Faith & Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants & Canada up for Success

Organizational Survey Summary Report
May 2017

Chris Brnjas, Kyla English, Rich Janzen

Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada up for Success is a research partnership intended to explore partnerships between faith-based and government-funded settlement organizations in Ontario. This two-year project is led by the **Centre for Community Based Research** (CCBR) and funded by the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada** (SSHRC**)**. More information about this project can be found at:

www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith_&_Settlement_Partnerships

The project used multiple methods. Case studies were held within the local study sites (Toronto, Peel, Waterloo, London). Other methods included a literature review and a cross-site organizational survey. Reports were written for each method.

Research Partnership

Rich Janzen	Centre for Community Based Research
Joanna Ochocka	Centre for Community Based Research
Kyla English	Centre for Community Based Research
Chris Brnjas	Centre for Community Based Research
Jim Cresswell	Ambrose University
Ron Kuipers	Institute for Christian Studies
Héctor Acero Ferrer	Institute for Christian Studies
Michael Skaljin	Interfaith Council of Peel
Huda Hussein	London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership
Mohammed Baobaid	Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration
Elyas Farooqi	Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration
Aamna Ashraf	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Trisha Scantlebury	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Idrisa Pandit	Renison University College
Doug Binner	The Salvation Army
Victoria Esses	The University of Western Ontario
Vera Dodic	Toronto Newcomer Office
Mark Chapman	Tyndale University College and Seminary
Giovanna Heron	Tyndale University College and Seminary
Tara Bedard	Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership
Sarah Best	Wilfrid Laurier University
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo	World Renew
Cameron Klapwyk	World Renew

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

Contents

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

Introduction

As part of the SSHRC-funded project "Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada Up for Success", the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) conducted an online survey to gain information from people on-the-ground about what faith and settlement partnerships look like in their communities. The survey was sent to individuals from settlement organizations, faith-based organizations, and other community organizations/groups in Toronto, Peel, Waterloo Region, and London. This survey was designed to provide insight into the project's three main research questions :

1) What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved? (structures)
2) To what extent are faith/settlement partnerships viewed positively? (vision)
3) How can effective partnerships be better facilitated? (processes)

The survey was created by CCBR, refined by project partners, and distributed using Survey Monkey. The link to the survey was sent out via email by the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) in each site. Recruitment was different depending on the context and the community. Across all study sites, approximately 650 agencies were invited to participate. It must be noted that survey respondents were limited to those who were already in relationship with their Local Immigration Partnership. CCBR also conducted a focus group in Ottawa at the Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) conference, with three Local Immigration Partnership representatives from Ottawa ON, Grand Erie ON, and Abbotsford BC. Data from this focus group has been incorporated into this report.

Here are some key definitions that were outlined for participants in the survey:

Settlement organization: An organization whose primary mandate is to work on immigrant settlement and/or refugee settlement, with at least some funding coming from government sources.

Faith-based organization/group: An organization or group that has a faith-inspired mandate (which could include working with immigrants/refugees) and is connected to some kind of religious constituency.

Partnership: A collaboration where the parties involved agree to work toward shared objectives through a mutually agreed division of labour. Partnerships can be formal with written agreements or informal arrangements.

Faith and settlement partnership: A partnership between a faith-based organization/group(s) and a settlement organization(s).

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP): A community-wide, multi-sectoral partnership working to strengthen a community's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants. The four LIPs involved with this study were: (1) London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership; (2) Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership; (3) Peel Newcomer Strategy Group; and (4) Toronto Newcomer Office.
The survey began with an organizational profile, which helped to determine which group the respondent was a part of: "settlement", "faith", or "other". The survey then split off into three parallel surveys, one for each group, wherein respondents provided answers to the first and second main
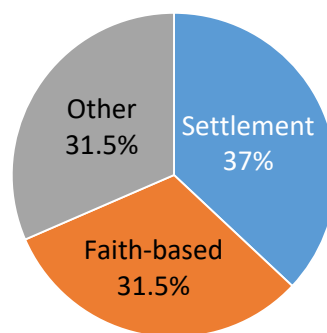
CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

research questions (related to structures and vision). At the end of the survey, respondents filled out a final section which was uniform across the three surveys and answered the third research question (related to processes). The rest of this report is divided up according to these four parts::

    A. Organizational Profile
    B. Experiences with Faith and Settlement Partnerships (structures)
    C. Opinions about Faith and Settlement Partnerships (vision)
    D. Future of Faith and Settlement Partnerships (processes)
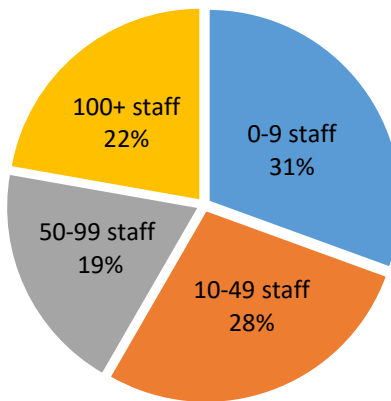
Organizational Profile

The survey attracted 73 responses well-divided between settlement organizations (37%), faith-based organizations (31.5%), and other stakeholders (31.5%) (**Figure 1**). Other stakeholders included respondents from family services, police services, employment services, youth programs, neighbourhood and social services, sponsorship matching agencies, the healthcare sector, student unions, school boards, and funders.

