

COMMUNITY REPORT

Immigration in 5 Rural Manitoba Communities with a Focus on Refugees: Case Studies

August 2016



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Immigration in 5 Rural Manitoba Communities with a Focus on Refugees: Winkler-Altona-Morden-Carman Case Study

August 2016





Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

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Introduction

In November 2015, a national resettlement initiative was undertaken to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees across Canada. Since November 4th, 2015 the Government of Canada has welcomed more than 29,700 Syrian refugees (August 1st, 2016) and the commitment to resettling more refugees to Canada is continuing in 2016¹. More than 1000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Manitoba and, of those, 90 have settled outside of Winnipeg, in rural communities and small centres. This research project was initiated out of this experience and is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO).

The purpose of the project is to learn from the current experiences in five rural communities in Manitoba and examine the settlement and community capacity of these smaller centres to resettle refugees. Selected communities are those who have received newcomers and have recently received refugees or have an active plan in place for the arrival of refugees.

This research project builds on the 2015 “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western region”² study conducted by the Rural Development institute (RDI) and Immigration Research West (IRW). It offered a snapshot of the immigration settlement services sector in 29 selected rural communities across the western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut).

1 Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>). date accessed August 8, 2016.

2 Ashton et al. (2015, May). Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region. Retrieved from <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publication/immigration-settlement-services-and-gaps-in-citizenship-and-immigration-canadas-western-region/>

Research Method

This study follows the same method as the 2015 study. Five communities³ were selected that are distributed geographically and represent a sample of the provinces’ smaller cities⁴. The five cases are: Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Boissevain-Killarney, Steinbach-Kleefeld and Morden-Winkler-Altona-Carman.

In the five communities, data were collected through 30 telephone interviews with a senior official of the Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) or a representative of the Refugee Sponsorship Group. The sample of participating service providers included both SPOs that have a primary mandate to serve newcomers (funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or other sources) and community organizations supporting newcomers in some capacity. This research did not include newcomers or refugees and as such the findings are based solely on the opinions and perceptions of SPOs and refugee sponsorship groups’ representatives.

Once data were collected, a draft report was compiled for each community. Each was shared with the research participants and other local stakeholders. Their feedback was incorporated and reports finalized.

3 Similarly as in the Ashton et al. (2015) study, the term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.

4 Winnipeg is excluded from the study together with the communities participated in the Ashton et al. (2015) study with an exception of Dauphin, due to its recent experience with refugee resettlement (15 individuals as of August 8, 2016).

Winkler-Altona-Morden-Carman Case Study

The Winkler-Altona-Morden-Carman case is a snapshot of perceptions from ten participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from a variety of sources, including IRCC, private, provincial and other federal sources. Several participants reported multiple sources of funding. Five participants and ten additional stakeholders provided feedback to finalize the report by participating in a teleconference discussion or via e-mail.

Community Context

Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman are 4 towns in south-central Manitoba in the Pembina Valley region, which are in relatively close proximity to one another. The four communities have a cumulative population of 25,632 (2011)⁵ and includes the city of Winkler with a population of 10,670, the town of Altona with 4,123, the city of Morden with 7,812,

and the town of Carman with 3,027 residents. The travel time between the communities ranges from 15 minutes to just over an hour and it is not uncommon for residents to travel between these communities to access goods and services. The closest metropolitan area is Winnipeg and is between 50 minutes (Carman) and an hour and a half away (Morden, Winkler, and Altona). The economies of the communities in the Pembina Valley region are primarily rooted in agriculture, but have strong manufacturing and food processing sectors as well.

The IRCC reports that 53 refugees have settled in the communities of Winkler (12), Altona (34), Morden (7) under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) sponsorship program, while also reporting that less than 5 Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) are still in queue for arrival in Carman⁶. In the feedback received an individual from Carman was aware of 16 refugees expected to arrive in Carman, 8 from Syria and 8 from Pakistan under the BVOR and PSR programs.

All participants confirmed that newcomers (including refugees) had settled in their community in the last 5 years. It was discussed in the teleconference and highlighted in feedback received by e-mail that the Winkler-Altona-Morden-Carman communities also serve newcomers from the surrounding municipalities such as Stanley, Rhineland, Pembina, Thompson, Roland, Dufferin, and Morris with a cumulative population of more than 22,000 people (2011)⁵.

Participants reported that the refugees who arrived in Morden, Winkler and Altona since November 2015 were from Syria, Myanmar (Burma) and Eritrea.



⁵ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

⁶ Government of Canada, Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees (retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>)

Table 1 – Settlement Services offered in Winkler, Altona, Morden and Carman, as reported by the 10 participants

 <p>Information and Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment and referral • Initial reception • Individual and group orientations 	 <p>Literacy and Language Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (Various levels) • Language assessment • Job specific language training • English at work • Literacy classes 	 <p>Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation/translation (limited) • Mental health • Childcare (for attending classes) • Women, youth focused programming • Transportation (by volunteers; Handivan, bikes) • Programming for newcomers with disabilities • Refugee specific supports • Food bank and community meals
 <p>Labour Market Access Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections with employers • Assistance finding a job (resume building, interview skills training) 	 <p>Community Connections</p> <p><i>(some offered on a volunteer basis)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with newcomers (e.g., conversation groups) • Mentoring programs • Welcoming communities (e.g community events promoting cultural awareness and diversity; cooking classes, one on one tutoring) • Citizenship classes 	

Seven of the 10 participants indicated that they were aware of an active plan for the arrival of more refugees by the end of 2016. In the teleconference it was mentioned that one family (four individuals) are expected to arrive in August 2016. Participants reported primarily that refugees would be arriving through the PSR and BVOR programs. There is also a family of five Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) who are thinking of relocating in the community from Winnipeg.

Settlement in the Community

Participants were asked how easy or difficult newcomer settlement was in their community. Seven out of 10 reported it is somewhat difficult and three reported it is somewhat easy. The reasons provided for the ease of settlement were the presence of experienced settlement service providers in the region, a supportive and coordinated volunteer base, availability of EAL classes, and donations in kind for newcomers from community members. However, the list of reasons explaining the difficulty of settlement for newcomers was a bit longer. The most frequently reported reasons were culture shock, discrimination, lack of public transportation, limited English language proficiency, and the scarcity of interpretation services. There was a consensus among all six individuals who attended the teleconference that transportation is a major challenge in those communities. Newcomers and refugees rely almost solely on volunteers for transportation assistance and the significant time commitment required from volunteers should not be underestimated.

Other reported reasons for the difficulty of newcomer settlement were difficulty finding work, followed by affordable housing, volunteer fatigue, availability of food that meets newcomers religious needs (e.g. Halal meat) and access to post-secondary education. Overall, though participants indicated that there are strong supports in place, some of the challenges of settlement are simply inherent with living in a rural area (e.g. lack of public transportation, meeting specific food requirements, limited access to higher education).

Settlement Services

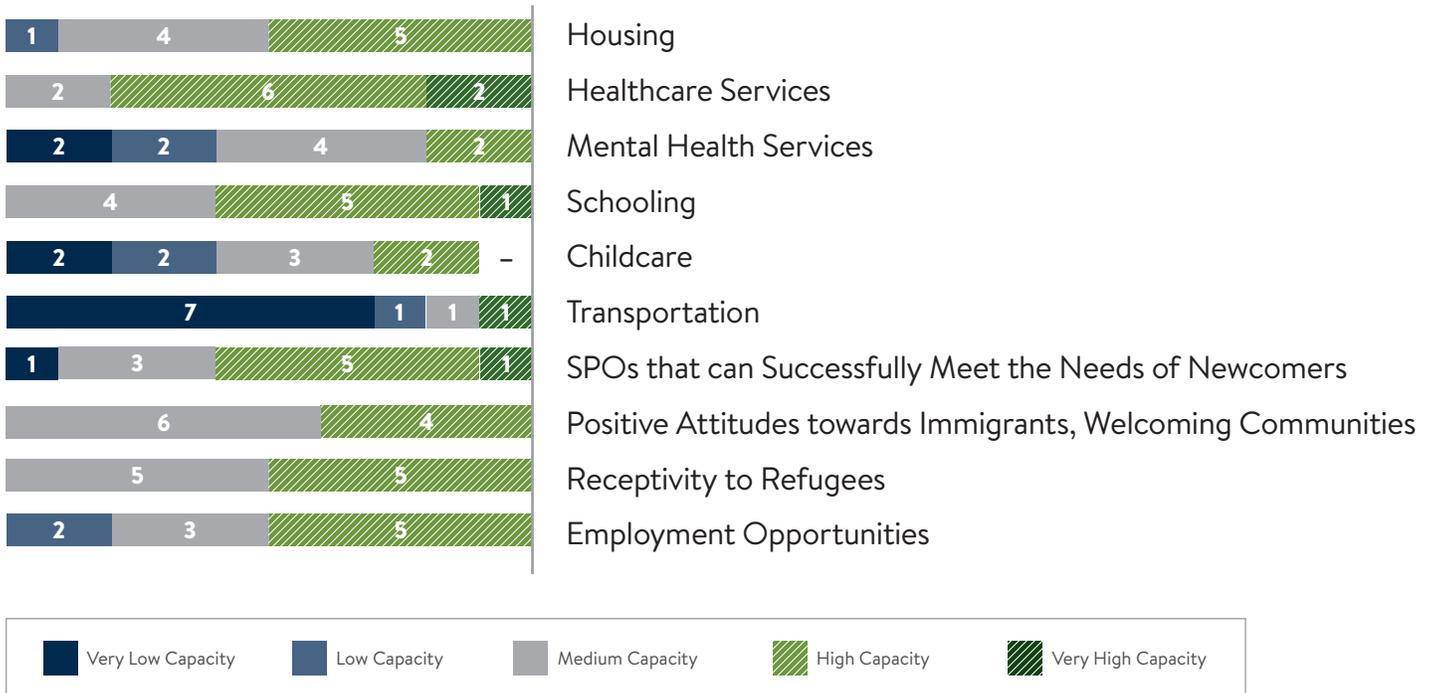
Newcomers, including refugees, have access to a broad range of settlement services and supports in the Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman area as shown in Table 1 (page 3). In Table 1, within each service category services are reported in the order of the frequency mentioned by the ten participants, with the most commonly reported service listed first in each section and the least commonly reported services listed last. It is noted that newcomers might have to travel within the

region to access services (half an hour drive). Only a couple of participants indicated that refugee-specific services were offered, but refugees have access to all services available to newcomers.

Participants were asked if they felt the current services offered to newcomers in the community needed to expand. Eight of the 10 participants felt that settlement services needed to be expanded in their community to meet the current need, while two participants felt the services currently offered were sufficient but would need to be expanded in the future in order to meet growing needs. Interpreter and translation services was identified most often by participants as needing to expand (e.g. for interactions in the healthcare, legal and education fields). Participants also identified expansion was necessary for crisis counseling (e.g., mental health and PTSD support), transportation services, language training (both frequency of classes and level of training), and more settlement workers are needed. A few participants also mentioned the need for more funding, more cultural awareness training, for both newcomers and residents, and more communication about the services available in the community. One participant mentioned that services, especially language training, should be offered locally in all four Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman (most services are offered in Winkler-Morden), since travelling distance even within the region is a barrier for newcomers to access services.

In addition to expansion of services, participants were also asked whether the services offered needed to change in order to meet newcomers' needs in the communities of Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman and participants' responses were divided. Five participants felt that services needed to change to meet current needs, while three felt that change to services was not currently needed, but would be needed in the future as demand continues to grow along with the diversity of newcomers. Two participants felt the current services were the services most needed and no change was needed. Those explaining the type of changes needed expressed the need for flexibility in the delivery of services (e.g. language training for specific skills, options for online service delivery) since newcomers have unique needs often based on their immigrant class, country of origin, and diverse experiences. In the teleconference, the unique needs for newcomer seniors were discussed since there are no programs tailored specifically for them. On one hand seniors are a small group in the newcomer and refugee population, on the other hand seniors' integration process is more challenging and slow. In some cases there are multi-generational refugee families resettling in the community and unique family dynamics are observed. Children are attending school and integrating more quickly and their grandparents (in most cases with limited to no English language skills) having limited social connections.

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity ranked from very low to very high by the ten research participants



Short and Long-term Needs of Refugees

Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. Language proficiency and housing were identified by the majority of participants (8 of 10) as a crucial short-term need for refugees. Most refugees arrive with very low level of English language proficiency, something that affects all the other aspects of their settlement (e.g. finding employment, daily life, socializing). Employment (4) and a welcoming community (connections, social support) (4) were also identified, as short-term needs.

In the long-term, integration into the community was considered as the most important need by the majority of participants (7). Employment (6) and language acquisition (5) were also identified, as top long-term needs. This overlap in short and long-term needs is expected since language and employment are so integral to newcomer well-being and settlement.

