

Establishing a Stronger Peer Resource Network for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

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Executive Summary

Project Objectives, Problem Definition, and the Client

Founded in 1971, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) is a non-profit organization that focuses on providing settlement services to recent immigrants and newcomers with a refugee background in the region of Greater Victoria (ICA, 2016a, para. 2). Since its inception, the ICA has worked with over 20,000 individuals to ensure they receive the support they need as they adjust to life in Canada (ICA, 2016b, para. 4). Resources offered by the organization include facilitation of private refugee sponsorship, settlement services, employment services (such as job search assistance and resume writing workshops), and English Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (ICA, 2016c, para. 2-9).

Since becoming a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) in August 2015, the ICA has faced a learning curve with regards to managing the needs and requirements of Constituent Groups (sponsorship groups that have been authorized by a Sponsorship Agreement Holder organization), as well as addressing the complex internal mechanisms of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. In 2016, ICA proposed to use a developmental evaluation process to help strengthen its PSR program. As part of the evaluation, this research project sought to enhance the effectiveness of the ICA's relatively new PSR program by examining ways in which it can bolster organizational resources through existing community assets and networks.

The primary objective of this report was to identify ways to further develop the ICA's PSR Program. Doing so, this project sought to leverage the resources that exist among local agencies, businesses, and institutions that make up the ICA's Community Partnership Network (CPN), to better assist Constituent Groups in resettling refugee newcomers.

The information was used to produce a full report of research findings with the aim of projecting this new knowledge onto resettlement services offered at the ICA through the PSR program. The client for this project is Dr. Sabine Lehr, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Manager at the ICA.

Methodology and Methods

The project provides an exploration of how program networks and community resources can be utilized more effectively than in the past to support Constituent Groups (CGs). Due to the nature of the project and the research focus, a qualitative research approach was deemed to be most effective in answering the research questions. In this way, the report is essentially a small-scale developmental evaluation of the CPN and its role within the PSR program, as well as an investigation of smart practices.

Using a method of developmental evaluation was appropriate for this project, as the research focus is on a complex and emergent program at the ICA, in which multiple stakeholders are involved (Dozois, Langlois, & Blanchet-Cohen, 2010, p. 14). Moreover, the nature of the program requires adaptive learning and innovation, therefore a developmental evaluation approach is most suitable for the project.

The data collection methods consisted of five semi-structured, key informant interviews with professionals from SAHs and other settlement organizations within Canada, which addressed smart practices, as well as issues such as refugee newcomer integration and Constituent Group needs. In addition to the interviews, three focus group sessions were held with representatives from the current roster of Community Partnership Network member organizations in Victoria, British Columbia, to gain an understanding of available resources within the wider community, opportunities for enhanced connectivity, and to elicit suggestions for improved program delivery.

Key Findings

Interviews

Interviewees emphasized the importance of regular contact with CGs, as well as the provision of training, workshops, and awareness raising. Participants also discussed the needs and requirements of CGs throughout the sponsorship process, as well as the various challenges related to sponsorship and resettlement. The development of networks with external agencies, institutions, and businesses within the community was identified as an important but challenging aspect of settlement work.

Focus Groups

Focus group participants demonstrated various levels of understanding of the ICA's PSR program, and a firm grasp of the CPN's mandate, and of their roles as members of the network. All participants have had varying degrees of experience working and interacting with refugee newcomers and sponsorship groups; many have established programs or services that provide assistance to those involved in the sponsorship process, whereas others have limited capacity to deliver such supports.

Partnerships between CPN members are few and far between, and most participants commented that they had limited knowledge of the activities offered by other member organizations. All participants supported the development of deeper intra-CPN partnerships, but identified this as a significant challenge. Other challenges related to CPN membership size, sponsorship group identification and connection were also raised.

Recommendations

Recommendations were formed around the issues of network development, stakeholder and resource management, and enhanced program mechanisms. With regards to network development, the recommendations address the need to focus on intra-CPN and CPN-CG partnerships, as well as taking a proactive approach to engaging less active members. In the area of stakeholder and resource management, the recommendations encourage greater dialogue and information sharing between the PSR program and its stakeholders (i.e. CPN members and CGs), and amongst the stakeholders themselves. Lastly, the recommendations suggest the development of new program protocols and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, as well as encourage further collaborative activity with other settlement organizations in the region.

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1.0 Introduction

Throughout human history, populations have faced displacement as a result of conflict or persecution. In 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2017) estimated that there were over 65 million forcibly displaced men, women, and children across the globe (p. 2). The number of individuals seeking refuge in a place outside of their own country has been steadily increasing in recent years, with multiple conflicts in several countries contributing to an ongoing international migrant crisis (Collett, 2017, p. 150).

In Canada, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program was introduced to provide wide-ranging supports to refugees arriving in the country. Since the late 1970s, the PSR program has enabled private citizens to assist refugees in adapting to their new lives during the first year of their resettlement (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 178). Furthermore, the program enables private sponsors to specifically select refugee individuals and/or families for resettlement to Canada.

As a well-established non-profit organization in Southern Vancouver Island, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) has sought to provide comprehensive settlement programs to refugee newcomers in the region. In mid-2015, the ICA became a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) through signing a framework agreement with the Government of Canada for the private sponsorship of refugees. A PSR program was subsequently launched to ensure the successful resettlement and integration of sponsored refugees, and to guide local sponsorship groups through the PSR process, from the application phase onward.

The ICA is now looking to enhance the effectiveness of its relatively new PSR program by examining ways in which it can leverage organizational resources through existing community assets and networks. Through an in-depth exploration of the established network of ICA-affiliated community partners, this report provides recommendations on how to improve the PSR program at ICA and to develop a stronger community support system for individuals and groups participating in the PSR program.

1.1 Project Client and Problem Definition

The client for this project is the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, represented by Dr. Sabine Lehr, the organization's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Manager. Founded in 1971, the ICA is a non-profit organization that focuses on providing settlement services to recent immigrants and newcomers, including those with a refugee background, in the region of Greater Victoria (ICA, 2016a, para. 2). Since its inception, the ICA has worked with over 20,000

individuals to ensure they receive the support they need as they adjust to life in Canada (ICA, 2016b, para. 4).

As a long-standing government-funded service provider organization for settlement services, the ICA has sought to create an effective settlement program that addresses the numerous issues that newcomers with and without a refugee background encounter in their adjustment to living in Victoria (ICA, 2015, p. 6). In addition to being a recognized government-funded Settlement Service Provider Organization for all newcomers in the region, the ICA has more recently become a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service provider for Government-Assisted Refugees, and is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) for Privately Sponsored Refugees and those who are supported under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (Lehr, 26 July 2016, personal communication).

Resources offered by the organization include facilitation of private refugee sponsorship, settlement services, employment services (such as job search assistance and resume writing workshops), and English Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (ICA, 2016c, para. 2-9). The organization provides diversity training and resources for the broader community, and supports over 200 businesses and organizations through the Community Partnership Network (CPN) to build diverse and inclusive communities in the Greater Victoria region.

In 2015, the ICA was officially designated as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). As a SAH, the ICA matches refugees with Constituent Groups (sponsorship groups that have been authorized by a Sponsorship Agreement Holder organization) in the Greater Victoria Region. In doing this work, program staff at ICA are tasked with ensuring that refugee newcomers receive settlement services for one year (or until they are self-sufficient), and that Constituent Groups (CGs) are appropriately prepared to take on the role of sponsorship, and are able to provide all necessary assistance to refugees resettled under the PSR program in their first year after arrival. As stated in the ICA's 2016-2017 Annual Report, the organization's PSR program has worked with 39 CGs to sponsor 50 separate cases (some CGs have taken on multiple cases), reaching a total of 174 individual refugee newcomers (ICA, 2017, p. 18).

Since becoming a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the ICA has faced a learning curve with regards to managing the needs and requirements of Constituent Groups, as well as addressing the complex internal mechanisms of the PSR program. In 2016, ICA proposed to use a developmental evaluation process to help strengthen its PSR program. As part of the evaluation, this research project sought to enhance the effectiveness of the ICA's relatively new PSR program by examining ways in which it can bolster organizational resources through existing community assets and networks that make up the CPN. This research seeks to provide new insight into how local community resources can be efficiently accessed and utilized by the PSR program and groups who decide to sponsor refugees.

This project is important for the ICA for a number of reasons, namely that: a) the ICA is committed to ensuring that refugee newcomers sponsored through the PSR program receive the highest quality support and services; b) having a deeper understanding of community assets within the CPN will allow the ICA to deliver more comprehensive support to its CGs; c) the delivery of holistic and targeted supports to CGs will help to create a stronger, more resilient, integrated, and engaged community of refugee newcomers on Vancouver Island.

The information gathered from this Master's Project will feed into a broader developmental evaluation of the PSR program currently taking place at the ICA, the findings of which will help the program to generate greater impact within the community. A developmental evaluation approach to the PSR program will help the ICA to respond quickly to emerging issues concerning refugee resettlement, and will build a strong foundation for program development and delivery.

1.2 Project Objectives and Research Questions

The objective of this Master's Project was to work alongside the ICA to further develop the organization's PSR Program. This project seeks to leverage the resources that exist among local agencies, businesses, and institutions that make up the CPN, to better assist sponsorship groups and Constituent Groups in resettling refugees. The information gathered will be used to produce a full report with the aim of projecting this new knowledge onto private sponsorship services offered at the ICA.

The primary research question addressed by this project is:

- How can ICA build on existing Community Partnership Network resources to effectively manage relationships with its Constituent Groups?

Corollary questions explored are:

- What do Constituent Groups need to achieve successful sponsorships?
- How can ICA better address these needs within the greater community?
- Which local agencies, businesses, and institutions are most likely to serve as resources for the PSR program?
- What are smart practices or tools used by other PSR programs in Canada?

For the purposes of this report, 'effective management of relationships' refers to an increased level of collaboration among stakeholders. 'Successful sponsorships' are those that provide sponsored individuals and families with the services and supports they need to start their integration process into Canadian society.

1.3 Definitions and Terminology

Before delving into a discussion of the PSR program and ICA, it is necessary to explain specific terms and concepts that reappear throughout the literature. This section provides an overview of definitions and terminology relevant to the report's subject matter.

'Refugees' and 'Refugee Newcomers'

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017a) defines a refugee as a person “fleeing conflict or persecution”, and who is protected under international law (para. 2). The primary distinction between refugees and immigrants is that an immigrant has chosen to move to a new community, whereas a refugee has been forced to leave their home. Although there is a significant difference between refugees and recent immigrants, both demographics may often be referred to under the banner term ‘newcomers’.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to ensure a distinction is kept between the two categories. Throughout this project report, the term ‘refugee newcomer’ is used to describe a refugee who has been resettled to Canada, and the term ‘refugee’ is used to describe a person who has fled their home, but has not yet arrived in Canada.

Sponsorship groups

Sponsorship groups are made up of Canadian citizens or permanent residents who wish to provide comprehensive support to refugee newcomers in their first year of resettlement in Canada. Sponsorship groups are split into three categories:

- Groups of Five (G5): five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents who are 18 years of age or older, and who live within the community of settlement
- Community Sponsors (CSs): a community sponsor can be “any organization (for-profit/not-for-profit, incorporated/non-incorporated) located in the community where the refugees are expected to settle can make an organizational commitment to sponsor” (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017, p. 3).
- Constituent Groups (CGs): a Constituent Group is a sponsorship group that has been authorized by a SAH to provide support to refugee newcomers. Every SAH has its own set of eligibility requirements for CGs, and CGs are usually based in the community where the sponsored refugee is expected to resettle (IRCC, 2017, p. 3). SAHs conduct regular monitoring of CGs and sponsored individuals throughout the sponsorship period, and assist CGs by providing them with resettlement information and support.

Sponsorship Agreement Holder

As defined by the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association (2017), a SAH is “an incorporated organization that has signed an agreement with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Canada [now Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada] to resettle refugees through the [private sponsorship of refugees program]” (para. 4). Aside from being able to sponsor refugee newcomers directly, designated SAHs give CGs authorization to become sponsors, and provide supports to these groups throughout the sponsorship process.

Settlement service providers, faith-based organizations, or ethnic/cultural organizations that wish to incorporate the sponsorship of refugees into their mission can apply to the Canadian government to become a Sponsorship Agreement Holder. Once an organization has been approved as a SAH, it has the ability to sponsor refugee newcomers themselves, and work with groups in the community to sponsor refugees. As stated by Employment and Immigration Canada in the early 1990s, “the operation of SAHs [in Canada] was formulated on the presupposition that a well-formed base of sponsor groups was ready to undertake sponsorship” (EIC, 1991, as cited in Lanphier, 2003, p. 241).

