



**Framework for
Modernized
Settlement in
Practice:**

The OCASI Vision

September 2010

Summary

The Modernized Approach to Settlement is reportedly driven by the federal government's desire to improve immigrant settlement outcomes. Currently under implementation by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), it is said to be the result of the following two key changes: increased program funding for immigrant settlement and a renewed vision on how settlement services can be delivered through a new set of terms and conditionsⁱ.

This approach includes some adjustments that have the potential to address long-standing OCASI concerns about eliminating the duplication of administrative processes, and to demonstrate a commitment to transparent and accountable decision-makingⁱⁱ.

The recent increase in settlement funding particularly in Ontarioⁱⁱⁱ has attracted keen interest in providing immigrant settlement services from a large variety of non-traditional and new players. Years of under-funding prior to that had left mostly community-based non-profit organizations to form the core of the immigrant and refugee-serving sector. Unsurprisingly many, if not most sector organizations view the new entrants' motives, values and practices vis-à-vis immigrant service delivery, with a certain amount of skepticism.

The combination of funder-driven programming changes and the entrance of new players into this dynamic new environment, particularly those that may operate on different values and principles, can present a threat to organizations that have historically received CIC funds to deliver immigrant settlement services. But these organizations as well as community-based organizations that have provided settlement services with other sources of funding, have relevant and valuable expertise, experience, and community-credibility. These are factors that will allow them, if they choose, to assert legitimate leadership in this context.

OCASI sees this moment as an opportunity for the sector to clearly articulate the values and principles that are central to immigrant settlement service programs and service delivery, and expectations of each other, of funders, and of external stakeholders. This paper presents OCASI's vision for the implementation of the Modernized settlement approach.

Introduction

The immigrant and refugee-serving sector, different levels of government, stakeholders such as the Canadian Labour Congress, the Conference Board of Canada, and various respected private sector

corporations such as the TD Bank all agree that investing in immigrant settlement and integration is essential for Canada's long-term prospects. They recognize that economic integration is critical to the social and political integration of immigrants. Politicians and government officials are faced with balancing these realities with the sometimes negative public perception of immigrants, and public backlash based on misconceptions (sometimes created by politicians) about government funding for immigrant-focused services.

In 2006, the Government of Canada increased the national budget for immigrant settlement and integration, including funds for the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA)^{iv}. In response to requirements in the Federal Accountability Act and Action Plan^v and recommendations from the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions,^{vi} CIC introduced new terms and conditions in 2008 for contribution agreements. The significant increase in settlement funding could be seen as an effort to compensate for more than ten years of under-funding. It came with a heightened awareness among decision-makers that they would have to demonstrate accountability for how these funds were being spent.

The recent immigrant settlement program makeover was thus subject to external drivers, such as a desire to demonstrate *accountability* (loosely understood as transparency in decision-making, oversight and reporting) to the voting public, as well as a genuine desire to improve settlement outcomes for immigrants and reduce the administrative burden on funded organizations by eliminating duplication of at least some administrative processes.

With the current round of adjustments, CIC has said it wants to reduce, if not eliminate, program silos and bring greater transparency, flexibility and fairness in decision-making and administration. The Department has also said it intends to bring in more players, including those that have traditionally not been funded to provide services. These announcements have fuelled sector organizations' various expectations of the Modernized approach. They include the expectation that funding would be extended to community-based immigrant-serving organizations that have previously not received CIC funds, and that services would feature client-centered programming where the service model is derived from real-life needs, and is not limited by factors such as immigration status.

Over the years, the sector has contended with the contradictions that are inherent to engagement with different levels of decision makers in government funding bodies, particularly the federal government. Higher level decision-makers at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the primary funder for immigrant settlement services, have expressed a commitment to the values of transparency, flexibility

and fairness. They have indicated that they are open to working with sector organizations to build a client-centered approach to immigrant settlement program design and service delivery, including implementing recommendations from the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions^{vii}. But funding-related administrative decisions are typically made by frontline CIC staff, and they have not always been consistent with the management message. For example, frontline CIC Program Officers have often contested the real cost of service delivery presented in funding proposals and in expense claims for CIC-funded programs, while senior managers have expressed willingness to recognize and fully reimburse the same costs.

This context informs OCASI expectations of CIC's *Modernizing Settlement*, the most recent attempt to re-organize immigrant settlement programs.

Modernized Approach

The Modernized Settlement initiative resulted from the increased funding for settlement programs and a “renewed vision on how settlement services can be delivered through a new set of terms and conditions”^{viii}. The framework is constructed as an outcome-based approach that intends to group activities from separate streams such as LINC, ISAP and HOST into one settlement program, reportedly to increase efficiency, and eliminate program silos and duplicated administrative effort for CIC and for organizations contracted to deliver services. Organizations would be able to provide a range of services both general and specialized, but grouped within a single contribution agreement if they so choose.