In the teleconference feedback session, mental health services was identified as an important long term need for refugees since, on top of having experienced traumatic events, they also have to go through a transition to adjust to a new culture and life in a new country. The teleconference participants were

unsure who could offer these services in the community, as there is a general need for all community members. Currently refugees are referred to the Aurora Family Therapy Centre in Winnipeg but transportation is a barrier to access this service.

Community Capacity

All ten participants agreed that the Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman region had the capacity to attract and retain refugees. The ten participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community’s ability to respond to the needs of refugees. The results are listed in Figure 1.

The community’s capacity to provide housing, schooling, and settlement services were ranked positively by respondents. Participants felt that a strong network of experienced settlement service providers exist in the region, together with schools experienced in welcoming children from newcomer and refugee families (more classroom space is needed though). Regarding housing, there is availability in the community, yet it is often expensive, especially for larger families. Finding housing is easier for PSRs, since the sponsorship groups arrange it before their arrival. In addition, the communities’ capacity to provide health care was very positively ranked and it was reported that some medical centres are expanding to respond to the communities’ needs. In the teleconference, it

was mentioned that local doctors might not always be familiar or educated in diseases occurring in other countries. For example, doctors might not be able to recognize the symptoms of a disease or not be readily able to recommend a treatment method for health issues not commonly seen in Canada, which may only compound the health issue and its impact on the newcomer. The importance of offering interpretation services in someone's first language when accessing health care services was also reiterated in the teleconference discussion.

Transportation was identified as a key capacity deficiency, as seven participants ranked their community as having very low capacity and one as low capacity. There is no public transport infrastructure in this region and newcomers often rely on volunteers, taxis, Handi-transit, and bicycles to make their way to services (mainly offered in Winkler-Morden) and their employment; however, biking is virtually impossible in the winter months and taxis are cost prohibitive. This limited access to transportation is less of a concern for PSRs initially because of volunteer networks established to provide transportation; however, as families become more independent and volunteer hours are reduced the issue will become more pronounced for families.

The participants ranked community capacity on receptivity to refugees and positive community attitudes towards newcomers as medium to high. Though church groups and sponsorship groups are engaged and enthusiastic in supporting refugees, the broader community may sometimes be skeptical and wary of newcomers. There is a regional need for more awareness and understanding between newcomers and residents in some cases, nevertheless participants reported the region overall is welcoming.

Participants had mixed perceptions in regards to their communities' capacity to provide mental health services to newcomers and the accessibility of childcare in the community. Four of the 10 participants ranked their communities' mental health services and access to childcare as low or very low while four and three respectively ranked it as medium. Access to mental health supports is crucial for refugees and was emphasized as such in the feedback received by the teleconference participants. One participant indicated that a potential refugee family was declined by the sponsorship group due to high mental health needs and the limited mental health services currently available in the community. Counseling supports are available in the communities, however participants mentioned several areas for improvement such as intercultural training for counselors, mental health services for children and provide services in refugees' first language. Regarding childcare, there are childcare facilities in the community but there is a need for more spots since waiting lists can be very long.

Participants' reports regarding the employment opportunities in their community were mixed, with 5 of the respondents rating employment opportunities either as medium or low. Though employment opportunities may be available, newcomers and refugees need to have at least working knowledge of English to take advantage of those opportunities. There was an overall consensus among the individuals attending the teleconference discussion in regards to refugees' English skills must be prioritized over employment. There are no language and employability requirement for refugees to come to Canada as for other newcomers and it is highly important for refugees to spend the first months to year advancing their language skills before looking for employment. This can cause frustration to refugees but in the long term it would be beneficiary for both ease of finding and retaining employment and also for safety reasons in the workplace.

Community members assist refugees connecting with employers and many companies are open to hiring refugees and newcomers. Most employment opportunities though are for entry-level positions and limited opportunities are offered for highly skilled professionals. In the feedback received this was identified as a potential challenge for long-term retention of the refugees and newcomers overall in the community. One individual shared the opinion that highly qualified newcomers might find themselves in a future dilemma; having to choose between an alternative career that would allow them to stay in the rural community they currently live in or relocating to a larger urban centre and return to their profession.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

Nine of the ten participants reported their organizations were engaged in partnerships with other community organizations. Partnerships were identified with a great variety of community stakeholders. Healthcare services, schools, local SPOs were the partnerships reported most often. Several participants also reported partnerships with their municipality, local NGOs, churches, local businesses. At least one participant identified a connection with each of the following stakeholders: MANSO, SPOs in larger centres, housing supports, ethno-cultural groups, the local library, provincial government, the cities and financial institutions.

Participants in the Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman region also made suggestions as to the types of partnerships needed in the region to better support the needs and settlement of refugees. Most of the partnerships reported already exist in the region. Several participants suggested the need to strengthen the existing partnerships with local employers, schools, healthcare and partnerships among the sponsorship

groups in the wider Pembina Valley region. Partnerships with local employers are needed to both connect refugees for potential work opportunities, but also to educate employers on acknowledging and overcoming challenges with cross-cultural communication and low English language skills in the working environment. Other suggested partnerships were currently not established, but are needed, such as, partnerships between local churches and Muslim groups to meet cultural needs of refugees and SPOs with recreational services. Partnerships that support the cultural and religious needs of refugees are reportedly in need of expansion, which supports the early presumption that successful settlement is facilitated by access to one's ethno-cultural group and by bolstering one's community connections. More cooperation and communication between sponsorship groups is also needed so the sponsorship groups can learn from each other's experiences. Additionally, partnerships with translation services and housing supports (e.g., real estate agents, local landlords) were highlighted as needed in the region.

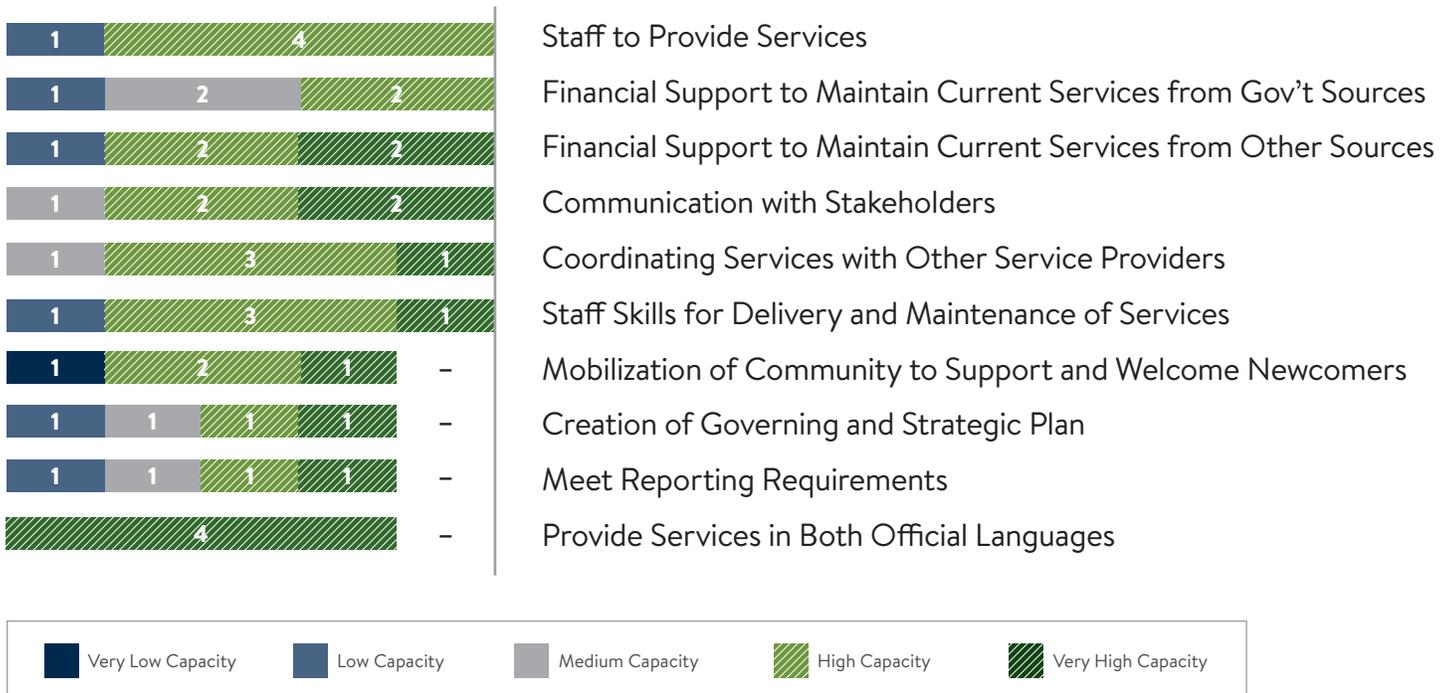
The participants were also asked about their own agency's or organization's capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees, in the community. Five participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were

most intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

Reports on organizational capacity were quite strong from the region. Four out of the 5 participants reported that capacity in staff, staff skills, non-government sources of funding, ability to communicate with stakeholders and coordinate services with other service providers were somewhat or very high. Participant feedback on capacity in government funding, the ability to create governing and strategic plans, and meeting-reporting requirements were mixed. The ability to deliver services in both official languages was unanimously reported as very low capacity together with the capacity to provide translation services in other languages.

Other participants indicated that they needed more funding to support services and to provide development opportunities for their staff to increase their understanding of the unique needs of refugees. One participant noted that overall the agency's capacity would be a lot higher if there was a clear timeline on the refugees' arrival to allow time for more preparation.

Figure 2 - Areas of agency capacity ranked from very low to very high by the five research participants responding to this question



The following two sections of the Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman community report explores the participants' experiences with the refugee resettlement that has occurred since November 2015.

Recent Experiences with Refugees

Participants described the coordinated effort and the cooperation of many community stakeholders required to resettle recent refugee families. In addition to sponsorship groups, other groups involved in refugees resettlement in the Pembina Valley regions are churches, the School Division, SPOs, health and mental health services, local businesses, Regional Connections, Build a Village, and an extensive volunteer network often coordinated by the church-based sponsorship groups. In the teleconference discussion it was noted that the sponsorship groups and the SPOs hired a coordinator to facilitate the community partnerships and to be responsible for all administrative work.

Overall, the sponsorship groups and local SPOs worked well together during the resettlement process of refugees, with all of the eight respondents to this question either somewhat or strongly agreeing that sponsorship groups worked well with SPOs. While SPOs were more likely to provide services to refugees that were government funded (e.g., language assessment and training) (Table 1), sponsorship groups relied heavily on privately funded activities and elaborate volunteer networks to provide services that SPOs did not or supplementing existing services. Sponsorship groups reportedly assisted refugees with transportation, housing, daily life (shopping, banking, taking them to the doctors, donations of food and house goods), finding employment, orientation to Canadian culture and to the community, connect them with SPOs and provide financial and social supports.

There were many key initiatives the participants' organizations undertook to prepare for the arrival of refugees in the communities. Sponsorship groups prepared for the arrival of the refugee families by networking with SPOs, churches, schools, and health services, identified local support services available, secured housing and furniture, raised funds to support settlement, and in some cases, created strategic committees to support specific needs of newcomers based on sponsorship group members' skills and experience (i.e., nurse lead the health committee). It should be noted that one sponsorship group's refugee family has not arrived yet. The other organizations involved provided information on the services offered in the communities, made efforts to recruit interpreters, provided training to their staff related to refugees' culture and needs, provided information regarding credential

recognition and school equivalency, gathered information and retained a medical record in preparation for the refugees' arrival.

There seemed to be strong partnerships between experienced SPOs and sponsorship groups to meet the needs of newcomers in this region. All individuals attending the teleconference discussion were also in agreement with this statement, stating the strong partnerships and good communication is "the strength of the community". Participants asked if there were refugees in the area that need support services, but are not accessing them and three said there were not, four did not know and one participant said yes. The participant indicated those refugees who were not accessing services may be unaware of how to navigate the system or may be simply too ashamed to ask for help.

Challenges & Successes

Though participants' organizations did their best to prepare extensively for the arrival of the refugees they still faced challenges. Participants reported frustration with the predictability regarding the timing of arrival. There is often a vague timeline, limited communication or clarity from IRCC, and then suddenly the refugees are arriving with very short notice. More clarity on the estimated arrival would enable the sponsorship groups and the other organizations to be fully prepared.

The second significant challenge mentioned is communication with refugees, as most of them arrive with low levels or no English language proficiency. A pool of interpreters and Google Translate were used to overcome this challenge, yet in some cases finding interpreters was a struggle. Being able to communicate clearly is key to the establishment of the initial relationship and trust upon arrival between the refugees and the members of the sponsorship groups. One individual who provided feedback was positive that there should be an opportunity for refugees to learn at least some English while they are waiting (most times months or years) in refugee camps prior to their arrival in Canada. This could make their life a lot easier once they arrive.

An additional challenge was trying to find housing to accommodate large families of 11 to 13 people. Also, sponsorship groups found working with IRCC and other government agencies to sometimes be challenging while trying

to get SIN cards or health cards, but found persistent follow up was key in getting what they needed from the organizations. Finally, racism and religious discrimination was mentioned as a challenge that sponsorship groups had to navigate during the resettlement process, and there were calls for more community education and awareness of ethno-cultural and religious differences.