1.4 Background

This section outlines relevant background information that provides the context for the rest of the report. It begins with a brief history and description of refugee resettlement and the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. This is followed by a discussion of the PSR program at ICA, along with a summary of the Community Partnership Network, including the key goals and principles of its operation.

1.4.1 Refugee resettlement and the PSR Program in Canada

In 1951, Canada signed on to the Convention on the Status of Refugees, a legal document crafted by the United Nations (UN), which defined the term ‘refugee’ and summarized the rights of displaced peoples, along with “the legal obligations of states to protect them” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017b). By ratifying the Convention, the Canadian government promised to uphold and protect the rights of refugees, and to provide safe haven to people fleeing persecution or faced with displacement.

The concept of immigrant and refugee sponsorship was first introduced in Canada in the late 1970s as a provision within the Immigration Act (Krivenko, 2012, p. 590). The Act, signed and adopted in 1976, set forth specifications which permitted groups of five or more individuals to privately sponsor immigrants or refugees (Krivenko, 2012, p. 590; Lanphier, 2003, p. 238). The Immigration Act was replaced by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) in 2002,

which updated and further clarified the government's position in relation to newcomers to Canada and refugee resettlement (Sinha & Young, 2002, para. 10).

Refugees are resettled to Canada in the following ways:

a) the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program, through which individuals and families are supported by Canadian citizens or permanent residents during their first year in Canada (Government of Canada, 2015, para. 1-2);

b) the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Program, through which individuals and families are supported entirely by the Canadian government throughout their first year; resettlement support and services are provided by designated non-governmental organizations, also known as "service provider organizations" for the Resettlement Assistance Program (Government of Canada, 2016a, para. 1-5);

c) the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program, through which individuals and families receive a combination of support from the government program and private sponsors (Elgersma, 2015, p. 2); and

d) the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) Program, through which the government partners with a private sponsorship group to provide supports to refugee newcomers with special needs. 'Special needs' cases can include individuals with medical disabilities, those who are experiencing trauma from violence, or cases involving a large number of family members (Government of Canada, 2017a, para. 1-4).

1.4.2 The PSR program at ICA

In August 2015, the ICA was approved by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) to become a SAH. This enabled the organization to provide sponsorship services to refugees, approve private sponsorships, match refugees with Constituent Groups, and to monitor and guide each case throughout the sponsorship period (ICA, 2016d, para. 1). The PSR Program at ICA consists of one staff member, the PSR Program Manager, who works directly with CGs to assist them in providing supports to sponsored refugee newcomers. The PSR Program Manager links CGs to settlement services within the ICA, and connects them with supports, resources, and information available in the wider community.

At present, the ICA works with around 30 CGs to assist them in their work with refugee newcomers. Families and individuals from countries in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa are among the cases that ICA and its CGs have worked with in the Greater Victoria region to date (ICA, 2017, p. 18).

1.4.3 The Community Partnership Network

The Community Partnership Network (CPN) was established by the ICA with funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria and the Government of Canada (ICA, 2016e, para. 1). The CPN is staffed and managed by the ICA's Community Development Coordinator, and consists of over 200 local businesses, agencies, and institutions spanning multiple sectors in the Greater Victoria region. CPN members include arts and cultural associations, educational institutions, faith groups, government agencies, health organizations, and police departments, among others.

As the lead agency for the CPN, the ICA organizes regular workshops, diversity training, and information sharing events for members. As stated by the ICA, the CPN's "long term goal is to develop the Capital Regional District's capacity to more effectively attract, welcome and integrate newcomers into our communities, workplaces, organizations and institutions" (ICA, 2016e, para. 2). Members of the CPN are committed to sharing resources and information to promote the diversity of the city.

The operation of the CPN is guided by the following goals and principles (as defined by ICA, 2016f, para. 2):

1. Raise awareness among community leaders and business managers of the need to create more welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces in the Greater Victoria region.
2. Strengthen the collective knowledge and skill-set of partnering organizations and develop an ongoing professional learning network and learning opportunities.
3. Identify and apply solutions to known barriers to inclusion. Ask leaders, employers, service and learning agents, policy/program decision makers, front-line staff and others what types of organizational and educational needs will enable them to facilitate newcomer integration. Facilitate opportunities, provide useful tools and establish new relationships.
4. Create a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), a community-based initiative to coordinate and create a strategic plan for the settlement and integration of newcomers in the community.

1.5 Organization of Report

The report that follows begins with a review of the literature related to private refugee sponsorship in Canada and associated themes, concluding with the conceptual framework of the research. Chapter 3 outlines the project's methodology including the selection of participants, data collection methods, and project limitations. Interview and focus group session findings are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. A discussion of these findings is then provided in Chapter 6. Following this, Chapter 7 offers recommended strategies with guidelines for their implementation, and Chapter 8 concludes the report.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review explores the existing body of knowledge on the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. Specifically, it examines literature (both academic and non-academic) relating to evaluations of the PSR program; the characteristics, roles, and motivations of CGs; the advantages of multi-sectoral community engagement; and, the challenges associated with refugee sponsorship and integration. It is important to note that few in-depth studies have been conducted since the PSR program's inception, and research focusing specifically on private sponsorship programs in Canada is relatively limited.

Key terms used to find scholarly research were 'refugee sponsorship', 'refugee resettlement', 'resettlement challenges', 'privately sponsored refugees', 'social capital', and 'multi-sectoral community engagement'. Research was conducted using the following databases and search engines: University of Victoria Library Summons, Google Scholar, Springer Link, and Taylor & Francis Online, and supplemented by a review of the works cited in the literature discovered through the initial database searches.

The review is divided into several significant themes which appear throughout the existing relevant literature. A large proportion of studies focus on the opportunities and challenges related to refugee resettlement and integration. Some studies explore the roles of service providers and settlement workers in assisting refugee newcomers in their transitions; several offer overviews of current programs, whereas others use case studies to provide insights into how settlement workers and programs can further support refugee newcomers and their communities. As this project emphasizes the roles of other community-based organizations and institutions in the process of refugee resettlement, the review also draws from literature that focuses on multi-sectoral community engagement in social issues.

2.2 Refugee Newcomer Integration

To support a better understanding of the topic in general, the first literature theme that was explored was the integration of immigrants and refugee newcomers within a host country. According to a report released by the Canadian government in 2001, integration requires active participation from both the newcomer and citizens of the host country; "rather than expecting newcomers to abandon their own cultural heritage, the emphasis is on finding ways to integrate differences in a pluralistic society" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [now IRCC], 2001, p. 4). Scholars have noted that building strong social networks and bridging diverse communities are essential steps in this process (Ives, 2007, p. 59; Soroka, Johnston, & Banting, 2007, p. 10).

Simich (2003) adds that such networks and partnerships must be sustained “well beyond the initial reception stage” for effective integration to occur (p. 154).

Leading practitioners and academics have examined several challenges associated with refugee newcomer integration in Canada, such as difficulties in accessing social services due to certain language and/or cultural barriers, inadequate information provided by government agencies (Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005), and the psychological hardships of being a refugee newcomer and dealing with issues concerning mental health, personal identity, and belonging (Beiser, 2009, pp. 539-574; 2010, pp. 39-43; Beiser & Hou, 2001; Lee & Brotman, 2011). Language acquisition, employment, and access to a strong support network are frequently identified as critical needs for refugee newcomer integration.

The success with which private sponsors manage to assist in the integration of refugee newcomers has been challenged by past evaluations of the program. For example, a 1989 study of the experiences of privately sponsored Southeast Asian individuals and families in Canada found that refugee newcomers often felt over-protected by sponsors, and many expressed frustration with regards to the inequity of support provided across sponsorship groups (Beiser, Turner, & Ganesan, 1989, p. 192). Moreover, Woon (1987) reported that Vietnamese refugee newcomers in Victoria had expressed uncertainty regarding the roles of sponsors, and were concerned about the somewhat ambiguous nature of the sponsor-refugee newcomer relationship (p. 133-134). Another study by Nguyen (1987) indicated that sponsored refugee newcomers tended to have minimal interaction with individuals outside of their own ethnic group, and the majority of refugee newcomers surveyed relied on their families and close relatives for emotional support (p. 48). Canadian sponsors have often been criticized for being overly assimilationist in their approaches to refugee integration; such critiques are formed around the notion that sponsors often tend to impose their cultural, social, and, in some cases, religious conventions on refugee newcomers and their families (Lanphier, 2003, p. 243; McKinlay, 2008, p. 2).

Despite the aforementioned scrutiny of certain elements of the PSR program, current consensus among scholars and practitioners has been that the program has been largely successful in supporting refugee integration (Beiser, 2003, pp. 203-215; Lenard, 2016, p. 302). A report on the experiences of Kosovar refugees in Ontario, for instance, found that sponsors were helpful in providing supports and accessing community resources for refugee newcomers, and that refugee newcomers maintained positive relationships with their sponsors (Centre for Refugee Studies, 2001, pp. 37-45). Krivenko (2016) states that, in recent years, the PSR program has proven effective in linking newcomer refugees with the community and social structures of the host country, and he contends that integration policies should begin utilizing lessons learned from the PSR program (p. 2). Furthermore, a 2016 government-funded impact evaluation of the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative found that 90 percent of sponsored Syrian refugee newcomers

reported a ‘somewhat strong’ or ‘very strong’ sense of belonging to Canada (Government of Canada, 2016b, p. 23).

2.3 Characteristics and Motivations of Sponsorship Groups in Canada

Another area that was examined in the literature review were discussions of the various characteristics of sponsorship groups in Canada, as well as their motivations for sponsoring refugees. Some of the groups that take on a sponsorship role are comprised of concerned citizens who may have no obvious affiliation to a larger collective or organization, whereas other CGs might identify with, and organize through, community organizations, ethnic groups, or faith-based congregations (Denton, 2003, p. 260).

Since its introduction in 1978, the PSR program has drawn a large amount of support from the Canadian public, particularly in response to widely publicized humanitarian crises (Labman, 2016, pp. 75-76; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). The Indochinese crisis of the 1970s sparked the first wave of public enthusiasm for PSR; individuals and communities across Canada pooled their resources together to provide support to Southeast Asian refugees fleeing conflict (Woon, 1987, p. 133). This enthusiasm returned in 1999 with the arrival of Kosovar refugees escaping their country’s war (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 185). In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the program, precipitated, in large part, by the Syrian civil war and the subsequent international migrant crisis (Labman, 2016, p. 75).

Several scholars documented the significant and ongoing sponsorship support provided by faith-based groups from the 1970s onward. Bramadat (2014), in his study of refugee resettlement and religion in BC, posits that religiously affiliated agencies have been instrumental in ensuring the successful implementation of the PSR program since its inception, beginning with the sponsorship of Vietnamese ‘boat people’ following the fall of Saigon (pp. 908-933). A number of authors have particularly highlighted the heavy involvement of Christian and Mennonite groups and churches in the PSR program (Bramadat, 2014, p. 908; Janzen, Chapman, & Watson, 2012, pp. 443-445; McKinlay, 2008, pp. 41-45). Faith-based organizations and communities (e.g. churches, mosques, and synagogues) usually operate within strong and well-established local networks, and their motivations for engaging in PSR activities tend to be based on core religious principles and traditions (Eby, Iverson, Smyers, & Kekic, 2011, p. 587). McKinlay (2008), for instance, points to the Exodus narrative in the Bible, along with the Christian principle of welcoming the stranger, as key underlying reasons for Christian interest in refugee support and advocacy (pp. 41-45).

Some authors have noted that many private sponsorships in Canada have been arranged to reunite families who have been separated during the process of resettlement (Derwing & Mulder,

2003, pp. 218-220; Hyndman, Payne, & Jimenez, 2017, p. 58). Personal connections or family ties thus present another motivation for groups to engage in refugee sponsorship.

