

# The Working Together Project

## Evaluation Report Year 3



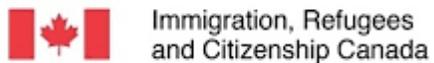
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## 1. Introduction

This report is a year 3 evaluation of the Working Together Project, a three-year program that supports Government-Assisted Refugees in Kitchener-Waterloo and neighbouring areas to find employment and learn English. The report addresses the process, outcomes and areas for further development.

The report begins by giving an overview of the project. Next, the evaluation approach is explained followed by research methods and participant demographics. The findings section is organized by the main research questions on process, outcome, and development of the program. The process subsection is divided into partnership and program implementation. The outcomes subsection discusses participant impact followed by community impact. And lastly, the developmental subsection presents recommendations, which were discussed and agreed upon by the steering committee.

This report provides insight into the development of the Working Together Project, offering both a means for partners and participants to voice their opinions and further improve the program going forward. The Year 1 report focused more on the strengths and weaknesses of program development, and less on program outcomes. This report for year 3 provides more insight into the program's impact on the lives of participants and will speak more strongly to whether the program is aligning with its theory of change.

## 2. Program Overview

*The Working Together Project* is an innovative three-year program led by Reception House Waterloo Region and is focused on creating a program with the goal of successful employment and English language acquisition for Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR). The program began in 2018 and is made possible by Service Delivery Improvement (SDI) funding from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Unlike any other known program, it combines employment and language training under one roof and recognizes the importance English plays in gaining and retaining meaningful employment. The program intends to improve the employment and language acquisition of refugee newcomers and assist with their economic integration into Canada. There is hope that this pilot program will expand within Waterloo Region and then be adapted to other locations.

The pilot began with Reception House selecting JD Sweid Foods, a local meat manufacturer to employ clients and The Literacy Group (TLG) to deliver language classes in the workplace. In September 2019, a new employer was added to the project, Tigercat Industries, a forestry equipment manufacturer. In year 3, five new employer partners

joined, two formally (Accumetal Manufacturing and DC Foods) and three informally (Cherry Forest Product, OXI-CP Brite, and RDJ Bakeries Ltd). At the end of year 2, The Literacy Group left the project due to a limited capacity to accommodate the growing program and Conestoga College began as the new language training partner in January 2020. The evaluation component of this project was carried out by the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR).

There were four main activity components to the program: pre-employment support, initial workplace support, language training, and ongoing vocational support. Participants enter the program at the pre-employment support component, and in order to move to the next component, they need to be active or complete the requirements in the previous component. These program components and their intended immediate/intermediate/long-term outcomes can be seen in the program logic model (see Appendix). This logic model was developed in conversations with the Steering Committee and adapted and revised over time.

**Pre-employment support** begins when newcomers to Waterloo Region with refugee backgrounds are referred to the Working Together Project by a Reception House case manager or by another agency. Working Together staff do an intake with the client to determine if they are ready to work, and if so, they enter the program. Pre-employment support provided by Reception House staff includes a client employment needs assessment, pre-employment training, and an Enhanced Canadian Workplace Culture Orientation. Reception House also refers clients to access employment services at the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre and The Working Centre. At these locations, clients do Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training, Occupational Health and Safety Awareness training, resume writing, and receive information about Canadian workplace norms. Lastly, clients are referred to work at a partner employer workplace. As of February 2021, 154 clients have participated in pre-employment support.

**Initial workplace support** begins when program participants have a start date for working at a partner employer workplace. The employer provides a job site tour, workplace orientation, and assistance with integration into the workplace. Reception House is active during this time, supporting the logistics and initial integration into the workplace. As of February 2021, 143 clients have participated in initial workplace support.

**Language training** begins once participants are employed at a partner company and enter language classes. Before beginning language classes, participants do an assessment to help the instructor customize the lessons according to their CLB level. In year 1, participants were required to attend 24 classes over a three-month period to

graduate from the program. In year 2, the funder approved extending language classes from three-months to six-months. In year 3, Conestoga College began as the new language instructor partner and they offered three classes based on the needs of participants: beginner, intermediate, and citizenship class. Upon graduation, eligible participants receive an incentive of up to \$1,200 for completing 24 classes, arriving on-time to work, scoring over 70% on assessments, and other qualifiers related to workplace and language milestones. If participants complete a second round of 24 classes and maintain the additional criteria, they may be eligible to receive another \$1,200. As of February 2021, 74 clients have participated in language training.

**Ongoing vocational support** is provided by Reception House and partnering employers to program participants who are both employed at a partner workplace and attending Working Together Project language classes. Reception House recognizes that these vocational supports are useful in supporting participants' attendance and engagement in the workplace and language classes. As of February 2021, 74 clients have received vocational support. In year 3, Reception House provided vocational support to 52 participants through a total of 767 interactions. The interactions between staff and clients were categorized and counted as shown in the table below.

Activity (n=52 participants)	Total interactions	Average (mean) interaction per participant
Transportation	69	1
Communication with supervisor/employer	148	3
Resolve issues with other people in the workplace	110	2
Resolve issues within language classes	176	3
Help understanding letters and accessing government and social services	132	3
Assistance with personal matters such as housing, health, or family matters	132	3

### 3. Overview of Evaluation

#### Evaluation Purpose

Program partners have determined that the purpose of this evaluation is to collaboratively assess:

- The effectiveness of program planning and implementation (process)

- The extent to which anticipated participant and system outcomes are being met (outcome)
- How the program and its theory of change can be improved to better facilitate the employment and language acquisition of participants (future development)

Three corresponding main research questions guided the evaluation:

- 1) Process: To what extent is the Working Together Project effective in its planning and implementation?
- 2) Outcome: How and to what extent has the Working Together Project impacted participants and the broader community/system?
- 3) Future Development: How can the program and its theory of change be improved to better facilitate the employment and language acquisition of participants?

## Evaluation Approach

This evaluation followed a **community-based research (CBR) approach**. This means that the researchers aimed to make the evaluation as useful and relevant as possible, sought diverse stakeholder participation, and took an action-oriented approach in developing innovation (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014). Two practical mechanisms to implement this approach included the creation of a steering committee to guide the evaluation and the hiring of community researchers who came to Canada as refugees.

A **steering committee** was formed to include all relevant stakeholders in the project. Monthly in-person meetings provided a space to regularly reflect on the larger project and partnership, as well as collectively develop strategies and protocols. This on-going feedback is a key component to ensuring the program adapts and runs smoothly and includes the perspectives of all stakeholders.

The committee is comprised of the following project partners in Year 3:

- Reception House (Project Lead and Employment Program representatives)
- Conestoga College (Dean School of Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Centre for Community Based Research (Project Lead and Project Manager)
- JD Sweid (Human Resource Director)
- Tigercat Industries (Human Resource Generalist)
- Accumetal Manufacturing Inc (Controller)
- Local Immigration Partnership, Waterloo Region (“Work” Steering Group representative)
- Kitchener-Waterloo Multi-cultural Centre (Manager Pre- Employment Program)
- A Community Member with experience providing workplace language programs for newcomers

The direction of the evaluation, including research questions, tools, sampling strategies and protocols were discussed with the steering committee. Evaluation findings were shared with the steering committee on an ongoing basis, so as to make continual improvements. The steering committee provided feedback on the annual draft reports, and they helped to develop the recommendations for each annual report.

In order to ensure that the evaluation that was relevant and sensitive to refugee newcomers, two **community researchers with lived refugee experience** carried out survey administration and focus group facilitation with program participants. Their direct engagement with participants encouraged a more welcoming and familiar relationship. Furthermore, they provided insightful feedback at regular CCBR team meetings, and occasionally at steering committee meetings. This feedback provided an opportunity for refugee voices to be heard, and to have a role in shaping the program. Engaging those with a personal stake in the issue at hand is a key principle of community-based evaluation.

