

Refugee Claimant Housing Referral and Data Management System Advisory

MINUTES

Meeting #10, Wednesday June 30, 2021 1:00 PM (Zoom)

Present: Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Sherman Chan (MOSAIC), Jacquelin Sarvini (MOSAIC), Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC), Lavinra Joseph (BC Housing), Richard Belcham (Inasmuch/MAP BC Co-chair), Joni Rose (MUNI), Jenny Lam (Options/MAP Co-chair), Demetrius Schwab (Union Gospel Mission), Vanessa Roth (Journey Home Community), Janet Ruff (IRCC), Iris Solorzano (Options) Julia Wu (BC211), Ali Mustafa (Independent), Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA), Jenny Moss (MAP Executive)

Meeting Chair: Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)

- Marzieh acknowledged that she was speaking from the unceded Coast Salish peoples territory in North Vancouver and thanked the Ministry for its funding of this project.
- The Agenda was reviewed and approved with no further additions.

Project Updates:

• BC CHARMS Report Book

Report back will illustrate the qualitative research via interviews with service providers and claimants. It includes photos taken by a National Geographic Explorer photographer that are anonymous to support privacy and tailored to the report themes. She is highly recommended, very professional, and applies a trauma-informed approach. <https://www.amyromer.com/>

Will present the findings to the BCNPHA Conference in the Fall following our roundtable with them during World Refugee Day events.

Marzieh shared examples of the photographs.

The report book will be available in 4/5 languages in the Fall and provided to settlement agencies, select housing providers, government agencies and refugee claimants.

• BC CHARMS Sub-projects

1. Innovative Housing Solutions for Refugee Claimants Research

Objectives are to:

- identify “out of the box”, innovative, “meanwhile spaces” or housing alternatives, including opportunities to leverage vacant or underutilized units as well as ways to increase supply of new safe, secure and affordable housing for refugee claimants.
- Utilize the findings to draft a comprehensive report including a set of key recommendations: towards housing alternatives and solutions for refugee claimants.
- Find solutions to support refugee claimants in securing housing along the housing continuum.
- Facilitate and strengthen opportunities for collaboration at the municipal level.
- Develop an inclusive approach to innovative housing solutions.

RFP deadline June 25 – applications have been received and the team will conduct interviews next week. The chosen researcher will start in July and finish in September.

2. Refugee Claimant Navigation Website - Richard

Idea came from a journalist refugee claimant who Richard met who had no idea how to navigate the first few days and where there was help. He did not understand agency websites because of language barriers – and needed a website he could manage.

Richard described the website concept

- idea is to be multilingual
- to avoid claimants having to shop around as it can all be in one place
- has a method whereby claimant can enter details in a form for 'looking for housing' so that it feeds automatically into BC CHARMS.

Richard shared a rough mock-up of the website under different needs like legal, housing, food etc. Simple information expressed in a simple way. Forms will connect refugee with service providers, such as the BC CHARMS database.

Project to start in September. Thanks to the MUNI budget there is funding for a project coordinator and a writer, there is a web development company willing to take on the project and the domain name booked: refugeeclaimbc.ca

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS:

Joni Rose (MUNI): BC newcomers Guide has just been revised and posted in English plus Welcome BC site has been updated, and now provides more information.

Vanessa (JHC): is this part of BC CHARMS funding?

Response: Yes, from BC CHARMS funding. Made sense to be able to funnel claimants through to BC CHARMS.

Does this mean the website will be managed by MOSAIC?

Response: Not sure where it will be hosted yet, but it will be part of the MAP initiative and funds will come via MOSAIC, (because MAP cannot receive funding directly). The website will be independent of MOSAIC and their referrals.

Iris Solorzano (Options): she explained how she did a similar exercise for TFW's – the **TFW Guide** as a booklet. She is concerned from her experience on 2 fronts:

a) that there is so much information available it is hard to pick and choose

b) there will inevitably be duplication again (BC Refugee Hub/Newcomers Guide/BC211 First Contact)

Her suggestion is that it is best to be done regionally. She created her booklet for Surrey.