Participants shared what they felt were their key successes during the refugee resettlement process. They highlighted the strong partnerships between sponsorship groups and SPOs, but also among different sponsorship groups. These relationships were characterized as having developed strong teamwork and dedication. The mobilization of community support was also a key success. Members of the communities donated money, their time, and key skills to support the preparation of arrival and the resettlement of refugees. Another key success was the support of SPOs in the region and their ability to adapt to the needs of the new arrivals, by expanding EAL class offerings and some providing childcare during services. Finally, the sponsorship groups attributed much of their success in the resettlement process to their preparation, coordination, and teamwork.

Conclusion

The Pembina Valley region, including Winkler, Altona, Morden and Carman, has seen population growth in recent years, which includes the recent arrival of 53 refugees and more anticipated by the end of 2016. This broad region has a strong religious foundation and many of the refugee sponsorship groups were church based and relied on their congregations and broader community to volunteer to support the resettlement of refugees in the area. The coordination of sponsorship groups, other community stakeholders, and the experienced SPOs in the area have helped support the initial resettlement of refugees and those forthcoming.

Overall, participants felt the region had strong capacity to support newcomer settlement, while also identifying key challenges. Lack of public transportation, limited English language proficiency of newcomers, scarcity of interpretation services, and discrimination were all seen as possible challenges to the settlement process.

Participants reported strong partnerships among SPOs, other sponsorship groups, and a variety of community stakeholders. The team effort seems to have led to a feeling of success with the resettlement of recent refugees. Further developing existing partnerships (e.g. employers) and fostering new partnerships (e.g. between different religious groups, recreational services) will also help better meet the needs of

newcomers. In addition, SPOs in the region reportedly have strong capacity in a number of areas to support newcomers, though more funding, staff training to increase understanding of the refugee experience, and the ability to offer more translation services would be helpful.

The recent refugee resettlement is the result of a coordinated effort between sponsorship groups, SPOs, community stakeholders, and the dedication of community volunteers. More clarity from the IRCC on the timing of refugee arrival would be highly valuable and appreciated by the sponsorship groups and the refugees themselves. However, this region has reportedly managed the influx wave of recent refugees relatively well, with lessons learned and opportunities for improvement along the way. The work of an elaborate network of organizations and individuals has supported the arrival and initial resettlement of the refugees, but time will tell how these refugees will settle and integrate into the Winkler, Altona, Morden, and Carman region.

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Special thanks to the members of the Project Advisory Panel for their input and assistance: Bequie Lake, Teresa Burke, Laurie Sawatzky & Cathy Dowd Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO); Lori Wilkinson, Immigration Research West (IRW) and University of Manitoba; Liz Robinson, Manitoba Government; John Biles & Benjamin Walker Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Terms:

Newcomers: Includes all immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students that have been in Canada for 1 day to 5 years.

Refugees: Includes all Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), Refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVORs) and refugee claimants. A refugee is different from an immigrant, in that an immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced to flee (IRCC, 2016)

Community: A municipality, district, region or other geographic area consisting of population clusters.

Stakeholder: Any group, organization, or enterprise that has newcomers and/or refugees as the primary or secondary clientele.



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Research Method

This study follows the same method as the 2015 study. Five communities³ were selected that are distributed geographically and represent a sample of the provinces’ smaller cities⁴. The five cases are: Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Boissevain-Killarney, Steinbach-Kleefeld and Morden-Winkler-Altona-Carman.

In the five communities, data were collected through 30 telephone interviews with a senior official of the Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) or a representative of the Refugee Sponsorship Group. The sample of participating service providers included both SPOs that have a primary mandate to serve newcomers (funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or other sources) and other community organizations supporting newcomers in some capacity. This research did not include newcomers or refugees and as such the findings are based solely on the opinions and perceptions of SPOs and refugee sponsorship groups’ representatives.

Once data were collected, a draft report was compiled for each community. Each was shared with the research participants and other local stakeholders. Their feedback was incorporated and reports finalized.

3 Similarly as in the Ashton et al.(2015) study, the term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.

4 Winnipeg is excluded from the study together with the communities participated in the Ashton et al. (2015) study with an exception of Dauphin, due to its recent experience with refugee resettlement (15 individuals as of August 8, 2016).

Steinbach – Kleefeld Case Study

The Steinbach-Kleefeld case is a snapshot of perceptions from five participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from IRCC, and both provincial and private sources. Three participants and one additional stakeholder provided feedback to finalize the report.

Community Context

Steinbach, a city of 13,524 (2011)⁵, is located 58 km southeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba. As the hub of economic activities in southeastern Manitoba, Steinbach is the regional shopping and service centre and agriculture supply centre for a large area⁶. Kleefeld is Manitoba's Honey Capital and it is also known for its dairy production⁷. The town is located about 17km west of Steinbach.



According to IRCC, 13 refugees have arrived in the Steinbach-Kleefeld area under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) sponsorship program. All five research participants confirmed the presence of refugees in their community and identified Syria and other African countries (e.g., Congo, Ethiopia) as the main countries of origin. Four out of five participants were aware of an existing plan for the arrival of more refugees in their community before the end of 2016. Four participants were aware of one more family coming; however two of those estimated three to five more families by the end of the year. All participants expected refugees to come through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program.

Settlement in the Community

Newcomer settlement in the Steinbach-Kleefeld community was considered as somewhat easy by three out of five participants, while two felt it lies within the difficult range (i.e., somewhat difficult and difficult). The reasons for the ease or difficulty of newcomers or refugee settlement vary. Settlement is considered a lot easier for newcomers that have family members already in the community and for the PSRs since by the time they arrive there is already an established network of connections and supports in place for them. Overall, there seems to be enough support from the community and individual community members that assist in overcoming some of the challenges. For example, even though there is no mosque in the community, church groups drive newcomers to Winnipeg to attend the mosque. The main concerns participants identified, which made settlement more challenging for newcomers were: the lack of public transportation, low English language proficiency, not enough entry level jobs, and the reduction in support service funding. In the feedback provided by one individual the combination of lack of public transportation and large distances that create a feeling of isolation for newcomers (especially in the long winter months) was seen as an on-going concern that affects newcomer settlement in Steinbach-Kleefeld.

5 Statistics Canada 2011 Census

6 City of Steinbach. Retrieved from <http://www.steinbach.ca/business-industry/>

7 The town of Kleefeld. Retrieved from <http://kleefeld.ca/about>

Table 1 – Settlement Services offered in Steinbach-Kleefeld as reported by the five research participants

		
<h3>Information and Orientation</h3>	<h3>Literacy and Language Training</h3>	<h3>Support Services</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sessions • Initial reception • Assistance with documents and with daily life • Needs assessment and referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (Various levels) • English for work, English at worksite (employers) • Volunteer English tutors and EAL classes in churches • Language assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare (for attending classes) • Transportation (by volunteers) • Interpretation/translation • Women, youth focused programming • Parenting support • Assisting with getting access to medical supports • Resource Centre (access to public computers, telephones, etc)
		
<h3>Labour Market Access Supports</h3>	<h3>Community Connections</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance finding a job (resume building, interview skills training) • Connections with employers • Referrals to professional organizations and information for foreign credential recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer support (especially through church groups) • Mentoring program • Welcoming communities (e.g sports programs, cooking classes- newcomers teach the community and vice versa, community event promoting cultural diversity) 	

The individual suggested that the community needs a cultural or drop-in centre for newcomers to access supports and have opportunities for recreation activities and social connections.

Settlement Services

There is a variety of settlement services and supports offered to newcomers in Steinbach-Kleefeld as shown in Table 1 (page 3). In Table 1, within each service category, services are reported in the order of the frequency mentioned by the five participants, with the most commonly reported service listed first in each section and the least commonly reported services listed last. Two out of five participants mentioned that there are services offered just for refugees in the community, however the sponsorship groups offer them on a volunteer basis.

Four out of five participants reported that services need to expand to meet the needs of the current newcomer population, while one felt current services are sufficient. Language training is the main service that needs to expand, both in the number of classes offered and so that an advanced level of language training can be offered in the community. One participant mentioned that in some cases newcomers have to travel to Winnipeg to access advanced language training. In the feedback received one individual strongly disagreed with this statement and mentioned that English as Additional Language (EAL) programs are offered in the community at various locations, various levels, and schedules, and there is no need for newcomers to travel to Winnipeg. Examples are the South Eastman English and Literacy Services (offers EAL at various levels), Eastman Immigrant services (offers a small English at work program), Heartland English School, churches and online programs. In addition the local colleges offer EAL programs for a fee.

More interpretation services were also needed in the Steinbach-Kleefeld region. The expansion of transportation supports or the addition of public transportation would be extremely helpful for newcomers in the community.

Participants were asked whether services needed to change to meet the needs of the newcomer population and three out of five cited this was not necessary, since the services currently offered are the services needed. One participant believed change will be needed in the future to meet the increasing diversity in Steinbach-Kleefeld's newcomer population, while the fifth one believed change is needed now since more professional individuals are coming and there is a need for foreign credential recognition programming in the community.

Short and Long-Term Needs of Refugees

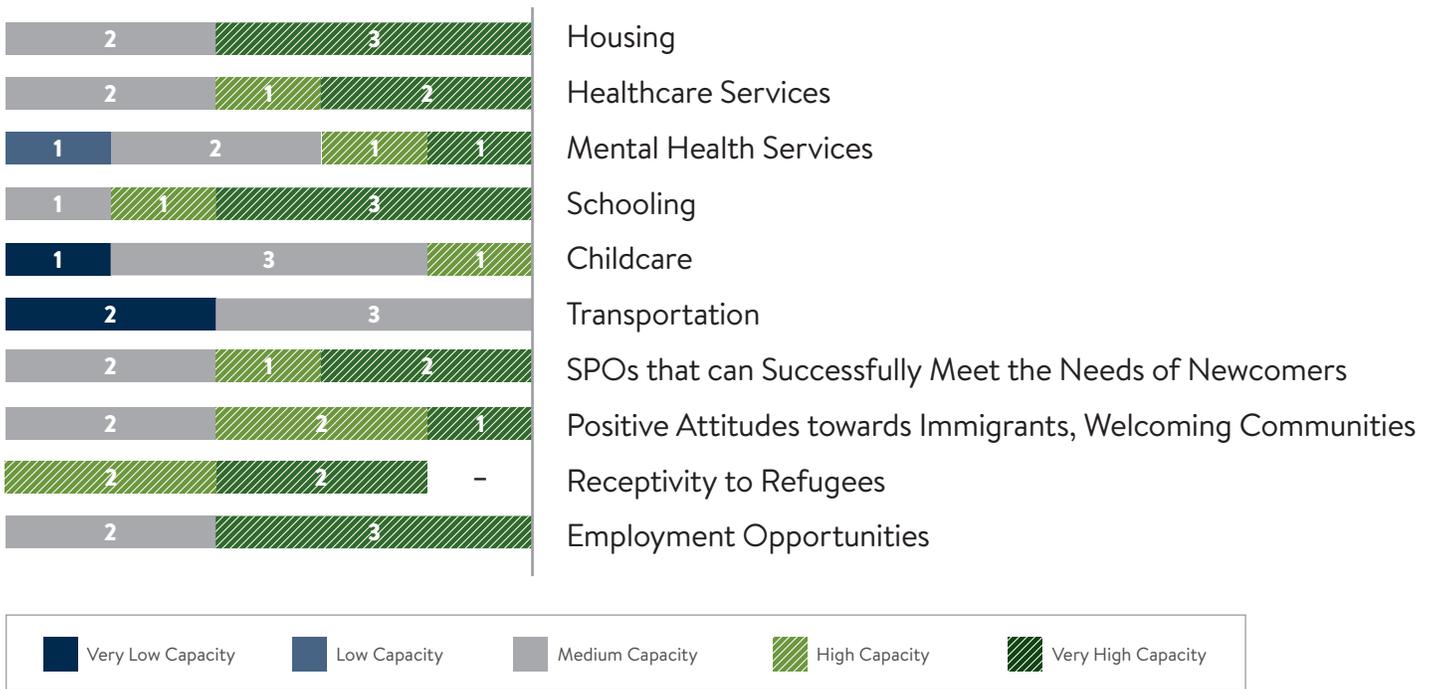
Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. In the short-term improving language skills (mentioned by 4 participants); cultural adjustment and making connections to the new community (4); and finding employment (2) were seen as the top needs. In the long run though, finding employment (4) and moving towards independence both financially and by relying on themselves rather than on the sponsorship group (3) become the most important needs. Continually improving language skills (3) remains a top priority, since many other factors like employment depends on language skills. One participant mentioned that even though English comprehension is getting better, pronunciation should not be ignored since employers are more likely to hire a newcomer with strong English pronunciation. In the feedback received one individual highlighted the fact that low English language skills result in safety and behavior challenges (especially in sensitive cases with women and children). The individual noted that in some cases newcomers tend to agree with something without having fully comprehended everything that was communicated to them in English. Also, newcomers may be hesitant to indicate their lack of understanding and to raise their concerns. This poses additional challenges and reiterates the importance of language skills in refugee and newcomer settlement.

