



SUMMARY REPORT

From Anecdotes to Evidence: Research-Based Recommendations for Supporting Rural and Remote Sponsorship

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Executive Summary



Refugees in Canada and beyond are largely destined for resettlement in large cities. However, through sponsorship, dispersal policies, and more informal mechanisms, more rural communities and smaller cities are welcoming refugees. Despite the increasing diversity of resettlement communities, research remains concentrated on large cities, leaving a gap in knowledge about resettlement in rural regions, towns, villages, and small cities. This report presents the results from three research activities:

PROJECT GOALS:

The goals of this IRCC-funded project were:

- To better understand rural resettlement through sponsorship;
- Offer recommendations to improve government policies and sponsorship training materials;
- Ensure support for refugees;
- Inform best practices moving forward.

1

Scoping Literature Review: Key results from 90 Canadian and 45 International studies (from comparator countries, including Australia and the United States).

2











Virtual Focus Groups & Interviews: Involving 40 participants broadly distributed across Canada: 19 sponsors/Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) representatives, 15 settlement staff, 5 Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) staff, and 1 refugee.

3

National Bilingual Survey: Administered virtually by Leger Marketing Inc., with 50 respondents (43 sponsor and 7 refugees) and data from approximately 130 sponsorships.

Results: Overall, the project found that rural communities can be good destinations for refugees. Rural resettlement can benefit both refugees and rural communities. Some refugees want to live in rural places, yet they are not often asked whether they would like to live in a small community or large city. Participants emphasized that if government policies bring newcomers to rural communities, there is a responsibility to support them with adequate services. Access to IRCC-funded settlement services and language training is limited in rural areas, so participants hope to expand access to in-person and virtual services. Supports for newcomers should be put in place before people arrive, rather than waiting for newcomers to come. Rural communities would like to be more involved in planning for future immigration and refugee initiatives.

Refugees in rural places face many of the same well-documented challenges as other rural residents, such as limited access to public transportation and medical services. Many of these rural challenges are beyond the mandate of IRCC to address directly, but it is important for IRCC and other stakeholders to take a holistic and intersectoral view of settlement, recognizing that settlement services alone are not enough to support refugees. All levels of government have a role to play in supporting newcomers settling in rural areas and other rural residents, by making investments in affordable housing, healthcare, mental health, public transportation, Internet access, social services, and education. While rural resettlement is challenging because of these gaps in services, rural communities also have assets that promote positive settlement, such as strong connections among community members. This project identified 10 broad challenge areas, along with possible activities that can be undertaken by IRCC to address these challenges.

<p>1</p>  <p>Barriers to Refugee Family Reunification</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Finding and Accessing Existing Settlement Services</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Accessing Language Training</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Accessing Professional Interpretation</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>Inequitable Settlement Funding Models</p>
<p>6</p>  <p>Sponsor Training Materials</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>The Hidden Costs of Private Sponsorship</p>	<p>8</p>  <p>Unequal Access to Sponsorship Agreement Holders</p>	<p>9</p>  <p>Limited Knowledge About Sponsorship and Stream Confusion</p>	<p>10</p>  <p>Mismatch between BVOR Profiles and Community Capacity</p>

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Refugees across the globe, including in Canada, are largely destined for resettlement in large, urban centres. However, through community sponsorship models, dispersal policies, and more informal mechanisms, more and more rural communities and regions, and smaller cities are welcoming refugee newcomers. Despite the increasing diversity of resettlement communities, migration and refugee research remains concentrated on large urban centres, leaving a gap in knowledge about the implications of resettlement in rural regions, towns and villages, and small cities. This project was commissioned by IRCC to address this gap.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: To

understand the realities of rural resettlement in order to:

- (1) Improve knowledge on the subject
- (2) Offer recommendations to improve government policies and sponsorship training materials, ensure support for refugees, and inform best practices moving forward.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What are the challenges, benefits and opportunities of resettlement and integration in small and rural places in Canada and beyond?

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

01

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL SCOPING REVIEW

The review collected and analyzed 90 Canadian and 45 international studies relevant to the topic of resettlement and migration in rural and smaller places.

02

VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

40 people participated, including: 19 sponsors and/or Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) representatives, 1 former sponsored refugee, 5 Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) staff, and 15 settlement staff.

03

NATIONAL BILINGUAL SURVEY

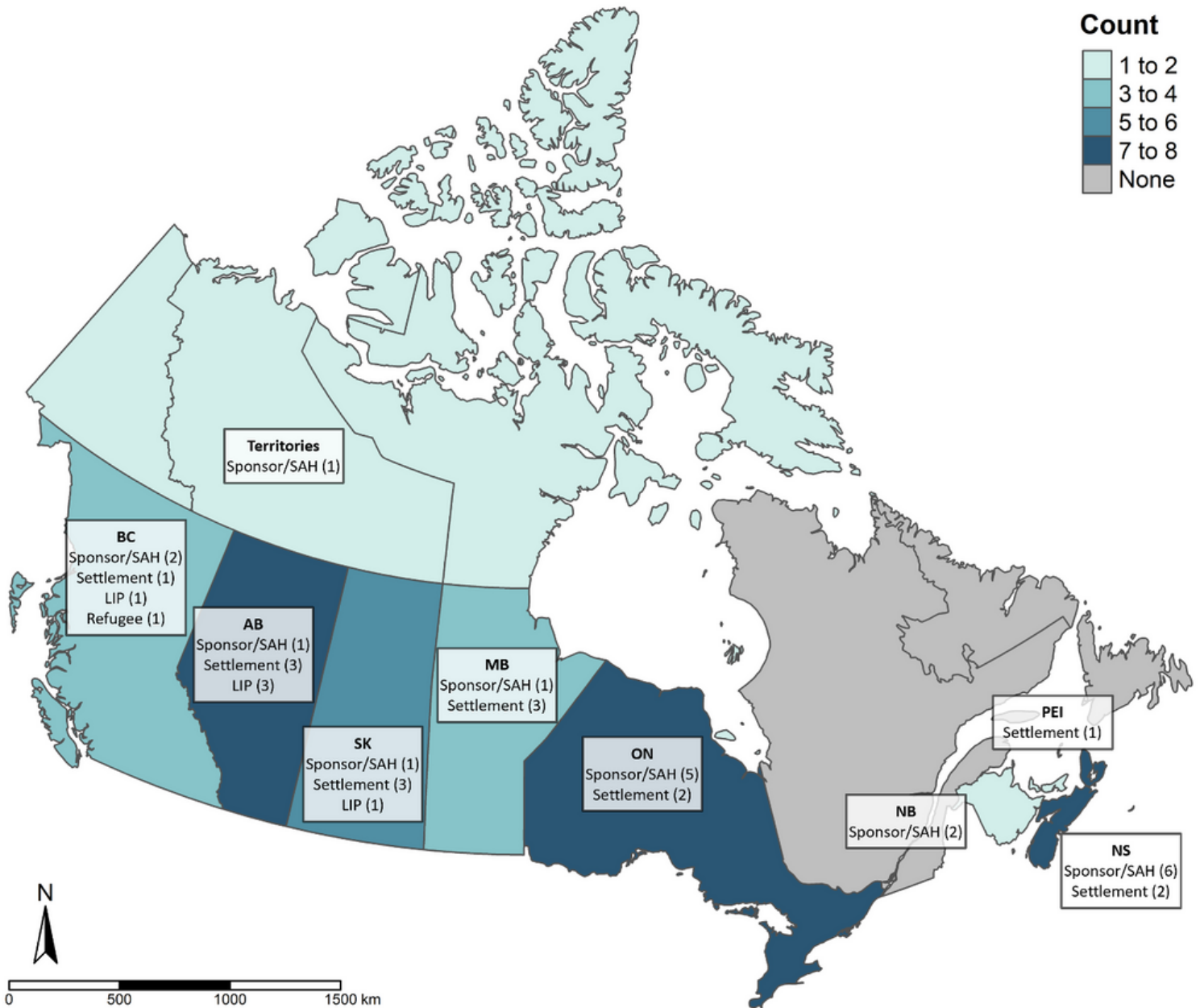
Conducted by the Leger Marketing Inc., a national, bilingual survey was sent to almost 700 organizations. 50 people responded: 43 sponsors and 7 refugees.