## Methods

This report summarizes data for year 3 of a three-year evaluation. Five methods of data collection were used: program tracking, participant surveys, focus groups (participants, program staff and partner leads), case study, and secondary document review (see Appendix). Year 3 followed the same methods as Year 2, with an additional employer case study. Due to the global pandemic, all methods in year 3 were conducted remotely.

The research team included CCBR full-time researchers, community researchers with a lived refugee experience, students on placement at CCBR, professional interpreters, and a Reception House staff. Community researchers were trained and supported to carry out the survey administration and focus group facilitation with participants. When needed, they involved professional language interpreters, many of whom received research interpretation training from CCBR. The CCBR program manager and program lead conducted the staff and partner focus group, staff interviews, and case study interviews. Finally, the program tracking tool was managed by a Reception House staff.

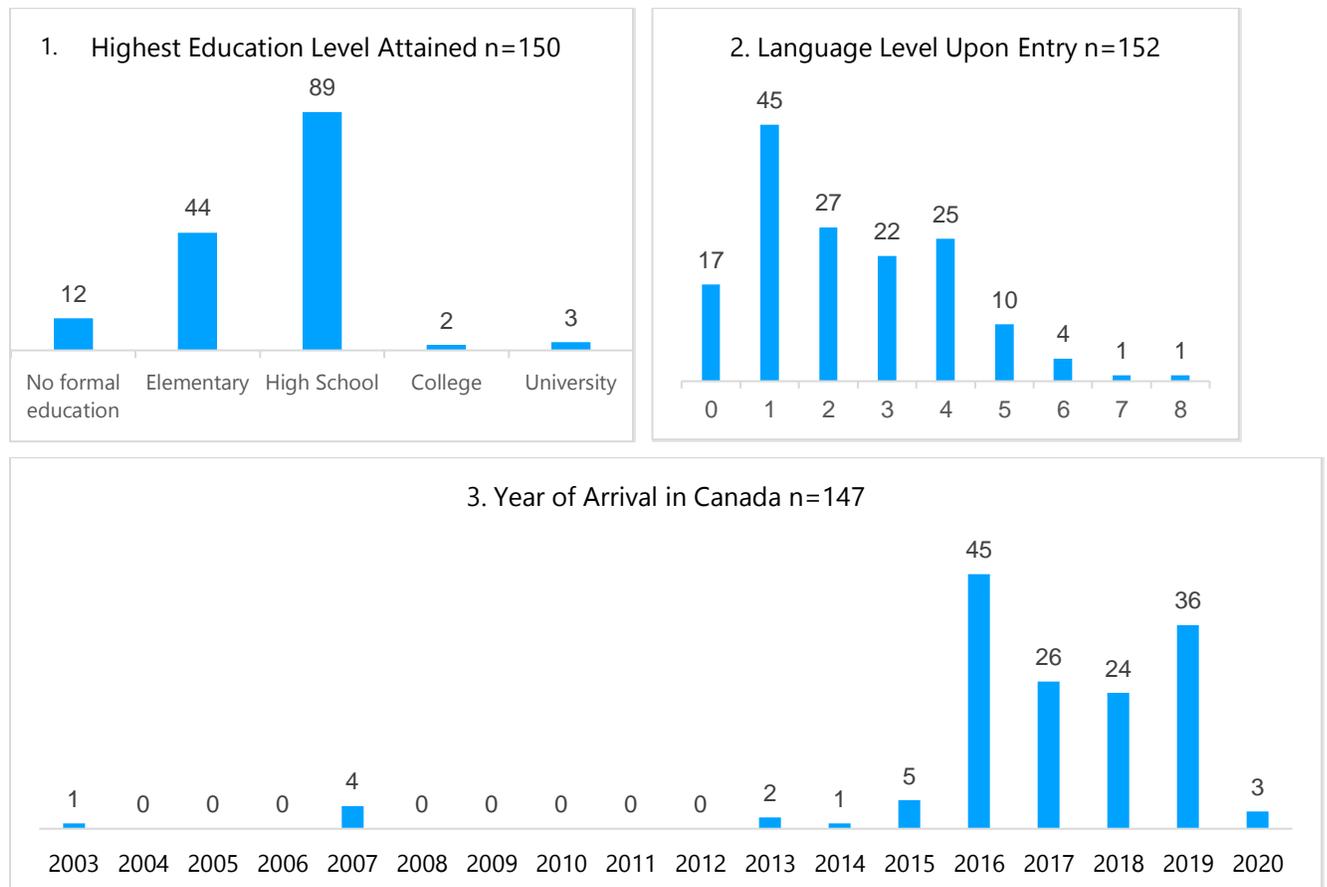
The five main methods used for the year 3 evaluation included:

1. **Program Tracking Tool:** This tool tracked all participants over time as they progressed through the program, collecting data about the various ways that newcomers are supported through the program. The data was collated in an Excel spreadsheet which was managed by Reception House, with oversight by CCBR. A total of 154 participants were tracked in Year 3.

2. **Participant Surveys:** Program participants were invited to complete a 30-question survey near the start of their employment with follow-up surveys completed every six-months thereafter. Survey questions followed the three main research questions, and were divided into work and program experience, program impact and recommendations. The following number of baseline surveys were conducted across the three years: Year 1 (n=12), Year 2 (n=11), Year 3 (n=23) to make a dataset of 46 baseline surveys for this report. In Year 2, 11 follow-up surveys were conducted and in Year 3, 35 were conducted, making a dataset of 46 follow-up surveys.
3. **Focus Groups:** CCBR researchers facilitated focus groups with three groups:
  - a) Purposively sampled participants: A total of 8 participants enrolled in English language classes, who had various lengths of time in the program were invited to the online focus groups. The two focus groups were split by language; one focus group with Arabic speakers (n=6) and the other with and English and Tigrinya speakers (n=2).
  - b) All program partners and staff: One online focus group with all program partners and staff who regularly sit on the steering committee was conducted.
  - c) Language instructor: One language instructor (the only one at the time) participated in a phone interview.
4. **Case studies:** CCBR researchers conducted two case studies.
  - a) Program participant case study: An online interview with a program participant who met the sampling criteria (graduated from classes and in the workplace) was conducted. Maximal sampling was used to provide rich insight into the program's processes and outcomes through a program participant's story. The program participant identified two additional people who could speak to their progress in the program, but they did not respond to the interview request.
  - b) Employer case study: JD Sweid was chosen as the case study because of being the longest-standing employer in the Working Together Project. The JD Sweid lead partner along with two other employees who have experience with program participants were recruited for an online focus group.
5. **Secondary Document Review:** The document review is ongoing and is comprised of material from partners related to the program, notes from steering committee meetings, and other correspondences with partner leads. This information is primarily used for context to help inform the overall evaluation, and to provide evidence of system-level impacts.

## Participant Demographics

As of February 2021, 154 people have been referred to the Working Together Project. Participants were largely high school (n=89) and elementary school (n=44) educated (see chart 1), male (81%), with an average (mean) age of 35 (ages ranging between 19 to 62). Of the 152 participants that had an official CLB level recorded at the start of the program, most were between a CLB level of 0-4 (see chart 2). The majority (89%) arrived in Canada between 2016-2019.



Pre-employment support has been provided to 154 people and of those, 143 (93%) have entered the initial workplace support component at the following partnering workplaces: JD Sweid Foods, a meat processing factory in Waterloo (n=107), Accumetal Manufacturing, an equipment manufacturing facility in Stratford (n=14), DC Foods, a meat processing factory in Waterloo (n=9), Tigercat Industries, a forestry equipment manufacturing company in Kitchener (n=6), Cherry Forest Product, a sawmill and hardwood manufacturing facility in Puslinch (n=3), OXI-CP Brite, a manufacturer of private label cleaning products in Guelph (n=3), RDJ Bakeries Ltd, a cracker factory in Cambridge (n=1). Of the 143 participants, 74 began the language training and vocational support component and of these, 26 people have graduated and exited the

program. A total of 24 of the 26 (92%) who graduated classes have received both incentives. Two people who graduated did not meet the criteria to receive both incentives. Thirteen people have received one incentive, as they have completed 24 classes and maintained the eligibility criteria.

