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Towards a New Model of Working with Older Immigrant Youth: *Lessons Learned from a Demonstration Project*

**Raj Khadka, Miu Chung Yan,
Trilby McGaw and Lucas Aube**

Series editor: Linda Sheldon, SFU;
Krishna Pendakur, SFU and Daniel Hiebert, UBC, Co-directors

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TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF WORKING WITH OLDER IMMIGRANT YOUTH: LESSONS LEARNED FROM A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Raj Khadka

School of Social Work, University of British Columbia

Miu Chung Yan

School of Social Work, University of British Columbia

Trilby McGaw

FreeRunning, MOSAIC

Lucas Aube

FreeRunning, MOSAIC

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ABSTRACT

The FreeRunning (FR) program, a demonstration project focused on serving refugee youth and young adults who face multiple barriers in the settlement process, was designed and delivered by MOSAIC. The project included a research component, conducted by a team from the University of British Columbia School of Social Work. Through a systematically designed data collection process, a significant number of youth participants were interviewed (either in a group or individually) at the beginning of the program (n=20), at their exit (n=15), and during a three-month follow-up (n=15). Interview findings indicate these youth had many needs, including (most significantly) language acquisition and employment. However, their life conditions, which were dynamic and fluid, interfered with their participation in the program. Nevertheless, upon their exit and during the three-month follow-up, most of the youth interviewed reported a positive outcome. In general, participants were satisfied with the program, though many desired more occupational training and employment opportunities. The positive results reflected in the data indicate the FR team's effort to adjust the program to accommodate the complex needs and dynamic, fluid life conditions of the participants. A review of youth programming literature found most youth development programs lack proper conceptualization, particularly in their organizing principles, goals, and structure. As we learned from the experience of these participants, as well as from the operation of the program during its first year, a flexible program design is required to serve refugee youth effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Although refugees only make up about 10 per cent of Canadian newcomers, they face more barriers than others in the settlement process due to their previous experience of persecution and violence, age, socioeconomic and cultural background, and host societal context. As a result, many refugees live below the poverty line, a reality that may be particularly challenging to youth and young adults (Anisef 2005), who make up a high percentage of all refugees (Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia 2007). And, according to the Australian National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (Coventry et al. 2002), refugee youth have often been disconnected from family and exposed to political, religious, or intercultural violence; persecution or oppression; and armed conflict or civil discord. They may also have fled from their home country. The capacity of young people from refugee backgrounds to make good decisions and manage the pressures of transition is impacted by their refugee experience and cultural adjustment, as well as by the practical demands of settlement.

Despite such serious challenges, there has until recently been a lack of refugee youth programming to cater to their immediate and future needs. The limited number of existing youth-serving agencies also lacks a **clearly articulated and conceptualized** service model that can effectively meet the complex needs of refugee youth. This paper details the findings of a study that was intended to answer two research questions: What are the service needs and challenges of refugee youth and young adults? What service model would best facilitate their successful settlement in Canadian society? Based on a systematic collection of data, which included face-to-face, focus group, and phone interviews with FreeRunning (FR) participants, staff, and commu-

nity stakeholders, we worked collaboratively with program staff to search for answers to the research questions. Before we conclude, we propose an integrative service model for consideration in future policy and program design dealing with the settlement needs of refugee youth and young adults.

Project background

Developed and managed by MOSAIC, FR is a demonstration project funded by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. Created in response to the needs of multi-barriered refugee youth, aged fifteen to twenty-five, the program was designed to facilitate their settlement process in Canada and, in particular, prepare them to move through the various interrelated stages of education, training, and employment. Altogether fifty refugee youth, thirty-three male and seventeen female, were served between August 2009 and July 2010. Out of those, thirty-nine were between fifteen and twenty years of age, and eleven were over twenty-five. The majority (n=35) were from Eritrea; others were from Vietnam (n=4), Bhutan/Nepal (n=3), and Iraq (n=3); and the remaining five were from Iran, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Ethiopia, and Senegal.

FR's overarching goal is to provide holistic, whole-person, client-centred case management services that help multi-barriered refugee youth settle successfully in Canada by equipping them to meet their short- and longer-term educational and employment goals. The short-term goal of FR is to provide refugee youth with their settlement needs and help them develop functional language skills through group classes and one-on-one support. The mid- and long-term goals are to help them find volunteering opportunities through which to gain Canadian experience, equip them with skills that will help them find

employment, build their self-confidence and leadership abilities, and prepare them for vocational and college education planning.

The original framework of FR was built on five key components: (1) understanding the impact of the refugee experience, (2) building on young people's ambitions, (3) supporting the role of family and community, (4) ensuring continuity of support between settings, and (5) taking responsibility for equitable outcomes.

Holistic, client-centred, case management approach

FR adopted a holistic, client-centred, case management approach to custom-fit services to multi-barriered refugee youth. Services are tailored to the individual needs of clients from various refugee communities in Vancouver. Each client is assessed by a case manager experienced in working with at-risk youth, using a holistic approach that involves a comprehensive needs assessment, identification of the service level required based on needs (i.e., intensive case management or supportive case management), the development of an individual action plan, and direction into one or more of the six areas of service designed to support the successful settlement of clients.

These six service areas are designed to (1) build upon young people's ambitions through one-on-one support, workshops, and referrals to suitable programs and agencies; (2) support step-by-step educational advancement; (3) meet immediate employment needs by offering short-term, practical, small group language classes that prepare clients for low-skilled work and by referring clients to job search and placement programs; (4) build trust and provide counselling through one-on-one care and group work; (5) provide positive peer role models; and (6) engage youth in their communities through youth-led, group-based activities.

In actual delivery, the FR team faced some challenges. The participants' changing life conditions, such as their housing requirements and location, and the complex needs of the youth sometimes made it difficult to implement the plan. In order to meet the challenges and needs of refugee youth whose life conditions were constantly changing, dynamic, and fluid, FR had to adopt flexible programming strategies while adhering to the key programming principles. This required staff changes, postponement of a program component, logistics considerations, and the adoption of a new strategy. For example, not long after the program began, FR staff realized that the multi-barriered participants would need support for at least a year if they were to achieve meaningful education and employment outcomes. In response, staff extended the duration of the program to one year. Similarly, lessons learned from working with Group A members, who had a low level of English-language proficiency, motivated the FR team to restructure the program and reorganize resources for Group B and C members, who had similar language needs. Another example was the hiring of an interpreter—who became a very important member of the team—to work with participants who did not have the English proficiency for group activities. In brief, the FR team demonstrated high flexibility, which proved very important in delivering services to refugee and immigrant youth, who experience changing needs due to their life conditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the needs of immigrant and refugee youth, as well as the existing practice for meeting those needs, we conducted a literature review. In general, the literature shows that existing programs tend to focus on social empowerment, academic skill development, language training, school-work transition, leadership development, recreation, cultural orientation,

counselling, and harm reduction via approaches like positive youth development, empowerment, prevention, case management, and the eco-system or ecological model.

