



Final Project Report

- 1) progress made against planned activities, outputs and outcomes;*
- 2) impact and contribution towards longer-term outcomes for clients;*
- 3) successes, obstacles and opportunities encountered; and*
- 4) actions taken to meet Official Language obligations as identified in the agreement, where applicable.*

Introduction

The Client Support Services (CSS) program was initially funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2006-2007 as an extension of a case management pilot project that was delivered by the YMCA of Greater Toronto in 2005. The pilot partnership involved six different immigrant-serving agencies that deliver the Resettlement Assistance Program services to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) in Ontario and YMCA as the Regional Coordinator of the program. After a two-year pilot period and evaluation, the full program rolled out as an integrated service delivery model in 2010 with the three core components:

- ✓ Intensive and client-centered case management services
- ✓ Community capacity building
- ✓ Regional coordination

The program partners were located in six diverse resettlement communities across Southern Ontario in both large and small urban centers: Toronto, COSTI Immigrant Services; Ottawa, Catholic Centre for Immigrants; London, Cross Cultural Learner Centre; Kitchener, Reception House Waterloo Region; Hamilton, Wesley Urban Ministries; and Windsor, Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County.

In 2017, CSS has developed into a national program titled the National GAR Case Management – Client Support Services. New partners include the Multicultural Association of Fredericton in Fredericton, New Brunswick; Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area in Moncton, New Brunswick; Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Regina Open Door Society in Regina, Saskatchewan; Association for New Canadians in St. John's, Newfoundland; Thunder Bay Multicultural Association in Thunder Bay, Ontario; Global Gathering Place in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary, Alberta.

The CSS partnership is an innovative and collaborative network of fourteen different organizations working together to support consistent and coordinated service delivery, share promising practices and developing both effective and efficient tools and resources that are responsive to community needs and the general settlement needs of vulnerable refugee populations in Canada. In an ever changing environment, the coordinated approach facilitates an updated and responsive process and leverages expertise from all partners.

The National Program Network include 216 staff persons who are involved in program service delivery in varying capacities including CSS Caseworkers, program managers, coordinators, program assistants, administrative staff, and social work placement students. Program Managers make up the program's Steering Committee and Youth Caseworkers make up the program's Youth Network. In 2018, we also began two working groups which addressed community capacity building and professional development, respectively, and consisted of Caseworkers.



The new partner organizations who have joined CSS under the National GAR Case Management Coordination Project, are continuing to build collaborative relationships with both the YMCA as National Coordinator and the other CSS service provider agencies, providing the CSS program as a growing national framework for GAR case management. These new collaborative relationships with stakeholders have assisted our network in growing its information, sharing capabilities and outreach, collaboration, and number of locations implementing CSS activities. The growth of CSS ensures more GARs across Canada continue to receive standardized case management support during their first 12-18 months in Canada.

1) Progress made against planned activities, outputs and outcomes

From 2017-2020 the CSS Program has evolved and improved in order to meet the changing needs of GAR clients and the changing operational context in Canada. Every year the National Program Network engages in the following activities:

- **CSS Network**

The general structure of the partnership for the CSS program represents a “National Program Network” that is unique to the settlement sector. The YMCA of GTA acts as the coordinator for this national program and collaborates with 14 different RAP service provider agencies to deliver intensive case management services to GAR clients across Canada. The National Program Network includes CSS staff of all levels across all 14 partner organizations. The purpose of a National Program Network is to engage CSS staff across Canada in a community of practice model, and to maintain consistent case management service delivery; sharing promising practices and developing both effective and efficient tools and resources that are responsive to community needs and the general settlement needs of refugee populations in Canada.

Overall, feedback received from the Coordinator Network were positive. Managers agreed that there is a collaborative approach to the CSS program, and that they are consulted whenever changes are being made. They also agreed that involvement in the Coordinator Network facilitates connections and information sharing across CSS sites. Some managers expressed the importance of maintaining balanced support across all sites as new members join the program.