The new framework is reportedly intended among other things to provide greater flexibility and innovation in the design and delivery of services, something that the sector has sought for years. It is also intended to improve planning and assessment activities based on local need, strengthen accountability and improve outcomes for newcomers. Since the CIC mandate and scope remains unchanged, eligibility for CIC programs and services will remain the same except for the inclusion of applicants in Canada or overseas who have been informed by letter from CIC that they have been selected to become permanent residents pending medical, security and criminal checks. Refugee claimants and non-status migrants such as the growing population of temporary foreign workers will not be able to access most CIC-funded services^{ix}.

CIC National Headquarters reportedly planned a smooth transition and implementation of the Modernized approach, by providing training and support for their own staff and for the sector, and by extending current contribution agreements to 2010-11. The Ontario Region also expected to issue a new

Call for Proposals (CFP) in Winter 2010 that would be based on the new approach^x. However, the region issued a CFP in March 2010 with a May deadline, later extended to June 2010. Contract negotiations are expected to begin in Fall 2010.

New Entrants

In Ontario, following the significant increase in settlement funding, a variety of new players became interested delivering settlement services and in approaching CIC for funding. The players ranged from large public institutions in municipal government, health and education sectors, non-profits and corporations from other areas of the human services sector, and private consultants and businesses (ie. for-profit language schools).

This breadth of interest was also evident in the diversity of participants who attended information sessions in May 2010, on the first Modernized Settlement Call For Proposals (CFP) issued by CIC Ontario Region. In addition to sector organizations participants ranged from individuals and groups with a strong history of working with newly arrived immigrants and immigrant communities, but that have never received funding from CIC; consultants and businesses with some awareness of immigrant settlement services but with no experience in working with these populations; community service organizations that had not previously made the effort to make their services accessible to newcomers but that were nevertheless seeing a large number of immigrant service-users; representatives from school boards, municipalities, hospitals, college, universities; and a broad variety of provincial umbrella organizations including sports associations.

Sector organizations hold vastly different views regarding the entry of new players. Organizations that have worked closely with external stakeholders have found the experience stimulating, challenging, collegial and occasionally frustrating. Many on both sides agree that they are engaged in an ongoing learning process, and that these relationships can be strengthened with continued engagement with each other. The following are some of the main responses expressed by sector organizations at OCASI discussions and events:

- Genuine excitement at the potential for new opportunities for collaborations, such as partnerships, that will allow organizations to pool their best ideas, skills and experience to proactively develop new synergies;

- Cautious optimism that services hitherto perceived as ‘mainstream’ and often closed to an understanding of newcomer needs will become more sensitized, and develop equitable service access;
- Cautious anticipation that ‘mainstream’ organizations would be transformed at many levels such as staffing, and the level of leadership and governance;
- Cautious optimism that the new entrants, particularly large public institutions could generally improve sector-funder relations through bringing new and different experiences with federal and other funders;
- Mistrust of external applicants, based on the perception that they are only interested in the increased funding now available for settlement services, and that they would be driven by a profit motive or values that could make them insensitive to client needs;
- Pessimism that the sector expertise would be under-valued and overlooked by funders, who are perceived to value, and lean heavily towards organizations with strong and more stable infrastructure (which are typically established and sustained through support from other funders), such as large public institutions;
- Deep pessimism that as large public institutions are funded for direct service delivery, that their competitive salaries would draw experienced settlement workers away from the sector.
- Genuine alarm that the increase in funding for new providers will be at the expense of traditional ones.

Sector organizations may take one or all of these positions, and their views may change over time. At present however, there is a greater tendency towards caution. Many have adopted a ‘wait and see’ approach, sometimes expressed clumsily through an exclusionary response to any overture from a new player. A participant at a recent CIC information session on the new CFP expressed frustration that as an external consultant, he was finding it impossible to even begin a conversation with sector organizations about working collaboratively. Other external stakeholders have periodically worked closely with sector organizations and expressed excitement at being able to learn from them through new collaborations to serve immigrants.

The Modernized framework is being implemented at the same time that the Governments of Canada and Ontario are set to renew and possibly re-negotiate the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), an exercise that would likely be influenced by national and provincial politics and fiscal considerations

that have very little to do with immigrant settlement and integration. Political considerations and a post-recession economy may therefore have some impact on the shape of things to come vis-à-vis settlement programming and service delivery.

Implementation

The following is OCASI's vision for implementing the Modernized framework:

- a. CIC and Sector representatives agree on a shared vision of immigration as a means to nation-building, and are committed to a meaningful and ongoing relationship to reaffirm the vision.
- b. Settlement policy and programming are informed by a commitment to build an equitable and inclusive Canada in which immigrants and refugees are full and equal participants in the nation-building project.
- c. Immigrant settlement and integration services are delivered by entities that have the requisite expertise, and attachment to immigrant communities.
- d. Immigrant settlement and integration service delivery is client-centered, and is informed by the principles of equity and inclusion.
- e. Relations among sector organizations, and between them and new players engaged in immigrant settlement service delivery are grounded in the principles of equity and inclusion.
- f. The Ontario government invests provincial funds in immigrant settlement and integration, allowing the province to assert a strong presence and leadership in this area. It will also allow the province to demonstrate commitment to a client-centered approach, whereby every individual that requires immigrant settlement and integration services can access it without regard to residence status in Canada.
- g. CIC and organizations providing immigrant settlement services have a shared agreement on an implementation plan, and shared understanding of principles that would guide the process. The principles would be derived from the recommendations outlined by the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions^{xi} and from the Code of Good Practice on Funding^{xii}. CIC should particularly demonstrate a commitment to transparency as follows:
 - Report on the total amount of funding available each year;

- Share the “funding allocation model” used for decision-making (including but not limited to regional allocation, client base, program priorities, outcomes); and
 - Provide a breakdown of how the funding was allocated (by priority and by region).
- h. A shared understanding of fair and efficient practices that should include, but are not limited to the following:
- CIC establishes common standards across Ontario for assessing proposals submitted in response to the Modernized Framework CFP; regional variation will exist within those standards to respond to unique regional needs; each Regional office will maintain consistency within its own process for selection, negotiation and monitoring of contribution agreements.
 - Protect effective programming that result in positive outcomes for immigrants and refugees, such as LINC, SWIS and others, while clearly moving away from service silos.
 - Agree on a percentage for administrative costs and allow Contribution Agreement holders to manage the overhead/administration budget, instead of approaching this on a line-by-line basis. This would be particularly useful for organizations that currently have multiple contribution agreements and that can expect to see one massive budget as a result of one consolidated agreement. CIC would satisfy internal accountability requirements by conducting audit/financial monitoring.
 - Agencies with more than one Contribution Agreement would be allowed to move slippage from one contract to another where necessary, and subject to prior approval from CIC.
 - CIC has invested in the sector, resulting in enhanced sector knowledge and expertise. CIC should access this expertise on an ongoing basis through a joint CIC-Sector Committee that would review new projects and program proposals with a view to guiding broader policy and program decisions.

Conclusion

CIC has made considerable resource investment in the sector since the inception of ISAP, but particularly over the past five years, resulting in enhanced sector knowledge and expertise. In fact, the growth and professionalization of the sector is one of the explicit goals of COIA that has been met to-date^{xiii}. The Department has also relied on sector expertise and insight in a collegial environment, contributing to improving outcomes for immigrant settlement and integration.

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship (MCI) has likewise invested in the sector over several years, supporting the development of expertise to address critical gaps in settlement programming particularly those resulting from eligibility criteria restrictions. Small as they are, MCI funds have helped the sector to reaffirm a commitment to equitable service delivery and an inclusive vision of settlement and integration. This experience would be useful in realizing the full promise of the Modernized approach to settlement.

Unlike other federal departments, CIC has a strong attachment to the sector, and through sector organizations to immigrant and refugee communities. The sector is clearly an ally in federal government efforts to realize the vision of nation-building through immigration. This would require meaningful and sustained investment in the sector by the federal government, including a financial commitment and a willingness to engage with the sector as an equitable stakeholder in implementing a shared vision for Canada.

ⁱ Smith, Adrienne. *CIC's Modernized Approach to Settlement Programming: A Brief Description*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, February 2010.

ⁱⁱ *Management Accountability Framework*. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Canada's new government delivers on \$307 million in settlement funding". Citizenship and Immigration Canada News Release, November 10, 2006.

^{iv} The Agreement was signed in November 2005, and was resourced at \$925 million over 5 years.

^v *Federal Accountability Act*. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. April 11, 2006.

^{vi} *From Red Tape To Clear Results: The Report of the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contribution Programs*. Treasury Board of Canada. December 2006.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Smith, Adrienne. *CIC's Modernized Approach to Settlement Programming: A Brief Description*. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, February 2010.

^{ix} They will continue to have access to information and referral, such as the in-person services provided by workers situated in public institutions and web-based services such as Settlement.Org and Etablissement.Org.

^x CIC Ontario e-News - December 2009 - Volume 1, Issue 6.

^{xi} Report of the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contribution Programs.

^{xii} *Code of Good Practice on Funding*. Voluntary Sector Initiative, October 2002.

^{xiii} Seidle, F. Leslie. *The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement: Assessment and Options for Renewal*. Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation. May 2010.