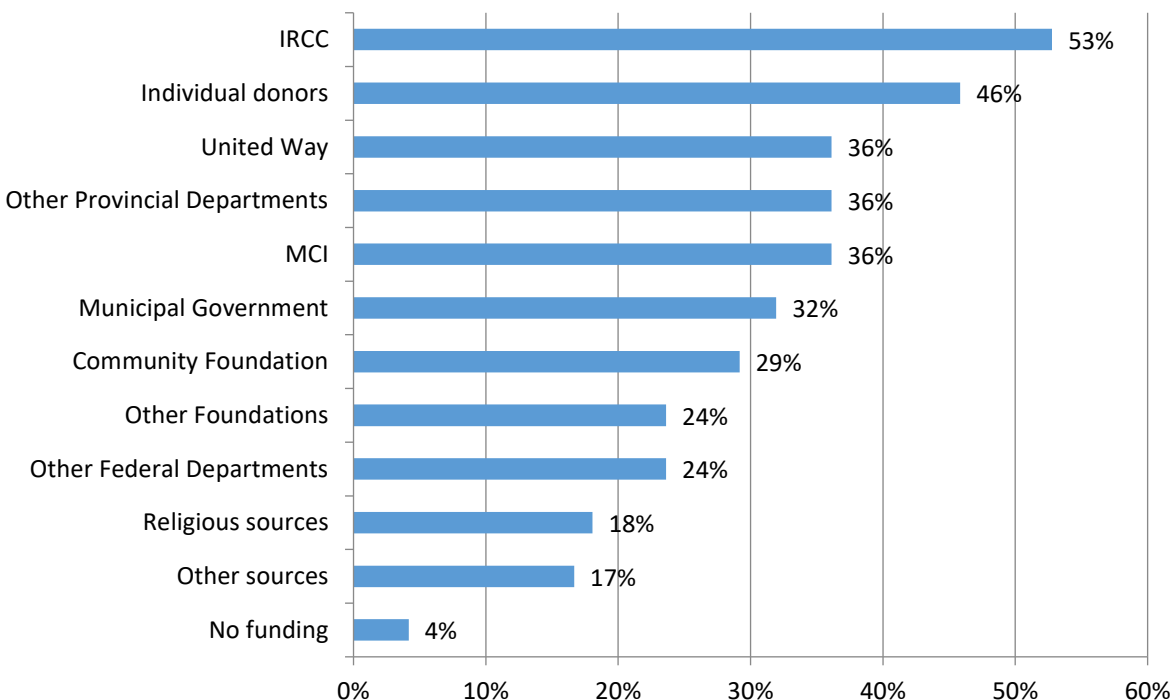**Figure 1:** Distribution of survey respondents according to agency type (n=73)

In terms of the location of survey respondents, 23 responded from London, 22 from Toronto, 12 from Peel, and 10 from Waterloo Region. Participating organizations were of various sizes. Most of the respondents were in organizations of either small or mid-ranged size (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: How many full-time equivalent staff does your organization have? (n=72)

Participating organizations received funding from multiple sources. As demonstrated in Figure 3, these organizations rely heavily on government funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). As well, individual donations are a heavy source of funding for these organizations.

Figure 3: From whom does your organization receive funding? (n=72)

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

Experiences with Faith and Settlement Partnerships (Structures)

In the second section of the survey, respondents were asked to observe the current state of faith and settlement partnerships in their context. They were asked to discuss partnerships that they have seen or been a part of, what prompted them to work in partnership, and what the results were of those partnerships. This section complied with the "structures" section of the *Faith and Settlement Partnerships* project, which asks "What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved?"

Within the survey, we wanted to understand the percentage of groups/organizations who had partnered with faith and/or settlement organizations in the past five years. **Figure 4** demonstrates that 81% of participating settlement groups had worked with a faith-based group on programs related to newcomers within the past five years. Similarly, **Figure 5** demonstrates that 78% of participating faith groups had worked with a settlement organization on programs related to newcomers within the past 5 years.