04

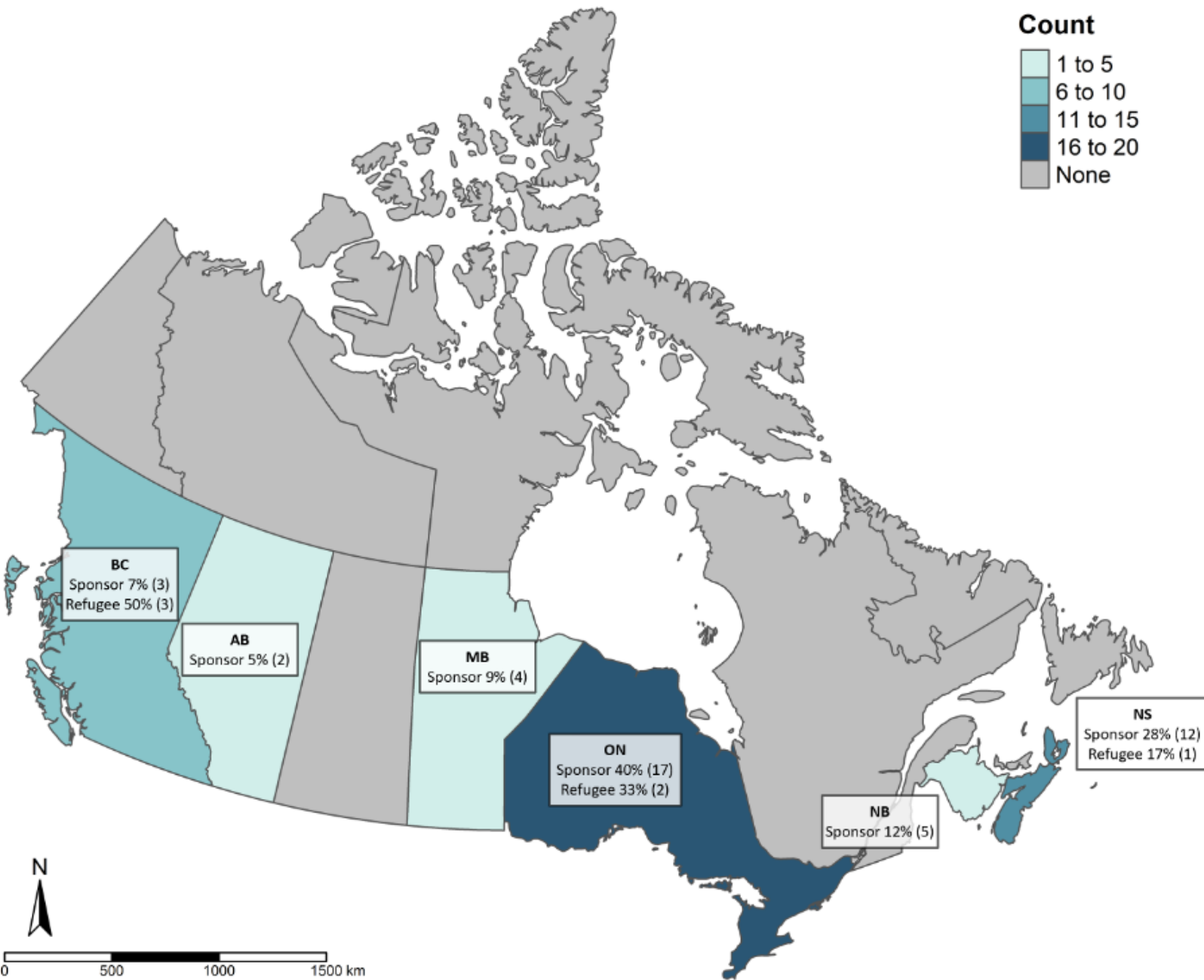
VERBATIM RECOMMENDATIONS

80 direct recommendations from participants are included in the full version of the report, organized based on the most relevant IRCC branch according to the branch's mandate.

10 focus groups were conducted with 36 participants. Each focus group involved between 2 and 8 participants, and the discussion was led and moderated by two project staff. Extenuating circumstances, such as scheduling conflicts or language barriers, required that a limited number of interviews were conducted in addition to the focus groups. Four individual interviews were deemed important to diversify the types of participants and organizations represented in the data, and included: a refugee participant, a settlement organization that serves refugees with specific needs, a francophone organization, and a sponsor in the North. The distribution of the 40 focus group and interview participants across Canada is shown in the map below, broken down into participant categories of: Sponsor/Sponsorship Agreement Holder representatives, Settlement Staff, Local Immigration Partnership staff, and the Refugee Participant.



This project included a national bilingual survey of sponsors and refugees aiming to capture quantitative information about demographics and sponsorship experiences from a range of sponsors and refugees across Canada. The survey launched in October 2022, and closed in January 2023. There were two versions of the survey, one for refugee respondents and one for sponsor respondents. Both versions were available in English and French. Participants were recruited through relevant listservs and organizations such as regional sponsor Facebook groups, settlement service providers, and Sponsorship Agreement Holders. There were 50 responses to the survey, including 43 sponsors and 7 refugees, as seen in the map below. Given this very small sample size, the survey results are not generalizable to the broader population of rural sponsors and refugees across Canada and cannot be considered representative of these broader experiences.



There are a number of key project takeaways across all project components.

Limitations of Existing Research

The scoping review showed the limits of the existing research, specifically:

- There is a clear bias towards the study of refugee resettlement in large urban centres and/or mid-sized cities. This bias means that despite the diversity of immigration and refugee resettlement in Canada, little is known about the implications of resettlement in rural hamlets, small towns or cities, or rural regions.
- Understandings of “small and rural” vary widely across research projects, so it is difficult to compare and contrast results and data between and across studies.
- Research is focused on select case studies and thus fails to provide a systematic overview of the experiences, challenges, and benefits of rural resettlement as a whole.



The Potential of Rural Resettlement

While there are challenges associated with rural life, the project identified a number of potential opportunities and benefits of resettlement in smaller communities, in particular:

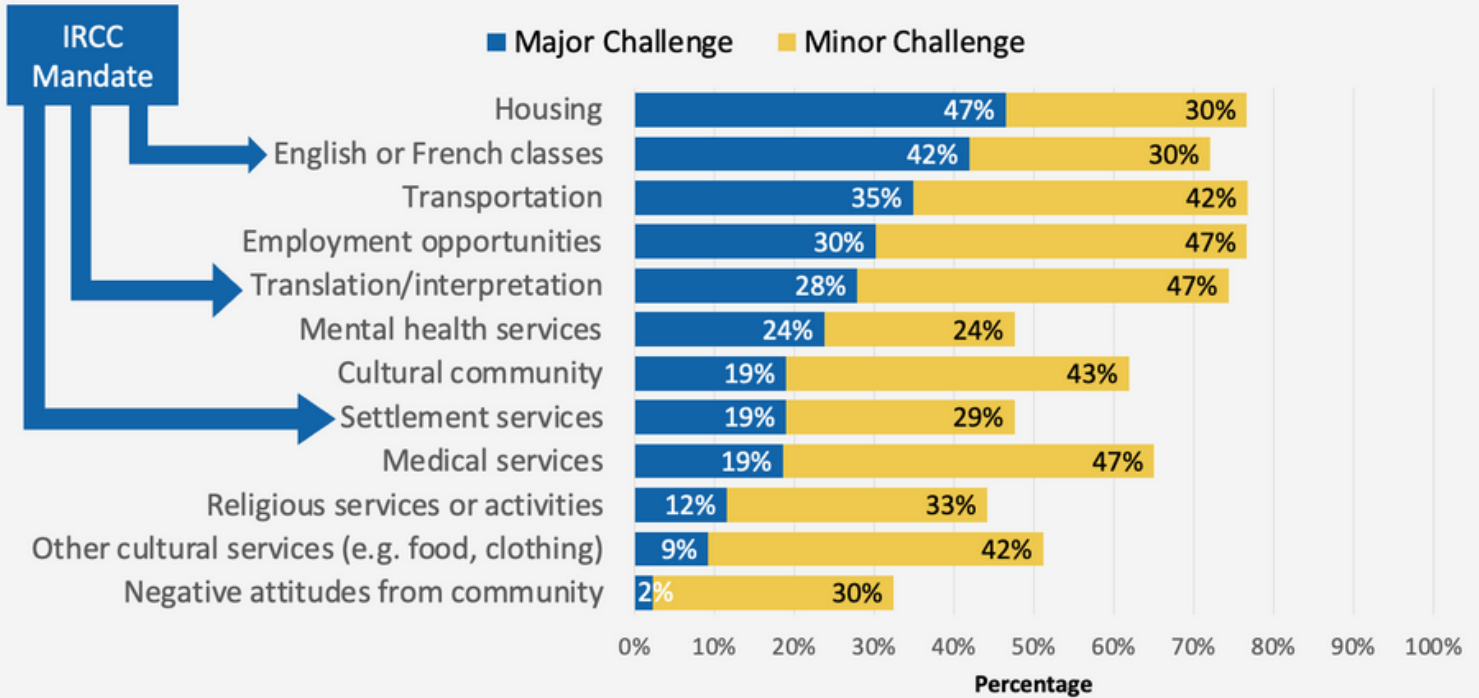
- In smaller communities, refugees are resettled in a slower environment, and they can access available services easier and (sometimes) faster. In some cases, they have more diverse housing options with access to outdoor space to garden or farm, and access to community networks and social capital may be greater.
- Even if they do not stay long-term, refugees bring new talents, resources, and diversity into rural communities, which often do not have the opportunity to participate in international and national projects, such as refugee resettlement.
- Some refugees want to live in rural places, yet they are not often asked their resettlement preference (in regard to community size or degree of rurality).

Refugees and Rural Dynamics

In this project, themes related to the inherent realities of life in rural and smaller places are referred to as Rural Dynamics. These include common rural challenges associated with the limited population density, and greater distances of these places to urban centres and services. Refugees face many of the same well-documented challenges as other rural residents, such as limited public transportation, healthcare access, and reliable broadband Internet. However, many of these challenges are outside of the mandate of IRCC to address directly.

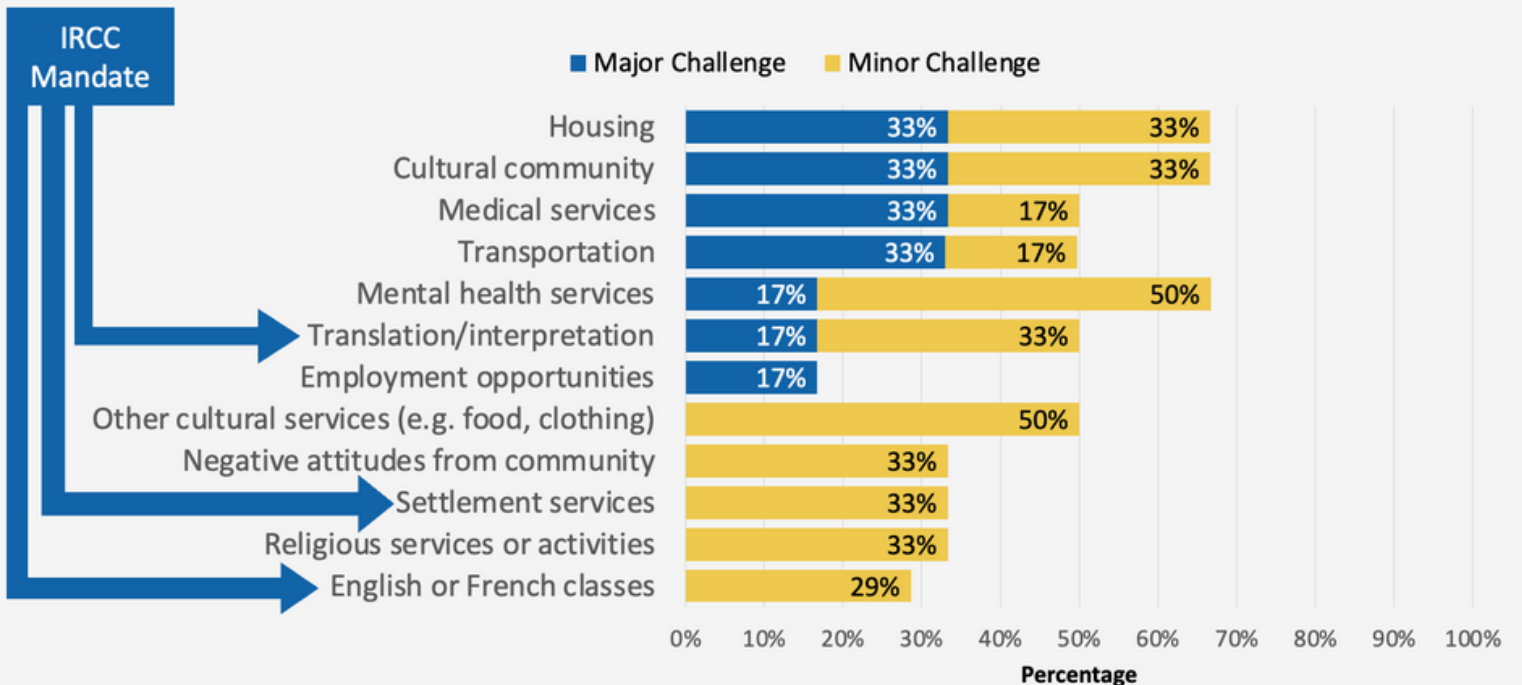
Challenges of Rural Sponsorship according to Sponsors