Community Capacity

All five participants were in agreement that their community has the capacity to attract and retain refugees. The five participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community's ability to respond to the needs of refugees. The results are listed in Figure 1.

Transportation was the main area that was scored very low with 2 participants stating the capacity is very low and 3 characterized it as medium. The community has no public transportation in place, which leaves newcomers and refugees either to depend on volunteers or to spend significant money on taxis. Both of these options were not seen as a permanent solution in the long term. In the feedback received one individual reiterated the importance of public transportation however emphasized that this alone would not meet all needs. There needs to be supports in place for families to obtain a vehicle given the location of the community and that the distances to someone's employment and to acquire necessities can be quite large (in the winter months the challenge increases). Childcare also scored low since childcare spots are

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity ranked from very low to very high capacity by the five research participants



limited in the community.

Participants had mixed perceptions around mental health services; this capacity area scored from low up to very high. There is some availability of services in the community, however for more specialized services refugees will need to go to Winnipeg.

In all other areas more than half of participants felt that their community had high or very high capacity. Experienced SPOs are in place and provided a wide range of services and supports to facilitate settlement of refugees. Housing for refugees is available and is normally arranged before refugees arrive; however in some cases can be expensive. Schools in the community have the capacity to accept more students (even though in some areas numbers might be high) and teachers are experienced with multi-cultural classes. Overall, participants feel that their community is a welcoming community and open to other cultures, however people are more familiar with immigrants than refugees, and levels of receptivity might vary depending on the refugees' country of origin.

Regarding employment opportunities, there is availability in the community, however mainly for low skilled positions. For any type of employment, even low skilled, a certain level of language skills is needed for individuals to find and keep their jobs. For example, in some industries like hog and agriculture,

even the entry-level positions require a certain level of English in order to follow safety protocols.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

Four of the five participants reported their organizations were engaged in partnerships with other community organizations. Partnerships were identified with a variety of stakeholders such as, schools, SPOs, churches, local businesses, Mennonite Central Committee, EAL and Literacy provider, Child and Family services, health authorities and other resource centres in the community.

Participants also shared their opinion regarding what types of local partnerships are needed in the community in order to better respond to the needs of refugees (regardless of whether the partnerships are already in place or not). One participant mentioned the lack of public transportation and the need for rural municipalities to come to the table and better understand and support refugee concerns and issues. Other important partnerships needed are with employers, the sponsorship groups, language providers and for government to address the red-tape issues with foreign credential recognition. Most of the needed partnerships appear to be in place in Steinbach-Kleefeld; however, it was reported that more coordination is needed so that all partners are working together to meet

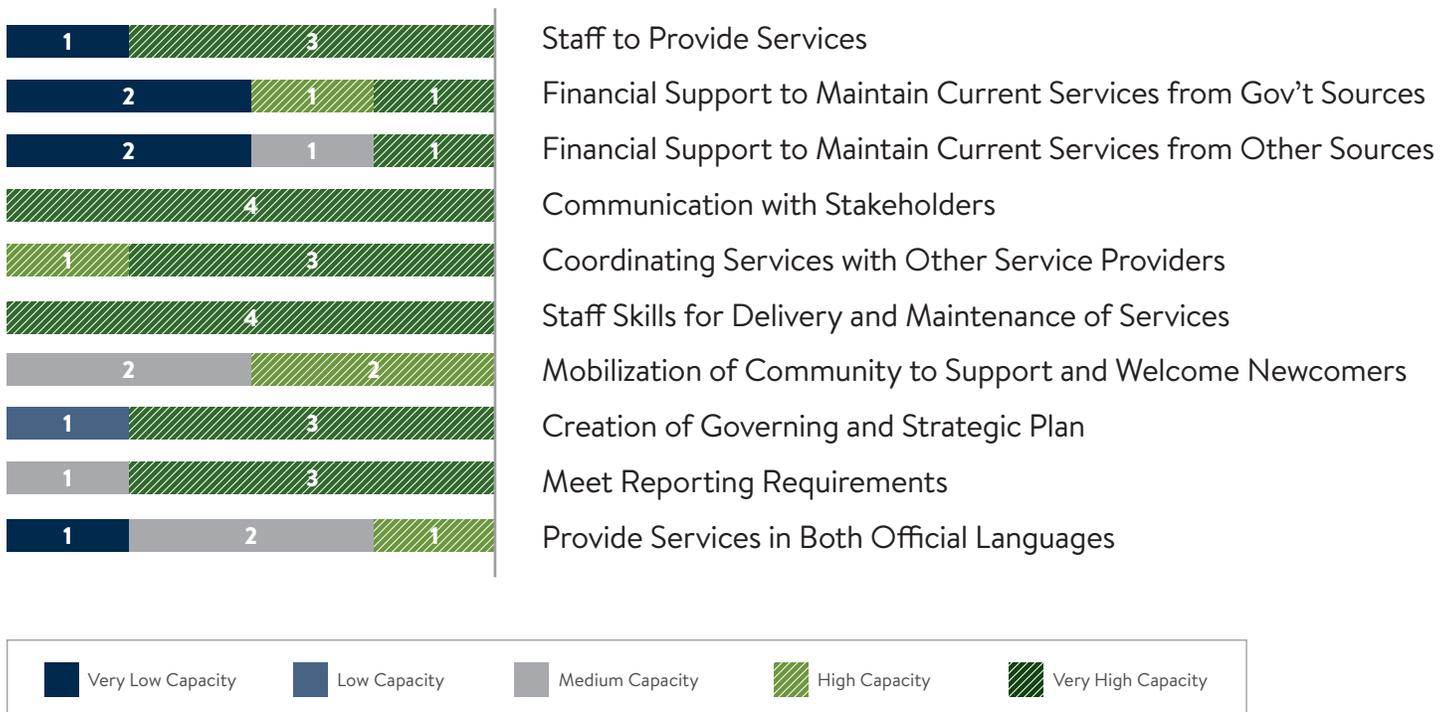
refugees’ needs instead of each partner doing their own piece.

The participants were also asked about their own agency’s or organization’s capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees in the community. Four participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were most intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

Four of the five organizations rated their organizational capacity to serve newcomers in their community as somewhat high to very high on many items (Figure 2).

More financial support is needed from both government and other sources and participants mentioned that multi-year funding needed to be in place in order to stabilize service delivery; something also highlighted in the feedback received by one individual. Capacity for staff skills for delivery and maintenance of services is adequate; however in some cases more staff is needed. Capacity to deliver services in both official languages is relatively low, but the main need was for interpreters in newcomers’ first language.

Figure 2. Areas of agency capacity as ranked by the four participants responded in this question.



The following two sections of the Steinbach-Kleefeld community report explores the participants' experiences with the refugee resettlement that has occurred since November 2015.

Recent Experiences with Refugees

According to the research participants, many organizations, other than the sponsorship groups, were involved in the process of refugees' resettlement such as, churches, the School Division, SPOs, Steinbach Family Resource Centre, Southern Health Authority, and Mennonite Central Committee. Overall, the sponsorship groups and SPOs worked well together during the resettlement process of refugees, with four out of five participants feeling this way, while one participant strongly disagreed with this statement (SPOs are based in Steinbach and sponsorship groups in Kleefeld are not well connected to them). SPOs provided services as listed in Table 1 while the sponsorship groups mainly assisted refugees with transportation, housing, daily life (shopping, banking, taking them to the doctors), finding employment, orientation to Canadian culture and to the community and provide financial and social supports. Four out of five participants agree with the statement that there are no refugees in Steinbach-Kleefeld who need support but don't seek help or access support.

There were many key initiatives the participants' organizations undertook to prepare for the arrival of refugees in the community. One organization conducted needs assessment for both the agency and the community. Lack of public transportation and lack of interpreters were both identified and volunteers were found to help address those issues. The sponsorship groups conducted meetings and delegated tasks to members to find housing for refugees and help them with day to day activities. SPOs, churches, schools and refugee sponsorship groups communicated to identify and match services offered with refugee needs. For example, teachers were already aware of the materials needed for them to learn English and also had materials in Arabic and French ready for refugees to use.

Challenges & Successes

Despite the preparation for refugee arrival, participant organizations faced challenges during the resettlement of refugees in their community. Participants mentioned different types of challenges based mainly on their organizations' involvement.

Knowing in advance the exact date new refugees are arriving in the community helps with planning. There were incidents where sponsorship groups were unaware of the refugee arrival until the same day, so this caught them by surprise and they were not as prepared as they could have been if they had had a few weeks' notice. In another case, half the members of one refugee family have already arrived, but there is no indication as to when the rest of the family is expected to arrive. Better coordination and communication is needed from the federal government to avoid frustration for both the refugees and those involved in their resettlement process.

Public transportation is a big concern and it is suggested for municipalities to be more involved and find ways to address this issue. Currently volunteers are assisting and biking is an option during the summer; however, these solutions are not permanent. Lack of interpreters is another challenge and despite the fact volunteers are assisting in this area too, an expansion of the interpreter program is needed.

One participant mentioned that refugee sponsorship groups need to financially support new refugees until they at least obtain basic language skills and then to arrange employment for them. Rushing to employment without prior English language comprehension has resulted, in one incident, in refugees losing their jobs due to low or very limited language skills.

Additional frustration is caused by the fact that refugees are missing proper documentation, such as birth certificates, immunization records, education level records and everything needs to be recreated from scratch. This is an ongoing challenge and no recommendation was offered regarding how to overcome it.

Participants also reported on the key successes during the resettlement process of refugees in their community. The positive things that came out of this process is the strong community partnerships that were developed, strong volunteer networks that assisted refugees with daily life needs and a volunteer group of language tutors assisting refugees learning the language. Overall, and despite the challenges, refugee families managed to settle and start their first steps towards doing things on their own and being part of the community.

Conclusion

The community of Steinbach-Kleefeld has recently welcomed and resettled refugees, with more anticipated to arrive in the near future. With already strong settlement services, they still required additional support to facilitate resettlement and integrate refugees. They relied on their volunteer network to meet the current and growing needs. Expansion of language training is a priority since other aspects of newcomers' lives depend on language skills (for example employment, social integration, safety).

Generally speaking, participants saw Steinbach-Kleefeld as a welcoming community with the capability to develop more of its current capacity to attract and retain refugees. Lack of public transportation remains a major concern and there is a call for neighbouring municipalities to come to the table and address this issue as well. An alternative would be for additional supports to be put in place that will allow refugee families to acquire their own vehicle.

Several organizations were involved in the resettlement of refugees in the community and worked hard to prepare for refugee arrival. Additional financial support (multiyear funding) and better coordination and communication (e.g. knowing in advance the timeline for refugee arrival) with the Federal Government is needed to allow for a more positive resettlement experience. Despite the challenges faced, and thanks to a strong volunteer and partnership network, refugees have settled and started their life in the community. What remains to be seen is how refugees move forward towards independence and integration.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE RESEARCH TEAM

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Terms:

Newcomers: Includes all immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students that have been in Canada for 1 day to 5 years.

Refugees: Includes all Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), Refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVORs) and refugee claimants. A refugee is different from an immigrant, in that an immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced to flee (IRCC, 2016)

Community: A municipality, district, region or other geographic area consisting of population clusters.

Stakeholder: Any group, organization, or enterprise that has newcomers and/or refugees as the primary or secondary clientele.



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COMMUNITY REPORT

Immigration in 5 Rural Manitoba
Communities with a Focus on Refugees:

Portage la Prairie
Case Study

August 2016





Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

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Introduction

In November 2015, a national resettlement initiative was undertaken to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees across Canada. Since November 4th, 2015 the Government of Canada has welcomed more than 29,700 Syrian refugees (August 1st, 2016) and the commitment to resettling more refugees to Canada is continuing in 2016¹. More than 1000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Manitoba and, of those, 90 have settled outside of Winnipeg, in rural communities and small centres. This research project was initiated out of this experience and is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO).

The purpose of the project is to learn from the current experiences in five rural communities in Manitoba and examine the settlement and community capacity of these smaller centres to resettle refugees. Selected communities are those who have received newcomers and have recently received refugees or have an active plan in place for the arrival of refugees.

This research project builds on the 2015 “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western region”² study conducted by the Rural Development institute (RDI) and Immigration Research West (IRW). It offered a snapshot of the immigration settlement services sector in 29 selected rural communities across the western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut).

1 Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>). date accessed August 8, 2016.

2 Ashton et al. (2015, May). Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region. Retrieved from <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publication/immigration-settlement-services-and-gaps-in-citizenship-and-immigration-canadas-western-region/>

Research Method

This study follows the same method as the 2015 study. Five communities³ were selected that are distributed geographically and represent a sample of the provinces’ smaller cities⁴. The five cases are: Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Boissevain-Killarney, Steinbach-Kleefeld and Morden-Winkler-Altona-Carman.