Immigrant and refugee youths' needs

During the initial settlement stage, the major needs of refugee and immigrant youth include employment, shelter, host country language acquisition, and basic orientation (George 2002). These basic needs are consistent with most newcomers regardless of their source country. The needs of youth may also change according to their stage of settlement, so this review only focuses on initial needs.

Host country language acquisition is a common need among newcomer youth. Language difficulties are enormous upon arrival and produce heightened stress and greater barriers to education, employment, and key services (Anisef 2005). Poor English language competency creates additional problems in academic learning (Huang 2000; Anisef 2005), finding employment (Delgado, Jones, and Rohani 2005) and accessing information, support, and services (Silvio 2006). Huang, who examined the academic achievement of immigrant children in the US, Canada, England, Australia, and New Zealand, found their math and science achievement lower than others only in England, the US, and Canada. A non-English language background was found in each country to relate to poor math and science learning, and this disadvantage was stronger among native-born children—presumably children of indigenous groups—than immigrant children (Huang 2000). However, findings from Wilkinson's study (2002) contradict Huang's. The former found that the self-reported English-language ability of respondents showed only a marginal and non-significant effect (0.018 beta value) on educational status. According to

the author, this could be in part due to the fact the English language ability was self-reported, with some respondents rating their abilities too high (Wilkinson 2002).

Several studies in the US have shown the direct effect of English proficiency on employment opportunities (Delgado, Jones, and Rohani 2005). The authors cite a study by MassINC, that found that in Massachusetts, employed immigrants who are fluent in English earn 33 per cent more than those with limited English-speaking skills. Another study in Los Angeles by the Economic Roundtable found that former welfare recipients who were English proficient earned higher wages than those who did not speak English or who were categorized as having limited English proficiency (Delgado, Jones, and Rohani 2005). Lack of English might be even more challenging for newcomers who, upon arrival, require immediate employment to survive.

Other factors influencing newcomer youth in the labour market include time in Canada, region of origin, mode of sponsorship, gender, and ESL training (Wilkinson 2008). According to Wilkinson, Canadian- and immigrant-born youth have higher rates of employment than refugee youth. For males, 72.4 per cent of Canadian-born and 79.5 per cent of immigrant-born youth were employed in the summer of 1998 versus 65.7 per cent of refugee males. For females, 77.2 per cent of Canadian-born and 87.7 per cent of immigrant-born were employed at that time versus only 45.9 per cent of refugee-born females. The same study reveals that those with more years of education but fewer years in Canada and those from regions other than Africa are more likely to find work in Canada. Males are two times more likely than females, and males from Asia/the Middle East are 16 times more likely than males from elsewhere to find work. Interestingly, government-sponsored refugees to Canada are more likely to find work as well. These factors raise a concern in

policy and program development about the challenge newcomers and refugee youth face in the labour markets.

The information needs and information-seeking behaviours of newcomers affect their ability to access services and build a social network (Meneses 1999; Silvio 2005; Deacon and Sullivan 2009). For example, Southern Sudanese youth in London, Ontario, lacked awareness about where to obtain information on education and apprenticeship training (Silvio 2005). Refugee Sudanese youth have often lived as refugees in various countries before coming to Canada, and many expressed a need for information about education (40 per cent), dealing with racism (24 per cent), employment (20 per cent), politics (10 per cent), and health (5 per cent). The ability to access information and resources is also exacerbated by language limitations. Deacon and Sullivan's (2009) study on refugee women's needs shows 87 per cent of respondents believed their language skills limited their ability to search for better housing, and 71 per cent expressed similar concern about their ability to use public transportation. They also believed their low language proficiency was an impediment to forming a social support network due to an inability to communicate effectively with their neighbours.

Newcomer youth may also have significant psychological, emotional, and developmental needs depending on their previous life experience, age, and family status. According to Derluyn and Broekaert (2007), refugee youth who have gone through persecution, violence, and family loss are more likely to have post-traumatic stress syndrome. Hyman, Vu, and Beiser's (2000) study on post-migration stress among Southeast-Asian youth in Canada found they had difficulties adjusting to school (including feelings of being marginalized, a challenging parent-child relationship due to communication difficulties, high parental expectations, and cultural conflict) as well as personal conflicts (in-

ternal conflicts traceable to intergenerational differences, acculturation, opposing values, and ambivalence concerning ethnic identity).

Anisef and Kilbride (2000) report similar results in their study on newcomer (largely refugee) youth: some Somali youth reported stressful experiences dealing with teachers when they sought to say Muslim prayers at school. Meanwhile, Filipino and Jamaican youth noted lengthy family separations as a source of difficulty between them and their parents—tensions that resulted in a lack of trust as well as difficulties on the part of the youth in adjusting to new rules and sources of authority. Both boys and girls felt intense pressure to dress fashionably as defined by their Canadian peers, and all youth associated poverty with the devaluation of their parents' educational credentials. Similarly, their placement in lower academic levels due to a low language proficiency created frustration and disillusionment among students. For some male students, school violence also added to tensions.

Three approaches to youth development programs

In the US, approximately five hundred national and seventeen thousand state and local organizations classify themselves as *youth development programs* (Erickson 1998), which, according to one definition, help participants develop “competencies that will enable them to grow, develop their skills, and become healthy, responsible, and caring youth and adults” (Networks for Youth Development 1998, 4). Likewise, the National Clearinghouse for Families and Youth (1998, 1) defines youth development as “a policy perspective that emphasizes service and opportunities to support all young people in developing a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and power.” Despite many definitions, there remains a lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes a youth development program, according to Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003), who

also argue that the elusive and evolving nature of youth programs makes it difficult to assess whether such programs promote healthy adolescent development. Drawing on both literature and the results from a survey of highly regarded youth development programs, the authors propose that youth development programs are characterized by their unique goals, atmosphere, and activities.