A total of 46 of the 74 people who entered language classes have completed a baseline survey. The remaining 28 people did not complete the survey because they dropped out of the program before the survey was scheduled. Of the 46 people most engaged in the Project, 22 people were from Syria, six from Burma, six from Eritrea, four from DR Congo, four from Somalia, two from Burundi, and two from Sudan. The majority spoke Arabic (28) at home, while others spoke Rohingya (5), Somali (4) Kiswahili (3), and other languages. Prior to coming to Canada, most were skilled workers or business people. Eight survey respondents had no formal education, 14 completed elementary school, 21 completed high school, two completed a certification course, and one completed an undergraduate degree.

The 46 participants who successfully entered the workplace and language classes and completed a baseline survey have less education and a lower CLB level than the average person who was referred. Of the 154 people referred, 8% had no education and 61% had a CLB level of 0-2. Whereas, of the 46 survey respondents, 17% had no education and 72% had a CLB level of 0-2.

## 4. Findings

This section summarizes the key evaluation findings in year 3 of data collection. The findings are based on data collected through the five methods and various stakeholder perspectives. This section is organized by the main research questions related to process, outcome, and future development.

### Research Question #1: Process

This section reports on findings related to the first research question: *to what extent is the Working Together Project effective in its planning and implementation?* We will first discuss the partnership as a whole before discussing each of the four program components individually.

#### Partnership Functioning

Overall, partners and staff reported **strong rapport** between Reception House, the partnering workplaces, and Conestoga College. One partner reported that Reception House was successful at gaining and retaining employers in this project because they

tried to understand the employer's needs. They explained, *"There is a shortage and we are trying to fill it. We support the folks they are hiring."* Employer partners agreed, reflecting that *"[our] rapport is excellent and there hasn't been an inconvenience [during the pandemic]."* The strong rapport between project partners may be a key reason to this project's success. A partner reflected,

*Our project is well structured and well defined. We are not working in silos. The spirit of working together and partnership has been so powerful. It is one of the key factors to why we are here now.*

Strong rapport was also evident in the coordination between partners. The language partner reported that Reception House and the workplace Human Resources staff have been *"supportive and helpful."* Communication between employers and the language instructor went well according to program partners and staff. For example, a program staff talked about how the language instructor taught about how to use English for phone calls after learning that the employer wanted program participants to call the manager when they needed a sick day.

The global pandemic impacted partnership functioning, by creating a **decreased connection** among some partners and between program participants and employers. A partner employer explained that due to working from home during the pandemic, they find it *"more difficult to establish interpersonal relationships with partners."* A partner from the Immigration Partnership reported that they have decreased their ability to recruit new employers because employers are busy trying to keep their business operating during a pandemic. Partner employers reported that they were less connected to the language progress of program participants due to classes being held online instead of in the workplace. They explained, *"We don't know who is in the class and what progression is [happening]."* In turn, program participants could not see how invested the employer was in their language progress. When classes were held in the workplace, the program participants could *"see that their employer cares enough to provide space"* and sometimes employers would *"bring them cookies and apples"* an employer partner reported.

## Implementing Program Components

### Pre-Employment Support

Evaluation participants indicated that the pre-employment support **prepared them well for the Canadian workplace**. Most survey respondents said that they were very satisfied (72%) or satisfied (24%) with the pre-employment support. Program

participants discussed that the pre-employment support helped them with understanding workplace safety and *“getting used to people and places [in the city].”* A program participant explained,

*“One thing that I consider very important is the training that Reception House did for us at the beginning of our work. It was about safety and it was amazing and it was done in Arabic and this helps us to understand everything.”*

However, some challenges were noted with the **virtual shift** of pre-employment support due to the global pandemic. The employment needs assessment, Canadian workplace culture orientation, and other Reception House services had to be adapted to remote delivery. A partner reflected, because of the virtual setting, *“we are not receiving the quality outcomes that we expected.”* For example, *“it is challenging to have multiple interpreters in the [virtual] room.”* On the flip side, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre health and safety training was working well online, according to a project partner.

## Initial Workplace Support

Most program participants reported **positive relationships at work**. Almost all (93%) of survey respondents were satisfied with *“How the employer helped me fit into the workplace and made me feel that I belong.”* The program participants in the focus group described the workplace as friendly, supportive, welcoming, respectful, interactive, and cooperative. A participant described his positive relationship with his supervisor who *“is communicating and interacting with me [every day] and I understand what he is saying.”* A participant who described his English level as beginner, agreed that the *“work environment is good [and] people are respectful.”* Another participant explained that the English-speakers in the workplace are helpful and cooperative, because when he cannot understand them, they write it down and *“help me to understand.”* A program staff observed that existing employees were welcoming to program participants, especially when they realized that *“it’s not that hard [to work with people who] don’t speak English.”*

The employer case study participants affirmed that they promoted positive relationships in the workplace by being welcoming to newcomers and refugees. One way to be welcoming was to learn about different cultural expectations and the needs of new hires. For the employer, this meant ensuring there was a private area for prayer and a safe place for foot washing. *“I would just say to be open minded, be patient, make sure you have systems in place,”* said a workplace manager.

Some program participants reported that they learned **on-the-job training** that prepared them do their job well. Almost all (98%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received training that helped their work performance. In year three, a partner employer offered eight Working Together Project participants a 6-week technical training in welding and metal fabrication. Program participants described the on-the-job training as including how to cut metals, paint, how to use machinery, and welding. A program participant shared his story. He had been working for 1.5 years on the factory line when his supervisor asked him, *“What do you think if we move you to a different place to develop yourself and your career?”* He was promoted to being a machine operator and *“it was a learning and good experience.”* Another participant talked about how he has more than 25 years of work experience in his home country, and the workplace is building on his past experience by offering him *“a new training course in welding.”*

By year 3, the workplace and Reception House had created an **efficient onboarding process**. A program partner explained that the new hires were screened first by Reception House to ensure they would be a good fit for the workplace. The workplace supervisors were efficient at giving new hires information they needed to make a decision about whether they want to commit to this job. Various workplace procedures such as paystubs were explained in an efficient way and *“everyone knows their role now so they can do it seamlessly,”* a program partner reported.

## Language Training

Early in year 3, language classes had to move suddenly from the workplace to an online platform due to the global pandemic. The classes continued to adapt according to the CLB levels of the participants. At the close of year 3, there were three different classes being held: beginner, intermediate, and citizenship classes. Citizenship classes were a new addition in year 3, as increased numbers of participants in the year 2 evaluation asked for these classes. The evaluation participants spoke more about the adaptations that went well than the challenges that were experienced in year 3.

The language instructor’s approach was **flexible, creative, and innovative**, which created a responsive learning environment. Partners and staff discussed how the language instructor found resources for online learning, facilitated new online tools, and sought out *“innovative ways to make it work.”* For example, breakout rooms allowed classmates to practice English with each other and recordings of the classes allowed

participants to review lessons. The language instructor noticed that family members were in the same room as the student, and he engaged *“the children to help the parent,”* commented a partner. A staff reflected, *“[the student] is comfortable to have their family help. It [has become] a family activity.”*

The **at-home online classes had benefits for some participants.** The project in year 3 discovered benefits for remote learning that could continue beyond the pandemic. One benefit of online classes was that employees from different workplaces could attend the same class, and more classes at a variety of levels could be offered. A project partner explained, *“The online classes created the efficiency of splitting up students into their respective levels [rather than having classes based on the physical location of the students].”* Another benefit was that at-home online classes were more comfortable than classes in the workplace, explained a program staff. Participants adapted well to the technology of online classes. A participant talked about how they *“learned a lot with the Chromebook... and it makes learning easy.”* Another participant talked about how they enjoyed doing breakout rooms when *“it is time for reading and I have some of my friends [in the room].”*

The global pandemic made it **difficult to test participants’ CLB level.** A partner and staff discussed how formal language assessments were delayed or cancelled in year 3 because of the global pandemic causing a backlog at partner agencies. The language instructor explained the challenge of giving virtual assessment, *“I can’t give a formal assessment virtually, [and so] I am giving a general assessment.”*

Participants made far more positive than negative comments about the language classes. However, some participants reported that the **different CLB levels made it difficult to learn.** One participant reported that *“it is difficult for some of us to catch up with the pace”.* Another participant reported that *“I don’t attend that much... the classes are not at my level.”*

## Ongoing Vocational Supports

Reception House effectively **supported participants to adjust to virtual classes and virtual services.** When the sudden switch to online classes was announced, Reception House had to find a solution to the challenge of little computer access and inadequate home WiFi. Reception House found Chromebooks to loan to participants, and when those ran out, they received funds from IRCC to purchase additional Chromebooks. However, ensuring that participants were equipped with technology and WiFi in their homes was not enough to make the virtual classes successful. Reception House also

trained participants on how to use technology. A partner observed how some services had little understanding of the technology barriers newcomer refugees face to accessing online services during the pandemic. Reception House stepped in to advocate for their clients and "*prepare people system-wide*" to better remotely serve newcomer refugees.

Evaluation participants agreed that the **ongoing vocational support effectively solved challenges** participants faced. Almost all (95%) of respondents on the follow-up survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the ongoing vocational support provided by Reception House. Some participants reflected on how the vocational support was timely and much needed. A participant reflected, "*Anytime we ask for his [Reception House staff] help, he's always ready and translating for us.*" Another participant shared:

*Reception House follow[s] up with us on a regular basis. They were always in touch with our supervisors and admin, and they were a point of contact between us and the company. In addition, Reception House helps us a lot in many other aspects, with Ontario Works, in day to day activities if we need any help; they are always ready to help. At the beginning, I was like a child who always needs support and mentors. But now, with their support, they help us to be more independent and to communicate better and be confident.*

## Research Question #2: Outcomes

This section will discuss the research question: *to what extent are anticipated participant and community outcomes being met?* We will discuss participant-level outcomes before community outcomes. In general, evaluation data found evidence that many of the intended outcomes (identified in the appended program logic model) were attained by year 3 of the project. Year 3 participant outcomes were almost identical to year 2 outcomes, however partners experienced greater integration and sense of belonging which were new findings in year 3. As for community outcomes, greater advancement in the local labour market and newcomer systems of support were made in year 3, and these advancements were consistent with the anticipated logic model system outcomes.

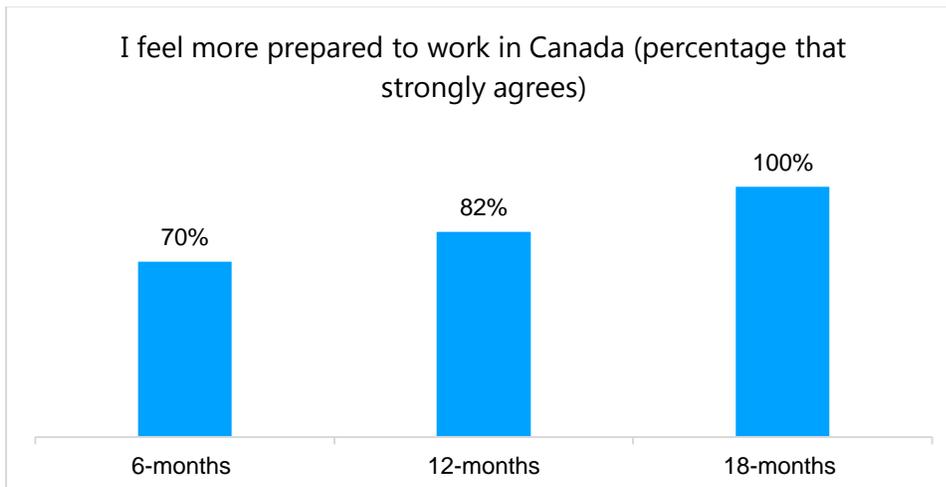
### Participant Outcomes

This project was created with the dual intention of improving employment opportunities and language acquisition of newcomer refugees. These two outcomes were the strongest outcomes found in year 3 followed by increased confidence and agency and

greater financial security. These main themes are consistent with the program logic model, but in year 3 a new theme emerged, which was an increased sense of belonging. As a result, increased sense of belonging was added to the program logic model. The year 3 themes below are organized in order of strength.

## Better Prepared for the Canadian Workplace

Consistent with the program's logic model, the evaluation found that participants are better prepared for the Canadian workplace because of the Working Together Project. Participants reported quantitatively that they were more prepared. At six-months into the program, 70% of survey respondents strongly agreed that they felt more prepared to work in Canada, compared to 82% at 12-months and 100% at 18-months (see graph below).



Many participants also reported qualitatively that they were more prepared for the Canadian workplace. Participants described that the on-the-job training prepared them to do tasks such as how to use a grinder, a forklift, a wireless communication device, how to weld, and how to cut, wash, and clean metallic objects. A participant described how he enjoyed his job more now that he was prepared for the workplace demands. At the beginning he *"[did not] know many things about the work"* but with more time, he became *"familiar with everything and I'm not facing any difficulty at all."* He went on to reflect that *"the more you understand the nature of your work, the more you are going to like it."* Some participants described the experience of being more prepared for the Canadian workplace as "amazing," "gradually growing up," and "learning in life."

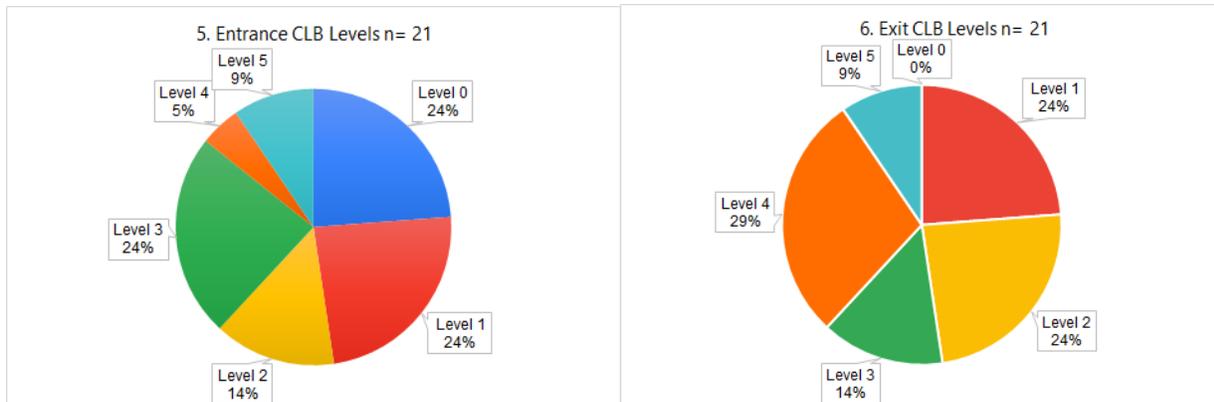
Consistent with the program logic model intermediate outcome, "greater ease in navigating Canadian work environments", those with varying levels of work experience

prior to coming to Canada found that the Working Together Project prepared them better for the Canadian workplace. Some participants had similar past work experiences in their home countries, but some were entering a new industry. A participant reflected that *“back home I never worked in a company like this, I [was] doing other things”* while another participant explained, *“welding... is not a new skill to me, but now I have [gained] a certificate in welding.”* In addition to the industry being new for some, the Canadian work environment also required an adjustment. A program partner reflected that *“The work environments they are used to are different from here... [For example], when participants get health and safety training and become aware of the workplace hazards, they take them more seriously.”*

### Increased Language Skills

Evaluation data shows that participants have increased their language skills. This finding is consistent with the program logic model intended outcomes of accessible language training, improved ability to communicate in the workplace, and increased ability to speak, read, write, and listen in English.

