



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday June 24, 2021 - 1:00 pm online

PRESENT:

James Grunau, Brad Kinnie, Doug Peat, Barry Growe (Journey Home Community), Derek Chu, Ryan Reid, Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace), Richard Belcham, Tammy Johnson, (inasmuch), Julia Wu (bc211), Jenny Lam (Options) Joni Rose (Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Gaston Ntabaza (SOS-ISSofBC), Dustin Lupick (HSABC), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Regrets: Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC)

Chair: Derek Chu

Welcome and land acknowledgement from Katze First Nations territory.

- The April 21 HWG Meeting Minutes were approved.
- The Agenda for this meeting was approved.

Updates

- **Update on BC CHARMS project**

2 updates: **Report book** includes **photography** from a National Geographic Explorer Photographer. Images are anonymous but highly emotive and thoughtful – match the contents of report Published in Fall hopefully and will be shared

Database: decided on Social Solutions' – Apricot 360 will customize a system for us. Signed 5-year contract with Social Solutions. and will start implementation/testing July 1. Hope to be able to launch and have everyone join in Spring early summer 2022. Could happen sooner (but rather than raise expectations)

Questions:

James – has there been discussion as to who will own, run, and maintain the database in the future?

Richard: It will be with MOSAIC for 5 years and after that it must be self-sustaining – and sustainability is a project being discussed. It needs to be independent of an agency- and perhaps the Reception Centre planned is a very likely home for it. DELETE

Thanks to Marzieh for her work on pushing the project forward to contract signing. And thanks also to Joni Rose for her resourcefulness and assistance.

Joni: Clarified that the government will fund first 2 years of the 5-year contract, with understanding that the Sustainability Plan will be in place at the end of the 2 years and the province can hand over after that.

Richard: It's a pioneer program – the first in Canada – and will be of great benefit to sector, claimants and government. It's also a great testament to MAP and collaborative action.

Joni added that it will provide a lot of important data to government to assist with decision-making.

Doug: Curious about HIFUS system? It has a check mark for refugee claimants that is not being used. Could we start that at HIFUS to record data?

Richard: it does record data at BC Housing, but it is not a useful referral system.

Doug: more interested in the data – maybe it can be counted by shelters to record at HIFUS.

Joni – would be useful once border opens as BC CHARMS won't be open yet.

Doug will table this data collection for a future meeting.

Brad: asked Marzieh if she is involved beyond project design into implementation?

Marzieh: will be involved in design and testing alongside the experts – and she will stay around after to support and start a train-the-trainer system to continue training others and providing support to the system. This section will be in YEAR 1 of implementation and is funded by MUNI.

Derek: who will provide day-to-day data management?

Marzieh – with Apricot we have purchased extra hours of support (24-hour tech support purchased for first year.)

Derek: not asking about technical support – more the management of the data – will there be an algorithm or someone managing this as an administrator? i.e., for referrals how does one client move further up the priorities?

Marzieh – Will be the point person to start. Meeting to decide on roles shortly.

Richard – recognized importance of Derek's question as having a point person to keep an eye on things – after a while it should not be as necessary.

Joni – Derek means someone needs to review data (data integrity) to make sure it's 'clean' or accurate and entered properly.

Richard – we will need to look at this when we are building forms and validation checks.

Mohammed: what if numbers are entered incorrectly?

Richard: User can go in and edit – but we will need alternate means of contact.

Derek: will there be a validation of data entry, so the barriers quoted are verified - so that claimants are correctly prioritized and housed? Concerned to channel the right types of clients to the few refugee- claimant specific housing providers.

Richard – vulnerability check will be there in a 2-step process

all the information will be available for housing providers to view

you can make the choices according to your mandate just like you do now.

Derek – who will fund the system beyond the 3 years? or is there an out? Who will need to raise funds?

Richard – yes there is an out: MOSAIC is responsible for funding beyond MUNI in terms of the sustainability plan which includes funding.

- **Report on "Looking for Home" MAP/BCNPHA Roundtable – Planning Group**

Tammy (inasmuch) – It was a good session but disappointing that not more providers were present. Thanks to Marzieh and Joni for the amazing videos. Good presentations.

Doug responded – he spoke with Jackson (BCNPHA) after – said he promoted widely and had another session that attracted many more and is perplexed but following up.