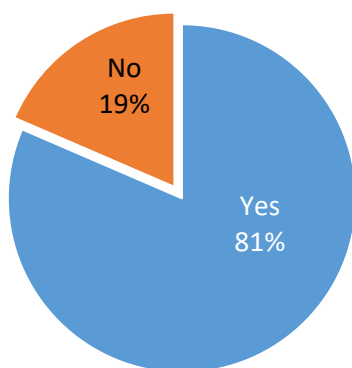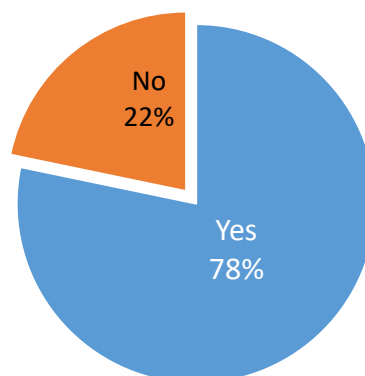**Figure 4:** Percentage of settlement organizations who have worked with faith groups (n=27)

Figure 5: Percentage of faith groups who have worked with settlement organizations (n=23)

Next, we wanted to understand the reasons or motivations behind why faith and settlement groups had worked together on newcomer issues. Within the settlement survey, when asked 'What prompted you to work with a faith group?', respondents (n=17) provided a number of reasons including:

1. Recognizing that newcomers often reach out to faith groups (94% of respondents)
2. Seeing collaboration as a way to address a service gap in the community (76% of respondents)
3. Talking with faith leaders in our community (53% of respondents)

Interestingly, respondents from faith-based groups (n=15) had similar but distinct reasons when asked "What prompted you to work with a settlement organization?":

1. Seeing collaboration as a way to address a service gap in the community (93% of respondents)

2. Recognizing expertise that they possess that our organization lacks (60% of respondents)
3. Talking with settlement leaders in our community (53% of respondents)
4. Recognizing that newcomers often reach out to settlement groups (53% of respondents)

Settlement agencies indicated that a primary motivation for working with faith groups was related to the fact that newcomers often reach out to faith groups when moving to a new community (94%). Only 53% of faith-based groups, on the other hand, indicated that a motivation for partnering with settlement organizations comes from seeing newcomers reaching out to settlement groups. A more common motivator for faith-based groups was seeing collaboration as a way to address a service gap (93%). The majority of responding settlement organizations (76%) were also motivated by this idea. Interestingly, a unique motivator for faith groups was that they recognized expertise that their organization lacked (60%), which was not a top motivator for settlement agencies.

The survey respondents were also asked to reflect on a faith and settlement partnership in their community which was valuable. Many examples of such partnerships were provided, indicating the diverse potential of these collaborations. Some examples are demonstrated below.

- One settlement worker from Brampton wrote of a partnership with a church where they shared information about their services and a program launch for Spanish speaking seniors. These programs were explained to congregants and announcements were made during Sunday mass. As a result, many seniors registered for the program and the church continues to refer clients for the seniors program and other settlement-related services.

- One settlement agency wrote of working together with a local Armenian Church to deliver information about how to do taxes through clinics and information sessions.

- One settlement agency representative wrote about mosques providing support for newcomers – giving information about Canadian society from trusted leaders in the mosque which is very helpful for newcomers navigating new laws and cultural norms.

- One representative from a faith group wrote about how their sponsored refugee family was able to attend (with other refugee families) a picnic which was sponsored by the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. Also they mentioned how London Urban Services Organization hosted a supper and parent session for Arabic speaking families. However, it was the faith-based sponsorship group that provided information and ensured registration and transportation to these events.

- A faith group representative wrote about how WoodGreen community services "are engaged and funding faith-based senior projects with Christian and Muslim organizations".

- A third-party stakeholder wrote about a multi-sector event that included settlement agencies and faith-based organizations to foster a spirit of collaboration.

- Another stakeholder wrote about an informal partnership between an organization and a congregation to support their Christian Syrian refugee families to increase awareness and

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

access to Immigrations, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration funded programs and services.

- One settlement worker discussed a partnership with BC Muslim Association which was an amazing bridge as refugees have started arriving into Canada. They had 166 people arrive in one night, so without the partnership it would have not run as smoothly. At another time, there was a larger group of Syrians that came into the community and they needed a larger location for their Eid celebration. Because they had a pre-established partnership with the LIP and the LIP had a partnership with the city, they were able to co-ordinate the use of a city space for free.

- Another settlement worker discussed the concern around Islamophobia with hate crimes against local mosque. There is a partnership around having high-level talks with minority groups to show that the majority of the community and vocalize that publically.