In year 3, estimated exit CLB scores were recorded for 21 participants (the scores were estimates because a formal in-person CLB test could not be scheduled during the pandemic). Almost all participants (90%) moved up one (estimated) CLB level in 6-months. The average entry CLB level for the 21 participants was 1.9 and the average (mean) exit CLB level was 2.8. Chart 5 below displays the estimated entrance CLB level and chart 6 shows the exit CLB level for the same 21 participants. Participants also self-reported improved language skills. At 6-months, 43% of survey respondents agreed and 48% strongly agreed that their English language skills have improved. At 12-months a higher percentage of survey respondents strongly agreed (53%) while 35% agreed. At 18-months, all survey respondents agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (67%) that their language skills have improved.



Some participants similarly qualitatively reported that they are showing an **improvement in English communication skills**. For example, a participant commented, *“language learning takes time. It’s very gradual improvement, but I can tell you I am showing improvement... I have improved my communication skills.”* Another participant reflected that *“at the beginning, our communication was limited, [but] now we can communicate with everyone at work.”* The language instructor commented on the participant’s eagerness to learn about tools in the workplace. He remarked, *“People are keen on progressing.”* Community researchers confirmed this finding with the observation that in year 3, more participants answered the follow up surveys in English, rather than relying on the interpreter.

Some participants reflected that their improved English language skills helped them **integrate into society**. This sub-theme is new, as it did not come up in year 2 and was not explicitly noted on the program logic model. As described in the paragraph above, improved English communication skills allowed participants get to know new people in their workplace. One participant reported that this program *“helped me to meet new people and learn more English.”* Another participant described how their improved communication skills *“helped me in a way to adapt to Canada.”* Other participants expressed how they now felt confident in their language to participate in parent-children interviews at their local school. Another participant shared their story of language learning and integration in this way:

*[The program] helped me to integrate within the community and society because it helped me improve my English skills. For example, with bad English I was not able to communicate and interact with my colleagues and supervisors... It made a big difference actually, before I was disappointed and feeling down. I sat around a year at home without work but after going to work I got busy, and I met new people. It helped me socialize and interact with people.*

## Increased Confidence and Agency

With enhanced language and work skills, some participants seemed more confident to navigate life in Canada and expressed a greater sense of agency. While staff and partners observed participant's increased confidence, it was participants who reported more on their increased agency.

Staff and partners reported that participants have **gained confidence** due to their enhanced English language skills and opportunities for job advancement. In the program logic model and in year 2, participants talked about "less stress and more confidence about life in Canada." Interestingly, in year 3 participants did not talk about less stress but emphasized greater confidence in the workplace and in themselves. The employer case study demonstrates that participants have gained confidence in the workplace. A workplace staff noted that participants became "*more confident. It was hard [for them] without [being able to] speak English. I think [their increased] confidence level [has had a] huge [impact].*" Another workplace staff agreed and reflected on a program participant's journey to being promoted to an on-the-job trainer:

*She was very meek, [but] she talks so much more now. Before, you would say good morning and her head would be down... I brought two new people over to her and it was so nice to hand them over to her. She was full of smiles. It's nice to see [people being promoted]. Some other people have been put into machine operator positions so they have been promoted.*

The language instructor confirmed this theme, reporting that his students in The Working Together Project have gained a sense of pride:

*The lower level CLB [participant] can [now] read science and before they didn't know the alphabet. It gives them proof [that they are] smart... It may give them a sense of pride... Most of them are parents and it gives them a higher status in their family.*

Program participants reported that they have **greater agency** in Canada because of the Working Together Project. Their sense of agency was especially apparent in program participants' increased ability to choose where they want to work in Canada, less intensive need for settlement supports, and greater knowledge of their rights and freedoms. The finding of greater agency is stronger in year 3 than year 2, but unlike year 2, there was no mention of less stress due to greater agency.

Most (71%) survey respondents at 12-months into the program strongly agreed that they are better able to make their own decisions about where they want to work in Canada because of the Working Together Project. Compare this result with the 52% of participants who agreed at six-months into the program. A program participant discussed how he is more confident about his future in Canada as a result of this program:

*At the beginning, I was like a child who always needs support and mentors. But now, with [Reception House's] support, [we are] more independent and able to communicate better and be confident. So, if tomorrow, I leave this job, I'm sure it will be easy to find another job.*

A participant candidly expressed how this program had given him greater agency in expressing and living out his rights and freedoms:

*I think it gave me the confidence to stand by myself. I can talk about my rights and people [will] listen to me. I think one of the rights is that when I'm at work I can... say no to anything that is dangerous... Canada is a peaceful country and you can do whatever you want as long as the government allows you to be a resident... You can move [anywhere].*

## Greater Financial Security

Partners underscored the positive impact the Working Together Project had for participants' financial security. Participants **gained a job and regular income**, and with that came greater financial security. For example, at one workplace some participants were approaching their one-year work anniversary, at which time they would be eligible to join the company's retirement savings program. The regular RRSP contributions would create more financial security for their future retirement, a steering committee member explained. When participants saw that greater financial security was an outcome of this project, they wanted their friends and family to get involved. A partner observed, "[Current participants] come to us and tell us that someone else... is really struggling and they need a job. [The referral] will come to us so that they are in a better spot financially". Greater financial security has created other benefits for program participants. A partner reflected:

*When clients start working you see so many changes in their lives. Better settlement outcomes, mental health, physical health, happy families, stable housing. We keep receiving messages of thanks from family members for how this program has been life changing.*

The case study participant also reported increased financial security as a result of this project. When she first arrived in Canada with her family, she found it difficult to find a job, pay for rent, and afford necessities for herself and her children. She reflected on the benefits of the program, *“If I continue [with this job], my life will continue to improve... If more people do this than they can live their life well.”*

## Increased Sense of Belonging

Some program participants reported that all components of The Working Together Project played a part in **increasing their sense of belonging to Canada**. This finding began to emerge in year 2. But it was in year 3, that an increased sense of belonging was reported more strongly. There were four dimensions of belonging that were particularly noteworthy.

First, the pre-employment and ongoing vocational support from Reception House increased a participants' familiarity with the city: *“Reception House helped us know places around the city... it helped me get used to people and places.”* Second, community researchers heard from participants in follow-up surveys that their increased language skills allowed them to participate in other community activities such as parent-teacher interviews at their child's school. This achievement gave participants a greater sense of being connected to their children's school environment. Third, when talking about the initial workplace support a participant went on to explain how *“I feel at home in Kitchener... I feel like this is a place where I was born.”* Lastly, a participant reflected that he has learned a lot from this project, including his rights as a Canadian: *“I have citizenship so I have a right to vote, to choose a party to support. I can participate in all [things] Canadians do.”*

An increased sense of belonging was an unexpected finding of the evaluation and pointed to the central role that language and employment plays in fostering a connectedness to a new community. A partner confirmed the link between employment and a sense of community belonging, by stating:

*When refugees start working, they connect to the community – they learn from their coworkers, supervisors, taking busses, reading signs. They are contributing to society, paying taxes, being a role model for your family and community. They feel like a useful individual.*

## Community Outcomes

The Working Together Project intended not only to impact refugee newcomers and their families, but also the broader community of Waterloo Region (see appended program logic model). Year 3 evaluation data revealed the greatest progress towards community level change. Impacts were evident within the local labour market and in the newcomer system of support. Each of these community-level impacts are described in more detail below, doing so by combining year 2 and year 3 evaluation data.

### Changes in the local labour market

The evaluation provided evidence that The Working Together Project has contributed to a local labour market that is becoming more attuned and responsive to the talent that newcomers offer. To begin, the program **increased awareness among some employers of the local immigrant talent pool**. While Waterloo Region has a history of promoting newcomer-employer connections, there have been some unique contributions arising out of this program that have led to more employers seeing the benefits of hiring newcomers. For example, representatives from the project (from Reception House, JD Sweid, and Conestoga College) participated on a panel hosted by the Immigration Partnership promoting employer involvement in the hiring of newcomers. Another community partner said it this way:

*[The Working Together Project] brings awareness to employers. Knowing that this program exists and seeing the credibility of it and dedication of Reception House has been great to share with employers...When we see connections happening – it excites us because that creates change and supports for employers. We want employers to access the talent of immigrants and refugees – this is a valuable program [to that end].*

The value of the program in helping to promote local immigrant talent had already begun in year 2. For example, JD Sweid had previously presented their experiences in partnering with The Working Together Employment Project at the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPS) event (“Immigrants and Refugees: A Solution to Your Workforce Gap”). JD Sweid had been nominated by the Immigration Partnership for the Recognition Award of the Community Employment Literacy Committee (CELC).