2.4 Sponsorship Group Needs and Responsibilities

Another theme addressed across the literature pertained to the needs and responsibilities of sponsorship groups and CGs. Several articles discussed the importance of connecting these groups with services in the wider community (Marwah, 2016, p. 10; Simich, Beiser, Stuart, & Mwakarimba, 2005, pp. 259-268). Janzen, Chapman, & Watson (2011) note that the PSR program should aim to form “social structures that facilitate... inclusion”, and to provide private sponsors with “access to the resources available within the social system” (p. 445). Janzen et al. (2001) mention that an important piece of said social structures is to provide “settings and events (places and spaces) of mutual exchange”, such as arranging shared meals and providing meeting space for sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers (p. 445)

Various municipalities and settlement organizations across Canada have published manuals and online guides to assist sponsorship groups and employers in creating a more inclusive environment for newcomers, thus allowing for a greater degree of integration (City of Red Deer, 2007, pp. 3-14; De Leon & Duveiusart-Déry, 2016, pp. 6-53; Hire Immigrants Ottawa, 2011, pp. 2-25). De Leon and Duveiusart-Déry’s 2016 Handbook for Refugee Sponsoring Groups provides in-depth detail of sponsor responsibilities, from securing housing and managing expectations in the pre-arrival stages, to assisting newcomer refugees in learning English, finding employment and ensuring their overall cultural adjustment (pp. 6-53). A provincial needs assessment recently conducted by The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA, 2016) provides an overview of resettlement programs and services available throughout the province, along with recommendations for enhanced settlement services and community collaboration (pp. 40-84).

2.5 PSR Program Challenges

There are numerous challenges associated with the operation of PSR programs, many of which have been identified by academics and professionals in the field. Several major challenges are presented below, namely issues surrounding refugee dependency, protracted processing times, and managing sponsorship expectations.

Many have pointed to refugee newcomer dependency on their sponsors as being an obstacle to successful resettlement and integration. Lamba and Krahn (2003) maintain that popular characterizations of refugees as ‘passive’ or ‘helpless’ can often cause sponsors to engage in activities and procedures that prevent refugee newcomers from taking control of their new lives

(p. 336). The tendency to view refugees solely through the lens of the conflict or trauma they have experienced further compounds these negative outcomes (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995, as cited in Lamba & Krahn, 2003, p. 336). Scholars posit that it is essential for sponsorship groups to recognize the capabilities and resourcefulness of sponsored individuals, and to promote processes that positively acknowledge these attributes (Lamba & Kahn, 2003, p. 336; Lanphier, 2003, p. 254-255).

Lanphier (2003) contends that the relationship between sponsored refugee newcomer and their sponsorship group should be one that emphasizes partnership and “community-building” rather than dependency (p. 255). Relationships that encourage independence and building social capital will help to ensure refugee newcomers are self-sufficient at the end of the sponsorship period.

From the time a sponsorship group decides to sponsor an individual or family to the moment the sponsored person(s) arrive in the host country can often be a lengthy process (Denton, 2003, p. 267; Government of Canada, 2016b, p. 23; Lanphier, 2003, p. 241). The issue of burdensome paperwork has been identified as a significant contributing factor to protracted processing times (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 183). In recent years, the Canadian government has instituted new regulations that bar government officials from assisting refugee applicants with paperwork; thus, as Treviranus and Casasola (2003) note, refugees and their sponsors are often faced with the task of completing extensive resettlement applications on their own, which can be extremely challenging (p. 183). Moreover, until 2012, the Canadian government did not place a restriction on the number of applications that sponsors could submit; this meant that submissions in the years prior to 2012 “greatly exceeded the amount that could be processed”, a situation which has resulted in sponsorship groups waiting over a year for the sponsored individual(s) to arrive (Government of Canada, 2016c, p. 23).

The intensely bureaucratic and complex nature of the sponsorship application process, coupled with lengthy processing times have been highlighted as major challenges for sponsorship groups (Marwah, 2016, pp. 9-10). Marwah (2016) states that it is important for SAHs and settlement agencies to keep sponsorship groups and CGs enthusiastic and motivated throughout the pre-arrival stages, and to ensure group members establish realistic timelines (pp. 9-10).

Managing the expectations of private sponsors has been cited as a key challenge for those engaged in the PSR program. Derwing and Mulder’s (2003) study of privately sponsored Kosovar refugees found that there was a significant disconnect between the way sponsors expected Kosovars to think and act, and the way they actually were; some sponsors expressed surprise that the individual(s) they sponsored came from urban areas and spoke English, and others were alarmed by the exceedingly patriarchal nature of the Kosovar culture (p. 226-228). In reporting on the experiences of Vietnamese refugee newcomers in the 1980s, Woon (1987) underscored the challenges brought about by this type of disconnection, stating that cross-cultural differences and unrealistic expectations often resulted in strained relationships between

the sponsored individual and the sponsorship group (pp. 138-139). Both studies found that sponsorship group members often desired a greater understanding of the backgrounds and cultures of those they were sponsoring (Derwing & Mulder, 2003, pp. 228; Woon, 1987, pp. 138-139). Recent articles have acknowledged the difficulty of managing the expectations of sponsorship groups in both the pre- and post-arrival phases (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 198; Marwah, 2016, pp. 9-10). Treviranus and Casasola (2003) contend, however, that PSR program implementers have begun to place an emphasis on sponsor training and information distribution in order to address this issue (p. 198).

2.6 Multi-sectoral Community Engagement

Navigating the complex process of refugee sponsorship requires that the sponsoring groups have access to the resources available among local businesses, organizations, and agencies in the community, and that community organizations openly share resources with these groups. It is important to note that this review did not yield any literature pertaining to sponsorship groups accessing community resources specifically. However, a number of articles that discussed smart practices and issues related to multi-sectoral community engagement were consulted. Bowen, Newnham-Kahindi, and Herremans (2010) stress the importance of community engagement for businesses and organizations to maintain legitimacy. The authors point to three categories of strategies: transactional – ‘giving back’ to the community through donations, volunteering, or building local infrastructure; transitional – ‘building bridges’ through stakeholder dialogues and public consultation; and transformational – ‘changing society’ through joint decision making and co-ownership (Bowen et al., 2010, pp. 303-305).

Bovaird (2007) argues that the “coproduction” of community engagement activities is essential to their success; he contends that community members must “trust professional advice and support, but the professional has to be prepared to trust the decisions and behaviors of service users and the communities in which they live rather than dictate them” (p. 856). It is through this collaboration, Bovaird (2007) posits, that community members are able to design programs and activities that best suit their needs (p. 856). Head (2007) discusses the various sectoral motives associated with community engagement activities, highlighting that the public sector stands to benefit from strengthened community relationships arising from civic participation, and that many private sector organizations see an inherent “value in demonstrating their belief in corporate social responsibility” (p. 448).

2.7 Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

As this project focuses largely on leveraging the resources available within the CPN, it was necessary to consult literature concerning the *bonding* and *bridging* of social capital. Mathie and Cunningham (2003) describe social capital as “the store of goodwill and obligations generated by social relations” (p. 479); social capital is gained among organizations through the development of trusting relationships and collaborative action (Brown & Hannis, 2008, pp. 5-6; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, pp. 479-480).

The *bonding* of social capital occurs when groups or organizations with similar mandates or goals form networks and strengthen social ties (Narayan, 1999, pp. 10-12; Larsen et al., 2004, p. 65). The creation of robust social bonds may precipitate an increase in opportunities to connect with groups or organizations from other sectors or social circles (Larsen et al., 2004, pp. 65-66). Scholars have therefore underscored the importance of *bridging* social capital – establishing vertical social networks between socially diverse groups or organizations (Putnam, 2000, p. 233; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 227). This emphasis is echoed by Gittel and Vidal (1998), who contend that, when previously unrelated or dissimilar community organizations and groups connect with one another, the ties created strengthen the overall social fabric (p. 15); *bridging* social capital thus expands the possibilities for inter-sectoral collaboration.

2.8 Summary and Future Research

Scholars and practitioners have acclaimed the PSR program for its positive social impact and largely successful record of refugee integration. Many studies have emphasized the variety of roles and motivations of sponsorship and CGs, their needs and responsibilities, and the ways in which these groups manage their obligations over the course of the sponsorship period. A discussion of multi-sectoral community engagement and leveraging social capital helped to situate the review within a wider social context, while also highlighting the focus area of this research project.

The topic of refugee integration and private sponsorship in Canada, along with various related impacts and challenges, continues to be a budding subject of exploration. Academic research in this area has been limited primarily to past evaluations of the program, several contemporary case studies, and broad discussions concerning resettlement and the integration of refugees. This project contributes to the literature by focusing on the ways in which Constituent Groups might establish stronger connections with organizations and resources in the wider community. In this way, the study links the practices of multi-sectoral community engagement, and the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, with the activities of the PSR program.

Further analysis of sponsorship trends, along with long-term monitoring of the impacts of sponsor support on refugee newcomers would provide invaluable information for the training of future sponsors (Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 199). Moreover, it will be necessary for practitioners and scholars to detail, as much as possible, the successes and challenges of private sponsorship with regards to the recent influx of Syrian refugee newcomers in Canada. Further studies that build on the results of the Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative (Government of Canada, 2016b), and the Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (Government of Canada, 2016c), both spearheaded by the Canadian federal government, will be vital to advancing research in this field. Future research that focuses on establishing and maintaining links between sponsorship groups and community resources will be necessary to advance the PSR program's overall effectiveness.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

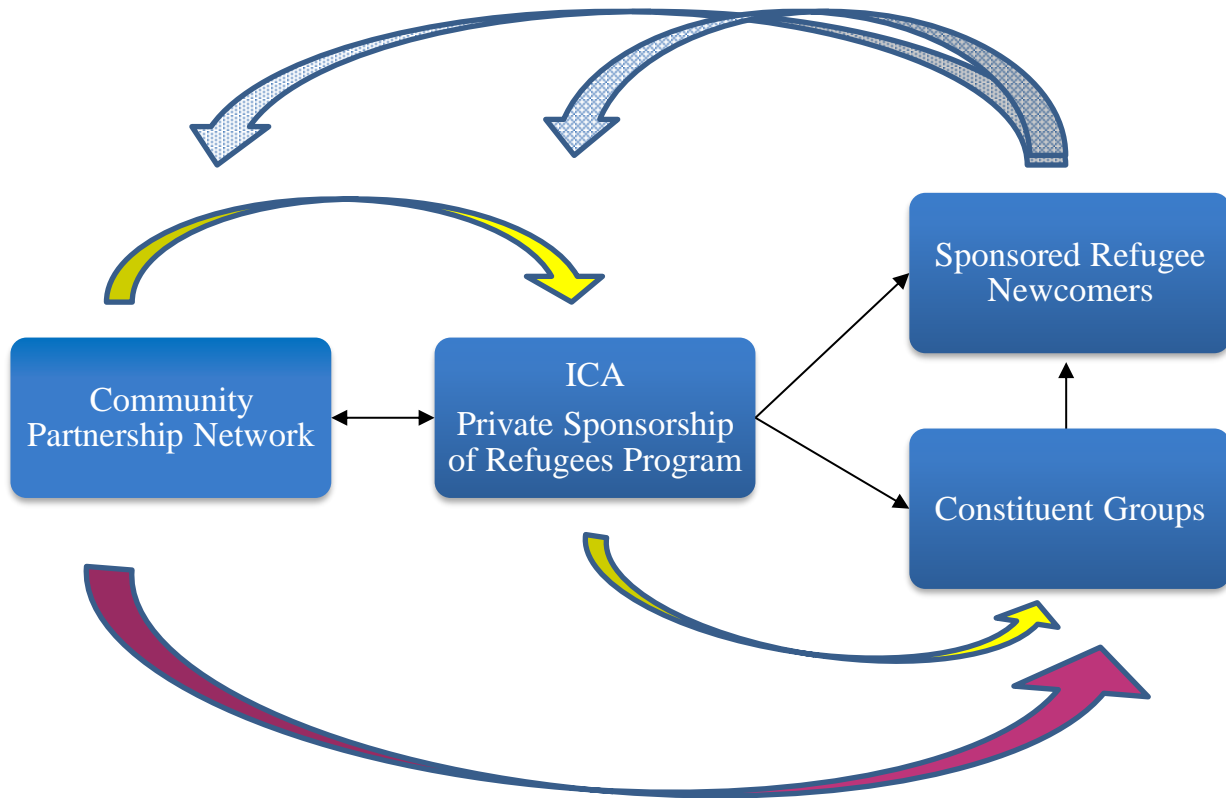
The conceptual framework applied to this project is based on the interaction between what members of the CPN can provide to CGs, and the role that the ICA can play in leveraging these resources to improve service provisions to its CGs. The success of the PSR program relies on the interplay of multiple actors, all working to improve the experiences of refugee newcomers. This research seeks to improve these linkages by analyzing the potential for bonding and bridging of social capital that exists within the CPN.