Her plan was to embark on a **refugee claimant guide** afterwards – so it will be useful if this happens – but the concern is leaving important information/agencies out and choosing who to focus on.

Can be very confusing.

Response: the idea is to be very specific to the very initial phase of arriving as a claimant – so maybe won't duplicate tools like Newcomer's Guide.

Demetrius (UGM): if it is like the DTES Survivor's Manual – he would use this.

Alexandra (MOSAIC): it will use lots of symbols rather than being text-heavy.

Joni: check with Arrival Advisor at Peacegeeks too.

Iris: how would this differ from BC Refugee Hub?

Response: BC Refugee Hub is provided for agency use – we need more for claimants in survival mode.

Marzieh: this website will lead claimants to the services needed.

- **Social Solutions Contract**

The contract for 5 years has been signed and it includes:

- 5-year contract with 3% annual increase (including: ASC (24/7 technical support), Train the Trainer, help from a project manager).
- Implementation starts immediately (July 1st) with meetings for 2 months.
- The operational costs for the first two years of the contract have been allocated in the current budget.

Richard congratulated Marzieh and BC CHARMS on completing the contract – huge feat.

- **Sustainability Plan – a sub-project of BC CHARMS**

Sustainability plan is starting soon to look at a robust sustainability plan including financial stability recommendations for Year 3 onwards.

- **BC CHARMS Contract Amendment**

In an agreement between the funder and the project team, the BC CHARMS contract was extended for one more year (to provide more support from the funder). A contract amendment was prepared in collaboration with the funder and signed by MOSAIC.

Joni: clarified that the finances were extended for another year.

Joni: But it is finite – will cease in 2023. That's why the sustainability plan needs to be robust and comprehensive.

Question:

Derek: Will we get a financial update on how funds have been used and how much funds are left?

Marzieh: Amendment we have describes deliverables and budget for 21/22 and 22/23 -

Alexandra – can make this information available within the next 2 weeks.

Sherman – it will be a report at a high level – no confidential information about personnel compensation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

We are now in Phase 2 of the 3 Phase project – so to clarify this is what we have done and will be doing: **5 sub-projects** that are taking place at the same time

1. **Database:** scoping exercise for the referral system - determining current trends, gaps, expectations of a centralised referral system etc through interviews, technical support throughout the project and starting customization and refugee claimant navigation website.
2. **Housing supply enhanced:** - Raising awareness – BCNPHA roundtable and conference and report book in the fall, connection with Landlord BC and other opportunities there, + Innovative Housing Solutions Research that will report in the fall.
3. **Referral system** will start at end of Stage 2, beginning stage 3
4. **Training & Communications** – starting some with certain organizations like Landlord BC, but rest is going forward.
5. **Sustainability Plan**– starting soon.

Staff Updates

Sherman: How will the project move on? There are changes at MOSAIC, but the good thing is staff here today will continue with the project and achieve its goals in conjunction with MAP BC and MUNI. Thank you to the Advisory Committee for all your assistance.

Saleem's last day June 30 – acknowledge that he and MAP HWG and Ministry staff got this project started.

Some modifications in the work that MOSAIC will be doing with refugees and migrant workers. But here is the immediate plan:

Alexandra Dawley will be **Acting Senior Manager** and look after all the refugee programs at MOSAIC and will be looking at some minor adjustments needed to refugee services through BCSIS, BC CHARMS Project and pilot sponsorship project 'Not Forgotten'.

Marzieh Nezakat will be **Acting Manager of Refugee Integration Program (BCSIS)** and continue BC CHARMS project.

Jackie Sarvini will be **Acting Coordinator of BC CHARMS project**.

Richard will support for the next 2 months.

NOTE: Joni will be away from July 1 – 12.

Question from **Derek:** should he still be on the committee if is no longer HWG co-chair?

Alexandra invited Derek to continue if he was available.

Richard: Project requires that a HWG co-chair must attend - so Jenny Moss will inform Doug he is invited to join.

(**NOTE:** **Marzieh** has been nominated and acclaimed as new HWG Co-chair in Derek's place)

Next Meeting Date and Demo: August 25 – (or maybe sooner)

Adjournment at 2pm.