Sponsor survey respondents reported a variety of major and minor challenges they faced. Only some of these challenges are directly under the mandate of IRCC.



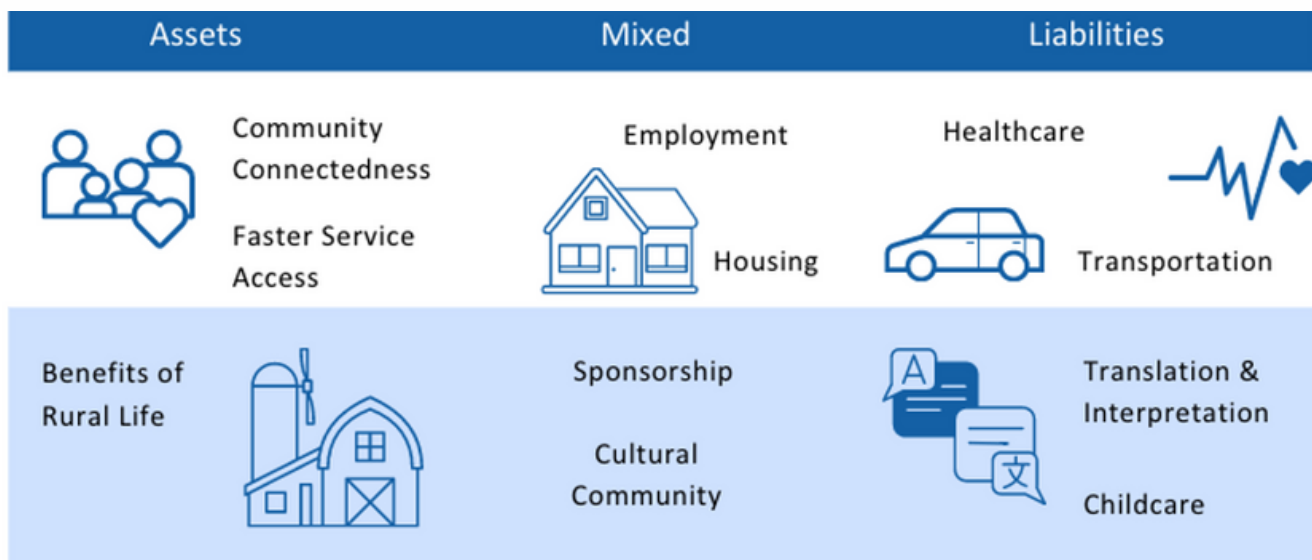
Challenges of Rural Sponsorship according to Refugees

Similarly, refugee survey respondents reported a variety of challenges they faced. The challenges most closely linked to IRCC's mandate are not in the top 5 challenges.



Holistic View of Resettlement

A holistic view of settlement is desired by sponsors and refugees. Settlement services alone are not enough to support refugees. Shortcomings in other critical services not funded by IRCC (especially affordable housing, health care, and transportation) make it challenging for small communities to welcome refugees or to say yes to IRCC requests to accept specific refugee groups. All levels of government have a role to play in supporting newcomers settling in rural areas and other rural residents by making investments in affordable housing, healthcare, mental health, public transportation, Internet access, social services, and education. While rural resettlement can be challenging because of gaps in settlement services and other services, rural communities also have assets that promote positive settlement, such as strong connections and networks among community members. Communities are also diverse in their assets and liabilities, as seen below. For example, while some rural communities may have many employment opportunities, others may have limited employment options available and affordable housing options for large families.



Expanding Rural Settlement Services

The current approach to funding settlement services is reactive, as a certain number of newcomers are required to reside in a community before services are funded. Settlement services and supports should be put in place before people arrive. Participants argued that if governments bring newcomers to rural communities, they have a responsibility to support them with adequate services. Participants expressed the desire to expand settlement services, including IRCC-funded services and language training, in small communities.

Perspectives Francophones

Participants francophones

Un parrain a rempli le sondage en français. On a mené une entrevue en français avec un fournisseur de services d'un organisme acadien au Canada Atlantique. On a exclu les participants du Québec parce que la province de Québec dirige ses propres programmes de parrainage et services d'établissement, hors de la juridiction d'IRCC.

Points pertinents semblables à d'autres contextes ruraux

- Les problèmes démographiques des communautés rurales francophones exigent l'accueil des immigrants et des réfugiés. À travers le parrainage, les communautés peuvent faire venir les réfugiés eux-mêmes.
- Le logement est le problème le plus important pour les immigrants et les réfugiés.
- Il y a un manque de connaissances à propos des programmes de parrainage.
- Les services d'établissement francophones sont basés aux grandes villes et en général ne fournissent pas de services aux communautés rurales.

Points pertinents spécifiques au contexte francophone minoritaire

- Il y a un manque d'accès aux Signataires d'Entente de Parrainage francophones.
- On perçoit l'Initiative des communautés francophones accueillantes comme un succès.
- Les fournisseurs de services francophones sont généralement exclus de soutenir les réfugiés pris en charge par le gouvernement à travers le Programme d'aide à la réinstallation.

L'appel au gouvernement : nous ne sommes pas les spécialistes de ce programme de parrainage privé. Franchement nous ne pouvons pas répondre à toutes les questions des communautés, parce que c'est très compliqué, c'est très exigeant. Alors, on souhaite que le gouvernement travaille avec les Réseaux en Immigration Francophone à travers le Canada pour aller rencontrer et expliquer et répondre aux questions des organismes et des communautés au niveau local.

- Fournisseur de services francophone

5 recommandations provenant de l'entrevue en français

1. Aidez les organismes francophones à devenir Signataires d'Entente de Parrainage pour qu'ils puissent appuyer les parrains francophones.
2. Rencontrez les organismes francophones et les communautés au niveau local pour promouvoir le parrainage et répondre aux questions.
3. Répandez l'Initiative des communautés francophones accueillantes à d'autres communautés rurales.
4. Financez les bureaux satellites des fournisseurs de services francophones dans les communautés rurales.
5. Impliquez les fournisseurs de services francophones dans le Programme d'aide à la réinstallation pour les réfugiés pris en charge par le gouvernement.

Francophone Perspectives

Francophone Participants

One sponsor completed the survey in French. The research team conducted one interview in French with a settlement staff member at an Acadian organization in Atlantic Canada. Participants from Quebec were not included in this study, since the province of Quebec runs its own sponsorship programs and settlement services, which are not under the jurisdiction of IRCC.

Key Takeaways Similar to Other Rural Contexts

- Sponsorship is a community-driven way to address demographic challenges in rural areas.
- Housing is the biggest challenge for immigrants and refugees.
- There is a lack of knowledge about sponsorship programs.
- Francophone settlement services are based in urban hubs and mostly do not serve rural communities.

Key Takeaways Specific to Francophone Minority Communities

- Lack of access to francophone Sponsorship Agreement Holders
- Perceived success of Francophone Welcoming Communities Initiative
- Francophone organizations are often excluded from delivering the Resettlement Assistance Program for Government-Assisted Refugees



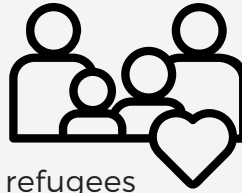
The appeal to the government: we are not the specialists in the private sponsorship program. So frankly we cannot respond to all the questions from the communities about the program because it is very complicated, it is very demanding. We would like the government to work with the Réseaux en Immigration Francophone across Canada to go meet communities and organizations at the local level and respond to their questions.
- Francophone Settlement Staff



5 Recommendations from Francophone Interview Participant

1. Support francophone community organizations to become Sponsorship Agreement Holders so they can support francophone sponsors.
2. Meet with francophone organizations and local communities to promote sponsorship and answer questions.
3. Expand the successful Francophone Welcoming Communities Initiative to additional rural communities.
4. Fund satellite offices of francophone settlement organizations in smaller communities.
5. Involve francophone organizations in delivering the Resettlement Assistance Program for Government-Assisted Refugees.

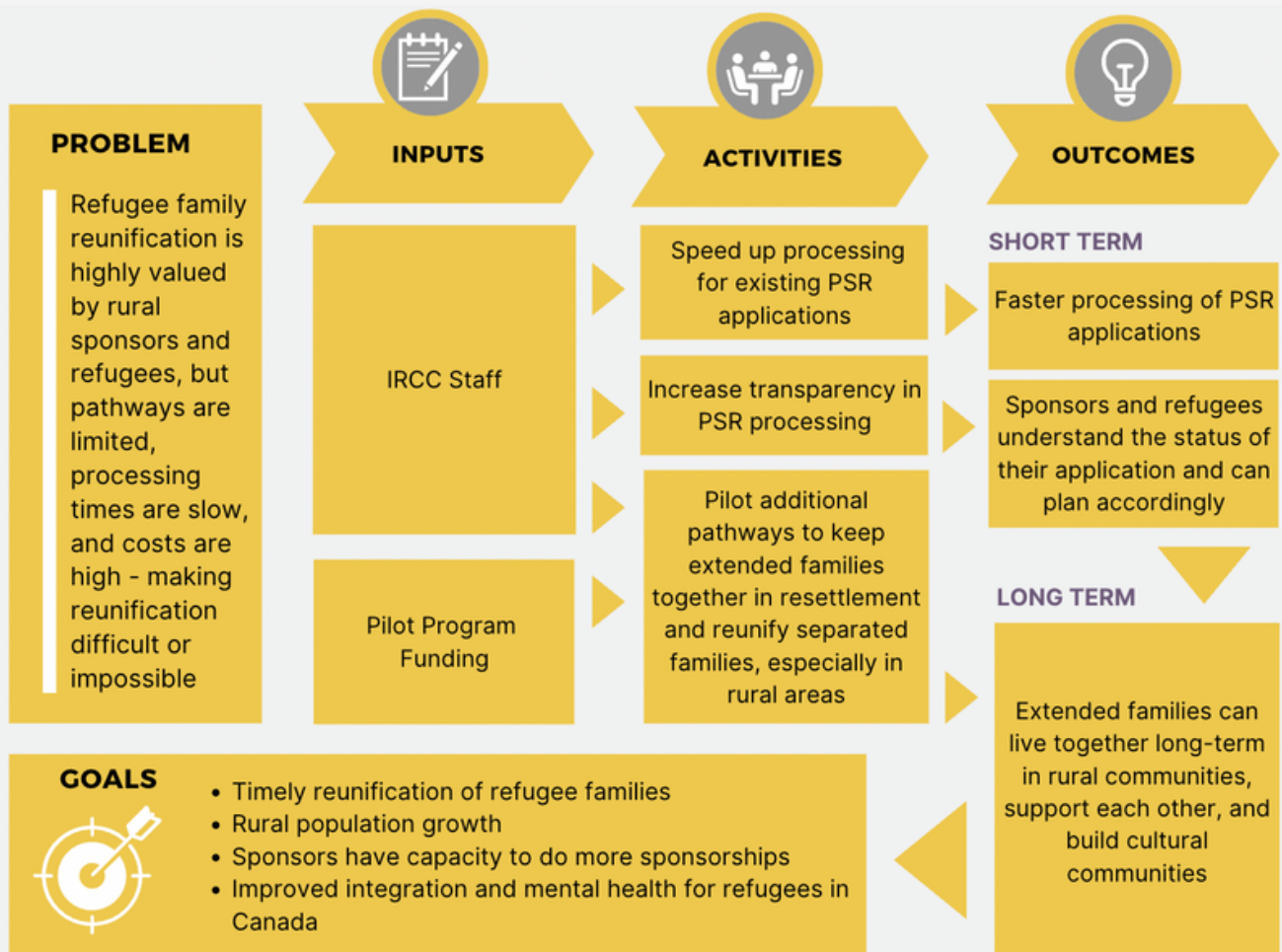
Existing studies, as well as focus group, interview and survey participants all emphasized the importance of family reunification. This research shows that rural sponsors want to bring families of refugees who have settled in their communities, but face significant barriers. Sponsors repeatedly pointed to slow processing times, a lack of transparency in processing, and high costs as challenges both for sponsorship groups and for refugees who are waiting.



"Reduce the cost of family reunification sponsorship. Family reunification is much easier for the sponsors and the refugee family but it costs twice as much. Fund raising such large amounts is difficult in a small community."
- Sponsor

In the survey:

- Over half of sponsors (58%) said that family reunification was a "major consideration" in choosing who to sponsor, and another 12% said it was a "minor consideration"
- Around one third (32%) of first time sponsorships were related to family reunification, jumping to half (50%) for second sponsorships.
- 38% of sponsors who chose the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program for their first sponsorship moved on to a second family reunification sponsorship through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program.



Although sponsored refugees and all newcomers benefit from connecting with settlement services, this research shows that finding and accessing existing settlement services is difficult in smaller communities. Sponsors and refugees struggle to find and access services, while settlement staff struggle to find and reach out to potential clients. The geographic catchment area for in-person and virtual services is often unclear, leaving rural newcomers unsure if they are eligible to access services.

"There's an IRCC website called 'Find free newcomer services near you'. It is so bad it is ridiculous. I live literally a block from my settlement office but because of the way they have them listed [the website directs me to services in another province]. It does not make any sense and the only thing worse than no information is really bad information [...] fixing up that website would be huge."
- Settlement Staff

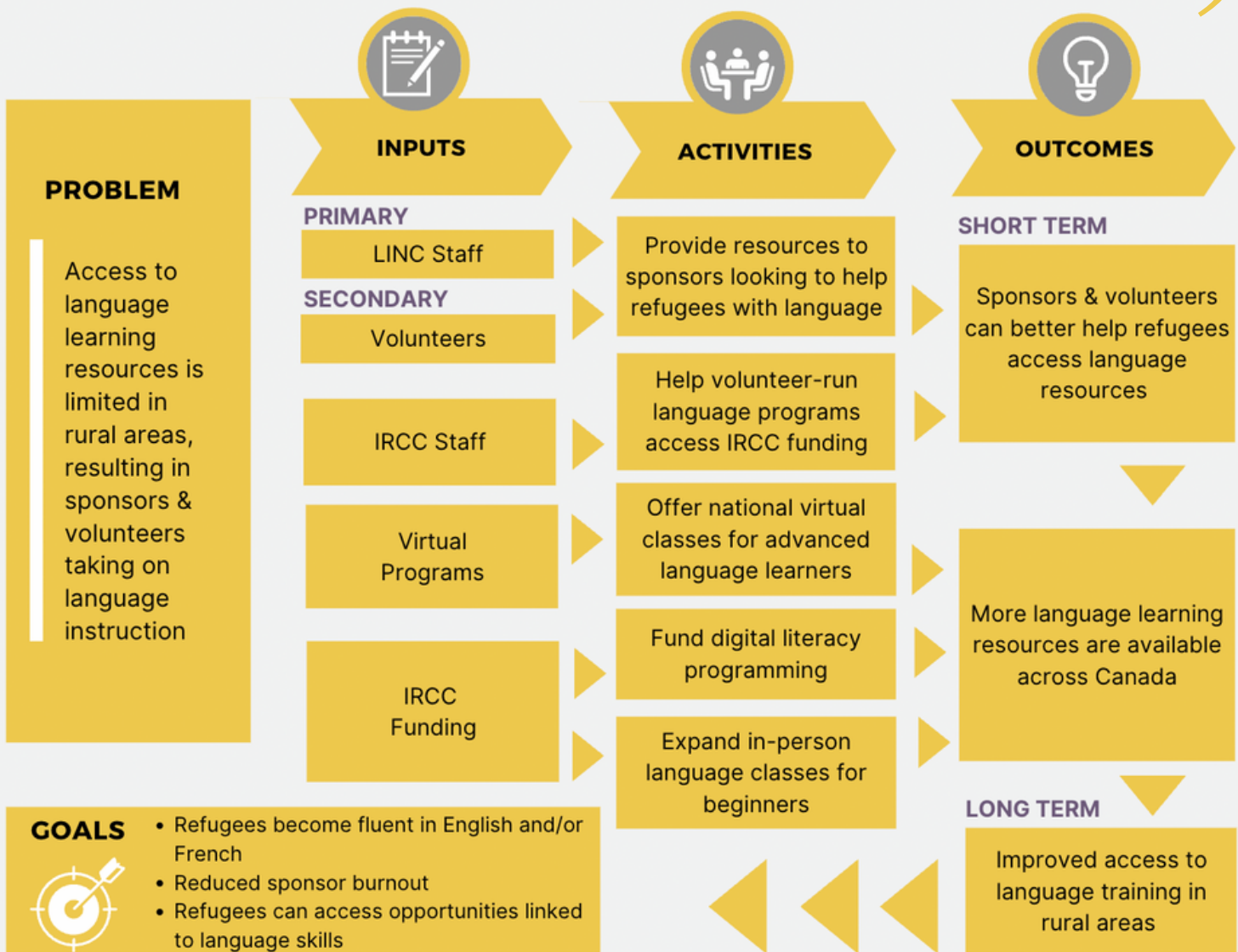
BEST PRACTICES:

- In Lloydminster, Alberta the Local Immigration Partnership created a "Passport to Settlement" that directs newcomers to existing services in the community.
- Check out the "Allies for Refugee Integration" project for additional ideas on supporting sponsor-settlement collaboration.



Learning English or French is essential for all aspects of integration, including communicating with sponsors and community members, accessing services, and finding employment. IRCC-funded language training is limited and sometimes non-existent in rural areas. In the survey, 8 sponsors reported starting their own English/French program or school, and 25 sponsors reported recruiting volunteer language tutors. Many focus group participants and survey respondents identified expanding access to language training as a priority for improving rural sponsorship. While virtual classes can help fill part of the gap, they do not work well for beginner language learners and some communities are missing reliable Internet access.

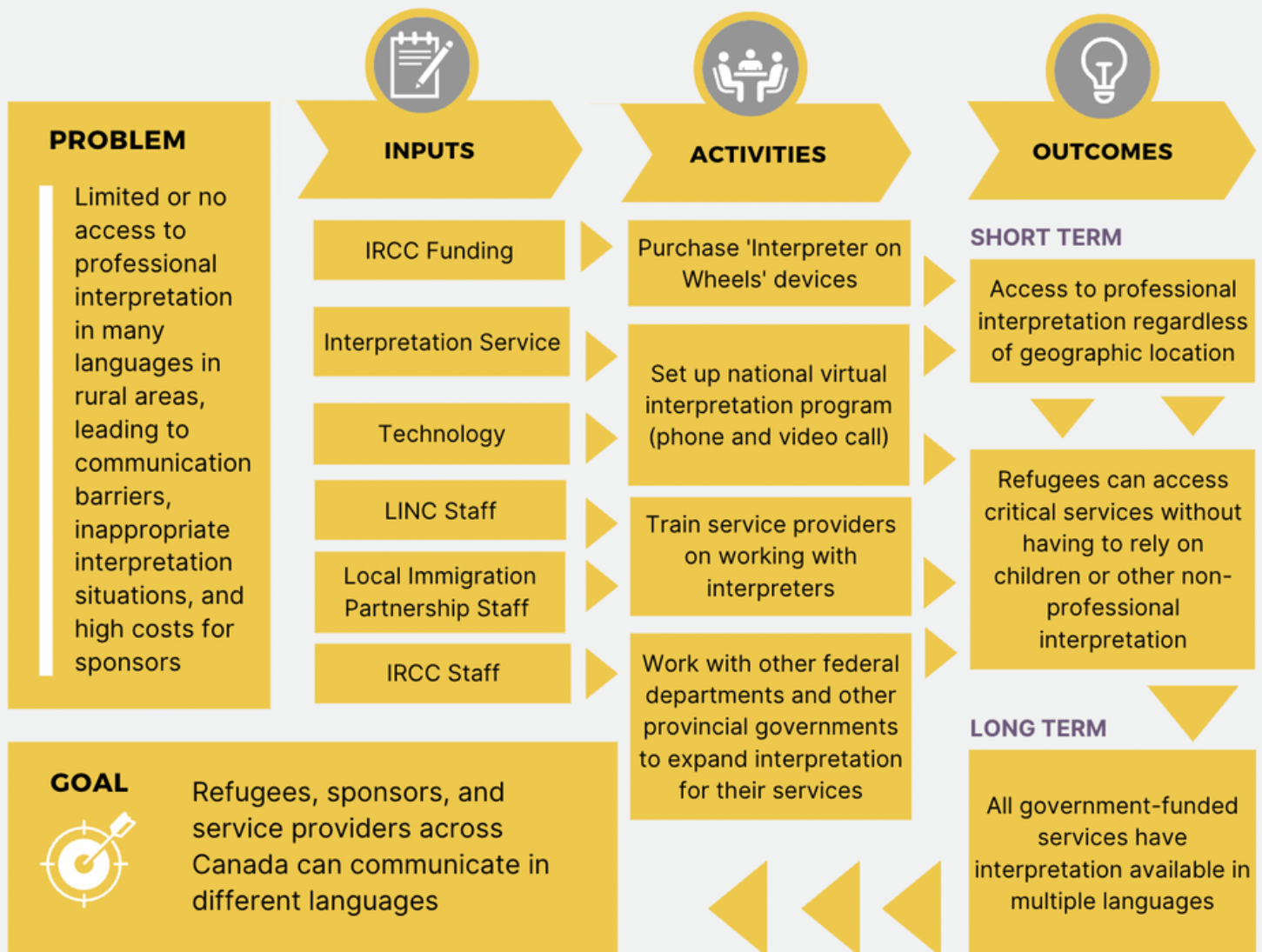
“We don't have the LINC program for any of our rural clients, it is based in the cities, and so it can put people at 2 hours away from classes [...] We have satellite campuses of the host organization [for LINC classes in the province] in the rural areas, but IRCC hasn't matched up yet to have the LINC program offered at [the satellite campuses in rural areas] and that's a low hanging fruit that you could just do tomorrow. So that's a gap that I always lobby for, every report, is to see the LINC program come out to the rural areas. Because I really feel like it's an urban-based program for us.”
- Settlement Staff



Professional interpretation is essential for effective communication between refugees, sponsors, settlement staff, and service providers. Many studies have shown the problems with using family members (especially children) as interpreters, like issues with confidentiality and difficulties in conveying critical health information. Many refugees and immigrants in smaller communities have no access or limited access to professional interpretation. Having in-person interpreters may not be feasible in smaller communities where few people speak a specific language, but virtual technologies and telephone interpretation can offer broader access to interpretation.

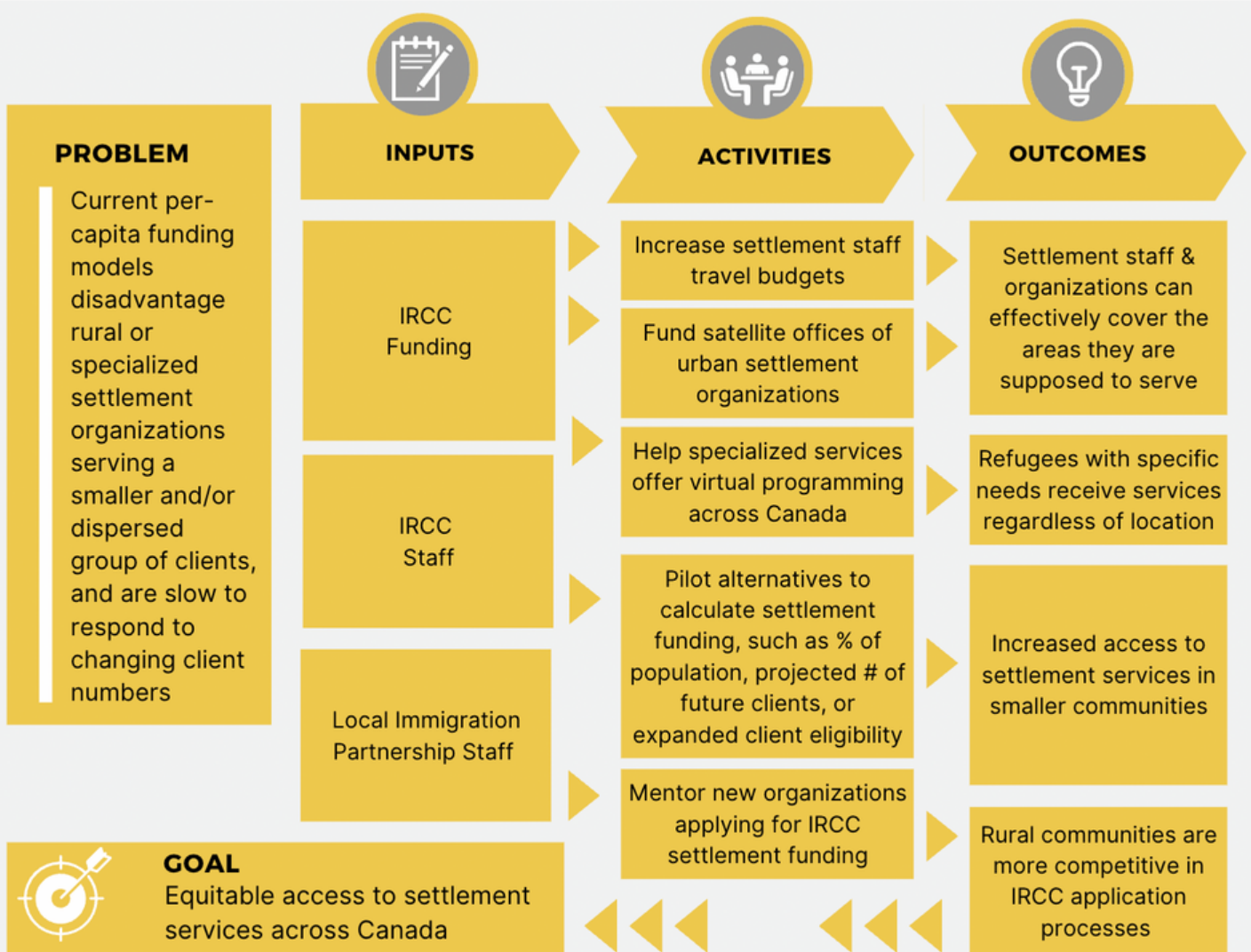


BEST PRACTICES: In Nova Scotia, the [Interpreter on Wheels program](#) provides health care in any language at the province's hospitals in urban and rural areas. Hospital staff can get immediate access to a trained interpreter via video call.



The per-client approach to funding settlement services disadvantages organizations who serve a small number of clients living in rural areas or smaller communities, or a small sub-group of clients dispersed over a large area (for example deaf newcomers). Funding models do not take into consideration when newcomers make up a significant percentage of a small community's population, when the number of newcomers changes rapidly, or when there are plans to bring more newcomers in the near future. As a result, there is unequal access to settlement services across Canada. In addition, settlement staff participants were keen to serve a broader geographic area, by travelling to neighbouring communities or by establishing satellite offices.

"IRCC talks too much about cost per client. Throw that out of the window when it comes to rural services. These communities deserve a settlement office even one day a week, and for emergencies they can do it virtually [...] so not worrying so much about cost per client, but worrying about effective settlement services. And if [the provincial and federal governments] are going to recruit people to rural communities, then they have to support them, it's just an obligation they have."
 - Settlement staff

