



**Newcomers Employment & Education Development Services  
(N.E.E.D.S.) Inc.**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FINAL REPORT**

April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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On behalf of the agency, I would like to thank:

- All the staff for their dedication and profound impact on our clients;
- The Executive and Management Teams for their expertise and exceptional performance;
- Volunteers for their ongoing commitment to our agency;
- Board members for their invaluable contribution;
- Funders who helped make this year such a success.

With their hard work, support and guidance, we were able to provide meaningful and quality programs to 2,185 newcomer children and youth and their families. We are extremely proud to be able to provide a wide array of services to our young clients and see their growth and successes in the areas of education, employment and overall contribution to Canadian society.

Special thanks to Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, Canadian Heritage, Province of Manitoba, Winnipeg Foundation, United Way and Service Canada for their financial support.

Sincerely,

Margaret von Lau  
Chief Executive Officer

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## OVERVIEW

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The 2019 – 2020 fiscal year was a year of continued growth for the agency. This year, we continued expanding and enhancing our programming for newcomer children, youth and families. However, near the end of this fiscal year, COVID-19 emerged as global pandemic including in Canada. This affected our program deliveries and activities particularly in March 2020, resulting in overall decreases in the number of clients we served, client contacts and program hours (compared to the previous fiscal year). While we experienced some challenges, especially with the arrival of the COVID-19 which ceased our ability to deliver in-person services to clients, overall, we were able to meet our desired outcomes and provide relevant and appropriate settlement and integration services to approximately 2,000 newcomer children, youth and families.

A total of 65 full-time equivalent (FTE) IRCC-funded staff plus an additional 19 FTE (funded by non-IRCC sources and Admin). staff were employed during this fiscal year to facilitate programming for immigrant and refugee children, youth and families. We delivered programming at 23 different locations, including twenty-one (21) schools, our main site on Notre Dame, and our Employment Program office across the street.

These staffing resources allowed us to provide supports and services to 2,185 clients. Staffing resources were crucial to the overall success and function of our agency, and, as a staff team, we were able to develop and deliver programming that met the goals and objectives of our agency.

Additional support services were provided to our clients to ensure that they were able to successfully access and participate in our programming. Staff resources helped to organize transportation (including maintaining our agency van and driving youth to and from program), provide informal interpretation support when needed, and met the psychosocial needs of the youth accessing our programming. Psychosocial support to clients became crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Our staff kept in touch with clients through weekly phone calls and video calls to check on their well-being and provide them with the necessary mental and other support.

Our Management team staff resources helped to coordinate specific services at our agency, including developing programming to meet the needs of our clients, supporting front line staff in the delivery of programming and program specific data collection and reporting.

Operations staff resources helped to keep our agency running smoothly and effectively. They were often the first point of contact for our clients and helped to connect clients to the appropriate services. They also contributed to the overall function of the agency by helping with client files, data collection, and iCARE data entry. They also played a key role in formulating and updating agency policies and procedures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff resources helped us develop, maintain, and expand our connections to the larger settlement sector allowing us to partner with several organizations to better serve our clients. Staff also connected with

established systems and organizations which also allowed us to ensure that clients were integrating into mainstream programs and services.

On average, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. served approximately 760 newcomer clients each month. Government Assisted Refugee youth (GARs) numerically dominated across our programs. One-hundred (174) individual volunteers and fifty (50) practicum students helped to support our staff in ensuring that all of our clients felt safe and welcomed at our agency. We strived to have a high adult to youth ratio to ensure that the youth felt supported and received quality services while attending our programs.

There were a number of notable client trends observed in the 2019-2020 fiscal year:

- Supporting clients with regulation had been an ongoing trend. Many clients required additional support with self-regulation and emotional regulation. Clients struggled with expressing their feelings, and, with the help of PSE and support staff, we were able to help them learn new skills to better manage emotions such as anger and sadness. Bringing clients back into their “window of tolerance” helped to re-engage them in program activities.
- Clients are demonstrating high levels of trauma responses, challenging behaviours and mental health issues (such as anxiety, PTSD, and depression). This is particularly true about Syrian and Yazidi clients.
- The demand for intensive 1-on-1 homework support remained high among the youth.
- Employment, Mentorship and After School Programs saw an increase in the number of youth (both younger and older) with limited English skills being registered and requesting additional English language supports.
- The need for additional computer skills and digital literacy skills have intensified among clients to engage in programs remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to successfully integrate into the school system and develop essential employability skills.
- Some of our programs saw an increase of cross-cultural conflict between clients from different ethno-cultural and religious groups, most notably between Syrian, Yazidi, Eritrean, Chinese populations. This trend was noted in programming based on-site at NEEDS as well as programming we provided in some schools. At times, these conflicts also involved parents and other family members.
- Older youth (particularly Syrian) were observed to be disengaging from the educational system, putting them at-risk of failing classes or being expelled. These youth and their families require additional support to ensure these students complete their grade 12 education.
- More clients are requiring transportation support to access agency programs and services.

- There continues to be high demands for interpretation among clients to fully understand orientation information and to communicate their unique needs and challenges.
- There was a substantial increase in the number of clients from refugee backgrounds accessing our Employment Program (75% of clients in the Employment Program this fiscal year were from a refugee background, the majority Syrian).
- Increased need for comprehensive employment programming for multi-barriered refugee youth (low language, limited financial supports and resources, challenges with education system, family pressure and social isolation) accessing employment programming.
- Increase in the number of clients requiring comprehensive educational support to complete school homework and assignments.
- Increase in the number of clients who graduated high school and transitioned directly into post-secondary education.
- Increase in the number of clients attending post-secondary schooling who still require considerable education support to complete assignments.

Though the aforementioned trends resulted in some challenges in program delivery, through our comprehensive programs and services offered to newcomer children and youth, in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- High numbers of clients have successfully moved through the education system and have received their high school diploma (as observed through participation in our annual graduation celebrations).
- Newcomer youth actively participate in post-secondary programs.
- Newcomer children and youth received appropriate information and services to address their settlement needs and have the knowledge required to make informed decisions about their life in Canada.
- Newcomer youth have learned how to navigate the public transportation, access mainstream resources and create and maintain positive relationships with adults and their peers.
- Newcomer children and youth are more connected to the community through referrals, special events, field trips and mentorship matches.
- Newcomer youth have gained the knowledge and skills required to enter (and stay in) the Canadian Labour Market.



- An increased number of employers are willing to hire newcomer youth, including refugee youth with additional barriers.
- Newcomer youth exhibit increased pro-social skills, coping mechanisms and self-esteem.

## AGENCY STATISTICS

During the 2019 – 2020 reporting period, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. accomplished the statistics that is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Agency statistics for the 2019-20 fiscal year**

Total number of Clients Served (incl. RCs etc.)	2185
Total number of Refugee Clients	1837
Total number of Syrian Clients	733
Total number of Yazidi Clients	166
Total Number of Refugee Claimant Clients	73
Total Number of Other Non-IRCC Clients	142
Total number of Client Contacts	31,622.50
Total number of Program Hours	63,455.75
Total number of Volunteer Hours	12,754.80
Top Countries of Origin	Syria, Eritrea, Congo, Iraq & Somalia

### Comparison to Past Fiscal Years

**Graph 1: Total clients over the last five fiscal years**



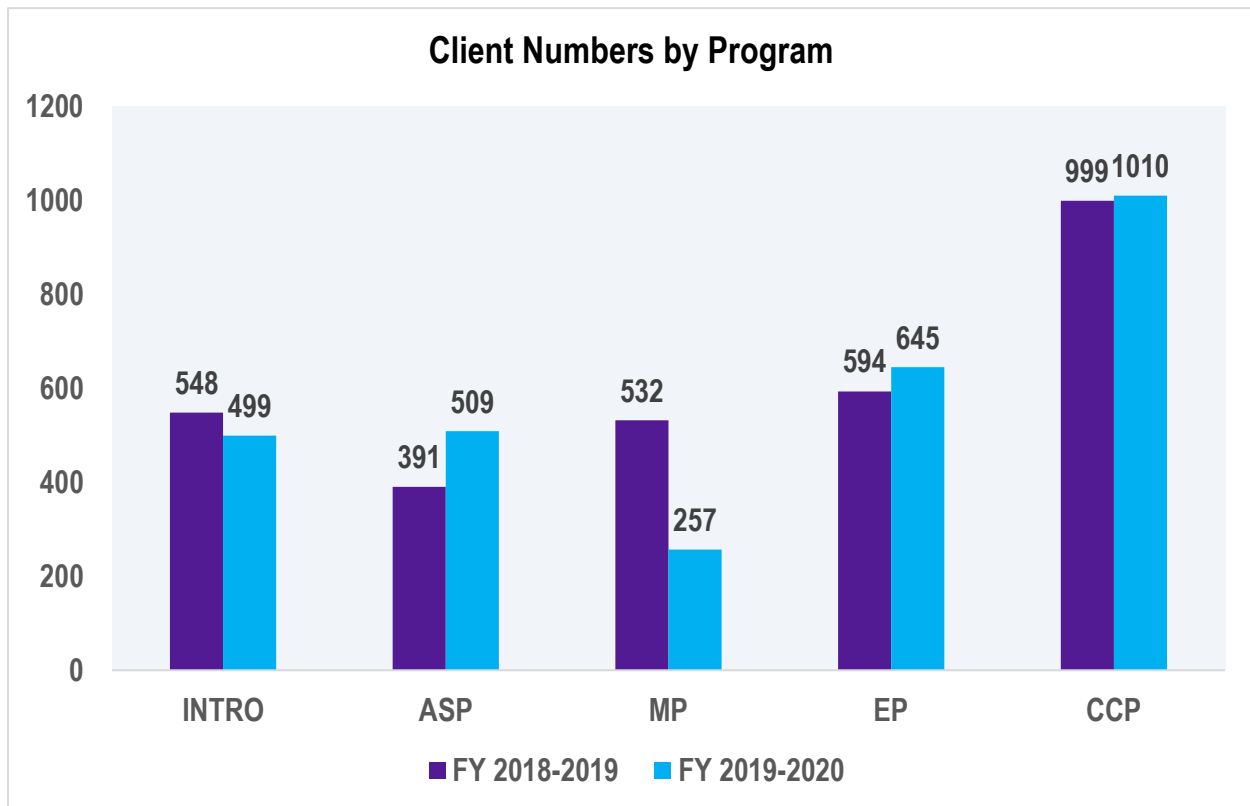


The overall number of clients served has steadily increased since 2015.

While the total number of IRCC eligible clients (1,970 individual clients) was less than the 2018-2019 FY (2,074 individual clients), the number of Non-IRCC eligible clients (refugee claimants, new Canadian Citizens, etc.) was higher this fiscal year (110 more clients). This is a result of the diverse range of funding that was brought into the agency from sources such as the Province of Manitoba, the United Way, and the Winnipeg Foundation, which made the delivery of services to these clients possible.

Regarding the number of clients served by individual programs, the Community Connections Program (CCP) served the highest number of clients followed by the Employment Program (EP) and After-School Program (ASP) as the second and third respectively. Three programs – CCP, EP and ASP – had increases in client numbers while two programs – Introduction to Canadian Education (INTRO) Program and Mentorship Program (MP) had decreases in the number of clients served (see Graph 2).

**Graph 2: Total number of clients served by program over last two years**



The Mentorship Program saw the most notable decrease, and this is largely due to the halt in the arrival of GARs and BVORs in Winnipeg, and the inability for clients to meet one-on-one with their mentors because of COVID.