The members of the CPN can have a significant impact on the success of the sponsorship process and settlement outcomes; the ability of sponsored refugee newcomers to successfully integrate into society is largely dependent on the extent to which community-based organizations, businesses, and institutions are willing to offer up support and resources to CGs and refugee newcomers. Rather than focus on the refugee newcomers and CGs themselves, the research looks instead at the experiences and work of selected CPN member organizations, and determines how these findings can be utilized to improve the ICA's PSR program. The concept of boundary partners, as presented by Smutylo (2005) is useful in describing the CPN members, CGs, and sponsored refugee newcomers in relation to the ICA; boundary partners are those "individuals, groups, or organizations with which the program interacts directly, and which the program hopes to influence" (Smutylo, 2005, p. 1). *Figure 1* illustrates the PSR program's relationship with the CPN and other boundary partners.

Jabareen (2009) writes that a conceptual framework seeks to "help us understand phenomena rather than to predict them" (p. 58). Building on this idea, the researcher used an exploratory research framework when gathering qualitative data from participants (Stebbins, 2001, pp. 5-8). Research questions identified in the *Introduction* section of this project report were used to guide the work; the project aims to answer the research questions based on what can be deduced from the findings. By taking this approach, it is expected that the study will develop a strong

understanding of the relationships between key actors, and identify areas for improvements to these relationships, and thus to the program itself.

FIGURE 1 - THE PSR PROGRAM AND BOUNDARY PARTNERS



This project's conceptual framework focuses on how the PSR program can leverage resources within the CPN to better manage and provide supports to CGs; this process is illustrated by the yellow arrow. The purple arrow represents the potential for the CPN to provide more direct support to CGs. The dotted blue arrows illustrate the process that is generated when the CPN and the PSR program receive feedback and recommendations from CGs and refugee newcomers.

3.0 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This section provides a discussion of the approaches taken to complete the project research. The research methods include focus group sessions with CPN members, and interviews with representatives from SAH and settlement organizations. The following section provides a detailed overview of the project methodology, research methods and limitations.

3.2 Methodology

The project provides an exploration of how program networks and community resources can be utilized more effectively than in the past to support CGs. Due to the nature of the project and the research focus, a qualitative research approach was deemed to be most effective in answering the research questions. In this way, the report is essentially a small-scale developmental evaluation of the CPN and its role within the PSR program, as well as an investigation of smart practices.

Using a developmental evaluation method was appropriate for this project, as the research focus is on a complex and emergent program at the ICA, in which multiple stakeholders are involved (Dozois et al., 2010, p. 14). Moreover, the nature of the program requires adaptive learning and innovation, therefore a developmental evaluation approach was found to be most suitable.

A portion of this report explores specific smart practices utilized by settlement organizations and SAHs in Canada. Smart practices are methods or approaches that have been notably successful in achieving their objectives, and can be adapted for use within similar programs (Community Tool Box, 2017, para. 5-10). Bardach (2006) adds that a smart practice is that which “takes advantage of some latent potential... to achieve a goal at relatively low cost” (p. 28).

3.3 Methods and Tasks

Research consisted of one-on-one interviews with representatives from SAHs and settlement organizations across Canada, and three focus group sessions with representatives from a total of 13 CPN member organizations. All interview and focus group questions were developed in advance and sent to the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board for approval prior to the project’s commencement. The questions were then refined as the research was conducted and gaps in the literature were identified.

Individual interviews took a semi-structured format to allow conversations to naturally evolve and to encourage deeper investigation of issues (Fylan, 2005, pp. 66-67). Interviews were open-ended and emphasized active listening, which allowed “the interviewee the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings” (Noaks and Wincup, 2004, as cited in Silverman, 2006, p. 110). Focus groups allowed for open interaction between participants, and for discussions to progress naturally (Kitzinger, 1994, pp. 106-107). As described by Morgan (1996), focus groups encourage open interaction among participants, and allow the researcher to utilize pre-determined research questions to facilitate and guide the discussion (pp. 130-132).

A total of five interviews were conducted with professionals from SAH and settlement organizations within Canada, and three focus group sessions were held with representatives from the current roster of CPN member organizations. This section provides a description of each research method and the processes involved.

3.3.1 Interviews

Once potential interview participant criteria were established, the researcher contacted the SAH Secretariat to request assistance in distributing participant request forms to SAH organizations across Canada. Recruitment requests were developed by the researcher, and were mailed out by the SAH Secretariat. Phone contact was made with those organizations that responded to recruitment requests and agreed to participate. Other non-SAH settlement organizations were selected and contacted directly by the researcher using referral sampling, whereby existing participants recruited further participants from among their colleagues.

The researcher interviewed representatives from three faith-based SAH organizations and two non-SAH settlement organizations in different parts of Canada. Interviews took a semi-structured approach; as Longhurst (2016) explains, semi-structured interviews are conversational in nature so as to offer participants “the chance to explore issues they feel are important” (p. 143).

Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Participants had the opportunity to review the questions in advance (see Appendix A). All interviews were transcribed and results were analyzed.

3.3.2 Focus groups

The recruitment of participants for focus groups took place at the beginning of the project. In order to gain a broad cross-section of perspectives and experiences, the researcher sought to include CPN members from the following sectors: employment, health, education, faith communities, law enforcement, arts and recreation, and finance. Potential participants were selected from the current roster of CPN members with close guidance from the ICA’s Community Development Coordinator, who manages the CPN. The Community Development Coordinator assisted in selecting specific organizations that were active members of the CPN,

and that had previous experience working with sponsorships groups and/or refugee newcomers. It was expected that placing a focus on the demonstrably active CPN members would result in a higher response rate, and that their inclusion would elicit more substantial and relevant findings.

Once potential participants were selected, invitations to participate were then developed by the researcher and emailed to each participant by the Community Development Coordinator. Of the 20 CPN members that were contacted, a total of 13 responded and agreed to participate.

Focus groups took approximately 90 minutes, and questions were sent to participants in advance of each session (see Appendix B). All focus group sessions were transcribed and results were analyzed.

3.4 Data Analysis

Using methods contained in Grounded Theory, the project took an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Thomas, 2006, pp. 238-239). As Thomas (2006) writes, “the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (p. 238). Interview and focus group transcripts were transcribed verbatim and reviewed rigorously to identify emerging themes or categories, relationships between themes, as well as those themes which were important to participants.

3.5 Project Limitations, Delimitations, and Risks

This project is limited by its scope. The project focuses on the PSR program from the perspective of CPN members who are familiar with the ICA, and have some understanding of the program, rather than the CGs or sponsored refugee newcomers themselves. Furthermore, the researcher only conducted focus group sessions with a small fraction of the total number of CPN members, as meeting with the complete roster of members was beyond the parameters of this project. Similarly, interviews were conducted with a very limited number of SAHs and settlement organizations in Canada.

It is important to note that there was a certain amount of self-selection bias that occurred in the recruitment stage for focus groups. All CPN members who were contacted and who volunteered to participate in the research represented organizations that are active members of the CPN, and have had some level of involvement with the PSR program. Representatives from organizations that are inactive members of the CPN, or have had no previous involvement with the PSR

program were not contacted. Thus, the focus group findings are limited to the opinions, viewpoints, and experiences of a more active subset of the CPN.

The project aim is to provide ICA with feedback and perspectives from CPN members and settlement organizations in order to strengthen the organization's PSR program, and to develop strategies to increase the program's ability to better manage CGs. As a result, the research did not explore the degree to which the PSR program was needed in the community, but only the ways in which the program might be improved.

The quality of information collected from interviews and focus group sessions depended on how willing the participants were to contribute to the project.

The Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria, in its review of the project, concluded that the project activities posed minimal risk to participants. The project's Protocol Number is 16-449.

4.0 Findings: Interviews

4.1 Introduction

From late February to early April of 2017, five one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from settlement organizations across Canada. Three of these interviews were with faith-based SAHs, and two were with non-SAH service provider organizations. The purpose of this research activity was to examine the current status of Canada's PSR program from the perspective of practitioners in the field, and to identify smart practices associated with refugee sponsorship and other settlement programs.

This section of the report provides an overview of the key findings from the interviews with participants. The findings are divided into the following four themes:

1. PSR program current state and smart practices
2. The role of settlement organizations
3. The needs and requirements of sponsorship groups
4. Resettlement and integration challenges

4.2 PSR Program: Current State and Smart Practices

4.2.1 Current state of PSR programs in Canada

All three SAH representatives interviewed explained that the catalyst for their organization's involvement in the PSR program was the Indochinese crisis and the migration of Vietnamese 'boat people' to Canada. Each participant SAH organization thus began implementing refugee sponsorship programs in the late 1970's and early 1980's. According to the interviewees, interest in the PSR program has been relatively steady since that initial outpouring of support, but has grown rapidly in recent years.

All three SAH representatives noted that this increased interest came in the wake of the conflict in Syria and the subsequent international migrant crisis. One interviewee who represented a small SAH in Calgary stated that, up until 2015, their organization handled an average of three CGs per year; however, since 2015, their "volume has skyrocketed", and they now work with close to 70 CGs (Interviewee A, personal communication, February 28, 2017). Similarly, a representative from a SAH based in Ontario stated that their organization is currently at capacity with regards to supporting CGs, a situation which has only developed within the past three years.

Each of the three SAH representatives interviewed were from faith-based organizations; as such, these organizations are able to receive funding support from church groups, and CGs are

established among church congregations. As one interviewee pointed out, the large membership of church-based CGs has ensured that duties are shared, and that burnout is generally avoided.

4.2.2 Smart practices

All of the representatives who participated in interviews stressed the importance of face-to-face contact with CGs and refugee newcomers. A PSR program coordinator working on Vancouver Island noted that their organization always schedules an in-person meeting with prospective CGs to discuss their motivations and ensure they were prepared for the sponsorship process; as the participant explained, “it’s kind of like an interview to see if they’re viable, and why they want to do this work” (Interviewee B, personal communication, May 4, 2017). Others stated that they try to organize regular meetings with CGs and sponsored refugees, if not in person, then through phone calls or using online software such as Skype.

In response to the influx of refugee newcomers and sponsorship requests over the past several years, several SAHs and settlement organizations have begun developing online training materials and guides to support CGs in their work. For instance, Interviewee A discussed their organization’s initiative to build a website that “walked people through the process” of becoming a CG, and provided direct access to resources which may have otherwise been difficult to find (personal communication, February 28, 2017). This type of online support was identified by other SAHs as being a vital aspect of information sharing among sponsorship groups. One interviewee mentioned that they had helped create a public online forum that enabled sponsors to share their experiences and challenges with one another; however, due to lack of resources this site could no longer be maintained.

In addition to training and information sharing, PSR program coordinators highlighted the use of reliable and consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress of their CGs. One interviewee stated that their organization requires two reports (narrative and financial) from CGs each quarter; in addition, informal check-ups are used to elicit feedback from sponsored refugees and a regular newsletter is sent out to CGs and other stakeholders. Another SAH sent feedback surveys to sponsors four to six weeks after the arrival of the sponsored refugee newcomer, and again at five and nine months. The same SAH also conducted volunteer-driven phone interviews with sponsored refugee newcomers at three, six, and 12 months into the sponsorship period.

The importance of building partnerships and sharing resources with other community-based organizations was highlighted by all three SAH representatives. Interviewees discussed the community partnerships formed by their SAHs, most of which were with other faith-based organizations, such as mosques or synagogues. One interviewee mentioned their organization’s frequent collaboration with the local multi-cultural association to deliver workshops and hold annual social events for CGs and sponsored refugees. All SAH representatives noted, however,

that these community partnerships were limited, and that increased collaboration with external organizations was needed.

4.3 The Role of Settlement Organizations

The settlement organizations consulted during this research were much larger than the SAHs, and they generally had access to more resources. This is primarily due to the fact that, unlike PSR programs within SAH organizations, settlement organizations receive the majority of their funding through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Government of Canada, 2017b, para. 1-3). One interview participant representing a Vancouver-based settlement organization noted that they operate 12 locations throughout the city, and many more which provide services in conjunction with other organizations. Another interviewee who represented an umbrella organization in Calgary discussed their work with various refugee and immigrant-serving agencies across the province of Alberta.

