Evaluation Report – Newcomer Peer Leadership Model

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Introduction

The YWCA reports that nearly 10 000 people immigrated to Nova Scotia in 2016 and 2017. The organization has worked with over 700 Newcomer women and their families and the need for settlement and non-settlement services continues to grow each year. Based on their work with Newcomer women and their families, the YWCA has learned that Newcomers often use informal networks of communication and resource sharing. This learning provides the basis for the Newcomer Peer Leadership Model program called *Experts by Experience (EX2).*

EX2 provides an innovative opportunity for Newcomer women to use their skills and motivation to provide important information to other Newcomer women to help them begin their lives in Nova Scotia. The peer-led model enhances delivery of services currently being provided to Newcomer women while increasing the capacity of the Newcomer Peer Leaders (NPL).

In 2018, the YWCA received funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to pilot *EX2* for a period of three years. As part of the funding, the YWCA was required to evaluate the project. The author of this report was invited to conduct the evaluation.

This report describes a summative evaluation of the peer leader model of service delivery (*EX2*). It assess whether the project did what it set out to do and met its intended outcomes. The evaluation relies on interviews with the Project Coordinator, Program Manager, NPLs, and Newcomer Women who participated in the program.

Project Description

The overall objectives of the project are to develop a model of service delivery based on peer support to enhance settlement services for Newcomer women and to build capacity of NPLs and Newcomer women receiving services. The project seeks to determine if a settlement service program model that is researched, designed, and delivered by newcomer women to other newcomer women can enhance current settlement programming available for Newcomer women.

Working with Newcomer women, the program offers a model of service delivery in which Newcomer women deliver educational workshop and individual guidance on topics related to settlement to other Newcomer women to support wellbeing. The program will provide training on financial literacy and pre-employment skills to address the positive economic integration of Newcomers which is key to their well-being. Other settlement topics include entrepreneurship, employment readiness, labour market entry, and financial literacy. Ongoing adjustments are made based on feedback gathered by participants during focus groups and surveys. Focus groups are held every three months and are facilitated by NPLs. Participants are invited to complete a feedback survey following each workshop or one-on-one session.

Participant eligibility criteria is based on IRCC's definition of 'newcomer' in the call for proposals from 2019. A newcomer is an immigrant or refugee who is adapting to life in Canada. The definition is not defined by a specific period of time but rather recognizes the ongoing

process of adaptation to Canada. The IRCC suggests that once an individual gets their Canadian citizenship, they are no longer considered a newcomer.

Theory of Change

Logic models provide a description of what a project does and how the project activities produce the intended outcomes. They also describe changes that project developers and stakeholders hope to produce and how the activities relate to those changes; this is the theory of change. The theory of change explains why it may be reasonable to think that the program will have the intended effects. The project's theory of change provides the assumptions on which this project was conceived. The evaluation work has contributed to an emergent theory of changed which is described in detail in a later section.

- The model of service delivery based on **peer support** to enhance current service delivery as well as build capacity of Newcomer women
- Newcomers already use an informal network of support to navigate services and so developing a **formal peer-based method of service delivery** provides an opportunity to develop best practices and provide support and structure to this informal network
- Peer-based service delivery provides a level of **flexibility** making it an effective approach to service provision to individuals with complex and diverse experiences and needs. As the NPL model provides an opportunity for service delivery to be individualized and flexible, NPLs can create an environment that is able to be sensitive to the unique needs of each client.
- Peer-based service delivery allowed for an **individualized approach** to working with participants. Newcomers are not a homogeneous group; Newcomers come to Canada for diverse reasons from many places and cultures. This diversity must be integrated into how services are delivered to ensure they are relevant. Rather than simply delivering information, the NPLs provide knowledge and skills in a contextual manner, while prioritizing the individual needs of participants and providing support
- Programs and services for and about women should be delivered by women, adopting a **gender lens**. This project embodies this value by supporting the development of Newcomer women's capacity to support other Newcomer women by providing opportunities to participate in information gathering (e.g., focus groups) that will be used to develop and refine the model; user-led and generated research. NPLs receive Core Capacity training on research and evaluation activities as to guide the development of the model. Further, the training provides skill development which can be used in future employment beyond the project. The emphasis on Newcomer women leading the development of this model aligns with this priority, as it addresses an absence of user-led and generated research which we know is integral to delivering services from a gender lens.

Project Logic Model

A logic model includes several linked columns: activities (resources that go into a project), outputs (products of the project), outcomes (changes that will result from the project) and long-term impacts. The Logic Model for *NPL* project is included below. It was developed by this writer in consultation with project staff. It includes information from the project proposal and additional information from project staff.

Activity		Output		Short Term Outcome		Long Term Outcomes
Staffing (1 coordinator, 4 NPLs)		1 Coordinator and 4 NPL positions staffed		Program development, management and governance effectively support consistent and responsive program delivery		
Training of NPLs (including Core Capacity Development)		Training program developed and delivered to project staff		Provision of settlement services is consistent, innovative and coordinated Increased capacity of NPLS to deliver on the project Increased capacity of NPLs (increased knowledge, skills, and career building opportunities for Newcomer women as NPLs)		The NPL's would have garnered more Canadian skills, references and resources for future employment
Workshop content developed		Workshop content and delivery aids developed with input from NPLs		Settlement and non-settlement services are responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities Content refined on an ongoing basis that responds to changing needs of newcomers		
Evaluation tool development		Work plan and logic model developed, research and evaluation tools developed, best practices determined Performance assessment		The evaluation tools support the development of the project and shareable resource. The NPLs have increased skills in evaluation practices		
Focus groups delivered		Conduct 15 focus groups throughout the project with a total of 90 consultants. The consultants' feedback informs further development of the model		Final model and shareable resource informed by consultants' feedback		

Workshops delivered	→	Delivery of workshops to newcomers by NPLs (104)	→	Increased financial literacy and employment knowledge and skills for Newcomer women Increased knowledge of life in Canada	→	Clients participate in local labour markets, broader communities and social networks Clients make informed decisions about life in Canada, enjoy rights and act on their responsibilities in Canadian society
Resource design and development	→	Development of a shareable NPL Program Resource Guide based on peer support which includes shareable and scale-able tools	→	Benefit other settlement organizations and those community-based organizations that work with newcomers	→	

Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix below shows each activity, output, and outcome from the logic model. It includes indicators (what are we looking for?), data sources (where did we look?), target numbers where applicable, and research methods (how we looked). I used the evaluation matrix to guide the development of interview guides to ensure that all questions related to activities, outputs, and outcomes were addressed by the evaluation.

Activities	**Indicator**	**Target**	**Data Source**	**Method**
Staffing (1 coordinator, 4 NPLs)	Staff hired	1 coordinator, 4 NPLS	Narrative reports	Document review
Training of NPLs (including Core Capacity Development)	Staff trained		Program coordinator, narrative reports	Interview, document review
Workshop content developed	Workshop material		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Evaluation tool development	Evaluation tool		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Focus groups delivered	Focus groups took place		Narrative reports	Document review
Workshops delivered	Workshops took place		Narrative reports	Document review
Resource design and development	Resources designed and developed		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Outputs				
1 Coordinator and 4 NPL positions staffed	Staff hired	1 coordinator, 4 NPLS	Narrative reports	Document review
Training program developed and delivered to project staff	Staff trained		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Workshop content and delivery aids developed with input from NPLs	Content developed with input from NPLs		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Work plan and logic model developed, research and evaluation tools developed, best practices determined	Work plan, logic model, research and evaluation tools, best practices		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Conduct 15 focus groups throughout the project with a total of 90 consultants. The consultants' feedback informs further development of the model	Focus groups took place	15 focus groups with 90 consultants	Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review
Delivery of workshops to newcomers by NPLs (104)	Workshops took place	104 newcomers	Narrative reports	Document review
Development of a shareable NPL Program Resource Guide based on peer support which includes shareable and scale-able tools	Shareable NPL Program Resource Guide		Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review
Outcomes				

Program development, management and governance effectively support consistent and responsive program delivery	Ongoing evaluation including NPLs conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews throughout the project with participants, the feedback for which will be immediately integrated into the SIS sessions/Program coordinator and NPLs meet on regular basis to analyze feedback and amend session based on feedback	80% high level of satisfaction and skill achievement	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Provision of settlement services is consistent, innovative and coordinated	Consistent, innovative, coordinated settlement services		Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Increased capacity of NPLS to deliver on the project	Increased capacity of NPLs		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interview
Increased capacity of NPLs (increased knowledge, skills, and career building opportunities for Newcomer women as NPLs)	Increased capacity of NPLs		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Settlement and non-settlement services are responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities	Services responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities		Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Content refined on an ongoing basis that responds to changing needs of newcomers	Content responds to changing needs of newcomers		Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
The evaluation tools support the development of the project and shareable resource.	Shareable NPL Program Resource Guide		Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review
The NPLs have increased skills in evaluation practices	NPLs evaluation skills		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Final model and shareable resource informed by consultants' feedback	Consultants' feedback informs resources and model		Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review
Increased financial literacy and employment knowledge and skills for Newcomer women	Increased literacy and skills for newcomer women		NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Increased knowledge of life in Canada	Knowledge of life in Canada		NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Benefit other settlement organizations and those community-based organizations that work with newcomers	Benefit to other organizations		Program coordinator	Interviews
Knowledge, skills, and connections related to the Canadian work environment	Knowledge on topics such as job search strategies, interview skills, resume and cover letter writing, confidence in claiming transferable skills, professionalism in a Canadian workplace context		Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Knowledge of life in Canada, including laws, rights, and responsibilities	Knowledge on topics such as the Canadian tax system, labour laws; rights in the workplace, social assistance programs		Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Long term outcomes				
The NPL's would have garnered more Canadian skills, references and resources for future employment	NPLs with Canadian skills, references, resources for future employment		Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews
Clients participate in local labour markets, broader communities and social networks	Clients participation in local labour markets, etc.		Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups
Clients make informed decisions about life in Canada, enjoy rights and act on their responsibilities in Canadian society	Clients decisions about life in Canada, etc.	80% of participants demonstrate higher levels of understanding of rights, responsibilities, and resources	Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Evaluation Design and Methods

The purpose of this evaluation is to test the effectiveness of the peer leadership model in which *Experts by Experience (EX2)* is based upon. The evaluation includes a summative component that assesses, where possible, whether the project produced the outcomes proposed in the logic model. This was done through interviews with the Project Coordinator, Program Officer, and NPLs. The evaluation also includes an exploratory component whereby the evaluator conducted interviews with Newcomer women to learn more about their experiences in the program and the impact their involvement had.

Evaluation Design

This work will report on whether the *EX2* project did what it set out to, produced the outputs and achieved the short-term outcomes as listed in the logic model.

Interviews will address questions related specifically to the *EX2* project but they will also address several questions generic to most evaluations that will help us learn about the program's implementation process (see chart below).

Area of Interest	**Evaluation Question**
Goals and Objectives	What do you see as the main objective or goal of the NPL program?
Planning	Is there a process in place for sustaining this program?
Access and Recruitment	How are participants recruited? Is there a process in place for this?
Facilities and Equipment	Where do the NPLs work? Is this location suitable?
Project Content	How is content developed? Who contributed to this process?
Governance and Management	What is the governance or decision-making structure of the NPL program?
Record-Keeping	Where are participant records stored? Are there policies related to accessing those records? What are they? Are financial records kept?
Staffing	Did the NPLs receive training? How was the training content developed? What are the roles of the NPLs?

Attention to Diversity	Are the measures in place to meet the needs of diverse participants, in terms of social, ethnic, language and other forms of diversity?

Created by: Diane Crocker, 2018

Research Methods

The main methods used in the evaluation are:

- Interviews
- Document review
- Sensemaking workshop
- Analysis of secondary data

Interviews. Qualitative interviews were held with the Project Coordinator, Program Officer, six Newcomer Peer Leaders (NPLs), and eight program participants (Newcomer women) using a semi-structured interview guide. Where relevant, a narrative approach was used in interviews. This approach allows researchers to collect stories which can provide rich detail about how the program works, the impact it has on participants, and what might need to be changed.

Document review. Analysis of program documents familiarizes the researchers with the project under review and provides the information needed to prepare an overview report on the project. For this evaluation, documents included board reports, narrative and claim reports, external monitor reports, project learning reports, and NPL reflections.

Sensemaking workshop. Select program participants were also invited to take part in a participatory workshop to work together to make sense of the stories gathered from participants prior to the workshop and during interviews. Newcomer women who were able to speak English conversationally participated in a two-hour virtual workshop.

Analysis of secondary data. The evaluator analysed quantitative data made accessible to the evaluation team by project staff. Surveys were used to collect the data following workshops and one-on-one sessions.

Methodological Limitations

There are some important factors to consider regarding the data analyzed in this evaluation. First, it is important to note that focus group participants are selected based on their ability to read and write in English and may not be representative of all program participants. Focus group participants are program participants who volunteer to take part in the focus groups and are often repeat attendees. That being said, the perspectives gathered in the focus groups often represent program participants who are most engaged in the program and can provide rich detail about what is working well and might need to be changed. Second, the evaluation is limited by a small number of survey responses. As well, multiple versions of the survey were implemented with multiple groups of participants which leads to multiple consequences. We are without core group

of program participants on which the findings are based. The survey data also lacks key information about participant demographics which limits our ability to provide information about the group of participants who completed the surveys. These factors limit my ability to make clear inferences from survey data. Finally, the project was unable to do pre- and post-surveys due to the change in the method of support requested by participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the project necessarily pivoted to provide one-on-one support to meet a variety needs and relied less on formal workshops aimed at increasing knowledge around target outcomes (e.g., financial and employment skills). As such, the evaluation design focused on interviews with project staff (Project Coordinator, NPLs) rather than participants to determine and track project outcomes.

Literature Review

The literature review describes research and evaluations of peer led interventions. The goal of the literature review was to learn more about the use, effectiveness, and value of peer led interventions and peer learning models. For the purpose of this literature review, the terms 'peer led intervention' will be used to describe the umbrella of peer learning-based models and programs.

I reviewed academic journal articles and reports on peer learning models and specific peer led interventions. To gather literature, I searched academic databases and Google Scholar using terms such as: "peer leader model", "peer led education", "peer led program", "peer-to-peer learning", "peer education", "peer learning", "peer leader evaluation", "newcomers", "newcomer women", and "immigrants".

Defining Peer Learning

Peer learning involves sharing information between peers, or those who belong to the same social, cultural, gender, and age group. As quoted in Parkin & McKeganey (2000), we can think of peer education as involving those of the same societal group or social standing educating each other or, more broadly, "where people share information… in social groups. [Peers are similar in age and status and] in some way identify with each other" (p. 295). The notion of shared status in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, or cultural membership is a key part of peer education (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). Informal per education is used to maintain both cultural and social equality within a peer group (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). Research has suggested the importance of shared cultural experience and social status insofar as peer leaders can "empathize with like-minded others" and refrain from asserting power or control (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000, p. 295). A review by Parkin & McKeganey (2000) by the authors suggests that peer educators with similar status can have a desirable credibility relating to age, sex, ethnicity; their experience, and the way in which information is communicated (i.e., non-judgemental).

Peer education approaches have been used in a number of areas related to health. Most often they have been used in substance misuse, HIV and AIDs, and sexual health education fields. In the UK, peer education has been relied on heavily – a number of agencies use peer education approaches to address drug use (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000).

Peer education models have also been used extensively in formal education, both schools and university settings. There have been efforts to distinguish specific types of peer learning, often in the context of peer education in academic settings. Damon (1984) distinguishes between two forms of peer learning – peer tutoring and peer collaboration. The former is thought most useful for delivering information and reinforcing skills while the latter for "facilitating intellectual discovery" and gaining basic knowledge (Damon, 1984, p. 331). A similar definition for peer tutoring was put forth by Topping (2005) who suggested peer tutoring is characterised by "specific role-taking as a tutor or tutee, with a high focus on curriculum content" (p. 632).

Turner & Shepherd (1999) provide ten common claims from the literature to support peer education including:

1) Peer education is more cost-effective than other methods
2) Peers are a credible source of information
3) Peer education is empowering for those involved
4) Peer education uses an already established means of sharing information
5) Peers are better able to pass on information because people identify with their peers
6) Peer educators can be positive role models
7) Peer education provides benefits to those peer educators
8) Peer education may be more acceptable than other forms of education
9) Peer education can be used to educate those who are hard to reach through conventional methods
10) Peers are able to reinforce learning through ongoing contact (pp. 236-237)

Evaluations of Peer Learning and Peer Led Interventions

Health Interventions

Analysis of data around HIV risk reduction among homosexual men by Kelly et al. (1991) concluded that peer influence models may be effective in fueling changes related to risk behaviours. This conclusion was drawn from surveys comparing risk behaviours between experimental ad control groups and their contact with peer education groups at pre-and post intervention stages. The result was a reduction in high-risk behaviour among men who had been in contact with peer education groups (Kelly et al., 1991).

A longitudinal study by McAleavey et al. (1996) of a peer education health project in Northern Ireland found significant change in the peer educators' behaviours. The project addressed health education including substance use by young people. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to assess impact and found that peer educators' substance use reduced over time. Other studies have found similar effects on peer educators involved in interventions related to HIV/AIDS whereby peer educators experienced increases in knowledge of HIV/AIDS and self-esteem. Peer educators involved in a sexual health education experienced increased self-esteem and confidence and improved communication skills (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). Further, A U.S.-based study on sexual health peer education in 10 different universities by Sawyer et al. (1997) using a pre and post tests questionnaire showed that peer educators experienced positive changes in self-esteem, personal development, and sexual behaviour.

In 2011, Simoni et al. reviewed literature which evaluated the efficacy of 117 peer-based interventions related to HIV/AIDs. The majority of studies provided some support for peer interventions in reducing sexual risk behaviour, attitudes and cognitions, HIV knowledge, and substance use (Simoni et al., 2011). The authors found that measuring outcomes using biomarkers or other non-self report variables were less likely to indicate efficacy of interventions. This finding may point to some problems in using self-report measures to measure change.

A review of 120 adolescent drug prevention programmes involving peer-led components by Black et al. (1998) showed positive results. Programs include in the review were aimed at reducing substance misuse. Findings suggested that interactive educative programs, such as in person communication with peer educators, were more effective in preventing drug misuse. A few more recent systematic literature reviews have described some positive outcomes of peer education programs. Bagnall et al. (2015) conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of health-related peer education and peer support in prisons. Their qualitative and quantitative synthesis revealed evidence that peer education interventions are effective at reducing risky behaviours and that peer support services have positive practical and emotional effects on recipients. Peer support services were found to be an acceptable source of help. The systematic review is limited by that most studies were of poor methodological quality (Bagnall et al., 2015).

Mental Health Interventions

Cook et al. (2010) evaluated outcomes of a strategy called Wellness Recover Action Planning (WRAP) during which self-management of mental illness is taught by peers to people in mental health recovery. Pre- and post-comparisons were made on reports which assessed three dimensions of self-management; attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The results of this study showed significant positive changes in self-management attitudes, skills, and knowledge for 76% of survey items completed by participants in one state and 85% of participants in another (Cook et al., 2010). More specifically, participants reported increases in their hopefulness for their own recovery, awareness of warning signs and decompensation, use of wellness tools in their daily routine, awareness of their own triggers, having a crisis plan in place, having a plan to deal with symptoms, having a social support system, and ability to take responsibility for their own wellness (Cook et al., 2010).

In another study, Cook et al. (2011) carried out a randomized controlled trial of a mental illness education intervention called Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals through Education and Support (BRIDGES). In the program, classes are taught once a week for 8 weeks by peers certified as BRIDGES instructors. Participants who received the intervention reported significantly greater improvement in self-perceived recovery and hopefulness. The authors support the use of peer-led mental illness education.

In 2016, Cabassa et al. (2016) reviewed peer-based health interventions for people with serious mental illness. Included in the review were studies from 1990-2015 that described peer-based health interventions for people with serious mental illness with evaluation the impact on

participants' physical health. Ultimately, they found that the strength of evidence produced by studies reviewed is limited due to methodological implications. The authors called more research on the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions across different populations and settings.

One study of peer-based case management program within community-based services for persons with severe mental illness found that peer providers served a valued role in creating connections with participants. Sells et al. (2006) compared the quality of treatment relationships and engagement in peer-based and regular case management in a longitudinal randomized clinical trial. Results indicated that participants perceived high positive regard, understanding, and acceptance from peer providers in six-month interviews (Sells et al., 2006).

Post-secondary Interventions

Cerna et al. (2012) describe the experiences of two U.S. community colleges that employed academically successful students to serve as peer leaders. They found that peer leaders played an integral role in helping other students learn. Key findings showed that students in peer-assisted courses felt they benefitted from peer leaders' guidance and support because it came from fellow students (Cerna et al., 2012). At the same time, peer leaders were given valuable experience as educators and leaders which can benefit their own educational and career trajectories. The college administrators saw the programs as affordable and cost-effective (Cerna et al., 2012).

Research by Keup (2016) analyzed data from a national survey of peer leaders. The majority of survey respondents, most of which were second year students, felt that their peer leadership experience was highly beneficial to their skills development, including interpersonal communication, organization, time management, etc.; nature of interactions with peers, staff members, faculty; and campus integration (Keup, 2016). Keup (2016) concludes that analysis of peer leader outcomes provides evidence that peer leadership be considered a "high-impact practice" (p. 31).

Keenan (2014) reported on primary data gathered through the 'Mapping peer-led academic learning UK survey' to report on the progress of peer-learning schemes in the UK. The findings pointed to a number of benefits for students who take on the role of 'peer leader', including: "the acquisition of higher level personal and professional skills (including empathy, communication, organisation, leadership, decision-making and teamwork skills)… subject learning is deepened, grades improve, relationships and inter-cultural awareness are enhanced, and employability prospects are greater" (Keenan, 2014, p. 5). Similar benefits for students who participate in peer-led learning sessions were found, such as greater sense of belonging, improved academic confidence, and greater community participation.

Very few studies describe impacts of peer led interventions on peer leaders or participants in the long term. Chase et al. (2020) conducted semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of former peer leaders from peer-led team learning workshops in undergraduate studies. The interviews focused on successes and challenges of being peer leaders, roles and responsibilities, and transferable skills. Analysis revealed that former peer leaders recognize leadership skills (e.g., encouraging peers towards their goals), coping with challenges, collaboration and teamwork skills, self-confidence, and problem-solving as being relevant and often used in their

current work (Chase et al., 2020). Similarly, Hanson et al. (2016) examined the relationship between exposure to peer learning in the undergraduate classroom and psychological wellbeing after four years of college. Using a longitudinal design and data from a study of college outcomes and experiences, the authors report significant, positive influence of peer learning on psychological well-being (Hanson et al., 2016). Further, peer learning had a significant positive effect on subscales of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The authors support the use of peer learning as an "important pedagogical practice" (Hanson et al., 2016, p. 191).

School-based Interventions

In the context of education among children, Damon (1984) argues that peer learning provides unique motivational and cognitive benefits for participants. These benefits include increases in children's self-esteem and interest in challenging tasks, enhanced achievement in school, and fostered prosocial behaviour (Damon, 1984). This paper discusses peer-to-peer education in comparison to adult-child instruction and advocates for a peer-based approach to education.

A study by Revill et al. (1997) investigating peer education in children's reading skills in an all-girls school showed significant increases in these skills. Wiist & Snider (1991) compared three models of health education in a school environment and found that the peer education model was the most effective in preventing the uptake of smoking, and showed that the group of peer educators were the most effective in delivering health education information.

Other

The *Lideres* (leaders) program is an innovative peer education leadership intervention grounded in a self-empowerment framework for Latina women who have survived domestic violence (Serrata, 2012). The program seeks to promote awareness about IPV. Serrata (2012) analyzed survey data which measured variables related to leadership development as well as analysis of journal written by participants which documented their experiences in the program. Results indicated that the curriculum used in the program was effective in influencing self-empowerment of participants cross three domains of leadership; intrapersonal (sense of leadership competency, leadership efficacy), interactional (knowledge of leadership, IPV and IPV resources, and leadership competencies), and behavioural (leadership emergence) (Serrata, 2012).

Evaluations of Peer Learning and Peer Led Interventions – Research Methods

Evaluations of peer education approaches have relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). Quantitative methods most often use pre and post questionnaires with control and intervention groups (i.e., those involved in peer education projects) to assess impacts of the peer interventions. The literature on peer education models points to challenges in evaluating effectiveness. One important challenge is due to the diversity in the focus of peer education projects themselves (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). This means multiple research methods and diverse evaluation approaches are needed to fully capture the impact and effectiveness of the broad range of peer education approaches. The challenge then becomes making comparisons about the effectiveness of programs using data from varying

evaluation approaches. According to Parkin & McKeganey (2000), “the need to develop an approach to evaluation that is tailored to the specifics of the particular project being evaluated will, however, limit the extent to which comparative judgements of effectiveness can be made”. In their work to apply theory to the practice of health-related peer education, Turner & Shepherd (1999) conclude that few theories can explain effectiveness past inferential claims due to the diversity of peer education practice. Other methodological challenges come from limited follow-up with intervention groups and difficulty determining causal connections between intervention and outcomes (Hart, (1998). Many evaluation rely on self- reported data which presents some limitations on demonstrating effectiveness. Subjects may provide researchers with socially acceptable responses as a result of the normative environment contributed by peer educators (Hart, 1998).

Benefits of Peer Learning and Peer Led Interventions – Peer Leaders

Parkin & McKeganey (2000) suggest that the strongest indication of the strength of peer education approaches is in the impact on the peer educators themselves. Peer educators tend to be self-motivated in engaging with the peers and that they too gain benefits from their involvement (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). This process can be empowering for those involved as a result of these proactive roles in educating others (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). Their review of evidence pointed to the conclusion that peer education approaches may be more effective at changing knowledge and attitudes of educators than changing behaviours in those receiving the interventions. The authors acknowledge that there are methodological difficulties in reaching this point due to reliance on self-reported changes in attitudes and behaviours.

Peer Led Interventions with Newcomer Women

The Women’s Platform is an initiative launched by the Scalabrini Centre, which offers specialised services to South Africans, Migrants and Refugees in Cape Town. The Women’s Platform became a cross-national support network that gives participants success to skills training, personal development workshops, networking opportunities, and small business development. Within The Women’s Platform, the Peer-to-Peer mentoring program provides opportunity for women mentors to lead a variety of practical trainings in personal or financial development skills. Mentor roles are paid positions. Mundell & Carone (2016) conducted twenty semi-structured itnerviews with participants and staff of The Women’s Platform. They suggested that one strategy that is promising in developing participant leadership for the initiative is the Peer-to-Peer mentoring program (p. 503). Participants who have received mentoring have shared how impactful it is to learn from the successes of other women who they can relate to and speak freely with (Mundell & Carone, 2016). Further, mentors are able to gain resume-building experience.

In a study produced for the United Way of Greater Toronto to inform decision-making around newcomer services, Sahay et al. (2005) reviewed 24 programs. Peer support to facilitate the settlement and integration of newcomers was evidenced almost all of the effective programs included in the review. One primary lesson learned through the review is that programs should include a direct support component, such as integration of social support from peers (Sahay et

al., 2005). Sahay et al. (2005) suggests that one way to provide direct support is through informal peer support from those who are or have been in similar situations and have face similar conditions. This is effective as newcomers have been found to depend on informal social support networks (Sahay, 2005). Similarly, the review also found that smaller learning is an effective way to create a safe and supportive learning environment for newcomers. Sahay et al. (2005) suggests that smaller group learning can "naturally foster peer support" (p. 21).

Summary of Findings

There are multiple terms used in the literature to describe peer learning models. Peer leader interventions have been implemented with a diversity of populations including women, children, students, and newcomers. Peer leader interventions have diversity in their focus as well, such as health, mental health, substance use prevention, education, and settlement and integration. The diversity of populations and focuses presents challenges for evaluation and research. Diverse evaluation and research approaches are needed to capture the effectiveness of interventions which makes drawing comparisons between interventions challenging. Literature on peer leader intervention call for more rigorous investigation and study design of peer-led services. However, the literature reports some evidence of positive outcomes on both peer leaders and those receiving peer leadership interventions. Often self-report measures are used which poses some limitations on research findings.

Evaluation Findings

General Evaluation Questions

Based primarily on analysis of interview data, I consider each of the evaluation questions below and illustrate with examples from the data where appropriate.

Does the NPL program have a clear statement of goals and objectives?

Yes. The objective of *EX2* is to test the peer leader model as an effective settlement service delivery model and to understand the impact on Newcomer women (NPLs and participants). The goals of the service provision are to share knowledge, information, and connect Newcomer women to resources. The program tries to create spaces where Newcomer women can share their personal settlement experiences and draw on the support of others to gain empowerment. The program strives to be flexible, adaptive and responsive to the evolving needs of Newcomer women.

Did the NPLs receive adequate training?

Initially, NPLs received six weeks of training and there has been opportunities for ongoing training in service provision and evaluation. Training topics included the principles of adult learning, workshop delivery, content and curriculum development as well as identifying supportive language for working with participants and how to connect them to resources. NPLs were trained in how to carry out focus groups and held mock focus groups for practice. They learned to a "shared contract" to be carried out with participants based on creating a space for the

work and respecting boundaries. NPLs received additional training on exploitation, domestic violence, and refugee mental health. Interviews suggest that NPLs could benefit from more training on financial literacy and evaluation tools.

Is the content appropriate for the project's goals and the intended clientele?

Yes, this is facilitated by processes for developing and reviewing content. Early on in the project, NPLs and the Coordinator would come together every six weeks to discuss the needs of newcomers and their requests for workshops and determine content for workshops. This process has changed over time as NPLs often work different hours and are not able to meet to brainstorm topics. As well, there is not always time to develop content collaboratively as Newcomer women have pressing needs related to information and resources. Currently, some content is developed by individual NPLs or the Coordinator, or by collaboration. Topics for content development are in line with the project's goals related to skill development (e.g., financial literacy, employment). Content development is also responsive to current local events (e.g., census information gathering) and global events (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic).

NPLs share content with each other and will contribute to content developed by others. NPLs and the Coordinator strive to gather information from reliable sources such as provincial and federal government websites, IRCC, non-profit organization websites, and the local library websites. All content is reviewed and approved by the Coordinator for accuracy and to ensure the content is in line with YWCA's values related to client-centred services and autonomy. NPLs have some flexibility and autonomy around the review process when working to meet pressing needs of Newcomer women. Overall, the process for content development is considered peer led with the Coordinator in a key role to maintain accountability as to what information is being shared. The Coordinator maintains a database of workshop content for NPLs to draw from.

The process for sharing information and resources is based on Newcomer women's ability and comfortability navigating websites for information. This means some Newcomer women are directed to information via website link while others will be presented with information in a more accessible manner. The following stories provide helpful examples.

> *… there's a big difference because what we were learning at [immigration service], if you compare it to what [NPL] is teaching us there's a big difference. The difference is first of things, language, the second thing is time. Because we go slowly and speak the language we understand: 'do like this, like this' so slowly by slowly. But there, we are many students, teacher is teaching there and what he say you do here. So, if you don't … your first time, it was a battle. But with [NPL] I really appreciate it because you go slowly by slowly and the language, because we use the Swahili and you understand what you are doing, slowly slow.*
>
> *Something she said is how she teaches us, I still remember 'oh, we learn this one with [NPL] and she said this and this and this and she was teaches us about this'. It will remain in your mind because its something you understand. It's good to understand*

something because when you understand something, you won't forget it. But if it's something not clear, it's easier to forget. I still remember what she's [NPL] told us.

Does the program location meet health and safety standards, and provide sufficient space?

Yes. The program location is adaptive to meet the needs of Newcomer women accessing the program. This includes physical spaces such as YWCA Halifax building, public spaces (e.g., restaurants, library), common rooms in apartment buildings, Newcomer women's homes, and NPLs' homes. During COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of meetings took place online using virtual meeting software. Interviews suggest the meeting locations are wherever Newcomer women are comfortable meeting and that the spaces are suitable.

Does the program have a clear governance structure?

Yes. The Project Coordinator makes decisions related to the financial aspects of the project including the budget (provided by the Program Officer) and spending, as well as the timeline and activities to be completed (number of focus groups, dates for focus groups, and NPLs responsible for focus groups). As previously mentioned, the Coordinator also reviews content developed by the NPLs. NPLs are responsible for determining workshop content, dates, times, and locations. NPLs also recruit participants and determine how they will communicate with participants (e.g., by phone, email, in-person).

Are appropriate procedures and provisions in place for record-keeping?

Yes. There are various avenues for monitoring and record keeping. Information from new participants is collected via intake forms which are kept in a database accessible by the Project Coordinator and Program Manager. Participants are given unique identifier numbers. NPLs also produce reports on each workshop they hold with participants. The reports include the location, number of participants, demography of participants, summary of focus group findings (including feedback), and recommendations. Feedback gathered using surveys are stored by the Project Coordinator.
Board reports are produced every four months. They detail the following regarding the program:

1) Staff updates/changes
2) Participation and activity numbers, including topics covered in workshops
3) Grant status and updates
4) Key accomplishments
5) Risk management
6) Plans moving forward (trends, development, evaluation)

Program monitoring is key to tracking progress towards outcomes and goals. The Board reports reviewed by the evaluator demonstrate effective record keeping and act as an accountability mechanism to the YWCA's Board of Directors.

Claim Reports provide narrative information on each project activity as listed in the project proposal and logic model. They describe:

1) Project ramp-up – Staffing

2) Training program developed and delivered to project staff
3) Workshop content development
4) Evaluation tool development
5) Focus group delivery
6) Workshop delivery
7) Resource design development
8) Final assessment of project outcomes (evaluation)

The reports reinforce findings about the project's tracking of activities and goals. The reports also provide rich detail about the project's implementation.

Is there a process in place for accessing and recruiting participants?

Yes. NPLs are responsible for recruiting Newcomer women and often they recruit by word-of-mouth through their own social networks of newcomers. NPLs will also recruit Newcomer women through programs they've attended, English language classes, or their previous or full-time employment in the settlement sector. Another source of referrals is program participants who will refer others. NPLs have also provided information about the program at community events to reach prospective participants and have had success going to places where newcomer women often gather to hold workshops. However, the opportunity to do so has been limited during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interviews with Newcomer women suggested that they previously knew the NPLs who would introduce the program as an opportunity to connect with other Newcomer women and receive information on how to adapt in Canada.

Does project staff (Project Coordinator, NPLs) have clear and distinguished roles?

Yes. The primary role of the NPL is to share information and connect Newcomer women to resources to meet their settlement needs and navigate immigration experiences. Their role also includes responding to Newcomer women's needs, providing direction, and sharing experiences. The role of the Project Coordinator is to implement boundaries in NPLs relationships with participants and reinforce the role of the NPL in the *EX2* program.

NPLs are supported to develop agency and autonomy in their roles. Interviews suggest that the NPLs have the support they need in their roles from other NPLs and the Project Coordinator. One shared an experience where she was overwhelmed in her role but the Project Coordinator helped calm her and emphasize selfcare and reflection.

Does the program have provisions to accommodate diversity?

Yes. NPLs are trained in diversity and inclusion skills. Participants are able to access service in their first language and are matched with NPLs who have similar cultural backgrounds, where possible. The service individualized or tailored to participants' level of understanding. For example, newcomers coming to Canada as refugees who may have lower income will be provided with more support around connecting to low-income resources. NPLs communicate with Newcomer women using their preferred method to accommodate diversity in access to

digital tools as well as comfortability around language. Alternatively, NPLs provide more advanced workshops for those with advanced understanding of how to navigate resources and information. NPLs are able to provide one-on-one sessions to meet participants where they are at in their learning. Newcomer women who face barriers to childcare are invited to bring their children to sessions. Overall, the service is flexible to provide a more informal atmosphere where Newcomer women an share their experiences.

Does the program have a process in place for medium to long-term planning?

If the peer leader model is considered to improve delivery of programs – in order words, if it is considered successful – the organization plans to apply peer leadership in other contexts and programs available at the YWCA and apply for more funding.

Evaluation of Logic Model Components

The following section I consider each logic model component and illustrate with examples from the data where appropriate.

Activity	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Method
Staffing (1 coordinator, 4 NPLs)	Staff hired	1 coordinator, 4 NPLS	Narrative reports	Document review

All staff positions have been filled. Since staff were initially hired in 2018 when the project began, two NPLs have resigned and both positions were filled.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Training of NPLs (including Core Capacity Development)	Staff trained	Program coordinator, narrative reports	Interview, document review

NPLs have received ongoing training in a variety of areas related to adult education, workshop facilitation, and settlement support and services.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Workshop content developed	Workshop material	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

NPLs and the Project Coordinator have developed a library of workshop material.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Evaluation tool development	Evaluation tool	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

NPLs and the Project Coordinator have developed evaluation tools including surveys and focus group questions.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Focus groups delivered	Focus groups took place	Narrative reports	Document review

NPLs have facilitated focus groups as planned.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Workshops delivered	Workshops took place	Narrative reports	Document review

NPLs have held workshops as planned.

Activity	Indicator	Data Source	Method
Resource design and development	Resources designed and developed	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

ENTER AFTER SEPTEMBER

Output	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Methods
1 Coordinator and 4 NPL positions staffed	Staff hired	1 coordinator, 4 NPLS	Narrative reports	Document review

The target number of staff hired has been met.

Details from data sources:

The process for staffing went as follows:

- Program Coordinator hired on August 20, 2018
- Creation of NPL job description and interview questions
- NPL job openings were posted on various jobs sites and recruitment platforms and were shared among local job developers
- 25 applications for NPL positions received
- 10 applicants were shortlisted and interviewed
- 4 Newcomer Peer Leaders were selected, reference checks and criminal background checks were conducted
- Newcomer Peer Leaders were hired and began work on November 16, 2018

Output	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Training program developed and delivered to project staff	Staff trained	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

The training program based on adult education theories and facilitation was developed and delivered to NPLs. NPLs have also received ongoing training throughout to the course of the project to further develop and strengthen their skills and knowledge.

Details from data sources:

Program Coordinator researched and developed necessary training modules for NPLs. Upon hiring, NPLs attended workshop training one day per week for six weeks to develop and enhance facilitation skills. Training topics were selected based on Adult Education theories and learning which were integral to developing a program that values the experiences of NPLs and

participants. NPLs learned about the importance of acknowledging and valuing experience as well as research and developing content and facilitating workshops. The goal was that once NPLs completed the initial training, they would obtain, strengthen, and maintain the skills acquired to set and achieve their own development over the course of the project and beyond.

NPLs have received training in the following areas:

- Team building, communication, guidelines and expectations
- Asset Mapping and Asset Based Community Development
- Peer Support and Leadership
- Employability and Transferable Skills
- Financial Literacy
    - Budget
    - Managing your Cost
    - Needs vs Wants
    - Credit and Debt Management
    - Protecting yourself from Identity Theft
- Creating and Implementing a Logic Model
- Feedback and Brainstorming
- How to develop and facilitate a workshop
- Research and Evaluation
    - Focus Groups
    - Surveys
    - Reports and Data Analysis
- Newcomer Peer Leaders Workshops and Focus Groups Presentations
- Partnership Development and Outreach
- Logistical Project Planning
- Taxes and citizenship application
- Digital literacy workshop including: -
    - Discover online basics
    - Explore online privacy
    - Navigate online privacy and security
    - Navigate online information
    - Mini Zoom Training/Google hangouts
    - Taking community engagement online
    - Microsoft 365 Training
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) and how to prevent the spread of this disease
- Benefits and credit available to Newcomers including:
    - Canada child benefits (CCB)
    - Disability tax credit (DTC)
    - Child Disability Benefit (CDB)
    - Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)

Output	Indicator	Data Source	Methods

Workshop content and delivery aids developed with input from NPLs	Content developed with input from NPLs	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

NPLs' input has informed content for the program (i.e., workshop topics and materials) based on feedback given by participants during focus groups and on an impromptu or informal basis. NPLs also provide anecdotal information about their observations of the workshops and one-on-one sessions which informs workshop content and delivery.

Details from data sources:

In the early stages of the project, NPLs designed and presented workshops on topics including:

- Cover letters and resume writing
- How to create and use a budget
- Navigating the health care system in Halifax
- Self-care

Since the initial development of these workshops, the Project Coordinator and NPLs have revised and edited the content of the workshops and have developed new material based on participant feedback. Workshop topics delivered to Newcomer women include:

- Volunteering in Canada
- Sourcing Traditional/International Food
- Recreation for Newcomer Women to Canada
- Women's Healthcare
- Navigating the Healthcare System in Nova Scotia
- Self-care and Wellness
- Financial Literacy focusing on Budgeting
- Emotional Intelligence
- Increasing Cultural Understanding for Newcomer women
- Recreation for Newcomer Women to Canada (Part 2)
- Women's Healthcare (Part 2)
- Steps into buying a house
- Emotional Intelligence (part 2)
- Sisterhood as an empowerment for young immigrant women
- Exercising self-care during the winter time
- Women's Healthcare (Part 2)
- Discover online basics
- Taxes, Savings and Investments

Outputs	**Indicator**	**Data Source**	**Methods**
Work plan and logic model developed, research and evaluation tools developed, best practices determined	Work plan, logic model, research and evaluation tools, best practices	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

Project staff have developed a logic model for the project and research and evaluation tools, including survey and focus group questions. A number of best practices for the service delivery have been determined including:

- The work needs to be peer led and responsive to newcomer women's needs
- Peer leaders must have similar experience of those they will support and must have an understanding of the barriers and challenges the group faces to develop trust. For this project, the experience of settlement
- In working with newcomers, the environment must be social because that is how information is best received. One NPL shared that because of this, women are not worried about making mistakes as they would be in a classroom: "… they're learning freely"
- Respect towards differences between and within cultural groups
- Connection/referral to resources that includes a "warm handoff" where NPLs support the referral process (after participants consent to share their information)
- Offer both group and one-on-one sessions, depending on the needs of participants
- Offer services in locations that newcomer women often gather, in small groups, where they are able to focus on learning
- Provide ongoing support to meet the evolving needs of participants
- Ensure NPLs represent a variety of cultural backgrounds and can communicate in participants' first (or preferred) language
- Prioritize relationship building with participants

Details from data sources:

During the initial launch of the program, a logic model was partially developed. There was some difficulty developing a logic model as the concept for the project was still being established. Project staff shared that this may have impacted the group's understanding of how the project would take shape, including implementation and outcomes. An updated logic model was developed by this writer in collaboration with project staff (Project Coordinator, Program Officer).

The Project Coordinator and NPLs developed evaluation tools including consent forms, survey questions, focus group questions, and image release forms early on in the project. The purpose of the survey is to gain immediate feedback on the design of the workshop and one-on-one sessions. Focus groups are used to dive deeper into details around what is and is not working with the model. The Project Coordinator and NPLs have revised and edited the questions for the focus groups and surveys to capture more feedback on the model. Project staff suggested that the new questions have generated more in-depth responses about the effectiveness of the model.

To determine best practices in the initial stage of the project, Project staff attended peer leader workshops (one held at the public library). They also consulted literature on peer leadership.

Outputs	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Methods
Conduct 15 focus groups throughout the project with a total of 90 consultants. The consultants' feedback informs further development of the model	Focus groups took place	15 focus groups with 90 consultants	Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review

Project staff held one focus group each reporting period (every three months) for a total of 12 focus groups with 6-15 participants per group. Findings from focus groups have been used to inform development of the model including the structure of workshops (e.g., formal or informal) and topics explored. Broad level analysis of focus group data shows that consultants feel safe to share their opinions and they were able to develop a sense of belonging in the workshops. NPLs made this suggestion in their interviews as well.

Details from data sources:

Initially, NPLs held focus groups with newcomer consultants to learn more about the needs of newcomer women and inform service delivery and initial topics. Twenty-four women participated and identified the following areas that were important to them:

- **Healthcare:** navigating the healthcare system, prenatal care, family planning, health insurance, getting family doctor
- **Children's education**: childcare, daycare, daycare cost disparities, post-secondary education systems for children
- **General rights of a newcomer**
- **Housing Policies**: Tenancy rights, laws relating to subleasing, breaking a lease, rent
- **Changing careers:** courses in continuing education
- **Post Secondary Education**: sourcing grants and scholarships
- **Finding Employment**: job exploration, job interviews, rights of employees, workplace policies
- **Financial Literacy**: understanding tax benefits and returns
- **Self-Advocacy:** learning how to speak up when help is needed without self-victimising
- **Food Security**: economical ways to source organic food
- **Social Connection**: Some of the women expressed the need to socialize. They said that while their partners have full lives here in Canada; they struggle and feel very isolated. They need to know more how to build connections.
- **Overcoming language barrier**: The language barrier was one of the main struggles almost all the women shared. They attend language classes provided by other services providers but still feel that when it comes to daily life or work life conversations, they find it hard to express themselves.
- **Parenting in the Canadian context**: Young immigrant moms find it very hard and challenging without the support of their extended family. They would like to know if there are groups that they can receive this support
- **Family Reunification**: sponsoring family members in order to bring them to Canada.
- **Entrepreneurship**: sourcing funding for small businesses

Focus groups have been held on an ongoing basis (every three months) to gather feedback on the program and inform changes to the service. The focus group guide can be found in Appendix (D). Participants who are considered "insightful" are invited to attend the workshops.

Outputs	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Methods
Delivery of workshops to newcomers by NPLs (104)	Workshops took place	104 newcomers	Narrative reports	Document review

NPLs delivered a total of 77 workshops from 2019-2021 and 225 one-to-one sessions. A total of 350 unique participants received workshops.

Details from data sources:

Outputs	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Development of a shareable NPL Program Resource Guide based on peer support which includes shareable and scale-able tools	Shareable NPL Program Resource Guide	Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review

ENTER IN SEPTEMBER

Details from data sources:

Outcomes	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Methods
Program development, management and governance effectively support consistent and responsive program delivery	Ongoing evaluation including NPLs conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews throughout the project with participants, the feedback for which will be immediately integrated into the SIS sessions/Program coordinator and NPLs meet on regular basis to analyze feedback and amend session based on feedback	80% high level of satisfaction and skill achievement	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

Feedback gathered through evaluation tools has been analyzed by NPLs and integrated into the workshops and one-on-one sessions including workshop topics, locations, and accessibility. NPLs are also able to provide feedback that is incorporated into the service. Interviews suggest both participants and NPLs feel their feedback has been heard.

Details from data sources:

Governance supports program delivery by hearing and responding to feedback from NPLs and program participants. Participants were provided with an online survey to complete after a one-on-one session that they are able to do at a later time. Most workshop topics come from

participant suggestions. Findings from focus groups inform the delivery of workshops and one-on-one sessions. As well, NPLs and Project Coordinator meet regularly to discuss what is going on and the gaps in service and NPLs encouraged to respond. Feedback from the evaluation tools is immediately integrated into workshop content that will be delivered to the individual or a group. For example, NPLs gathered content and resources on parenting as some parents having trouble with their children because they are asking for help and there is a shift in power that parents need help navigating. Workshop location was an area that NPLs received feedback and incorporated it into the sessions by holding workshops at locations that are more central (e.g., convenient). Where possible, NPLs began providing content in advance of sessions at the request of participants. Another example of feedback to inform the model was providing service in newcomers' first language where possible. Participants also shared they would prefer information delivered was more practical than theoretical and kept as simple as possible.

Focus group findings suggest participants feel that they have been able to provide feedback to improve the workshops and that their feedback is heard. NPLs accept and implement suggestions for workshops and seek clarification during workshop to increase their understanding of participants' requests.

Another avenue for feedback to inform the model is from NPLs to the Project Coordinator. Project staff shared that often they do not receive feedback from the NPLs. This may be attributed to that the NPLs work in their roles part time (30 hours per month). They also shared some reflections on the role of culture in giving feedback in that in a lot of countries, feedback is connected to jeopardizing jobs. Another factor is that NPLs prioritize attending to participants during their limited work hours. The Project Coordinator welcomes feedback from both NPLs and participants. Interviews reveal that NPLs feel their feedback is heard. One example that shows this involves reflections on the concept of a workshop as less familiar for participants from some cultures. In response, NPLs promoted one on one support sessions which were incorporated into the service provision.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Provision of settlement services is consistent, innovative and coordinated	Consistent, innovative, coordinated settlement services	Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

The settlement services has been provided consistently and using innovative methods by collaborating with community services providers to meet the needs of Newcomer women and by finding new ways to deliver the service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Details from data sources:

The best example of consistent and innovative service is the project's ability to adapt to conditions and barriers related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Project staff found innovative ways to meet participants needs, such as offering workshops virtually, and continued to provide consistent service. Another effort that contributes to this outcomes is collaboration with other service providers. Project staff collaborate with the Refugee Health Clinic and other programs within the YWCA to quickly connect participants to services and respond to needs. As well,

interviews suggest that project staff try to make connections within and outside the YWCA to help participants and assist with information seeking and follow-up.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Increased capacity of NPLS to deliver on the project	Increased capacity of NPLs	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interview

NPLs' capacities increased by learning the importance of sharing experiences and how to teach and help empower others. NPLs' knowledge of the purpose and use of the evaluation tools has improved as well as other skills and knowledge through ongoing training.

Details from data sources:

Interviews revealed a variety of ways in which NPLs' capacity to deliver on the project was impacted. NPLs learned that sharing their own settlement experiences in turn made Newcomer women feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences and their needs. They were also able to learn how to teach others: "… people can learn at any time, and if they are given an opportunity, actually they can grow". NPLs reflected on the importance of encouraging and assuring women and how this impacts them in return: "If you teach them… you will be so encouraged because you will see your work you will see the difference of your contribution". Another way NPLs' capacity to deliver on the project increased was their progression in their understanding the purpose of the evaluation tools. NPLs were able to learn that the surveys and focus groups help to test the peer leader model. Interviews suggests that feedback from evaluation tools helped NPLs to identify topics areas of importance, go deep into topics, and learn more about the topics in order to deliver information to participants. As well, they are able to connect with other organizations to help Newcomer women get the support they need. Related to this, interviews mentioned some important learnings around empowerment, a key goal of the project, and suggested: "We don't empower people. We provide them with the tools so they themselves can be empowered". Ongoing training contributed to NPLs' capacity to deliver on the project. A final way this outcome was achieved was through NPLs' effort to accommodate differences within the groups of women NPLs are supporting.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Increased capacity of NPLs (increased knowledge, skills, and career building opportunities for Newcomer women as NPLs)	Increased capacity of NPLs	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

NPLs' capacities have improved through increased knowledge of workshop topics, skills related to identifying and relaying important information, teamwork, communication, teamwork, computer skills, and career building. NPLs recognize the impact on their growth and showed a high level of support for the program.

Details from data sources:

Interviews reported a number of ways the capacity of NPLs was positively impacted by the program. NPLs gain work experience and skills from a recognized non-profit organization as a

result of the project. By providing information and resources to their peers, NPLs' own knowledge increases and they are better equipped to search and identify important information. For example, two NPLs reported taking on volunteer positions to help others apply for benefits (employment, retirement, child tax benefits). NPLs were able to grow skills related to teamwork, communication, computers, and presentations. Interviews suggested NPLs have been able to benefit from skill building opportunities throughout the project.

One NPL shared that involvement in the project helped them identify their ideal career path and has since enrolled in post-secondary schooling. More than one NPL went on to pursue other employment opportunities and mentioned that their experience as NPLs was a facilitating factor for this in terms of making contacts with other organizations.

There are two types of reports that are provided by NPLs. Mid-point Guided Self Reflection Questions for NPLs provide NPLs the opportunity to reflect on their roles and experiences in the project. They are provided with questions regarding their overall thoughts, interesting discoveries about themselves and others, challenges, powerful learning moments, teamwork and communication, strengths, and the hiring process. The reports provide rich detail on how NPLs are thinking about the project and its impact on participants and themselves. NPLs' reflections detail their growth and improvement in skills as a result of their involvement in the following areas:

- Verbal communication
- Planning and organizing
- Abstract thinking
- Problem solving
- Facilitation
- Tutoring
- Leadership
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Identifying community resources

NPLs describe feeling empowered and have learned in-depth information about the needs of Newcomer women. All NPLs discussed the positive impact the program has on Newcomer women and see the value of their contribution.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Settlement and non-settlement services are responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities	Services responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities	Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

The service provision has been highly responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities by meeting requests for topics, making accommodations to facilitate participation, and the pivot in service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Details from data sources:

One of the ways the service was responsive to the needs of newcomers and communities was meeting Newcomer women's requests for workshops on specific topics such as taxes, community resources, English courses, and citizenship preparation courses. Initially, workshop topics were more "standard" and included information on the healthcare system, financial literacy, and selfcare. Project staff learned that Newcomer women experience a variety of needs and expanded to find information on other areas, such as computer skills. NPLs noticed that many of African participants were quite limited in their computer skills which contributed to isolation and disconnection from communities local and abroad. In response, NPLs used a training manual to teach online basics. More generally, NPLs strive to provide accommodations for participants and facilitate their participation in the program. NPLs felt there was great responsibility to feedback and flexibility of service.

The program was able to meet the changing needs of newcomers and communities during Covid-19 by offering individualized and flexible support. NPLs checked in on participants to see how the project might support them. Many Newcomers transitioned to different schedules to facilitate working from home, online learning, and childcare and required one on one support which the NPLs were able to provide. Most group sessions were put on pause as many participants were not comfortable sharing some needs in a group space, such as those related to financial situations or child welfare. NPLs were able to able to respond with flexibility and support participants during the evenings and weekends at times it was convenient for those working. Those unable to log into Zoom were offered in person (following public health safety measures). Many needed more information on specific topics related to working online and accessing services online, such as using a computer, or information on COVID-19 (cases and how to keep yourself and others safe). Others needed more personal (e.g., emotional) support. NPLs also offered information about available financial support, how to manage stress and maintain mental wellness (e.g., meditation) and activities for children to do at home. One interview suggested a good marker of success was the project's ability to facilitate reaching out to peers in a state of global pandemic: "… this program was there, available to accompany them [Newcomer women] in the change". The following story illustrates an extraordinary example of how the project remains responsive to participants' evolving needs:

> *OK, so there is a woman. She's [ethnic group] and she was pregnant, she was pregnant with two kids. And she had no family here and she didn't know how like how to go to the IWK what to do with her kids? What options are there? I referred her to a doula program. Yeah, where she had a doula and the hospital and her kids stayed with me… because we couldn't find anyone to take care of her little ones. I find her a doula. And then her mom came here she… wasn't aware about like there was something with booking tickets for her mom from Egypt and I supported her through all the way. Like to how to book ticket, how to find the cheapest way. But it was part of this job and supporting this woman. Yeah, and the doula part was the most important because it changed all her experience here. So, she until today like it has been two years. She's very thankful. And this same woman she had some issues with her mental health after giving birth and she wasn't aware of the concept of depression like postpartum depression and… she approached me to ask, where could I go? What should I do? And then I*

provided her with this list with services for postpartum like women. Where to go and what happened and she got a lot of support. She went to a psychiatric psychiatrist who speak Arabic as well and she gets prescriptions. Yeah, so it was really helpful to her and she she's very grateful and thankful for this.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Content refined on an ongoing basis that responds to changing needs of newcomers	Content responds to changing needs of newcomers	Program coordinator, NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Content for workshops and one-on-one sessions has been refined to meet the changing needs of newcomers by responding to requests for information from workshops and one-on-one sessions and feedback from focus groups.

Details from data sources:

Generally, Newcomer women are able to request what they would like to more about. Information is then gathered and provided in workshops and one-on-one sessions. Participants are also able to indicate topics they wish to learn more about in the surveys dispatched after each session or workshop. Interviews suggested most requests were employment and resource related in the beginning.

COVID-19 showcased how adaptable the program is and responsive to the changing needs of newcomers. NPLs implemented digital literacy workshops and sessions so participants would have the skills and comfort level to log onto Zoom.

As previously mentioned, there was a greater desire from Newcomer women for one-on-one support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some women needed support with issues that they did not wish to share in a virtual workshop setting. Also, many of the women did not have access to digital devices which introduced a barrier for participating in workshops.

One-on-one support provided to Newcomer women included:

- Connection to services and supports
    - Connected two women to YMCA to receive support in preparation for Canadian citizenship test
    - Connected one woman to YWCA's Financial Literacy Newcomer Program for tax support
    - Connected newcomer mothers to YWCA Halifax December 6 Fund
    - Connected newcomer women and their families to Family SOS Family Program
    - Connected women to employment programs offered at YWCA Halifax
    - Helping women filling applications to the Free Veggie Care Package from FREE Square Roots
    - Referrals to virtual English classes at other community organizations
    - Registration for Heart in a Box art kits for children provided by community organizers

- Assisted newcomer women in completing their university/college applications and scholarship and loan applications
- Citizenship application/ permanent residency application and post-grad work permit
- Internet and cell phone bill payment
- Psychiatric online support and application for MSI Health cards
- Home desk furniture
- Application for public housing
- Tax filing and tax appeal
- Employment references
- Canadian Emergency Benefits (CERB) and Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB)
- Application for child tax benefit
- Application for work permit
- Informed women and their families of the new developments since the province-wide state of emergency
- Online learning and what will that look like

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
The evaluation tools support the development of the project and shareable resource.	Shareable NPL Program Resource Guide	Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review

ENTER AFTER SEPTEMBER

Details from data sources:

Overall, the evaluation tools have been used to improve the model. Surveys and focus groups are used to ascertain topics of interest and to inform to delivery and structure of the service. Content is then developed and delivered during sessions and to determine workshop implementation. For example, the presentation style for specific topics; informal and formal. NPLs shared that the evaluation tools helped them to better understand the "right" questions to ask participants to further develop the model and content.

One NPL shared some concerns around the appropriateness of the evaluation tools. Focus groups and are based on more European/Canadian culture and aren't so present in other cultures where the women come from.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
The NPLs have increased skills in evaluation practices	NPLs evaluation skills	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

The NPLs have increased evaluation skills related to developing and implementing focus groups and surveys, capturing feedback, eliciting further information through probing, identifying important information, and reporting feedback data.

Details from data sources:

NPLs have successfully learned to implement the evaluation tools to gather feedback. One NPL mentioned using their evaluation skills in other employment context where they were able to provide feedback on structuring questions (e.g., open ended vs. Likert scale). NPLs have learned how to conduct interviews use probing questions to gather more information. They've learned how to gage participants body language or "read the room" and hold space for participants to share. Further, they've learned that sharing their own experiences helps participants feel more comfortable to open up. Another indicator of NPLs' increased evaluation practices is their ability to capture participants' perspectives shared in focus groups. For example, an NPL produced a report which described focus group findings from their own perspective instead of participants' perspective. The NPL was able to revise and improve the report, demonstrating an increase in skills. NPLs have also learned to pull important information from evaluation data, such as areas for change. Finally, they've learned how evaluation tools measure impact and how the service can be adjusted in response.

Findings from interviews suggest that NPLs still have some questions about the purpose of the evaluation tools and how to gather more feedback from participants to inform the model. These findings are related to focus groups with repeat participants.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Final model and shareable resource informed by consultants' feedback	Consultants' feedback informs resources and model	Program coordinator, NPLs, documents	Interviews, document review

ENTER IN SEPTEMBER

Details from data sources:

The elements of the peer leader model that need to be captured in the shareable resource are "layers of connectivity", or the elements of the model that are more effective in supporting newcomers.

Claim reports on Activity 6 (Workshop Delivery) include positive feedback from Newcomer women who have received workshops that provide important considerations for the shareable resource. The reports also include areas for improvement, barriers, recommendations for change. The evaluator has highlighted some broad themes from the feedback which are described below with supplementing quotes.

NPLs' knowledgeability. Participants suggested the NPLs seemed very knowledgeable about the workshop topics.

Usefulness of workshop topics. Participants found the topics to be very useful and relevant and this made the information very accessible and understandable. Also, the topics are of interest to them and beneficial to their well being. The consultants continue to praise the program for being a constant support that keeps meeting their settlement needs.

> *"I hardly get to talk about much less think about my mental health so this is a great opportunity"*

Engaging workshop sessions. Participants suggested the NPLs were interactive and engaging which made the participants very attentive.

Leadership by Newcomer women. The participants stated that seeing another newcomer woman conducting the workshop was motivating and empowering. The participants also shared that a major benefit to the workshops and focus groups is that the NPLs speak their language and/or can provide interpretation services. Participants spoke about the power of empathy that they receive from the NPL's. This is as a result of the fact that NPL's understands their background, challenges, values and ways of life. They also mentioned that it is great that the peer leaders are women of similar backgrounds, (continental Africa, South America, West Asia) because they (NPLs) would also have an understanding of the cultures and norms of their countries of origin and would the best guide the participants how the cultures would merge with Canadian culture.

> *"I prefer the newcomer facilitator because we share similar experiences and we learn from each other"*
>
> *"I prefer the newcomer facilitator because they have a direct perspective of my experience"*
>
> *"I prefer the newcomer facilitator because more information is discussed in a relaxed environment giving a person more ways to discuss and learn"*
>
> *"When I first came to school, the case workers or facilitators from another organization talks and I hear nothing. I understand nothing. They will give me flyer or invite me to workshops. How can I read a flyer when I have no English? I was asked about my email when I never used a computer before. How is that okay? If I didn't have the peer leader that is an immigrant and someone who understands my challenges I would still be I situations that I cannot understand. The peer leader had to explain things to me because I had no idea what was going on."*
>
> *"We feel anxious around Canadian born people. I am afraid to talk to them if I have a problem because I am afraid to sound stupid. That is why I come to your workshops, I feel safe. You take us seriously and you don't talk to me like I'm stupid."*
>
> *"When I come to the YWCA workshops, I feel safe and home. That is why I learn a lot. To see you (the facilitator) a newcomer and doing this job, motivates me a lot!"*
>
> "*When a peer teaches, they have an understanding of the culture of my place of origin hence will teach me accordingly with respect to my culture and social beliefs."*
>
> "*It is very good to provide us with a chance to be around fellow women; we get a safe space to share our ideas and complaints and find possible solutions from our peers who might have insight on our problems."*

"For me the most important thing here is to meet people like me and to discuss relevant things, such as our experiences so we can learn something new from each other, support each other on our path and to stay connected - and on these sessions I meet all of my needs."

"… when it comes to memorable meeting I may say each and every meeting is memorable for me because when we get together with other fellow women the things which we discuss and the topic which we do share and experience, it does stay in my heart because in our culture, and it's in our own language and especially parenting. How are we going to help our kid to grow up here? It's really memorable."

Flexible and adaptive. The women have expressed gratitude in being able to call upon the NPLs and the program during COVID-19 and subsequent social isolation. During this period, their participants have requested to put a pause on workshops and have requested more 1:1 support from the NPLS because they need support with issues that they do not wish to share in a virtual workshop setting. Because of the program many of them of them have a better understanding of what is going on, the terms that are being used and the various measures that are in place to help them and their families.

"I thank you! Now I understand it better"

"If I hadn't participated in this workshop I would not know that I could be fined"

"I will make sure to tell people surrounding me about the state of emergency"

"I don't know what I would have done without your support"

"If you didn't tell me about the new releases regarding the emergency status, my family and I would have stayed home. We were afraid of the fines"

Skills-based support.

"We should have more of these workshops to prove Canadians and the worlds how capable we are as Newcomer Women"

"I am so happy that at least I am able to do some online things by myself. My children were surprised when I went to you-tube and played their song. I surprised them by getting it through my cell phone and playing it on the TV screen when all the family members were present. I am so happy to play the Congolese songs I like without bothering anyone. I am quite happy"

"*My children tried to show me but I am too slow they get frustrated. They treat me like I will not know. Now I am very happy to comfortably go online by myself. When I want to check the weather or grocery store hours, I do not ask them. They were surprised to realize how much I have known"*

Comfortability and safety of sessions. The participants said that they found the NPLs to be very accommodating, which helped them to feel comfortable asking questions. They appreciated that the facilitator is a newcomer like them which puts them at ease, thus making expressing themselves easier. The participants shared that they are motivated to participate in group settings because of the community and web of friendships formed as a result of the workshops. They found the workshop to be a safe and inclusive space as it was in a location familiar to them and they felt free to speak and there is mutual respect among each other.

> *"... they [NPL] taught and gave us a chance to express our ideas and thoughts in every step of the way"*
>
> *"We got a chance to ask questions and we were explained in detail where we had not understood properly"*
>
> *"... we took turns speaking and everyone got the chance to say something"*
>
> *"I've been here for 2 years and my English is still not great so people in other workshops don't take me seriously when I speak. It is not that I do not try, it is that I have to guess or try to understand by myself. Here, I am not concerned about this, I feel safe as I share and get information without these worries"*
>
> *"It was a friendly environment that you weren't being talked to or at, you were being talked with."*

NPL receptivity is an important factor in improving safety and inclusivity in terms of how participants are able to identify with their peer leader and how the peer leader makes the effort to draw them out. Participants appreciated taking turns speaking so they could know what to expect from them. They explained that in a country where they are the minority, small groups are key to making a person feel included. They also asked to have more consistency and more frequent workshops. More than one participant mentioned having to develop the skills to participate virtually as an initially uncomfortable but helpful experience.

Group-based structure. Women appreciated the friendship that developed between the women and the informal nature of the workshop.

> *"The great thing about these workshops is that they are focusing on our needs. That is why I feel safe. I feel that I have a group to reach out to when needed which makes me feel safe"*

Recommendations for improvement

1. Consultants preferred a mix of facilitator-focused with PowerPoints and informal workshops. They preferred that style because it flowed very well in their opinion.
2. Consultants agreed that topics better structured will be impersonal ones like issues concerning the school district and the library. The informal style is best suited to personal topics such as savings.

3. Consultants agreed that topics better structured will be topics such as health care system or banking. The informal style is best suited to personal topics such as motherhood, shopping in Nova Scotia.
4. Some of the consultants reported that the peer leaders should remind participants about housekeeping rules when engaged in workshops/ focus groups virtually. For example, the NPLS should remind participants to mute their mics when the NPLs are speaking. Many of the women expressed their desire to start meeting in person as they would like to meet other participants.

Barriers. One group of newcomer participants stated that they sometimes face transportation and childcare issues in attending the workshop. Others have stated that being able to choose the location and the times for workshops and focus groups have eliminated barriers related to scheduling. This finding was supported in focus group analysis. Focus group analysis revealed that language can be a barrier to participating in workshops when there are multiple languages being spoken in a single workshop or when English is being spoken and participants have low English language levels. Other barriers include location of the meeting and conflicting work schedules.

Factors that help Newcomer women participate in workshops were NPL availability/flexibility when scheduling sessions and being notified of the topic in order to prepare questions/discussion points in advance of workshops. Some suggested that when they are made aware of the workshop schedule it allows them to make arrangements to bring other Newcomer women which can increase participation.

When asked about the most important factors in designing workshops, most often participants mentioned flexibility around time followed by language (common language or translation), topic, refreshments, and materials.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Increased financial literacy and employment knowledge and skills for Newcomer women	Increased literacy and skills for newcomer women	NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Interviews point to increased financial literacy and employment knowledge skills for Newcomer women by helping them to find jobs, referral to supportive community organizations, digital literacy training, English language support, and information about budgeting. Some participants have also received education-related support.

Details from data sources:

NPLs delivered workshops on employment skills, including how to find jobs. Participants were also referred to community organizations such as the YWCA and YMCA to seek further information and training. Digital literacy training also contributed to participants' employment skills. One NPL suggested participants' comfortability in using their laptops and cellphones has improved and they are exciting about implementing their skills. English language support (learning, practicing) from NPLs also supports participants' employment skills, as shared by Newcomer women.

Regarding financial literacy, participants received information about budgeting.

According to analysis of focus groups, workshops on employment skills/financial literacy included:

- Finding a job (including recommending job postings and employment resources)
- Preparing for job interviews
- Creating or revising resume
- Finding childcare
- Financial education (e.g., banking, investments)

The following narratives describes participants' experience accessing employment and education related support:

> *"... she [NPL] sent to me an email of... shelters opening and then she is like just before I was about to reach she calls and she is like 'I think you should apply for this I know you are not scared going out so I think you will be good not to stay at home hungry' and we both laugh at about it but I love the idea that she brought that issue. So I applied and I got that put up shelter job thought which very sustainable into me and I am very grateful for that."*

> *I'll give you an example of a of a young woman. She [participant] is 21 and I was there to support her in all the process to get into university and now she's doing her Bachelor of Science. Doing it step by step with her. Like where to go to get support and applying for scholarships? Where to go? How to do, how to apply for loans? And she's very thankful to this. To this to these workshops, alongside to the one on one support.*

Outcomes	**Indicator**	**Data Source**	**Methods**
Increased knowledge of life in Canada	Knowledge of life in Canada	NPLs, newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Participants experience some increase in knowledge of life in Canada through information on healthcare, Canadian culture, and Canada's immigration system including challenges for newcomers.

Details from data sources:

Through the *EX2* program, participants were provided information about MSI and how to access healthcare. For example, the hours during which clinics operate and when to call a family doctor instead of accessing emergency care. Interviews suggest Canadian culture is a "big" topic and was discussed in depth throughout the program.

NPLs were able to learn about the complexity of the immigration system and the barriers that can be present for the different streams of immigration. Further, the challenges associated with navigating aspect of life in Canada. They also learned the history of immigration in Canada and how immigration has changed over time.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Benefit other settlement organizations and those community-based organizations that work with newcomers	Benefit to other organizations	Program coordinator	Interviews

The project's work can benefit to other organizations by spotlighting the capability of Newcomer women, by providing best practices for service provision to newcomers, and by providing important information about the needs of newcomers to Canada.

Details from data sources:

The project's work highlights the aptitude of Newcomer women – both NPLs and participants. This can improve hiring of Newcomers who are of benefit to settlement organizations.

In terms of the model of service, the project provides some best practices for working with Newcomers, specifically the benefits of the peer leadership model and the types of outcomes for NPLs and participants that the model can bring. For example, the project has learned that Newcomer women often connect through apps such as WhatsApp. The project shows that the model can support and add value to how Newcomer women are connecting and sharing information before coming to Canada and during the immigration journey.

Through this work, the organization and other organizations can better understand the needs of newcomers. Newcomer women have provided a high level of support for the program.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Knowledge, skills, and connections related to the Canadian work environment	Knowledge on topics such as job search strategies, interview skills, resume and cover letter writing, confidence in claiming transferable skills, professionalism in a Canadian workplace context	Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Participants have gained transferable skills including computer and computer software skills, such as Microsoft PowerPoint. Through virtual programming, participants have learned to participate in online meetings including use of virtual meeting software. They have been guided through the EI process, making and updating a resume, seeking employment (and services to assist with this), and preparing for job interviews. NPLs have also provided information on how to use qualifications from participants' home countries (i.e., credentials) to gain employment.

Outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Knowledge of life in Canada, including laws, rights, and responsibilities	Knowledge on topics such as the Canadian tax system, labour laws; rights in the workplace, social assistance programs	Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Participants have gained knowledge on topics related to life in Canada including rights, health and education systems, government, citizenship, taxes, and culture.

Details from data sources:

Participants were provided with information on multiple aspects of life in Canada including:

- How programs and funding works
- Social responsibility
- Government
- Rights as citizens
- Public education
- Child protection

NPLs helped participants prepare for citizenship tests and connected them to further resources (e.g., preparation courses). Participants were provided information on accessing income tax related resources and services. In workshops, participants were able to discuss challenges around accessing healthcare.

According to analysis of focus groups, workshops on knowledge of life in Canada included the following topics:

- Duties and rights of citizens and immigrants
- Conditions upon arrival to Canada
- Culture and norms
- Parenting
- Laws
- Essential services
- The importance of learning how things work in Canada

The following narratives describes two participants' experiences of learning about life in Canada from the *EX2* program:

> *"When I arrived in Nova Scotia, I knew nothing. I knew to say only 'hi' and 'bye'. I struggled with everything. How to use the bus, where to do shopping and with everything. This program helped me to understand and navigate essential services in Halifax."*
>
> *"…it is not economic help that we need, but rather to understand what things to do and not to do… we are doing it together."*

Long term outcomes	**Indicator**	**Data Source**	**Methods**
The NPL's would have garnered more Canadian skills, references and resources for future employment	NPLs with Canadian skills, references, resources for future employment	Program coordinator, NPLs	Interviews

NPLs gained professional skills and training , knowledge about the needs of Newcomers and immigration process, skills related to working virtually, and connections to Canadian workplaces and education.

Details from data sources:

Through their roles as NPLs, Newcomer women are able to reflect on the immigration process and how to best support other Newcomer women. They gained professional skills around developing and facilitation workshops and using virtual meeting software. They were also provided opportunity for training in specialized areas – NPLs were given a course on mental health for immigrant women.

One NPL began onboarding to the project during the pandemic and thus was able to develop the new skills that are now required for working through the pandemic. Another NPL reported a better understanding of the Canadian workplace. The same NPL contributes the connections she made that led to a university education in social work to the *EX2* program because she was able to get to know the needs of her community. Similarly, another NPL began a personal project of creating a website and blog for newcomers to help assist them in navigating services and programs in Halifax. For one NPL, the program helped her to learn valuable information through teaching skills to her peers.

Long term outcomes	Indicator	Data Source	Methods
Clients participate in local labour markets, broader communities and social networks	Clients participation in local labour markets, etc.	Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Newcomer women participated in their broader communities through recreation and research, social networks, and were encouraged and supported to encourage employment opportunities.

Details from data sources:

Regarding the labour market, participants shared that NPLs provided encouragement to take job interviews and pursue employment. NPLs shared job advertisements and showed Newcomer women where to find job advertisements. One participant shared how her NPL helped her to secure childcare so she could pursue employment. NPLs also provided information about community resources, such as recreation, to help Newcomer women participate in their communities. Interviews also described how Newcomer women were connected to an opportunity to voice their perspectives on immigrant women in Canada – another way they were able to engage in the broader community.

The workshops provided the opportunity for Newcomer women to meet people from other countries and learn about new ideas and cultural differences. Many Newcomer women were able to speak in their first language with other women from similar cultural backgrounds. Some participants were able to stay connected and share information by creating Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

Long term outcomes	Indicator	Target	Data Source	Methods
Clients make informed decisions about life in Canada, enjoy rights and act on their responsibilities in Canadian society	Clients' decisions about life in Canada, etc.	80% of participants demonstrate higher levels of understanding of rights, responsibilities, and resources	Newcomer women	Interviews, surveys, focus groups

Participants were provided relevant information and encouragement to make informed decisions about life in Canada but I am unable to determine if the target was met for this outcome.

Details from data sources:

One participant shared an experience where she was encouraged to seek alternative employment after being exposed to a negative work environment. Participants shared they were assisted making informed decisions about areas of life such as housing, purchasing vehicles, investments in savings accounts for children.

Focus Group and Survey Findings

As previously mentioned, surveys and focus groups were used to further test the peer leader model (Appendices). The questions in these tools center on specific areas of the workshops/one-one-one sessions on which project staff sought to gain feedback. After each workshop and one-on-one session, participants were asked to complete either an online or paper version of the survey. Focus groups were held every three months and participants were offered a stipend for participating. The number of participants per focus group ranged from 6-15 and on averaged lasted 1.5-2.5 hours.

Quantitative survey data were analyzed in Excel. The focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis to draw out broad themes that categorize responses to each question. The following section describes findings produced by the analysis.

Results from Survey A (Appendix E)

As shown in Table 1, just over half (60%) of respondents who responded had not previously attended workshops conducted by a newcomer facilitator. The majority of respondents (79%) had also not previously attended workshops conducted by a Canadian born facilitator (see Table 2). The majority of respondents felt that the length of the workshop was sufficient for the topic presented.

Table 1. Distribution by response to question 'Have you attended any other workshops conducted by newcomer facilitator?'

Have you attended any other workshops conducted by newcomer facilitator?	Percent
No	60%
Yes	40
Total	100
n =	9

Table 2. Distribution by response to question 'Have you attended any workshops conducted by a Canadian born facilitator?'

Have you attended any workshops conducted by a Canadian born facilitator?	Percent
No	79%
Yes	21
Total	100
n =	14

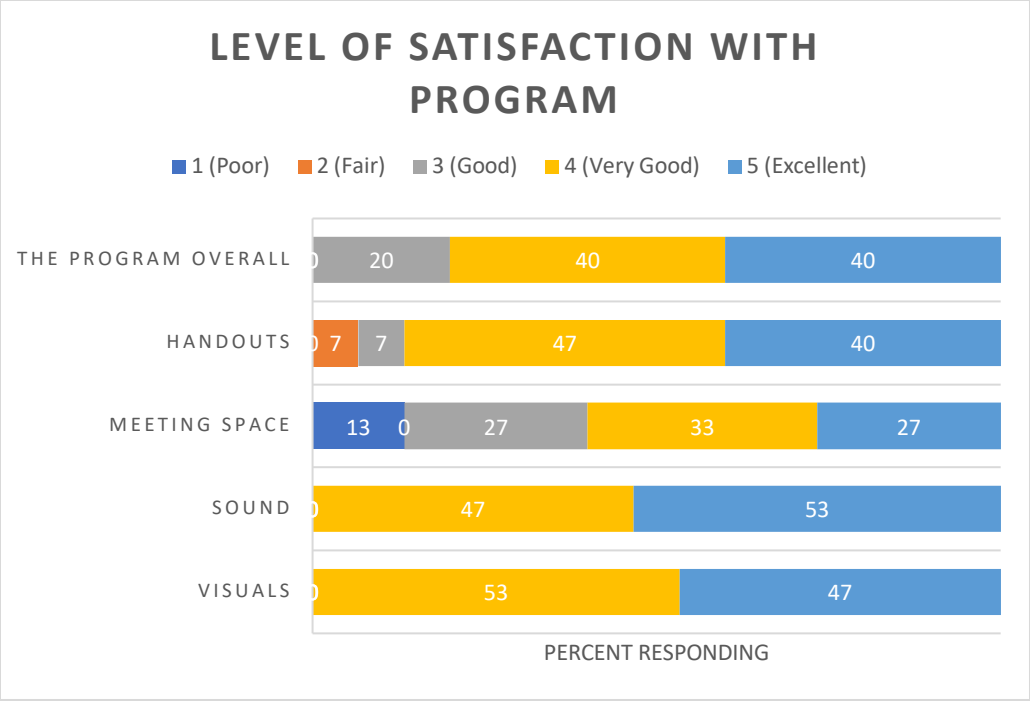
All participants (n = 16) responded 'yes' when asked if the workshop was helpful for them.

Table 3. Distribution by response to question 'Was the length of the workshop sufficient for the topic presented?'

Was the length of the workshop sufficient for the topic presented?	Percent
Yes	86%
No	14
Total	100
n =	14

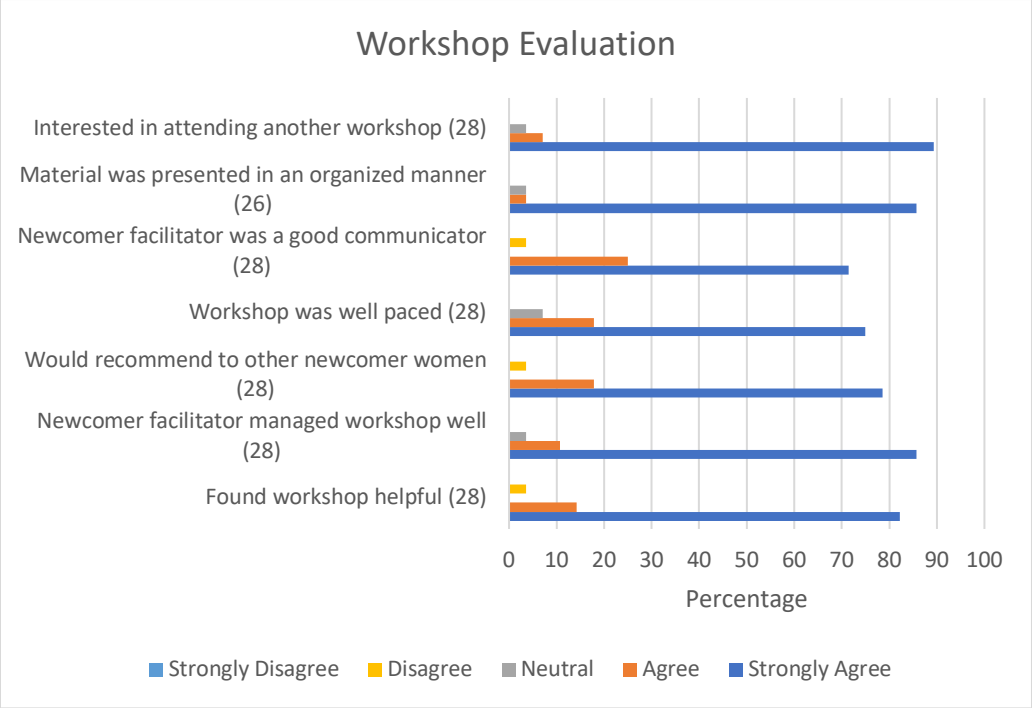
All respondents (n = 15) responded 'yes' when asked if they liked the way the facilitator presented the material. When asked why, the majority of participants mentioned sharing about themselves (e.g., future plans) and clear/interesting information, topics, and questions.

The graph below describes participants' overall level of satisfaction with the program based on their responses to a Likert scale (i.e., 1-5) for each question.

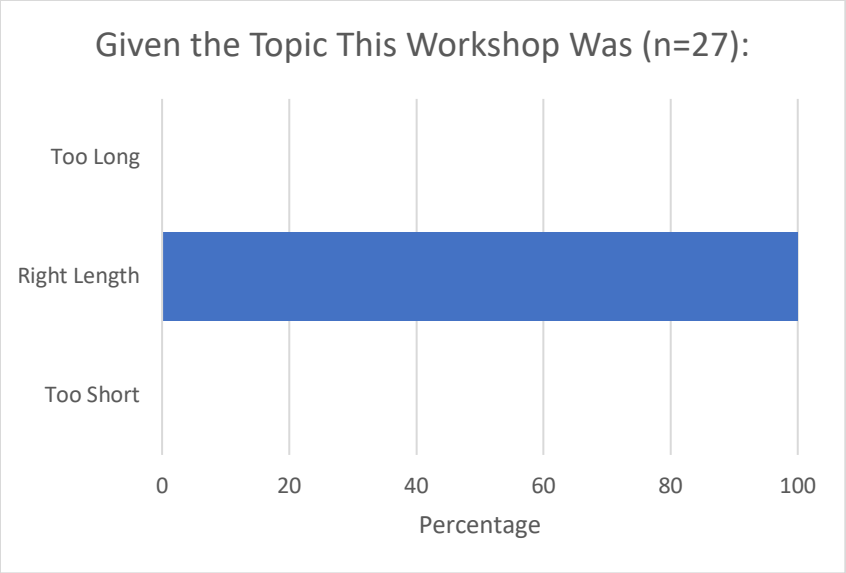


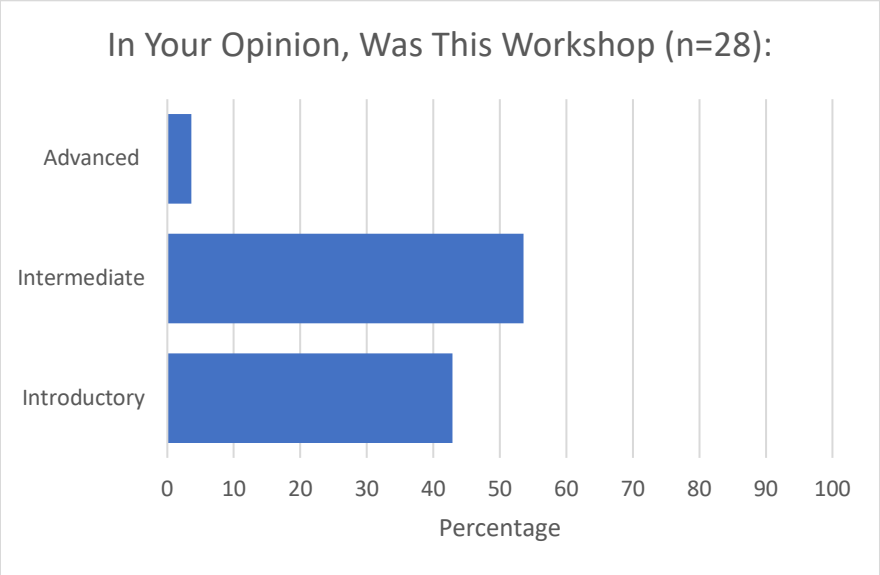
Results from Survey B (Appendix F)

The graphs below describe results from evaluations based on participants' responses to a Likert scale (i.e., 1-5) for each question.



The graph below describes participants' perspectives on the length and level of difficulty of the workshop.





When asked what they liked the most about the workshop, more than half (58%) mentioned sharing experiences and challenges and hearing others' perspectives and experiences. Following that, five of the 24 respondents (20%) provided suggestions for improvement including providing the level of difficulty in advance and smaller groups. Others mentioned the topics and information.

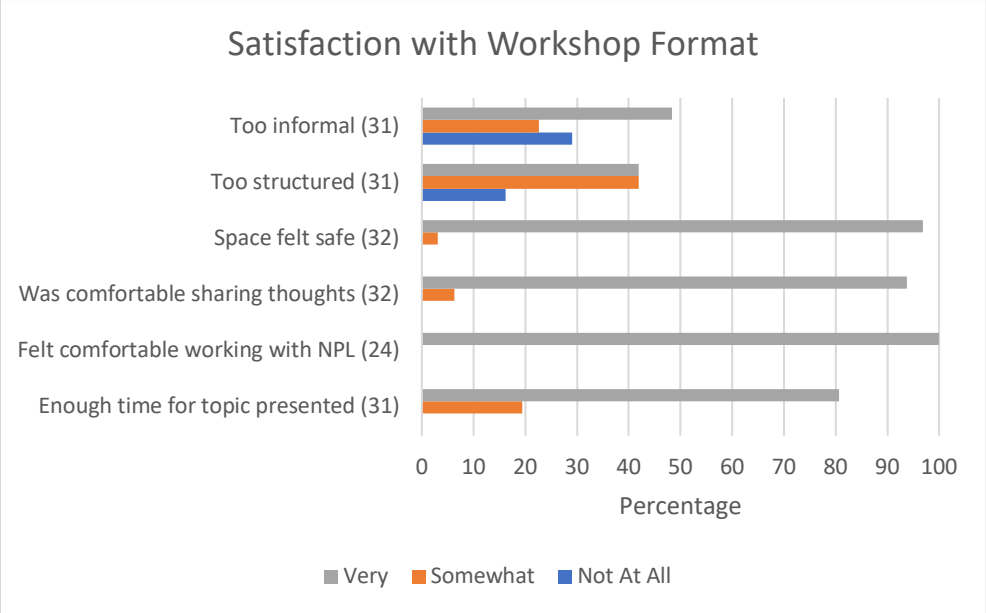
Findings from the focus groups provide further details on what participants liked about the model. More than one participant mentioned that the workshops provide information and knowledge for newcomers, particular important information and resources that can help newcomers to adapt. This is illustrated by the following quote: "[the model] helps the newcomer women to accept the new life, the new community, the new culture, and make it easy to adapt to a new society and community". One participant suggested that many newcomers come to Canada

alone or without people who can provide information to them. Participants suggested the model makes them feel like they're not alone and that they can ask questions. Others pointed to the NPLs' receptivity to help and ability to help address participants' immediate and pressing needs through selected topics. One participant described the NPL as a 'friend type person' who is receptive to helping, giving guidance, and connecting to information. Another participant mentioned the personalized nature of support. Participants also found the workshops empowering: one mentioned that the workshops gave them a "push" while another suggested they too could take on the role of helping others. Finally, participants mentioned the social aspect of the workshops whereby they could connect with others.

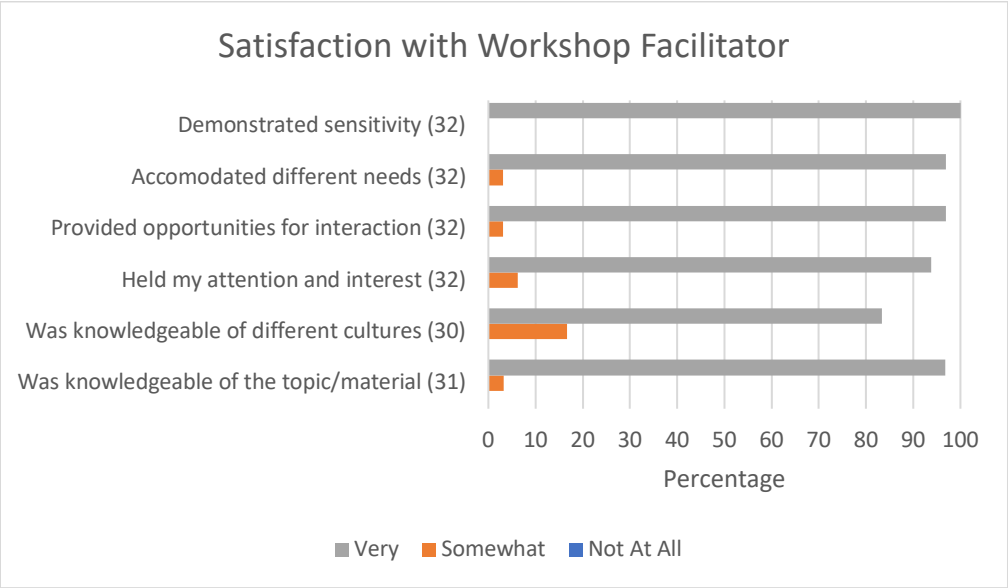
Participants were also asked to describe the three most valuable things they gained from the sessions. Many participants valued the sense of community the sessions provided, especially during COVID-19. One participant shared: "In my case, I started the program just when I needed it because I felt very low but then I received all that support from you". Through this they were able to meet people and talk and share they common experiences and interests. Participants also valued workshops on technology where they could learn how to use a computer, search, and navigate the web safely and confidently. Another topic of value for participants was employment where they could access help with resume revisions, mock interviews, discuss employment opportunities, learn how to mobilize training and education, and realize their strengths. Other valuable takeaways were the opportunities to learn and gain knowledge, access information and resources, the flexibility of the workshops around topics, emotional wellness and managing stress, and the kindness and patience of NPLs.

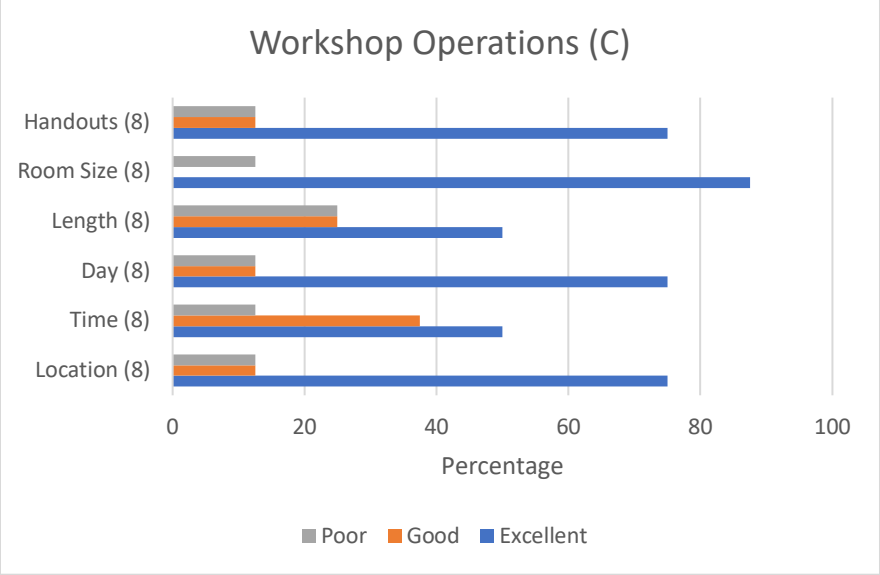
Results from Survey C and D (Appendices G, H)

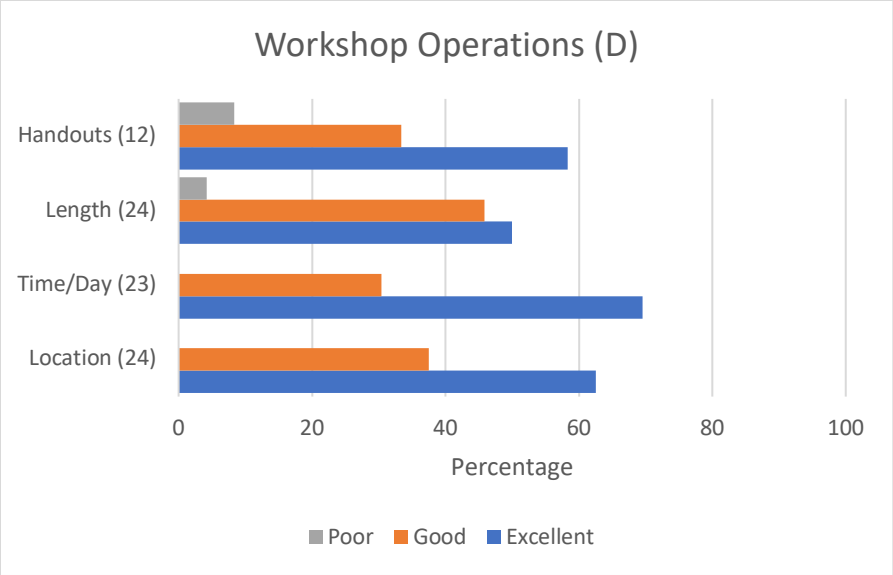
The graphs below describes participants' level of satisfaction with the program format, facilitator, and various elements related to implementation based on their responses to a Likert scale (i.e., 1-3) for each question.



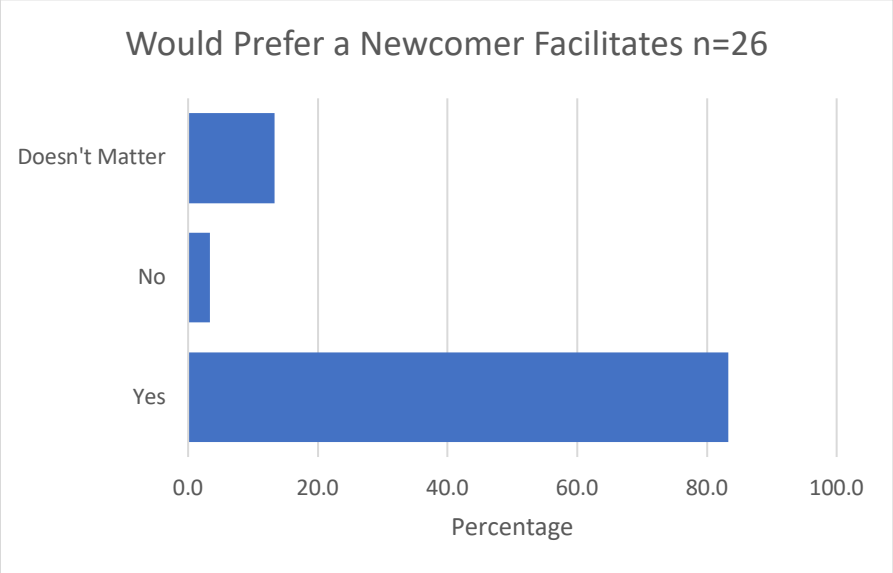
To expand workshop formality and structure, more than one participant suggested that formal workshops are helpful for financial topics such as employment benefits or taxes. Informal workshops were preferred for discussion-based topics such as emotional intelligence and stress.







Importantly, the following graph suggests that most newcomer women would prefer a newcomer facilitator for workshops. When asked why, more than one respondent reported they felt a Newcomer would better understand their experiences and challenges, they would feel more comfortable, and that they would understand better.



Focus groups results support the quantitative findings from surveys. Many focus group participants felt it was important that peer leaders are also newcomers because they can relate to and identify with other newcomers who have faced a similar process. Participants mentioned they could feel comfortable with others who have had similar experiences and needs and have faced similar challenges and problems. The following quotes demonstrate these findings:

> *"When I am being taught by my peer I know when they tell me to do something, they have gone through the same struggles."*

"... sometimes you don't have to explain the whole thing just by saying a few words you noticed that they will understand immediately"

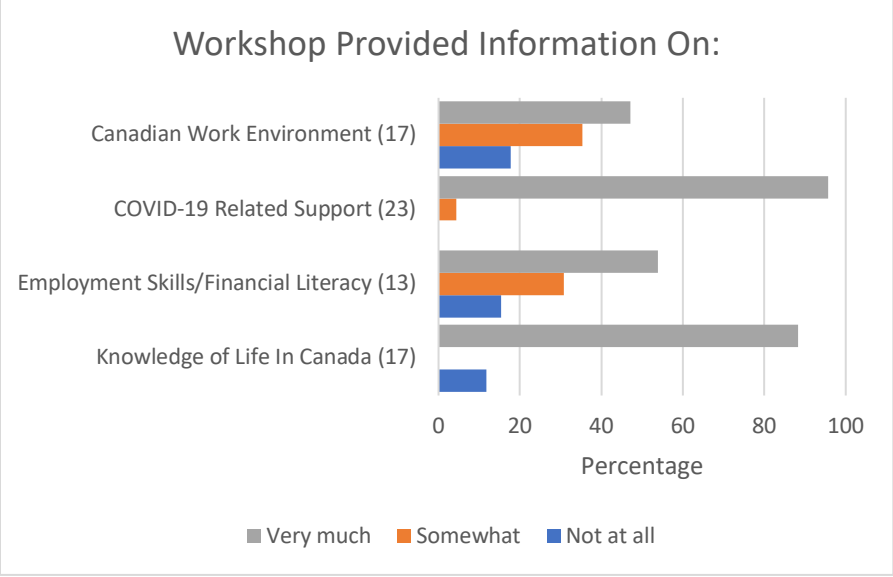
"I believe that the fact you [the facilitator] is an immigrant yourself results in you understanding the difficulties and the pain we go through during resettlement. And thus your presence as a newcomer facilitator makes these workshops a safer place for us"

"My peer knows life where I come from and has lived here in Canada hence knows how the two lifestyles merge."

Participants also felt it was positive to see other newcomer women who have had success in their integration. They valued having someone who has already gone through the process in other to help address their needs and make plans.

Language and culture were identified as key elements of the newcomer peer leader model by focus group participants. Some felt sharing a common first language facilitated their understanding of the materials: "I get to understand better because my peer shares a common language with me therefore, they can explain to me in detail when I am confused and use a language that I am well versed with". Another participant shared: "It's a safe space where we an socialize in a common language which receives stress and makes us feel at home". Others saw the workshops as an opportunity to improve their English. NPLs' understanding of culture was also considered an important factor in providing information to newcomers: "When a peer teaches, they have an understanding of the culture of my place of origin hence will teach me accordingly with respect to my culture and social beliefs".

The final graph below describes the topics covered in workshops.



Participants were asked to reflect on the support received during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly the one-on-one and virtual support they received. Many felt the virtual sessions were convenient; they didn't have to leave their home to access support. This was echoed in one-on-one interviews with Newcomer women as well. Some found that the virtual session actually

facilitated participation, saved them time and moved some transportation related barriers. Some had not participated in online meetings prior to the pandemic so virtual sessions provided a learning challenge. Virtual sessions were challenging for some with low English skills, those without email addresses, and those joining meeting using cellphones with small screens. Many mentioned they would prefer to resume in-person sessions when it is safe to do so to facilitate interacting with others. Some participants felt one-on-one sessions allowed for more privacy to ask personal questions or have discussions.

Findings from focus groups can help expand on participants' learnings from the workshops on the above topics.

COVID-19 related support included:

- Public health measures (social distancing, masks, wash hands)
- Rules related to mandatory quarantine
- Navigating the school system
- Accessing information on COVID-19 related updates (case numbers)

Importantly, participants suggested the *EX2* project provided people and support to connect with during the isolation of the pandemic. Many found it helpful to have someone check in on them to offer support.

Sensemaking Workshop

The sensemaking workshop brought together the Project Coordinator, the four NPLs, and seven program participants (Newcomer women). Participants were recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate and their ability to speak and read in English. The workshop lasted two hours.

The stories analysed in the workshop were gathered by NPLs and by this writer during evaluation interviews. Newcomer women were presented with the following prompt: *Please share a story (narrative, experience) from your time with the YWCA program. Something that stands out in your mind as memorable or important, whether it be a good or bad story.* The workshop began with a story sharing circle during which participants were asked to read aloud the anonymous stories that had been shared with them. After each story, the group was asked to suggest key words or words that stood out for them from the stories.

A number of key words from the stories describe the type of support, activity, or topic Newcomer women participated in during their time in the program. These include:

- Socializing
- Giving advice
- Social security
- Basic, essential needs
- Community building
- Bridging, linking
- Importance of privacy
- Self care
- Improved digital literacy
- Communicate
- Ongoing learning
- Self development
- Shared cultures
- Interview preparation
- Exploring

- Guidance
- Shared experience
- Goal achievement
- Personal assistance

Other key words from the stories as suggested by participants illustrate some sentiments around the support they received. These words often described key qualities of the NPLs they worked with. Some examples of this are:

- Empathy
- Caring
- Encouragement
- Comfortable, and comfortable asking for help
- Dedication, commitment; "never give up"
- Adaptation

Importantly, some key words from the stories describe the various outcomes of the *EX2* program on Newcomer women:

- Confidence and self esteem
- Safe space
- Expanding social network, connections
- Recognition, validation, and acceptance
- Open to learn
- Value of experience
- Sisterhood
- Trust
- Determination
- Gratitude
- Feeling empowered, empowerment
- Independence, total independence and a sense of freedom
- Increasing knowledge
- Sense of belonging
- "Proud of herself"
- Feeling secure/sense of security
- Engagement
- Inclusion
- Enjoyment/sense of joy
- Useful knowledge
- Improvement
- Support

Finally, some key words suggested by participants show how Newcomer women were feeling about their experience with immigration and experiences accessing other settlement services:

- Frustrating situations
- Confusion
- Immigration stressors (e.g., mental health)
- Not inclusive
- Insensitive
- "how is that okay?"
- Eurocentric
- Challenge

Following the story sharing circle and the discussion about key words, participants were invited to think about the categories (or groupings) of stories they heard about. The categories of stories are varied and they align with workshop topics described in the document review. The categories include:

- Digital literacy
- Collaboration/working together as newcomer women
- Communication, English language acquisition
- Realizing potential/success, self acceptance
- Preparing for new life/adaptation, inclusion and integration, life in Canada (acculturation)
- Share culture, discuss differences
- Importance of self care
- Positive side of immigration
- Giving advice, guidance
- Sense of sisterhood (deeper than network), system of support and empowerment
- Build capacity of newcomer women
- Growth and community growth
- Share experience
- Skill development and independence
- Connection to resources (social, economic)
- Areas for opportunity

During the final activity, participants were asked to highlight stories they felt had the most impact. A consensus formed about two top stories that participants felt were most impactful, and eight other stories with big impact were discussed. The discussion revealed some key characteristics of stories which had more impact than others. The most impactful described the challenges of coming to Canada as a newcomer and the confusion, disconnection, and frustration newcomers often feel on this journey and in trying to access information and services. In the stories, Newcomer women were unsure of where to go to access information and support, and language played a large role in this. Experiences which describe newcomers' embarrassment or hesitancy to ask questions resonated among many participants. Many participants were reminded of their own experiences and were able to relate to the stories. The top two stories then pointed to the EX2 program as providing comfort and an outlet to ask for advice: "It [EX2 program] rescued me!". One story described the program as offering a "sisterhood" while another suggested the program offers connection through a peer who is able to "walk in your shoes". Participants agreed that in contrast to other services, EX2 creates a forum where women are included and can participate.

These reflections show how participants are thinking about impact of the program, and the ingredients necessary to have the biggest impact.

Summative Evaluation Findings

The findings of this evaluation suggest that the *EX2* program did what it set out to do in testing the peer leader model as a settlement service provision and its impact on Newcomer women (NPLs and participants). The project successfully carried out planned activities and seems to have met outcomes based on evaluation data. Analysis of data suggests that the peer-led model is a valuable and effective approach to service delivery through providing support that is individualized, flexible, adaptive, and responsive and meets the evolving needs of newcomers to Canada. A major marker of success is the project's ability to pivot in the structure and goal of the service to meet changing needs of Newcomers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Importantly, analysis of survey data showed that participants seemed to prefer a peer facilitator and found the model to be helpful and beneficial. Most participants felt it was essential that

settlement service be facilitated by a peer and described the importance of support from someone with a similar cultural background and shared first language. Interviews with participants highlight the meaningful impact the program had on their lives through information, support, and connection. Through this program, Newcomer women were able to access information and connection to resources based on their changing, but also to networks of their peers. Workshops and one-on-one sessions provided Newcomer women with the opportunity to share their settlement experiences and draw on the support of others to gain empowerment.

The project faced some challenges related to the evaluation tools used to test the peer-led model. Some project staff felt the purpose of the focus groups were not clear and that the questions were repetitive for Newcomer women who participated in focus groups multiple times.

Emergent Theory of Change

Prior to this evaluation, some work had been done to build a theory of change for the *EX2* program as detailed in a previous section. In the points that follow, I suggest some findings that can help to build on the theory of change for this work.

- Providing a **social environment** is a key element of the program. It enable women to feel comfortable to share their experiences openly and ask questions. A social environment is also how Newcomer women best receive information because they are able to learn freely.
- **People are experts of their own experience.** The service honours what women know, their culture, and builds on their strengths. One way this is done is by employing peer leaders from similar social and cultural groups who understand the group's barriers and challenges.
- Engage **women who are leaders in their communities**, and those who aspire to lead and help others. Participants can benefit from seeing their peers succeed while connecting with their shared social and cultural group.
- The peer relationship is focused on **relationship building** which improves peer leader and participant outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Project

1. Continue to utilize the informal support networks that Newcomer women frequent and access in order to engage more women, particularly those who are most in need of the service (i.e., those without access to support or information).
2. Continue to match peer leaders with participants who share a common or similar culture or social group, where possible.
3. Continue to employ peer leaders who want to lead and help women in their community as a key factor in the project's success.
4. Consider providing NPLs with sufficient information (e.g., purpose of tools) and training on evaluation tools, including guidelines for participation eligibility.
5. Consider developing an updated logic model that focuses on outcomes for participants, NPLs, and the service model.

6. Consider providing NPLs with additional and clear information and support to navigate the parameters and boundaries of their roles.
7. Consider implementing a 'warm handoff' when a new peer leader is introduced to help maintain the supportive relationship and safe space that has been built between peer leaders and participants and to promote relationship building.
8. Consider pursuing opportunities to build referral relationships with community organizations working in the settlement sector to expand the reach of the service.

Recommendations for Future Evaluations

Future evaluations should focus on defining and measuring success of the model of delivery by determining outcomes that align with the goals of the service delivery model. Where possible, use of a control group can help to determine whether or not a peer-led approach enhances current service delivery (e.g., those that do not use a peer-led approach).

Appendix A – Interview Guide: Project Coordinator

SECTION 1: The NPL Model

1) Can you tell me about how the workshop content was developed?
    a. What does the content consist of?
    b. Who contributed to this process?
2) Did the project develop an evaluation tool? If so, what does the evaluation involve?
    a. Do the evaluation tools support the project's development and the shareable resource? What does this look like?
3) Was a logic model developed?
4) How many focus groups were conducted? How many individuals were consulted?
5) Was feedback incorporated into the model? How?
    a. How was feedback collected and integrated into the project from participants and NPLs? What did this process involve? Was the process ongoing?
    b. How did the feedback process impact the settlement service sessions?
    c. Did participants' feedback inform the shareable resource and model?
6) Did the project follow best practices? What are the best practices for this work and how were these best practices determined?
7) Did the project develop a shareable guide or resources? What does the guide include?
8) Has the project impacted NPLs' evaluation skills? If so, how?

Now I'm going to ask a few questions about the impact of the program.

SECTION 2: Outcomes and impacts

9) Does this project address the evolving needs of the newcomers? How is this done?
    a. Does the content of the Settlement Integration Sessions evolve or change to address newcomers' evolving needs? What are some examples to show how this is done?
10) Does the project benefit other settlement organizations that work with newcomers? How?
11) Did the project impact NPLs' knowledge, skills, and career building opportunities? If yes, how?
12) Did the project impact NPLs' readiness and preparedness for the Canadian job market?

SECTION 3: Generic project evaluation questions

Now I have some more general questions about how the program works.