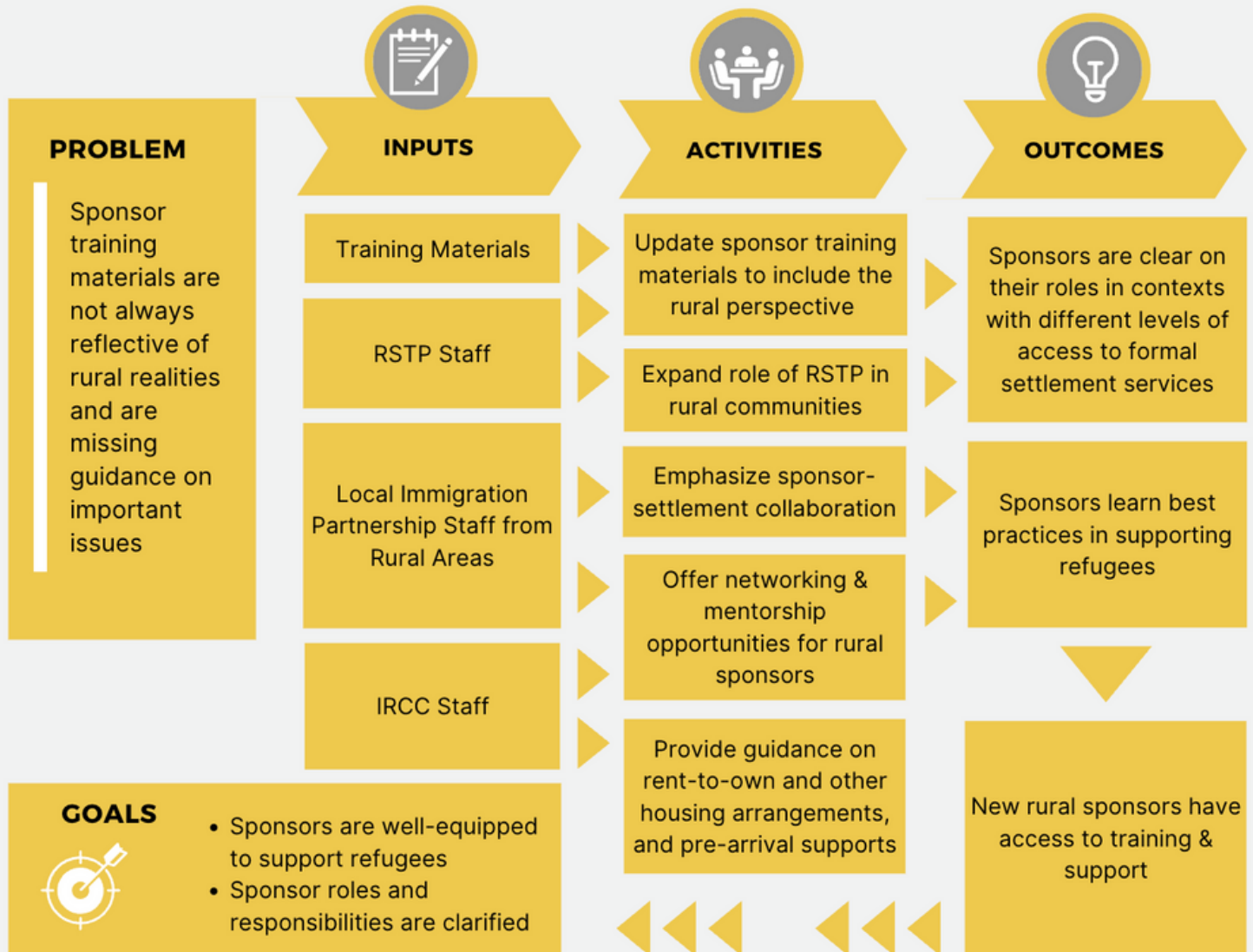


Sponsor training is essential so sponsors, especially new sponsors, are well-equipped for their work. Participants felt that sponsor training materials do not always reflect rural realities, for example by assuming that refugees will take public transportation, which is often limited to urban centres and cities. Sponsors also wanted more guidance on pre-arrival supports (financial and other supports) and other issues. For example, due to a lack of affordable rental housing in some communities, sponsors are buying and renting homes to refugees through rent-to-own arrangements. However, sponsors do not receive any guidance regarding the specifics of such arrangements.



“We’ve [purchased a house] a few times [...] it’s been a group of people who said yes, I’m willing to step up and sign some kind of a deal with the intent that it’s rented by the family and then the offer is made to purchase, a rent to purchase, basically [...] So that was born of necessity, I think, but it seems to have worked. But I’m not sure what all the risks involved are.”

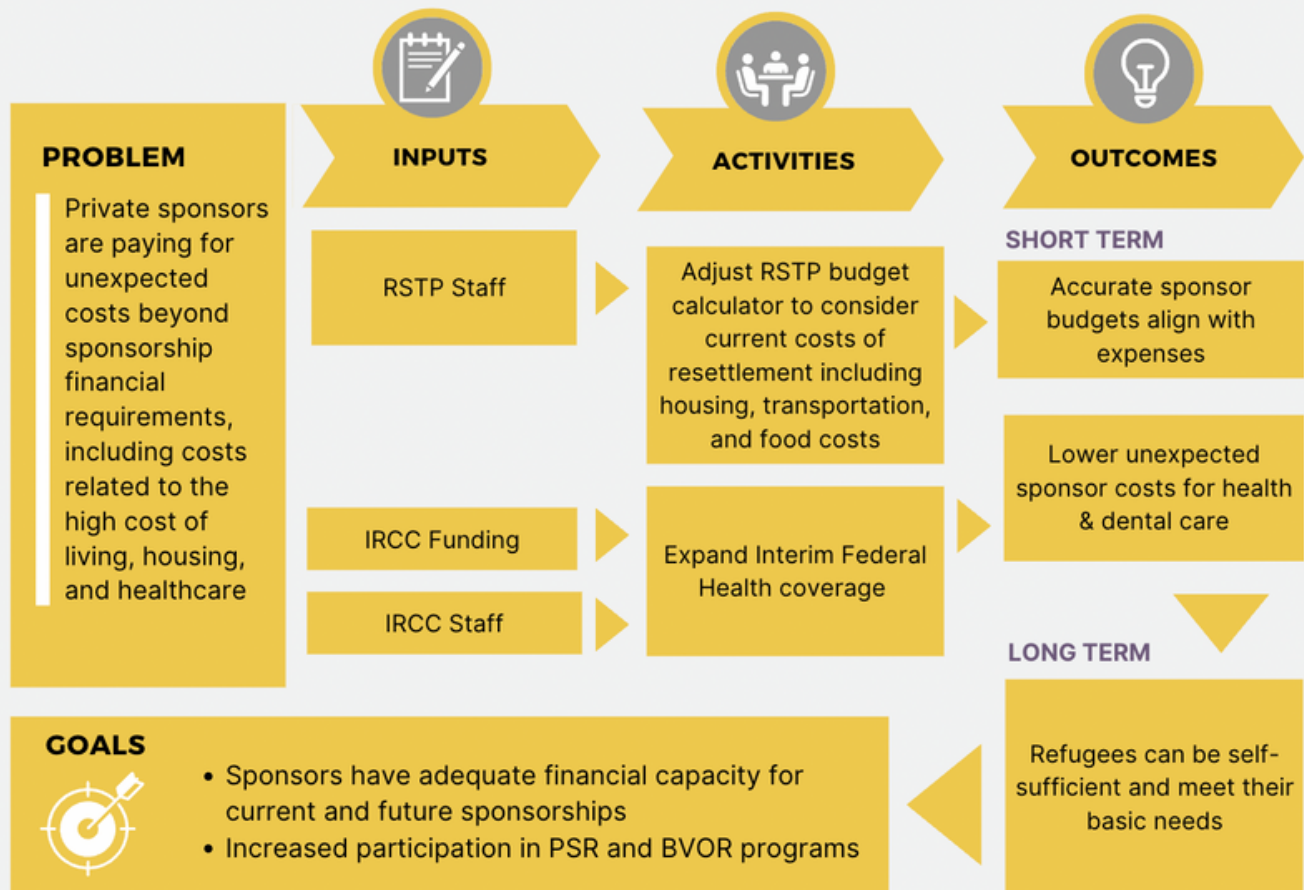
– Sponsor





Sponsors take on unanticipated costs of sponsorship, regardless of stream. Financial requirements for sponsorship are based off of social assistance rates. Sponsors can use the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program online calculator to calculate the financial requirements for the start-up costs and income assistance for a sponsorship, based on family size. Sponsors explained that these income assistance rates are not high enough to pay for the current costs of housing and living. In addition, participants explained that there are some hidden costs that are not included in these minimum financial requirements, especially in a rural context when sponsors may need to pay extra costs for transportation and interpretation. Sponsors also pointed to the limitations of the Interim Federal Health program, which is not as comprehensive for health and dental care as it is often presented,

"When we learned about Interim Federal Health coverage in a webinar, my impression was that there was a lot of stuff that was covered with it, and we're finding that's not quite true [...] in the budgets we built [for the sponsorship] we didn't add in extra medical things, because we had been told originally right like dental is covered, prescriptions. One of our guys had kidney stones and needed painkillers. Those were not covered [...] So we're finding that there's a large gap even in that first year [between] what should be covered and what actually is [covered]. I think that needs to be advertised better, because if someone hasn't gone to the dentist for 5 years or 10 years or ever, there's going to be a lot of work that needs to be done. [For] a sponsorship group [to receive] a \$750 bill that you weren't planning for, that's a bit disheartening." - Private Sponsor



In our survey, sponsors reported that Sponsorship Agreement Holders were their top source of training and support. However, not everyone has access to a SAH. Two particular communities spoke of their limited access to SAHs: (1) Rural groups not affiliated with a religious community; and (2) Francophone minority communities. In many regions of Canada, there are no francophone SAHs, making it challenging to recruit or to support francophone sponsors. In addition, some rural SAHs described how IRCC's administrative requirements are difficult to meet, especially if they are small and have no paid staff, only volunteers.