In addition to their direct work with refugee newcomers in the areas of education, employment, and language training, settlement organizations often provide training workshops to sponsorship groups, including assistance with developing settlement plans. One interviewee noted that their organization assists sponsorship groups in preparing sponsorship application forms and dividing responsibilities between group members in the pre-arrival phase. As this participant stated, “we help [sponsorship groups] to understand what private sponsorship is, what might be some challenges they might face, how to go about connecting them with financial institutions, what to look for in terms of housing” (Interviewee C, personal communication, March 8, 2017).

Participants discussed their involvement in holding regular networking sessions with sponsorship groups, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and local businesses to raise awareness around refugee issues, lessons learned, and challenges related to refugee resettlement. The settlement organizations interviewed were not SAHs, however they worked closely with sponsorship groups and helped to connect them with SAHs when appropriate.

Depending on the size of settlement organizations, some may have the capacity to conduct research on refugee-focused issues in the region. For example, according to one interviewee, their organization is currently partnered with an external research agency to complete a longitudinal study of Syrian refugee newcomers in the Prairie region of Canada.

4.4 The Needs and Requirements of Sponsorship/Constituent Groups

All interview participants discussed the various needs and requirements that CGs and sponsorship groups may have throughout the sponsorship period. One of the key priorities identified by most interviewees was ensuring sponsors are provided with clear and concrete descriptions of rules and responsibilities as they embark on the sponsorship process. Closely linked to this was the effective management of sponsor expectations; many participants noted that sponsors are often confused about their roles and may have little understanding of the ways in which they are meant to support sponsored individuals and families. As one interviewee indicated, it is crucial that CGs “understand what they’ve signed up for and know what their goals are” at the outset (Interviewee B, personal communication, May 4, 2017). Another interviewee pointed out that this requirement extends to the sponsoring group’s awareness of – and sensitivity to – the culture and traditional practices of the refugee newcomer(s), as well as the understanding that refugee newcomers are likely to have been exposed to violence and/or experienced trauma prior to their arrival in Canada.

As mentioned previously, regular meetings, information sharing sessions, and training workshops are particularly useful for sponsors to be successful in their work with refugee newcomers. All participants emphasized that CGs and sponsorship groups required hands-on training that imparts relevant information in a concise and easily digestible manner.

4.5 Resettlement and Integration Challenges

A common challenge raised by participants representing SAHs was a general lack of organizational capacity. One interviewee underscored this issue, stating that their SAH had such a small number of staff that, “if I was to quit tomorrow then everything would be in turmoil” (Interviewee D, personal communication, April 7, 2017). This low capacity has also made it difficult for SAHs to connect CGs with other service providers (such as settlement organizations), non-profit organizations, institutions, or businesses in the community; of the participating SAHs, all were currently able to offer the standard PSR services to their CGs, but did not have a reliable system of linking these groups with external organizations in order to access services outside of the SAH’s realm.

The development and implementation of consistent and reliable monitoring and evaluation systems was identified as being another major challenge. Following the influx of refugee newcomers in recent years, SAHs are looking for improved data collection methods to track the process of CGs and sponsored individuals. As indicated by one interviewee, “there’s a real need for coordination and systematization in terms of how private sponsors are coordinated” (Interviewee E, personal communication, April 4, 2017). Another participant noted that their

organization has been using a tracking system developed by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), but added that it does not have the capacity to gather all the necessary information, particularly since the number of CGs has risen so dramatically in the past few years.

Other challenges cited were related to government regulations and the sponsorship application process. One SAH representative posited that federal rules and regulations concerning the PSR program tend to be amended frequently, which made it difficult for their organization to keep track of which policies were in effect and which were no longer enforced. The lengthy processing time for new applications was identified by all interviewees as an additional significant challenge. Once paperwork has been completed and the sponsorship application is submitted, sponsors must wait for an unspecified amount of time before the sponsored refugee arrives in Canada. One interviewee explained that “I’ve got a couple of cases where the application was done 6 or 7 years ago, and we’re still waiting for the family to arrive” (Interviewee D, personal communication, April 7, 2017). All interviewees pointed out that protracted processing periods have often caused frustrations among CGs, often leading to the eventual fragmentation of the group.

4.6 Summary

The above sections are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of SAHs and settlement organizations in Canada. The interview findings instead provide a brief ‘snapshot’ of the experiences and operations of certain organizations engaged in the PSR program and settlement work across the country. Through an exploration of these findings, it has been possible to identify common activities, smart practices, and challenges.

Overall, the interviewees emphasized the importance of regular contact with CGs, as well as the provision of training, workshops, and awareness raising. Participants also discussed the needs and requirements of CGs throughout the sponsorship process, as well as the various challenges related to sponsorship and resettlement. The development of networks with external agencies, institutions, and businesses within the community was identified as an important but challenging aspect of settlement work.

5.0 Findings: Focus Groups

5.1 Introduction

In late April and early May of 2017, three focus group sessions were conducted with representatives from selected CPN member organizations based in the Greater Victoria region. A total of 13 organizations participated over the course of the three sessions. Participants from a variety of sectors were chosen to gain a broad cross-section of perspectives and experiences. Participants represented the following sectors: employment (2), education (3), finance (1), faith communities (1), law enforcement (1), health (1), and arts and recreation (4).

To allow for greater clarity in a discussion of the findings, specific organization names are used in this section, however individual representatives are not identified. By making reference to actual organization names, it is anticipated that the ICA, its CGs, and other service providers in the region will utilize this information to access resources they may have previously been unaware of. Permission to use organization names was obtained from participants prior to embarking on the research.

This section of the report provides an overview of the key findings from focus group sessions with participants. As this section details CPN member engagement with sponsorship groups in general (and not exclusively CGs linked to ICA), terms such as ‘sponsorship group’ or ‘sponsors’ are used instead of ‘Constituent Groups’.

The findings are divided into the following four themes:

1. CPN member relationships and roles
2. CPN member engagement with sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers
3. Intra-CPN Partnerships
4. CPN Challenges and suggestions for improved networks and service delivery

5.2 CPN Member Relationships and Roles

5.2.1 CPN member relationships

All participants spoke positively of their organization’s relationship with the ICA, as well as their experiences as members of the CPN. Most identified ICA’s CPN-focused training sessions as highlights of their involvement with the network, and some added that these sessions have allowed for connections to be established between members.

5.2.2 CPN member roles

All participants appeared to have a strong understanding of the CPN's mission and goals. When asked to reflect on their roles as CPN members, many participants were eager to discuss the actions their organizations have taken to help advance these goals. A number of participants commented, however, that their individual roles as CPN members were not clearly defined, and that the CPN lacked a certain amount of structure and coordination.

5.3 CPN Member Engagement with Sponsorship Groups and Refugee Newcomers

All focus group participants had some level of understanding of the PSR program, and representatives had varying degrees of experience working with sponsorship groups and/or refugee newcomers. Several participants represented organizations that maintain both well-established and innovative programs to assist sponsorship groups in their work with refugee newcomers, and provide direct support to sponsored refugee newcomers over the course of their settlement in Canada. Other participants had less experience in this area, but expressed an interest in offering services for these groups and establishing deeper partnerships with other CPN members and community groups.

Examples of organizational involvement in the PSR program are detailed below, and are divided into the following sectors: employment, education, finance, faith communities, law enforcement, health, and arts and recreation.

Employment

The British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA) offers employment programs for refugee newcomers who wish to work in the construction industry. A participant representing the BCCA highlighted a service through which the organization shares employment information with sponsorship groups so that they may pass it on to sponsored individuals during the pre-arrival phase. The service was introduced 19 months ago as a response to the influx of Syrian refugee newcomers arriving in Victoria. The participant noted that the online information page for the program was recently translated into Arabic in response to requests from sponsorship groups for Arabic language materials to share with sponsored individuals and families. As stated by the BCCA representative:

“We have a presentation in Arabic and the Syrian dialect in particular, explaining what construction jobs are available, what are the opportunities, and what is the general outlook of construction jobs in the industry, so that people who come with that kind of background can be told this is what you can look forward to.”

(Focus group participant B, personal communication, April 24, 2017)

A representative of the Victoria Chamber of Commerce detailed the organization’s advancement of employment-focused initiatives for refugee newcomers. In particular, the Chamber of Commerce is facilitating a partnership between a local construction agency and an English language academy to provide practical language lessons to prepare sponsored refugee newcomers for work at the construction agency.

Several participants found that, although gaining employment is critical to the successful integration of refugee newcomers, seeking out employment programs and related occupational information is not necessarily the first priority for sponsorship groups. It was posited that acquiring stable accommodation and registering for English language lessons often take precedence, and the issue of employment is usually addressed at a later stage. One participant contended that placing employment lower on the list of priorities makes it more difficult for sponsorship groups to assist refugee newcomers in securing work within the 12-month sponsorship period.

Education

Educational institutions can play a significant role in providing information to sponsorship groups and preparing them for the sponsorship process. One participant from the Social Sciences department at the University of Victoria noted that sponsorship groups may contact the department with requests for information relating to the settlement process and the services available in the region. The participant stated that these interactions are infrequent, but that, “when sponsors ask me for information, it’s more about what’s available here in Victoria, less so about cultural norms. There have been a couple of questions around trauma associated with being a refugee” (Focus group participant C, personal communication, April 25, 2017). The participant usually aims to connect sponsors with researchers at the university who may be able to provide accurate responses to inquiries.

A participant representing the English Language Development department at Camosun College highlighted the school’s monthly information sessions, which sponsorship groups are encouraged to attend. An Arabic speaking advisor works on campus to assist refugee newcomers and sponsorship groups with registration and accessing information regarding classes. The participant indicated the importance of developing effective methods of sharing this information with sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers; the participant stated that “we need to reach out to let them know what we can offer”, and that “it would be good to have a better flow [of

information] between other institutions” (Focus group participant I, personal communication, April 26, 2017).

In addition to educational institutions, public libraries are frequently utilized as an information source for sponsors and sponsored refugee newcomers. A representative from the Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) explained that in recent years, they have focused on spearheading new services specifically for those involved in the PSR program. Currently, the GVPL offers library tours to sponsorship groups and privately sponsored individuals or families, and provides library cards to sponsored refugee newcomers. For those who do not have a personal fixed address, the library has introduced an address verification form that allows for the sponsorship group to sign off on a library membership for the sponsored individual. The participant representing the GVPL pointed out that the city’s public libraries have made an effort to add dual language materials to their collections, particularly Arabic literature and e-books. Other participants discussed the importance of ensuring sponsorship groups are made aware of these resources.

Finance

A number of focus group participants identified financial stability as being a key element of successful refugee resettlement. Several pointed out that sponsorship groups need to ensure refugee newcomers have an understanding of the Canadian banking system, and have access to a personal bank account. One participant spoke to this issue, discussing their work at a local branch of the Vancity credit union; the non-profit organization responded to the influx of Syrian refugee newcomers by working directly with sponsored individuals and families in registering for accounts, reviewing financial options, and exploring other available services.

Faith communities

The Muslim community in Victoria has been instrumental in providing supports and resources to sponsored refugee newcomers who adhere to the Islamic faith. According to a representative of Victoria’s BC Muslim Association (BCMA), headquartered at the Masjid Al-Iman mosque, the BCMA is in a unique position to not only assist refugee newcomers, but also to provide sponsorship groups with culturally sensitive information and training. The mosque is mostly operated by volunteers, and has been struggling to keep up with the demand for services, particularly due to the large number of refugee newcomers arriving from Syria in recent years. As the participant explained, “we used to do an orientation for sponsoring families, to teach and educate them about Muslim culture and etiquette”, but that this service is no longer offered due to low organizational capacity (Focus group participant D, personal communication, April 26, 2017).

Law enforcement

A representative from the Saanich Police Department (PD) discussed their involvement in various community engagement activities. The participant noted that the department has delivered several information sessions and workshops to edify refugee newcomers on Canadian/BC law, police procedures, and personal rights. These sessions allot time for sponsors and sponsored individuals to ask questions and discuss legal issues with local law enforcement officials. The participant highlighted how important it is “to demystify the PD. It’s easy for me to forget how intimidating our uniforms are. Anything that we can do, especially with newcomers and teens, to humanize the badge” (Focus group participant E, personal communication, April 26, 2017). The representative added that sponsorship groups are encouraged to contact their local PD to organize an information session or an event that allows refugee newcomers to interact with police officers.