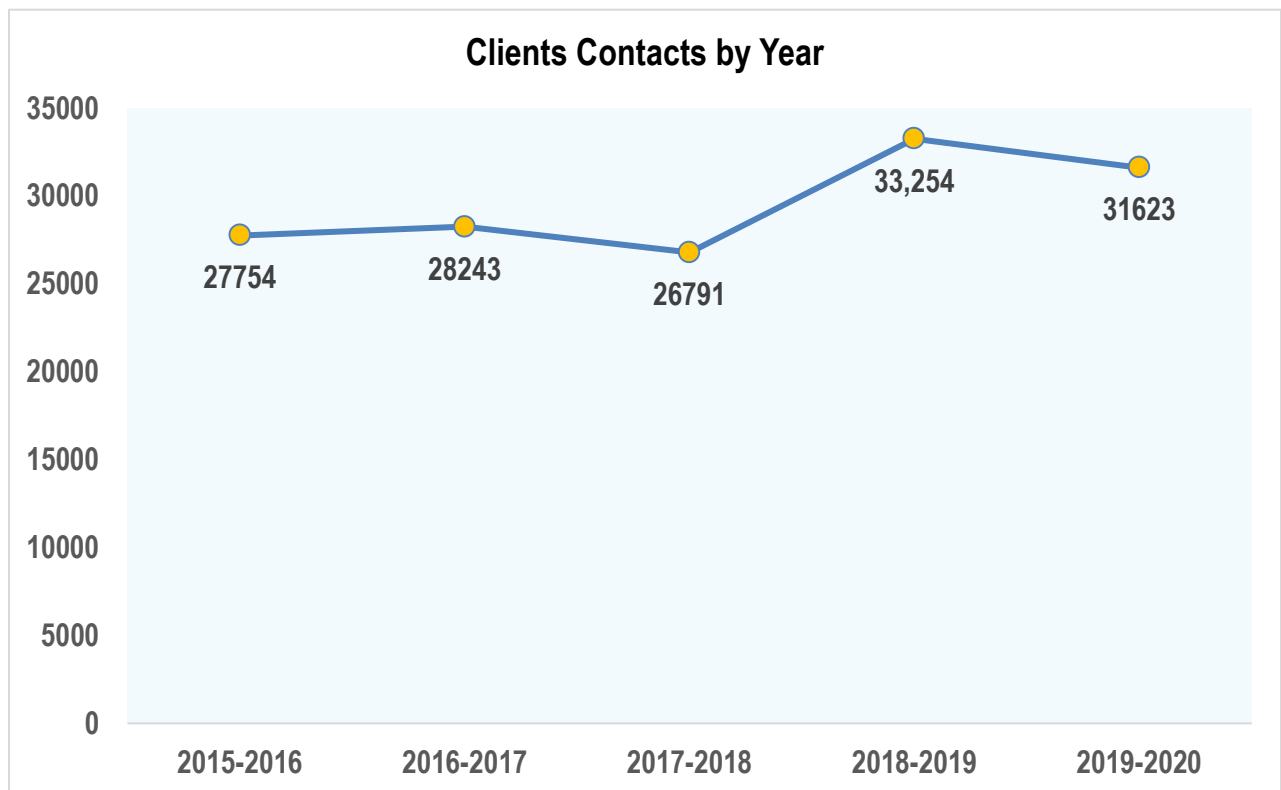
However, it should be emphasized that while the total number of clients served in the INTRO and Mentorship Programs was less compared to the 2018-2019 fiscal year, both programs in the 2019-2020 fiscal year

significantly exceeded their target number of clients by 62% and 50% respectively. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, INTRO served a total of 449 clients (with a target number of 225 clients) and the Mentorship served a total number of 257 clients (with a target number of 125 clients).

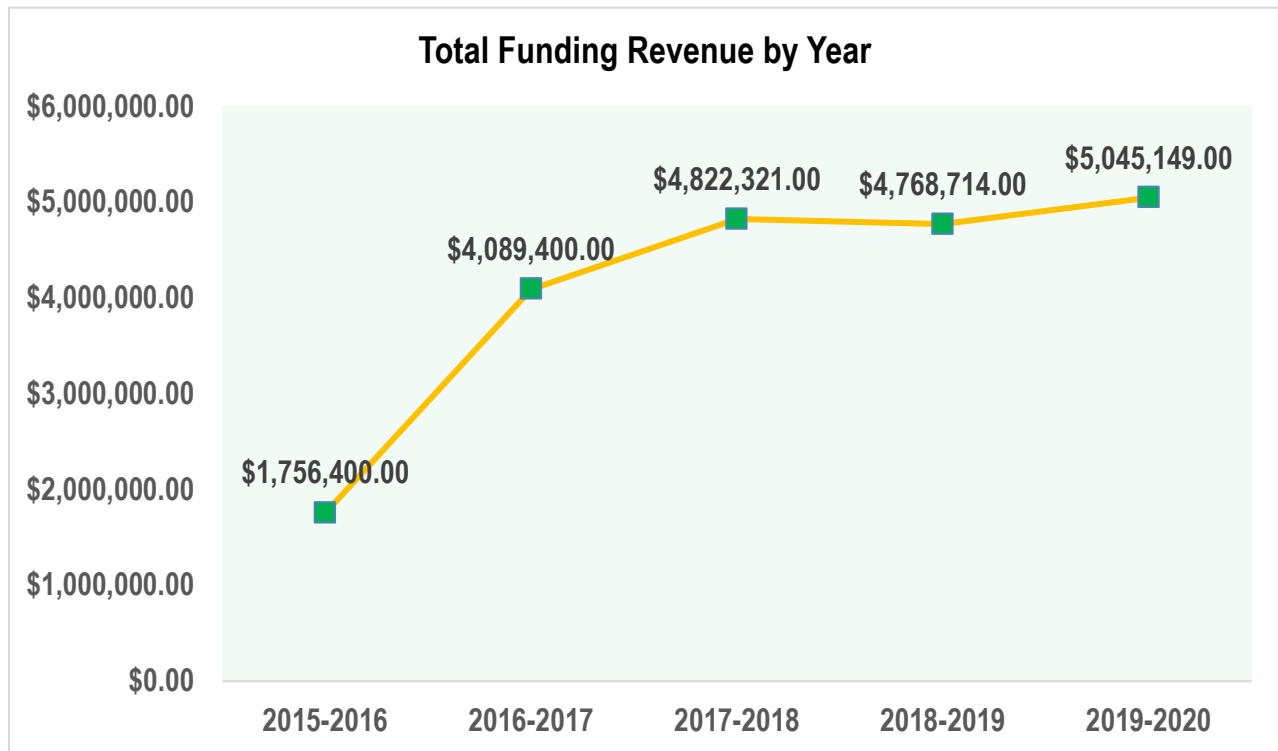
The suspension of in-person services in March 2020 as a result of COVID-19 had a direct impact on the total number of client contacts and program hours this fiscal year compared to last fiscal year.

The numbers of total client contacts, program hours, and volunteer hours decreased at the agency level in FY 2019-20 in comparison to the previous FY. The funding revenue had consistent growth in the recent years, and this trend continued in this fiscal year. Graphs 3 & 4 present the trends of total client contacts, and funding revenues over the last five fiscal years.

**Graph 3: Client contacts over the last five years**



**Graph 4: Funding revenues of last five years**



Other agency highlights include:

- The number of schools the agency is providing programming in has slightly decreased this fiscal year (from 24 in FY 2018-19 to 21 in FY 2019-20). However, this is a reflection of clients making a successful transition into the mainstream school system at certain school sites. While on-site programming ended, support to these schools is still provided on an ongoing, as needed basis.
- The total number of Syrian clients the agency served slightly decreased this year (733 individual clients) from 785 last fiscal year. However, this indicates that even after 2-3 years of settling in Canada, Syrian clients are still accessing services and perhaps those who initially did not access services (perhaps they came as PSRs), are now accessing services. This is notable in the Employment Program where the majority of clients are Syrian.
- In Fall 2019, the Agency saw the introduction of the Mental Health Project (MHP), funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This comprehensive project provides a set of experimental programming to refugee children and youth (aged 6-21), their parents, and local social service providers, with the ultimate goal to create an evidence-based intervention to promote emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of refugee children and youth, which can be shared with others involved in public health and well-being promotion across Canada.

- A new pilot program, the Newcomer Youth Post-Secondary Bridge Program was successfully launched in January 2020. This project linked over fifty (50) newcomer youth in Grade 12 to post-secondary institutions and community resources to support their transition into post-secondary education and training. Due to the success of the pilot, the Post-Secondary Bridge Program will continue to provide these essential services to newcomer youth in the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year.

## INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM REPORTS

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### INTRODUCTION TO CANADIAN EDUCATION (INTRO) PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Kate Paterson

#### Overview of Activities:

The INTRO Program continued to provide valuable education and settlement supports to newly arrived Government Assisted and Privately Sponsored Refugee children and youth. The goal was to assist these children and youth with their initial settlement needs and support their integration into the larger Canadian school system. The delivery of the INTRO Program was affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in early March 2020. As a result, the total number of primary clients and the numbers of delivered sessions and client contacts were slightly less than the previous year. The overall INTRO program statistics for the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: INTRO statistics for FY 2019-20**

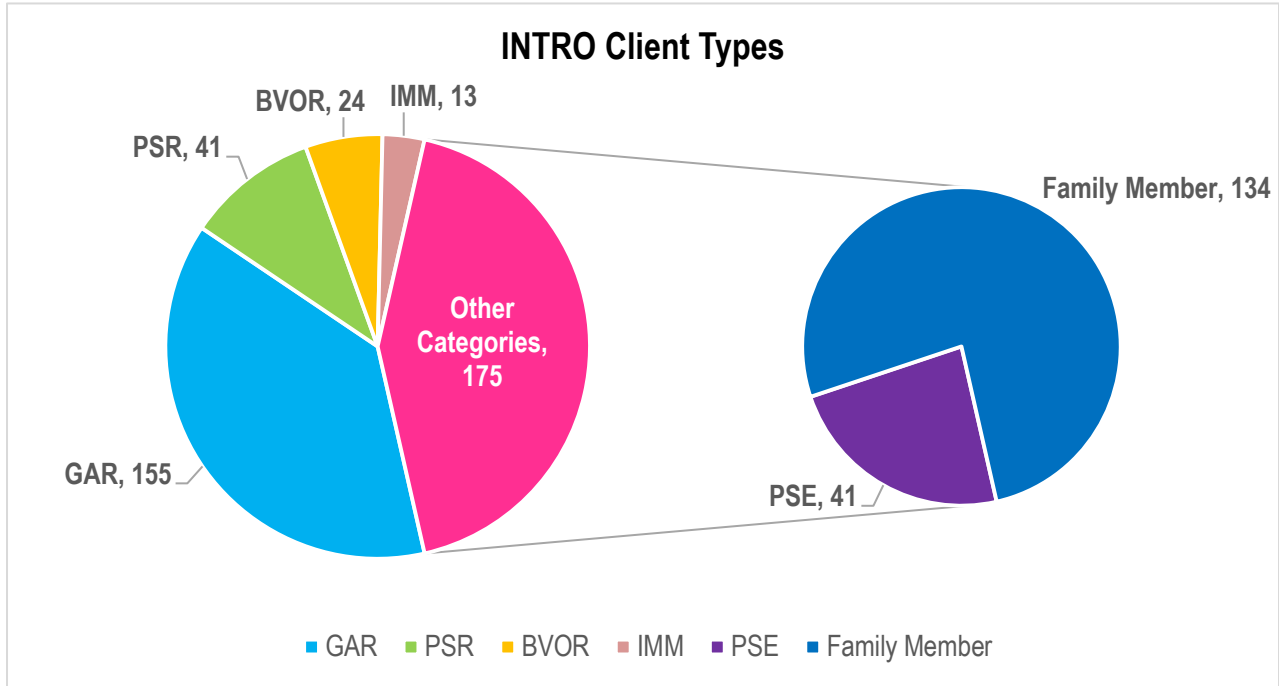
Target Number of INTRO Primary Clients:	225
Total Number of INTRO Primary Clients:	325
Total Number of Clients (including family members)	174
Total Number of New Curriculum Clients:	233
Total Number of Curriculum Clients	233
Total Number of Curriculum Contacts:	3,165
Number of Curriculum Hours:	18582.50
Total Curriculum Sessions	207
Total Needs Assessments and Referrals:	84
Total Number of Crisis Support Clients	38

The program served four (4) types of clients in the 2019-20 fiscal year, which include Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), Blended-Visa Office-Referral Refugees (BVORs), and Immigrant (IMMs). In addition, the program provided additional psychosocial (PSE) support to agency clients who needed them and served many family members of primary clients. Graph 5 shows the types of clients the program served during the last fiscal year:

The INTRO Program delivered transitional orientation and educational programming to 325 clients during the 2019 - 2020 fiscal year. The program ran from Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. with the exception of one week in August where the program closed to do preparation for the new school year. During these sessions, clients were provided with opportunities to build their English language skills as well as increase their knowledge in the four curriculum areas: Education/Employment, Health/Nutrition, Safety/Law, and

Places/Community. Computer classes, pro-social skill development, and integration activities were also incorporated as a way of increasing the overall success of the clients who accessed the program.