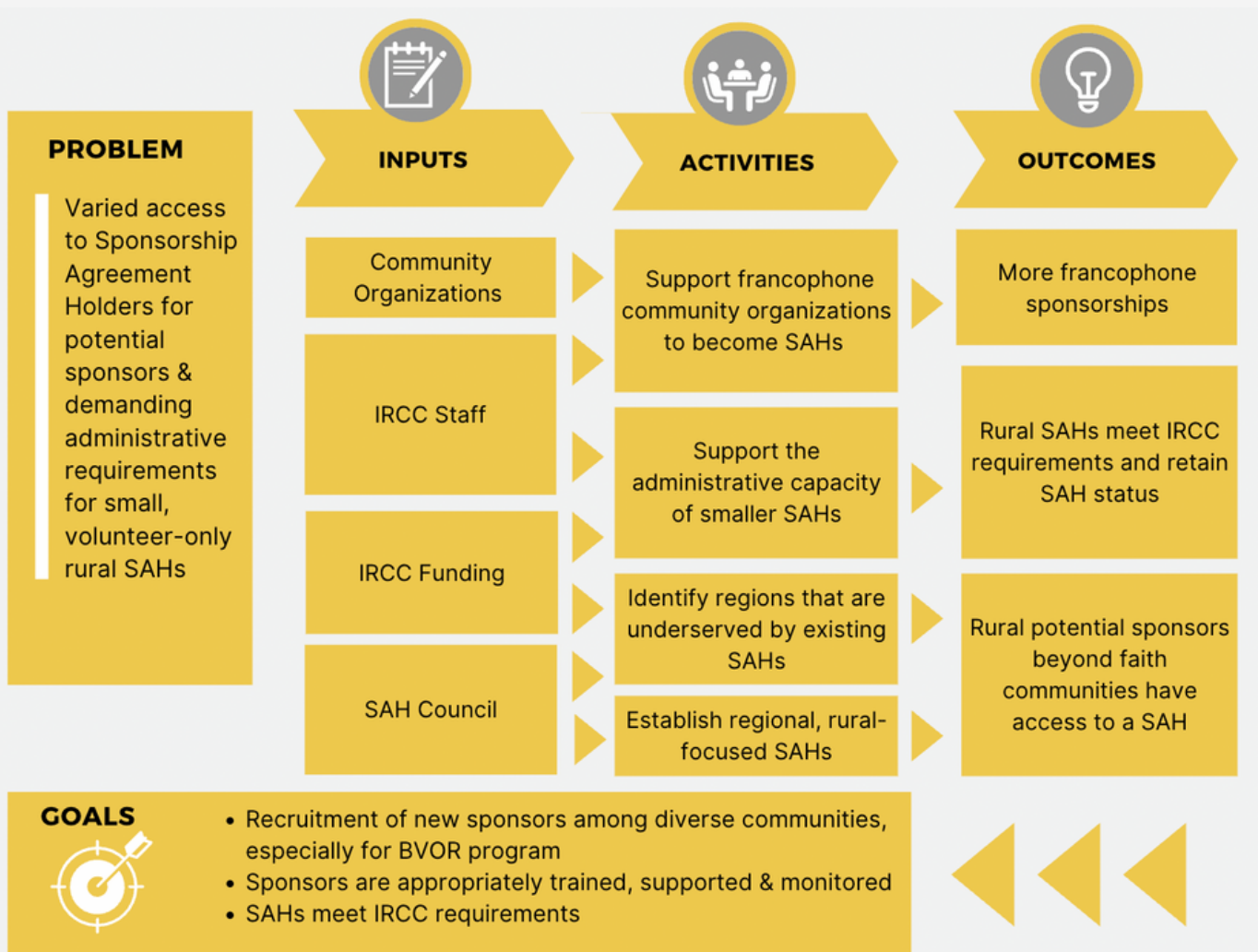
"Many SAHs will not work with groups outside of the area where they have a physical presence. I'm sure others would appreciate a non-religious SAH that is willing to work with groups outside of larger urban centres."

- Private Sponsor



"I want to make a request that IRCC help francophone organizations to become SAHs." - Settlement Staff

In response to the idea of a nation-wide network of rural sponsors, one participant suggested: "Maybe [a national or regional organization] could act as a SAH for rural areas that cannot provide IRCC with their present expectations." - Sponsor



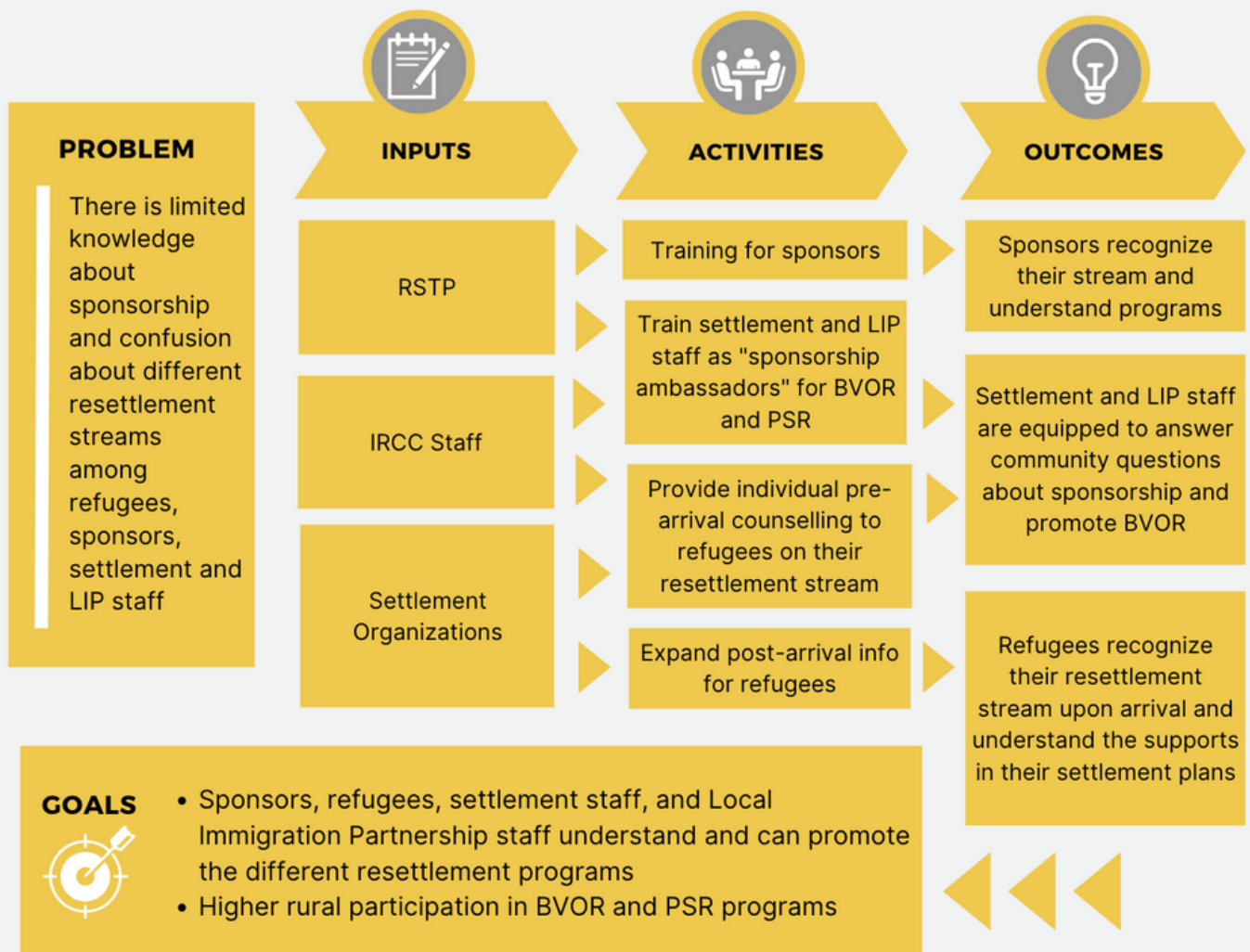
09 LIMITED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SPONSORSHIP & STREAM CONFUSION

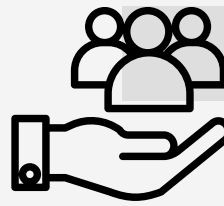
Sponsors, refugees, settlement workers, and Local Immigration Partnership staff all lack knowledge about resettlement streams. Sponsor and refugee survey respondents were sometimes confused about the resettlement streams or simply did not know the stream of their sponsorship. Settlement staff and Local Immigration Partnership staff explained that community members ask them about sponsorship, but they often lack the knowledge to answer community questions.

"I don't think there's information around here at all. I've had so many people ask me questions [about refugee sponsorship]. I have finally found some answers. But it's just having the information when people ask questions."
- Settlement staff



BEST PRACTICES: The St. Lawrence-Rideau Immigration Partnership created a guide called "How to Sponsor and Welcome Refugees to Leeds and Grenville Communities" with general info about the PSR program, information about Syrian culture, and information about locally relevant resources.

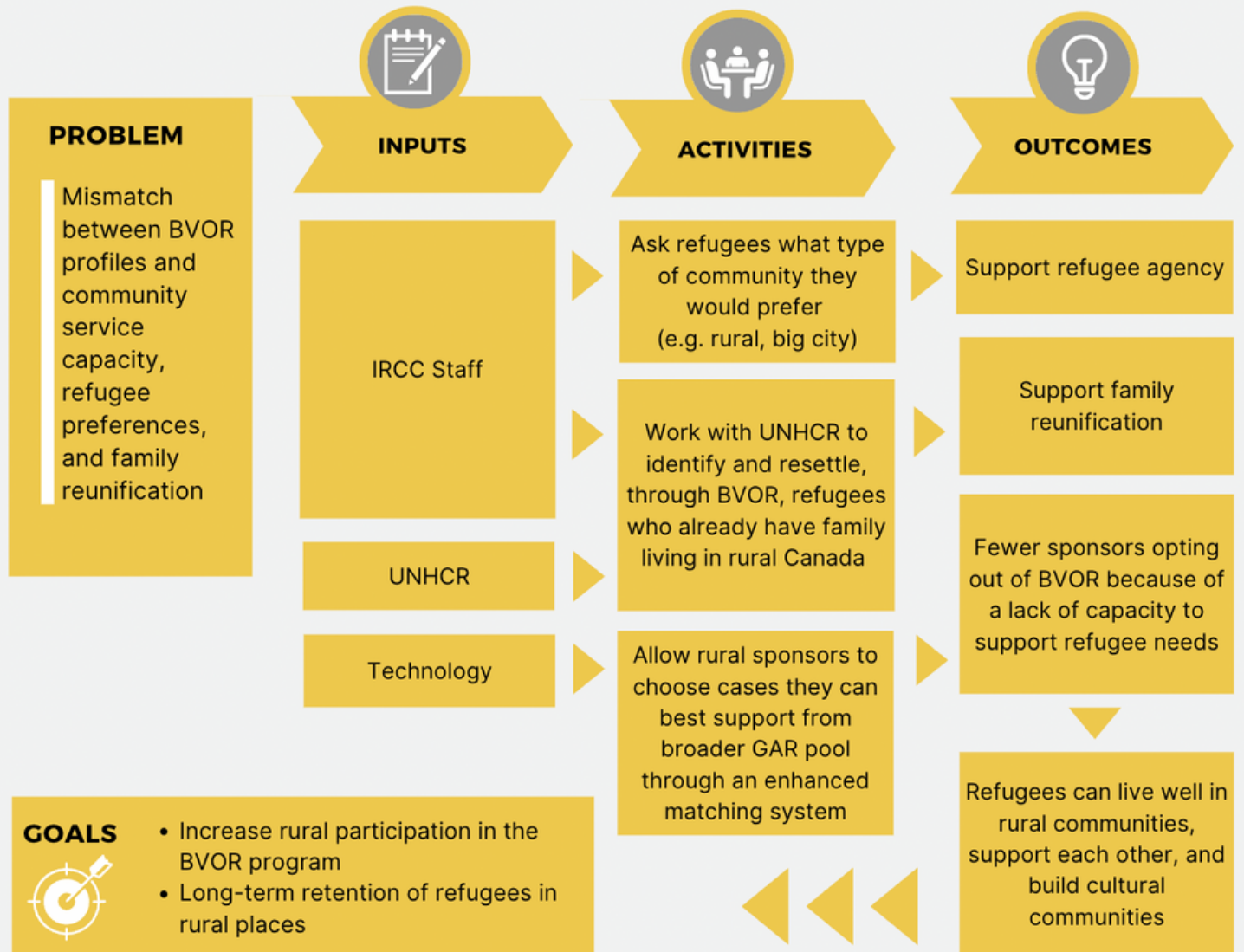




Rural sponsors are not always able to support the needs of Blended Visa Office-Referred families because of limited community capacity. Rural communities may be limited in terms of the types of refugee families they can support, because of limited health services, employment opportunities, or languages spoken in the community. In addition, it is not clear to potential rural sponsors whether a refugee would want to live in a rural or smaller communities, since refugee preferences about living in an urban versus a rural place are missing from BVOR profiles.

