focused on short-term measurable results instead of holistic, long-term results (Meinhard, 2012)
- A lack of organizational stability and capacity building which results in an impaired ability to proactively meet the evolving needs of newcomers, particularly the most vulnerable (Shields & Türegün, 2013)

Challenges faced by Alberta SPOs



- 60% of AAISA's membership reported having little to no research capacity
- Alberta SPOs struggle with capacity to do formal research. Research tends to be ad-hoc

National versus Local Research



- National Themes:
 - Economic, Social and Cultural Integration
 - Multi-stakeholder Partnerships
 - Temporary Residents
 - Role of the Settlement and Integration/Non-profit sectors
 - Health and Well-being
 - Location Decisions/Secondary Migration
 - Vulnerable Populations
 - Alberta SPOs contribute significantly to national research projects, yet often this research does not reflect their experience and therefore is not used to inform program level decisions

Prairie Region Themes

- Holistic Approaches to Mental Health
- Perspectives of Integration and Inclusivity
- Indicators of Successful Settlement and Integration
- First Nations and Newcomer Relations
- Settlement Service Provision in Remote Communities
- Intergenerational Effects of Integration

Provincial Themes

- Alberta Francophone Communities
- Use of Technology (i.e. Learning Communities)
- Temporary Foreign Workers
- Secondary Migration
- Outcomes Measurement
- Sexual Health and Sexual Diversity
- Support for Vulnerable Populations (LGBTQ refugees, youth, seniors, and women)
 - Mental Health Support for Refugees

“Courage to Begin: Building Capacity of Immigrant Service Providers and Sexual Health”

- 46% of respondents reported that gender and sexual diversity is a priority in their work
- 51% of respondents expressed that they had a fairly high level of comfort in this area
- Speaking on sexual health and gender diversity, one practitioner reflected on influence of stigma:

“This is a very sensitive issue, very difficult to talk about, people feel threatened and at-risk, it is all under the table.” (Hurlock, 2015)

Key Findings:

- Settlement practitioners identified a need for research and interventions that reflect local realities in places such as Fort McMurray or Grand Prairie
- Need for further professional development in this area

Recommendations

- To address an evolving settlement and integration environment, there is a need to:
 - Shift the terms of engagement
 - Create research that is nimble, responsive, and place based
 - Be attentive to the needs of frontline workers
 - Embed research into all areas of settlement and integration work such as professional development, evaluation, and decision-making at both the policy and program level
 - Assist local organizations in making a strong case about their impact on newcomers and inform them as they adjust and adapt their programs
 - Foster connections between national researchers and institutions and local organizations

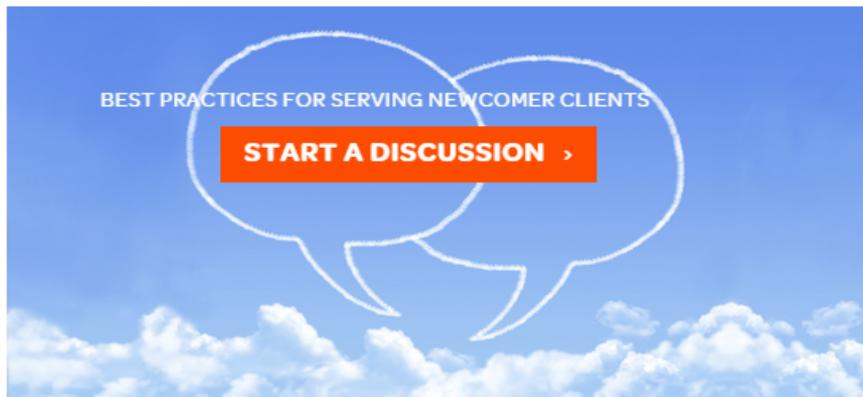
Value of research for settlement and integration organizations



Bridging the Gap

- Develop a robust, integrated Learning Community for settlement practitioners
- Embed research into professional development to build the capacity of local organizations
- Understand the alignment between federal and provincial policy to help inform decision makers
- Delve into the needs of vulnerable populations such as LGBTQ newcomers at the local level

Learning Community



AAISA's Learning Community is a tool containing practical resources and ongoing skill development for professionals working with newcomer Canadians. It includes a resource centre, community forum and information on training and certification on various topics

A RESOURCE HUB FOR SETTLEMENT PRACTITIONERS

Welcome to AAISA's Learning Community! This Community of Practice (CoP) brings together professionals working in the settlement sector or those working with newcomer Canadians who require specialized services. Members who join the CoP share a common goal and seek to expand their knowledge related to the settlement practice through the process of sharing information, experiences, and resources that support them in their everyday work. The CoP is based on the 2010 Competencies



Thank you!

Questions, comments?

References

Shields, John and Adnan Türegün (with research assistance from Sophia Lowe). 2014. “Settlement and Integration Research Synthesis 2009 - 2013.” A CERIS Report. Submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa.