



# BUILDING EQUITABLE ECONOMIES FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN PEEL

Interim Report: May 1 to November 2, 2022



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## **Tamarack Project Interim Report November 2022**

Over the past 6 months, the Tamarack Project team has made effective headway into the overall project. The team has, up to this point, largely kept on track with the proposed work plan, with a few minor adjustments. The following report outlines key project activities that have occurred up to this point, along with a description of their outcomes, a reflection on our engagement with the selected priorities, challenges faced and lessons learned, and plans for the next steps.

### **Key Project Activities**

Key project activities up to this point include the establishment of the project team and the advisory committee, progress on the literature review, development of questionnaires and interview guides for the focus groups, flyer creation and recruitment, collection of statistical data from Statistics Canada and other agencies, and the start of the conduction of focus groups.

### **Establishment of the team and advisory committee**

Within the first two months of the project, the overall team working on the project was formed. One adjustment to the team was made at the start of September, with a new project assistant joining from FSP. The team includes Monica Riutort, director of Peel Institute of Research and Training, Dr. Soo Min Toh, Professor of organizational behavior at the University of Toronto, Sarah Costantini, project assistant with Family Services of Peel, Hanniel Kim, a research assistant with CRAWL lab at the University of Toronto, and Luis Lozano, a statistician.

In June 2022, letters of invitation were sent out to establish the Tamarack advisory committee. The final committee was established on Monday, July 25th. The committee is formed by Ali Salha, Polycultural Immigrants Services ([asalha@polycultural.org](mailto:asalha@polycultural.org)), Berna Bolanos, Catholic Crosscultural Services ([bbolanos@ccscan.ca](mailto:bbolanos@ccscan.ca)), Hanniel Kim, University of Toronto ([kanniel.kim@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:kanniel.kim@mail.utoronto.ca)), Marta Orellana, OCASI ([morellana@ocasi.org](mailto:morellana@ocasi.org)), Monica Riutort, Family Services of Peel ([mriutort@fspeel.org](mailto:mriutort@fspeel.org)), Najma Iqbal ([najma.iqbal@gmail.com](mailto:najma.iqbal@gmail.com)), Sandra Rupnarain, Family Services of Peel ([srupnarain@fspeel.org](mailto:srupnarain@fspeel.org)), Shayla Shewchuk, Family Services of Peel ([shayla.shewchuk@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:shayla.shewchuk@mail.utoronto.ca)), Soo Min Toh, University of Toronto ([soomin.toh@utoronto.ca](mailto:soomin.toh@utoronto.ca)), Zari Gill, RedShawl ([zari.gill@redshawl.org](mailto:zari.gill@redshawl.org)). Regular meetings have since been scheduled with the committee to provide updates on the project and to receive feedback for directions on which to take the project.

### **Literature Review**

Over the course of the last 6 months, the team has been working on the development of a literature review that focuses on prominent family theories, family programs for immigrants and refugees, and the family needs of immigrants and refugees as set out in both grey and scholarly literature. At this point in time, a second draft of the literature review has been written, and the team is still working on further developing the sections on immigrant needs, family typologies, and family programming. Some of the main findings at this point are as follows.

In assessing the literature on family programming, one of the key findings is that family-based and parenting-based programs for immigrants and refugees have largely been effective in improving the

mental health of parents and children, improving family functioning, increasing parents' sense of competence in the parenting of children in the host country, improving children's behaviour, and improving parent-child relationships. The types of programs implemented have been highly heterogeneous in nature and have largely been developed for specific immigrant or refugee populations, making it challenging to narrow down exactly what types of programs may be most effective for the diverse population of immigrants and refugees in the Region of Peel.

Another key finding is the importance of cultural relevancy. This was highlighted in multiple studies that interviewed participants. Culturally tailored programming was found to increase the acceptability of the interventions, increase skill implementation, increase participation, and decrease dropout rates. A key part of this process is a cultural adaptation phase in which needs are assessed with community members and key stakeholders.

#### **Collection and analysis of Statistics Canada demographic data in the Region of Peel**

Data is being collected and analyzed from Statistics Canada focusing on immigrant and refugee populations in the Region of Peel. Specifically, data is being collected from the 2016 and 2021 Census to be used for comparison. Currently, the data that is currently available and that has been collected for comparison for the years of 2016 and 2021 at the Region of Peel levels and its subdivisions (Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon) are: (1) population by age, sex, and dwellings; (2) populations, families and households; (3) income and housing; (4) language; and (5) Aboriginal peoples. Data specific to immigrants from the 2021 Census will be released at the end of October. Once this dataset is released, the relevant data will be collected and will be analyzed in comparison to the 2016 data.