**Graph 5: Client types of the INTRO Program in FY 2019-20**



Classroom culture was a focus of the program. This is because many schools around the world function differently from the Canadian School System. Lessons were developed by certified teachers who have experience with EAL learners. This resulted in clients gaining ample opportunities to develop their English language skills through a variety of activities (such as team building activities, worksheets, interactive games, BINGO, vocabulary board games, and jeopardy). N.E.E.D.S. Inc.'s onsite gym facility was used daily to help increase clients' physical literacy, and SMART Boards were utilized to help make the lessons more interactive and engaging.

Through funding from the United Way and the Province of Manitoba, the INTRO Program continued to provide services to refugee claimant children and youth for the third consecutive year. This funding allows us to provide significant and much needed support to refugee claimants and other non-IRCC eligible clients who have historically had limited access to resources upon arriving in Winnipeg due to their ineligibility for IRCC-funded services.

## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Misty Belcourt

### Overview of Activities:

The After-School Program (ASP) continued to see high numbers of newcomer youth accessing services. The Homework Club continued to be the most attractive component of this program for the youth. In addition to Homework Club, social and recreational activities were provided to newcomer youth in the areas of sports, art, music, dance, pro-social skill development, and field trips to community organizations. Table 3 shows the program statistics for the 2019– 2020 fiscal year.

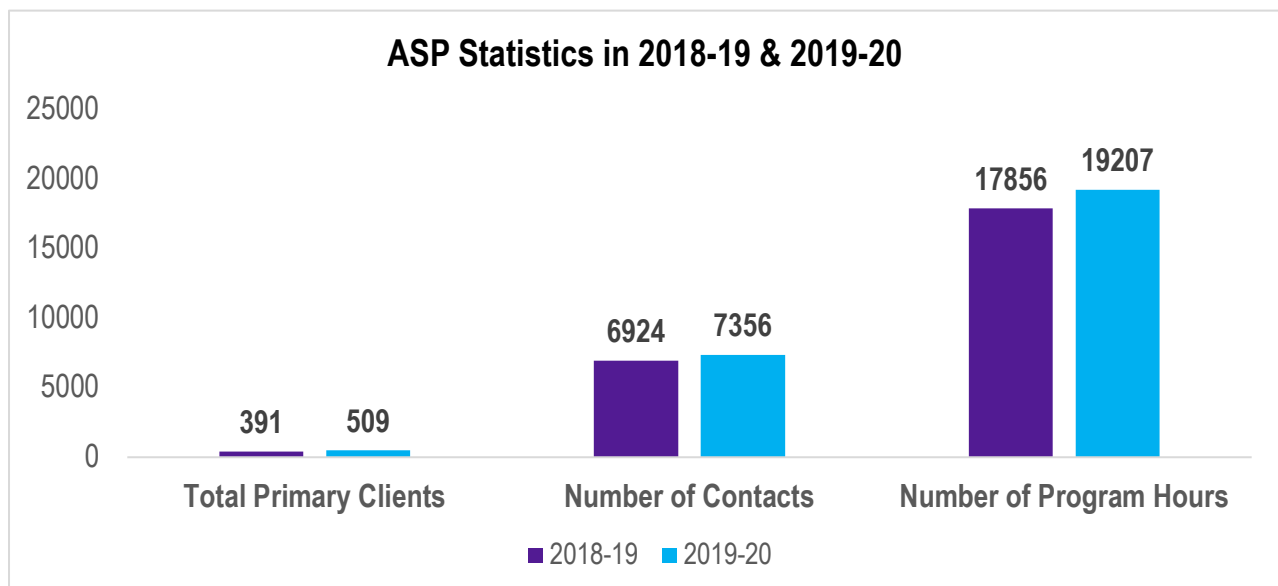
**Table 3: ASP statistics for FY 2019-20**

Total Number of Primary Clients	509
Total Number of New Primary Clients	292
Total Client Contacts	7356
Total Program Hours	19207
Average Attendance	35
Number of Psychosocial Support Contacts	7

\* low attendance numbers on Fridays skewed our average attendance.

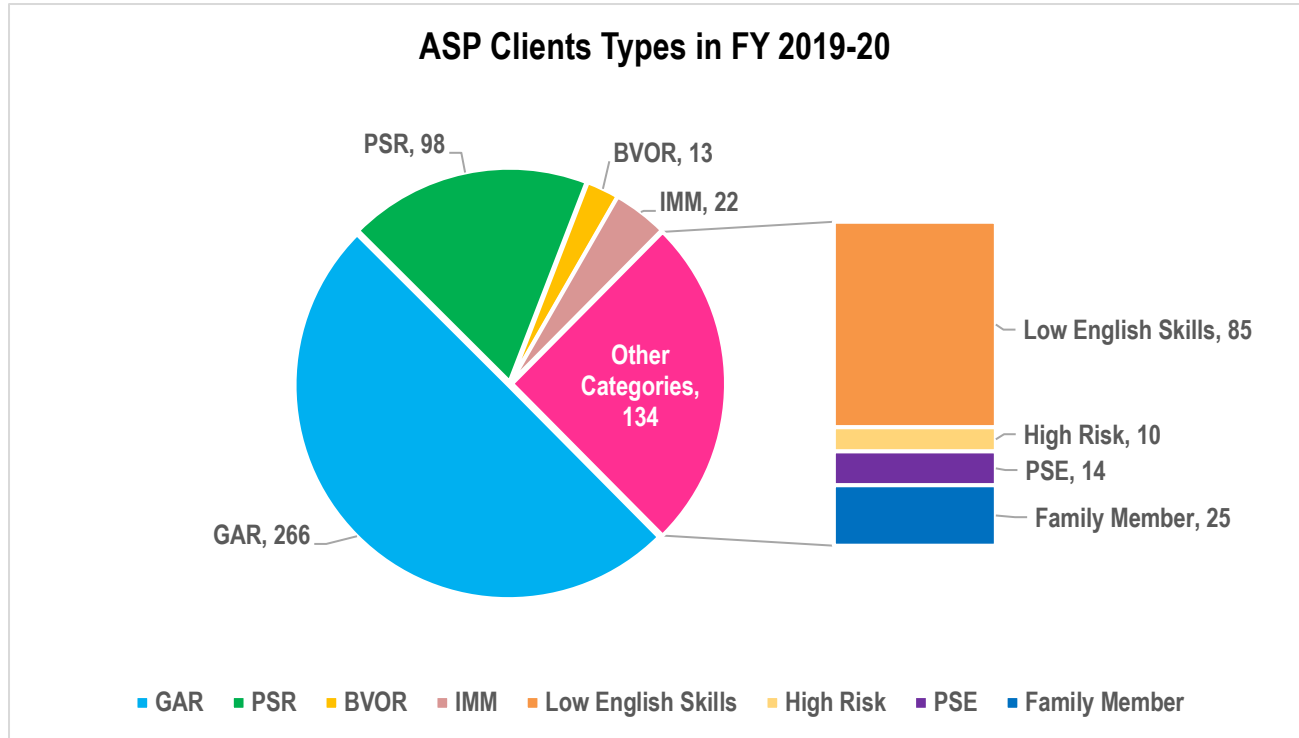
Compared to the previous fiscal year, the number of newcomer youth accessing the program and amount of services delivered to them significantly increased in the 2019-20 fiscal year. This indicates increasing demand for the programming under ASP among the newcomer youth. Graph 6 presents a comparative picture of ASP client sizes, contact numbers and programming hours in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years.

**Graph 6: Comparison of ASP activities between FYs 2018-19 and 2019-20**



In terms of client-types, the After-School Program served seven categories of clients in the 2019-20 fiscal year. These include GARs, PSRs, BVORs, IMM, clients with limited English language skills, high-risk clients with low engagement in education system and gang idolization, clients needing additional PSE support, and family members of primary clients. The distribution of these client-types served during the last fiscal year is presented in graph 7.

**Graph 7: Client types of ASP in FY 2019-20**



Specific activities delivered under ASP in the last fiscal year are outlined below:

**Homework Club:** Youth received assistance with their homework and were able to use the computers to research or to type up assignments. We are seeing more and more students accessing the computers to download homework assignments off of online platforms. There were on average of twenty (25) youth attending homework club each night. A high number of volunteers were required as many of the youth needed 1-on-1 support to complete their assignments. We also continued our partnership with the Franco-Manitoban School Division as we offered homework support in French to their students.

**Dance Class:** Youth were offered weekly dance classes focusing on cultural and hip-hop dance where they could express themselves and learn about other cultures through movement. Youth preformed the dances they learned in dance class at several different agency celebrations throughout the year.

**Boys/Girls Nights:** The girls'/boys' nights focused on more socio-emotional aspects such as self-esteem, leadership, confidence, bullying, healthy sexuality and relationships and stereotypes, while still having fun with the activities. The boys'/girls' nights were often separate and occasionally came together once or twice a



month. N.E.E.D.S. Inc. partnered with the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) to provide presentations on healthy sexuality to our youth clients. Overall, these sessions were well-received by the youth participants and we hope the partnership will continue in the future.

**Soccer & Basketball Clubs:** Youth played weekly soccer and basketball games at the University of Winnipeg RecPlex and in partnership with Sport Manitoba, participated in a variety of skill building and physically activity opportunities.

**Swimming Program:** Many newcomer youth come to Canada without knowing how to swim or having access to swimming opportunities. In past years there have been tragedies where newcomer youth have drowned because they were not properly prepared for the water or trained in water safety. This program provides newcomer youth with basic swimming and water safety instruction.

**Music & Storytelling:** A Master's of Peace and Conflict Studies practicum student ran drumming infused with storytelling workshops. Participants shared stories about the meanings of their names, shared cultural songs and it allowed the youth with lower levels of English to express themselves through music.

**Computer Classes:** Structured computer classes were offered weekly so youth learn how to use various functions in Word, PowerPoint and make web pages. Unstructured computer time was also incorporated into regular programming. Due to the high demand for using the computers for homework, regular computer classes were not facilitated throughout the fiscal year.

**Cooking Club:** The Cooking Club took place weekly at the Immigrant Centre where youth learned about nutrition, how to read labels, learn measurements, and how to follow recipes. By the end of the session, youth created many delicious meals.

**Fort Whyte Farms:** Fort Whyte Farms allows youth to participate in two (2) sessions, one in the Fall and one in the Spring. Youth volunteer weekly feeding animals, working in the green house, and making meals with locally sourced food. In the Spring session, two (2) youth from NEEDS were hired to work on the Farm full-time over the summer.

**Future Focused:** This program discussed academic topics regarding post-secondary schooling, scholarships and graduation requirements, but also included employment and career exploration, stress management, managing finances and volunteer opportunities. This program was developed based on feedback from the youth and tailored to the needs expressed by recent graduates that would help guide them in their academic and future career endeavours.

**Let's Talk Science:** This program was delivered through a partnership with the Let's Talk Science program and was facilitated by University of Manitoba students. Youth were provided with opportunities to learn through hands on workshops in areas of science, math and engineering. Some of the topics covered included learning about sugar content, how to measure density, learning about pH balance and H<sub>2</sub>O. They also learned about bacteria and blood types. All workshops were hands on experiential learning where they did activities related to the topic. The goal of this program was to help youth explore their interests and start thinking about future career and/or post-secondary opportunities.

**Conversation Café:** Conversation Café is a chance for youth who want to practice their verbal English in a safe and smaller environment, with topics selected and facilitated by staff to increase confidence. Some of the topics covered throughout the year were personal development, safety, discussion of challenges and how to overcome said challenges, and how to set realistic goals for themselves in the future.

**Newcomer Youth Post-Secondary Bridge Program:** This new pilot project linked Grade 12 newcomer youth to post-secondary institutions and community resources/services to support their transition into post-secondary. New partnerships to support the project included:

- The University of Winnipeg's International, Immigrant and Refugee Student Services, Student Recruitment, and Admissions Department
- University of Manitoba's Student Recruitment Department
- Red River College's Student Recruitment Department and English Training Centre
- WELARC
- Seven Oak's English Assessment Adult Learning Centre

Through these partnerships, newcomer youth were connected to timely information and supports necessary to access post-secondary education. The program was well received, with participation of over fifty (50) youth in the pilot.