Through these tangible examples, there is evidence to suggest that faith and settlement partnerships (both formal and informal) are helpful for newcomers. When respondents (n=44) were asked, "What benefits to newcomers have you observed as a result of faith and settlement partnerships?", they agreed with several pre-determined benefits:

Through faith and settlement partnerships…
1. Newcomers gained awareness of community resources to deal with settlement issues (89% agreed)
2. Newcomers received appropriate information and services to address their settlement needs (80% agreed)
3. Newcomers made connections to the community and to public institutions (75% agreed)
4. Newcomers acquired more supportive relationships with others in their community (68% agreed)
5. Newcomers gained knowledge of life in Canada, including laws, rights, and responsibilities (66% agreed)
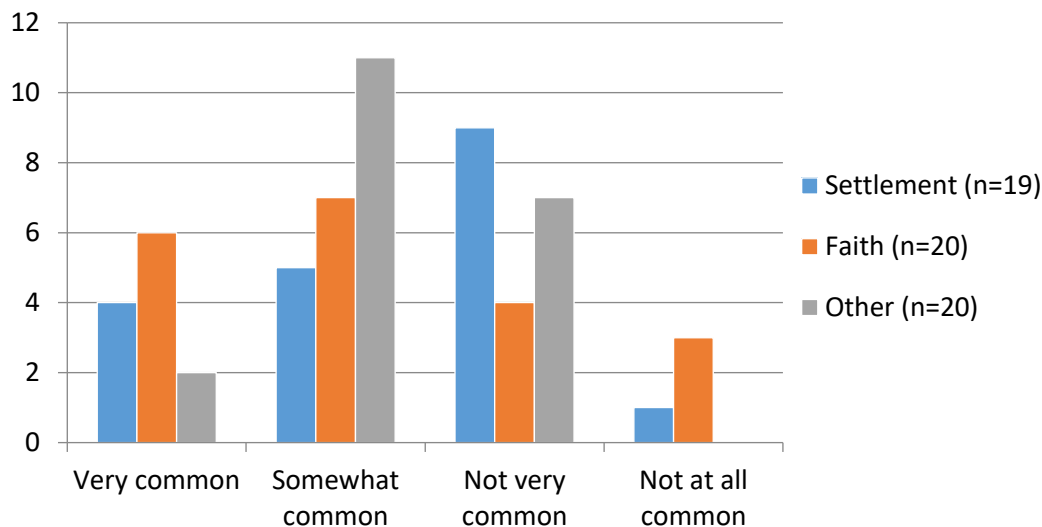
On top of this, when respondents (n=31) were asked "What benefits to your organization have you observed as a result of faith and settlement partnerships?" they noted three common benefits:

1. Our organizations has made new community connections that are helpful to our work (84% agreed)
2. Our organization is able to provide more programs and resources to newcomers (61% agreed)
3. Our organization has learned how to form new partnerships in the community (61% agreed)

Another question in the survey asked, "Relative to other types of cross-sectoral settlement partnerships, how common do you see faith & settlement partnerships as being in your community?". Answers (as shown in **Figure 6**) ranged from 'not at all common' to 'very common', with the greatest number of respondents (n=23; 40%) stating that partnerships between faith and settlement organizations are 'somewhat common', followed by 'not very common' (n=20; 34%). Among settlement agencies, it seems that there are still many who see partnerships as not very common. Faith groups, on the other hand,
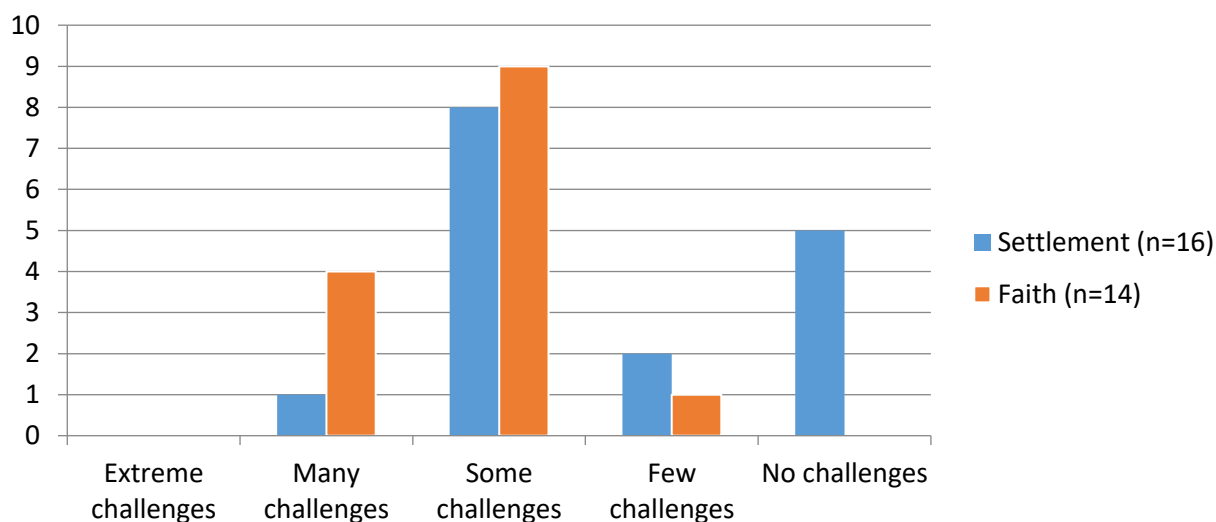
seem to think that these partnerships are more common, while other stakeholder groups seem fairly ambivalent.