In the five communities, data were collected through 30 telephone interviews with a senior official of the Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) or a representative of the Refugee Sponsorship Group. The sample of participating service providers included both SPOs that have a primary mandate to serve newcomers (funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or other sources) and community organizations supporting newcomers in some capacity. This research did not include newcomers or refugees and as such the findings are based solely on the opinions and perceptions of SPOs and refugee sponsorship groups’ representatives.

Once data were collected, a draft report was compiled for each community. Each was shared with the research participants and other local stakeholders. Their feedback was incorporated and reports finalized.

3 Similarly as in the Ashton et al.(2015) study, the term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.

4 Winnipeg is excluded from the study together with the communities participated in the Ashton et al. (2015) study with an exception of Dauphin, due to its recent experience with refugee resettlement (15 individuals as of August 8, 2016).

Portage la Prairie Case Study

The Portage la Prairie case is a snapshot of perceptions from six participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from provincial, private, IRCC and other federal sources as well as the city of Portage la Prairie. Four participants and two additional stakeholders provided feedback to finalize the report.

Community Context

Portage la Prairie (Portage) is the fourth largest city in Manitoba with a population of 12,996 (2011)⁵. It is located in Southern Manitoba between the province's two major centres (Winnipeg and Brandon). Portage is a major service centre for the Central Plains region of Manitoba containing regional government offices, retail and distribution services⁶.



According to IRCC⁷ and confirmed by the research participants there hasn't been an arrival of refugees in the community yet (four out of six participants said refugees hadn't arrived in the community and the other two were unsure). However, five of the six participants (one participant was unsure) confirmed that there is an active plan in place for refugees to arrive in the community before the end of 2016. They are expecting two families from Syria (total of 10 individuals) under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) and Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Programs (BVOR mentioned by three participants and PSR mentioned by two).

Settlement in the Community

Participants' opinions were divided when asked how difficult or easy it is for newcomers (including refugees) to settle in Portage. Three participants perceived newcomer settlement as somewhat difficult and three as somewhat easy. An existing SPO network in the community and partnerships among various organizations assist newcomers to have their needs met. Additionally, settlement is usually easier for those newcomers whose cultural group is present in the community, but often these groups are not present in Portage.

The main concerns participants identified, which made settlement more challenging for newcomers in the community were finding affordable housing, mental health issues and finding mental health support, low English language skills, and acceptance by locals. Two participants mentioned that there needs to be education for both newcomers and local residents, so more exposure to each other's culture is possible.

⁵ Statistics Canada 2011 Census

⁶ Source: Portage Regional Economic Development, The Region of Portage la Prairie 2015 Community Profile. Retrieved from <http://www.plprecd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/RegionofPortage.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>

Table 1 – Settlement Services offered in Portage la Prairie as reported by the six research participants

 <p>Information and Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment and referral • Initial reception 	 <p>Literacy and Language Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (general) • Language assessment • Job specific language training • Additional language training through volunteers 	 <p>Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare (during service delivery) • Transportation (by volunteers) • Interpretation/translation (in some cases by volunteers) • Women, youth and seniors focused programming • Services for parents and families • Supports to persons with disabilities
 <p>Labour Market Access Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance finding a job • Connections with employers 	 <p>Community Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives that foster interactions between newcomers and Canadians (taking newcomers to hockey game, curling league) • Mentoring program • Welcoming communities (cultural events, some events through churches) 	

Settlement Services

The settlement services offered in Portage as mentioned by the six research participants are shown in Table 1 (page 3). In Table 1, within each service category, services are reported in the order of the frequency mentioned by the six participants, with the most commonly reported service listed first in each section and the least commonly reported services listed last. Most of the basic settlement services are offered in the community, however some of them depend on volunteers (e.g. transportation, interpretation). Three participants mentioned crisis counseling is offered in the community, although two participants cited that it is only available outside of the community (newcomers are referred to a Winnipeg facility). Only one participant mentioned that there are services offered just for refugees, however the sponsorship groups offer them on a volunteer basis.

Four out of six participants reported that services need to expand to meet the needs of the current newcomer population, while two felt services are sufficient but expansion will be needed in the future. Services that participants thought need expanding include transportation supports, job specific language training, foreign credential recognition and upgrading skills programs, childcare and integration services. Three participants mentioned that their organizations are short staffed and are unable to dedicate the time and resources needed to provide integration services due to insufficient funding.

Participants were asked whether services needed to change to meet the needs of the newcomer population. Three participants cited a change is needed and two cited a change will be needed in the future. The anticipated refugee arrival will require services to adapt to the unique needs of refugees, and refugee focused programs should be offered in the community. Other examples of new services that need to be offered in the community are: introduction to the education system (for newcomer families with children), job-specific language training offered by the large employers in the community, and the current social services offered need to involve more newcomers.

Short and Long-term Needs of Refugees

Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. In the short-term participants cited access to housing (mentioned by 5 participants); mental health and health services (4); and improving language skills that affect other aspect of life such as social and employment

integration (3) as the top needs. Participants believe that the long-term needs of refugees are: integration into the community and getting a sense of belonging (4), improving education and having their foreign credentials recognized (3), transportation (2) and improving language skills (2).

Community Capacity

Four out of six participants felt that their community has the capacity to attract and retain refugees, while one participant had the opposite opinion and one was unsure. The six participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community's ability to respond to the needs of refugees. The results are listed in Figure 1.

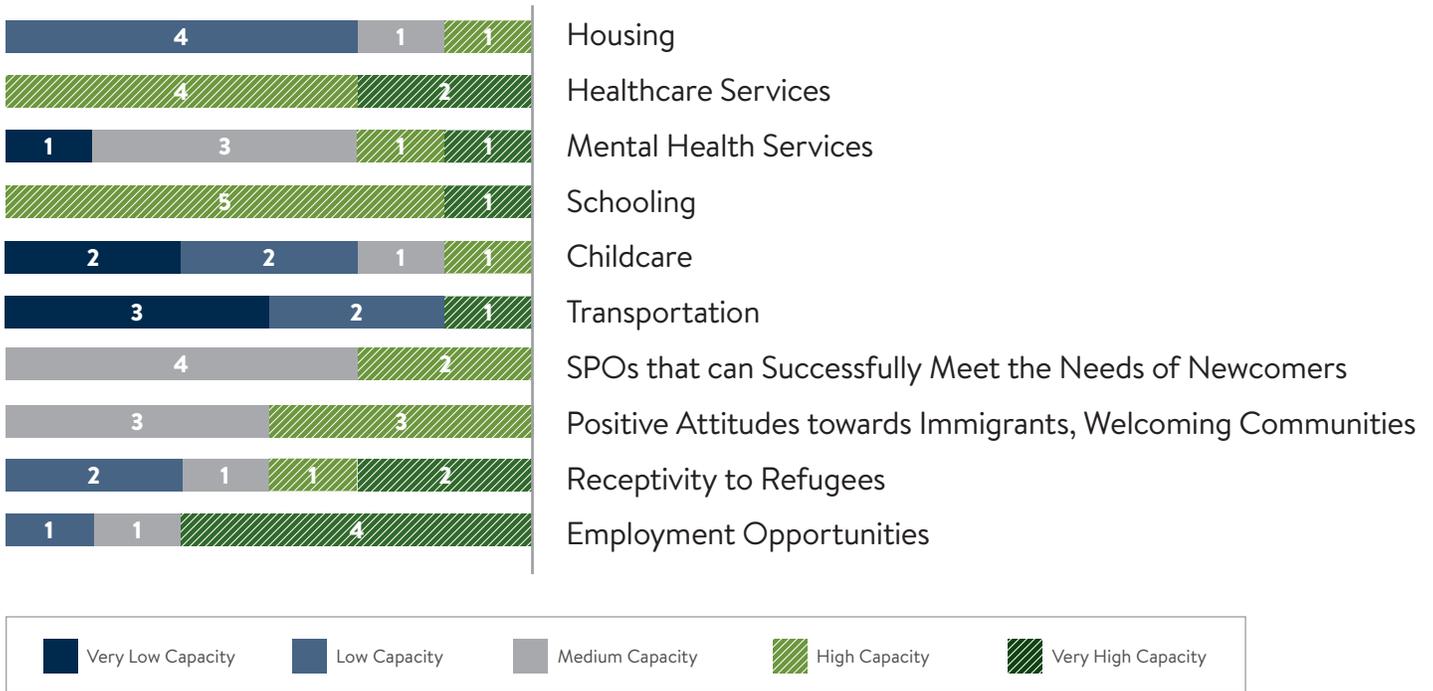
Transportation, childcare, and housing were the three areas of community capacity that scored low. Five of the six participants stated transportation was within the very low (3) to low (2) capacity range, since there is no public transportation available in the community. Currently the need is met by volunteers. Participants reported a few initiatives taking place in the community to address the issue, including a transportation committee (in partnership with SPOs), funding in place for adults to get driver's licenses, and a borrow-a-bike program. A family resource centre also provides shuttle transportation for newcomers participating in their programs.

Childcare was also within the very low (2) to low (2) capacity range with one participant reporting medium capacity and one high. Daycare spots are scarce and waiting lists are very long. Participants mentioned future plans in place to expand childcare services in the community. Housing was the third area that scored low since low-income housing is not easily available in the community. However, one participant mentioned that two houses are already in place for the two refugee families expected to arrive.

Mental health and receptivity to refugees were two areas of capacity where participants' opinions were mixed. Regarding mental health, two participants were not aware of any mental health service providers in Portage. Two of the other four participants that were aware of mental health providers in the community questioned how culturally competent the services are, since in the past some newcomer families moved to Winnipeg to access the mental health services they needed.

Regarding receptivity to refugees, participants' perception is mixed due to different attitudes from different groups of people. While people involved in the arrival and resettlement process of refugees in the community (e.g. sponsorship group, volunteers, SPOs, churches) are very supportive and

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity as ranked from very low to very high capacity by the six research participants



welcoming (e.g. high financial support raised for refugees, a large network of volunteers, cultural workshops to increase awareness in the community) there are some negative attitudes expressed publically (e.g social media posts, letter to the sponsorship group). Attitudes towards immigrants, rather than refugees are more positive in the community since the community has seen a benefit in recruiting and retaining immigrants. Nevertheless, there are still some incidents where negative feelings are expressed.

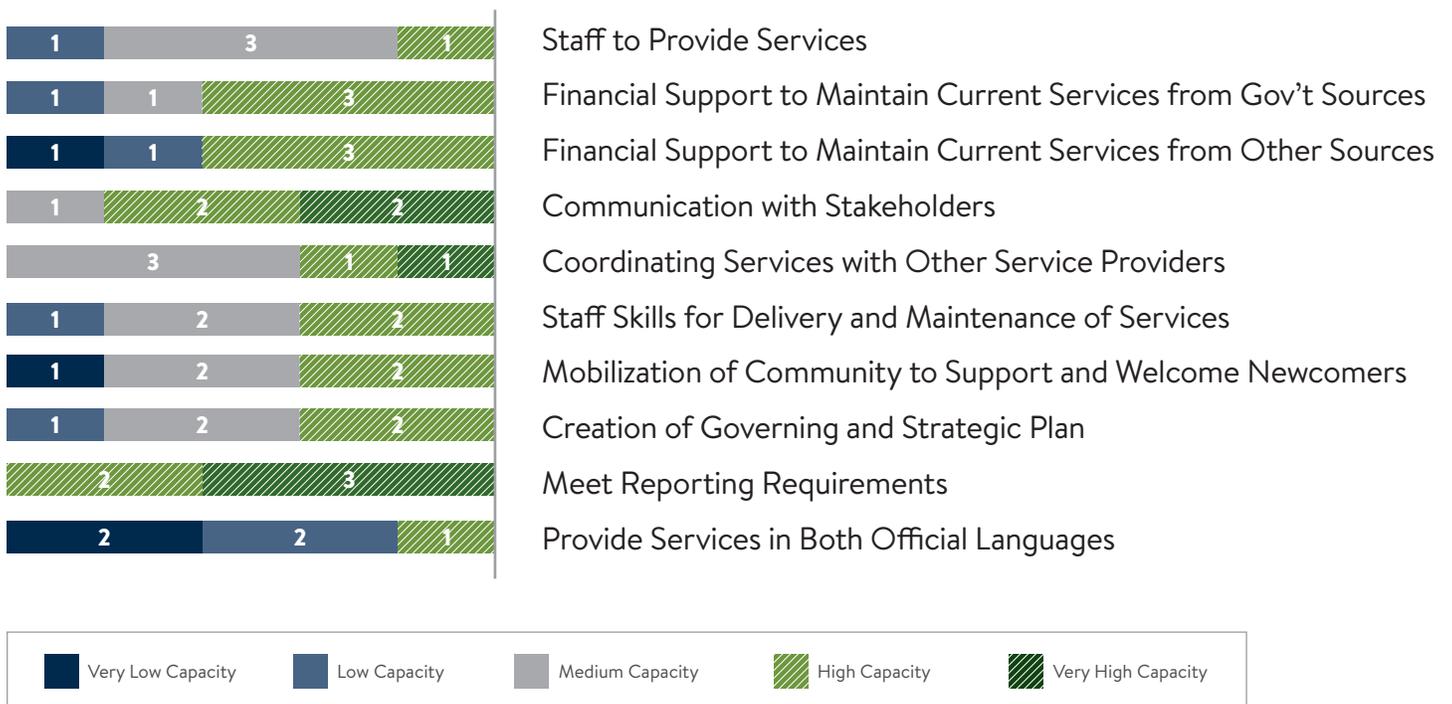
The remaining areas of capacity scored relatively high. Participants feel the services offered by SPOs in the community are somewhat sufficient, but funding is limited together with professional development opportunities for SPOs’ staff and service delivery often rely on volunteers. Health care services are provided by well-trained staff who are experienced with newcomers, as well other resources are in place (e.g. interpreters for appointments with the doctors). Schools are sufficient, however there is room for improvement (additional financial support to create programs for refugee students is needed). Regarding employment in the community, participants said there is a broad range of opportunities especially for entry-level positions. For professional and highly qualified newcomers having their credentials recognized and finding employment that matches their skills and qualifications remains challenging.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

All six participants reported their organizations were engaged in partnerships with other community organizations. Partnerships were identified with a great variety of stakeholders such as, schools, other SPOs, health and mental health services, Child and Family Services, churches, local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Portage la Prairie, recreation opportunities for children, and other resource centres in the community.