## MENTORSHIP & OUTREACH PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Misty Belcourt

### Overview of Activities:

In the 2019-20 fiscal year, the total number of primary clients (171) accessing services in the Mentorship & Outreach exceeded the target number (125). Through mentorship matches, 114 clients (slightly higher than the previous year) were provided with additional positive adult role modelling, opportunities to practice their English language skills, and chances to visit community resources and events. Due to continued high demand for mentorship support, there was a waitlist, the same as the previous years. Compared to last year, there was a slight increase in the number of 1-on-1 mentorship matches, but a slight decrease in newcomer children and youth attending our Site-Based mentorship program. Table 4 presents the summary statistics of the Mentorship and Outreach Program for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

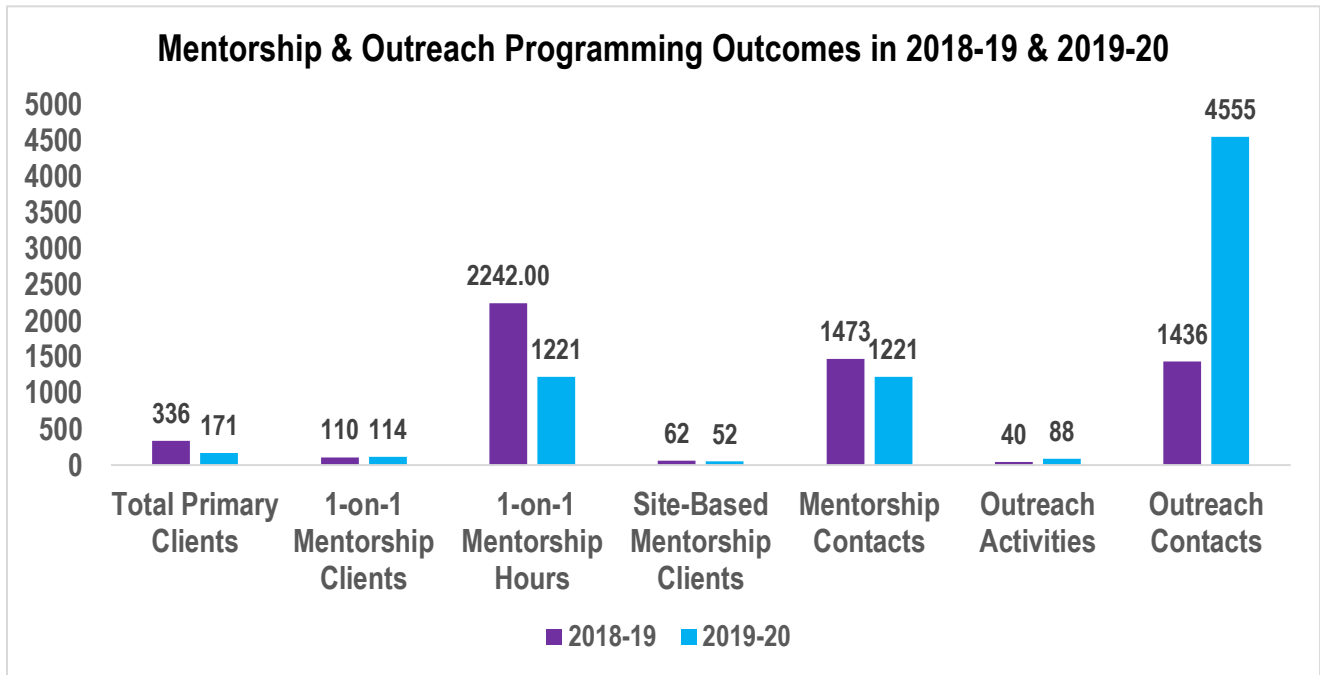
**Table 4: Mentorship Program statistics for FY 2019-20**

Target Number of Primary Clients	125
Actual Number of Primary Clients	171
Total Number of New Clients	214
Total Number of all Clients	*257
Number of 1-on-1 Mentorship Clients	114
Number of 1-on-1 Mentorship Hours	1614.00
Number of Site-Based Clients	52
Number of Site-Based Hours	2500.00
Number of Mentorship Contacts	1,221
Number of Outreach Activities	88
Number of Outreach Contacts	4,555
Number of Psychosocial Support Contacts	12
Number of Current Mentors	27
Number of Mentorship Inquires	62
Number of Mentorship Interviews	30
Number of Mentorship Training Sessions	12
Number of Mentors Trained	23

\*\*includes family members (parents, guardians, siblings, etc.)

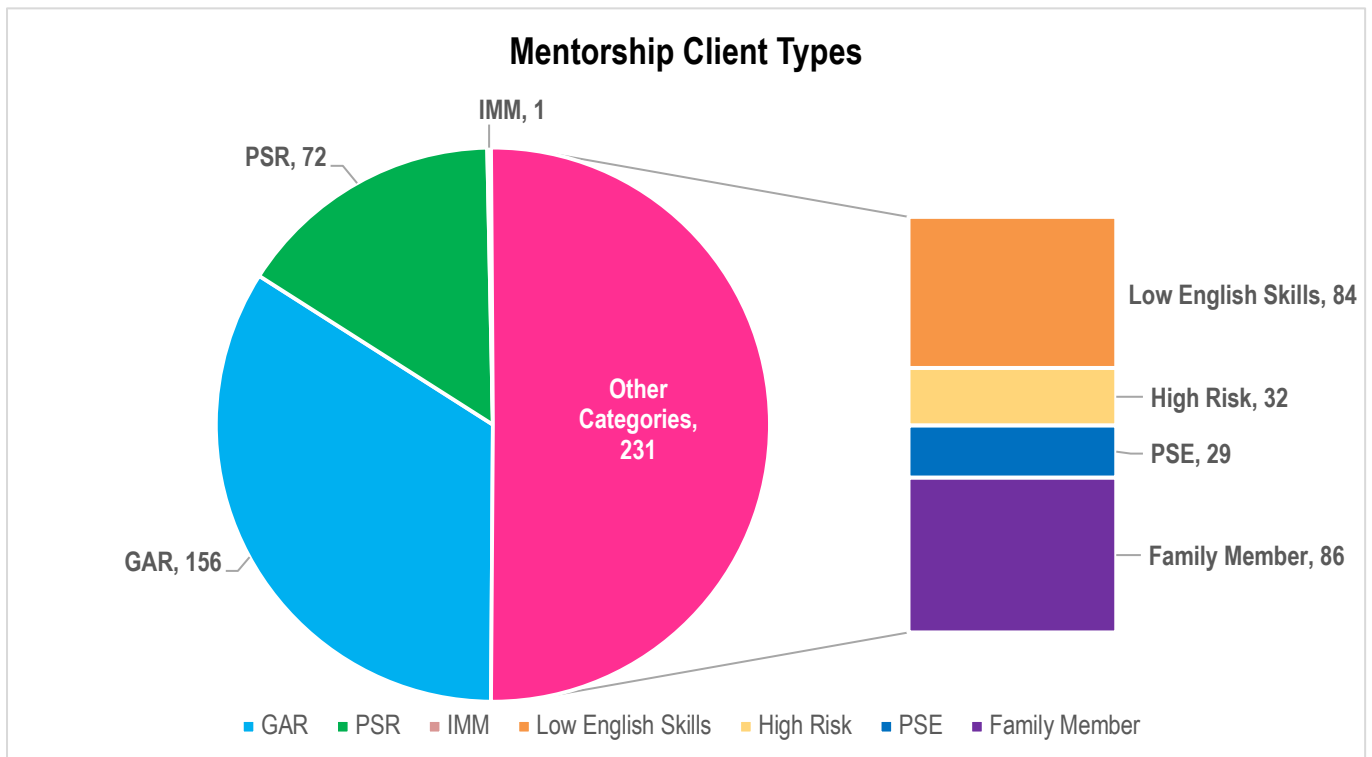
Graph 8 below provides a comparative picture of the Mentorship and Outreach Program in terms of some key outcome areas, such as total primary clients, number of clients in 1-on-1 and site-based mentorship programming, total mentorship hours, number of outreach activities and number of outreach contacts. Notable, is the significant increase in the number of Outreach contacts compared to the 2018-19 fiscal year.

**Graph 8: Comparison of MP activities between FYs 2018-19 & 2019-20**



In the 2019-20 fiscal year, the Mentorship and Outreach Program served seven types of clients which include GARs, PSRs, IMMs, high-risk clients, clients with limited English language skills or needing additional psychosocial supports, and family members of mentorship clients. The distribution of client-types served is presented in Graph 9.

**Graph 9: Client types of MP in FY 2019-20**



The Site-Based Mentorship Program ran Saturday afternoons and invited newly arrived refugee children and youth to participate in a variety of activities. The goal was to help the clients create positive social networks as well as become familiar with community places, resources and supports.

The outreach component of the program continued to be in high demand; the volunteer coordinator and mentorship facilitator completed 88 outreach activities as a way of recruiting more volunteer mentors.

Due to the continued high demand for agency services, volunteers played a key role in our ability to meet the needs of our newcomer clients. Volunteers helped to keep our adult/youth ratio high, which allowed us to continue to create a safe, supervised, and welcoming environment for our clients.

Volunteers also provided significant support to our newcomer clients in the form of mentorship. This program was completely made up of individuals who volunteered their time to support newly arrived refugee youth during their initial settlement period. Without volunteers the delivery of the Mentorship Program would be practically impossible.

## EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Thandiwe Ncube

### Overview of Activities:

The Employment Program continued to deliver high-level services and programming to our clients from our office across the street from the main N.E.E.D.S. Inc. office as well as off site at five (5) different schools across Winnipeg. Providing programs at various school sites throughout Winnipeg allows clients who may face transportation barriers to access our programming within the communities they live.

Clients gained support from our Youth Employment for Newcomers: Career-Driven Internship Program, Employment Development Program and English for Employment Purposes workshop series, and one-on-one job coaching. Funding from the Province of Manitoba allowed us to continue our First Jobs for Youth Program and launch our Increasing Employment Success for Multi-Barriered Refugee Youth. Table 5 presents the summary statistics of the Employment Program for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

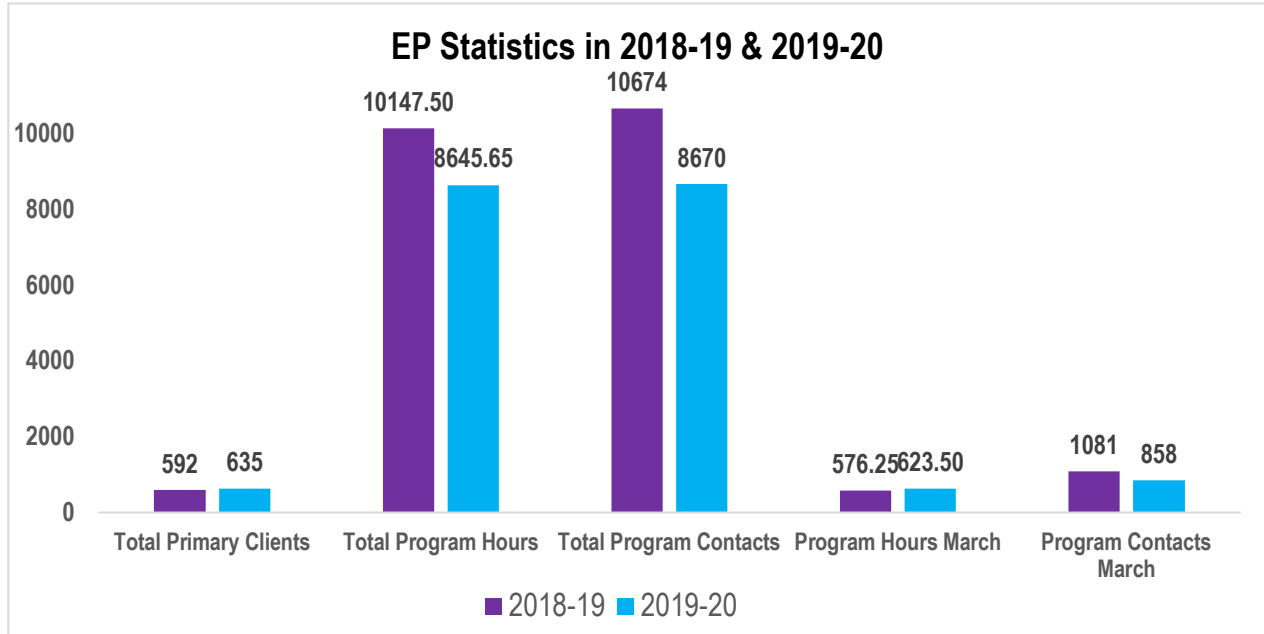
**Table 5: Employment Program statistics for FY 2019-20**

Target Number of Primary Clients	425
Total Number of Primary Clients	635
Number of One-on-One Coaching Clients (Short-Term)	*446
Number of First Jobs Clients	30
Number of Career-Driven Internship Clients	120
Number of English for Employment Clients	25
Number of Cineplex Clients	14
Number of Program Hours	8365.50
Number of Program Contacts	8259
Number of Psychosocial Support Contacts	415
Number of NEEDS Assessments & Action Plans Completed	420