Figure 6: Relative to other types of cross-sectoral settlement partnerships, how common do you see faith & settlement partnerships as being in your community? (n=59)

Survey results indicated that there is also an awareness of the reality that partnerships can be challenging. As indicated in **Figure 7**, in response to the question "To what extent have you experienced challenges when implementing your faith-settlement partnership?", most respondents (57%) said there were 'some challenges' that they have experienced in implementing their faith-settlement partnership. With that knowledge in hand, it is important to note that many still see these partnerships as valuable and that challenges are a barrier to be overcome instead of a deterrent for collaboration.

Figure 7: To what extent have you experienced challenges when implementing your faith-settlement partnership? (n=30)

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

The survey also provided some important qualitative insight regarding respondents' experiences of the major challenges of faith and settlement partnerships. The responses were varied and informative, and snippets are shared below from each respondent group of the survey.

[Settlement Agencies] What, if any, have been the major challenges that you have experienced when partnering with faith organizations/groups?

"…Sometimes the 'faith' dictates the services or advice we can provide…"	"…[those] who still hold old beliefs that churches just want to increase their congregations…"
"Potential differences in organizational values/missions/decisions making that limit timely collaborative endeavours."	"…when a religious based faith group sponsoring [refugees] is different from [their] original faith, does that mean they expect [them] to switch religions?"
"…as soon as a [minority religious leader] is involved, they're wanted by *everyone*. And to the point that [the leader becomes] really exhausted."	

[Faith Groups] What, if any, have been the major challenges that you have experienced when partnering with settlement agencies?

"Communication and financial support. Transportation access issues for newcomers."	"…[they] do not have enough staff to give as much help to newcomers as is needed."
"…it isn't always possible to integrate faith based values/beliefs into the planning and implementation projects."	"We have to move at the space and timing of the settlement organizations and in terms of changes to agreement by their funder."

[Stakeholders] What, if any, have been the major challenges of faith and settlement partnerships that you have seen or experienced?
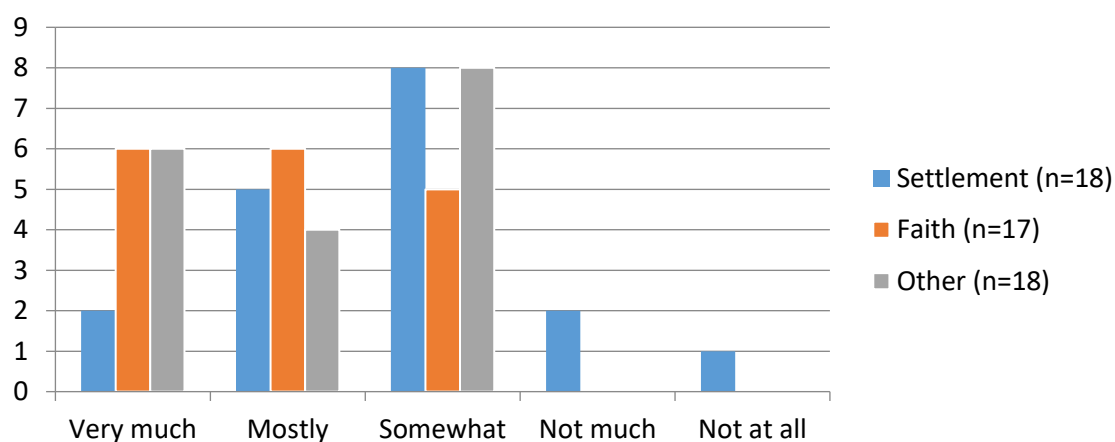
"Concerns that the settlement agency will 'take away' the faith group clients."	"Accurate information shared, finding right contacts to work with in the faith community and finding the right time to meet and have discussions."
"Developing a common language together."	"Lack of resources from settlement organizations to compensate faith-based organization for use of facilities…"

Opinions about Faith and Settlement Partnerships (Vision)