Health

Accessing suitable health care was acknowledged by participants as one of the top priorities for refugee newcomers. A representative of Island Health discussed their engagement with sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers. Although Island Health focuses on providing healthcare plans primarily for Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), the participant noted that, due to the influx of privately sponsored refugee newcomers in Victoria, private sponsorship groups have been connecting with the organization at an increased rate. The participant explained that, on average, they receive calls from new sponsors two times per week. This has put a strain on Island Health’s service delivery in recent years.

Sponsors often contact Island Health with general inquiries about health care programs, most having very little knowledge of how to secure these services or the appropriate channels to go through; as the participant stated, “a sponsor group will contact me and they’ll have no idea - they’re totally lost” (Focus group participant F, personal communication, May 2, 2017). The participant’s main concern was that sponsorship groups do not know how to access information related to health care for the individuals and families they sponsor. They added that ICA has been helpful in providing this information to sponsors, but that the onus should be on sponsors to seek it out.

Arts and recreation

Establishing links with organizations and institutions that promote the arts and recreation was identified as a vital aspect of the sponsorship process. Several focus group participants discussed the important role that leisure and artistic activities play in ensuring successful refugee newcomer integration. A representative of Westshore Parks and Recreation emphasized the need to offer recreational services and facilities to refugees and newcomers in general; the participant pointed to the Leisure Involvement for Everyone (LIFE) program, which allows free drop-ins at any Victoria recreation centre for registered individuals. In recent years, the Westshore centre

has worked closely with the Red Cross to register many refugee newcomers into the LIFE program. Although this has been a successful initiative, Westshore Parks and Recreation has experienced difficulty in connecting, and sharing information with, sponsorship groups in particular. This was echoed by another participant who represented Saanich Parks and Recreation, who stated that their association had limited interactions with sponsors, and they expressed a desire to explore ways to increase engagement with these groups.

A representative of The Belfry Theatre, a non-profit theatre company based in Victoria, discussed their recent initiative to invite refugee newcomers to performances. For instance, in early 2017, the theatre hosted a group of 20 Syrian refugee newcomers and their sponsors to attend a play; remarking on the outcomes of that event, the participant stated that, “we had people say they didn’t understand the show, but that they were happy to get their minds off what was happening back in Aleppo” (Focus group participant G, personal communication, April 25, 2017). The representative pointed out that their interactions with sponsorship groups has been limited to informal and brief conversations in the theatre lobby following the events.

Other publicly available resources

In addition to the aforementioned services provided by CPN member organizations, participants identified a number of other publicly accessible resources and materials offered by their own organizations that might assist sponsorship groups to conduct their work with refugee newcomers. Online informational materials are offered by many CPN member organizations, and are freely accessible to the public. For instance, the University of Victoria maintains an online Capital Regional District (CRD) Community Green Map featuring sites associated with sustainable living, nature, and community building. A representative of the university’s Social Sciences department noted that the CRD Green Map also identifies sites where resources and training is available for immigrants and refugees throughout the Greater Victoria region. Printed materials such as brochures and pamphlets are readily available from a number of CPN member organizations.

Some focus group participants discussed the importance of providing physical space for sponsorship groups to access. For instance, representatives from Westshore and Saanich Parks and Recreation stated that rooms can be reserved at no cost at a number of recreation centres in the city, and may be used as meeting spaces for sponsorship groups. Likewise, several GVPL library branches throughout the city offer meeting rooms that may be booked by sponsorship groups. Spaces for learning were also identified as meaningful resources in the sponsorship process; participants representing the University of Victoria and Camosun College pointed to the availability of free on-campus presentations and academic panels that focus on migration issues and refugee integration, and are open to the public.

5.4 Intra-CPN Partnerships

Most focus group participants have limited experience partnering with other CPN members to deliver services to sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers. Many added that they had very limited knowledge of the programs and services offered by other CPN member organizations. When participants indicated a deeper awareness of another member's activities, it was usually because they operated within the same municipal department as each other (e.g. districts within the city's Parks and Recreation network, or police departments). Some participants identified specific examples of engagement with other members, but added that these were usually one-off events, and that a lack of funding or low organizational capacity has made it difficult to nurture partnerships between CPN members.

Few examples of regular and consistent intra-CPN collaborations were raised during the focus group sessions. A participant representing the Saanich PD discussed one example, citing their involvement with the BCMA in providing police-led community events and information sharing sessions at the Masjid Al-Iman mosque. It was added, however, that these events were limited to three or four per year, and relied on funding from an external committee. Participants acknowledged the low number of established partnerships within the CPN, and most expressed a significant interest in developing deeper relationships with other member organizations.

5.5 CPN Challenges and Suggestions for Improved Networks and Service Delivery

Participants raised a number of challenges related to the delivery of PSR-focused services, and suggestions for improvements to the CPN were offered. One participant stated that over the past few years the CPN has increased in size, and there have been fewer opportunities to organize regular meetings between members. They added that "the CPN was most successful in its early years when we'd have meetings once a month, and you'd see 40 people from different organizations regularly" (Focus group participant A, personal communication, April 24, 2017). A number of participants agreed that, in addition to the training sessions, regular ICA-led meetings among CPN members would be beneficial. It was suggested that these meetings would give members an opportunity to share experiences and ideas for improved service delivery, and to strengthen their existing relationships within the CPN. When discussing these proposed meetings, most participants acknowledged the extra time and effort this would require from ICA staff, and they noted that it is likely unfeasible given the ICA's current capacity.

The development of partnerships between CPN members was identified as an area for improvement. Some pointed out that, due to the network's large membership and low organizational capacity, it is often difficult to coordinate with other CPN organizations with

regard to service delivery and establishing partnerships. One participant mentioned that intra-CPN links might be improved by developing an online database for CPN members to connect with one another and to input resources available at their respective organizations. Another participant added that such a database would assist organizations in bolstering their roles as CPN members. It was also noted that CPN members might establish partnerships through regular meetings between CPN members from each sector.

An additional challenge raised by several participants was the issue of sponsorship group identification; although all participant organizations have had some level of experience working directly with sponsored refugee newcomers, many stated that they are unable to identify who the sponsoring groups are or how to connect with them. Building on the notion of increased connectivity with sponsors, it was suggested that sponsorship groups have a greater presence at CPN-focused events, such as meetings and training sessions. One participant proposed that sponsorship groups be invited to these events, and that invitations could be sent out with the ICA newsletter.

Participants acknowledged that the ICA works well as a hub for connecting sponsorship groups with CPN member organizations, but they also stated that having a way of contacting sponsorship groups directly would assist CPN members in delivering targeted services with increased efficiency. As one participant pointed out, sponsors might often assume that ICA will assist them in every aspect of the sponsorship process, but that it is important for them not to rely completely on the ICA; speaking on this issue, the participant added that “they see ICA and think ICA has all the answers” (Focus group participant H, personal communication, April 25, 2017). This point was echoed by another participant who recognized the invaluable connections provided by the ICA, but that in terms of making contact with sponsorship groups, “it would be better if there were more ways of reaching out” (Focus group participant D, personal communication, April 26, 2017).

5.6 Summary

Overall, focus group participants demonstrated various levels of understanding of the ICA’s PSR program, and appeared to have a firm grasp of the CPN’s mandate, but indicated less clarity with regard to their roles as members of the network. All participants have had varying degrees of experience working and interacting with refugee newcomers and sponsorship groups; many have established programs or services that provide assistance to those involved in the sponsorship process, whereas others have limited capacity to deliver such supports.

Partnerships between CPN members are few and far between, and most participants commented that they had limited knowledge of the activities offered by other member organizations. All

participants supported the development of deeper intra-CPN partnerships, but identified this as a significant challenge. Other challenges relating to CPN membership size and sponsorship group identification and connection were raised. Suggestions for improvements were then offered to address these issues.

The following section provides an in-depth discussion and analysis of the findings presented in sections 4 and 5, and will identify key themes for the ICA to consider as it looks to establish a stronger peer resource network.

6.0 Discussion and Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The ICA has identified a need to build on existing CPN resources to effectively manage relationships with its CGs. The research findings detailed in Sections 4 and 5 highlight specific smart practices and challenges raised by other organizations doing similar work, as well as important feedback from CPN members about their level of engagement with CGs, their interactions with each other, and how to increase the effectiveness of these networks.

As the interview findings demonstrate, participant SAHs and settlement service providers in Canada are working to develop improved methods of responding to the arrival of refugee newcomers. The focus group findings illustrate the various efforts that CPN members have made to assist in the integration of privately sponsored refugees. In identifying smart practices in PSR program delivery, the interviews found that participant organizations have been confronted with similar challenges in their work with privately sponsored refugees and sponsorship groups. As demonstrated by the focus group findings, these challenges extend to community-based organizations that are involved in PSR program activities.

This section uses the interview and focus group findings to discuss their implications for the ICA's PSR program. Common themes found throughout the primary research are addressed and analyzed, and, where relevant, links are made to the literature reviewed in Section 2.

This discussion is divided into the following four themes:

1. Refugee newcomer integration
2. Bonding and bridging social capital
3. Managing expectations
4. Improved program delivery

6.2 Refugee Newcomer Integration

The integration of refugee newcomers is a central theme running throughout the literature review and research findings. It was frequently noted by participants that the successful integration of sponsored refugees requires collaborative engagement from the refugee newcomer, sponsorship groups, settlement service providers (including SAHs), and community-based organizations. This was reflected in the literature, as several scholars posited that establishing strong social networks, along with active participation from the newcomer and the host country, are crucial elements of integration (Ives, 2007, p. 59; Soroka et al., 2007, p. 10). Interviewees representing

SAHs and other settlement organizations viewed integration as an ongoing process, citing the continuous interplay of various actors as key to enabling successful refugee newcomer integration. In focus group sessions, CPN members tended to view integration through a more targeted lens, identifying the completion of specific benchmarks (e.g. learning English, finding employment, or securing housing) as indicative of a sponsored individual's degree of integration. Some participants from interview and focus group sessions also pointed out that a refugee newcomer should not have to abandon their own culture in favour of that of the host country in order for successful integration to occur.

All interview and focus group participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a welcoming environment and creating opportunities for refugee newcomers to access resources within the community. Interviewees representing SAHs and settlement organizations highlighted the numerous successes and challenges associated with establishing such an environment, situating this discussion within the context of PSR program operation, and settlement work in general. In focus group sessions, CPN member representatives were eager to discuss their work and experiences with sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers; participants generally spoke positively of these experiences, and most indicated that these programs and activities were contributing to the refugee newcomer integration process.

As demonstrated in Section 5.3, the program activities currently offered by participant organizations are varied, targeting major facets of the integration process. All participants agreed that effective integration is more likely to occur when these types of programs and activities are made visible to the wider community, and information is readily accessible to sponsorship groups.

6.3 Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

The concepts of bonding and bridging of social capital, as highlighted in the literature review, appeared throughout the research findings. Although the terms 'bonding' and 'bridging' were not explicitly referenced by participants, many stated that improved partnerships and innovative collaboration between organizations was crucial to ensuring the success of the PSR program.

6.3.1 Communication and shared resources

The challenges surrounding communication between stakeholders, and the accessibility of community resources, were common threads throughout the literature review and research findings. The topic of effective communication among CPN members was brought up frequently in focus group sessions, with many participants stating that current methods of sharing information should be improved. Focus group participants were largely unaware of the programs and services offered by other CPN member organizations, and expressed a desire for more

efficient modes of information sharing amongst each other, as well as with sponsorship groups. The importance of this type of collaboration was addressed in the literature review, which highlighted that open dialogue between community-based organizations and other stakeholders serves to enhance multi-sectoral community engagement (Bovaird, 2007, p. 856; Head, 2007, p. 448).

The literature review found that having knowledge of, and access to, publicly available resources was a central requirement for CGs to be effective in their work with sponsored refugee newcomers (Marwah, 2016, p. 10; Simich et al., 2005, pp. 259-268). This stance was echoed by interview participants, some of whom identified challenges in this particular area. Specific issues were brought up by interviewees who represented SAH organizations; these participants noted difficulties with regard to connecting CGs with service providers in the wider community, and cited a general lack of reliable mechanisms for linking CGs with external resources.