Youth development as a paradigm is “a recent phenomena” (Delgado 2002, 34). Delgado cautions that the concept of youth development should not be confused with the traditional services provided by some youth organizations such as the YMCA, Boy Scouts, boys’ and girls’ clubs, and settlement-house movements, even though they have all historically played “significant non-stigmatizing roles in reaching out to youth” (34). As stated earlier, the paradigm and concept of youth development is still evolving and thus lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework.

The growing complexity and diversity of youth development programs and lack of an integrative conceptual scheme and consistent terminology make it difficult to categorize existing models and practices. Authors have arbitrarily grouped youth development programs into three approaches: prevention, resiliency, and positive (Small and Memmo 2004) or community youth development.

The prevention approach, commonly used for most current drug addiction, youth delinquency, violence, adolescent pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS programs, originated from public health and epidemiological programs for disease prevention (Bloom 1996; Leavell and Clark 1953) and was influenced by the mental health field. It is now the foundation for many youth initiatives (Hawkins, Catalano, et al. 1992). Program-wise, two key strategies of the pre-

vention approach include reducing or eliminating risk factors and increasing or promoting protective factors. It may also involve enhancing competencies within the target group so participants can develop coping mechanisms to deal with stress and future problems (Durlak 1997). Contemporary prevention also embraces an ecological framework (Kelly 1986). Despite the prevention model's popularity, it's seen as deficit-oriented because it emphasizes youth problems instead of strengths (Benson 1997).

Resilience is defined as a positive developmental outcome under conditions that are adverse or that challenge adaptation (Masten and Coatsworth 1998). Resilience strategies in youth programming aim to foster resilience among marginalized youth; help youth avoid violence, drugs, and crime; and promote productive and responsible citizenship. Recently, the concept of resilience has been expanded from its micro focus to a macro level, addressing social institutions that foster development, such as family (McCubbin et al. 1997) and community (Center for Community Enterprise 2000). Benard (1995) associates resilience with the process of healthy human development and claims it is based on a biological imperative for growth. In youth programming, the resiliency approach can help youth cope with negative situations or effects. But, some critics argue, it fails to consider environmental conditions (Tolan 1996) like homelessness and abuse, which may have a negative and unavoidable impact on youth (Hagan and McCarthy 1997).

The positive youth development approach, which is fairly new to problem prevention, emphasizes the positive aspect of youth development. It is " a shift away from concentrating on problems toward concentrating on strength, competencies, and engagement in self-development and community development" (Perkins et al. 2003, 5–6). This approach includes a positive, assets-building orientation; youth participation and mobilization; active support

for growing capacity; and new opportunities (Perkins et al. 2003; Connell, Gambone, and Smith 1998; Pittman and Irby 1996; Pittman and Zeldin 1995; Roth et al. 1998). However, Small and Memmo (2004) say the positive youth development model overlooks risks that can jeopardize youth health and development if not addressed and typically views all assets as equally significant, which, their research shows, is not the case.

Immigrant and refugee youth program models and approaches

Settlement service programs and models

The service delivery model for newcomers, albeit not specifically for youth, can be broadly divided into a theoretical model and a practice-based model (George 2002). The former can be further divided into two categories, the first consisting of cultural competence models, anti-racist models, ecological models, and empowerment models, which tend to inform practice. The ecosystem model advanced by Morales (1981) is described as the most appropriate for working with newcomers from third-world countries, as it stresses the need to recognize the realities of neo-colonialism and institutional racism and work at both the individual and systemic level to empower newcomers. The empowerment model is seen as a useful approach for newcomer settlement, as it builds on strengths and enhances capacity (Hirayama and Cetingok 1988). Finally, built on an ecological framework, the stress reduction model (Hirayama, Hirayama, and Cetingok 1993) identifies three types of major stressors for newcomers—family pressure, occupational concerns, and cultural barriers—and explores ways of reducing stress, such as increasing coping skills and self-esteem and strengthening newcomers' support networks.

The second category of theory-based models focuses on different stages of migration and acculturation and describes critical variables affecting newcomer

adjustment at each stage. The model suggested by Cox (1985) describes the migration process as having four stages: pre-movement, transition, resettlement, and integration. Similarly, the migration framework conceptualizes the migration process in three phases, consisting of pre-migration and departure, transit, and resettlement (Drachman 1992). Finally, the acculturative framework advanced by Herberg (1988) portrays acculturation as an ongoing phenomenon that can take several generations. Program intervention depends on the needs of immigrants at different stages.

Practice-based settlement service models have also raised debate on the structural differences between ethno-specific agency services and mainstream agency services (Jenkins 1980; Iglehart and Becerra 1996; Pinto and Sawicki 1997). George (2002) proposes a settlement service model based on needs which combines two features: newcomers' needs and number of arrivals. The number of arrivals is important: it plays a large role in the allocation of funding. The specialization-based strategy considers specific needs mediated by linguistic and cultural sensitivity. In addition, George (2002) argues for grouping such services to make them accessible to newcomers and improve the system of referrals. The proposed model of service to newcomers consists of three levels: reception and basic-level services, services for labour-market entry, and specialized settlement services. However, since most of these discussions focus solely on adult newcomers and immigrant families, it is not clear how applicable these models are to service for newcomers, particularly refugee youth.

Services and program models for newcomer youth

Delgado, Jones, and Rohani (2005) suggest six best practices for newcomer youth: enhancement of adult caring relationships, successful brokering between parent and peer influences, reinforcement of language and culture, interventions that are culturally harmonious, interventions that integrate, and interventions that empower. They argue these best practices help address the needs of newcomers and should be part of the core values and practices of any youth program.

In Canada, a review of youth programs offered by settlement organizations in Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver yields nine groups of immigrant youth programs: general social/educational youth programs, settlement workers in school programs, community-based augmented academic support, gender-specific programs, school-work transition programs, heritage language schools, counselling services, civic participation and leadership programs, and advocacy and social justice (Van Ngo 2009). However, programming for newcomer youth is inadequate and lacks a comprehensive model. Van Ngo's (2009) critical review reveals "various shades of patchwork, sidelining, and marginalization of immigrant youth in the social services and education arenas" and calls for "a paradigm shift in immigrant youth services from charity-based programming to an entitlement/rights-based model of practice" (96).

