



BC Refugee Claimant Housing Referral and Data Management System Project

Minutes of the CHARMS Advisory Meeting #7

Wednesday January 20, 2021 - 1:30pm -3:30pm (Zoom)

Present: Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC), Sherman Chan (MOSAIC), Jacqueline Sarvini (MOSAIC), Richard Belcham (Inasmuch/MAP BC Co-chair), Joni Rose (Min Municipal Affairs), Derek Chu (Kinbrace /MAP Housing Working Group Co-chair), Iris Solorzano (Options), Lavinra Joseph (BC Housing), Jenny Lam (Options/MAP Co-chair), Sonia Rosenfeld (IRCC), Demetrius Schwab (Union Gospel Mission), Vanessa Roth (Journey Home Community), Julia Wu (BC211), Ali Mustafa (Independent), Jenny Moss (MAP Executive)

Meeting Chair: Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)

- Marzieh provided a welcome to everyone and new year's good wishes and an acknowledgement that she was speaking from the unceded territories of the Coast Salish people
- Marzieh also acknowledged the generous financial support of Ministry of Municipal Affairs
- Agenda was reviewed and approved
- Repeated project goals and objectives

Technical Project Updates:

- **Online Survey:** The survey (via Survey Monkey) was designed to understand the current trends in housing services for refugee claimants, including numbers served and referral systems used. It also asked stakeholders to identify their expectations for the new centralized housing system. In total, Forty one individuals from thirty-one (31) agencies participated.
- **Interviews:** There were two (2) different types of interviews. One for stakeholders (from October to December 2020) and one for refugee claimants (from December 2020 to January 2021).
 - **Stakeholders:** These interviews were meant to gain a deeper understanding of housing practices and referral processes, including gaps and challenges. Individual invitations were sent to a diverse group of stakeholders geographically and professionally. In total, thirty-seven (37) individuals have participated in the interview.
 - **Refugee Claimants:** These interviews were meant to listen to the housing journey experience through the perspective of refugee claimants whom we serve. Referrals were received from a variety of organizations around the province and interpretation was provided when needed. In total, fifty (50) individuals have participated in the interview, though Marzieh and Jackie are interested in speaking to more refugee claimants (around 10 – 12 more).
- **Logo and Report Book:** A designer was hired in December 2020 to design the BC CHARMS logo, brochure, and report book.
 - The materials will be available in print and electronic versions and translated into five (5) languages.
 - The report will be completed by March 2021 and will be accessible to settlement agencies, housing providers, government bodies, landlords, and refugee claimants.

- Four logos were proposed by the designer, and they were narrowed down to two by the project team. As a group, everyone chose between Logo 1 or 2, and logo 2 was ultimately chosen. A guidebook on how to use logo will be circulated in the near future.
 - **Technical Consultant:** Hissein's contract ended in November 2020 and two (2) new technical consultants have been identified to work on the Systems Requirements Document and with the Security Consultant to oversee the system testing. The successful candidate(s) will start working soon.
 - **Hiring a Security Consultant:** Because access will be given to a lot of organizations across the province, it's important to hire someone who will adhere to the BC Privacy and Security considerations and law. A potential security consultant was identified and will start late January or early February 2021.
 - **Software Vendors:** Meetings were held with possible software vendors to see if their platforms are compatible with the vision of the centralized referral system. A decision will be made soon, based on the requirements document.
 - **Systems Requirement Document:** A Systems Requirement Document will be created, separate from the Software Requirements Document or as an appendix to it.
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Software Requirements Document Feedback:

Under 'Executive Overview': "(5) Provide real-time information on the number of clients requiring housing and the number of housing/shelter availabilities."

Demetrius: I was under the impression that shelter availabilities won't be included and encompassed by BC CHARMS, because that's already being done by BC 211.

Alexandra: Good point. We don't want to duplicate what's already being done. BC CHARMS could begin when the refugee claimant moves from shelter to transition housing.

Richard: There's a possibility of systems integration (which would be ideal), though that leads to a lot of technical complications.

Under 3. 'BC CHARMS Overview' >> 3.4 'Project Objectives' >> 3.4.2 'Service Providers' Benefits': "(7) Eliminate making/receiving multiple referrals."

Joni: Could you explain this part a bit more?

Marzieh: It means eliminating duplications.

Joni: Is it the same as #8 ("Eliminate duplication of information/service")?

Marzieh: #7 is more about eliminating the duplications of information and referrals; #8 is more about eliminating the duplications in the services. We can combine the two and make it one item.

Derek: As a separate point, could we include 'Accuracy of client information' as an additional service provider benefit?