#### **Collection of other agency data specific to newcomers/refugees in the Region of Peel**

Data specific to the mental health of Ontarians have been collected from the 2020 Mental Health Survey in Ontario that was conducted by Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), Addiction and Mental Health Ontario (AMHO), and Ipsos. Some key findings relevant to our project are that COVID-19 has had a great impact on the mental well-being of Ontario families, since COVID-19, more than half (59%) of parents noted behavioural and/or emotional changes in their children, increase in families feeling stressed to the point that they could not cope, and 45% of Ontarian report a deterioration in the mental health since the start of COVID-19. These findings can assist in determining how many families need mental health support and how best to support them. The only limitation of this research is that it is not broken down into immigrants and refugees.

#### **Flyers and Recruitment**

A flyer has been created to be used for recruitment. This flyer has been disseminated to community organizations serving immigrants and refugees Recruitment for the focus groups has largely been done in partnership with Ali Salha, Programs Manager at Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services.

#### **Questionnaires and focus group guides**

Pre-screening surveys, pre-discussion questionnaires, and focus group guides have been developed. Pre-screening surveys have been developed for immigrants and refugees and service providers to determine their suitability for the study. Pre-discussion surveys have been developed specifically for the parents and adolescents to be disseminated before the conduction of the focus group to collect information

from participants on demographics, service provider awareness, services use, as well as specific scales to measure family well-being and family functioning. For service providers, pre-discussion surveys cover demographics, and service use, and helpfulness for immigrants and refugees. Finally focus groups guides have developed focusing on areas such as mental health, family, housing and employment.

### **Consent letters**

Consent letters for the focus groups with the mothers, fathers, adolescents and services providers have been developed.

### **Plan and organize focus groups**

Focus groups are currently in the process of being conducted. The first focus group with mothers and fathers was conducted on October 25, 2022. Service provider and adolescent focus groups will be conducted on November 3 and November 8, respectively. For the mother focus group, there were 22 participants, and for the father's focus group, there were 8 participants. For the service provider focus group, we expect 12 participants, and for the adolescent focus group, we expect 15 participants.

### **Engagement with Priorities**

The two priorities selected were (1) to implement the holistic integration of mental health supports into settlement and employment services and (2) to improve service navigation and accessibility from the marginalized immigrants' and refugees' perspectives and experiences. Up to now, we have largely been working towards this priority through the conduction of the literature review. The two areas of the literature review that allow us to address these priorities are the assessment of family needs and the examination of family programming. By examining the literature on immigrant and refugee needs, we will be able to establish a more coherent understanding of what types of mental health services need to be developed for families. The focus of assessing programs has been to determine what has and has not been effective in meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee families. These findings can be used to inform future program development aimed at mental health support. The literature review has also guided our development of the surveys and focus group guides to understand what areas need to be addressed in speaking with immigrant families. As such, to work towards these priorities key areas of focus in the survey and focus group guides are establishing family needs, access to and use of services, what services they believe they need, and understanding pathways to services for families. By understanding what the current access to and use of services looks like for immigrant and refugee families in Peel, we will be better able to provide recommendations for how to more effectively integrate mental health supports and improve the pathways to services for families.

### **Challenges and lessons learned**

A key area of challenge relates to the conduction of the literature review. Specifically, these challenges are the lack of grey literature assessing immigrant and refugee family programs in the community, a lack of research on programs in the Canadian context, and a lack of research on pathways to services for immigrant and refugee families. This lack of literature has posed a challenge to developing the surveys and guides, as it prevents a full understanding of what needs to be addressed in speaking with immigrants in the Region of Peel, particularly the lack of literature on pathways to services. These also pose a challenge to determining how to best serve the diverse needs of the immigrant and refugee

communities living in the Region of Peel. Finally, they may pose a challenge to developing the framework of the needs.

In terms of statistical analysis, some of the challenges that have arisen have been that some data is not broken down by region, preventing an analysis of immigrant demographics, movements, and health in the Region of Peel, the central area of focus for this study. Another challenge is that census data, a key source for our data, is reported by one person in the household which does not allow for a full look at the family as the unit of analysis.

### **Next steps**

Next steps include completion of the literature review, analysis of statistical data from Statistics Canada and analysis of data from other agencies, survey and focus group data collection, analysis of the survey data, thematic analysis of the transcription and observation notes, and finally the compilation of all data and analyses into a final report for the funders and for publication.