The Canadian Council for Refugees (1998) reports some best practices of specialized programs for immigrant youth, including assisting youth in becoming oriented to Canadian culture and focusing on parents and youth in response to growing intergenerational conflict. The intergenerational program aims to reduce the risk of adolescent maltreatment and delinquent behaviour among first-generation immigrants; a skills-building and support program

targets immigrant parents and adolescents simultaneously. For instance, a summer day camp ran an eight-week program for immigrant children that combined English instruction with fun and stimulating activities; it also allowed their parents to continue attending their own ESL classes.

Much of the literature recommends the mentoring approach, which, by helping to facilitate the positive development of newcomer youth, is proving itself “invaluable in minimizing the risks associated with the stresses of acculturation as well as in facilitating the identity formation process” (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, and Rhodes 2003, 99). Successful mentoring programs are based on a youth development philosophy (Roth et al. 1998; Larson 2000) that differs from that of deficit youth program models, which aim to prevent negative outcomes among youth. Youth programs that emphasize the positive attributes and assets that youth possess and provide support and encouragement help participants succeed in achieving their goals and realizing their potential (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, and Rhodes 2003). For example, Bridge-2-Success, a comprehensive youth development program for refugees in the San Francisco Bay area, provides settlement services and supports refugee youth in succeeding academically and developing career-readiness skills as well as supportive relationships with adults and peers (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services 2009). Participants with language issues and post-traumatic stress receive one-on-one home-based tutoring and mentoring. Program volunteers are recruited and paired with refugee youth for at least six months. Each pair signs a tutoring contract and mutually develops action plans for ongoing support.

As in Bridge-2-Success, workforce preparation for immigrant youth is increasingly becoming a concern of many program models. For non-immigrant youth, many programs focused on work transition or workforce preparation al-

ready exist, such as school-to-work transition programs. According to Ferrari (2003), many US organizations have responded to the concern by using the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report, which outlines such skills as working well with others, acquiring and using information, and thinking critically, to develop recommendations to guide program development and evaluation. The report focuses solely on efforts the school system should make as a community organization. The new program model based on community youth development emphasizes the importance of creating bridges between the micro and macro levels through experiential learning and mentoring (Ferrari 2003, 208). This model suits newcomer youth, who lack host country work experience and knowledge. Given their cultural and linguistic limitations, practical experience can facilitate quicker learning. The idea is based on three concepts: do, reflect, and apply (209). The opportunity to apply knowledge to another situation builds confidence among learners.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a triangulated, multi-method evaluation approach comprising a mix of utilization-focused evaluation (Patton 2008) and logic models (Millar, Simeone, and Carnevale 2001) to systematically collect data from the FR program. As a utilization-focused evaluation, the study aims to improve the effectiveness of the program and enhance its use in future programming, particularly in model development. Using the idea of logic models, we measured the effectiveness of the project by considering (1) a subjective perspective report by participants on whether they felt this program was helpful to them, (2) the number of youth who returned to a formal education program upon and three months after completion, and (3) the number of youth who entered the job market upon and three months after completion

Sampling

Through a non-probability sampling method, research participants were selected from the landed immigrants and adult refugee youth who participated in the FR program between September 2009 and July 2010. In total, twenty youth participated in the focus group discussions and fifteen in an exit interview and a follow-up interview three months after leaving the program. Another five, who entered the program late and did not participate in the initial focus group, participated in the exit and follow-up interviews. The rest of the youth who participated in the program were not available for either interview; some left the program early, and others moved to new cities or provinces. Of the twenty youth who participated in the focus group interviews, fifteen were male and five female, and out of the fifteen youth who participated in the exit and follow-up interviews, eleven were male and four female. They were mainly refugees from Eritrea, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, and Nepal (Bhutan).

Since the success of this project relied on the contribution of different stakeholders, we also interviewed key informants, including staff of the FR program and other agencies that referred youth to this program.

Procedures

To capture multiple perspectives, a multi-method research strategy was used, including the following approaches:

a. Focus group interviews with youth participants

Twenty youth participated in the seven focus group interviews, five of which occurred in the first three months and two mid-program. All FR participants were invited to take part in the focus groups. They were briefed about the purpose and process of the focus group with the assistance of an inter-

preter and a translated version of the consent form. However, only a limited number volunteered to participate due to the language difference, their recent arrival in Canada, lack of trust, unfamiliarity with the system of consent, and other logistics issues. The two-page consent form may also have reminded them of prior experiences of being interrogated in a prison or conflict zone before coming to Canada. During the first focus group session, it was noticed that some participants looked lost and uncomfortable. Over time, the project intern established a relationship with many participants by taking part in some of their activities, which helped them feel more at ease in subsequent meetings.

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the participants' perception and expectations of the FR program as well as the challenges of their settlement process. A semi-structured, open-ended interview guide was used. The average time for each group ranged from thirty to forty-five minutes. An interpreter was used in all focus group meetings except one, in which participants were comfortable with English.

b. Activity surveys and exit and follow-up interviews of youth participants upon completion

Twelve youth took part in an activity satisfaction survey after the second *popular theatre*, which is major component of the FR program. Questions in Likert scale format (and some open-ended questions) were used to solicit feedback on the activity.

Fifteen youth participated in exit interviews upon completion of the program and the same number took part in the follow-up interview conducted three months later. The questionnaire for the exit survey was structured, with closed- and open-ended questions focused on understanding overall program

satisfaction. The follow-up phone interviews, based on a semi-structured interview guide, were conducted to assess current employment and academic or vocational training status as well as the utility of the program in participants' lives.

c. Personal interviews with program staff

All six FR staff members were interviewed to gain their perspectives on the strengths and challenges of the program and to get suggestions on how to improve it. The interviews lasted thirty minutes on average.

d. Field observations, staff meetings, and meeting logs

Field observations were conducted at least twice monthly from September 2009 to June 2010. The intern, Raj Khadka, attended some youth activities to observe the group dynamics and program processes and to better understand the program activities and participants' progress. He also attended some staff meetings to assess the progress of the program and important program decisions. The research team met with the FR team two times to discuss the progress of the program, co-ordinate the research process, and solicit opinions on the program design. The research team also met with the program manager and FR coordinator to discuss critical events and the progress of the program. A midterm project meeting between the research and program teams was conducted in December 2009 to share initial focus group findings and program observations, solicit ideas and opinions from staff, and discuss potential challenges in program development. The research and program teams met again in June 2010 to discuss the findings that had been collected and ideas regarding the potential service delivery model. The program director, manager, and FR coordinator also shared with the research team data, reports,

and other material related to this project, which are incorporated in the final analysis and development of the proposed service delivery model.