6.3.2 Partnership development

All interview and focus group participants agreed that maintaining strong working partnerships between stakeholders was a key element of delivering successful PSR program activities. Participant CPN members frequently commented on the value of developing solid, long-term collaborative relationships with other members to assist CGs and refugee newcomers. However, many added that the CPN's size and low organizational capacity has hindered effective coordination between CPN members. In instances where coordination does exist, it is primarily between member organizations that operate within the same sectors, a situation that is referred to in the literature review as *bonding* social capital (Larsen et al., 2004, p. 65). A number of focus group participants discussed methods by which future partnerships might be developed across sectors, thereby enabling CPN member organizations to *bridge* social capital (Putnam, 2000, p. 233; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 227). Interviewees representing SAHs and settlement service providers also acknowledged the benefits of forming partnerships with other likeminded organizations, as well as developing multi-sectoral collaborations.

Although there was a general recognition among focus group participants that cross-sectoral partnerships do indeed help to ensure more effective service delivery, discussion regarding specific opportunities for the creation of such partnerships was limited. When asked specifically about this, CPN member participants had few suggestions regarding potential or innovative ways in which their respective organizations might connect with other businesses, agencies, or institutions within the CPN to assist refugee sponsorship groups in their work. There may be a number of factors contributing to the lack of proposals for new collaborative activity between CPN member organizations. One such factor may be that CPN member participants generally have limited knowledge of the activities and resources offered by fellow members. A lack of regular CPN-led meetings, and an inability to connect directly with sponsorship groups may also contribute to this lack of partnership innovation.

6.3.3 Engaging less active CPN members

It is important to reiterate that, due to the self-selection bias that occurred in the recruitment stages of this project (see Sections 3.2.3 and 3.4 of this report), the study did not include those CPN member organizations which have historically had little to no involvement with the CPN or the ICA. The absence of less active, or dormant, member organizations in focus group sessions thus resulted in a lack of perspectives from this particular subset of the CPN.

Although the participation of the abovementioned subset was beyond the scope of this project, it is worth noting that engaging less active members of the CPN in regular ICA and/or CPN-led events has the potential to create further opportunities for innovative partnerships within the network. As discussed in the literature review, Head (2007) posits that organizations often see civic participation and corporate social responsibility as inherently valuable (p. 448); active members of the CPN are in a position to demonstrate to those less engaged members the value of participating in PSR activities.

6.4 Managing Expectations

6.4.1 Sponsorship processes and programs

The theme of managing sponsorship group expectations was raised by interview and focus group participants, and had also appeared throughout the reviewed literature (particularly in Derwing & Mulder, 2003 pp. 217-237; Treviranus & Casasola, 2003, p. 198, and Marwah, 2016, pp. 9-10). For participants representing SAHs and settlement service providers, being able to ensure sponsors maintained realistic expectations of the sponsorship process presents a significant challenge. Several interviewees stated that sponsors may not be fully aware of the time required for such a commitment, and that some sponsorship groups have expressed frustration with the application process and the bureaucracy that characterizes the pre-arrival phase.

A number of focus group participants commented that CGs and other sponsorship groups often place too many expectations on the ICA to provide them with all the information and services required throughout the sponsorship process. CPN member representatives noted that this can result in an over-reliance on the ICA, which might in turn prevent CGs from independently seeking out information and accessing services provided by CPN member organizations. CPN members also expressed concern that this might contribute to CGs being underprepared for certain elements of the sponsorship process. Although this exact concern was not voiced by participant SAH representatives during interview sessions, all three commented that low organizational capacity has contributed to difficulties in connecting CGs with other service providers (such as settlement organizations), non-profit organizations, institutions, or businesses in the wider community. This is a substantial challenge for many SAHs, yet its implications

remain unexplored in academic reporting; the literature review yielded very few articles or reports that focused on this particular issue.

6.4.2 Refugee newcomer culture and identity

Interviewees and focus group participants agreed that sponsors should have a relatively firm grasp on the cultural backgrounds of the individuals and families they sponsor, and that cultural understanding is a vital part of establishing a strong sponsor-to-refugee newcomer relationship. Interviewees maintained that delivering cultural awareness training and workshops to sponsorship groups can help to facilitate integration and a more successful sponsorship experience. These comments echoed themes found in the literature, specifically in articles by Derwing and Mulder (2003, pp. 228) and Woon (1987, pp. 138-139), which argued that a lack of cultural understanding on the part of sponsors can potentially create a disconnect between sponsorship groups and those they sponsor.

It is important to note here that many participants of this study did not address matters relating to their own perceptions of who refugee newcomers are, particularly regarding cultural backgrounds. Throughout all three focus group sessions, for example, many CPN member representatives tended to speak of refugee newcomers as being ‘Arabic-speaking’ or ‘Muslim’, often without acknowledging that a large proportion of refugee newcomers do not necessarily identify as Arab or adhere to the Islamic faith. This popular perception is likely due to the arrival of large numbers of Syrian refugee newcomers to Canada over the past several years. The widely publicized Syrian civil war and the subsequent migrant crisis triggered a wave of enthusiasm for refugee sponsorship (Labman, 2016, p. 75), which may have in turn contributed to this narrow perception of refugee newcomer identities. Thus, managing the expectations of the CPN members themselves represents an important element of the PSR program at ICA; encouraging member organizations to reflect on personal perceptions through ICA-led workshops and training sessions may serve to enhance service delivery and inclusivity.

6.5 Improved Program Delivery

Issues related to improved PSR program delivery and CPN frameworks were frequently raised by interview and focus group participants. This section outlines some common suggestions provided during these sessions.

As mentioned in Section 5.2.1, CPN member participants found their relationship with the ICA and other CPN members to be positive overall. Most indicated that CPN-focused training sessions, organized by the ICA, were important features of the program, and that they enabled members to establish connections with one another. Participants in all focus group sessions acknowledged the importance of ICA as a hub to connect community-based organizations with refugee newcomers. Several participants noted that the Community Development Coordinator

(and Manager of the CPN) is readily available to respond to inquiries, and is generally effective in providing supports to members. However, low staff capacity at ICA was often cited as a drawback, and a number of focus group participants indicated that the large membership of the CPN necessitates the management and support of more than one individual.

Connectivity was a theme that arose frequently in interview and focus group sessions. Many focus group participants suggested that the CPN increase connections directly with CGs and refugee newcomers. Interviewees who represented SAHs also emphasized that consistent connectivity and communication with CGs is vital to PSR programs. Several focus group participants proposed that an online information forum be created which would list programs and resources offered by CPN member organizations; it was suggested that the forum be accessible to CGs through the ICA's website, and would be maintained by the CPN. Participants added that a forum such as this would increase efficiencies by establishing a more direct link between the CPN and CGs.

The identification of sponsorship groups and CGs was highlighted as another aspect of improved program delivery. Several CPN member representatives indicated that they often do not know who the individuals are that make up sponsorship groups or CGs. Some participants suggested that the ICA provide a contact list of CG leaders so that CPN members might have a way of reaching out to these groups.

The use of reliable and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks was emphasized by many participants, particularly SAH representatives. Requesting regular status reports, conducting check-ups, and distributing feedback surveys were listed by participants as effective methods of monitoring the progress of CGs and the refugee newcomers they sponsor. For the ICA, establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework specifically designed to collect and analyze information from CPN members may serve to enhance the PSR program's impact. Although focus group participants did not comment explicitly on the creation of such a tool, CPN members would likely benefit from regular reports or feedback surveys to reflect on their own work with sponsorship groups and refugee newcomers.

6.6 Summary

This section has provided an in-depth exploration of the research findings, and their implications for the ICA's PSR program and the CPN. Discussion and analysis of interview and focus group session findings, along with context from the literature review, sheds light on the complexities surrounding the ICA's PSR program operation and the CPN's involvement in sponsorship and refugee newcomer integration processes.

A number of significant themes have emerged through this analysis. The integration of refugee newcomers appeared as a central theme throughout the literature and findings, demonstrating the similar underlying goals related to the activities of settlement organizations and the CPN. The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital emerged from the findings as another principal theme, encompassing communication (both within the CPN, and between the CPN and CGs), partnership development, and engaging less active CPN members. Building stronger connections, as well as creating new and innovative ones, were chief discussion points highlighted by the participants, and represent the crux of the research problem. The theme of managing expectations was also identified across the literature and findings, demonstrating the importance of ensuring that stakeholders are provided with sufficient information regarding their involvement in PSR-focused activities. Lastly, the theme of improved program delivery appeared throughout the research findings, as participants identified specific challenges related to program operation, and offered suggestions for program improvements.

The findings and analysis provided in the above sections will inform recommendations for the program to consider in the future. The next section will present these recommended strategies that address the ICA's desire to build program capacity and develop a stronger peer resource network.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

Since becoming a SAH, the ICA has faced a learning curve with regards to managing the needs and requirements of CGs, as well as addressing the complex internal mechanisms of the PSR program. In 2016, ICA proposed to use a developmental evaluation process to help strengthen its PSR program. As part of the evaluation, this research project sought to enhance the effectiveness of the ICA's relatively new PSR program by examining ways in which it can bolster organizational resources through existing community assets and networks found within the CPN.

The CPN currently consists of over 200 member organizations operating within both public and private sectors. A number of members have developed programs or activities to assist refugee newcomers in their settlement, and to provide resources for sponsorship groups to complete their work with sponsored individuals and families. Based on the information gathered from focus group sessions with CPN member representatives, semi-structured interviews with representatives of Canadian settlement and SAH organizations, and a review of relevant literature, the following recommendations outline strategies for leveraging these resources and creating efficiencies within the ICA's peer resource network.

The following recommendations are divided into short-term (within one year), medium-term (within 3 years), and longer term (3 years or more) strategies and are presented in order of priority. It is important to note that both the PSR program and the CPN are each managed by only one staff member, and therefore even the short and medium term strategies outlined below are likely to require substantial human and/or financial resources to implement. Long term recommendations are those that will require even greater resources, planning, and funding to implement.

7.2 Recommendations for Network Development

Recommendation 1.1 (medium term): The CPN should develop an online platform for CPN members to openly communicate with each other, and to share information regarding available resources. Ideally, the platform would be formulated and maintained by the Community Development Coordinator, and would be accessible to CPN members and ICA staff only. Establishing such a space will ensure CPN members are aware of resources offered, and will encourage CPN members to reach out to one another, thus fostering innovative partnership development.

Recommendation 1.2 (short term): The PSR program should provide CPN member representatives with contact information, or a list-serve, of CG leads. Doing this will enable CPN members to connect directly with CGs to share information and offer services. It should be noted, however, that the effectiveness of this particular strategy will depend on the willingness of CG leads to share contact information with the CPN.

Recommendation 1.3 (medium term): The ICA should develop strategies to engage less active, or dormant, CPN member organizations. For example, the ICA and the CPN could be more proactive in promoting the CPN through online materials and at ICA-led events. Active CPN members could use promotional materials and events to share experiences regarding their involvement with the CPN and any success stories related to their delivery of PSR-focused activities.

7.3 Recommendations for Enhanced Stakeholder and Resource Management

Recommendation 2.1 (short / medium term): To further enhance connections between the CPN and CGs, a database or forum should be developed by the ICA for CGs to list their needs, which CPN members could respond to directly. This would provide CGs with reliable and up-to-date sources of information regarding available services in the region, and would ease pressure on the ICA to provide this material.

Recommendation 2.2 (medium term): The PSR program should encourage and help facilitate CPN member agencies to deliver regular information sharing sessions to CGs. These sessions would be developed by CPN member organizations to share information regarding their programs and services, particularly those that target issues related to refugee newcomer integration. For example: faith-based organizations might facilitate information sessions about cultural and faith practices; employment-focused organizations might offer workshops centered around the training they offer; health agencies could deliver information sessions on how CGs can access appropriate health care for refugee newcomers; and local police departments might facilitate open dialogue to address concerns regarding legal issues and police interaction with newcomers.

Recommendation 2.3 (long term): The PSR program should facilitate regular CPN workshops and/or training sessions which focus on the needs and requirements of CGs. Delivering appropriate services to CGs requires that CPN members have an awareness of the challenges associated with the sponsorship process, and that they receive regular training on the rules and regulations concerning the private sponsorship of refugees. As part of this strategy, CPN

members could be invited to CG meetings with the ICA's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Manager.

Recommendation 2.4 (short term): Managers of both the PSR program and the CPN should be proactive in encouraging members of the CPN to create easily readable, succinct, and accessible program information packets for CGs. Materials could be translated into various languages, and could also offer strategies on how CGs can effectively impart information to the individuals and families they sponsor. The materials would ideally be offered in online and printed formats.