In the third section of the survey, respondents were asked to discuss their own opinions regarding faith and settlement partnerships in their context. They were asked to discuss how these partnerships are viewed, and their own opinions about how they function. This section of the survey complied with the "vision" section of the *Faith and Settlement Partnerships* project, which asks "To what extent are faith/settlement partnerships viewed positively?".
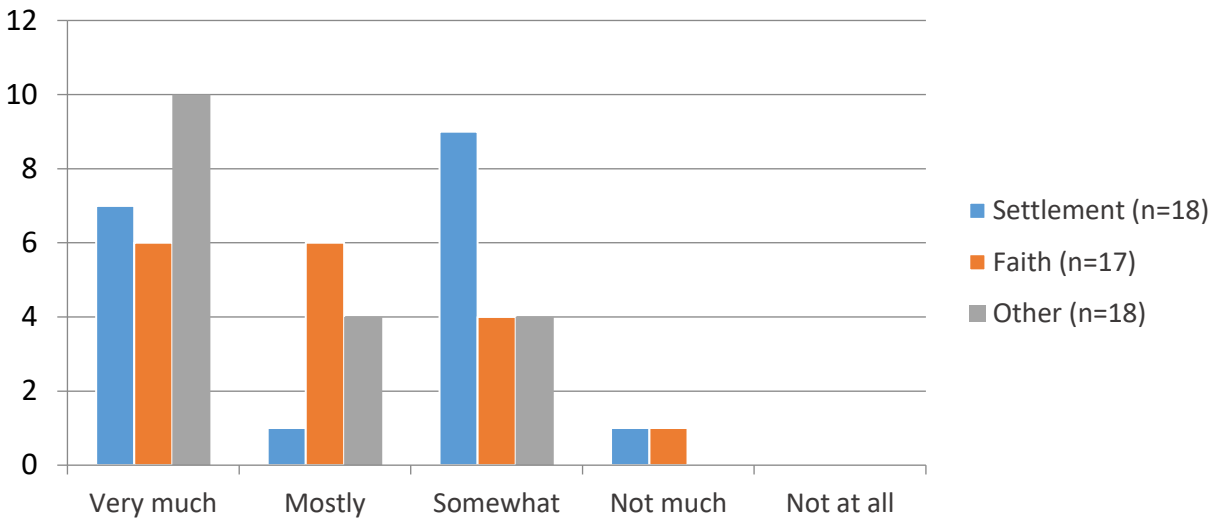
On the whole, as demonstrated in **Figure 8**, faith and settlement partnerships were viewed quite positively by participating organizations. While there were a few outliers, an overwhelming number of respondents indicated that these partnerships are viewed at least "somewhat" positively (n=50; 94%), with many indicating a "very" positive view (n=14; 26%).

Figure 8: To what extent do you think faith and settlement partnerships are viewed positively in your community? (n=53)
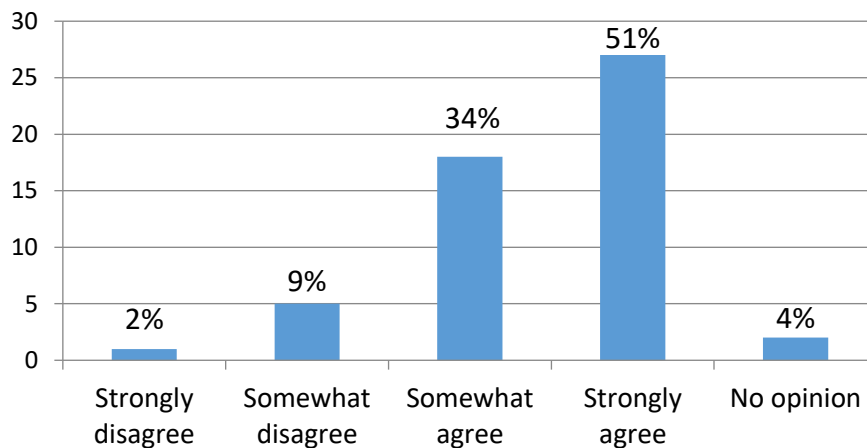

Respondents (n=53) also indicated that their Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) seems to value the participation of faith groups in community settlement planning and coordination. Overall, as demonstrated in **Figure 9**, the greatest percentage of respondents (n=23; 43%) said that members of their local LIP "very much" value the participation of faith groups. When looking at each stakeholder group separately, however, settlement organizations tended to be the most negative in their responses, stating more often that their LIP "somewhat" values the participation of faith groups as opposed to "mostly" or "very much" values it.

