

TOGETHER PROJECT

togetherproject.ca | a project of MakeWay

DESIGNING AND DELIVERING REMOTE AND HYBRID SOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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ABOUT US

Since 2016, Together Project has aimed to make change in three interconnected ways:

- building newcomer social connections
- supporting newcomer integration priorities
- amplifying community involvement in newcomer integration

REFUGEE INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

- Low social capital
- Low levels of French/English
- Digital access/literacy
- Affordable housing
- Health and mental health
- Barriers to employment
- Racism and discrimination

WHAT ROLE CAN VOLUNTEERS PLAY?

- Build social bridges between communities
- Provide social support tailored to individual households' unique integration priorities
- Complement rather than replacing or duplicating settlement services
- Find the role that best suits the need:
 - Ally
 - Advocate
 - Guide
 - Tutor
 - Mentor
 - Friend

THE WELCOME GROUP PROGRAM

The Welcome Group Program connects government-assisted refugees, refugee claimants, protected persons and Ukrainian CUAET arrivals with a “Welcome Group” of 3-5 volunteers for 6 months of social support that is tailored to the specific integration priorities of each household.

THE WELCOME GROUP PROGRAM

Key program features:

- Volunteer training
- Group matches
- Translation support
- Preference matching
- Settlement sector collaboration
- Evaluation & iterative learning

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Conversational language practice
- Employment pathways: resume creation, job application, mock interviews
- Youth empowerment: tutoring, mentorship, extracurriculars
- Service navigation: understanding forms, learning about and accessing services
- Emotional support
- Building a social network

THE PANDEMIC BOOMERANG

How can we reinvent a program that is intended to build strong social connections as something that is experienced entirely virtually?



THE PANDEMIC BOOMERANG

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What does **remote** volunteer social support look like?

Is it more or less effective than **hybrid** social support? What does this depend on?

How can this help us improve our program?

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How does access and understanding of technology impact the ability of refugee newcomers to benefit from services?
2. How does the experience of receiving social support change when it is a primarily remote vs. hybrid experience?
3. Who benefits most from what kind of experience?

OUR 2021-2024 EVALUATION PROJECT

- Comparing the experiences of program participants whose matches are primarily remote vs. primarily hybrid
- Funded by IRCC's Service Delivery Improvement stream
- Three settlement agency partners:
 - COSTI Immigrant Services (GTA)
 - Catholic Centre for Immigrants (Ottawa)
 - DIVERSEcity (Surrey, BC)
- Externally evaluated by partners at Western University
- TD Bank partnered to provide volunteer support
- Aiming to include 145 households (~580 individuals)

PROJECT WORKFLOW

1. Settlement agencies refer eligible clients to Together Project
2. Together Project onboards clients, collects demographic data, administers baseline surveys
3. Together Project recruits and trains volunteers to match with families
4. Evaluation team administers 3 month and 6 month surveys, follow up interviews

PROJECT CHALLENGES

—
Alignment between program delivery and evaluation

Data coordination across partners

Survey fatigue

Survey and interview interpretation in 10+ languages

PROJECT SUCCESSES

—
Significant uptake among newcomers

Valuable experience working with new partners

Capacity building around program scaling

Promising preliminary findings

CONTACT US

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