“Consider listening to communities re: types of employment they can support, family size, etc. for blended sponsorship. We opted out, because we didn't feel we could offer what they needed, as a small community. We found a family that had skills that they could employ here.”

- Sponsor



Community Capacity



Rural communities are diverse and differ in their capacity to welcome and support refugees. The community capitals framework is one way to identify and address the challenges and opportunities in any community.

Community Capitals: Talking about rural resettlement through a community capital framework can help communities, researchers, and policy-makers understand and potentially address the differing assets and liabilities that exist across diverse, rural community contexts.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS

- 01 NATURAL CAPITAL: The landscapes, air, water, plant and animal life of a place.**
Participants identified abundant access to the natural environment as an asset of rural life, while the large geographic distances were often understood as a liability.
- 02 CULTURAL CAPITAL: The common languages and values of community life.**
Depending on refugee preference, participants identified the presence or absence of diverse cultural communities as both an asset and a liability. However, the (often) absence of translation and interpretation services was seen as a liability.
- 03 HUMAN CAPITAL: The people and their skills that make up a community.**
While employment opportunities for refugees differed across contexts, the majority of participants identified the limited capacity of rural settlement service providers as a liability.
- 04 SOCIAL CAPITAL: The connections and networks that tie communities together.**
Community connectedness was seen as an asset of rural life that can help refugees access available services faster. A common liability was the lack of access to healthcare.
- 05 POLITICAL CAPITAL: The access a community has to decision makers and leaders.**
Participants said that they often feel ignored by IRCC and by governments in general. They identified immigration processing delays, limited communication and information-sharing channels, and eligibility restrictions for settlement services as common liabilities.
- 06 FINANCIAL CAPITAL: The resources needed to fund services and programs.**
Financial capital was largely identified as a liability. Participants stated challenges with limited available funds for settlement services, barriers to access funding, budget inflexibility, and the per capita funding model that disadvantages smaller places.
- 07 BUILT CAPITAL: The infrastructure that supports society.**
While access to affordable housing was mixed among participants, everyone identified the lack of public transportation and reliable broadband Internet in rural places as liabilities.

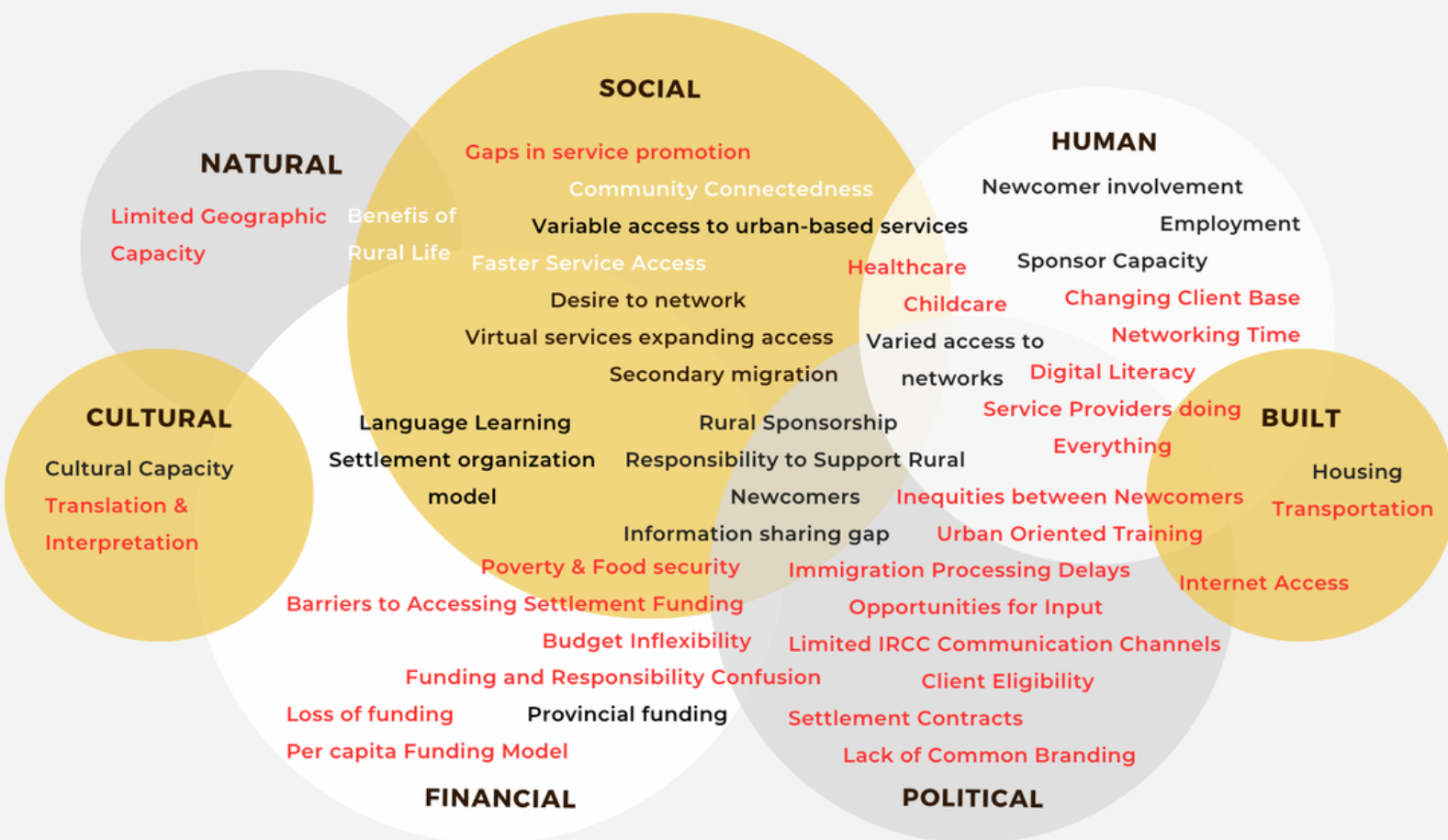
The community capitals framework can be further utilized to organize, explore, and potentially respond to the research participant comments that relate to the realities of resettlement outside of large urban centres. Below, the responses from focus group participants were organized into themes, and then identified as either an asset (benefit), liability (challenge) or a mix of both, of life in rural places depending on how participants spoke about these themes.



LEGEND: In the figure below, the colours indicate the ways in which each theme was discussed by research participants. Themes in **RED** were largely considered to be **LIABILITIES** by participants, the themes in **WHITE** were largely considered to be **ASSETS** by participants, and themes in **BLACK** were largely considered to be a mix of **LIABILITIES & ASSETS** depending on the specific community context, and how participants spoke of the issues they raised.

Understanding Rural Resettlement Through Community Capitals

The community capitals framework helps capture the interconnectedness and multi-dimensional nature of community life, specifically in smaller places. Many of the topics raised by participants can fit into more than one type of community capital, thus the circles below overlap.



Refugees are living, working, and settling in rural and smaller communities across Canada. The results of this project demonstrate that rural volunteers, community members, and, particularly, private refugee sponsors are taking on the overwhelming majority of the work required to resettle and integrate newcomers into smaller places. Rural sponsors indicate that while they (often) have limited access to settlement services, language training, public transportation, healthcare, and other services in their community, they rely heavily on their social connections and networks to fill in these gaps. Settlement workers and LIP staff spoke of the challenges they face when attempting to deliver services outside of urban centres across large geographic areas with few resources and limited staff. Across all participant groups, individuals spoke about what they value about their communities, including the landscapes and nature, close sense of community, and access to good employment, homes, and family or friends.



Q: What could the Canadian government do to make rural sponsorship better?

A: “Have homes, transportation and medical doctors. Enough for the new people coming in.”
- Refugee survey respondent

Moving Forward

Refugee newcomers will continue to settle in rural communities. Moving forward, we need to find ways to meaningfully support refugees, sponsors and settlement staff in smaller places.

01

SUPPORT REFUGEES WHO WANT TO LIVE IN RURAL AREAS

Some refugees know that they would like to be resettled to a rural or smaller place. Asking refugees if they have a resettlement preference would be a good place to start.

02

CLARIFY SPONSOR OBLIGATIONS & SETTLEMENT SUPPORTS AVAILABLE

The roles of sponsors need to be clarified, so that they know what to expect and where to access additional supports. For example, the geographic boundaries of settlement services need to be clarified so that adequate supports are being provided across the country.

03

INVOLVE & ENGAGE ALL GOVERNMENTS

The issues raised in this research cross municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions, and influence populations beyond refugees. Governments need to work together.

04

CHANGE IMMIGRATION POLICY

Immigration policy must recognize that rural and smaller places can offer positive resettlement experiences and, like any community, consist of both assets & liabilities.



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