Joni: What do you mean by accuracy? Do you mean *complete*?

Derek: Both accurate *and* complete. If you don't have both, you can't achieve #5 ("Ability to best match clients' needs with housing/shelter availabilities").

Demetrius: Add 'easily updated data' (i.e. real-time information) in regard to shelter availability and client information.

Under 3. 'BC CHARMS Overview' >> 3.5 'Target Audience':

"(A) Full Access Users: Any private individual or external organization that is granted access to BC CHARMS, examples of such users: Settlement Agencies; Emergency Housing Providers; Transition Housing Providers"

Derek: Why does it list 'private individual or external organization' under Full Access Users but doesn't do the same under Limited Access Users (where it lists 'any individual or organization')? Why doesn't it cover both – is there a difference?

Marzieh: We'll re-word it.

Joni: Yes, the wording isn't very clear. The word 'private' doesn't add anything, so you can edit that out. Maybe spell out that the Full Access User has access to *all* data – or are there additional restrictions for certain groups?

This needs more flushing out from the privacy consultant. You need to be careful of who's going to have access to what information, because security awareness and maintenance is very important. Pay attention to the risk and what could potentially happen.

Make sure that you spend all of your energy on these details so that all users understand what kind of level of access they'll be given (and what that looks like). Structure it so that the only people who need access to certain data gets access to that data.

Vanessa: 'External' organization implies that there's an *internal* organization. There's no distinction between the both of them.

Jenny: Just to add on: Compared to the Limited Access Users, there are no examples of the organizations or individuals included under Full Access Users. Who, as an individual, will have access?

Marzieh: We'll re-word it.

Derek: Because it says 'private individuals' – can refugee claimants refer themselves into the system?

Marzieh: When speaking with the potential tech consultant, they proposed a separate platform that could be used by refugee claimants. This platform isn't connected to the main platform and would ask refugee claimants to submit their details through a webform or survey, which will then be sent to BC CHARMS.

We'll need to look into this a bit further, because this could add an additional burden onto Settlement Workers (e.g. spelling errors and duplications that they'd need to sort through and manually fix).

Richard: We first will need to build out the main system and include all of the necessary users before we could add an additional web-based interface.

Alexandra: Individuals shouldn't be listed under 'Full Access', because it's already been decided that this system will not function as a self-service platform.

“(B) Limited Access Users: Any individual or organization with no direct access to BC CHARMS but receives temporary or regular reports from the system, **example of such user:** Limited Access Referrals (Lawyers and CBSA); Limited Access Reports (Provincial Government)”

Marzieh: I will re-word this after Joni's suggestion (which was sent earlier). Take out examples.

Under 3. 'BC CHARMS Overview' >> 3.6 'Access Control' >> 'Types of Access Control'

Derek: Will BC CHARMS be using all of these types of access control (ABAC, DAC, MAC, and RBAC)?

Marzieh: No. This table is just describing all of the types; it's meant to be a blueprint that covers what we could potentially use.

Under 4. 'Functional Requirements' >> 4.3 'Data Flow Diagram' >> 4.3.1 'Context Diagram'

Derek: Looking at this diagram, it looks like Settlement Workers are only updating the information. Are they not creating it, too?

Marzieh: We'll re-word it.

Vanessa: What type of information is the Housing Worker giving to the Settlement Worker?

Richard: It ultimately depends on the type of access they have. The only thing to be concerned about is that the information that's trying to be sent has the full consent of the refugee claimant and that the ability to access this information once it's on the system is limited.

Under 4. 'Functional Requirements' >> 4.3 'Data Flow Diagram' >> 4.3.1 'Level 0 Data Flow Diagram'

Derek: Who's the External User?

Marzieh: It can be the government asking for reports/pulling up reports under what's available on the dashboard. Also goes back to the question if refugee claimants will be given access to the system.

Richard: Just to add: The External User would be able to pull reports, but at a high enough level that it's not breaching consent (i.e. no personal information is being shared).

Joni: I think there should be a diagram that's more straight-forward. It should illustrate the moment that the client arrives and the possible scenarios as to where they would be introduced into the system. Where are they in the system and what is the process? It should be a typical client's story that shows how the database fits into the bigger picture.

[Richard and Joni discussed the matter. The consensus is that Joni will draw an example of what she's thinking about and Richard (with the help of other folks) will flesh it out even further.]

Under 4. 'Functional Requirements' >> 4.10 'API'

Joni: You should spell out all of the potential risks. You're only going to consider API so long as there're no risks in the integrity of the data.

Marzieh: This is just an introductory piece. We'll go more into detail in the final document. Same with 4.11 'Tracking'.

