



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday October 28, 2021 - 1:00 – 2:30 pm online

PRESENT:

Doug Peat, Barry Growe, Ricardo Rocha (Journey Home Community), Derek Chu, Mohammed Zaqout, Ryan Reid, (Kinbrace), Tammy Johnson, (inasmuch), Ann Barnard Ball (New Hope), Julia Wu (bc211), Jenny Lam (Options) Joni Rose (Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI), Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Chair: Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)

Welcome, and land acknowledgement from the unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories.

Thanks to our funders the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, BC

Introductions were made.

Tammy (Inasmuch) announced she and her husband are adopting a baby from overseas. She is taking a year parental leave and stepping down as Acting ED at Inasmuch and from this committee. Tammy's last meeting will be November 25.

Everyone congratulated her on this wonderful news and wished her the very best in her new role!

- The September 23 HWG Meeting Minutes were approved.
- The Agenda for this meeting was approved with the addition of a request to fill a position to represent this committee on the BC CHARMS Advisory Committee.

Updates and discussions

1) BC CHARMS project – Jackie Sarvini

Status of the BC CHARMS report book and themes at the BCNPHA Housing Central Conference

Report book: has been submitted to the funder including many stories from claimants and service providers, photos, letter of recommendation from Landlord BC all included.

5 themes included:

- Who belongs? Stories of belonging and struggles of claimants looking for housing
- Am I eligible? Navigating the unaffordable and often unreachable rental market
- What makes a home? What does a home mean to claimants?

- Where do I go? Stories of claimants reflecting on the barriers to gaining housing and what they would do.
- The Future is Bright Stories of claimants looking to the future with hope and resilience.

These themes will be highlighted in the **Housing Central** conference in November.

New Project Assistant at BC CHARMS Floorence Faqiri – she has worked on the questions that will also be featured at the workshop:

- What are your approaches to ensure that claimants are placed in safer and secure housing?
- How do you cope with housing challenges when it comes to availability and long waiting lists?
- How do you help individuals understand Housing Benefits available to them?
- What are some of the improvements you have witnessed for newcomers in housing provisions?

Innovative Housing Solutions research

Two researchers have been working for 2 months and have submitted an early draft for review. They have highlighted the struggles and pressures for claimants in their housing search. Lack of housing and the difficult search to achieve it increases isolation and mental health problems.

18 Challenges and Opportunities are highlighted in the research.

Progress on the Refugee Claimant Navigation website

Easily accessible and navigable website envisaged that provides information easily for non-English claimants. The goal is to connect claimants on first arrival with the services they need. Not to replace other websites but to provide information in a more readable way.

Report on the database

Core group from MOSAIC/MAP together with 2 tech advisors and the Privacy and Security Consultants have been meeting since July with Social Solutions team to develop a system based on previous input/suggestions including robust privacy and security mechanisms:

Features of the privacy & security components:

- Limited access at different levels to the system
- Up to date housing availability
- Seamless intake/referral process

Using common referral process used by agencies currently –not losing the human connection but just putting everything online.

Flowchart of information: Jackie walked HWG through information collection process and communication to various stakeholders. HWG viewed it from the point of view of:

a) Claimant b) Housing provider c) Settlement worker in various scenarios.

SEE SLIDES FOR DETAILS

Q&A:

Q: *How do you avoid duplication of effort by multiple settlement workers working on the same initial referral form?*

A: Settlement worker can ‘pick’ the initial referral for their own if they can provide support (e.g., they are in a nearby city). To avoid duplication, there is a mechanism in the system that automatically changes the status of the file to ‘contacted’ if a settlement worker contacts the client; otherwise, the status will remain as ‘awaiting’.

Q: *Can housing vacancies be accessed without inputting the initial client info or consent?*

A: Settlement workers / Housing providers are the only ones with access – the information can be filtered based on cities so useful in that way. You can see all the vacancies in the province and whether they are Open or Closed, how many bedrooms etc.

Many questions were collected from the CHAT and Jackie will answer them outside the meeting. You may also send more questions to jsarvini@mosaicbc.org

Representative to BC CHARMS Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee membership is based on role: MAP/HWG/Housing providers/Settlement Workers/Shelters/Transition Housing/Government etc.

Meetings started at outset of project a year ago but now the committee is not meeting as often as earlier.

Derek was the HWG Co-chair representative before but has now stepped down – it is essential we have a representative from HWG and neither current co-chairs are available for different reasons.

SUGGESTION: Can we find another representative from the committee?

Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC) volunteered and will take the place once she is oriented. HWG appreciated her generosity and the advantage of having ISSofBC with all its experience involved.

2) BCNPHA Conference

In addition to the content overview above Jackie mentioned she will contact panelists with the questions they will be asked potentially and regarding a training session with Jackson from BCNPHA.

3) The upcoming CCR conference

Jenny Moss mentioned that registration is open for the online CCR Fall Consultation (see <https://ccrweb.ca/en/meetings>) from November 29 – December 3. The consultation includes good representation from BC and MAP members including a workshop on December 1st at 10:30 am PST on ‘Preparing for an Influx of Refugee Claimants’. Barry Grove will provide the presentation and take questions. Attendees will be broken into regional groups to start discussions on a plan appropriate to their needs.

Thanks go to Derek Chu for joining Jenny, Claire Roque, and Edgar Valderrama on the planning team.

Hope to see you all there!

4) 4.8 million-dollar RFP discussion - Possibility of reissuing to include capital funding

Marzieh invited Joni Rose to clarify the government’s present position:

Joni – the government is still exploring options and will communicate once they have their ideas – but not just to MAP. Any communication will go out broadly.