\*\*all clients registered as 1-on-1 coaching clients upon registration

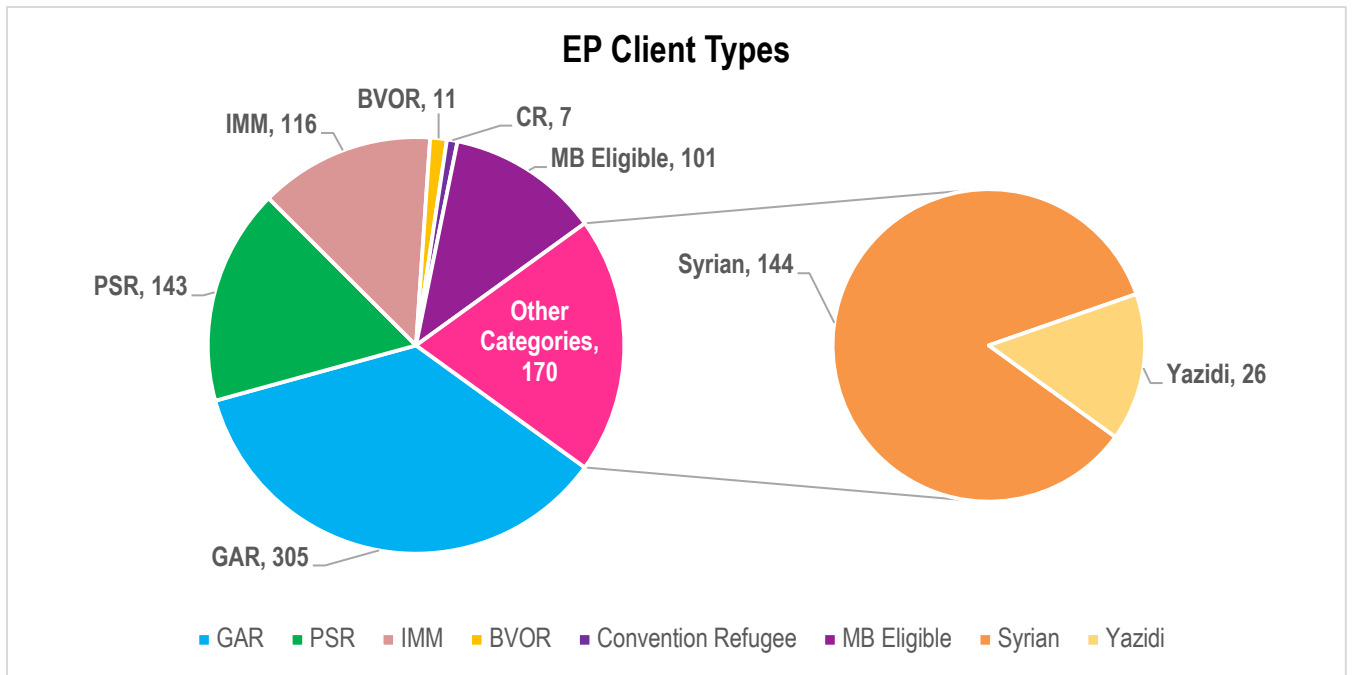
This fiscal year, the Employment Program saw a slight increase in the number of clients served since 2018-19. While total the total Program Hours and Contacts slightly decreased from the last fiscal year, it is important to note that March is usually a very busy month in Employment, with a large number of clients preparing for and entering into work placements. Despite COVID-19 disruptions to in-person services, staff were still able to quickly transition to the delivery of remote services to provide clients job searching assistance, applying for jobs, interview preparation as well as referrals to CERB and EIA. Key outcomes are outlined in Graph 10.

**Graph 10: Comparison of EP activities between FYs 2018-19 & 2019-20**



The major types of clients that the Employment Program served in the 2019-20 fiscal year include GARs, PSRS, IMMs, BVORs and Convention Refugees (CR). Like in other N.E.E.D.S. Inc., GARs dominated Employment Program clients. Funds from the Province of Manitoba enabled employment services to be delivered to one-hundred and one (101) Manitoba eligible clients, who would not have been able to access the services previously. The distribution of EP client-types for this fiscal year is presented in Graph 11.

**Graph 11: Client types of EP in FY 2019-20**



In delivering the Employment Program, partnerships with schools and school divisions have been the key. These in-school programs provide access to services for newcomer youth who otherwise may face barriers to programming such as transportation to our downtown location. As well, in two of the school sites, programming was offered during school hours to engage newcomer youth who are unlikely to participate in programming outside of school hours.

As in the previous years, employer partnerships played a central role for the delivery of work experience programs. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, EP partnered with thirty-seven (37) employers at fifty-two (52) business locations in Winnipeg to provide on-the-job training and mentorship opportunities to clients. These employer partners represented a range of job sectors that included food & hospitality, retail, and other service sectors. Employer partners offered work experience, volunteer, and mentorship opportunities to youth, so they could build employability skills. In addition, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff made 1,179 contacts with two hundred and thirteen (213) employers at three hundred and twenty-eight (328) business locations in the city to build partnerships to provide work experience and volunteer opportunities to clients and to support them in their work placements. While the number of employer partners is lower than the last year, which were 61 and 96 respectively, this is directly correlated to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shutdown of the economy made it impossible to place youth in work placements in March. The majority of clients accessing employment services are ages 16-22 and currently in high school. Thus, the majority of work placements are in entry-level service sector jobs including, retail, restaurant and fast-food, which all faced closures. Alternately, clients interested in seeking employment were referred to frontline employer partners such as Safeway, Foodfare and Family Foods, for direct hiring.

Throughout the fiscal year, employment staff also liaised with community organizations, including Prince's Trust Canada (PTC), for the delivery and implementation of the "Get Into" Customer Service Program with Cineplex, the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG), Winnipeg Harvest, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Fort Whyte Farms, Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS), the Boys and Girls Club of Canada, and Siloam Mission. The program provided volunteer/mentorship opportunities to clients who wanted to enhance their personal network and increase employability skills. Employment Program staff also consulted with staff at the CrossRoads Adult Learning Centre, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), the Manitoba Customer Contact Centre, and the Social Research & Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to discuss potential opportunities to collaborate or partner.

Low English proficiency in clients accessing employment services remained a concern. In the 2019-20 fiscal year, almost 50 percent (43%) had low English language and literacy skills. Many clients (14%) required additional help with their homework and course assignments to be successful in the educational system and the job market. Furthermore, there were many (23%) who had low English skills and no previous work experience. Moreover, a good number of EP clients (total 11) were identified as high-risk who were referred for additional psychosocial support.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Monique Burke & Meagan Botelho

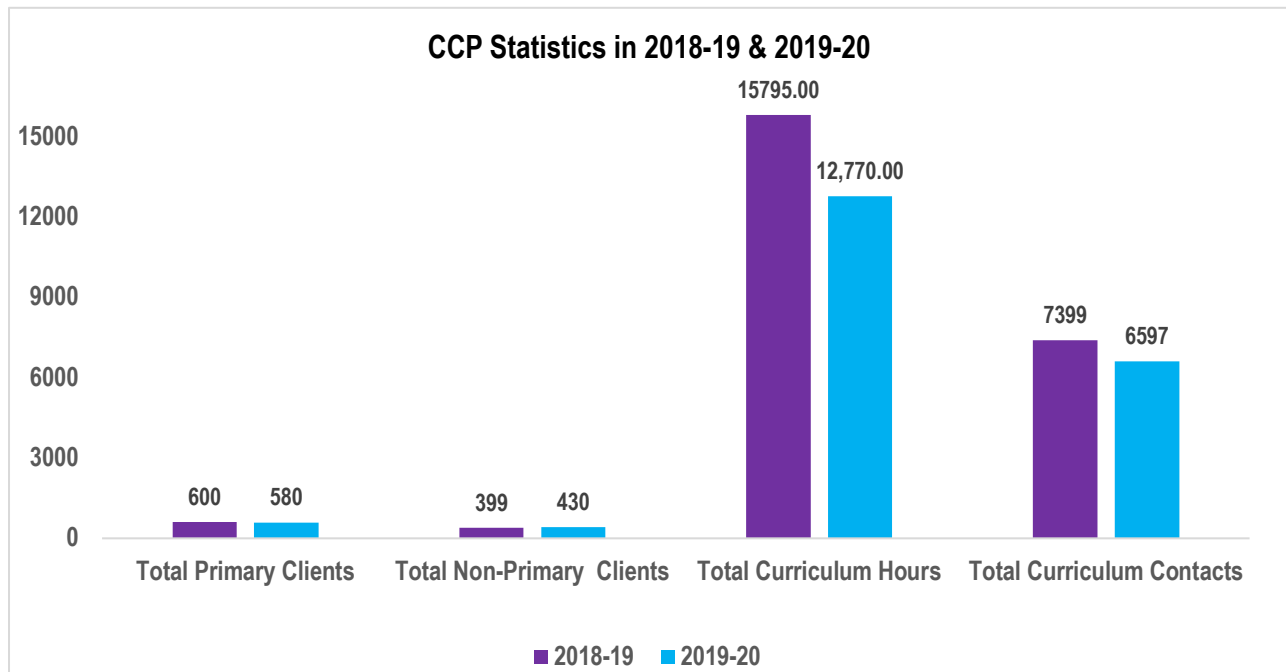
### Overview of Activities:

The Community Connections Program (CCP), continued to develop during the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year. The program was primarily designed to provide additional support to Syrian children and youth at their schools to help them successfully integrate into their new community. However, children and youth from other ethnocultural communities were also served. There were continuous intakes, and programs were delivered by qualified and experienced facilitators (Community Connectors). Support staff that represented the cultures and languages of our clients helped to engage students and interpret and communicate with families.

**Table 6: CCP statistics for FY 2019-20**

Target Number of Primary Clients	500
Total Number of Primary Clients	580
Total Number of After School Sessions	595
Total Number of Curriculum Hours	12,770.00
Total Number of Curriculum Contacts	6597
Total Number of Cross-Cultural Activities	83
Total Number of Home Visits	53
Total Number of Referrals	351
Total Number of PSE Support Contacts	390

**Graph 12: Comparison of CCP activities between FYs 2018-19 & 2019-20**



Compared to the 2018-19 fiscal year, the CCP remained steady in terms of the number of primary and non-primary clients served, total curriculum hours and curriculum contacts. We exceeded our target number of primary clients and saw a higher level of engagement in programming activities by family members. There was a slight decrease in overall curriculum hours and contacts compared to last fiscal year. School closures and the abrupt transition to remote services interrupted the delivery of off-site curriculum programming in March 2020.

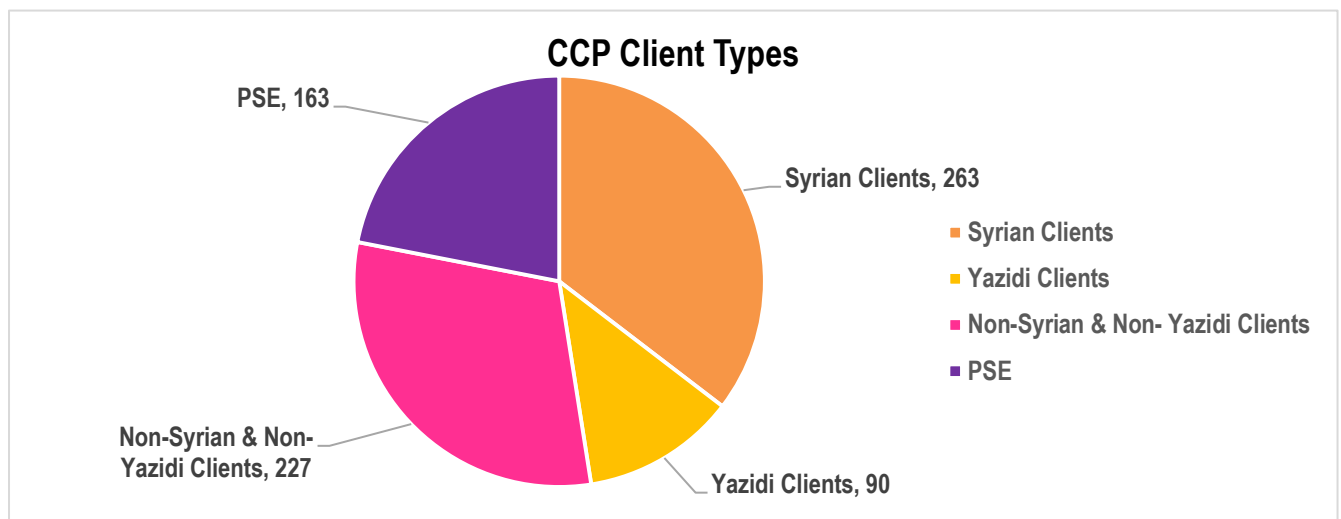
The CCP Curriculum focused on five (5) different topics:

- Education/Employment (such as Education system, post-secondary, and careers);
- Health/Nutrition (such as physical activity, doctors, and Food Guide);
- Safety/Law (such as role of police, Justice System, financial literacy, rights/responsibilities of citizens, and fire/internet safety);
- Community/Places (such as transportation, public spaces/resources, multiculturalism, and gender equality); and
- (5) Pro-social Skills/Integration (such as making friends, decision making, culture shock, and settlement stressors).

Curriculum was updated regularly, so youth received relevant and accurate information. Partner school divisions included: Louis Riel School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, St. James-Assiniboia School Division, River East Transcona School Division and Winnipeg School Division. Programming was delivered within five different school divisions at twenty-one (21) schools in Winnipeg. All after-school programming included a healthy snack, choice time, and a review of N.E.E.D.S Inc. behavior expectations.

As indicated, the CCP has diversified its client base. This fiscal year, approximately two-hundred and thirty (230) Non-Syrian and Non-Yazidi clients received services. A number of clients still required ongoing psychosocial support to help work through past/ongoing trauma, build relationships with others, follow directions, emotionally regulate, and integrate in to the classroom, school culture and community broadly.

**Graph 13: Client types of CCP in FY 2019-20**



Cross-cultural integration programming was also delivered as a way of promoting acceptance, cross-cultural friendships, and support for Syrian newcomer children and youth. The goal was to discuss and decrease racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in the various school communities. These cross-cultural activities were delivered using a variety of methods including storytelling, student ambassadors, and friendship groups.

## **NATIONAL NEWCOMER YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT**

**Managed by:** Misty Belcourt

Ninety-five (95) newcomer youth were recruited across the three partner sites (Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto) to participate in the 3rd cohort of the Civic Engagement Project.

Thirty (30) youth from NEEDS participated in the program. Youth attended and participated in Leadership Training workshops on the topics of:

- Leadership & Teamwork
- Indigenous History & Culture
- Canadian Values
- Equality, Multiculturalism & Respect for Diversity
- Volunteerism & Building Belonging

Through these workshops, youth developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for topics covered in the workshops, and built leadership skills which can be applied in the community.

After completing the workshops, youth planned, developed and implemented a youth-led community project which addressed some of the main challenges they were experiencing within the larger community. One example of a community project that the youth focused on addressed stereotypes of newcomer and Indigenous communities and brought together newcomer and Indigenous youth. The participants felt storytelling would be a meaningful medium to reach their target audience. They created a storyline, with art illustrations which was made into a storybook and colouring book that were printed for distribution.

In February 2020, fifty (50) newcomer youth (including 30 youth from NEEDS and 20 from the abovementioned partner sites) attended and participated in the National Newcomer Youth Gathering in Winnipeg. Youth had the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience while interacting with newcomer youth from the other partner sites. Youth developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for diversity and inclusion. Able to reflect on their own experiences, youth developed tools and strategies to promote diversity and inclusion and to stand against racism in their communities.

## THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

**Managed by:** Kirby Borgardt

The Mental Health Program entitled “Enhance Wellness of Refugee Children, Youth and Families” began in September 2019 with the financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada under the Mental Health Program Innovation Fund (MHP-IF). The program provides a set of experimental programming to refugee children and youth (aged 6-21), their parents, and local social service providers, with the ultimate goal to create an evidence-based intervention to promote emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of refugee children and youth, which can be shared with others involved in public health and well-being promotion across Canada. The activities of the program are guided by a work-plan approved by MHP-IF.

The program has six (6) major components which include: (1) developing a trauma-informed curriculum; (2) psychosocial education groups for refugee children and youth; (3) facilitation of a Circle of Security (COS) parenting group and parenting social support group; (4) Making Sense of Trauma (MSOT) training for service providers and educational staff; (5) evaluation of the program; and (6) participation in KDE-Hub activities.

During the reporting period (FY 2019-20), the program operated its activities in-line with the deliverables outlined in the work-plan for Year 1. Accordingly, creation of a trauma-informed curriculum on psychosocial support for refugee children and youth has been completed. In the process of developing the curriculum, the curriculum development team of the Mental Health Program (MHP) conducted literature searches on the best practices of trauma-informed curriculum, and closely collaborated with the experts in this field, particularly the experts at New Directions. The team also had several consultations with Syrian refugee parents during the early stages of curriculum development. The knowledge, ideas, suggestions and feedback that were thus acquired were integrated into the trauma-informed curriculum. Such consultations will continue as the curriculum will continue to be adapted based on new ideas, feedback and experiences. The curriculum development team has also developed the framework for the facilitators’ guide, and it is now in the process of being finalized. In addition, the program has translated the Big Feeling Come and Go published by Canadian Centre for Child Protection into four (4) different languages: Arabic, Swahili, Somali and Tigrinya. The project has superseded the set timeline in accomplishing the activities under this component.

As planned, the program also delivered 2 (two) PSE groups during January-March 2020, one for age group 6-12 and the other for age group 13-21. Twenty (19) sessions were delivered (out of intended 24 sessions, 12 for each group) until mid-March, where 31 refugee children and youth participated. Total 118.25 client-hours of PSE programming was delivered through the 19 PSE sessions. Topics of the sessions included Building Connections, Our Brain and Survival Responses (Freeze, Fight & Flight), Identifying Emotions and Self-Regulation. However, face-to-face PSE sessions were postponed from mid-March due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, staff regularly participated in KDE-Hub activities and navigate its website to make the best use of the resources made available there. MH staff attend the bi-weekly seminars organised by the Hub and participate in its research initiatives as part knowledge and idea sharing and their contribution to the emergence of a mental health intervention community across Canada.

## PARTNERSHIPS

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N.E.E.D.S. Inc. partnered with many different settlement service providers, educational institutions, mainstream organizations, networks and community members in order to provide the best service possible to its clients.

The following is a list of all the partners from the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year:

- Winnipeg Harvest (in-kind food donations)
- Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (M.I.I.C.) Inc. (Welcome Place) (client referrals)
- School Divisions (Louis Riel, Winnipeg #1, Pembina Trails, St. James-Assiniboia, River East Transcona, DSFM)
- Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO) Inc.
- Momenta (Program delivery and staff training)
- Manitoba Employment & Income Assistance (ensuring clients correctly report their income)
- Immigrant Centre (cooking classes for N.E.E.D.S. Inc. Clients)
- Food Matters Manitoba (cooking classes for N.E.E.D.S. Inc. clients)
- MOSIAC (positive parenting workshop)
- Volunteer Manitoba (volunteer referrals, CSPIN program)
- Aurora Family Therapy Centre (referral)
- Post-Secondary Institutions (U of W, U of M, Red River Collage, Booth College, Robertson College)
- University of Winnipeg RecPlex
- Youth Agencies Alliance (member organization)
- Employers (37 individual employers at 52 different locations)
- Gang Action Interagency Network (GAIN)
- Family Dynamics (client support, referrals)
- Winnipeg Police Service
- City of Winnipeg's Community Services Recreation and Leisure Department
- City of Winnipeg's Corporate Support Services (hosts info sessions for clients applying for jobs)
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Network of Organizations for War Affected Newcomers (NOWAN)
- Newcomer Education Coalition (NEC)
- SWIS Advisory Committee
- Prince's Trust Canada
- Manitoba Sponsorship Agreement Holders Network
- Community Organizations (KidsFest, Assiniboine Park Zoo, Winnipeg Fringe Festival, Manitoba Children's Museum)
- FortWhyte Farms
- Art City
- Let's Talk Science
- Summer Camp Opportunities (Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre, YAA, Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, Manitoba Pioneer Camp, Gimli Bible Camp, Rotary Club, Manitoba Museum)

In addition to the above partnerships, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also received financial support from the following funders:

#### Federal Government

- Canada Student Summer Jobs Program, Service Canada
- Canadian Heritage
- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Public Health Agency of Canada

#### Provincial Government

- First Jobs for Youth
- Lighthouses Program
- Multiculturalism (MIIP)
- Skills and Employment Partnerships (former MB4Youth)
- Urban Green team

#### Other

- Central Neighbourhoods Winnipeg
- Winnipeg Foundation
- United Way
- Winnipeg Harvest

## SUCCESSSES

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The agency experienced many successes this fiscal year, including all programs exceeding their target number of clients. Despite sudden unprecedented challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to meet the needs of our clients and help them successfully settle into the community. Specific factors that allowed for these successes included:

- **Staff:** All staff at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. receive continuous professional development to meet the unique needs of our clients. Many N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff have been working at the agency for several years which means they have had time to develop meaningful relationships with many of the clients who have come to see N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff as trusted adults they can talk to. Our well-trained staff are able to identify and address various challenges and concerns that may arise with clients. N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff are also multidisciplinary coming from a variety of backgrounds such as conflict resolution, social work, education, marriage and family therapy, peace and conflict studies, international development, and sociology. This diverse educational background provides a breadth of expertise when it comes to programming and addressing challenges or issues related to our work.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also tries to hire staff who reflect the backgrounds of our clients. As a result, our staff speak many different languages and can often relate to the experiences and challenges expressed by our clients. This helps to provide a deeper contextual understanding of certain issues and also enables us to provide services in the client's first language when needed.

- **Volunteers:** Volunteers are vital to the operation of our agency and assist in the delivery of several different services for newcomer children, youth and families. Without volunteers, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. would not be able to provide the high level of supervision and personalized support we strive for.

Volunteers contribute to the project's success in several ways and help to ensure newcomer children and youth integrate successfully into the greater Winnipeg community. Aside from supporting the agency with our snack/meal program, volunteers provide direct service to clients in the areas of mentorship and educational and employment support (as mock interviewers). They are able to fill in the gaps and assist us in providing a safe and welcoming environment for our clients.

Most notably, volunteers impact the settlement of newcomer children and youth during their first year in Canada through mentorship matches and community outings. Our Mentorship Program would not be successful without the commitment of dedicated volunteers. If there were no volunteers, there would be no 1-on-1 mentorship. These volunteer mentors spend a minimum of 6 hours each month, for 12 months, with their mentees to provide educational and recreational opportunities to help with their integration into Canadian society. In Site-Based Programs, volunteers prepare snacks, help staff with activities, and act as positive role models to youth who are participating.

The After-School Program heavily relies on volunteers to help support clients, especially in our Homework Club. We average about 25 clients per evening who need individualized support in



understanding and completing school assignments and preparing for tests and exams at schools. Volunteers also assist with setting up for snack, clean-up, and also offer additional client support and supervision to help ensure that we maintain appropriate staff-client ratio.

The INTRO Program has had the support of many volunteers, some of whom have been in program for many years and know the program very well. Program delivery is enhanced by the support of volunteers and practicum students in the classroom. Volunteers have proven themselves invaluable by learning the routines of the classroom, acting as excellent examples on how to follow the behaviour expectations, and providing additional supervisory support.

Practicum students also contributed to the success of our project by providing higher-level support to our programs and assisting in the completion of intakes and needs assessments. This allowed our staff team to focus on delivering other aspects of the project, including supporting multi-barriered/high risk youth.

- **Flexible & Accessible Service Delivery:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. programs and services are delivered in a flexible and accessible manner, and this allows clients' easy access to the support they require during the settlement and integration processes. The population we serve (children and youth) are more successful in meeting their settlement goals when they feel their needs are being taken into consideration; without high levels of flexibility, many of our clients would not feel as though their individual needs were being taken into consideration.

Our agency is located in a central location, which allows clients to easily access it from various areas in Winnipeg. We are located on several main bus routes and provide services during the day, evening, and on weekends. We do home visits when appropriate to inform and engage parents and guardians about our programs. Many of our programs are drop-in (while still structured) which allows for more flexibility for our clients. Support services such as transportation makes it even easier for clients to access our programs and eliminates outside financial barriers.

Most of our programs have continuous intakes so that refugee children and youth can access programming immediately upon arriving in Winnipeg or whenever the need arrives during their settlement experiences.