Under 4. 'Functional Requirements' >> 4.11 'Tracking' >> 'Type' >> 'Privacy'

Joni: Service providers often don't realize that consent is the first thing that you have to do and prioritize. Even a person's name is considered private information. Before you enter any data, you need client information; that's the first step that should be included in one of the flow diagrams.

Marzieh: It's already included in one of Richard's diagrams.

Under 4. 'Functional Requirements' >> 4.11 'Notifications'

[Note: Change the 4.11 to 4.12. 4.11 is Tracking.]

Joni: How about waitlist management – how will it be prioritized? Are there priority groups that will be housed first?

Richard: There'll be a traffic light design. Simple navigation that helps to prioritize who needs help first.

Julia: In this diagram flow, would there be any triggers or flags that notify users when a refugee claimant 'drops out' of the system (i.e. they're successful in finding housing or they have to be reintegrated)?

Richard: There will be different enter and exit rooms, depending on the refugee claimant's situation. Refers back to the flow diagrams that he designed.

Vanessa: If a refugee claimant is going through the referral system and (in the case of Journey Home) decides that they don't want to be in the Community House, what happens?

Richard: They're marked as 'unhoused' in the system. The system will only mark them as 'housed' if they're successful and they physically moved into the space.

Derek: If they reject the housing offer, do they go 'down' in the list of priority? Is it similar to BC Housing?

Richard: Good question – I have to think about that. What's the policy like in Kinbrace?

Derek: Refugee claimants have to take the first offer of safe and affordable housing. However, that's a case-by-case basis – if refugee claimants are offered subsidized housing, they have to take it. If they say no, they have to leave Kinbrace within a month. If it's market housing, they can decline 1-2 offers but have to move on afterwards.

Richard: The problem, then, is that every organization has a different policy when they refer out (usually 3 – 6 months in most cases). Difficult to include such functions into the system since it differs greatly.

Derek: We don't want refugee claimants to 'shop around' (e.g. choosing between Kinbrace or Journey Home or Inasmuch).

Richard: I agree. This will require a lot of coordination and thought; I'll have to think about this.

Vanessa: What would the policy be around permanent housing? It should be managed differently than transition housing.

Richard: It'll depend on how the system will see that. Should the system illustrate all of the offers that have been made to the refugee claimant? Should it also list out their reasons for declining housing? How should it 'penalize' them and where would they then sit in the vulnerabilities list?

Demetrius: I'm afraid of algorithms deciding on the vulnerabilities of clients. It shouldn't just be checking a bunch of boxes; someone should be on the other end to understand what's going on.

Richard: I agree.

Derek: Provide an option for refugee claimants to turn down the offer but let them know that if they do decide to do that, that it'll go into their file. We should still advocate for them to make their own choices, but they should be aware that their choices have consequences.

Vanessa: Will the system update itself when a client moves into permanent housing?

Richard: Yes. If the refugee claimant has found a lot of issues in their housing and wants to return back into the system, they're able to so long as they're still eligible (i.e. they're still a refugee claimant). Otherwise, if they already have Permanent Resident or have already received Protected Status, they're no longer eligible for intake/referral and will be referred to another organization that can give them appropriate services and help.

Derek: So, the system is more about their immigration status?

Richard: Yes – once they are a Permanent Resident, they should access the general services that're now available to them. This means that they're no longer eligible for intake or re-referral in this centralized housing referral system.

Derek: In Kinbrace, there are some cases where residents get Permanent Residence before they leave our space.

[Discussion as to whether a file ought to close when a refugee claimant receives permanent housing OR when they get protected status and then Permanent Residence. Can someone whose immigration status changes but is still in transition housing be included as they move to permanent housing as a Permanent Resident?]

Ali: Does that mean that a 'refugee claimant' also includes those making Appeals, H&C claims, PRAA cases, since they don't have their protection yet?

Richard: Yes.

Jenny M: What about protected persons who haven't yet received their Permanent Residence?

Richard: We need to define what is a refugee claimant for this system – it should define someone whose status changes and they gain access to more government services.

Demetrius: We might have protected persons in shelter – could they not be referred to transition housing?

Derek/Richard: Kinbrace/Inasmuch wouldn't accept them because not RC's.

Derek: The issue could be best solved through asking how we could best use our resources. I'm not saying that those with protected status are not vulnerable... but do they really need our scarce resources?

[Needs to be discussed as an eligibility question outside of the requirements document.]

Marzieh: Please send me an email if you have more thoughts on these issues to discuss in team meetings.

Next meeting: Wednesday February 24th (1:30 PM – 3:30 PM)

ADJOURNED: 3:35 PM