In year 3, the program continued this trajectory by broadening its reach to different employers and explored different sectors for collaboration. For example, Reception House presented at several important networking events, such as the Bluewater Wood

Alliance: Helping Companies Source Talent and Labour Event at which they received strong positive feedback from people interested in their project model. In addition, the Immigration Partnership is adapting their learnings from this project into an info packet for small to medium-sized businesses on the benefits of hiring immigrants.

Beyond raising awareness, the program also **increased the capacity of partner employers to hire newcomers**. Partner employers mentioned that they were better equipped to hire newcomers as a result of their participation in the program. Indeed, JD Sweid, the original employer partner, hired about 100 refugee newcomers over three years as a direct result of this project. The Pillar Nonprofit Network feasibility study commissioned by Reception House found that the Working Together Project filled a service gap related to employee retention by offering services to both employers and refugee employees. Employers are faced with the challenge of filling entry level positions and refugees are faced with the challenge and barriers of attaining and retaining employment. In part, the increased capacity to hire newcomers resulted from the vocational supports that the project provided both to newcomers and to the workplace. The language training component was also a significant factor in facilitating the hiring on newcomers. Consider the perspectives of these employer partners:

*Bringing folks in with language challenges, we can onboard them easier [as a result of this program]. We are more self-sustainable than before. We are all learning different cultures... There was a bit of delay at the beginning but now we have people more prepared to help the transition [into the workplace]. This does take more time than people who are fluent. But the benefit is that [our company] is running.*

*We took six employees at once and that was a learning experience. We learned how to train them with a language barrier. Our employees did a great job trying to be patient and helpful. It was rewarding to see a few of them continue with us.*

*We've always been open to have people on board that speak low English, and it's exciting to have helped to support that. [The program is] making it easier to help in the community but get employees at the same time.*

Another labour market impact was how the program contributed to **promoting more welcoming and supportive workplaces** for newcomers who have been hired. Partners discussed how participating employers have learned how to be more open-minded about diversity and how to create strategies to support refugee newcomers to be successful in the workplace. For example, one employer partner point out how the

workplace shifted to account for the Muslim holiday of EID: "We figured out that flexible EID day – we anticipate that a group of employees won't be showing up. Now we can think ahead to plan for this." Another partner said that they were "surprised at how accepting other [co-workers] have been [of newcomers]... I wasn't expecting them to welcome [newcomers] as much as they have." Still another employer acknowledged that this project has equipped them to provide different ways of training that are more effective for people with a low-level English. While these examples (and the ones written below) are all within the existing partnership, they represent experiences that could be valuable for other local employers to know.

*As you bring new cultures in the workplace, there is going to be some impact. We often think of incorporating immigrants and refugees as if they are doing the changing and accommodating. But it overlooks the positive changes they can provide to a Canadian setting.*

*[The program] contributes to the workplace diversity that we are pushing to see. And [that] contributes to the overall economy.*

*An employer goes into an employment environment very employment-centric – egocentric. What we want, when we want it, on our terms. Over the past couple years [within this program] you learn just how flexible an organization can be. And how tolerant folks are once they start to see the benefits. So, what we see now, for my benefit, is a much more agile management, supervisory staff. They are going to work and figure things out... People are just more open-minded [to welcoming newcomers in the workplace].*

## Changes in the newcomer system of support

In addition to labour market changes, the program has also made some impact on the local newcomer system of support. In particular, evaluation findings indicate that The Working Together Project **increased cooperation among local organizations**. Examples of this cooperation included:

- KW Multicultural Centre and Ontario Works began referring newcomers to Reception House which is providing greater options for employment support for Waterloo Region's refugee newcomers.
- Reception House is in discussion with Mennonite Central Committee to explore future collaboration and to adapt the project's model for providing employment support to privately sponsored refugees.

- Reception House met Tourism Human Resources Canada, which runs another SDI project promoting newcomer employment in the hospitality industry, to share best practices.
- Reception House has advocated to other service provider organizations encouraging them to assist newcomer clients in their shift to virtual platforms.

One partner summarized the improved cooperation among local services in this way:

*[The Working Together Project] has created more cooperation between the sectors. We have created a system of pre-employment program of the KW Multicultural Centre and employment program of The Working Centre... We meet more often and there is a system in place. There is a wakeup call in the community of settlement services. [More] organization have started referring clients to [The Working Together Project].*

Another community-level impact was how the project **increased the capacity of the community to continue supporting refugee newcomer employment in Waterloo Region**. More specifically, year 3 evaluation findings reveal how partner efforts have contributed to a community that is now better equipped to link vocational and language training support for refugee newcomers, even beyond the life of the project. The increased cooperation among local organizations mentioned above certainly contributed to project sustainability. However, there were number of other intentional efforts that more concretely served to lay the groundwork for promoting vocational and language training support for refugee newcomers in the future. Examples include:

- Reception House is exploring different funding sources to continue aspects of this project. For example, they contracted Pillar Nonprofit Network to conduct a feasibility study on how aspects of the Working Together Project could be adapted to become a self-sustaining social enterprise in the future. The study identified model options for pricing, legal structure, workflow, and staffing. Reception House also submitted a Letter of Intent to IRCC for another project through its Service Delivery Improvements funding stream. Building on this project success, the proposal focused on welcoming workplaces by providing vocational support, language training, and workplace cultural capacity building in a wider range of employment sectors.
- In year 3, as more word spread about the success of the program, employers became more interested in this project. As a result, five additional workplaces became project partners and hired newcomer refugees. As described above, some employers are now more aware of newcomers and more equipped to hire

them, in part because of this program. Some workplaces can only hire in small numbers, which was not possible in year 1 and 2 because English classes in the workplace required a group of newcomers. The move to virtual classes allowed for new employers to hire only one or several newcomers and still access the benefits of virtual classes. As such, the program has contributed to a shifting landscape where more employers are considering the newcomer talent pool to address their labour market needs.

- Involvement in the program helped some partner employers to develop employee recruitment strategies that will extend beyond this project. For example, JD Sweid reported that their internal referral program created during this project (which provides a bonus to current employees if they refer their family or friends) is a successful strategy that will continue to connect the company with committed refugee newcomer employees. They explained, *“We have a file folder full of referrals... It grows exponentially. We are a bit more known and people want to work for us. The referrals I find are the most successful [for retention].”*
- An employment partner (JD Sweid) suggested that when the project comes to an end, they would consider continue to offer language classes in the workplace. Over the past three years they have seen the investment pay off for the company.

## Research Question #3: Future Directions

This section will discuss the research question: *how can the program and its theory of change be improved to better facilitate the employment and language acquisition of participants?*

Regarding the program’s theory of change, throughout this report we have noted how evaluation findings have deepened the program’s understanding of what it should do in order to be effective (i.e., activities), and what changes it is striving for (i.e., intended outcomes). In general, year 3 findings have confirmed the general soundness of the program’s theory of change, even while highlighting the importance of striving for more holistic outcomes for newcomer refugees (greater community integration and sense of belonging) and the Waterloo community (increased capacity of community to continue supporting newcomer employment). The program logic model in the appendix has been updated to reflect theory of change improvements based on year 3 evaluation results.

With regard to program improvements, year 3 evaluation participants suggested actions targeted at two groups. First, they identified actions that existing partners could carry out to sustain activities beyond the life of the project. Second, they shared their

learnings about what others could do when adopting the program model and adapting it to their own unique context.