FINDINGS

A grounded theory method was used to analyze the data. Analytic induction and constant comparison strategies (Glaser and Strauss 1967) helped find patterns in the primary data (observations, focus group, surveys, exit interviews) and secondary information (project progress report). The baseline expectations of youth participants collected from initial focus group interviews were compared with exit interviews and three-month follow-up phone interview data to measure a set of intended outcomes and evaluate the existing model. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the triangulated data were compared to see if there were any patterns or contradictions, and findings were discussed with FR staff and interpreted using settlement and integration literature and theories.

Challenges and needs

The challenges and needs of FR participants who contributed to focus group discussions are consistent with those of other refugee youth in Canada, as evident in the literature. The needs of these youth can be categorized into short- and long-term ones. Short-term needs include knowledge of basic services and resources, orientation to the Canadian system (law, regulations, education, and employment), English-language acquisition, development of relationships, and temporary employment. As some participants said, language is a basic requirement, a “key” to entering a new world, finding a job, and learning about the Canadian lifestyle and “culture.” They’re also concerned about finding employment, so the development of employability skills is one

of the biggest needs of youth. In a focus group, one Eritrean participant said, “[The] only worry we have is how to find jobs.”

Indeed, language acquisition and finding employment are two overwhelming challenges for most participants in the Canadian settlement process. English is the second language for some and the third for others, meaning they have to start learning at a very basic level. Finding work without the command of English and prior job experience proves very challenging to all these youth. Other challenges include becoming accustomed to the Canadian system, culture, laws, and regulations. For instance, time management is a challenge for many in terms of attending classes, searching for jobs, and keeping appointments. In addition, though refugee youth are interested in and eager to develop relationships with others beyond their own community, the lingual and cultural barriers make it difficult.

Their long-term needs include obtaining stable employment, learning a higher level of English, reunifying their family, and pursuing higher education or vocational training. Most participants stressed their need for family reunification as well as vocational training that would enable them to find stable employment in Canada. Like many new immigrants, they were challenged financially not only to meet their own needs but also to support family members back home and help them relocate to Canada. Their unfamiliarity with social resources kept them from accessing appropriate services easily.

Participants also expected most of their needs could be met by participating in the FR program. Some had unrealistic expectations at the start of the program due to an unclear understanding of its goals and objectives.

Recruitment of program participants

FR staff employed a multi-pronged strategy to recruit clients through referrals and community outreach. The program started with a limited timeframe for staff to recruit youth participants. Being a new program, neither staff nor refugee youth had any connection to each other; thus outreach workers faced some challenges in finding clients at the outset. Staff therefore turned to creative strategies to recruit participants to the program. Their experience shows refugee youth are difficult to access and, despite having many needs, are not well connected to the system.

FR staff identified and contacted people from refugee communities by visiting local businesses and organizations like restaurants, hair-braiding salons, coffee shops, food markets and churches. Through one Ethiopian restaurant in New Westminster, staff were able to connect with some newly arrived Eritrean youth, resulting in the enrolment of thirty-four participants, mainly from the Eritrean community. A few Iraqi and Kurdish clients were also recruited through referrals from Step Ahead workers, who spread the word about the program in those communities. Several Ja'rai youth were found through the Vietnamese Alliance Church.

FR staff also tried to connect with other community service organizations, contacting frontline workers and coordinators of MOSAIC's Step Ahead Program for Multi-Barriered Refugees as well as ELSA programs and the Vietnamese Alliance Church in August 2009 and providing them with program information and referral forms. The visits to levels 1, 2, and 3 ELSA classes were highly effective. One outreach worker regularly visited ELSA classes to meet with students that teachers thought fit the FR program. Staff also presented program information at a Settlement Agreement Holder conference and made contact

with workers at the BC Muslim Association and Burnaby School District. Some clients (five at the outset) were recruited via referrals from ELSA and Step Ahead.

A postcard flyer marketing the program was developed, using a comic strip-style image to visually engage youth and including a summary of program information to assist frontline workers with referrals. It's been suggested that to capture the attention of refugee youth, images and symbols about education and job-skill enhancement might be more effective.

Programs, activities, and intervention to address needs

Client assessment and action planning

Youth were assessed through a multi-stage process to establish the range of their needs. The first screening determined their program eligibility; then, potential clients attended classes for a few weeks to see if the program was a good fit. Only after understanding their motivation and commitment to the program could staff carry out a comprehensive assessment with the help of an interpreter. This component of the assessment included their background information and needs for settlement, education, and skills enhancement. Popular theatre, used as a trial assessment tool, proved highly effective in allowing clients to express their experiences, dreams, fears, and joys verbally and non-verbally in a non-threatening environment, as reflected in the results of the Participation Activity Satisfaction Survey. The program is considering using popular theatre as an essential part of its assessment process. It has also adopted a strategy of ongoing assessment related to the settlement, education, and employment needs of youth, which tend to change as their life situations evolve and they develop more trust in the program staff.

Based on the initial and ongoing assessment, staff developed goals and action plans with the youth based on their level of education, skills, interests, needs, and capability. These plans included a series of staged goals that could take up to five years to achieve. Staff aimed to provide each client with a career plan that took into account the responsibilities and pressures he or she faced (e.g., the need to look after dependents, send money home, repay transportation loans, and make ends meet) and his or her aspirations to move beyond low-paying, low-skilled jobs to create a fulfilling vocational life.

Functional language, computer training, and skill workshops

The program provided functional (practical) English-language training; short-term bridging courses that prepared youth for adult education, vocational opportunities, or trades training and included an orientation to practical study skills; learning strategies relevant to the Canadian education system; instruction in life skills and other essential skills; and orientation to Canadian employment opportunities and workplace culture. After providing some language and basic computer training, FR offered job-readiness workshops attended by most of the youth, except those who joined the program late or whose English level was too low.

At the start of the program, a group approach was used whereby youth were given information and orientation on various life skills and essential settlement topics like shopping, transit systems, language schools, and social insurance numbers.

FR's approach focused on interactive and experiential learning; staff provided interactive workshops on key settlement topics and helped participants put the information they learned into practice through group classes and one-on-one support. As reported by staff in its progress report to the Ministry of Advanced

Education and Labour Market Development (British Columbia), the only way the youth could understand, internalize, and retain the information was through regular review, discussion, and experiential practice; in other words, they needed to learn how the information was relevant to them and how to apply it in practice before being able to function independently (FreeRunning Agency 2010).

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF SKILLS TRAINING/INFORMATION SESSIONS

<i>Skills, short-term vocational training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. John Ambulance First Aid Certification: FR supported clients in preparing for and passing the exam using interpreters • Food Safety Certification: FR supported clients in preparing for and passing the exam using interpreters • Six-week soft skills–building module using basic popular theatre methodology and games • 16-week group work module, including these topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exploring the keyboard and word processing – Canadian work environment – Completing job applications – Internet job search – Interviewing skills – Employment standards – Financial literacy – Introduction to education options – Writing resumés
<i>Settlement and community connection</i>	<p>Information sessions on various community resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-week financial literacy training targeted to refugee youth • Volunteering in Canada • Employment programs at MOSAIC • Canadian policing system and key Canadian laws • Victim support • Canadian welfare system (through the Tommy Douglas Library)

Case management including counselling and transitioning

The third phase of FR emphasized case management and transition to mainstream programs. Youth were each assigned a staff member to meet with on a regular basis to review and discuss their individual needs, progress towards their goals, and future strategies. Youth were also assisted in identifying and accessing college, vocational training, adult basic education, and youth employment programs, and some were assisted through the registration processes. To encourage youth who wanted to enter the job market, the program provided some funds to cover training fees and expenses.

Program outcome

Adjustment to job market, school, and vocational training

As indicated in the results of the exit and follow-up interviews, how these youth adjusted to the job market, school, and vocational training is encouraging and above satisfactory. Just a few months before the end of program, it was reported that most FR clients were engaged in some kind of employment, either full-time, part-time, on contract, or on call. During the same period, some clients not attending the regular FR program were using community services at the African Centre of Integration in New Westminster to receive training or certification.

Altogether fifteen youth participated in each of the exit and follow-up interviews. At the time of the exit interview, three of the youth were working full-time, three part-time, and one on an on-call basis. Meanwhile, six were continuing to attend English-language classes, and the remaining two were doing some vocational training. More than half of all FR clients had achieved Level 3 in ESL proficiency or better (see table 2), an impressive fact given

that most did not speak English upon arrival in Canada eight to twelve months earlier.

TABLE 2: ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVEL

LANGUAGE LEVEL	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AT THIS LEVEL APRIL 1, 2009 TO MARCH 31, 2010
Canadian Language Benchmark Level 1	5
Canadian Language Benchmark Level 2	13
Canadian Language Benchmark Level 3	14
Higher than Level 3	8
TOTAL	40

Source: FreeRunning Progress Report II (2010)

Employment status was mixed at the time of the follow-up interview. Four of the fifteen participants were working full-time and six part-time, while five were unemployed. All four female participants were unemployed at the time of the exit and follow-up interviews, and, of the total number of unemployed youth, two were from Africa. Most of the unemployed youth also had low-level English-language competency. While the results must not be generalized, the experience of these fifteen youth suggests service providers need to consider factors such as gender, race, language competency, education level, social background, soft skills, life cycle, available resources, and program flexibility when designing programs for refugee youth, in order to increase their chance for success.

Increased confidence

During the exit interview all participants reported an increase in self-esteem as a direct result of participating in the FR program for a period of time ranging from three months to a year. Heightened confidence was attributed to their increased ability to speak English, perform life and essential skills, navigate and access basic services and resources, search for jobs, and prepare for interviews. Most of the youth said they were first exposed to English through FR and had developed some basic listening, speaking, and reading skills in the program that helped them function better in daily life and workplace situations. Some youth also felt empowered by their improved English skills to pursue higher-level ELSA classes at other resource centres.

Almost all participants reported an improvement in life and essential skills as a result of the program. As one FR client stated during an exit interview:

When I first came to Canada, I was all lost, did not know how to talk, where to go for help, how to find and apply for job? I was very confused, stressed, and depressed. Then later, after joining FreeRunning, I gained hope and confidence. . . . I know I do not still have job and enough money to support me, but I'm confident I can find job, I can find help and support. It is because I have some skills to reach there.

Participants reported being able to set personal goals based on their new skills and experiences, be more punctual, organize their appointments, begin to take care of their personal needs, ask for help on their own, understand Canadian culture better, manage their monthly budget, and speak English more comfortably. Those with higher levels of English (about half the group) said they were able to complete application forms and set up appointments. Those who felt their English level was still poor reported some hesitation in searching for a job but said they felt more comfortable in dealing with day-

to-day challenges. More than half of respondents (nine of fifteen) said at the exit interview they felt quite confident about their job search and interview skills. The rest indicated they had gained some skills in conducting an online job search, preparing for an interview, and writing a resumé, and they better understood how to look and interview for a job and the importance of filling in applications.

However, participants said they felt the program lacked enough exploration into the skills and abilities they already possessed and the kind of job they'd like to obtain. Most participants said they learned about volunteering but did not really get an opportunity to do so.

Challenges: less but still continue

All participants agreed that taking part in FR helped them face their challenges. In their words:

"Yes, it has helped me develop skills for finding job." (Vietnamese participant)

"Yes, it has built my self-confidence and taught me about Canadian system." (Female participant)

"Yes, FR built my confidence. . . . I learned how to approach people. . . . They empowered me." (Eritrean participant)

"It helped me learn Canadian system and develop some skills that I need in my day-to-day life." (Vietnamese participant)

"It improved my English and built my confidence." (Nepali-Bhutanese participant)

"Yes, especially for how to find jobs, file applications. They helped me in my daily difficulties." (Eritrean participant)

However, they all reported ongoing challenges in work, school, and life. Worrying about “future and family” seemed to be a key theme troubling these youth. Most had difficulty understanding, speaking, and writing English; lacked a formal education; and faced challenges in finding and keeping a job. Other challenges included stress, anxiety, and depression; health conditions; affordable housing; financial difficulties; and relationship building. Their stress and depression were correlated to their inability to find work, due to their low level of English, and family worries related to ongoing conflicts in the home. Without a proper job, it was also hard for some of the youth to reunite with family members, which caused much stress. In other words, they were in a catch-22 situation.

Strong need articulated for strengthening job-readiness skills, vocational training, and volunteer opportunities

Key findings from interviewing the youth and staff indicate that employment is the number one concern. Participants strongly expressed their need and desire to work in order to successfully settle down and integrate into Canadian society. FR staff also said the job-readiness preparation component should be strengthened. As stated earlier, participants liked the existing job-readiness component, particularly learning how to search for jobs online, write resumés, and prepare for interviews, but they expressed a strong desire for more intensive skill-development training, particularly in terms of work placement, volunteering, and vocational training. Very few participants were given the opportunity to volunteer in work-placement sites, although many expressed a desire to do so. As one Eritrean youth said, “I wish I had some volunteering or work placement experience, which could be good for me; whenever I go to work they ask me if I had any work experience in Canada.”