Annual Meeting

In the Annual Meeting evaluation, 82% of CSS staff and managers were 'very satisfied' with the conference content and the scheduling and timing. The components of the Annual Meeting that received the most positive feedback were the workshop on TVIC. Partners felt that the Annual Meeting was a good opportunity to network across sites. Some members shared that they would like to reintroduce more space for networking and round-table discussions. This feedback will be incorporated into the planning of the next Annual Meeting.

Working Groups

- **Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee consists of management staff from the 14 RAP service provider agencies who make up the CSS national program network. This committee regularly meets to share promising practices related



to intensive case management support for GARs and the general settlement needs of refugee populations in Canada.

This partnership of CSS Managers at each Site provides a space where leadership in the CSS program can meet and discuss challenges and opportunities. The network met six times per year: twice in-person and four times by teleconference. Through the Steering Committee, the CSS program is able to maintain a consistent model across CSS Sites and to optimise service delivery through cross-learning and strategic planning to the national dimension of the program.

- **Youth Network**

The CSS Youth Network is comprised of CSS Caseworkers who work largely with youth from the 14 CSS partner agencies along with the National Coordinator as facilitator. Meetings are held with this group to address challenges in serving GAR youth and identify promising practices in this area. Its purpose is to work with CSS staff that support youth in their local communities to share promising practices in youth engagement and outreach with their local sites.

This partnership of CSS youth staff at each Site, provides a space where staff working with youth in the CSS program can meet and discuss challenges and opportunities for youth programming. The Youth Network meets through regular teleconference and in person meetings.

- **Professional Development Working Group**

The purpose of the Training and Professional Development Working Group is to create a space for the National Coordinator (YMCA) and the CSS program delivery staff to collaborate in the research, planning, and execution of the professional development trainings that CSS staff will receive over the course of the fiscal year. The Working Group collaborated to source needs-driven, outcomes- focused training and professional development of the CSS network, to ensure staff are consistently able to learn and/or strengthen existing professional skills that contribute to high quality, consistent, and standardized services for GAR clients across Canada.

In addition to resources, the National Program Network received standardised training across the network based on the needs of CSS staff. The National Coordinator has both delivered trainings based on needs (CSS Database Training, New Staff Training and LMS User Training) as well as contracted external partners to deliver trainings based on the CSS Training and Professional Development survey administered on a yearly basis.

Year-end Training and Professional Development Survey

The topics that members shared they were interested in receiving training in the last 3 years, were the following: advocating for clients in the community, emotional resilience for caseworkers, crisis response and management and teaching clients to advocate for themselves. This feedback will be incorporated through the work of the Training and Professional Working Group in the 2019/2020 fiscal year as far as organizing effective trainings locally, via webinar and web-conferencing, and at the next Annual Meeting.



- **Innovation and Community Capacity Working Group**

The purpose of the Client Support Services' Community Capacity Building (CCB) working group was to share best practices, lessons learned, and discover innovative ways to improve how CSS staff conduct outreach on behalf of GARs as well as how resettlement communities across Canada receive GARs. The working group collaborated to develop innovative outreach methods within resettlement communities to ensure communities have the capacity to receive diverse GAR populations. More broadly, they ensured that organizations and services in their communities are more aware of refugee issues/needs of GARs. The working group created collective and impactful opportunities for information exchange, networking, and strategy development within their respective communities.

CSS's objectives for the working group were the following:

- To share best practices and lessons learned based on previous and current community capacity building initiatives
- To develop resources that can be shared at each site to enhance community capacity building
- To provide best practices guidelines and/or a handbook for staff and community members to use
- To continue the process of standardizing community capacity building across the CSS program

As National Coordinator, YMCA GTA planned the logistics of capacity building meetings, presentations, and resource development. Working group members decided on a principal theme for each fiscal year, and made decisions about the types of documents.

The following outcomes were completed by the working group in the last 2 years, all under the agreed upon theme of CCB:

- Terms of Reference:

The CCB working group Terms of Reference document was developed to reflect the goals and responsibilities of the current fiscal year's working group members. The document outlines the purpose, objectives, responsibilities, meeting frequency, terms, and composition of group and selection process of members. The document outlines that while the working group aims to standardize the process of community capacity building, each Site operates differently and may have different areas of focus.