Figure 9: To what extent do members of your Local Immigration Partnership value the participation of faith groups in your community's settlement planning and coordination? (n=53)
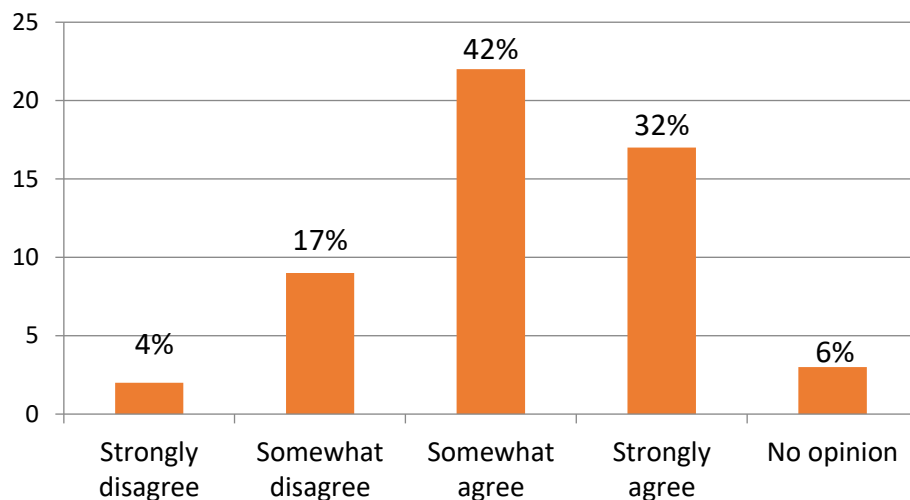

As indicated in **Figure 10**, when respondents (n=53) were asked to evaluate the unique contribution of faith groups to the settlement sector, a strong majority (85%) agreed that they contributed something that no other group could bring.

Figure 10: Faith groups contribute something unique to the settlement sector that no other group bring? (n=53)

On a similar vein, when asked to evaluate challenges, almost ¾ of respondents (**Figure 11**) agreed that the challenges to faith and settlement partnerships are no different than any other cross-sectoral partnership in the settlement field. Therefore, though data seems to indicate that faith groups offer a unique contribution to these types of partnerships, the challenges are no more or less different than any other partnership in the field.

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

Figure 11: The challenges of faith and settlement partnerships are no greater than any other cross-sectoral partnership in the settlement field? (n=53)

Respondents were also asked to more openly discuss the limitations and opportunities of faith and settlement partnerships. Below are some noteworthy snippets that explore these questions.

What do you see as being the major limitations to faith and settlement partnerships?

"Immigrants and refugees are very diverse in their own beliefs and faiths… they need more practical services such as English language, childcare, employment, etc.…"	"There are assumptions on both sides about the motivations of the other…"
"Communication between the two groups"	"Faith groups mostly rely on volunteers who have little time to attend meetings and become part of the coordination of services in the community."
"Multiple faith groups working together to meet a need in the community takes relationship building and time."	"Building awareness of these services and encouraging use of these services requires settlement staffing time which is at premium given the… continuous funding reductions."
"Faith groups can have a negative connotation for service users due to past and present acts of faith communities around the world."	"…sometimes the fear of the unknown is what keeps different sectors from working together…"

What do you see as being the major opportunities of faith and settlement partnerships?

"By reaching out to faith groups the sector broadens it services and accommodates to the needs of the community…"	"Working together to serve newcomers to create stronger community."

"We have been better able to hold larger community groups as churches have spaces, ministers have been extremely supportive…"	"More services for newcomers than [faith groups] could provide."
"…refugees are very often people of faith and spirituality who want to be connected to their religious community."	"A large compassion-driven community (many more people) being mobilized and equipped to respond effectively to welcome refugees for a much longer period than government funding would allow for."
"Building community and relationships, welcoming the stranger who becomes known, learning about other faiths and traditions, meaningful involvement for volunteers."	"The faith groups offer a platform for the newcomer to connect with community."

Future of Faith and Settlement Partnerships (Processes)

In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked to discuss the future of faith and settlement partnerships. More specifically, we were interested in understanding how these partnerships could be improved, and what would make them more likely to occur as an agent of integration. This section complied with the "processes" component of the *Faith and Settlement Partnerships* project, which asks "How can effective partnerships be better facilitated?".