The FR program did include restricted funds to cover some relevant training, such as first aid and food safety training.

Participants had higher expectations regarding vocational training. For example, another Eritrean participant stated, *"I wish I had forklift training."* However, as observed in the first focus group interviews, many youth participants seemed to have had unrealistic expectations of the program. They thought it would find them jobs or offer long-term vocational training. Few had the same expectations in the follow-up interview. Others expected the program to connect them to various vocational training institutions and provide bursaries.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FREERUNNING PROGRAM

Rapidly changing life conditions, low ability levels, and high expectations all posed challenges for staff. To better serve this unique group of youth, FR staff had to constantly adjust and tailor the program to fit each client's needs. As a result, the FR team had to creatively deal with many challenges. These included adapting programs according to rapidly changing needs, client short-sightedness, communication issues, competing demands on participants' time, lack of organizational skills, ongoing challenges with rolling intake, and long lead times for entry to post-secondary and vocational education. These difficulties were successfully addressed by taking the appropriate steps but required a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of staff. Each of these challenges will be briefly discussed below.

Adaptation of programs according to the rapidly changing needs of participants

Having to “adapt programming to the participants rather than the other way around” (FreeRunning Agency 2010) put added pressure on staff members as they struggled to develop modules based around clients’ rapidly changing needs. The newness of the program and the wide diversity of the refugee youth added extra challenges.

Short-sightedness on the part of clients

Some clients chose to focus on unexpected opportunities that arose during the program, like short-term employment, rather than on program completion, which resulted in their missing important skill-development training. However, some returned to the program when their temporary jobs ended or they realized the importance of completing the program to increase their chances of successful integration into Canadian society and the labour market.

Communication issues

Communicating with the clients posed significant challenges early on due to their widely divergent views and values. Despite the use of interpreters, staff sometimes struggled to convey their points, due to the differences between the clients’ mindsets and the ‘Canadian’ perspective. Providing clarification on certain topics therefore involved a considerable amount of work on the part of staff.

Competing demands on participants' time

Most of the clients had competing demands on their time; it was at times hard for them to attend the program. Additionally, FR staff encouraged them to attend full-time ELSA classes, leaving less time in their schedules to participate in FR. Some participants also had to attend medical and other appointments or part-time jobs.

Lack of organizational skills

Most clients had difficulty being punctual, multi-tasking, taking initiative, and planning ahead. FR staff spent two months impressing the importance of being punctual on the clients—not just for the sake of the program but also in terms of obtaining and keeping a job. In addition, most of the Eritrean clients had spent two years in an Egyptian prison prior to arriving in Canada, where they did nothing but sit around; adjusting to higher energy demands was difficult.

Ongoing challenges with rolling intake

FR staff reported one-on-one work with clients lends itself well to a rolling intake model. They found it harder to accommodate individual participants in the group process work when they started at different times.

Long lead time for entrance into post-secondary and vocational education

Most FR clients expressed a desire for post-secondary academic and vocational training, as well as access to financial support for course fees. However, many such programs have long wait lists and lead times, meaning clients exited FR before being accepted. This impacted the program's ability to meet participants' educational needs.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO BE KEPT

The data showed four key themes relating to the strengths of the program and its approaches: the individualized and holistic approach; the use of popular theatre for expression, learning, and assessment; the use of flexible programming and ability to adapt to the needs of clients; and the use of culturally tailored services.

Individualized and holistic approach

Services were tailored to the needs of individual clients and included a comprehensive needs assessment, the development of an action plan, and supportive case management. As described elsewhere in this report, the assessment included settlement, educational, and skill enhancement needs. After assigning youth to case managers, assessment became an ongoing process, as client needs and aspirations kept changing. Staff developed flexible goals and action plans with the youth based on their education level, skills, interests, needs, and assets. These plans included a series of staged goals that could take up to five years to achieve. In order to execute individually tailored action plans and provide supportive case management for settlement, youth were assigned a staff member with whom they regularly met to discuss their individual needs, progress on their goals, and future strategies. Youth were also assisted in identifying and accessing college, vocational training, adult basic education, and youth employment programs and were accompanied through the various registration processes. Client needs and challenges were also assessed and, in some cases, FR provided financial assistance to remove barriers to work placement and employment. The individualized and holistic approach helped youth discuss and meet their immediate needs and get help in a compassionate and empathetic environment.

Use of popular theatre for assessment, expression, and learning

FR employed the popular theatre approach to engage participants; create a sense of safety, community, and group cohesion; assess needs and facilitate goal setting and action planning; and encourage the acquisition of soft skills such as teamwork, initiative, awareness, confidence, communication in English, and conflict resolution, all of which are important in Canadian workplaces. Participants with varying levels of English used verbal and non-verbal communication approaches to participate, which inevitably led to language skill development. The popular theatre technique was also non-threatening and enabled participants to relay their dreams and stories, promoted a sense of community and friendship among learners, and proved effective for participants with various learning styles, including kinaesthetic and non-visual learners.

Flexible programming adaptive to the needs of clients

FR's ability to be flexible in relation to how projects were structured was key to the program's success. Flexibility allowed staff to tailor projects according to the needs of the participants. For example, class times were rescheduled to accommodate the availability of most participants, the age range was widened to accept Eritrean clients aged twenty-six to thirty, the geographic reach of the program was expanded, and the length of participation time was extended to one year. Working with multi-barriered refugee youth requires flexible programming that is adaptive to their needs but still maintains some structure.

Culturally tailored services

Given the diversity of participants' cultural backgrounds and needs, FR included culturally tailored services. Staff paid attention to the norms of participants' cultures, provided a cultural interpreter as needed, and translated the action plans into the clients' first language. A part-time cultural support worker who speaks Tigrigna and Arabic was hired to provide group and individual interpretation and assist clients in solving settlement issues in their first language. Even during social events, attention was given to the cultural norms of the participants; for example, at a community barbecue during Ramadan in September 2009, food was only served after sunset.

INTEGRATED PROGRAM MODEL

As indicated in the literature, youth development programs lack proper conceptualization, which should include (at least) organizational principles, goals, and delivery structure. Very often these programs were designed and organized heuristically according to the practical wisdom of the workers. The FR program was organized using a more thoughtful approach. However, the constantly changing life conditions and needs of refugee youth require a high level of flexibility in program design. An appropriate service model for this type of program requires a built-in mechanism to allow refugee youth with different language abilities and needs to take full advantage of the program. Based on our experience of the program and analysis of the data collected from participants, staff, and other stakeholders, we propose an integrated program model that may better serve refugee youth and assist them in their settlement process in Canada.

Core principles

Early on in the settlement process, refugee youth tend to have dynamic and fluid life conditions that prevent them from establishing a routine and participating in programs on a regular basis. Their needs are diverse and complex. Thus a development program must be designed to suit the unique nature of who they are and what they need.

Whose needs to be met?

Learning English and finding employment were found to be the main needs of youth participating in the first year of the FR program. They clearly indicated that their inability to speak English was the main barrier to their advancement in the Canadian job market, education system, and society in general. They strongly felt the need for Canadian work experience and either training or post-secondary education, as well as the need to learn about the lifestyle, culture, law, and regulations in Canada. They also said that building up their social networks and relationships and bringing their families to Canada were important. In addition, most of the youth had financial needs: they had to be able to support themselves after government funding ended, and many also had to contribute financially to their family back home.

While we recognize that the needs of refugee youth are so diverse and complex that no one program can meet them all, we must also be realistic about the youth's expectations and what they are capable of achieving within a short period of time. As such, we propose that a program for refugee youth should first address four major, basic needs for settling in Canada: language, cultural and social skills, employment, and relationship building. Other needs—social, economic, psychological, spiritual—are either connected to the ones listed

above or pave the way to their fulfillment. Language and employment are competing needs: language opens the door to other possibilities, and employment contributes to survival, stability, and progress in a land where refugee youth have limited support. Although these four different kinds of needs are equally important, we propose a step-wise approach to meeting these needs in a program setting. The categories in figure 1 demonstrate the hierarchical needs of the FR clients who participated in the focus group discussions.

FIGURE 1: CLIENT NEEDS



Eligibilities

FR program findings show that we should be clear on the eligibilities of participants. Perhaps it's unrealistic to expect that one program can serve a diverse group of refugee youth with different needs and skills. So, who do we want to serve? What kinds of needs should we try to meet? What kinds of basic skills are required from the participants? These are important questions in the program design. In a program designed for refugee youth with great language needs, a multiple-entry design is useful. Based on preliminary language skills, youth can enter different levels of the program. In other words,

language skill is an important assessment criterion to determine the eligibility of participants for different levels of entry.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the settlement process, older refugee and immigrant youth have special and diverse needs that have not been met effectively in regular youth programming or settlement services thus far. Given the growing numbers within this immigrant group, their successful settlement will have long-term impacts not only on their socio-economic integration but also on Canadian society in general. Living in a transient condition, they face many instabilities and challenges. Programs based on a highly structured model may not fit well with their contingent condition. Instead, a flexible program design is required. The experience of the FreeRunning project, as indicated by participant feedback, may offer some insight into designing programs for this group of youth.

Flexible programming

The constantly changing needs of refugee youth, complicated by factors such as the socio-cultural background of their origin country, their experience of migration, and their various stages of settlement, require a flexible programming approach. In light of their different needs and skill levels, a flexible program must have multiple-level entry points, and the level in which a youth is placed should be determined by a careful assessment of the individual's needs and skills. The programming also should involve different types of activities. A regular and structured program schedule may not fit with the contingent and unstable condition of the youth. Therefore, a careful arrangement of both structured program activities, such as daytime ESL classes, and unstructured activities, such as drop-in services and evening English conver-

sation groups, will help meet the individual needs of clients and maintain a high degree of flexibility in their schedules. No one organization or program can meet all the needs of these youth. Therefore, flexible programming should help young people access other social activities within the community or their own ethnic group. In other words, flexible programming is a key component of serving transient youth.

Case management and integrative perspective

Flexible programming requires a good understanding of the unique needs of the group as a whole and of each individual participant. Using a holistic and culturally relevant case management approach, the youth program should take into consideration multiple needs, including various developmental and psychological ones, to help youth meet basic settlement needs and assist in long-term planning. Due to their lack of experience in seeking formal services and the language barrier, these youth are more likely to succeed with a one-to-one case management process that includes a comprehensive needs assessment, identification of their service level based on requirements, development of an individual action plan, and referral to services outside the program and organization. The case manager can also monitor the progress of the youth and provide ongoing support.

Job readiness component: mentoring and experiential learning

As reflected in the FR program, refugee youth are particularly concerned about employment. Since temporary employment is a major need, any youth program will need to place emphasis on strengthening job readiness. Refugee youth face many barriers to employment, including their lack of Canadian work experience, low level of education and English, inadequate vocational

training, and limited job search skills. Besides helping to improve their skills, programs for these youth should include elements like internships, job placement, and mentorship.

Not all youth from this group are ready for employment. Very often, due to past experiences, youth lack self-confidence in interacting with Canadian society. Therefore, programs that aim to help these youth settle and integrate will also need to focus on re-establishing their self-esteem and nurturing their leadership abilities. Improving their language skills is also a critical step. In addition, successful integration into the labour market requires English-language proficiency, and ESL training may need to focus on language training that can help them meet workplace requirements.

Incentives: Progression and fiscal incentive to keep the motivation

Immigrant youth often encounter tremendous economic challenges in the initial stages of settlement. Struggling for survival prevented many of the FR clients from fully participating in the program and trapped them in a catch-22 situation. To help refugee youth break through, reasonable financial incentives, such as weekly allowances, stipend funds, and bus passes, are needed to help minimize financial struggle, motivate interest, and encourage full participation in the program. Though no program can guarantee success, one that's well designed to assist refugee youth in the early stages of settlement may bring them some long-term success down the road.

To conclude, in this paper we reported the findings collected during a demonstration project that helped older refugee youth in their early phase of settlement. The participants of the FreeRunning program reflect the possible predicaments of youth in similar situations. The findings indicate there was some program success. This success may reflect the importance of a flexible

programming approach and the creativity and adaptability of staff. Based on the lessons learnt from this demonstration project, the proposed integrative model is just an attempt to illustrate the need for evidence-informed programming. We humbly understand that this is a preliminary study of one program for this group of youth. To improve the services for refugee youth, we urge for more systematic investigations and comparisons of different kinds of programs.

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