7.4 Recommendations for Improved Program Mechanisms

Recommendation 3.1 (long term): The PSR program should develop protocols for CPN members and other agencies, businesses, and institutions in the wider community to engage with CGs. Establishing official procedures for community-based organizations to follow when working with CGs will enable the PSR program to provide its stakeholders with consistency, and help to improve the program's overall structure.

Recommendation 3.2 (medium term): The ICA should develop uniform monitoring and evaluation frameworks for CPN members to track their own work with CGs and refugee newcomers. This will serve to generate consistent methods of tracking the progress of CPN-led activities that target individuals and families who are involved in the PSR program. As part of this strategy, the ICA should provide a mechanism for gathering regular feedback (such as a survey) from CPN members regarding their work with CGs and refugee newcomers. Collecting feedback from the CPN would provide staff with information that would allow for reflection on the effectiveness of CPN-led program activities and identification of areas for improvement.

Recommendation 3.3 (medium term): The ICA should increase collaboration with other settlement and SAH organizations in the region (such as the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society, and the Anglican Diocese of BC) to establish stronger support networks for CGs and refugee newcomers. Developing deeper partnerships with other Victoria-based settlement agencies will help to ensure CGs receive the most comprehensive services available for their work with refugee newcomers.

Recommendation 3.4 (medium term): Future research should be conducted into establishing deeper links between CGs and CPN members, as well as between CGs and non-CPN organizations in the wider community. Research should also involve the less active, or dormant, subset of CPN members, in order to increase engagement in the PSR program at ICA.

8.0 Conclusion

By becoming a Sponsorship Agreement Holder in 2015, the ICA has committed itself to provide services to CGs and sponsored refugee newcomers in the region. Through the resulting PSR program, ICA staff can assist groups of Canadians to sponsor individuals and families from other countries who are seeking a new home and respite from conflicts that are often life-threatening.

The relatively new PSR program at ICA has faced a learning curve, and has been met with a number of developmental challenges since its inception. Approximately one year following the launch of the PSR program, the ICA proposed a developmental evaluation to formulate strategies for program improvement and enhanced service delivery. As part of the broader developmental evaluation, this project sought to examine ways in which the program can bolster organizational resources through existing community assets and networks found within the CPN.

This project used a developmental evaluation approach to explore the resources and relationships that exist within the CPN, and to examine ways in which to leverage these resources to better assist CGs in their work with refugee newcomers. Another aim of the project was to offer strategies for program improvement through an investigation of smart practices used by other settlement and SAH organizations across Canada. The project did this through a review of current literature on relevant themes concerning refugee newcomer integration, private sponsorship, and the bonding and bridging of social capital. Gaps were identified in the body of literature, which were then addressed by the research. The project gathered primary data through CPN member focus groups and interviews with staff from SAH and settlement organizations. These methods allowed participants to share their experiences and provide insight into ways current services and networks can be strengthened.

The research findings were analyzed together with the reviewed literature to explore emergent themes, and recommendations were formed around the issues of network development, stakeholder and resource management, and enhanced program mechanisms. With respect to network development, the recommendations address the need to focus on intra-CPN and CPN-CG partnerships, as well as taking a proactive approach to engaging less active members. In the area of stakeholder and resource management, the recommendations encourage greater dialogue and information sharing between the PSR program and its stakeholders (i.e. CPN members and CGs), and amongst the stakeholders themselves. Lastly, the recommendations suggest the development of new program protocols and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, as well as encourage further collaborative activity with other settlement organizations in the region.

As acknowledged throughout this report, the research did not seek participation from organizations that are less active, or dormant, members of the CPN. Future research should address this limitation by targeting these particular members, exploring their understanding of the PSR program, and eliciting their perspectives on their roles as CPN members, as well as their

relationships with other members of the network. This further research would also serve to formulate strategies for engaging this particular group within the CPN. Another area for future study would be to conduct primary research (via focus group sessions or interviews) with refugee newcomers who are, or have previously been, sponsored by CGs. Such a project would enable the PSR program to further analyze the effectiveness of the CPN in relation to the refugee newcomers themselves.

This project has demonstrated that the PSR program at the ICA, although relatively young, has considerable peer resource networks to draw from, and is in a prime position for leveraging these networks to improve service delivery to its CGs. By focusing on strategies that enhance collaboration, facilitate information sharing, and improve internal program mechanisms, the ICA can ensure that the PSR program, together with the CPN, provide the most comprehensive services to refugee newcomers and the people who sponsor them.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Interview Questions

- 1) How long has your organization been a Sponsorship Agreement Holder?
- 2) How many constituent groups does your organization currently work with? What is the average size of the constituent groups?
- 2) What supports/resources does your organization provide to existing and prospective constituent groups?
- 3) Does your organization partner with any external businesses, agencies, institutions, etc. to help deliver the PSR program?
- 4) Does your organization have a system of connecting local businesses, agencies, institutions, etc. with constituent groups? If yes, can you explain how this works?
- 5) Based on your experience working within a privately sponsored refugee (PSR) program, what are some of the key needs/requirements of constituent groups in conducting effective work with refugees?
- 6) What are some significant challenges you have encountered in implementing your organization's PSR program?
- 7) What mechanisms are in place for your organization to monitor and evaluate the PSR program?
- 8) Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B:

Focus Group Questions

1. What is your understanding of the ICA's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program? Provide explanation to participants who have limited knowledge of the PSR program.
2. a. Has your organization had any previous experience interacting with any refugee sponsorship groups? Interacting with newcomers?

b. If yes, in what way(s) have you interacted with refugee sponsorship groups or refugee newcomers? What worked well, what could have been improved?
3. What type of publicly accessible resources are available through your organization?
4. What are some ways you think your organization can assist refugee sponsorship groups in their work with refugee newcomers?

Some possible examples to guide the participant:

- Workshops
- Technical support
- Meeting space
- Logistical support (e.g. assistance with application forms)
- Employment
- Other

5. What are some ways your organization might connect with other businesses, agencies, institutions, etc. in the Greater Victoria region to assist refugee sponsorship groups in their work?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add/discuss?

Appendix C:

Interview Recruitment Script – Email

Dear <<participant's name>>:

My name is Alex Norfolk and I am a Master's student in the Community Development program at the University of Victoria. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study concerning the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. This study will focus on improving the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA). The study will be conducted by myself, and will constitute the capstone project for my Master's degree.

I am writing to ask if you would be interested in contributing to this study through a phone interview with me, the researcher. The interview questions will be about your organization's refugee sponsorship program with an aim to develop a catalogue of smart practices. If you agree to participate, the information you share will only be seen by staff at the ICA, various sponsorship groups in Victoria, and certain members of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria.

Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in this study. If you would like further information regarding this study, please contact me, Alex Norfolk, at: anorfolk8@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Alex Norfolk

Appendix D:

Focus Group Recruitment Script – Email

Dear <<participant's name>>:

My name is Alex Norfolk and I am a Master's student in the Community Development program at the University of Victoria. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study concerning the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada. This study will focus on improving the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA). The study will be conducted by myself, and will constitute the capstone project for my Master's degree.

I am writing to ask if you would be interested in contributing to this study by participating in a focus group session led by me, the researcher. During the focus group session, we will discuss ways in which local businesses/organizations/agencies like yours can provide more effective assistance to sponsorship groups in the area. If you agree to participate, the information you share will only be seen by staff at the ICA and certain members of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria.

Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in this study. If you would like further information regarding this study, please contact me, Alex Norfolk, at: anorfolk8@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Alex Norfolk

Appendix E:

Interview Participant Consent Form



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Establishing a stronger peer resource network for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

You are invited to participate in a study entitled 'Establishing a stronger peer resource network for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria' that is being conducted by Alex Norfolk.

Alex Norfolk is a graduate student in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at: anorfolk8@gmail.com

As a graduate student, Alex is required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Community Development. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact Dr. Speers at kspeers@uvic.ca.

This study is also being conducted for a client. The client for this study is Dr. Sabine Lehr, Private Sponsorship of Refugees Manager at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria.

Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this research will be to conduct a developmental evaluation to identify ways to improve the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA).

The primary research question to be addressed by this project is:

- How can the ICA leverage existing community resources to assist sponsorship groups in their work with privately sponsored refugees?

Importance of this Research

The team at ICA has identified a need for investigation into how community resources can be effectively leveraged to increase program capacity. Research of this type is important because the delivery of holistic and targeted supports to refugee sponsorship groups will help to create a stronger, more resilient, integrated, and engaged community of newcomers.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because your organization implements a Private Sponsorship of Refugees program.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will consist of a one (1) hour phone interview with the researcher. Audio-tapes will be used and hand-written notes will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you. The phone interview is likely to be conducted on a weekday, and therefore could potentially disrupt your work schedule.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

Your participation in this research is expected to contribute to the state of knowledge surrounding the subject. Information gathered from participants via interviews is expected to assist the researcher in developing a catalogue of smart practices used by Private Sponsorship of Refugees programs in Canada.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used only if you give permission for this.

Anonymity

There will be limitations to protecting your anonymity during this study. In disseminating the results of the study, the researcher will refer to individual participants only by their position title and the organization they work with. Although individuals will not be named in the dissemination of the results, given names are often publicly accessible through organization websites.

Confidentiality

There will be limitations to protecting your confidentiality during this study. Interview participants will be contacted personally by the researcher. The nature of this activity limits the researcher's ability to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

A full report will be disseminated to project participants, the client, and other designated staff at the ICA. The report will also be made available to various Victoria-based sponsorship groups.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in two (2) years following the completion of the project. Electronic files will be deleted, and transcripts/notes will be shredded.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:

- Alex Norfolk (researcher): anorfolk8@gmail.com
- Dr. Sabine Lehr (client): slehr@icavictoria.org
- Dr. Kimberly Speers (supervisor): kspeers@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix F:

Focus Group Participant Consent Form



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Establishing a stronger peer resource network for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

You are invited to participate in a study entitled 'Establishing a stronger peer resource network for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria' that is being conducted by Alex Norfolk.

Alex Norfolk is a graduate student in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at: anorfolk8@gmail.com

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Community Development. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly Speers. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-8057.

This study is also being conducted for a client. The client for this study is Dr. Sabine Lehr, Private Sponsorship of Refugees Manager at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria.

Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this research will be to conduct a developmental evaluation to identify ways to improve the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA).

The primary research question to be addressed by this project is:

- How can the ICA leverage existing community resources to assist sponsorship groups in their work with privately sponsored refugees?

Importance of this Research

The team at ICA has identified a need for investigation into how community resources can be effectively leveraged to increase program capacity. Research of this type is important because the delivery of holistic and targeted supports to refugee sponsorship groups will help to create a stronger, more resilient, integrated, and engaged community of newcomers.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because your organization is an active member of the Community Partnership Network led by the ICA. Your inclusion in this study will assist us in gathering a comprehensive

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will consist of a 1.5 to 2-hour focus group session to be held at the ICA office building, located at 930 Balmoral Road, Victoria, BC. Audio-tapes will be used and hand-written notes will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you. The focus group session is likely to be held on a weekday, and therefore could potentially disrupt your work schedule.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

Your participation in this research is expected to bring benefits to society in general, and contribute to the state of knowledge surrounding the subject.

Information gathered from participants via focus groups is expected to assist sponsorship groups in accessing resources for their work with refugees. This will in turn help to provide refugees with the supports they need to integrate and become active and engaged members of society.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used only if you give permission for this.

Anonymity

There will be limitations to protecting your anonymity during this study. Because participants are drawn from a pre-existing list of CPN members, and will participate in focus groups sessions in person, it will not be possible to ensure anonymity.

In disseminating the results of the study, the researcher will refer to individual participants only by their position title and the organization they work with. Although individuals will not be named in the dissemination of the results, given names are often publicly accessible through organization websites.

Confidentiality

There will be limitations to protecting your confidentiality during this study. Participants are drawn from a pre-existing list of CPN members, and will participate in focus groups sessions in person. The nature of this activity thus limits the researcher's ability to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways:

A full report will be disseminated to project participants, the client, and other designated staff at the ICA. The report will also be made available to various Victoria-based sponsorship groups.

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Data from this study will be disposed of in two (2) years following the completion of the project. Electronic files will be deleted, and transcripts/notes will be shredded.

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- Alex Norfolk (researcher): anorfolk8@gmail.com
- Dr. Sabine Lehr (client): slehr@icavictoria.org
- Dr. Kimberly Speers (supervisor): kspeers@uvic.ca

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.