



COMMUNITY
SETTLEMENT
INITIATIVE

MODEL & RESULTS

MARCH 2021



SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement Services are case-management and program offerings that support the positive resettlement and integration of immigrants into Canada's communities and workplaces.

Settlement services are offered by NGO's referred to as Settlement Agencies.

Settlement Agencies are funded by the Government to offer programs and support to eligible immigrants living in the area.

Traditionally, settlement agencies are found in densely populated urban areas with many recent newcomers to Canada.

Settlement services are often delivered in a centralized model where the client is expected to reach the agency to receive services.

Settlement agencies maintain their funding amounts by upholding client targets made possible by accessing a pre-existing population of immigrants.



THE RURAL REALITY

How will smaller communities and rural regions with widespread geography fit into the traditional model for settlement service delivery?

Reality: settlement agencies do not exist in rural areas. Why?

BARRIERS

EFFECT

Low recent immigration	Low Demand for localized services
No Public Transportation	Limited accessibility without robust social capital
Distance between small cities and towns	Considerable time commitment as disincentive and barrier to participation
Isolation and lack of awareness	Little knowledge of where to go for help, no service achieved
Individual town service capacity	Pockets of strengths , imbalance of service capacity and outcomes

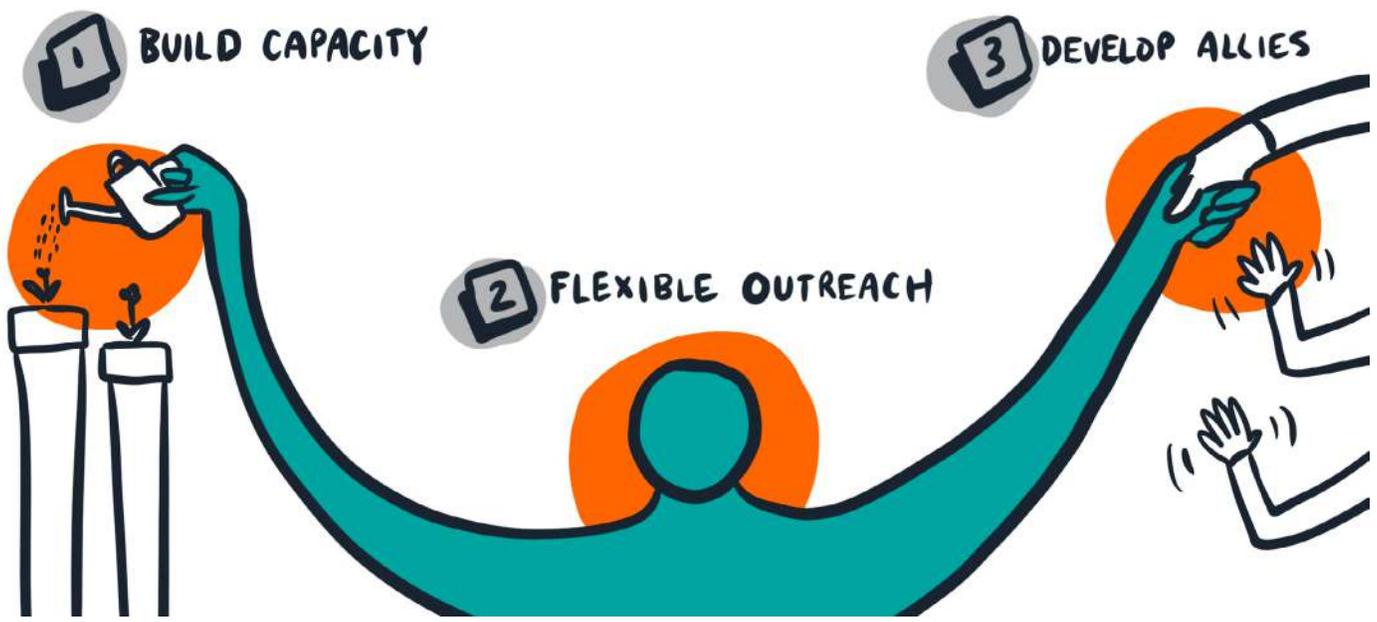
NEWCOMERS TOLD US

Newcomers told us that when they do become aware of public services locally, they are referred out in an endless cycle or end up referred to Ottawa for help.

How does that impact rural regions?

- Newcomers living here rely solely on social capital, if they can access it.
- Local public services refer out and so miss opportunities to engage with newcomers.
- Newcomers referred to Ottawa often migrate there due to the accessible and relevant supports.
- Recent immigrants are not attracted to or retained in the area.
- Diversity and cultural sharing becomes very limited.





WE PROPOSED A SOLUTION

1. Focus on building the capacity of non-settlement community actors to contribute meaningfully to the settlement and integration process.
2. Decentralize that effort in an outreach model where flexible ways to participate are offered and well supported by Settlement Coaches and trainers.
3. Develop a network of allies in the rural region who share:

Capacity

Resources

Expertise

Connections

and a willingness to learn.

THE COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT INITIATIVE MODEL BY RENFREW AND LANARK COUNTIES

We aimed to support newcomers indirectly by serving three distinct ally groups.

- Employers
- Service Providers
- Community Groups

Within these three groups, we worked with clients such as individuals, leaders, organizations, neighbours, teams and students.

We called our clients “allies.”

We offered three tiers of engagement with highly trained settlement coaches:



We began with a baseline assessment.

For grouped sessions, we asked questions about the problems they face as a group, topics of interest, and objectives for growth and improvement.

For individual sessions, we developed and deployed the AASK framework. The AASK Grid helped the settlement coach to form a strategy for intervention.

AASK FRAMEWORK

Attitudes about Newcomers.

Awareness of their unique needs.

Skills to serve those unique needs.

Knowledge of other services and resources to help.

Each individual ally was measured on a 1-6 spectrum in each of the four areas through interview and analysis. We also added a bias monitoring step to the assessment and conclusion-drawing process in a team format.

Our interventions and trainings demonstrated effectiveness for the following reasons:

1. We always expressed a “come as you are” co-development lens to the work.
2. We recognized that everyone has a different baseline capacity, and that’s okay.
3. We identified and tackled the root causes of issues rather than focusing on symptoms.
4. We addressed bias and privilege more often than any other topics, recognizing self-awareness as a critical first step in interpersonal change.
5. We made it fun and dynamic with innovative facilitation and delivery of material.
6. We nurtured the allies by staying in touch, offering support and genuinely listening to them.
7. We did it in teams of Settlement Coaches and Inclusion Trainers to ensure a collaborative and diverse approach to the work.

WHAT DID OUR CLIENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES?

“Really cleared up the concept of privilege and bias for me. Having that knowledge about our ‘lens’ will help when considering policy and practice. Hope to help remove barriers to our residents so everyone feels included.”

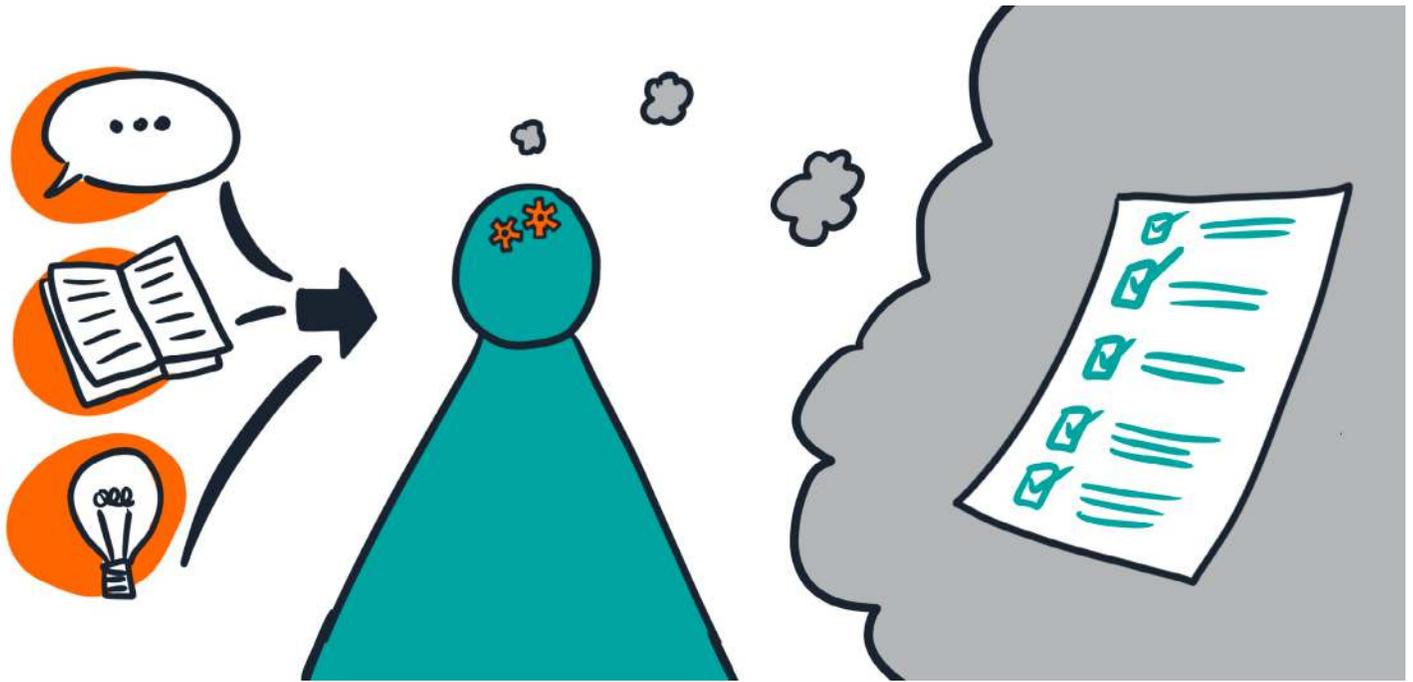
“I have become far more aware of the struggles faced by BIPOC and even more aware of how little I understand of their struggles. As a result, I feel that I am better able to welcome, interact with, and work with recent immigrants.”

“I am always interested in learning and building on my skill set to better serve the community I live in. Whether I am working with the public in my position or not, the tools and knowledge that your service has provided are vital in any capacity, even if it’s just teaching me to be a better human.”

“The training provided further insight into how best to serve newcomers. Having staff develop increased understandings of the needs of newcomers, as well as their challenges, has allowed us to modify our delivery in order to better meet their needs.”

“I never really understood what a bias was before. I am finding this bias in my life every single day. I am so comfortable with what I am familiar with that I never questioned it. I am now so much more aware of those gut reactions and how unreal they can be!”

“Loved the anti-oppressive framework. EVERYONE is important, everyone matters.”



WHAT WE LEARNED

Allies are willing to contribute to positive settlement outcomes, they simply lack the lived experience and capacity to do so.

Broad participation in settlement outcomes transfers the ownership of the integration journey to the community itself, rather than one singular agency.

By impacting the people who uphold exclusionary systems through interpersonal change and co-development, the system can shift as a whole.

A decentralized outreach service model dramatically improved participation and building pools of shared capacity across the region.

Individual agencies reported a sense of relief to have accessible expertise who also had local context.

Rural communities and the newcomers who wish to live there deserve access to the capacity they want and need to be successful as they desire.

We recommend that all smaller communities consider investing in a program model of this nature, not only for long range economic prosperity but to enrich the social fabric of rural regions with the gift of diversity.