## Actions for Project Partners

The funding for The Working Together Project will end March 31, 2021. However, over the past year project partners have discussed and identified certain actions that could serve to sustain some of the momentum this project helped to create in Waterloo Region. Some important examples are listed below.

- **Pursue resources to sustain project learnings:** This project has been shown to be successful, with project partners learning throughout how best to delivery this innovative program. Partners remain motivated to sustain their efforts as much as possible. To this end, Reception House commissioned research on the feasibility of pursuing a social enterprise model and applied for additional three-year IRCC SDI funding. These avenues or others may be pursued to secure resources that will help to sustain and build on project learnings. In particular, future efforts should not only focus on supporting refugee newcomers in the workplace, but also support employers to create welcoming workplaces and be adaptable. To this end, the SDI proposal submitted by Reception House and its partners emphasizes recruiting employers with a long-term commitment who can foster welcoming workplaces and workforces for newcomer refugees.
- **Leverage internal workplace referrals:** JD Sweid has developed an internal referral system during this project that provides a bonus to current employees that refer their family or friends. Before this project, JD Sweid was facing hiring shortages (as were other factories) but through this project they have gained a sustainable job applicant pool through internal referrals. The internal referrals from The Working Together Project participants may continue to generate new successful hires of newcomer refugees. Employer partners involved in this project likewise could continue or adopt a system of internal referrals of newcomer refugees.
- **Continue to provide flexible language training for newcomer refugees:** The range of participant backgrounds was quite diverse and so were their learning preferences. Some participants had low-levels of English and some were mid-level. Many were parents and some were young adults, with different home situations. Some participants reported that they preferred online classes and some preferred in-person classes. The global pandemic highlighted the benefits of incorporating online platforms for language training and the need for an

online CLB assessment tool. Conestoga College is working to incorporate these virtual platforms and tools beyond the pandemic with funders such as IRCC. One employer partner is already considering providing language classes beyond the life of the project and others can do the same. When they do, language training should be flexible and adapt to the various home situations, schedules, CLB levels, and preferences for online versus in-person classes.

- **Invest in refugee digital literacy:** The global pandemic brought many challenges and adaptations to this program, one of which was a shift to virtual programming and services. Evaluation participants emphasized the importance of service providers being skilled at using online platforms, securing technology for clients, and training for newcomer refugees on digital literacy. Investing in refugee digital literacy allows clients to access the range of programs and services available to them in our region and communicate more easily with their employers. Reception House recently was successful in securing additional funding to this end. The funding will help them provide newcomer refugees with computers, stable Wi-Fi, and training to be digitally literate.

## Actions for Others When Adapting the Model

Project partners learned a great deal about how to deliver this innovative program over the past three years. Their learnings may be of interest for others interested in providing vocational support and workplace language training for refugee newcomers in their own community. Below we list key actions for others when they wish to adapt the project to their unique context. These suggested actions were developed in consultation with the project steering committee.

- **Launch an effective partnership in your community:** Evaluation results indicate that this project was successful in meeting many of its intended outcomes. A key ingredient for this success was the collective capacity of project partners, their commitment to work together toward common goals, and their openness to ongoing mutual learning. As one partner reflected, the partnership *“allowed all of us to learn from each other.”* Other communities interested in adapting this model should choose their partners wisely based on the level of capacity, commitment, and curiosity partners bring to the project. They would do well to be guided by a project steering committee that includes all project partners, and also community partners and networks (e.g., local immigration partnership) and refugee newcomers with lived experience. The remaining points below highlight key ingredients when assembling a partnership that is primed for success.

- **Identify a trusted lead resettlement organization:** Reception House played the central role in the partnership. Their success was aided by the trust and respect they brought into the partnership. They were able to leverage their past relationships and build on their competency in project coordination. Other groups wishing to adopt this model should begin by identifying a resettlement organization with a similar level of trust, respect, and competence within their community. A resettlement organization is well-placed to be the back-bone support of the project as it is grounded in the lived-experience of refugee newcomers. As such, they can ensure that the project remains client-centered as they coordinate efforts among language instructors, workplaces, and newcomer refugees.
- **Recruit employers with a long-term commitment:** Evaluation results demonstrate that employers begin to see notable benefits around two years into the project. Employers focused only on an immediate return on their investment might not be the best suited for this project. When strategically recruiting partner employers, the following characteristics are important: 1) a commitment to the long-term vision of the project, 2) the ability to prepare their existing workforce to welcome newcomer refugees; and 3) the ability to collaborate closely with the lead resettlement agency. Other communities thinking of adapting this model should also consider areas of skill shortages and match newcomer refugee talent with corresponding job opportunities.
- **Engage a flexible language training partner:** The evaluation demonstrated that an effective language partner has the capacity to be flexible, creative, and innovative when providing language training. Such a partner will provide the best language results for newcomer refugees. More specifically, an ideal language partner is one with the ability to be adaptive to continual intake, be responsive to various cultural backgrounds, schedules, and CLB levels, and have the ability to adapt to preferences for online versus in-person learning and teach workplace-specific vocabulary. Training partners would employ qualified instructors who have the competence and passion to engage refugee newcomers in the classroom.
- **Build a culture of strategic learning:** From project conception, evaluation was to play a central role in guiding and shaping the project. Evaluation results were continually shared throughout the three years of the project, with the steering committee taking responsibility to finalize and implement the various cycles of evaluation recommendations. This commitment to continuous reflection enabled

adaptive program planning and management. Similar projects should adopt a community-based approach to evaluation that is stakeholder-driven, participatory and action-oriented. Resources for implementing such an approach can be found at [www.eval4refugee.ca](http://www.eval4refugee.ca).

- **Invest funding in this project model.** The Working Together Project demonstrated impact in the lives of newcomer refugees, the local labour market, and the newcomer system of support. Funders such as IRCC and the Ontario Ministry of Labour and Training should consider investing in this project model. As the pilot intended to test innovation in workplace language training for newcomer refugees, the project was shown to be largely successful as a viable alternative model to newcomer language training that could be adopted in communities across the country.

## 5. Conclusion

The Working Together Project was a three-year innovative project in which cross-sectoral partners collaborated to improve employment opportunities and language acquisition of newcomer refugees in Canada. The developmental evaluation investigated project learnings and outcomes, to inform future directions and clarify the program theory of change. In year 3, anticipated outcomes for participants and the community were largely met, with additional unanticipated outcomes of greater community integration and sense of belonging of refugee newcomers, as well as increased capacity of community to continue supporting newcomer employment.

Project partners learned a great deal about how to deliver this innovative program over the past three years. They remain motivated to implement whatever aspects of the project they can, even as project funding ends. Partners have also proactively pursued other sources of funding that would enable them to build on project learnings. Finally, partners believe that what they have learned might be of interest to others. They have identified key actions for those wishing to provide vocational support and workplace language training for refugee newcomers in their own unique community context.

## 6. Appendix

### Client Case Study

Ebele (pseudonym) came to Canada as a refugee in 2017 with her family. Before arriving in Canada, she worked as a hairdresser at a salon. Ebele became connected with The Working Together Project and began first with Reception House pre-employment support and then initial workplace support at JD Sweid. Reflecting on this support, Ebele says that the safety training was very helpful, *“They explained how to protect from the cold, how to take care in the dangerous areas when electric shock can happen. Nothing has been left out, it went well”*.

Ebele has been working at JD Sweid for almost two years. She explained that when she began working, she learned some new procedures and skills such as scheduling, how to be on time, and how to adapt to the working environment. Through these challenges, she was able to rely on another program participant who worked alongside her and her supervisor for support. She described her relationship with her coworkers, *“People are friendly [and] my coworkers are good. Sometimes I can’t understand, but they still understand what I’m saying. At the beginning they didn’t understand me, but now I’m good. What I like is the supervisor helps me understand. He talks very slowly”*. While Ebele enjoys the work that she does at JD Sweid, she also reflected that it can be physically challenging work.