Joni – maybe we need to go to them – perhaps the subject could be on their agendas – at BCNPHA annual conference or a meeting to get a broader audience?

Come with the common barriers and the answers on how to break them down –
e.g., language interpretation/navigators

We need to promote better throughout BC how to network together, and how to challenge the barriers.

Doug – acknowledged this is a very good idea and we will be at the BCNPHA Fall Conference.

We also need to name refugee claimants as vulnerable entities in RFP's

Joni – once the RFP is closed Joni will meet with us about strategy and ideas around procurement
Let's hope the call results in some good projects.

James – how many housing providers did attend the roundtable?

Doug – we have not yet received a report from Jackson – once we have that we can provide.

Dustin – HSABC has a lot of cross-over with BCNPHA – one problem is that if a presentation is on an issue that is not normally within the portfolio, then people do not attend. Agree it is a good idea to go to their meeting, and even pop them in breakout rooms that they don't expect.

Mohammed – we need to do more advocacy before we bring people to a roundtable. Landlords should not have problems with refugee claimants in their housing if we approach it the right way – we need to encourage face to face conversations - to educate people on who is a claimant, they are legally here and have work permits and the contributions they bring. Door-to-door advocacy. Happy with the event but needed to see more outcomes.

Brad commented: Such a great point, Mohammed. Refugee voices need to be the main focus of this type of advocacy. Very powerful.

- **Update on the CCR Housing Working Group – Mohammed**

Latest meeting was within the CCR Settlement Working Group.

Discussed 3 main points:

1) **Key issues related to housing in each area** – BC issues raised were affordable housing, systemic racism, family reunification, Islamophobia, gender-based prejudice, jobs and job security – especially during the pandemic. Mentioned issues in Ontario – same as BC but others like resettlement involving claimants changing province of residency. Quebec: Language, anti-black issues, Islamophobia, public transit, privacy concerns. Discussed some ideas for solutions.

2) **Emerging issues:**

- newcomers not managing things over zoom, struggling in virtual world.

- data and research demonstrating that there is growing anti-Asian and Islamophobia, anti- LGBTQ – barring them from housing.

3) **Open borders** – everyone ready to support refugee claimants coming. Welcoming. Discussed possible influx but not enough time to discuss solutions.

- **\$4.8mil Refugee Claimant Housing Fund - Call for Response Updated – Doug**

Recap: HWG had sent a collective letter to be included earlier, but after the RFP came out with different wording there was no time to collectively respond, so JHC sent in inquiries specifically about:

Whether mobile or modular units could be included in the RFP on land -

This was then included but it was not clear if they could be new or re-used? And where they can be placed?

These questions were sent for clarification.

Doug called and discussed with the Procurement Manager to get some clarity about the process and how they respond to changes in the RFP. He also asked if deadline for response could be changed based on new information – and was told that on occasion they could change date of RFP's. But not at this time. Deadline sits at July 12. After July 12 we can ask for more clarification

There were no questions.

Business

- **Election of a MAP HWG Co-Chair**

Derek (Kinbrace) has completed his term as HWG co-chair so nominations were called for.

MAP HWG received one nomination before the deadline from Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC) for Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)

Marzieh was invited to provide a statement of intention

Marzieh's statement:

- Originally from the city of Isfahan in Iran – Marzieh has lived in Canada for 2 years.

- 8 years ago she worked for the first time with vulnerable neighbourhoods of her city – there were around 10,000 irregular migrants from Afghanistan and Syria as well as migrants from other parts of Iran.

- Marzieh joined an NGO concerned with women and children's rights there on the frontline, and then on their Board. They helped over 2,000 children – very proud of their accomplishments with this population.

- Marzieh then completed her PHD in linguistics – and became a full-time professor.

- Left shortly after to come to Canada.

- Worked as a LINC instructor with MOSAIC first – helped newcomers grow their confidence and integrate.

- 8 months later applied for BC CHARMS Coordinator position and during her first year with the project she has spoken with many service providers and claimants to hear their views, their housing journeys and the barriers as well as witnessing their resiliency.

- Attended MAP meetings and learned about services/resources provided to claimants, as well as departmental meetings at MOSAIC, and how these services can make a big difference.