- CCB Toolkit

The National GAR Case Management - Client Support Services (CSS) Community Capacity Building Toolkit has been developed to standardize the *approach*, not the process, of effective and inclusive community capacity building across CSS sites. It exists for CSS managers and staff, but can also be applicable to secondary audiences (e.g. RAP/settlement/life skills workers, etc.).

- CCB Event Toolkit:

The Toolkit is a multi-page document that will help the CSS Program and each Site to achieve the goal of community capacity building within CSS, which, as stated in the CCB Toolkit, is "to standardize the approach, not the process, of effective and inclusive community capacity building across CSS Sites." This resource can be drawn from to assist CSS staff in the process of hosting CCB events with the goals of removing barriers for GARs, building community partnerships and engagement, increasing GARs' access to services, and raising awareness to influence positive change in their communities. The Event Toolkit is



standardized but flexible to the needs and capacities of each Site. This resource is a living document that the working group and National Coordination Team will continuously edit to share tools and strategies for CCB event planning between CSS Sites and staff members. The CCB Event Toolkit includes a variety of sections, including: Purpose of CCB Events, The Event Planning Process, Budgeting and Financial Support, Communication, Tasks during the Event, The Post Event Process, as well as Navigating Common Challenges and Best Practices.

- CCB Events Templates and Tools:

Along with the Event Toolkit document, the working group collaboratively developed and contributed a variety of useful templates and resources for all Sites to use when planning events. These templates include budgeting template, event run sheet, partnership terms of reference template, communications plan, press release template, event checklist template, post-event report template, and other helpful resources and tools. These resources can be found on Moodle:

Mentorship Initiative

The Client Support Services (CSS) Mentorship Initiative was a pilot project for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The goal of the Mentorship Initiative was to bring all CSS Sites closer to a similar level of implementation of the CSS model. Through regular phone calls and email communication facilitated by the National Coordination Team, as well as in-person meetings and visits to each other's CSS Sites, both Mentor and Mentee were able to learn valuable insights and CSS implementation strategies from each other.

The Mentorship Initiative was deemed successful by all individuals involved in this pilot project. Mentees reported having a greater understanding of CSS implementation from Mentors, as well as clear next steps regarding data entry, organization, time management, and mobile case management, along with other important aspects of Intensive Case Management. Mentors, too, reported feeling inspired by their Mentees; for instance, Ottawa's Mentor reported that he "learned and received more than he gave to (his Mentees in) New Brunswick."

One of the aspects of CSS that makes it so unique is the National Program Network of CSS Sites and the Community of Practice Model through which all Sites share knowledge. Besides helping Managers learn strategies to implement CSS more efficiently and effectively, the Mentorship Initiative strengthened the relationships of CSS partners as a part of this National Program Network. One partner shared, "CSS Mentorship goes beyond CSS – we learned to work together and adopted tools and models from other services, activities, and programs as well." Clearly, while the Mentorship Initiative is focused on CSS and its partners, its impact can be widespread and easily replicated in Canada's refugee resettlement sector.

The Mentors' visits to Mentees' Sites was deemed successful. Mentees reported feeling more connected to the CSS National Program Network, with ideas and the motivation to immediately implement Intensive Case Management as well as more long term initiatives to move closer toward a standardized level of CSS implementation. Many Mentorship pairings shared that the impact of the Initiative included a commitment to working toward a more coordinated case management model, setting expectations with



clients from the start of their enrollment in CSS, more wellness programs and trainings for staff, helping to transition clients out of the CSS program in a positive way, and learning how to restructure their CSS program by learning from other Sites and their change management processes.

- **Resource Development**

The creation and updating of resources is based on the needs of the National Program Network. From 2017-2020, the National Coordinator has created/updated resources such as:

- Standards of Practice in Intensive Case management
- Community Capacity Building Toolkit
- Community Capacity Building – Event Planning Toolkit
- CSS Training and Professional Development Plan
- CSS Safety and Security Manual - updated
- Secondary Migrant Resource
- National File Documentation Guidelines (including training and file reviews)
- Service Delivery Manual - updated
- National Program Logic Model
- Database User Manual - updated
- Branding Guidelines

CSS National Database:

A key tool available to all CSS National Partners is the CSS National Database (Efforts to Outcome [ETO] software). The CSS Database is a web-based case management software that allows customization of different modules to fit the specific CSS Case Management Program Model. The software has enabled CSS to standardize the data collection process of GAR client information through ongoing support and training from the CSS National Coordinator, while simultaneously tracking the progress, efforts, outcomes and successes of GAR clients in the CSS Program. The CSS National Database is a multi-purpose tool that enables the following:

- Supports the work of Caseworkers - The database is primarily a case management tool that supports Caseworkers with managing their clients by tracking their progress throughout their participation in CSS. The CSS modules in the database are customized to track/monitor information on client demographics, client needs (through needs assessments), daily case management interactions and services, information and orientation sessions, workshops and referrals. Information is drawn from these modules to provide GAR clients with a concise settlement plan that displays their settlement needs, steps and activities to be taken to address those needs, and the resources (referrals and organizations) available to them to address their needs.
- Supports the work of CSS Program Managers - The CSS National Database is a tool for CSS Program Managers to track/monitor the work that Caseworkers do with their clients. It also supports them in staff supervision by offering a standard and consistent approach to client services, with quality tools, resources and training. The database enables managers to access aggregate data through customized reports available or prepared by the CSS National Coordinator which can be used to: advocate for services in their communities with stakeholders;



understand and demonstrate the level of service being provided to clients; and make evidence based decisions about program needs and direction.

- National Statistical Data - The CSS National Database is a reporting tool that provides aggregate reports to track/monitor national statistical information on client demographics, information on needs and referrals, program outputs and program outcomes. CSS Partner agencies, IRCC, and other community stakeholders receive these reports and are able to see emerging trends in client demographics, needs, services provided and program outcomes at both a national and local level. Examples:

- Outputs Report
 - My Case Load
 - Site Outputs
 - My Service Outputs
 - Case Management Activity Details
 - Employment, Education and Language status
 - IRCC – funded Support Services (Case management Activities)
 - Orientation Report
 - Community Capacity Building Reports
- Client Centered Reports
 - Case Notes Report
 - Review individual and family services
- Case management Reports
 - Referrals Report
 - Complete Services Report
 - Needs Assessment Matrix Report
 - Participants without contact Report
- iCARE Reports

- Integration of iCARE data requirements: The database is a tool that translates Case Management activities and services provided to clients into iCARE reports used to bulk upload client information. By configuring the CSS Database to include iCARE data fields, the data entry process is streamlined to reduce data entry duplication. The integration of iCARE into the CSS Database has also provided a standardized and consistent way of collecting iCARE data across the country for Case Management services and activities that are otherwise not captured succinctly if input directly into iCARE.
- Through training, consultations, meetings and manuals, program data collection is nationally coordinated and produces consistent data through standardized data entry methods.
- Standardized data provides the CSS Program with the ability to identify trends and patterns of client needs and outcomes at a national level.
- Statistical reports are created for further analysis to identify promising practices and areas for improvement regarding client service provision delivery.



- Statistical data is used to inform local partnerships and collaborations regarding community conditions, and settlement and implementation strategies to address GARs and, in general, newcomers' needs.
- Clients are connected to the broader community and social networks
- Clients have the knowledge of the Canadian work environment and are connected to local labour markets

Program Evaluation

In 2019-20 the Client Support Services program (CSS) across Canada conducted a nationwide Evaluation Study with the York Institute for Health Research, Program Evaluation Unit, funded by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Building on the Impact Study Evaluation, a report was submitted containing a summary of the evaluation and recommendations, the resulting program responses, actions and considerations for enhancing and improving CSS as a case management program supporting the long-term settlement outcomes for government-assisted refugees (GARs).

