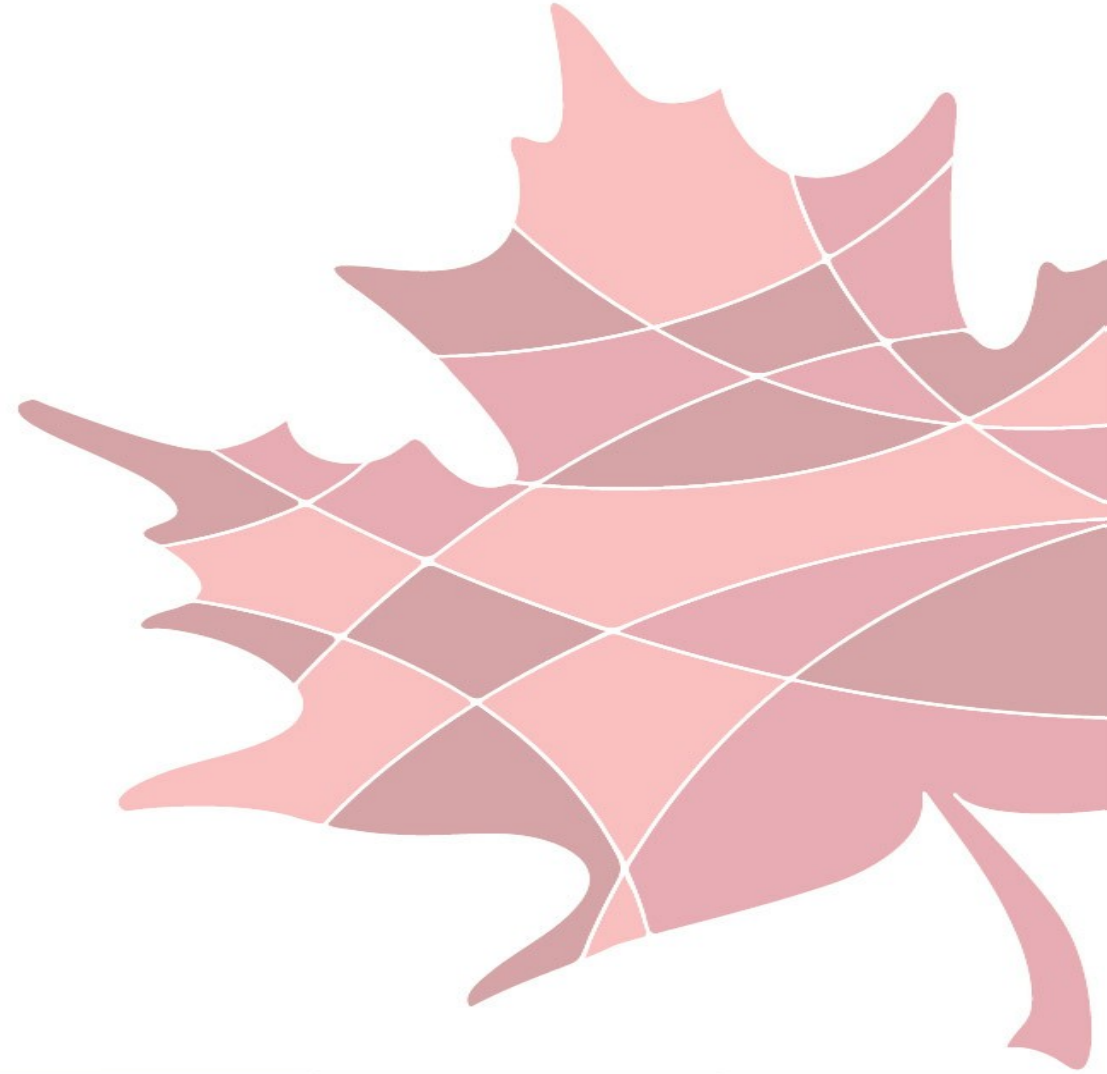


Service Delivery Improvement (SDI) – Overview and Findings

Settlement and Integration Policy
Fall 2023



Settlement Delivery Improvement (SDI) at a Glance

What is it?

A dedicated funding stream of over \$30M each year to build evidence for what works in improving outcomes and increasing the effectiveness of the Settlement Program.

When was it?

- **First cohort (SDI 2017):** Launched in 2018, 102 funded projects.
 - All projects from the first cohort ended on or before **March 31, 2022**.
 - Findings and promising practices from this intake have been collected and analyzed.
- **Second cohort (SDI 2020):** Launched in 2020, 80 funded projects.
 - All projects from the second cohort will end on or before **March 31, 2024**.
 - Mid-project findings were reviewed in early 2023 and final reports will be reviewed as they are submitted to identify and disseminate promising practices.

Where is it going?

- Future SDI cohorts are under development with the next iteration planned for the upcoming **Call for Proposals 2024** funding intake process.

Annex: Select Findings and Promising Practices from SDI 2017

Priority #1: Language Acquisition

- Mobile learning apps can provide convenience, ease and relevant learning content, but are limited in effectiveness without additional interactive supports.
- Low language proficiency has limited the effectiveness of SPO/private employment partnerships.

Priority #2: Employment

- Employment supports for low Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) clients appeared to be largely ineffective.
- One on one placements were found to be too labour intensive and not seen as generating results commensurate with the investments.

Priority #3: Youth Supports

- Client-centred design approaches resulted in program development that was better received by newcomer clients and better aligned with their needs.
- Targeted supports for the older, vulnerable youth population in collaboration with teachers, school boards and employers, facilitate completing high school and transitioning into the workforce.