- She has volunteered to be the new HWG co-chair as she is involved with housing and will be for some time.

- She would like to stay connected with this issue and advocate for positive housing for claimants.

There were no questions. Derek asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none Marzieh was acclaimed by HWG – and the committee are all excited to work with Marzieh.

Discussion

Derek raised two issues that are common to their residents and asked for members' opinions:

- Strategies for Managing Refugee Claimants' Housing Expectations
- Strategies on How to Encourage Refugee Claimants to Consider Housing Outside of Metro Vancouver

Brad – JHC wants to work with RC's as early as possible in their time in Canada - to challenge 'street information' that they inevitably hear. Need to challenge stereotyped information like 'Surrey is a dangerous place to live'. The earlier we can get accurate information to claimants the better. 'Happy Tour' started by Raul at Kinbrace – he would take claimants on a tour of the city to get to know it and imagine where they could live.

Richard – created a brochure on '**Why come to Inasmuch**' because they have to 'sell' Abbotsford to folks as it is an unknown.

Answers claimants' questions like how to make city appointments and provides information as to the services at Inasmuch.

Gaston – SOS refers a lot of claimants to housing providers here (at HWG).

1) One issue is for many who come from other parts of the country they might know about another province (often Quebec) but not BC; however they are considered to be less of a priority by housing providers. As a result they often end up in shelters which are inappropriate. What is your position on this?

2) What about Habitat for Housing – they do provide housing for refugees.

Brad & Derek responded – they do provide housing in terms of vulnerability and availability.

Acknowledge the point that those from other provinces may be more vulnerable if they don't know BC. But the basic vulnerabilities about trauma, family makeup etc would be more important. Kinbrace makes decisions as a team. The amount of time in Canada would never be the deciding factor.

Richard – have to look at how people fit in too.

Gaston asked if the providers let claimants know about home insurance when they move out – content insurance?

Tammy (Inasmuch) – great questions - we do a budgeting session so should come up in that session. But not necessarily emphasized too much – though it's a good reminder. Some landlords require this insurance, however.

Tammy spoke to Derek's question about managing expectations.

It's challenging for everyone coming from overseas.

Must first establish trust so claimants can believe in what she says

She emphasizes to claimants that the first place they rent will probably not be their long-term house – just a stepping-stone – in order to counter their expectations or disappointment.

Also we talk about costs so people are prepared – i.e., budgeting for internet that is more expensive here.

Question – Derek: how do you settlement workers manage to balance all the integration needs at start?
How do you establish trust?

Brad – we don't focus on housing as a topic for claimants during their first 2 months as there is so much stability needed first. They work on the claim and work permit/financial issues first.
Each case worker develops the relationship and trust till they get to a point where more long-term issues like housing can be brought up.

Joni: comment – at BC CHARMS we are discussing the development of a website for refugee claimants – can we provide a map with average housing rental costs across lower mainland? Maybe even province wide?
And what that would that mean over a year.

Richard – good resource + add area guide – what's around each locale.

Brad - + a 3-minute video on the area and it's resources.

Mohammed shared the PDF resource that Ryan developed at Kinbrace: Finding a Place to live in Vancouver.

It has housing costs, getting a rental, - and a map to show the different cities.

Provides information but also manages expectations in terms of a claimant's budget.

Ryan – not interactive and a bit outdated but welcome to use or model on for a better tool. (Price and location map attached to these Minutes)

Mohammed – at Renter's Services Center Meeting he could see that rental at \$600/room isn't possible in Vancouver anymore.

Marzieh also added a resource about food assets via Google Map:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1XEmhBp-1P0xxH7ZPFMc76sBFb2U&fbclid=IwAR2uPYWZSDYED1qx-srqPFPxOlXH28iKvgsOxmR8pppjeVJJ_uvnGmmshLs&ll=49.24287001975263%2C-123.10958977351855&z=12

Agency (Housing Related) Updates

- Doug thanked Derek for his dedication as HWG co-chair.
- Derek thanked James as one of the pioneers of HWG, and as his mentor in his early years.
- Richard announced his leaving Canada in October – Tammy will be Interim ED at Inasmuch.

Adjourned at 2:40 pm - Next meeting: Thursday September 23, 2021