13) What do you see as the main objective or goal of the NPL program?
    a. What effect do you hope the program will have?
14) Did the NPLs receive training? If so, what did the training involve?
    a. How was the training content developed?
15) What are the roles of the NPLs?
    a. Do the NPLs have the support needed to work in this role? What does that support look like?
16) Where does the NPLs work? Is this location suitable?
17) What is the governance or decision-making structure of the NPL program?

18) Where are participant records stored? Are there policies related to accessing those records? What are they?
    a. Are financial records kept?
19) How are participants recruited? Is there a process in place for this?
20) Do you believe that this program works? Why or why not? What makes it effective?
21) Are the measures in place to meet the needs of diverse participants, in terms of social, ethnic, language and other forms of diversity?
22) Is there a process in place for sustaining this program?

Those are all the questions I have for you, is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B – Interview Guide: Newcomer Peer Leaders

I'd like to begin by discussing the NPL Model for working with newcomer women.

SECTION 1: The NPL Model

23) Can you tell me about how workshop content was developed?
    a. Who contributed to this process?
    b. What are the workshops about?
24) Did the project develop an evaluation tool? If so, what does the evaluation involve?
    a. What is done with evaluation data?
    b. Do the evaluation tools support the project's development, and the shareable resource? What does this look like?
25) Were you and other NPLs, and participants able to provide feedback?
    a. Was the feedback incorporated into the model? How?
    b. How was feedback collected and integrated into the project from participants and NPLs? What did this process involve?
    c. Was the process ongoing?
    d. Were you given avenues to provide feedback on the model and the content of the workshops?
    e. How did the feedback process impact the settlement service sessions?
    f. Did participants' feedback inform the shareable resource and model?
26) Was a logic model developed?
27) How many focus groups were conducted? How many individuals were consulted?
28) How do you think about best practices in this work?
    a. Did the project follow best practices? What are the best practices for this work and how were these best practices determined?
29) Did the project develop a shareable guide or resources? What does the guide include?

Now I'm going to ask a few questions about the impact of the program.

SECTION 2: Outcomes and impacts

30) Does this project address the evolving needs of the newcomers? How is this done?
    a. Does the content of the Settlement Integration Sessions evolve or change to address newcomers' evolving needs? What are some examples to show how this is done?
31) Did the project impact your knowledge, skills, and career building opportunities? If yes, how? If it is helpful, you could tell me a story about your experience?
    a. Did the project impact your financial literacy and employment knowledge and skills?
    b. Did the project impact your knowledge of life in Canada?
    c. Did the project impact your readiness and preparedness for the Canadian job market?
32) Has the project impacted your evaluation skills? If so, what did you learn?

Now I have some more general questions about how the program works.

SECTION 3: Generic project evaluation questions

33) What do you see as the main objective or goal of the Experts by Experience program?
    a. What effect do you hope the program will have?
34) Did the NPLs receive training? If so, what did the training involve?
    a. How was the training content developed?
    b. Any missing training?
35) What are the roles of the NPLs?
    a. Do the NPLs have the support needed to work in this role? What does that support look like?
36) Where does the NPLs work? Is this location suitable?
37) What is the governance or decision-making structure of the NPL program?
38) Where are participant records stored? Are there policies related to accessing those records? What are they?
    a. Are financial records kept?
39) How are participants recruited? Is there a process in place for this?
40) Do you believe that this program works? Why or why not? What makes it effective?
41) Are the measures in place to meet the needs of diverse participants, in terms of social, ethnic, language and other forms of diversity?
42) Is there a process in place for sustaining this program?

Lastly, I would like to hear about some specific examples from the project. One way that we can learn more about the work and the impact that it's having on people and communities is through telling stories. We will work with these stories together as a group at a later date to explore what they mean.

SECTION 4: Narrative/stories

43) Can you describe a story or experience from the project that made you feel like it was having a positive impact?
44) Can you describe a story or experience from the project that made you worry about the impact the project is having?

Those are all the questions I have for you, is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix C – Interview Guide: Participants

1. Can you tell me how you got involved with the YWCA program?
    a. (Prompts: Who first approached you? What did they tell you?)

2. Tell me about your first meeting with the YWCA program. What happened?

3. Can you describe what happens during the workshop? What happens when you meet?

4. Can you tell about a time when you were working with the YWCA program and thought it was a really helpful experience? What happened? How did the program address your needs?

5. Can you tell me about the most difficult meeting you've had with the YWCA program? What happened?

6. Do you have any other memorable meetings with the YWCA program that you would like to tell me about?

7. Could you describe any other services, supports, or programs you've accessed because of the YWCA program? What about the job market, community, social networks (e.g., friends or support groups)?

Probes for all questions (where relevant):

How did that make you feel?
What was significant about that experience?
What influenced how this story played out?
How would you describe this experience?
Who was involved? Who could have made this experience better/worse?

NOTE: End interview by going over notes and each anecdote to make sure participant is comfortable sharing it and that it does not include identifiers.

Lastly, I'm wondering if you can tell me a story (or narrative, or experience) from your time with the YWCA program. I'm hoping you can tell me a story that involves a change in yourself or someone else as a result of the YWCA program. Stories like these can help us to learn about the impact the program can have on newcomer women like yourself.

Most Significant Change Questions: What is the most significant change that has happened because of the YWCA program?

What is the change?

What happened?

Who or what did it happen to?

What needed to be in place for the change to happen? What factors helped the change happen?

Follow up questions (probes):

What it is about this story that is important to you?

How do you feel about that experience or event?

Who needs to hear about this?

Thank you for sharing your reflections and experiences with me. Do you have any questions or final thoughts before we wrap up?

Appendix D – Focus Group Guide

1. These workshops are based on a peer leadership model which means…. *(you explain model)*
    a. What do you like about this model? What do you not like so much?
    b. Do you like that the facilitator is a newcomer like you? Why or why not?
2. Do you like the group setting of the workshop? Why or why not?
    a. What factors help you to participate in the workshop? Were there any barriers to participating?
    b. Did the workshops provide you with the opportunity to actively participate?
        i. How can these opportunities be improved?
3. Since Covid-19 began, there has been a lot of one on one support. How would you describe your experience with this? (Probe: setting (online or in person), scheduling of meetings (time), length of the meetings)
4. Did you face any barriers to attending the workshops? (Probe if necessary)
    a. Did you have childcare issues?
    b. Were there issues with transportation?
    c. Other barriers?
5. Did you feel comfortable participating in the workshops? Why or why not?
    a. Was the setting comfortable?
    b. Did you feel you were given equal attention as the other participants?
    ~~c.~~ Are there any areas you feel could be improved to make the space safer?
6. In the workshops there were different styles of presentations – there were structured workshops, facilitator focused with PowerPoints etc, and there were informal workshops that were more open discussions between each other…
    a. Which did you prefer?
    b. Why?
    c. Are there specific topics that would be better structured? What about informal?
7. Were there opportunities to provide feedback to improve or change the workshops?
    a. How can these opportunities be improved? (Probe for feedback on: follow-ups or other opportunities)
    b. Are there other ways you would prefer to provide feedback?
    c. Do you feel your feedback was heard? Why or why not?
8. Now imagine that you were planning workshops for women like yourself – what do you see as the most important factors in designing the workshops? (Probe if necessary)
    a. Materials
    b. Topics
    c. Language
    d. Location and Time
    e. Planning and scheduling
    f. Refreshments or snacks

Now we have some questions about what you learned during the workshops.

9. Did you learn anything about… (probe for examples). Feel free to use examples of your knowledge in everyday life, if it helps.
    a. Knowledge of life in Canada?
    b. Employment and skills?
    c. Digital literacy?
    d. The Canadian work environment?
    e. Participating in the labour market?
10. What Covid-19 related information did you discuss or learn? Is there anything else you would like to learn about related to Covid-19? (probe for examples)
11. What were the three most valuable things you took away from the sessions? (probe for examples)

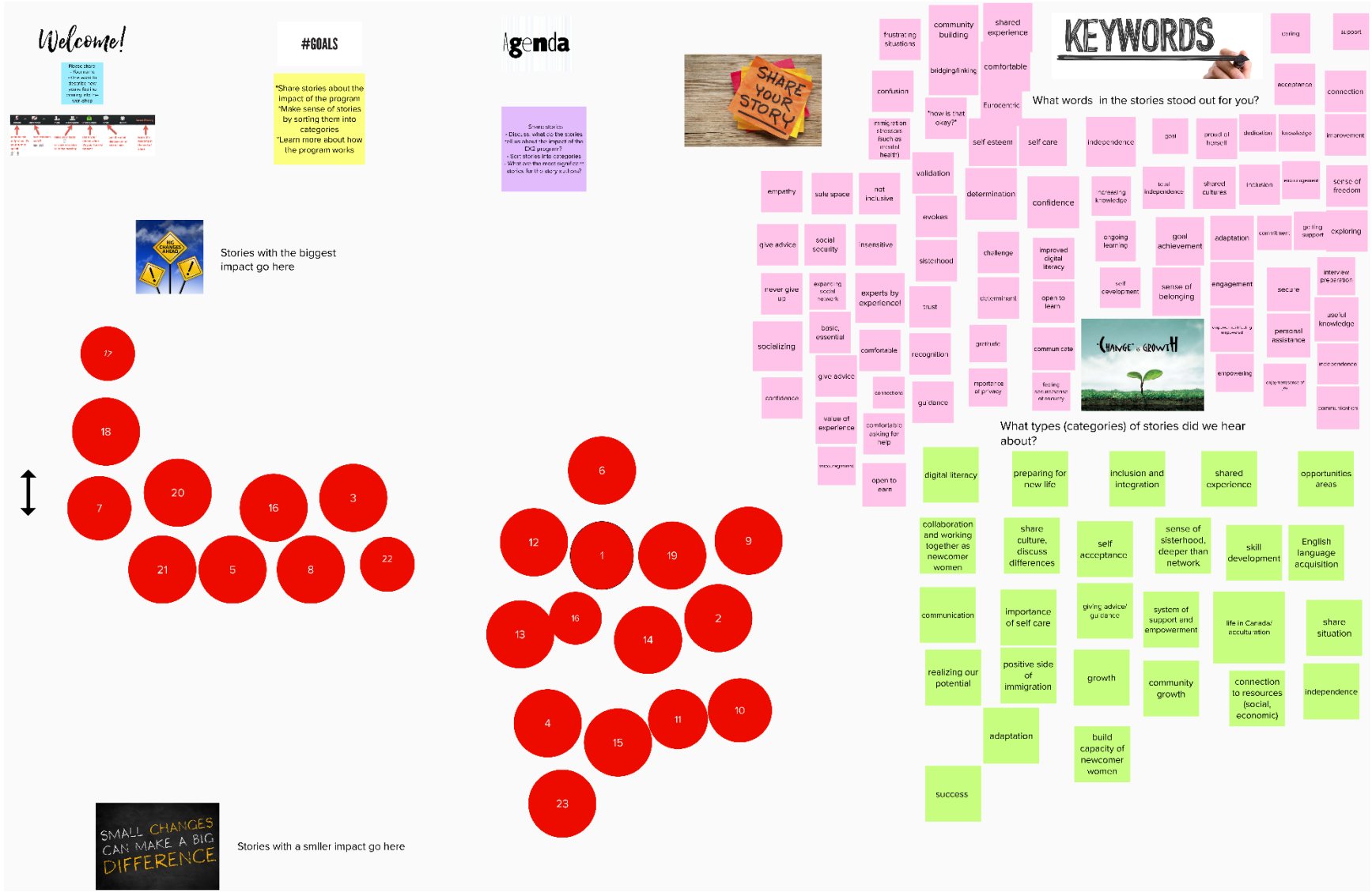
Appendix E – Participant Survey (A)

Appendix F – Participant Survey (B)

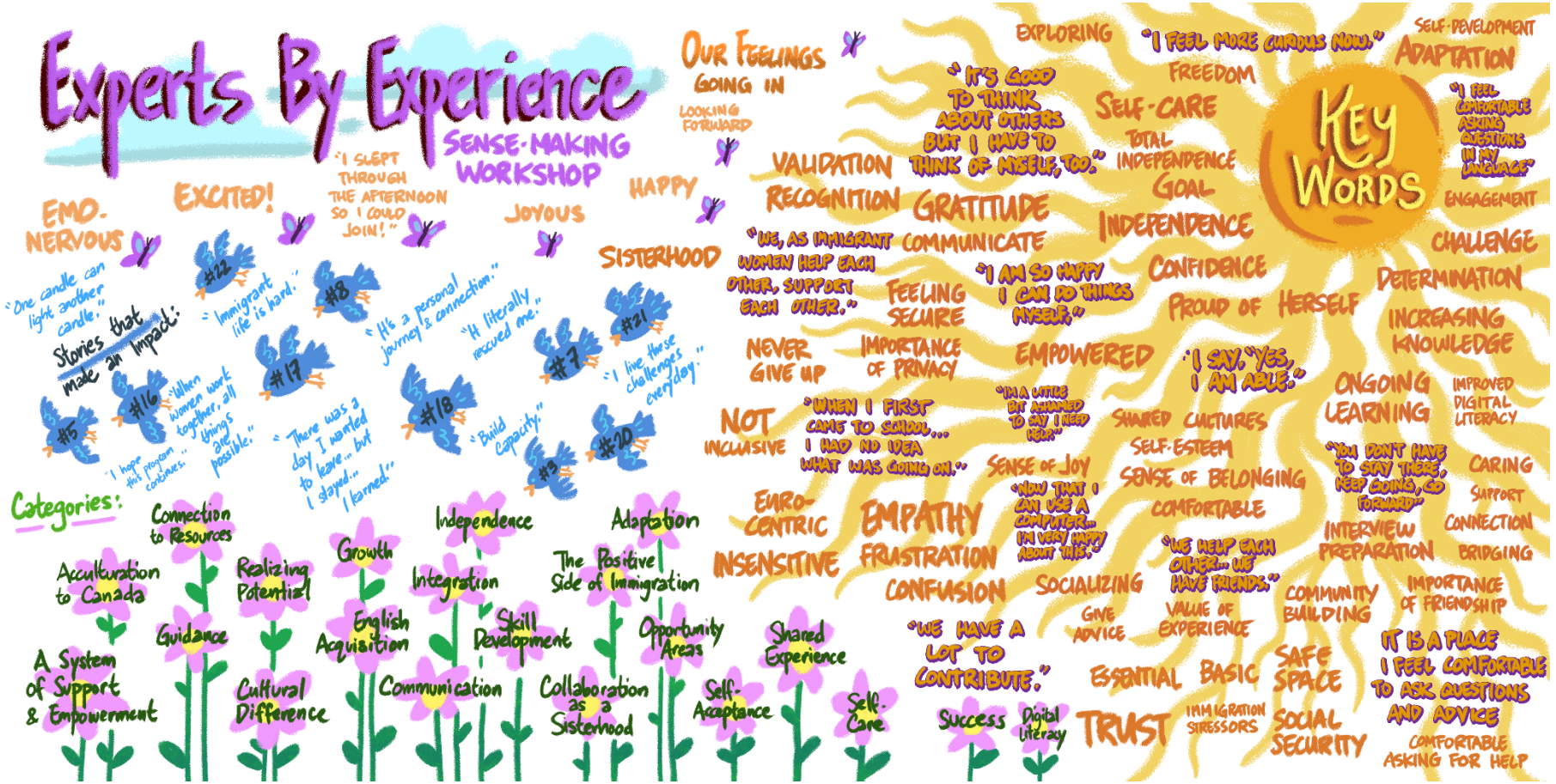
Appendix G – Participant Survey (C)

Appendix H – Participant Survey (D)

Appendix I – Sensemaking Workshop MURAL



Appendix J – Sensemaking Workshop Graphic Design



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