Priority #4: Harnessing Volunteers & Supporting Capacity Building

- On-going need for the development of evaluation capacity among organizations supporting refugees, with this likely being applicable across most SPOs.

Priority #5: Newcomer Well-Being and Programming to Support Vulnerable Clients

- Mental health issues among newcomers are often a product of settlement stressors rather than PTSD. These issues can be addressed by focusing initially on adjustment-related stress.

Policy Design of SDI 2020 Process - Lessons Learned and Applied

- **The SDI 2020 intake was designed to reflect key lessons learned** from the first intake:

#1 More focus on key concepts with strong potential for improving the Sector

Less emphasis on base Settlement streams and more on broad sector issues.

#2 Stronger focus on outcomes measurement and earlier identification of promising practices

Via the mandatory performance measurement framework (PMF).

#3 Enhanced focus on comparative research

In order to develop stronger evidence, all projects must feature at least a basic test and must be focused on research rather than direct service delivery.

#4 Mandatory mid-project and final third-party evaluation

To validate project achievements and support design of CFP 2024.

Overview of SDI Expression of Interest 2020

- Distinct in concept and approach from its predecessor, the **SDI 2020 EOI process focuses** on **short-term** projects that will support newcomers and the settlement sector through **sustainable recovery from the pandemic** under three priority streams:
 1. **Leveraging technology** to support effective, equitable remote service delivery;
 2. **Increasing employer involvement in the integration process** to improve newcomer employment outcomes; and,
 3. **Building the capacity of the settlement sector to be flexible and resilient** through social research and development, **and enhancing anti-racism activities and programs.**

Targeted Request for Quotations (RFQ)

A separate process was held concurrently on community-based governance approaches for service delivery.

Some Preliminary Findings from SDI 2020 Projects – Mid-Projects Evaluations

Priority 1:

Leveraging Technology to Support Remote Service Delivery

Generally, technological and online approaches have shown potential but require more work to fully understand and benefit from the opportunities available through digital service mediums.

- ✓ Online approaches allow for support of volunteers and mentors in smaller communities.
- ✓ AI has the potential to streamline services and increase client independence.
- ✓ Larger or combined datasets can improve the functionality of AI/Chatbots and mitigate the challenges related to small datasets.
- ✓ Outreach strategies are needed to build client awareness of online tools, starting with pre-arrival.

These findings are aligned with and informed by recommendations and insights put forward by the NSIC Technology Task Group ([2021](#)) and the National Standing Committee on Technology ([2022](#))

Some Preliminary Findings from SDI 2020 Projects – Mid-Projects Evaluations (Cont'd)

Priority 2:

Increasing Employer Involvement in Settlement Services

Employers are interested in hiring newcomers but experience both internal and external challenges.

- ✓ Engaging employers in projects was noted as challenging due to their capacity issues.
- ✓ Employers are more focused on recruitment than retention, and did not independently recognize a role for themselves in supporting newcomer retention.
- ✓ Employers indicated that working with SPOs on their employment needs has been a positive experience and would increase the likelihood of hiring newcomers after the intervention.
- ✓ Employers are more likely to be engaged if they are already interested in or have completed some kind of education and training around inclusive workplaces.

Engaging employers to hire newcomers and support their settlement journeys continues to be an area that would benefit from further innovation, and is under consideration as a priority for future funding initiatives.

Some Preliminary Findings from SDI 2020 Projects – Mid-Projects Evaluations (Cont'd)

Priority 3(A):

Supporting Sector Resilience and Adaptability

The reach and adoption of **Social R&D** and outcomes measurement will continue to require further development across the Sector.

- ✓ **Project evaluation is not well understood by many SPOs and would benefit from capacity-building investments to allow them to more fully understand project success and opportunities for improvement.**
- ✓ **Research projects that rely on newcomer participation require significant resources to identify, connect, and perform follow-ups.**
- ✓ **Compensation for both SPOs and newcomers to participate in research projects could help to alleviate organizational pressures and ensure newcomers are able to participate fully in the research project.**
- ✓ The sector's interest and desire for additional support in developing and advancing outcomes measurement capability is acknowledged and is under consideration as a priority area in future funding initiatives.

There is an ongoing need to foster a culture of innovation and rigorous testing in the broader settlement sector.

Some Preliminary Findings from SDI 2020 Projects – Mid-Projects Evaluations (Cont'd)

Priority 3(B):

Enhancing Anti-Racism Capacity

Given individual differences in perceptions of racism, specific community-based approaches to research has opened new avenues for client-driven service improvement and innovation.

- ✓ Leveraging pre-existing partnerships within the community allows organizations to adopt inclusive and equitable protocols and succeeding in awareness campaigns.
- ✓ Provision of dedicated funding for anti-racism initiatives allowed organization leaders to dedicate staff time and resources to accommodate the prioritization of this work.
- ✓ Combining anti-racism and economic objectives showed promise when engaging municipalities and other public institutions.

This SDI 2020 funding area influenced by the design of the 2022 Equity RFQ and continues to inform the design of the IRCC Settlement Program.

Next steps for SDI 2020

- The Social Innovation Unit will conduct a review and analysis of the Final Reports from the SDI 2020 cohort, with most anticipated to be submitted in **Spring 2024**. The findings from this review process will inform the policy direction and design of future SDI initiatives and cohorts.
- Please note that SDI recipients will be encouraged to share their findings on the dedicated SDI forum on SettleNet.

Questions?

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