Participants also shared their opinion regarding what types of local partnerships are needed in the community in order to better respond to the needs of refugees (regardless of whether the partnerships are already in place or not). Health and mental health authorities, the City and local municipality, education, employers, and community justice office are needed the most. One participant mentioned a partnership group that existed in the past in the community and included representatives from Child and Family Services, the justice system, healthcare services, local churches, education, and public housing. This partnership group needs to reform to enable organizations to share resources and communicate the needs of refugees. Most of the partnerships needed appear to be in place in Portage, however they are somewhat informal.

Figure 2 - Areas of agency capacity as ranked by the five participants responded in this question



The participants were also asked about their own agency's or organization's capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees in the community. Five participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were most intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

More improvement is needed in coordination and communication among the SPOs to identify refugee needs and adapt services to meet unique needs. Additional efforts should be made to mobilize the community so the community is better prepared for the refugee arrival. Participants highlighted the need for training opportunities for SPOs' staff to increase their cultural awareness in relation to refugees (e.g understanding the importance of refugees keeping their first language) and gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding them. Currently all specialized supports for refugees are in Winnipeg and staff's experience in providing services to refugees and welcoming them in the community is only gained on the job. Additional training is needed for staff to facilitate services using interpreters and better coordination with the volunteer group of interpreters.

Conclusion

Portage is preparing for refugee arrival, as two refugee families are anticipated to settle in the community in the near future. The various service providers in the community have limited previous experience resettling refugees. Although the basic settlement services are already offered in the community, there is a call for more support for SPOs and other organizations to prepare for the refugee arrival. SPOs' staff need training opportunities to increase their understanding around the unique needs of refugees and adapt their service delivery in order to meet those needs.

In Portage the strong partnership network that is already in place, could be more formal in order to share resources and collectively communicate the needs of refugees. Additional efforts should be made to mobilize the community, increase public awareness about refugees, and work towards advancing the community's capacity to welcome them.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE RESEARCH TEAM

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COMMUNITY REPORT

Immigration in 5 Rural Manitoba
Communities with a Focus on Refugees:

**Boissevain-Killarney
Case Study**

August 2016





Funded by:

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Immigration, Refugees
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Introduction

In November 2015, a national resettlement initiative was undertaken to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees across Canada. Since November 4th, 2015 the Government of Canada has welcomed more than 29,700 Syrian refugees (August 1st, 2016) and the commitment to resettling more refugees to Canada is continuing in 2016¹. More than 1000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Manitoba and, of those, 90 have settled outside of Winnipeg, in rural communities and small centres. This research project was initiated out of this experience and is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO).

The purpose of the project is to learn from the current experiences in five rural communities in Manitoba and examine the settlement and community capacity of these smaller centres to resettle refugees. Selected communities are those who have received newcomers and have recently received refugees or have an active plan in place for the arrival of refugees.

This research project builds on the 2015 “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western region”² study conducted by the Rural Development institute (RDI) and Immigration Research West (IRW). It offered a snapshot of the immigration settlement services sector in 29 selected rural communities across the western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut).

1 Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>). date accessed August 8, 2016.

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Research Method

This study follows the same method as the 2015 study. Five communities³ were selected that are distributed geographically and represent a sample of the provinces’ smaller cities⁴. The five cases are: Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Boissevain-Killarney, Steinbach-Kleefeld and Morden-Winkler-Altona-Carman.

In the five communities, data were collected through 30 telephone interviews with a senior official of the Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) or a representative of the Refugee Sponsorship Group. The sample of participating service providers included both SPOs that have a primary mandate to serve newcomers (funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or other sources) and community organizations supporting newcomers in some capacity. This research did not include newcomers or refugees and as such the findings are based solely on the opinions and perceptions of SPOs and refugee sponsorship groups’ representatives.

Once data were collected, a draft report was compiled for each community. Each was shared with the research participants and other local stakeholders. Their feedback was incorporated and reports finalized.

3 Similarly as in the Ashton et al.(2015) study, the term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.

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Boissevain-Killarney Case Study

The Boissevain-Killarney case is a snapshot of perceptions from four participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from IRCC, provincial and private sources. One participant provided feedback to finalize the report.

Community Context

Killarney, a town of 2,197 (2011), is located 37kms Southeast of Boissevain, population 1,572 (2011). The two communities are situated in the Southwest corner of Manitoba close to the Canada-United States border and the International Peace Park. The leading industry in Boissevain is agriculture, while Killarney acts as a commercial hub for the area. Both towns attract visitors throughout the year to the many outdoor recreation activities available and local art.⁵

Three of the four participants were not aware of any refugees who arrived in the Boissevain-Killarney area since the end of 2015, which is consistent with IRCC's publicly available records⁶. However, the fourth participant indicated that a Syrian refugee family of five had arrived in the community during that time. All four research participants reported that there is an existing plan for the arrival of refugees in their community before the end of 2016, and 2 to 4 families would be arriving through Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR) programs.



Settlement in the Community

Participants considered newcomer settlement in the Boissevain-Killarney community to be within the difficult range, since three of the four participants reported settlement being “somewhat difficult” and one being “difficult”. Overall, the community is new to the settlement process of immigrants and refugees and this lack of experience can be challenging for all involved. Boissevain-Killarney is a small rural community and gives a feeling of isolation to newcomers due to its location and lack of ethno-cultural diversity in the community. Limited language programs, limited employment opportunities as well as the lack of public transportation were all cited as additional potential challenges to settlement. Participants noted that community capacity is limited due to settlement services not being readily available in Boissevain-Killarney. Newcomers often must find transportation to the communities of Cartwright or Brandon to meet with a Settlement Facilitator. Participants stated that while these challenges exist, the community is supportive of newcomers and being a safe and affordable community to live in were seen as easing newcomer settlement.

⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.killarney.ca/default.asp> and <http://www.boissevain.ca/information/default.htm>

⁶ Government of Canada, IRCC, Map of destination communities and service provider organizations retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp> (day accessed July 22nd, 2016)

Table 1 – Settlement Services offered in Boissevain-Killarney as reported by the four research participants.

 <p>Information and Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment and referral • Information and orientation • Initial reception 	 <p>Literacy and Language Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (once per week only) • Language assessment 	 <p>Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation (volunteers) • Services for youth, seniors and people with disabilities
 <p>Labour Market Access Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance finding a job • Connections with employers • Job skill building courses 	 <p>Community Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal volunteer-based mentoring programs 	

Settlement Services

There are limited settlement services and supports available to newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney. Available services indicated by the participants are shown in Table 1 (page 3). Participants also noted that there are no services offered just for refugees in the community.

Two out of four participants reported services need to expand to meet the needs of the current newcomer population, while two felt services are sufficient in relation to the current population but if more newcomers arrive then expansion will be needed in the future. Participants indicated that expanding community outreach is needed to communicate the current services offered, as well an expansion of language programs to offer training five days per week.

Participants were asked whether services needed to change to meet the needs of the newcomer population and two out of four cited this was not necessary since the services currently offered are the services that are needed. The other two participants believed services would need to change in the future to meet the expected increase in Boissevain-Killarney's newcomer population. A focus should be put on cultural diversity, culture shock and adaptation services as well as programs that help newcomers feel welcome in the community. Refugee-specific services will also be needed in the future since more refugees are anticipated to arrive. Examples are English language programs tailored to Syrian refugees, interpreter and translation services.

Short and Long-term Needs of Refugees

Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. Participants identified accessing housing (mentioned by 3 participants); forming social connections and integrating into the community (3), as well as healthcare needs (3) as the top three short-term needs. Healthcare was seen as priority as refugees arriving tend to have immediate healthcare needs (dental and mental health especially), which participants noted must be addressed right away before health issues become larger long-term needs.

Participants indicated that finding employment (3) and having a sense of belonging in the community (2) were the most important long term refugee needs, in addition to moving towards independence related to finances, transportation, and being able to relocate if they wish (2). English language acquisition is also a top long term need in order for refugees to gain employment and adapt to everyday life in Boissevain-Killarney (2).

Community Capacity

All four participants were in agreement that their community has the capacity to attract and retain refugees. The four participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community's ability to respond to the needs of refugees. The results are listed in Figure 1.

Transportation was considered the lowest capacity to meet refugee needs with half the participants indicating the capacity is very low, while the other half indicated low to medium capacity. Transportation within the community is available through a taxi and Handivan service, however this is for a fee. Volunteers also informally provide transportation to newcomers. The largest challenge is accessing transportation between Boissevain-Killarney and other communities.

Regarding Mental Health services, participants indicated a low to medium capacity. Specifically, there is a need for more counseling services and staff to meet current demand as well as more staff trained to address unique mental health needs of refugees, including trauma.

Two participants indicated that Boissevain-Killarney has a low capacity to meet housing needs of refugees as low income rental housing is limited. However the other two participants felt that although there is room for improvement in this area, housing is available.

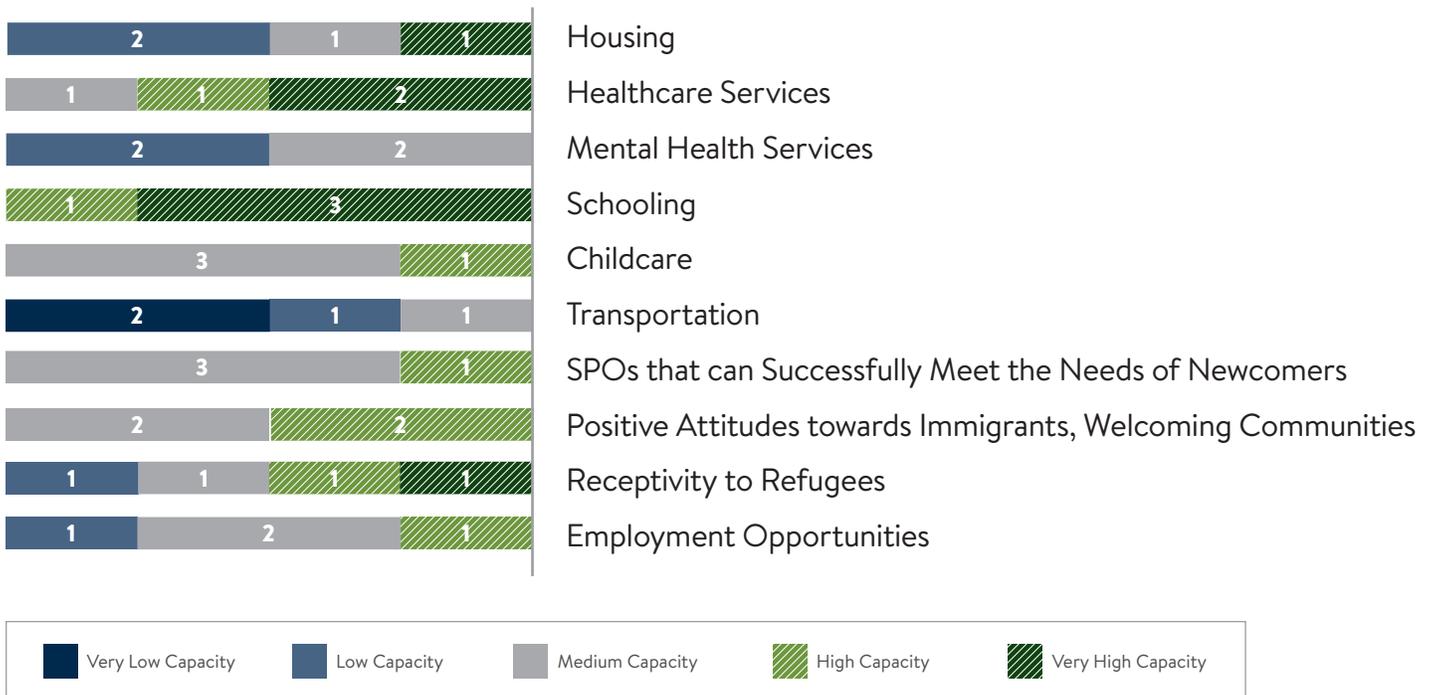
Participants had mixed perceptions around receptivity toward refugees since this capacity area scored from low up to very high. One participant noted the community seems to be less open due to limited cultural understanding and misinformation through the media. Overall though, the participants felt that attitudes are quite positive towards refugees and newcomers in general. Two out of four participants indicated that the community is generally positive and welcoming towards refugees.