During this reporting period, we continued to deliver programming and enhanced supports to refugee children and youth at 18 different schools around Winnipeg through the Community Connections Program. This allowed us to better connect clients to resources already offered in their community, helping us to avoid duplication of services. In addition, this type of 'off-site' programming has allowed us to reach children, youth, and families outside of the core area in Winnipeg. Staff are accessible in most schools when they are able to work on-site, which allows clients and school staff to drop-in and receive information/support from Connectors.

Mentorship matches bring services to the clients and addresses several barriers that often prevent clients from accessing our programs (transportation, supervision, parental concerns, etc.).

Our Employment Program continued to employment programming at 5 high schools across 3 school divisions to serve newcomer youth who do not have access to our downtown location due to the inability to make the commute. Two of the sites delivered employment programming during school hours to engage newcomer youth who are unlikely to participate in programming outside of school hours.

- **Appropriate Programming:** In addition to providing accessible and flexible programs, our programs are appropriate and relevant to the clients we serve. We strive to ensure that our programming reflects the needs of our clients and is responsive when these needs change.

Our programs are designed in a way that youth can seamlessly transition to other agency services when needed. We have clear internal referral procedures and our agency-wide behaviour management model ensures that youth receive consistent messaging and feedback around expectations. This assists youth in understanding their roles and responsibilities when accessing agency programs. There are formal 'pathways' for youth to follow within our programming depending on the specific age and need of each client.

Aside from the main outcomes of our settlement programming, we incorporate other valuable skill building opportunities for clients such as technology, pro-social skill development, behaviour management, and opportunities to connect with trusted adults and positive peers in a supervised environment.

Our Employment Program for instance provides specialized programming for clients with low English comprehension so that, despite this obstacle, they are still able to participate in program and learn valuable workplace specific language in English which improves their employability. Curriculum programming also focuses on several objectives including orientation program, family engagement, cross-cultural activities, needs assessment, support services (such as interpretation and transportation) as well as support during critical hours. This allows program objectives to meet the varying needs of clients and their families to help enhance their integration.

All of our programs are supported by psychosocial educators who aid clients who may be experiencing challenges associated with trauma, self-regulation, or maintaining positive peer relationships which affect their ability to successfully participate in program. Special events allow us to connect with larger systems and communities, which often result in expanded partnerships and stronger relationships with the families of the clients we serve. Connecting with the families of our clients is essential as many of our clients are under the age of 18 years and need consent from their parents/guardians to access our programs.

Special events, such as family events, networking events with businesses, and youth gatherings result in increased opportunities for our clients to connect with each other, showcase their skills and abilities, share their perspectives, challenges and experiences, and secure work placements. Our special events are reflective of the needs of our clients and change to ensure appropriateness. We ensure that client accomplishments are celebrated through graduation and recognition events.

- **Support of Partners & Community:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. continues to receive an immense amount of support from employers, school divisions, and community organizations. Each of these partnerships were central to the delivery of programming this fiscal year, and contributed to program operation by either providing work placement/mentorship opportunities to youth participants, additional support funds to augment existing employment services, classroom space/resources, or effective delivery of services.

Partnerships with employers were central to the delivery of services to clients this fiscal year. Without employers who are willing to partner to provide on-the-job experience and mentorship opportunities to clients, work experience programs to increase the employability of newcomer youth would not be possible. Employer partners provided work experience, volunteer, and mentorship opportunities to youth, so they could build employability skills and be ready to enter the labour market. Prince's Trust Canada (PTC) was again a central community partner that collaborated with N.E.E.D.S. Inc. and Cineplex, to increase the employability of newcomer youth through the "Get Into" Customer Service Program. They provided funds to program participants to make them more commitment to the program, which included paid work placements, funds to purchase required attire for uniforms, meal stipends, and transportation to and from Cineplex.

Support from school staff (such as EAL and LAL teachers), administration (principals) and community liaisons in partnering school divisions made the delivery of the Employment Development Program and the High School Internship Program possible. The Community Connections Program has also received a lot of support from schools and school division staff regarding the supports that N.E.E.D.S. Inc. provide in house. This recognition has allowed the program to run efficiently within some schools and some school divisions and allows staff to effectively work to enhance settlement supports to clients.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also has several connections to external partners and guest speakers who come to program and help to educate clients and families (at family events) in certain areas. This helps to provide specialized information and orientation to clients regarding areas that are outside of the capacity of staff.

- **Referrals Networks:** In order to experience the full benefit of partnerships with other agencies, service providers, and community organizations, effective communication must occur. N.E.E.D.S. Inc. focuses on establishing effective lines of communication with our partners so that information can be shared in a timely and efficient manner. We value participation in the various settlement-related networks we are a part of so that we can make connections with other service providing organizations (SPOs).

This contributes to the success of our program by allowing us to work with agencies who are serving mutual clients and ensure the complex needs of our clients are being met. Working collaboratively has significantly contributed to our project's success; we understand that we are only one piece of the settlement sector and look to other SPOs to meet the needs of clients outside the scope of our agency. We regularly accept client referrals from other SPOs, and also regularly refer our clients to other agencies when we do not provide the services they require.

- **Client Feedback:** It is important to our agency that our programs and services meet the needs of the newcomer children and youth we serve. Feedback from clients and their families allows us to assess whether they benefited from agency services and how successful their settlement experiences were.

Much of the feedback we obtain is positive in nature and clients express their gratitude for the support they receive. This is a strong indication that our services were beneficial. When feedback suggests that we could better meet the needs of our clients, we re-examine our programming and make the needed changes. We also believe that many newcomer children and youth 'vote with their feet' meaning that the high attendance in our voluntary programs speaks to the level of satisfaction of our clients.

In addition, collecting feedback provides an opportunity to ensure that resources are getting used appropriately and efficiently. Using feedback whether it is considered positive or negative is beneficial as it strengthens the reputation of our agency in the community and results in long lasting relationships with community members. Integrating into a community may take longer than a year, and when these relationships are built through responsive service delivery, newcomer children and youth have a better chance of becoming better-integrated Canadian Citizens and engaged members of our communities.

Specific methods of feedback collection include:

- Regular and formal check ins with mentors, mentees, and their families
  - Exit interviews- Informal conversations with clients
  - Home visits- Client and program observation
  - Participant evaluations upon program completion
  - Pre/post-tests to measure change
  - Internship journals- Informal client focus groups
  - Feedback from employer partners (formal evaluations and frequent check-in's)
  - Frequent client follow-up's post program
  - External evaluator feedback
- **Support Services:** We believe that providing support services are vital to the success of our programming. We provide wrap-around supports to address specific client needs and eliminate barriers to participation. Without these support services, many newcomer children, youth and families would not be able to access our programs and/or participate in a way that enhances learning.

Support services that contributed to the success of our project included:

- Interpretation (helped to create a safe and welcoming environment and helped clients feel heard)
- Transportation (ensured client safety to and from our agency and eliminated financial barriers to access)
- Crisis Counseling (addressed settlement-specific issues that created barriers or prevented full client engagement)

We work from a holistic approach, involving families whenever possible to increase the support our clients experience. Our supports are delivered in a timely manner, and whenever possible we work in a preventative manner to address issues before they become crises. It has been our experience that this increases overall client well-being, which, in turn, increases positive settlement and integration outcomes.

- **Remote Services:** The arising of the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis required the agency to temporarily cease in-person contacts with clients. However, despite this challenge, all programs and staff were extremely proactive contacting clients by phone and email to deliver services. Programs and staff have been extremely proactive in reaching out to clients to check on their wellbeing and provide necessary services and supports to clients remotely, including PSE support and assessments, homework assistance, job searching assistance, assistance with applying for jobs online, referrals to community resources, and Support with accessing government assistance programs (such as EI, CERB, EIA).

Programs have also set up Google Classrooms, where clients can access important resources and interact with staff including:

- Educational resources
- Employment resources
- PSE resources
- General safety information

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also uses its social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube), to upload videos and communicate important information to clients about available services and how to access them.

## CHALLENGES

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The continued high demand for programs and services at our agency created many challenges including having enough staff and space for programs, having enough transportation support, waitlists for programs (mentorship) and having enough interpretation support. It was challenging to manage and organize all of these aspects, and that resulted in additional work for all the program managers and staff at our agency. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic created several unprecedented challenges for the operation of agency activities and the delivery of programming. Some of the ongoing and new challenges were:

- There is a need for newcomer children and youth to receive comprehensive mental health services to deal with pre-immigration experiences, trauma, family reunification and/or conflict and ongoing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, that are often exacerbated through the settlement experience. It has been our experience that many newcomer children and youth from a refugee background require high levels of supports and services to deal with issues related to past trauma and mental wellness; while we are able to provide psychosocial support to clients attending our programs, often the need is beyond the scope of our agency and requires intervention at the family level.
- Supporting clients with regulation is an ongoing trend that had been seen continually throughout the last fiscal year. Many clients in program required additional support with self-regulation and emotional regulation. Clients struggled with expressing their feelings and, with the help of PSE and support staff, we learned new skills to help them when they experience big feelings, such as anger and sadness. Bringing clients back into their window of tolerance helped them re-engage into program activities. Providing clients with breaks, hands-on activities, movement, singing and dancing have all been effective strategies in supporting clients with self-regulation.
- Some programs saw an increase of cross-cultural conflict between clients from different ethno-cultural and religious groups, most notably between Syrian, Yazidi, Eritrean, Chinese populations. Ethno-cultural majority groups, such as the Syrians and Yazidi populations, tended to exclude, bully and tease the ethno-cultural minority groups – the Eritreans, Chinese and Botswanans.
- There was an increase in the number of clients with limited literacy skills registering in programs but also requesting English language support. Both young and older clients who have been in the country for less than a year also find it difficult to integrate into the education system due to language barrier.
- The number of GAR and PSR youth accessing employment services at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. continues to increase exponentially. These youth encounter a number of unique settlement challenges and barriers to employment including low English language skills, limited financial supports and resources, family pressure and intergenerational conflict with parents/elders, difficulties with participating in after-school employment activities due to other commitments/responsibilities, housing concerns, challenges in the formal education system, and experiences of social isolation. Such multi-

barriers of clients require that employment related services are geared towards lower English language and literacy and combine both English for employment and employability (“soft skills”) training, so youth can successfully enter the labour-market.

- A majority of clients who access services at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. have very limited experience of using software such as Microsoft Office, G-Suite, and Internet engines (Chrome, Firefox, Safari). These are essential for searching for a job, writing a resume, emailing an employer, and/or corresponding with essential government services (such as CRA, EIA, EI, etc.) quickly and independently and, therefore, have been integral parts of programming at N.E.E.D.S. Inc.

The need for clients’ receiving computer skills and digital literacy training intensified in March 2020 with the arrival of COVID-19. This is because it has had a profound impact on clients who either lack technological resources to access important services, or do not have the knowledge or ability to navigate essential online services/resources independently. In the time of COVID-19, limited or no access to digital technology devices such as tablets, home computers or access to the Internet has made it virtually impossible for staff to provide services to some clients using remote technology such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Skype). It is crucial that clients have basic digital literacy and computer skills, so they can keep up with changes in society. As the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed, circumstances can change swiftly, and it is important that society’s most vulnerable individuals are not excluded from accessing services, or simply left behind because they do not have access to technology or digital literacy skills.

## BEST PRACTICES

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Over the course of the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. was able to identify several best practices that allowed us to meet the unique and challenging needs of newcomer children and youth.

- **Partnerships & Relationships:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. recognizes that newcomer children, youth and families have many different needs during the settlement and immigration process. It is our belief that there is greater benefit to clients if our agency works closely with partner agencies and the greater community.

Partnerships with other settlement sector service providers, mainstream organizations, employers, schools and community members greatly added to the success of our program delivery. These partnerships allowed for opportunities that we might not otherwise been able to offer the clients we work with such as tickets to sporting events, admission passes, space for recreational program activities and work-placement/employment opportunities.

Partnerships with various school divisions allowed us to expand our services and offer programs in various locations around Winnipeg. This contributed to the success of our project by increasing our accessibility to clients. Our Community Connections Program works closely with other community agencies as well as school staff to provide a holistic support plan to clients. A well-established partnership with eighteen school sites in four school divisions enabled information and case plans to be developed collaboratively between our programs and schools in order to best serve clients.