Ebele has been taking English classes for about one year. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, her classes have been moved online. While she explained that she prefers the in-person classes, she still enjoys the online learning and continues to benefit from participating. She said, *“At the beginning I didn’t know anything, but it seems that it’s helped me a lot. I use it in my workplace”*.

The impact of the program on Ebele’s life in Canada has been significant. When she first arrived, she found it difficult to find a job, pay for rent, and afford necessities for herself and her children. In her own words, Ebele reflects on the benefit of the program, *“If I continue, my life will continue to improve... If more people do this than they can live their life well.”* Ebele’s positive experience with the program is evident in her reflections and she does not have any suggestions for improvement.

## Employer Case Study

JD Sweid Foods is a local meat manufacturing company and the first to join as a partner employer on The Working Together project three years ago. They initially became connected with the project to fill an employment need within their company and, over the past three years, they have hired and trained more than 100 participants.

JD Sweid Foods' success with the project required some hard work and the willingness to adapt. With the support of Reception House staff, management notes that *"Over the course of the 3 years, it has gotten much easier [and] everyone knows their role now and can do it seamlessly"*, making onboarding and training much smoother. For example, a supervisor reflected, *"If we need 5 people, we can get 5 people in a week"*. One way that JD Sweid Foods has adapted their workplace to be more welcoming to newcomers and refugees is by learning about different cultural expectations and needs that their new hires may have. This meant ensuring there was a private area for prayer and a safe place for foot washing. *"I would just say to be open minded, be patient, make sure you have systems in place,"* said a manager, reflecting on how other workplaces could be also be successful.

Beyond the successful hiring of refugee newcomers, another benefit to the company is the development of deeper relationships with Reception House and the individuals they employ through the project. Managers felt pride in providing a quality, safe work environment for refugee newcomers. *"They thrive. They have income that is steady...they're more confident."* Recently, the company was able to provide a University scholarship to the son of a couple who were hired through the project. Through these positive relationships, the name of the company has become well known in the community and even more employment connections are being made through word-of-mouth referrals.

JD Sweid Foods has learned a lot during their time with The Working Together project. One overarching learning has been about taking the time to invest in creating systems for long-term transformation. When asked about scaling-up the project, a manager cautions, *"if you're looking for an immediate return on your investment, it's not going to happen. Wait until year 2. It will take some time to get there. And if [you] don't have the resilience, [you] might fail. [You] have to be committed and wait for that return on the investment"*.

# Program Logic Model



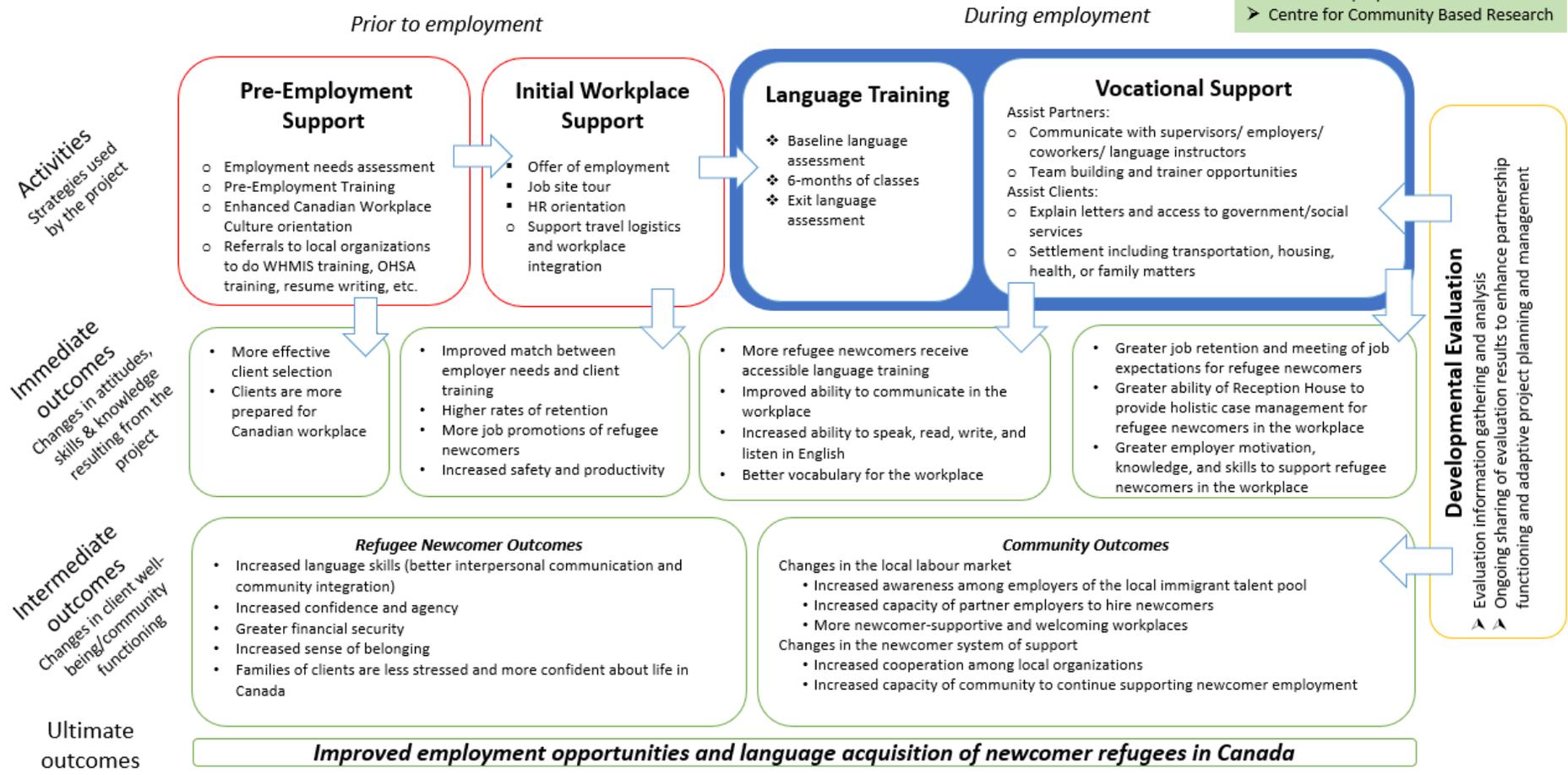
CENTRE FOR  
COMMUNITY  
BASED RESEARCH

V.18 March 2021

## The Working Together Project: Program Logic Model

**PARTNER LEAD**

- Reception House
- ❖ The Literacy Group (Year 1 & 2),  
Conestoga College (Year 2 & 3)
- Partner employer
- Centre for Community Based Research

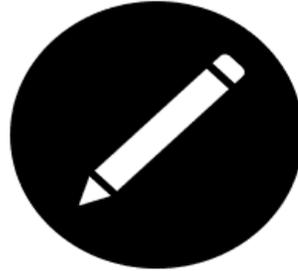


## Year 3 Evaluation Methods



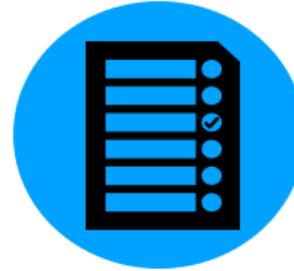
### 1) Program Tracking Tool

- Reception House tracking
- All clients



### + Client Language Assessments

- All clients in classes



### 2) Client Surveys

- Baseline + every 6 months; administered by CCBR
- All clients who have entered classes and the workplace



### 3) Client Case Studies

#### Employer Case Study

- Three interviews to tell the story from the employers' perspective

#### Client Case Study

- One client interview to tell the story of a clients' progress



### 4) Client Focus Groups

- Two focus groups – one with Arabic speakers and the other with multiple languages



### 5) Partner and Staff Focus Groups

- One focus group with partner leads and frontline staff.
- Interviews with key staff absent from the focus group



### 6) Secondary Document Review

- Ongoing by CCBR
- Request partners to forward any documents related to project progress