Program Outcomes (Immediate and Intermediate)

- ✓ **Partners & Stakeholders are engaged in settlement strategies to address newcomer's needs**
 - Clients, service providers and IRCC are aware of newcomer settlement needs
 - Referrals and personalized settlement plans are based on assessed settlement needs
 - Target population is aware of IRCC settlement services
 - Program participants are aware of newcomers' needs and contributions and are engaged in newcomer settlement
 - Client have the skills/life skills needed to function in Canadian society
 - Decision-making is informed by the needs of GARs and existing service provision
- ✓ **Provisions of settlement services is consistent, innovative and coordinated**
 - Standard tools, resources and program coordination support the effective delivery of services
 - Clients are connected to the broader community and social networks
 - Clients have the knowledge of the Canadian work environment and are connected to local labour markets
- ✓ **Settlement and non-settlement services are responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities**
 - Timely, useful and appropriate IRCC settlement services are available in the Official Language of choice
 - Clients obtain the IRCC settlement services they need to deal with settlement issues as they emerge
 - Clients have timely, useful and accurate information needed to make informed settlement decisions
 - Clients understand life in Canada, including laws, rights, responsibilities and how to access community resources



2) Impact and contribution towards longer-term outcomes for clients

The following points illustrate the impact of the partnership of the CSS National Program Network in service delivery and coordination at the community level:

- The CSS National Program Network continued to work closely to keep 14 CSS partner agencies engaged in developing and maintaining standard tools and resources, and collaborating on processes that enhance the service delivery to GARs across Canada for all partners. A number of consultations were conducted throughout the year with different staff groups to capture the expertise in the network and facilitate information sharing.
- Various information sharing tools have also been helpful in supporting the management of ongoing work of the National Program Network. Information sharing tools such as LMS (Moodle), bi-weekly email communication, and quarterly e-Bulletins have resulted in more effective use of time to ensure staff can respond to collaboration and consultation requests and to ensure time management for such activities.
- Standard national training for all CSS staff results in CSS services being delivered in a coordinated and consistent manner at the community level.
- Coordinator and Steering Committee/Working Groups allow for staff to easily communicate promising practices that can be either directly applied or adapted for each local community.
- Standard tool development facilitated by the National Coordinator staff, is essential in supporting CSS staff in better serving GAR clients. For example, the Standards in Intensive Case Management, Branding Guidelines.

3) Successes, obstacles and opportunities encountered

There are several examples from the CSS partnership that could be considered promising practices as this program has operated for thirteen years, was piloted for the first two years, evaluated formally and rolled out with over 25 recommendations that were all implemented. Additionally, in this reporting period the partnership has grown to include national partners. Essentially, the core components of the partnership-- those being, case management, community capacity building and national coordination, should be considered as promising practices in that they demonstrate:

- Consistent delivery that is regularly updated to meet emergent needs
- Other stakeholders and government have been responsive to the identified needs of GARs in resettlement communities
- Partners and stakeholders have been engaged through reports/evaluations that facilitated the implementation of strategies to address the complex needs of various groups in the refugee population
- Staff Networks - National Program Network, Steering Committee, Working Groups and Youth Staff Network. Solutions-focused staff groups represented from across partner agencies, responding to the needs of GAR clients and communities that serve and support GARs.