The government will look at all suggestions and recommendations including Doug’s recommendation to re-issue the RFP with capital funding included.

Question: are any of the agencies getting questions from potential refugee claimants overseas about wanting to come to Canada?

Responses:

- JHC have received about 90 requests from Afghans in Afghanistan regarding all pathways to Canada.
- Tammy (Inasmuch) Receives more than normal now from Afghanistan, South & Central America and elsewhere
- Jenny (MAP) We always get some requests from around the world but definitely requests from Afghanistan currently via email/phone and attendees at an Afghan event.

Joni suggested we request statistics from HWG members to inform planning: how many requests as refugee claimants, country of request, possibly size of family.

AGREED TO SEND Question out to HWG re: potential refugee claimants.

Doug mentioned MP Ken Hardie's brief to Federal Government on Afghan refugees and possibility of MAP as a whole inputting information.

Returning to discussion about the RFP: Doug suggested a letter with a recommendation from MAP to ask for capital funding to be included in any RFP – then BC Housing and Private funders can collaborate with the potential funds they have mentioned for housing specifically refugee claimants.

Recommendations could also go beyond capital funding to include other ideas like single men's housing, Reception Centre, regional solutions for e.g. Fraser Valley, modular housing, or covenanted use.

Derek: what is the process of adding more recommendations to the Province as MAP (not as individual agencies)? Can we decide what MAP recommends and what should be included?

AGREED: to ask HWG members for the recommendations they want added to a MAP letter to government.

HWG members can then take a vote on the list of recommendations with rationales.

Joni: timeline needs to be quick to avoid dragging out the process.

Doug – suggested the process be completed by Monday November 8 – Joni will support our quick response.

5) Stream B funding

- **Increasing budget for housing search for affordable housing**
- **Increasing budget on items affecting claimants' housing, such as employment**

Marzieh: This discussion is based on the fact that safe and affordable housing is very much related to employment, and not much funding goes into employment services for claimants: only Open Services. Refugee Claimants (Stream B Clients) are not eligible for IRCC funded employment programs, such as WorkBC and Career Paths. The only service from WorkBC programs available to claimants is the Open Services. So, services, such as mentorship are not available to them.

Doug: Request: We would like to see more funding in BCSIS Stream B for employment programs to decrease homelessness and trauma.

Example: Christie Centre in Toronto – provide housing to claimants – now recognize that helping people find reliable work would help with housing.

Joni said that in an email with questions to government regarding contingency, MAP had asked if we would

look at an increase to BCSIS services for contingency funding especially in a surge. The response to the letter stated that we would review the Stream B contracts should a surge happen.

Joni requested clarification about what level and exactly what funding MAP HWG is asking about: Federal or Provincial?

Joni clarified that WorkBC is a provincially managed program funded by federal dollars and BC Settlement and Integration (BCSIS) is a provincially funded program that offers a suite of services including labour market services to those that are ineligible for Federal settlement services. BCSIS Stream B is specific to services for Refugee Claimants.

Discussion about what level of government this request is geared to. Possibly both.

Mahi (ISSofBC) Better to advocate the Federal government to open up eligibility to existing programs – in addition to asking the Province for more funds. It is fundamental to get IRCC to include temporary residents in eligibility for services.

Joni: Agreed – Provincially [for BCSIS Stream B] the request is in questions to government submitted with the MAP Emergency Planning Report and has been responded to by the government as a probable service in an emergency.

Doug added that we could lobby federal government to transfer more funds to the Province to include refugee claimants in full employment programming.

Marzieh agreed – easier to expand existing programming like Work BC they use than start from scratch.

Mahi raised the issue that insecure immigration status is a barrier to gaining government funding – always worth considering the wording and argument necessary when making a request to the federal government.

Agency Updates (from the CHAT)

- **Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC)** Please send all BC CHARMS related question to Jackie at jsarvini@mosaicbc.org
- **Tammy (Inasmuch)** Just wanted to let everyone know that we have a new couple with us from Columbia who are doing an inland claim (arrived October 11th). One is one time vaccinated and the other is double vaccinated. I'm not sure how many recently arrived RC's other agencies have received but this is the first for us and the first who have arrived with vaccinations.
- **Tammy Johnson:** My last day before parental leave is November 25th and while we're hiring for a new ED our Board Chair Kelly will be stepping in. Her contact email is kellyrader2@gmail.com . Our new

Settlement worker, Sarah, can be reached at settlement@inasmuch.ca .

Adjourned at 2:31 pm - Next meeting: Thursday November 25, 2021

Joni provided this supplementary description of Stream B services under BCSIS:

Stream B (Specialized services) provides a wraparound support service that assists the refugee claimant during their initial settlement and claim process. A Stream B wraparound service may include help with:

- documentation,
- access to food and shelter,
- medical care,
- clinical counseling and mental health group support,
- legal aid,
- familiarization with the hearing process,
- work permit and customized employment support.

Once the claimant is settled into more permanent housing and has filed a claim, the Stream B service provider will then ensure that the client is connected to the community where they have settled into through a referral to a BCSIS Stream A worker in that community or another stakeholder where appropriate.

Supplementary clarification re: WorkBC program:

Joni clarified that WorkBC is a provincially managed program funded by federal dollars and BC Settlement and Integration (BCSIS) is a provincially funded program that offers a suite of services including labour market services to those that are ineligible for Federal settlement services. BCSIS Stream B is specific to services for Refugee Claimants as explained above.

Note: that Federal settlement services include additional labour market supports that complement WorkBC labour market services. Recommendation to talk to Chris Friesen or Cathy Sherrell to understand the work they are doing to request the Federal government expand federal settlement services to temporary residents.