Childcare and SPOs' capacity were seen as medium by three participants and high capacity by one. Participants indicated that the capacity to meet needs is impacted by limited funding and thus limited ability to offer services.

Participants' opinion of the community's capacity to meet employment needs of refugees varied. There was no consensus on the availability of employment opportunities, since two participants found it was sufficient and two limited. Some employment opportunities are available, especially entry-level positions, but language skills are essential for refugees to take advantage of those. For refugees with specialized professions and skills, opportunities are quite limited.

Regarding schooling and healthcare services, more than half of the participants felt that their community had high to very

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity ranked from very low to very high by the four research participants



high capacity. Good schools, hospitals and clinics are available in the community, however some travelling to neighboring communities is required in the cases of emergency or accessing specialized health services.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

Two of the four participants reported their organizations were engaged in partnerships with other community organizations. The partnerships mentioned were with churches, other SPOs, local government, schools, Turtle Mountain Adult Education Centre but also with volunteers.

Participants also shared their opinion regarding what types of local partnerships are needed in the community in order to better respond to the needs of refugees (regardless of whether the partnerships are already in place or not). One participant mentioned the need for all levels of government to collaborate on service provision and funding to better provide information and services to refugees. Other important partnerships needed are with Settlement SPOs and Language Service SPOs to provide holistic support to newcomers and refugees. Participants indicated that sponsorship groups, community members, and refugees should be working together to communicate needs, build relationships between refugees and local residents, and facilitate positive attitudes towards refugees. Participants indicated that the school divisions, healthcare services, and social assistance should

also collaborate to better support families and provide specialized or individualized support for refugee students. Most of the partnerships needed appear to be in place in Boissevain-Killarney; however, more collaboration among the organizations is needed.

The participants were also asked about their own agency's or organization's capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees in the community. Three participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2, page 6). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were mostly intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

The organizational capacity was found to be very low to somewhat low on several items. More financial support is needed from both government and other sources to maintain current services. Participants indicated that by increasing funding, SPOs would be able to expand their services, provide interpreters and translators, as well as increase the operating hours of the Settlement SPO.

Participants indicated there is a need for more communication and coordination between stakeholders and mentioned lack of communication regarding the services available in the community. Mobilization of the community to support and welcome newcomers was seen as generally a high capacity, as well as agencies' capacity to meet reporting requirements.

Figure 2 - Areas of agency capacity as ranked by the three participants responding to this question



The following two sections of the Boissevain-Killarney community report contain information on the recent experience the one participant had with refugee resettlement since November 2015 and should neither be considered exhaustive or representative of the community as a whole.

Recent Experiences with Refugees

From the perception of the one participant the sponsorship group and the Adult Learning Centre were the two organizations involved in the process of refugee settlement in the community. Housing and English classes were the first things arranged while preparing for the refugee arrival. The participant indicated that the sponsorship group and SPOs worked in silos rather than in collaboration. The sponsorship group provided the following services to refugees: housing, financial support, help integrating into community, church related social support, information and referral, and transportation.

Challenges & Successes

The main challenge faced during the refugee resettlement in the community, according to the one participant, was not having a clear timeline for the refugee arrival. In one instance the sponsorship group paid for housing for 4-6 months prior to the arrival of their sponsored refugee family. There is a call for the Federal Government to either provide specific timelines for the refugee arrival or provide financial support to the sponsorship groups to alleviate these unnecessary expenses.

The lack of interpreters in the community was also mentioned as a challenge due to the low English levels of the refugees arriving. The one participant indicated that an increase in language programs and volunteer conversation or mentorship programs might help to ease the challenges associated with the language barrier.

The participant was unsure of the key successes of the refugee resettlement at this point.

Conclusion

The community of Boissevain-Killarney faces unique challenges as a rural destination for newcomer and refugee settlement due to both its location and lack of experience in welcoming and settling newcomers. Only one participant had a recent experience with refugee resettlement in the community, but all participants reported there is a plan in place to welcome several families before the end of 2016.

Limited services and supports are available to newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney mainly due to insufficient funding for SPOs. Partnerships among organizations involved in the newcomer settlement process are informal in nature and there is a call for more collaboration and coordination. Lack of public transportation within the community and to other communities, together with lack of ethno-cultural groups creates a feeling of isolation and additional challenges for refugees and newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney.

Despite the challenges and their limited experience with newcomer and refugee settlement in the community Boissevain-Killarney was overall seen as a welcoming, safe and affordable community for newcomer and refugee settlement. Participants are hopeful for the arrival and successful settlement of new families in their community.

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Dauphin Case Study

The Dauphin case is a snapshot of perceptions from five participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from IRCC, private, provincial and municipal sources. Three participants and one additional stakeholder provided feedback to finalize the report.

Community Context

Dauphin is located in the Parkland region of Manitoba, on the edge of Riding Mountain National Park with Duck Mountain Provincial Park across the valley. It is a rural community with a population of 8,251 residents (2011)⁵, and an industry focused primarily on agriculture.

According to IRCC, 15 refugees have arrived in the Dauphin area since November 4, 2015 under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program.⁶ The five participants confirmed both the settlement of newcomers in their community over the past five years and the recent arrival of the 15 refugees, all reportedly from Syria. Participants disagreed on whether or not more refugees are anticipated to arrive in their community before the end of 2016.



One participant reported there was an active plan in place for 4-5 individuals under the Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) program, while a second participant said there was not an active plan and the remainder did not know. From the IRCC website, there are no families in pending status intended for resettlement in Dauphin. In the feedback received, two individuals noted that there are local discussions about this but no active plan is currently in place.

Settlement in the Community

Participants were mixed in their perceptions of how easy settlement was for newcomers in Dauphin. Three participants felt that settlement was either difficult or somewhat difficult for newcomers, while the remaining two participants felt that settlement was somewhat easy. The key challenges to settlement were identified as language difficulties (both newcomers' English language skills and the dearth of Arabic and other foreign language speakers and translators in the community), limited religious and ethno-cultural diversity, and the lack of public transportation or the expensive alternative of taxis. In the feedback received one individual highlighted that there is religious and ethno-cultural diversity in the community and positively spoke about examples such as: the existence of the Parkland Filipino Association, the Spanish Language Church, a growing Indian and Pakistani community, a few Muslim families and many families from China.

As an additional challenge, participants mentioned the limited resources and funding to support the settlement of newcomers and refugees in Dauphin. Although there is a very experienced, local IRCC-funded SPO (Parkland Regional Settlement Services) and settlement services are easy to navigate and access, there is only one person employed there. Therefore many responsibilities are placed on a broad community-based volunteer network (however less experienced) to support the settlement of newcomers and refugees in Dauphin. This strong and committed volunteer network, the experienced SPO (regardless of the limited resources), the availability of entry level employment positions in the area and relative accessibility of housing were mentioned as reasons that make settlement easier for newcomers and refugees in Dauphin.

5 Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

6 <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>

Table 1 – Settlement services offered in Dauphin as reported by the five participants.

		
<h3>Information and Orientation</h3>	<h3>Literacy and Language Training</h3>	<h3>Support Services</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and orientation • Needs assessment and referral • Initial reception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (Basic) • Language assessment (referrals to Brandon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation (mainly by volunteers; some but limited funded by IRCC) • Childcare (limited for attending classes) • Interpretation/translation (very limited) • Crisis counseling • Women, senior programming (informal, ad-hoc basis) • Youth focused programming • Refugee specific services (limited, mainly by volunteers)
		
<h3>Labour Market Access Supports</h3>	<h3>Community Connections</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance finding a job (resume building, interview skills training) • Connections with employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between newcomers and residents • Welcoming communities (multicultural events) • Mentoring opportunities (informal) 	

Settlement Services

There is a variety of settlement services and supports offered to newcomers in Dauphin as shown in Table 1 (page 3). In many cases, services are limited or reliant on volunteers. In Table 1, within each service category, services are reported in the order of the frequency mentioned by the five participants, with the most commonly reported service listed first in each section and the least commonly reported services listed last. Three of the five participants indicated that refugee-specific services were offered in the community (EAL classes for Syrian refugees, Arabic-English interpretation). Most of those refugee-specific services and supports are offered by the sponsorship groups.

In the feedback received it was mentioned that language assessment is only taking place in Brandon. In one special case, representatives from Winnipeg visited the community to conduct language assessments for 13 individuals. In the feedback offered it was also questioned whether formal programming for immigrant women and seniors are offered in Dauphin.

Four out of five participants reported services need to expand to meet the needs of the current newcomer population, while one felt services are sufficient. Participants voice a clear need for more funding and staff to provide more services, especially English language classes, since currently there are only two individuals working a few hours a week each as EAL teachers. More resources for interpretation services are also needed since the community has recently received 15 refugees with little to no English language skills. Additionally, expanding access to childcare during EAL classes and other services would both improve English skills and reduce isolation for refugee mothers with young children.

In addition to expansion, participants from Dauphin were asked if services in their community needed to change to meet the needs of the current newcomer population and three out of five felt that the services currently offered were the services currently needed. One participant felt change would be needed in the future if Dauphin's newcomer and refugee population continues to grow to meet their unique needs. The fifth participant believed change is needed now to provide more information and knowledge to community members about refugees' experiences and cultures. In addition, though the volunteers in Dauphin are committed, it will be challenging to maintain the current level of investment, which strongly indicates the need for more funding, especially if the newcomer population continues to grow.

Short and Long-term Needs of Refugees

Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. In the short-term, participants identified housing (mentioned by four out of five), English language training (3) and social connections/welcoming community (3) as the top needs. Long term most participants mentioned employment (5) and language skills (4) as the top needs. English language skills are considered essential both in the short and long term as these skills are cornerstone to both meaningful employment and being able to communicate with one's neighbours and to navigate the community.

Community Capacity

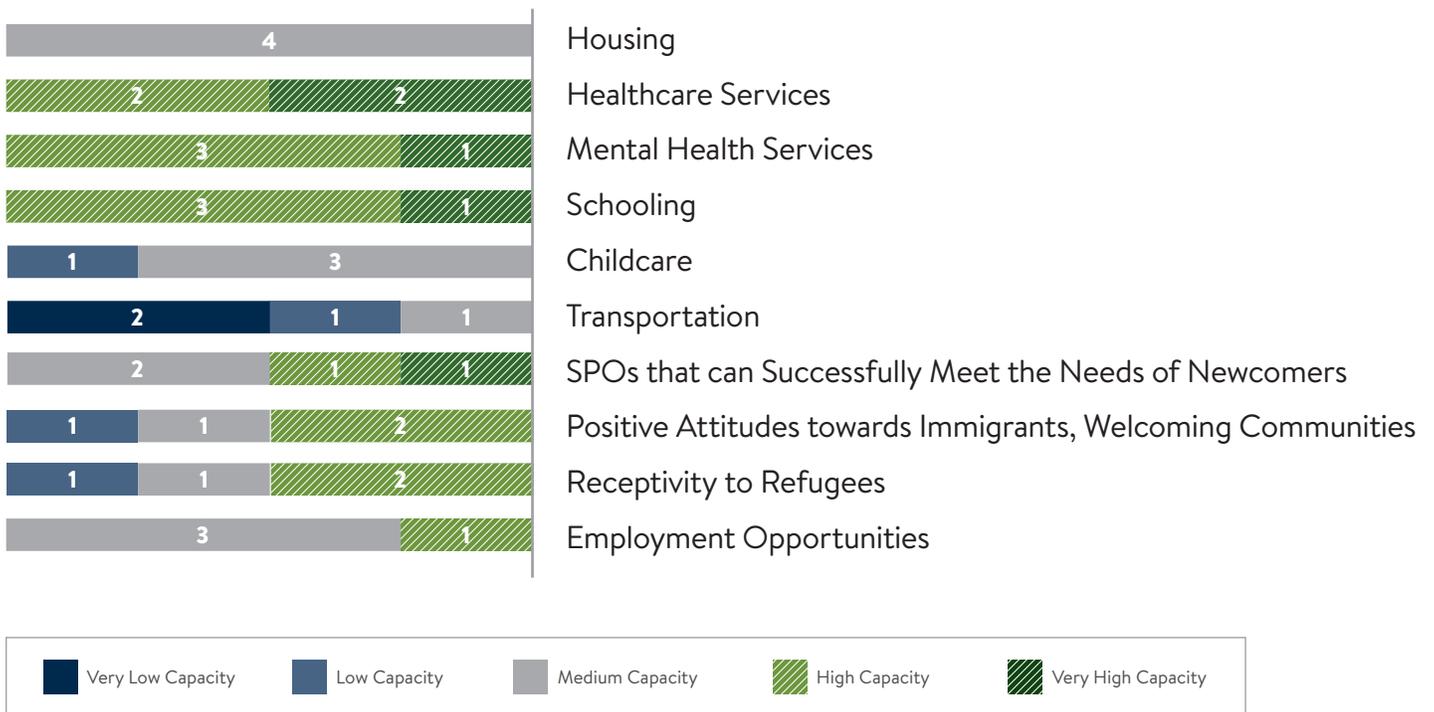
Four of the five participants felt that Dauphin had the capacity to attract and retain refugees and the fifth participant was unsure. The four participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community's ability to respond to the needs of refugees (Figure 1, page 5).