- Communication tools and strategies - Various tools are used to facilitate staff sharing and cross-learning between and across CSS partner agencies that include: the CSS LMS (Moodle) Website); CSS Quarterly E-Bulletin and Newsletter; CSS National Quarterly Reports; bi-weekly Coordinator Network emails; CSS Site Visits; regular teleconferences with Program Managers; and in-person meetings to move projects and activities forward. These tools facilitate cross-site sharing of important information related to the CSS program which promotes consistent service delivery across Ontario, and the country. Essential CSS documents are readily available through mobile accessibility on the CSS Moodle.
- Collaboration and Consultation - A main feature of the national CSS program is that the GAR expertise and knowledge of staff across the National Program Network are utilized to develop and enhance program tools, resources and standards to ensure they meet the needs of GARs, and the service provider agencies and settlement communities that receive and support them. The CSS partnership is strengthened by ensuring local community and organization priorities and focus are represented in the CSS National Coordinator action plans and activities. The National Coordinator is also the designated facilitator, meaning we do not deliver direct service but rather have a mandate to do collaborative work with all CSS partner agencies.
- Community Capacity Building - Conference and committee participation allows for CSS national research and expertise to be shared with settlement and mainstream human service sectors. The National Coordinator has also assisted in delivering Local Community Presentations in CSS communities and engaging local stakeholders that serve GARs to increase awareness.
- Training - Relevant and standard trainings to develop staff competency and organizational capacity of partner agencies: a yearly Training and Professional Development Plan is created for various staff groups (National Program Network, Steering Committee and the 2 Working Groups, Youth Network), based on identified needs of CSS program staff; trainings are facilitated by members of the National Coordination team (in the case of new staff trainings) as well as external trainers. The Knowledge Transfer Plan ensures all past trainings delivered to the National Program Network are maintained and accessible for re-training of current program staff and training of new program staff; all training resources organized into learning modules are housed on the CSS Learning Management System website. And finally, standard New Staff Training for new program staff with CSS Training Schedule is provided and delivered by the National Coordinators.
- Community of Practice Model – The National Program Network staff are able to engage with each other through the Annual Meeting and staff networks, to share information and promising practices as subject matter experts on GAR resettlement. This national network is also able to build capacity across the country to work effectively with emerging client issues and challenges. In-person meetings continue to be a key time to make progress on national projects and initiatives, with teleconferences acting as an opportune time to follow up.
- Promising Practices related to the CSS National Database:
Site Consultations - All major changes completed to the database in the last 3 years underwent rigorous consultations with program Sites. Site consultations have proven to be a promising practice because they facilitate a collaborative approach to provide feedback on future changes to be made to the database before they are completed. This has made all changes to the database in the 2018-19 fiscal year transparent and completed after approval has been gained by all Sites. The methodology used to conduct a Site



consultation includes hands-on activities, group discussions, and having open conversations about the strengths and weaknesses of ETO.

Each CSS Site has benefited from its partnership in the CSS National Program Network, as demonstrated by the continued engagement of CSS Sites. The CSS program has continued to grow in both capacity as well as professionalism of services delivered and remains a unique program that fills a critical gap in the settlement of GARs in Canada.

The growth of the CSS program has been multifaceted:

- ✓ Staffing increase: From approximately 80 staff in 2017 to over 120 staff in 2020, in particular during the 2017 - 2018 when expanding nationally
- ✓ Improved tools: Including the continued customization and development of CSS National Database
- ✓ Increased networks: Mentorship Initiative established in 2018 and linked to better CSS implementation in the newer SPOs partners
- ✓ Development of new standard documents

The YMCA Coordination activities, for ten years, have supported the participation of six CSS sites throughout the province of Ontario. In this reporting period (2017-2020), the CSS program was granted approval by IRCC to roll out as a national program, requiring that the YMCA Coordination team secure participation from RAP service providers from across the country.

Securing participation from RAP agencies outside of Ontario has presented both incredible opportunity as well as some challenges. These challenges were mostly around balancing regional coordination activities with active outreach to new sites, but also included:

Aside from the challenges that arise from maintaining the CSS partnership while outreaching to new Sites/partner organizations, the following challenges also arose:

- As a result of annual budget reductions experienced across the sector, CSS partners continue to find it difficult to find the capacity to respond to National Program Network activities and requests. It is also challenging for CSS Sites to demonstrate to local IRCC officers their contributions to the CSS National Program Network as there is no mention of this outcome or output in their local Contribution Agreements regarding the CSS program. To respond to this, the CSS National Coordinator has worked to ensure CSS National Program Network activities are conducted with sensitivities to Local Site capacity, and that there is flexibility with deadlines and other projects to achieve the goals of the group. The National Coordinator has a number of activities that require ongoing follow-up and action from CSS Sites. To streamline this process, the CSS National Coordinator uses a Weekly email, which is sent to the Coordinator Network at the beginning of each week. This tool ensures information is available in a timely manner and organized.



Conclusion

From 2017-2020 the CSS program has moved from a provincial program towards a national, professional and established program that continues to fill a gap in the settlement of GARs in Canada. The CSS program has successfully created and maintained partnerships, developed tools and resources to suit the needs of the program, in particular the CSS National Database, and engaged youth and youth programming for the CSS program. In sum, the CSS program is well-placed to meet the needs of GARs and remains a unique program that has the capacity to proactively adapt to the changing needs and contexts.