The Employment Program continues to receive an immense amount of support from employers, school divisions, and community organizations. Each of these partnerships were central to the delivery of employment programming this fiscal year, and contributed to program operations by either providing vital work placement/mentorship opportunities to youth, employment support funds to augment existing employment services, or classroom space/resources. A partnership with 52 Winnipeg businesses provided opportunities for clients to build essential employability skills and gain hands-on experience in a Canadian workplace. Partnerships with 5 schools in 3 school divisions was integral to the delivery of employment programming, such as the Employment Development Program, High School Internship Program, and DMCI Life-Works Course. Our continued partnership with Prince's Trust Canada (PTC) and Cineplex resulted in about 70% of youth's being hired into paid employment upon completing the "Get Into" Customer Service Program. As a partner, PTC also ensured that participants were provided with a paid work experience, appropriate work attire, meals, and transportation to and from the workplace.

Partnerships with volunteer organizations and colleges/universities were a vital part in ensuring the success of the programs by providing referrals of skilled individuals who could act as volunteers.

Lastly, partnerships with other organizations provide our youth with opportunities they might not otherwise have access to. For example, Fort Whyte Farms provides our youth in the After-School Program and Employment Program with valuable volunteer work experience to include on their resumes



and a chance to work at the farm over the summer. The University of Winnipeg's RecPlex also provided space for the After-School Youth Program to run its Basketball Program, and a new partnership with Folklorama fostered cultural exchange opportunities for youth, allowing for a smoother integration into Canadian society. Youth Agencies Alliance (YAA) provides opportunities for youth to go to camp and to participate in the Youth Leadership Circle. Our established relationship with other newcomer serving agencies such as Family Dynamics and Aurora Family Therapy Centre allowed the respective agencies to support clients in their areas of strength, reducing duplication.

The shared vision of schools, community organizations and other stakeholders to provide the best possible services and supports to enhance the integration of newcomer and refugee children and youth is vital to successful settlement outcomes.

- **Staffing:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has been providing programs and services for newcomer children, youth and families for over twenty (20) years. It has been our experience that hiring educated, enthusiastic, and professional staff results in higher quality of programming for the clients we serve.

Our staff team is multidisciplinary and consists of university graduates in the areas of education, marriage & family therapy, social work, psychology, human rights, peace studies, conflict resolution, sociology, etc. (1 of our staff has a PhD and 30% of our staff hold or are in the process of completing Masters Degrees). When provided the opportunity, staff openly shared their ideas on how to enhance the services we provide, particularly in the areas of program delivery, curriculum development and ways to encourage more active engagement of clients.

It is also imperative to us that our staff team represents the clients we work with; currently we represent over 20 countries and speak over 30 different languages. This is important as our staff are role models for the clients we work with and it is important that youth are able to connect and relate with these staff as many of them have shared experiences from their home countries. In addition, shared religious and cultural beliefs helps to build a sense of trust and belonging among our clients.

Our focus on building safe, positive and supportive relationships with clients also helps increase their overall engagement and success. Our commitment to hiring past clients to work as staff at our agency provides opportunities for them to give back to others after receiving such positive support from staff members at our agency and to be positive role models for younger newcomer children and youth.

Ongoing professional development and training ensures that staff have the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the needs of our clients and the overall objectives of our agency. Staff who are knowledgeable and have appropriate education, training and experiences ultimately improve our services and enhance the support we provide to clients.

Although most of our staff are hired for a specific role, we share staff between our different programs as a way of being responsive to the needs of our clients. This best practice allows us to better meet the needs of individual clients, increases safety, enhances efficiency and prevents a wait list for services whenever possible.

- **Service Locations:** Having a convenient downtown location which is easily accessible by bus and is on many bus routes makes it accessible for clients to either walk or bus (bus tickets provided) to the agency to receive services. For those youth who are unable to attend programming at N.E.E.D.S. Inc.'s downtown location, we also offer after-school programming and settlement supports at 21 different schools within Winnipeg.

This fiscal year, our Community Connections Program delivered on-site programming at 18 schools in 4 school divisions (Louis Riel School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, St. James- Assiniboia School Division, Winnipeg School Division).

The Employment Program also ran a large majority of programs on-site at 5 partnering schools in 3 school divisions (Louis Riel School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, Winnipeg School Division). This enabled youth to have access to employment programming, particularly those with limited access to transportation, and/or, who are struggling academically and find it challenging to access supports at the agency or outside of school hours.

Our Mentorship Program also reaches youth who may be unable to access services at our central location. Typically, the mentor will meet the youth at their house and proceed to their activity in the community from there. The mentor/mentee outings can take place anywhere in the city convenient to the mentee and their family.

- **Multiple Languages:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. hires staff who represent the ethno-cultural groups we serve; this ensures that staff are able to communicate with clients in their first language. Having staff who can communicate with clients and their families in their original language is an asset. It allows for smoother communication and provides clients with a sense of comfort. In addition, it allows for the understanding of cultural nuances that may arise and provides assurance to the clients that what they are communicating is being understood.

Although helping clients to build their English language skills is our number one priority, having staff with multiple languages allows us to communicate directly with clients (and their families) and provides them with opportunities to ask questions and express themselves. This allows them to take more control and responsibility in their settlement and address barriers to settlement more holistically. Being able to communicate with parents/guardians who often take longer than their children in learning the English language allows us to address challenges and barriers at the familial level that may be impacting our clients.

Our current staff can speak over 30 languages, some of which include: English, French, Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, German, Hindi, Italian, Kinyamuranga, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Kurdish, Kurmanji, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Vietnamese, and Bengali.

- **Personalized, One-to-One Service:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. believes that safe, supportive and nurturing relationships are the core of the success we experience in serving newcomer children and youth. Without

first creating a solid foundation, newcomer children and youth will not trust and confide in our staff in the way they do when a relationship is there.

Immigration and settlement is challenging for families. Parents and guardians are often busy with meeting the basic needs of their family (housing, food, clothes, etc.) and securing employment. Personalized and one-on-one services ensure that the clients we work with receive the attention and guidance that is essential in helping them address their settlement needs.

Creating strong relationships with clients and adapting services accordingly helps keep them engaged in their settlement process; over time many clients end up receiving the amount of support they need as they feel that our agency is a safe place where they can seek help without judgement.

Personalized and one-on-one services, and the resulting relationship, also leads to youth being more open to receiving constructive feedback. This leads to them being better equipped and prepared to participate in settlement services that will assist them in having long-term success (internships, participation in the education system, getting along with their peers, etc.).

In our Employment Program, individual job coaching provides an opportunity for youth to establish rapport and build a relationship of trust with Employment staff. Individualized coaching and training sessions are customized to meet the individual needs of youth as well as supplement concepts learned in group sessions. Individualized coaching also enables Employment staff to conduct skills/needs assessments to determine youths' level of employability, personal timeline planning, as well as assist with job searching, development of tailored resumes, and direction on how to apply for jobs. Personalized, one-on-one services also enable Career Coaches to create, in conversation with youth, customized long-term educational and career plans, which is integral to youths' success in securing and maintaining meaningful employment and pursuing post-secondary opportunities.

Clients who are entering work placements also require intensive individualized support to be successful. The experience a client has within the first couple of shifts of a new work placement often determines the trajectory of the work experience. Access to individualized coaching and mentorship with Career Coaches and Employer Liaisons to help address client concerns or performance issues is vital in maintaining high program retention rates and ultimately, successful employment outcomes.

The personalized one on one service that our one-on-one Mentorship offers participants who may be experiencing extra challenges during their settlement with the additional support they need to thrive and succeed. Mentors assist participants in their homework, introduce them to new activities and resources around Winnipeg and help them navigate the various systems (school, law, housing) as needed, which they may find overwhelming. Through one-on-one Mentorship, participants develop pro-social skills as they interact with others and develop attachments to positive resources and activities.

- **Psychosocial Education:** Over the past fiscal year (and especially within the Syrian and Yazidi refugee influx) we have observed that the needs of many refugee children and youth we serve have continued to

change; there is a greater need for psychosocial support due to past experiences of trauma, interrupted schooling, and intergenerational conflict.

Experiences of trauma have significant negative effects on the physiology, emotions, impulse control, self-image, ability to think, learn and concentrate of refugee children and youth. These clients generally struggle with maintaining meaningful relationships with others and struggle with regulating emotion which may result in behavior problems, difficulty seeking help and learning from their mistakes; they are at risk to a wide range of problems that will most likely impact/impede their settlement and integration. As such, our agency has increased the amount of psychosocial support provided to our clients so that they can be successful both at and away from our agency.

It is our experience that when newcomer children and youth feel safe and supported, both physically and emotionally, they are more engaged and participate fully in settlement programming. By addressing the psychosocial needs of our clients alongside settlement programs and services (wrap-around approach), we assist in their ability to create and maintain positive, meaningful relationships, complete their educational aspirations, secure and keep employment and engage in the larger Canadian society.

Our agency-wide behaviour model provides staff with tools to help assist our clients in developing pro-social behaviours (such as decision making, problem solving, communication, leadership, and anger management). All staff are trained in the model and intervene when needed. This year we worked on continuing to build capacity in all of our staff members to respond from a trauma-informed approach when support clients, specifically higher risk individuals.

Psychosocial support (PSE) was provided to clients in various ways including one-on-one, group and general program support. Through individual PSE support, we were able to assess risk and protective factors, nurturing resilience and foster strengths. General program support provides additional opportunities for children and youth to interact in a safe and supervised environment. PSE groups delivered to clients included:

- Gang Awareness
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Street & Community Safety
- Emotional and Psychological Safety
- Managing Difficult Emotions
- Coping Strategies
- Mindfulness and Meditation
- Self-Regulation
- Stress Management
- Circle of Security (COS)

Several elementary and high schools have approached N.E.E.D.S. Inc. for additional support in managing student behaviours and involving students and their parents in educational or recreational opportunities. Many schools have little experience working with war-affected students and thus, are

responding to clients' negative behaviours from a more disciplinary standpoint than trauma-informed standpoint. We have been trying to work with schools to support the needs of our mutual clients. We have seen many positive changes among the clients provided with psychosocial support; they have increased engagement in their education, access supports on a more regular basis and are able to build positive relationships with their peers and supportive adults.

- **Special Events:** N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff regularly organize family events throughout the year to bring families together to share food, learn about life in Canada and connect with other newcomer families and N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff.

Large special events such as the annual Winter Holiday party enable clients to engage in cultural exchange activities and learn about common holidays/traditions in Canada. Family Lunch and Learn events hosted by INTRO are also very successful. Families are invited to join their children at the agency and participate in sessions to learn about settlement topics that include: winter safety, recreation services, or fall holidays. After the session, families are invited to enjoy a meal together where they can interact with staff and ask questions. These events serve as an opportunity for N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff to inform families of other programs their children could access at N.E.E.D.S. Inc., and also help prepare them for upcoming seasons (such as appropriate winter clothing) and events happening in the community.

These special events also allow N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff to build relationships and trust with the families we serve.

- **Use of Technology:** Our agency is equipped with multiple SMART boards and computers (including laptops) that can be used within programming to foster learning and keep programming dynamic and fun. For instance, in our INTRO Program the use of computer games helps clients learn math and English. It makes learning enjoyable and keeps their interest.

Some of our clients who attend the homework club in our After-School Program do not have access to computers at home and thus having a computer lab where clients can access computers in order to complete their homework assignments and do research is a vital aspect of what makes our homework club so popular and successful. Access to computers also enabled youth to partake in structured computer classes to develop their technological literacy skills.

The Employment Program routinely incorporates technology such as laptop computers and apps such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Survey Monkey to foster interactive learning and elicit feedback on workshops and instructors. In our weekly job club, youth were set up with a laptop and had an opportunity to search for and apply for jobs online with the support of staff.

In response to COVID-19, services to clients were transitioned online, and staff have been finding innovative ways to continue to support clients who have access to technology and the Internet or data. Google Classrooms have been established where youth can access educational and employment resources.



N.E.E.D.S. Inc. also uses its social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube), to upload videos communicate important information to clients about available services online and how to access them.

## CONCLUSION

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This fiscal year saw the continued growth of our agency, staff team and programming. Although we experienced several challenges, including those unprecedented challenges related to the COVID-19 public health crisis, we remained committed to meet our desired outcomes and provide relevant and appropriate settlement and integration services to our clients. Whenever needed, we took necessary measures and adopted appropriate strategies to program delivery and ensure that the needs of clients are properly addressed and met.

The majority of our clients were from a refugee background and we observed that similar to last fiscal year, clients from Yazidi and Syrian backgrounds required a higher degree of individualized support due to past experiences of trauma, family conflict, distrust of authority and interrupted schooling. Individualized supports throughout all N.E.E.D.S. Inc. programming were essential in ensuring their success in the activities and workshops in which they participated.