The community's capacity to provide schooling, health, and mental health services were ranked as high to very high by the four respondents. Schools have been very accommodating to the needs of children from refugee families and have employed educational assistants to support these students. Health and mental health services are quite sufficient in the community and interpretation is offered when accessing them. However in the feedback received one individual mentioned that interpretation services for accessing health services are not readily available and are not offered by the health authorities. It was also mentioned that although mental health services exist, the counsellors don't have the necessary experience to address the mental health needs of refugees.

All four participants responding to this question also felt that Dauphin's IRCC-funded SPO was doing a great job, despite limited funding, and a fear of more funding cuts. More funding is needed to provide programs and hire more staff.

Regarding housing, childcare, and employment opportunities the community capacity was considered medium. There is some availability of low income housing but limited Manitoba Housing units exist. Finding childcare is challenging for everyone in the community and becomes greater for refugees and newcomers who lack community connections. However, some volunteers do assist refugee families with childcare. Dauphin Friendship Centre has also supported the provision of childcare services. Regarding employment, there are opportunities in the community; however, they become fewer for skilled professionals.

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity ranked from very low to very high by the four research participants responding to this question



Participants were mixed in their report of community capacity regarding positive attitudes towards newcomers and receptivity to refugees, with rankings on these two items ranging from low capacity to high capacity. There have been some explicit examples of fear of and discrimination towards refugees, but the broader community has been relatively supportive. In addition, the Dauphin Interchurch Refugee Team has been working towards educating the community regarding diversity and the refugee experience through community events.

Transportation was the only area that participants reported a “very low” capacity for the community, with two participants ranking transportation very low, one low, and one medium capacity. This ranking is understandable given that Dauphin has no public transportation, taxis are expensive, and newcomers have to rely almost solely on volunteers for transportation assistance.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

All five participants reported that their organization, agency or group was actively engaged in partnership with other stakeholders in the community. The most commonly reported partnerships were with the IRCC-funded SPO (Parkland

Regional Settlement Services), community NGOs (i.e., Dauphin Friendship Centre), and other local service providers. Partnerships with health services and agencies, schools, sponsorship groups, community members, media outlets, churches and municipal offices were also reported.

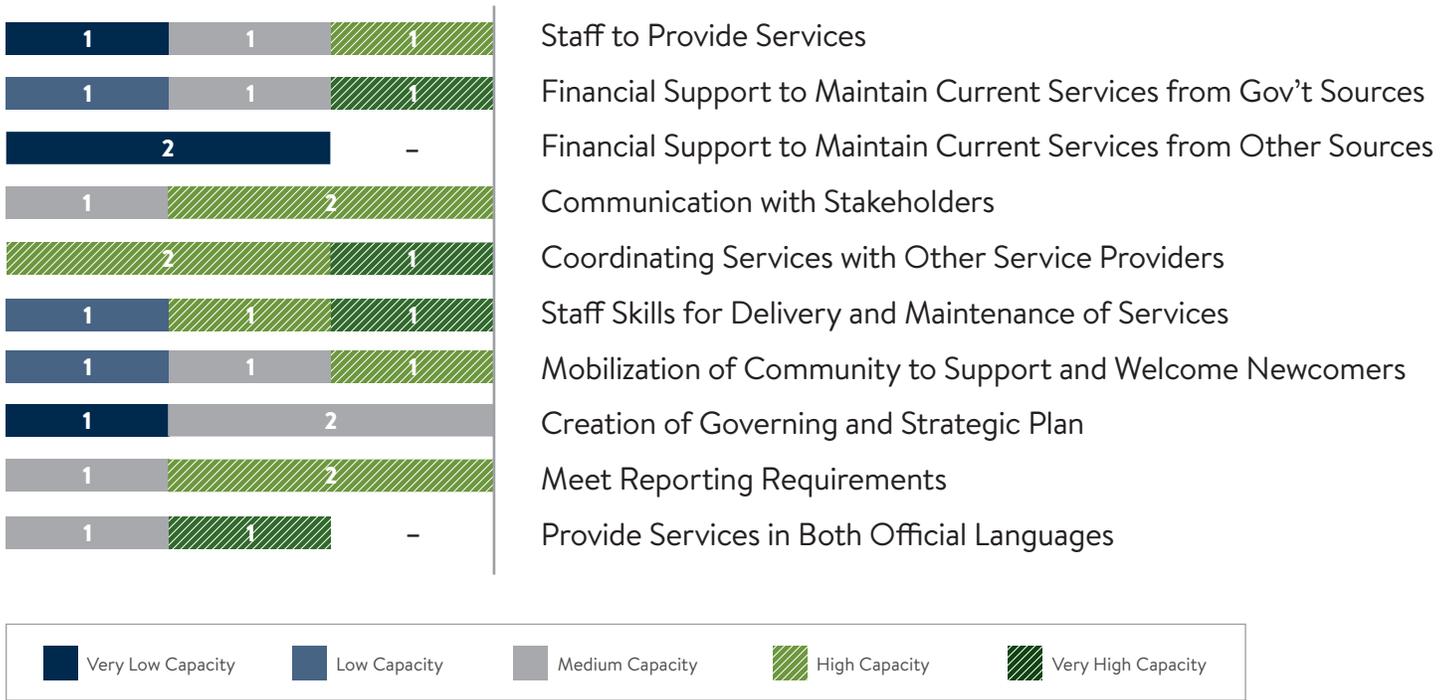
Participants shared their opinion regarding what types of local partnerships are needed in the community in order to better respond to the needs of refugees (regardless of whether the partnerships are already in place or not). Participants identified partnerships with the Seniors Centre to offer programming for senior refugees and the Parkland Job Opportunity Centre to increase cultural understanding of Syrian refugees within the employment context. Partnership with the Dauphin Municipal government was also identified as needed and this was also reiterated in the feedback received. Currently the Dauphin Municipal government does not financially support the refugee resettlement and service provision and needs to be engaged in the planning for the refugee resettlement in Dauphin. Other important partnerships mentioned are with employers, schools, and the sponsorship groups. It was also highlighted that the partnership between the community members/volunteers and sponsorship groups would need to be continually fostered to maintain the supports offered to refugees and other newcomers (e.g. transportation).

The participants were also asked about their own agency’s or organization’s capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees, in the community. Three participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were mostly intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

The highest capacities were their ability to coordinate services with other service providers, their ability to communicate with stakeholders, and meet reporting requirements. Funding from sources other than the government was less positive with 2 people reporting that capacity was very low.

All other areas of capacity had mixed rankings by participants, with reports from low to high on each. Overall participants mentioned that more staff are needed for the SPOs together with more funding and flexibility in funding to increase staff temporarily as needed (e.g. during an influx of newcomers/refugees). One participant mentioned there is less capacity to deal with Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) since it involves additional efforts such as to recruit and coordinate volunteers, create and execute a plan for the GARs’ resettlement process; all of which need additional funding and staff.

Figure 2 - Areas of agency capacity as ranked by the three research participants responding to this question



The following two sections of the Dauphin community report explores the participants' experiences with the refugee resettlement that has occurred since November 2015.

Recent Experiences with Refugees

The participants described an elaborate, coordinated effort of settling refugees including a network of service providers, committees, and community volunteers to support the arrival of 15 refugees from Syria. Examples are churches, the IRCC-funded SPO (Parkland Regional Settlement Services), the Dauphin Friendship Centre, Community Mental Health, the school division, local medical offices. The community prepared well in advance and the Dauphin Interchurch Refugee Team was created months before the refugees' arrival to organize and plan for their arrival. Many initiatives were taken by the sponsorship groups and the organizations involved: housing was secured, fund raising was conducted to raise funds for expenses, schools and doctors were contacted. The team reached out to Altona's Build a Village organization to gather information, in addition to communicating with Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, IRCC and other organizations from the settlement field outside of the community (e.g. Westman Immigrant services, Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, Winnipeg English Language Assessment and referral Centre). Long-term language training was planned and connections with interpreters from outside Dauphin were formed. Teams of volunteers were established to assist with transportation as well. The library brought in resources related to Arabic translation and other items that would be needed to facilitate communication. Overall, three out of four participants felt the sponsorship groups and SPOs worked well together during the resettlement process of refugees. The fourth participant strongly disagreed with this statement mentioning that better organization and a more proactive approach was needed by the sponsorship groups.

Dauphin participants listed the services and supports that the sponsorship groups offer to refugees in the community. Some of the services offered more in collaboration with the settlement office (Table I, page 3), but the sponsorship group also offers transportation, housing, financial support, childcare, registering children in schools, arranging medical appointments, connecting them with the community and employers and arranging interpretation services.

Four participants agree with the statement that there are no refugees in Dauphin who need support and they don't seek help or access support.

Challenges & Successes

In Dauphin, the preparation and planning pre and post refugee arrival was impressive; however, challenges remained during the resettlement process.

Participants unanimously mentioned language and communication as the key challenge during the resettlement process. Dauphin is a small town and prior to the arrival of the Syrian refugees there were very few Arabic speakers in the community. The refugees arrived with limited to no English language skills. The settlement committees and community members knew in advance that English would be limited; they relied on Google Translate and hired an interpreter who could also facilitate life skills for refugees for the first two to three months. The language barrier challenge is ongoing and will continue until the refugees acquire sufficient language skills, which will take time.

Insufficient funding to cover the increase in service demand from the arrival of the 15 refugees put pressure on the local SPO. They had to "cut corners everywhere" to ensure proper programming for the refugees is in place and still this was not enough. The community volunteers are a significant support for refugee resettlement and there is a challenge to maintain the volunteers long-term. In hindsight, two participants said there could have been better preparation and training of volunteers and more awareness of workload that was required.

Participants also reported their perceptions of the key successes during the refugee resettlement. The decision to raise funds and hire an interpreter for the first few months was seen as an extremely valuable decision for both the refugees and community stakeholders. The success of the resettlement process was largely due to the efforts of the sponsorship groups and their committed teams of volunteers.

Many community members, with unique skills (i.e., teachers, medical staff) got involved and volunteered their time and skills to support diverse efforts. One participant noted that a refugee family said they felt their sponsorship group was like “one big family,” which certainly indicated they felt supported. The close partnership between sponsorship groups and the settlement office was integral to the success of refugees’ resettlement as well. Overall, and despite the challenges, refugee families have reportedly made significant progress in the few short months after arrival, with children doing well in school, fathers working part-time, and language skills progressing nicely.

Conclusion

Dauphin is a small rural community that has recently welcomed three refugee families. Key groups and volunteers pulled together and created a task force to plan for and support the resettlement of refugees. Challenges were met including funding, communication due to language barriers and recruiting and maintaining volunteers. There is a clear call for more funding and more staff to support the needs of new residents. Currently a lot of the services offered depend heavily on volunteers (e.g. transportation, interpreters hired with funds raised by volunteers) and this is difficult to maintain in the long term. Language acquisition is key to both employment and community integration; therefore, language training should be high priority and sufficiently funded. More community education regarding ethno-cultural diversity and the refugee experience are needed in order to create and sustain a welcoming environment, open and supportive of refugee and newcomer arrival and integration.

The community has learned some lessons from the recent experience with refugee resettlement and has a more realistic understanding of what to expect in the future. The concerted and committed effort from all community stakeholders and the progress refugees have shown in such a short time, leave the participants feeling as though the resettlement process has been a success. With more funding and resources there is potential for Dauphin to attract and retain more refugees in the future.

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Terms:

Newcomers: Includes all immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students that have been in Canada for 1 day to 5 years.

Refugees: Includes all Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), Refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVORs) and refugee claimants. A refugee is different from an immigrant, in that an immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced to flee (IRCC, 2016)

Community: A municipality, district, region or other geographic area consisting of population clusters.

Stakeholder: Any group, organization, or enterprise that has newcomers and/or refugees as the primary or secondary clientele.



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