As seen in **Figure 12**, when asked what would make it *more* likely for faith or settlement groups to form a new partnership with each other in the future, different stakeholder groups presented slightly different views. We highlighted in red where responses to a particular suggestion were significantly different between settlement and faith agencies.
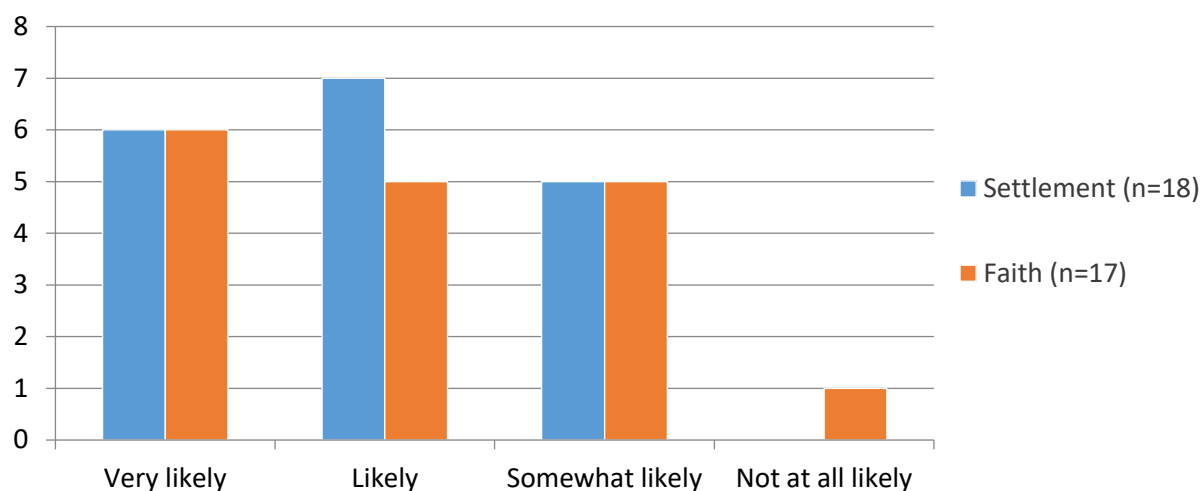
Settlement groups (n=17) indicated that partnerships would be more likely if they were able to address a service gap otherwise not possible due to funding/client eligibility constraints (76%). Faith groups (n=17) also indicated that this was important, but that they would like stronger evidence of the benefits of faith and settlement partnerships (71%) as well as hearing stories about other partnerships in action (65%). Both groups were looking for greater awareness of how partnerships are presently supporting newcomers (53% settlement groups; 59% faith groups), as well as a greater understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of partnership (53% for both). Settlement groups also indicated that they would like clearer understanding of their motivations for supporting newcomers, immigrants, and refugees (53%), although this was less of a concern for faith groups (29%).

Figure 12: What would make it more likely for your organization to form a new partnership with a faith or settlement group? (n=34)

	Settlement (n=17)	**Faith** (n=17)
Being able to address a service gap otherwise not possible due to funding/client eligibility constraints	76%	53%
More opportunity to meet and converse with faith/settlement leaders in my community	47%	35%
Greater awareness of how they are presently supporting newcomers (immigrants/refugees)	53%	59%
Greater understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of partnership	53%	53%
Clearer understanding of their motivations for supporting newcomers (immigrants/refugees)	53%	29%
Stronger evidence of the benefits of faith and settlement partnerships	35%	71%
Encouragement from our constituents/funders	29%	41%
An internal champion who cares about it	35%	35%
Hearing stories about other partnerships in action	24%	65%

Figure 13 reveals that for many respondents in settlement agencies or faith groups (n=35), it is still likely that their group or organization would pursue a faith and settlement partnership in the future. With the exception of one respondent, all indicated that it was at least "somewhat likely" that a partnership would be pursued in the future.

Figure 13: How likely is it that your group or organization would participate in a faith/settlement partnership in the future? (n=35)

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were asked to provide any final comments about faith and settlement partnerships. These comments are provided below.

Please provide any final comments you have about faith and settlement partnerships

[Settlement agency] "We are pleased with the collaboration we've had with the different faith groups and we feel confident that our partnerships will continue to grow."	"Government sponsored refugees need a lot of help and their needs far exceed the capacity of the Canadian Government settlement agencies to provide."
"Faith leaders would benefit from the Privacy Act, confidentiality and importance of client consent training."	"It takes a whole community to provide support, no group should be left out who is willing to support in the true spirit of welcoming new Canadians."

Conclusion

This report details the findings of an organizational survey conducted in 2016-2017 with representatives (n=73) from faith groups, settlement agencies, and other relevant organizations in Toronto, Peel, Waterloo Region and London, ON. Findings provided important insight into the three main research questions of the *Faith and Settlement partnerships* project, pertaining to vision, structures, and processes.

The survey revealed that all parties involved have already started pursuing faith and settlement partnerships and have energy to keep on exploring them. Although these partnerships have their challenges, the data indicates that they can be rewarding for both organizations and for immigrants and refugees. This survey produced exciting results and should be used as encouragement for organizations to continue seeking out these partnerships in their community.

CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH