Exploring the Conditions for Digital Service Delivery

IRCC Refugee Information Needs

May 2021

Table of contents

Executive summary

The Canadian Digital Service (CDS) ran an Exploration with IRCC on refugee information needs, and related programs, from March 22 to April 26, 2021. CDS learned about current service delivery conditions, challenges, and opportunities for providing a service to meet refugee information needs. This report provides an overview of findings and recommendations and proposes a roadmap.

Need for a service

Refugee Information Needs is an initiative to bring consistent, authoritative, accessible information to refugees entering Canada. There are plans to admit 36,000 resettled refugees in 2021-2023. They tend to be younger, less educated, and less likely to speak French or English than other immigrant groups. As a result, refugees may have a more difficult time locating information online than other groups. Depending on their country of origin and the region in which they settle, refugees receive different quality information and services. While other countries, including the United States, have easy to use online resources for refugees to learn about and access relevant services, Canada provides incomplete information in disparate formats and sources such that it is hard for refugees to find the information that they need.

Findings

IRCC has several resources that could be leveraged to build this service. The Client Experience Group conducts user research for specific efforts and potentially could be engaged for ongoing help. Teams within IRCC are creating Information products for groups such as permanent residents in a way that could be a model for how to meet some of the needs of refugees. Legal, privacy policy, and POR groups are available to support the project and have relevant experience from which to draw. IRCC also works with organizations in different regions and internationally with solid expertise in understanding and meeting the information needs of refugees. While making updates to the IRCC website can be slow, IRCC does have a process to release content in a timely fashion when there is a crisis or other extenuating circumstance. Those processes could serve as a model of working on web content iteratively. And, there is a working group assembled with the goal of meeting the information needs of refugees.

At this point, information needs do not sit with one entity. There are 5 DGs reporting to 3 ADMs who make decisions related to information needs for the refugee assistance program (RAP), slowing innovation in this area. In addition, IRCC works with service organizations to inform refugees and it is not yet clear whether IRCC or these organizations are in a position to house and distribute comprehensive information to refugees. Although there is a working group who has successfully produced a video for refugees in different languages, their activities are limited by capacity and access to relevant language and domain expertise.

Next steps

Without a clear directive to do this work, a dedicated team, and clear ownership of the project, there is a need to define who is responsible and assign accountability and appropriate resources (i.e. staff and funding), to make incremental, feasible investments in the project.

Given all we've learned, CDS recommends the following short term objectives to enable a user-centred service delivery model:

1. To begin, identify a champion at the executive level who can secure the time and people to begin the work.
2. Create a content inventory of all refugee information. Identify opportunities to revise, edit, and consolidate what you already have.
3. Assign a service owner to lead the effort and be responsible for day-to-day operations.
4. Conduct a scan of the existing research and consult with partners to learn about user needs and key problem areas to advocate for dedicated resources.
5. Based on the findings from step two and four, identify the problem space you would like to address first. Choose a small problem and a well-defined user group with a high potential for success (like the work you did on the video). Decide if the service is to be housed at IRCC or in another organisation.
6. Build a small team with content creation, UX research, and design experience to conduct user research with refugees, and test and iterate on solutions.

The Refugee Information Needs exploration process

30+
People attended the kick off

6
Functional groups targeted

9
Interviews conducted with 28 employees

Through an Exploration, the Canadian Digital Service (CDS) provides specific recommendations to a partner organization. The Exploration process helps CDS further its understanding of how teams can best deliver services that meet user needs, and what challenges may impede successful delivery.

CDS kicked off the Refugee Information Needs exploration with a stakeholder mapping exercise with the team, to start understanding who would play a role in shaping the service. The team from CDS met with the core group involved in Refugee Information Needs to give an overview of the Exploration process, and how CDS processes help the government serve people better.

The following week, CDS team members met with people throughout the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) organization to learn more about their challenges, victories, and points of friction. The CDS team then documented and analyzed the findings, formulated recommendations for creating a Refugee Information Needs program.

In the final phase of the exploration, CDS collaborated with IRCC to create a plan for how these findings and recommendations could be implemented in a way that prioritizes the needs of refugees.

MARCH 22
Exploration kick off
Over **30** people in attendance from IRCC

MARCH 22 - 29
Engaged 28 employees over 9 interviews
From IRCC, representing work methods and program design, design and direction, legal, communications, ATIP, and policy.

MARCH 30 - APRIL 9

Synthesized and summarized what we heard, our findings and recommendations.

APRIL 6 - 9
Conducted 2 follow-up interviews
To get feedback on the Exploration participant experience to inform ways we can improve the service.

APRIL 13
Shared an initial draft summary with the Refugee Information Needs team for input.

APRIL 16 - 19

Conducted recommendations workshop with the Refugee Information Needs group and added the output to the report

APRIL 26
Shared the Refugee Information Needs Exploration final report with the Refugee Information Needs team.

Recommendations for Refugee Information Needs

Getting started

To enable this project to move forward, we suggest identifying a champion at the executive level who can secure the time and people to begin the work. This executive can support the team as they work through the initial recommended steps up to the point when an official service owner can then be identified.

Content catalog and design

The central pillar of addressing the information needs of refugees is the content, and delivering that content to people through the right channels at the right time. IRCC has a content repository that can serve as a starting point for this service. However, it is not clear what's already available and what's still missing, or needs updating. We recommend performing a "content audit" early, to discover what's already there, and what needs to be found or created.

Successful information services for refugees will require: thoughtful design of the information, communicating through appropriate channels and touchpoints, writing in the languages refugees speak, and making that content accessible regardless of literacy level. Content must be clear, understandable, and easy to locate. Employing best practices in the use of plain language and translation, strategic use of accessible visuals, and performing usability studies on content can increase the effectiveness and adoption rate of services.

We recommend starting the project with a small set of people conducting a content inventory and based on what is available and lacking, think about new tactics for content design.

Content inventory

The first step is to perform a content inventory or "audit" of all the information currently being provided, to identify information gaps and inconsistencies. This can be reviewed in conjunction with the journey map to point out gaps in the process, where users are at different touchpoints, and what resources are available to them.

- Create an inventory of refugee information-related content from different IRCC groups.
- Categorize the content in a way that makes sense for the project: such as content type (web, brochure, training, etc.), information type, audience, ownership, and last update.
- Identify where information is missing, where there's duplicate information, and where information is inconsistent or conflicting.
- Expand the content inventory by gathering information from delivery partners (eg SPOs)

Creating multilingual content and low-literacy materials

Currently, translation into languages other than French or English is a big challenge for IRCC, and necessary for refugees who are not fluent in English and French yet. Many refugees also have low to no literacy skills in any language. We suggest testing and iterating different creative solutions to meet their needs.

- Identify a trusted translation service and iterate until a solution works. Consider the following:
    - Test crowdsourcing translation.
    - Engage immigrant communities in the translation process.
    - Test automated translation tools that have human review/approval before publishing.
- Test other methods of communication such as visuals, videos, and audio to communicate.

Information structure and delivery

Aside from testing different channels of providing information, the current content can be restructured and reformatted (e.g. information that's currently in pdfs) to be more accessible.

- Rewrite content in plain language that scores well below a grade 5 level for readability.
- Explore offering a service to enable refugees to submit questions using the technology they currently have (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal, SMS) to receive detailed information. Test it.
    - Use data from these interactions to prioritize what information to improve first.
- Create information structures that users can navigate more easily than long documents or webpages. Test these new formats.
    - Simplify information hierarchies with added visuals, or re-organizing content to put important, salient information at the top, and the full details at the bottom.
    - Explore using interaction questions to lead people to the content they need such as the visa section of the IRCC website or the Veteran's Affairs Benefit Finder.

Consistent messaging

Consistent messaging will help avoid confusion when refugees gather information from multiple sources (like IRCC, SPOs, and private citizens). Improving consistency in IRCC's messaging requires choosing a "source of truth" for information within or outside of IRCC to serve as reference for any organization working with refugees that creates or updates content.

- Create a set of guiding principles that all information needs to adhere to, in order to create a consistent message – regardless of who's providing it (whether IRCC, SPOs or SAHs).
- Create a "source of truth" where factual information, approved messaging, and other information for refugees can be accessed centrally by other IRCC groups, SPOs, and SAHs.
- Create content guides that include examples of how information can be delivered using plain language in accessible formats, while still following all IRCC guidelines and the "source of truth" described above.

Align the organization

Currently, the service sits across several branches and ownership is diffused. Making changes to existing services can require several levels of approval. This structure stifles advancement and can cause frustration.

To enable this project to move forward, we recommend that you choose a person to own the service and be responsible for its outcomes in the longer term, a "service owner". This person will work closely with the executive overseeing the project. Furthermore, we suggest clearly defining responsibilities of each relevant DG with the goal of limiting the number of DGs involved in each decision and the approvals needed to make changes.

Define clear ownership

The existing working group for Refugee Information Needs includes many bright, thoughtful team members who were able to produce a video in 5 non-official languages to help with a gap in information services. Based on this experience, setting clear outcomes and expectations and empowering a team to iterate and test different mediums and content structures for the information will give them the space and opportunity to meet their objectives.

- Create a single service owner (this could be an executive) who is responsible for the outcomes of the refugee information needs initiative.

Streamline decision making and content approvals.

To allow for iterative user centered delivery of the service, we recommend creative solutions be found to limit the number of approvals required for new content to be released. Some ways we suggest would be:

- Use a Lean approach to map the approval processes to understand who is involved, where there are redundancies, and identify opportunities to simplify the process.
- Based on the map of approval processes, identify when each executive needs to be included in decision making (ie: if information involves GARs or if information is about arrival, etc).

Prioritize support for the service

To deliver and maintain a service requires funding, staff, and a sustainable model for support. In order to improve outcomes for refugees, this service has to be a priority for the organization and remain a priority over time. We've identified three ways to do so within IRCC. The first is to identify an executive who is responsible for the service and can begin to secure resources, time and FTEs for the work. The second is to link refugee information needs to a well-understood departmental priority. The third is to use research to identify the most pressing need, and build a case for a service that meets the identified need. IRCC could then secure funding for the service on its own.

For this service to succeed, it will need to be staffed with a long-term team that can continue to produce a service that responds to changing information needs, cultural considerations, and differing contexts of the variety of refugee communities resettling in Canada. Once live, measure impact in order to advocate for the long-term prioritization of the service.

Leverage research to make the case for value

The team has thoroughly reviewed international efforts to meet the information needs of refugees and to identify possible gaps in Canadian offerings. We recommend continuing this work and applying it to the Canadian context to help define the problem and gain support for this initiative.

- Conduct a literature review of the commissioned research on refugee needs to develop key insights to incorporate into a service vision and business case.
- Continue to look at other international refugee programs that have been successful in the areas that are important to IRCC and identify what has made them successful.
    - Request data on impacts of the service offerings.
    - Identify how their approach could be adapted to the Canadian context.

- Review current efforts to provide information to refugees from both in and outside of the government context, e.g. from regional efforts, community groups, social media, and other informal organizations. Identify efforts that you can build upon or with whom you can collaborate.
- Conduct research on the need for the service, combining qualitative interview findings with surveys and other quantitative work.
- Reevaluate the barriers that have impeded improvements in the past to understand why they were unsuccessful.
- Define a performance measurement strategy, including outcomes related to meeting information needs that have not been collected (e.g. not part of the annual survey).

Tie refugee information needs to bigger priorities and data

Refugee information needs has always been a priority for IRCC however, has always been lower priority than other initiatives and often gets neglected by the overworked team. IRCC is a department driven by outcomes (rather than output) and metrics. By tying the initiative to other departmental priorities and collecting data on the outcomes, a stronger case can be made to continually fund addressing these needs.

- Tie improving information (or exploring information needs) to fit other priorities within the department
  - Is this information relevant for a wider audience? Identify audience types and their needs.
  - Look at who is creating this information, and give them the knowledge and understanding of how to make improvements.
- Explore funding possibilities for the service. For example, the use of unused project funds for the development of a video series.
- Leverage any Foresight studies to identify potential future needs.
- Work in the open within the department to share research and learnings, and provide opportunities for other groups to share back.
  - Create opportunities for others to provide ideas, such as concentrated design “sprints” or “dragon’s den competitions.”

Articulate the value of the service

Based on the problem and specific audience that you define through early stage research, draft a value proposition for the service. Once you understand the value, you can better advocate for the service.

- Define the value of IRCC meeting the information needs of refugees as a core team, or through a group session – for example, through a value mapping workshop.
- Use the research and data gathered to create a brief (1-2 paragraph), impactful, data driven statement for how refugee information needs are lacking and why it is IRCC’s responsibility to

fill the gap.

Scope the problem space

Delivering effective services requires articulating the problem to solve, and the scope of the solution to be delivered. This can help the team focus, prioritize tasks, and chart progress. Based on your content inventory and review of existing research, we suggest you identify a narrowly-scoped problem and one user group to address first then broaden the scope and user groups served over time.

By defining an initial project with a narrow scope that seeks to solve a well-defined problem (that's considered high priority in the organization and to their partners), IRCC will increase the chances of both short- and long-term success. (see Appendix B)

Define who the "users" are, and how the needs of user groups align

This service could be for refugees directly or for the service organizations that work with them. It could also be for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) solely or could be for Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees (BVORs) as well. Once you determine the audience, you can identify their needs and begin to address them.

- Determine whether IRCC is delivering content directly to refugees or through partner organizations or both. Will it be for GARs or SPOs? For PSRs or SAHs?
- Map GAR, PSR and BVOR to understand if they are getting information from the same places or not. As you scale, identify similar information needs and solve for the common problems (example of this kind of mapping exercise).

Empower a multidisciplinary, iterative approach

After defining a service owner and which executives will be involved, we recommend assembling a multi-disciplinary team, to begin working in an iterative fashion. Diverse teams contribute to the success of services, digital or otherwise. Multidisciplinary teams working in an iterative way reduce overhead, establish important internal feedback processes, and increase the likelihood that the service will meet user needs (see Appendix B). This also meets the Digital standard of collaborating widely, empower staff to deliver better services and iterate and improve frequently.

IRCC currently includes some different disciplines in working groups and teams but there is a lack of designers, UX researchers, and content creators who would bring new understanding of the problem space and propose different solutions. In addition, there are many levels of approval that teams need to go through to make changes, impeding the ability to iteratively develop solutions. Both acquiring research and design roles, and increasing the autonomy of the team, would enable the delivery of this service.

Work in small, multidisciplinary teams

Build a team (or potentially a working group) with different disciplines early in the process. This allows quick and constant input from other groups and disciplines present within the Refugee Information Needs Space.

- Put together a core team and define their roles in delivering changes to refugee information. The team should include a service owner, a content creator, and UX professional to do design and research.
    - This could leverage the current working group, if they are given a single executive who is accountable, and an expanded mandate to meet the defined user needs.
    - This could mean either hiring or bringing in people from IRCC – including from Client Experience Branch, legal (once applicable), etc. to be able to provide ongoing input.
- If people can't be dedicated full time to the team, explore whether they can be on the team part time. Even a part-time commitment from a subject matter or other expert can improve the iterative feedback process, provided their role and remit is clearly defined.

Take on small chunks of work, and iterate on them

Start adopting an iterative approach to problem solving, and how it applies to the Refugee Information Needs program.

- Implementing Agile in government services can be hard, but not impossible. Research new methods of working, and try to slowly incorporate some new ways of working (agile/iterative processes, user stories, epics, prioritized backlogs, etc) over time. Be open to assessing what is working/what isn't, and make the needed adjustments in order to assure a smooth, continuous delivery loop.
- Consider serving content in a small-scale "pilot" (a new page on the website, changing language on a form, updating content on a particular program, etc), where iteration can be done constantly, and learnings can be incorporated back into the service quickly.
- Create a hypothesis, test, and iterate on it. A launch shouldn't be the end of a new service or program.

Conduct user research with each iteration

User research is a set of activities used throughout the service lifespan to understand and meet the needs of users. In the section on Prioritize and Support, we describe how you could employ generative user research to inform the first phases of the service. Once you have a team, we also recommend that you conduct ongoing usability and evaluative user research to see whether the service is working for people as intended and how you can improve the service over time. Through ongoing user research, teams can build user-centred services based on evidence that are both usable and useful. Conducting user research is a core enabling condition for service delivery (see Appendix B) as well as meeting the digital standard of designing with users.

At IRCC, there are both real and perceived barriers to conducting user research that could be overcome to do this critical work. There is little to no contact with refugees outside of the client experience branch right now. However, the Public Opinion Research (POR) group has a good understanding of user research and the privacy policy group sees possible ways to conduct user research in an ethical manner. There is a need for more capacity but there are options to build it.

Build capacity to conduct user research

To conduct user research, the team will need to build capacity in this domain.

- Investigate the options such as, including someone from the Client Experience Branch, training up existing staff, hiring, and working with vendors.
- Locate people with the language skills to facilitate sessions. Consider refugees, past or present, who could facilitate research. Hire staff and/or co-op students with these language skills and cultural understanding.

Leverage existing research and data sources

IRCC has engaged several groups to conduct research with refugees that could be relevant, as have other organizations. Before conducting original research, we suggest a review of the literature and other efforts (See section on Prioritize support for the service) and talking to agencies who have data that could inform the design of this service. Identify what questions have been answered and what is still unknown and draft a research plan accordingly.

- If relevant to the problem you identify, engage with IOM to better understand refugee needs before coming to Canada.
- Leverage call centre data to understand what information people seek out. Set up regular meetings with call centers to track how information needs change over time.
- Look at web analytics for current sites to better understand needs and usage patterns.

Talk with refugees directly

Team members perceived barriers to conducting user research with refugees beyond what seemed to be present in our analysis. Think creatively about ways to conduct research with end-users.

- Identify organizations who can connect you to refugees, and partner with them.
- Find ways to connect with refugees outside of the application process. Reach out to service organizations to help recruit people. Interview their members by phone. Post on social media to invite participants. After COVID, conduct intercept testing where refugees congregate.
- Begin with English or French speakers, then expand to research in other languages.
- Work with the privacy policy group to find opportunities to collect informed consent during the service experience, to gain access to a larger group of refugees in the future.
- Compensate refugees for their time both in person and during remote testing. The CDS policy team can advise on how to do so.

Begin with small studies and iterate often

Carve out small manageable projects and experiment, tinker, and rework both the research process and the designs and content that result from that work. The team will learn through small studies as well as larger ones.

- Use the launch of the video as an opportunity to solicit and learn from user feedback.
- Identify small-scope engagements that are doable, and can inform the service design (even small studies of 10 - 20 people are informative).
- Test early and often, opposed to waiting to the end or using annual surveys. Test simple prototypes and drafts in addition to polished materials (for example: paper versions of a website or, in the case of the video, rough cuts or the script itself).

Conduct research to understand the utility and impact of the service

Once you have some capacity, you can conduct research to answer your specific questions.

- Conduct targeted research focused on areas including information needs at different points in a refugee's journey, technical access and limitations, and appropriate channels for communication.
- Based on your research, draft a list of "user stories." User stories are descriptions of the value of different features of your service written from the perspective of the user. Base the design of the service on these user stories.
- Test possible solutions as you prototype them, to understand if they are usable and valuable for the intended audience.
- Find ways to highlight the impact of these improvements and share findings with senior management and the broader IRCC community to show the value of the work being done.

Roadmap

The following are the recommendations mapped by impact and feasibility based on a workshop CDS conducted with key stakeholders at IRCC.

Start Now

★★★ HIGH IMPACT
●●● LOW COMPLEXITY

Content catalog and design

- Categorize the content in a way that makes sense for the project: such as content type (web, brochure, training, etc.), information type, audience, ownership, and last update.

Prioritize support for the service

- Continue to look at other international refugee programs that have been successful in the areas that are important to IRCC and identify what has made them successful.
    - Request data on impacts of the service offerings.
    - Identify how their approach could be adapted to the Canadian context.

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Identify organizations who can connect you to refugees, and partner with them.
- Find ways to highlight the impact of these improvements and share findings with senior management and the broader IRCC community to show the value of the work being done.
- Identify small-scope engagements that are doable, and can inform the service design (even small studies of 10 - 20 people are informative).
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- If relevant to the problem you identify, engage with IOM to better understand refugee needs before coming to Canada.

★★★ HIGH IMPACT
●●● MEDIUM COMPLEXITY

Prioritize support for the service

- Tie improving information (or exploring information needs) to fit other priorities within the department

    - Is this information relevant for a wider audience? Identify audience types and their needs.
    - Look at who is creating this information, and give them the knowledge and understanding of how to make improvements.

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Find ways to connect with refugees outside of the application process. Reach out to service organizations to help recruit people. Interview their members by phone. Post on social media to invite participants. After COVID, conduct intercept testing where refugees congregate.
- Review current efforts to provide information to refugees from both in and outside of the government context, e.g. from regional efforts, community groups, social media, and other informal organizations. Identify efforts that you can build upon or with whom you can collaborate.

★★★ HIGH IMPACT

●●● HIGH COMPLEXITY

Content catalog and design

- Explore offering a service to enable refugees to submit questions using the technology they currently have (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal, SMS) to receive detailed information. Test it.
    - Use data from these interactions to prioritize what information to improve first.
- Create a set of principles produced by IRCC that all information needs to adhere to, in order to create a consistent message – regardless of who's providing it (whether IRCC, SPOs or SAHs).

Align the organization

- Based on the map of approval processes, identify when each executive needs to be included in decision making (ie: if information involves GARs or if information is about arrival, etc).
- Create a single service owner or executive who is responsible for the outcomes of the refugee information needs initiative.
- Use a lean approach to map the approval processes to understand who is involved, where there are redundancies, and identify opportunities to simplify the process.

Scope the problem space

- Map GAR, PSR and BVOR to understand if they are getting information from the same places or different. Identify similar information needs and solve for the common problems (example of this kind of mapping exercise).

Empower a multidisciplinary approach

- Implementing Agile in government services can be hard, but not impossible. Research new methods of working, and try to slowly incorporate some Agile processes (user stories, epics, prioritized backlogs, etc) over time. Be open to assessing what is working/what isn't, and make the needed adjustments in order to assure a smooth, continuous delivery loop.
- Put together a core team and define their roles in delivering changes to refugee information. The team should include a service owner, a content creator, and UX professional to do design and research.
    - This could leverage the current working group, if they are given a single executive who is accountable, and an expanded mandate to meet the defined user needs.
    - This could mean either hiring or bringing in people from IRCC – including from Client Experience Branch, legal (once applicable), etc. to be able to provide ongoing input.
- Consider serving content in a small-scale "pilot" (a new page on the website, changing language on a form, updating content on a particular program, etc), where iteration can be done constantly, and learnings can be incorporated back into the service quickly.

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Based on your research, draft a list of "user stories." User stories are descriptions of the value of different features of your service written from the perspective of the user. Base the design of the service on these user stories.

Start soon

★★☆ MEDIUM IMPACT
●○○ LOW COMPLEXITY

Content catalog and design

- Identify where information is missing, where there's duplicate information, and where information is inconsistent or conflicting.
- Expand the content inventory by gathering information from delivery partners (eg SPOs)
- Create an inventory of refugee information-related content from different IRCC groups.

Prioritize support for the service

- Conduct a literature review of the commissioned research on refugee needs to develop key insights to incorporate into a service vision and business case.

★★☆ MEDIUM IMPACT
●●○ MEDIUM COMPLEXITY

Content catalog and design

- Rewrite content in plain language that scores well below a grade 5 level for readability.
- Test other methods of communication such as visuals, videos, and audio to communicate.
- Plain language guides that give examples of how information can be delivered more clearly and relatably, while still following all IRCC guidelines and the "source of truth".

Prioritize support for the service

- Use the research and data gathered to create a brief (1-2 paragraph), impactful, data driven statement for how refugee information needs are lacking and why it is IRCC's responsibility to fill the gap.
- Conduct research on the need for the service, combining qualitative interview findings with surveys and other quantitative work.

Empower a multidisciplinary approach

- Create a hypothesis, test, and iterate on it. A launch shouldn't be the end of a new service or program.

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Test possible solutions as you prototype them, to understand if they are usable and valuable for the intended audience.
- Test early and often, opposed to waiting to the end or using annual surveys. Test simple prototypes and drafts in addition to polished materials (for example: paper versions of a website or, in the case of the video, rough cuts or the script itself).

★★☆ MEDIUM IMPACT

●●● HIGH COMPLEXITY

Prioritize support for the service

- Define a performance measurement strategy, including outcomes related to meeting information needs that have not been collected (e.g. not part of the annual survey).
- Define the value of IRCC meeting the information needs of refugees as a core team, or through a group session – for example, through a value mapping workshop.
- Reevaluate the barriers that have impeded improvements in the past to understand why they were unsuccessful.

Start later

★☆☆ LOW IMPACT

●○○ LOW COMPLEXITY

Prioritize support for the service

- Work in the open within the department to share research and learnings, and provide opportunities for other groups to share back.
  - Create opportunities for others to provide ideas, such as concentrated design "sprints" or "dragon's den competitions."
- Explore funding possibilities for the service. For example, the use of unused project funds for the development of a video series.

Scope the problem space

- Determine whether IRCC is delivering content directly to refugees or through partner organizations or both. Will it be for GARs or SPOs? For PSRs or SAHs?

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Create information structures that users can navigate more easily than long documents or web pages of text. Test these new formats.
- Compensate refugees for their time both in person and during remote testing. The CDS policy team can advise on how to do so.
- Leverage call centre data to understand what information people seek out. Set up regular meetings with call centers to track how information needs change over time.

- Simplify information hierarchies with added visuals, or re-organizing content to put important, salient information at the top, and the full details at the bottom.
    - Explore using interaction questions to lead people to the content they need such as the visa section of the IRCC website or the Veteran's Affairs Benefit Finder.

★☆☆ LOW IMPACT
●●○ MEDIUM COMPLEXITY

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Investigate the options such as, including someone from the Client Experience Branch, training up existing staff, hiring, and working with vendors.
- Begin with English or French speakers, then expand to research in other languages.
    - Work with the privacy policy group to find opportunities to collect informed consent during the service experience, to gain access to a larger group of refugees in the future.
- Conduct targeted research focused on areas including information needs at different points in a refugee's journey, technical access and limitations, and appropriate channels for communication.

★☆☆ LOW IMPACT
●●● HIGH COMPLEXITY

Content catalog and design

- Identify a trusted translation service and iterate until a solution works. Consider the following:
    - Test crowdsourcing translation.
    - Engage immigrant communities in the translation process.
    - Test automated translation tools that have human review/approval before publishing.

Prioritize support for the service

- Define the value of IRCC meeting the information needs of refugees as a core team, or through a group session – for example, through a value mapping workshop.
- Leverage any Foresight studies to identify potential future needs.

Empower a multidisciplinary approach

- If people can't be dedicated full time to the team, explore whether they can be on the team part time. Even a part-time commitment from a subject matter or other expert can improve the iterative feedback process.

Conduct user research with each iteration

- Locate people with the language skills to facilitate sessions. Consider refugees, past or present, who could facilitate research. Hire staff and/or co-op students with these language skills and cultural understanding.

Appendix A: What We Heard

As a part of this Exploration, we spoke to people from all levels and disciplines in your organization. We conducted group working sessions and individual-level interviews. To make sense of what we heard, we took notes during each session and analyzed this qualitative data against the conditions that enable or block digital service delivery. Based on this analysis, we made recommendations on key areas to focus on. We present the results of the analysis below and the recommendations are above.

About Refugee Information Needs

Resettled refugees are selected abroad and arrive in Canada as permanent residents. IRCC provides them with a variety of services to support their successful settlement and integration into Canadian society. In the last 5 years, Canada has resettled 135,000 refugees. There are plans to admit 36,000 resettled refugees in 2021-2023. The resettlement of refugees (BVORs, PSRs and GARs) is a shared responsibility between the federal government and many other partners, including private individuals. Pre-arrival, resettlement, settlement services and support are provided by IRCC-funded service provider organizations and by private sponsors, all of whom are key partners in the delivery of Canada's resettlement and settlement programs. These organizations and sponsors provide eligible newcomers – including refugees – with services, support, and information that they need to integrate into Canadian society. They not only address immediate and essential needs, but also help further with the integration process: offering services such as language training, employment-related support, and the delivery of information for successful integration. There are various partnerships between IRCC and the diverse sponsor community that provide support and information to sponsors as well, for them to be able to help effectively with the integration journey.

In the case of government-assisted refugees resettling in Canada outside of Quebec, resettlement supports and services are provided by the Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program. IRCC funds 32 organizations in 34 communities to deliver RAP services. While IRCC isn't directly delivering this program they do have some information resources that are designed for end user clients: e.g., information on the IRCC website, but it is only in English and French and is very difficult to find – even for those of us who speak English and French and generally know how to navigate GoC websites. Also, the Information and Orientation stream of the IRCC Settlement Program produces the Welcome to Canada workbook that is given to all newcomers to Canada, but it is only in English and French.

Resettled refugees are relatively young as compared to the Canadian-born population: children ages 0-14 comprised one third of all resettled refugees over the past five years, 29% were in the 15-29 age-range, and close to 25% were 30-44 years old. Almost 80% of GARs, 75% of BVORs, and 45% of

PSRs have no knowledge of either English or French and education levels are significantly lower than newcomers admitted to Canada under immigration streams, with more than 75% resettled refugees indicating that they had secondary schooling or less (including none).

There are lines of evidence that have confirmed that IRCC has a role to play in the information delivery service of refugees. For example: The Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (GAR, PSR, BVOR and RAP) (2016) recommended that IRCC should develop a strategy to improve privately-sponsored refugees' awareness of the supports available to them during their first year in Canada and the Evaluation of Pre-Arrival Settlement Services (2018) confirmed that there is a continued need to provide relevant and accurate settlement information and support to newcomers prior to their departure for Canada to accelerate their integration and that there are gaps in knowledge as newcomers face a variety of challenges and have a variety of needs upon arrival. Data from IRCC's 2018 Newcomer Survey indicates that all three streams of resettled refugees reported that the information they received about living in Canada met only some or none of their needs. Interestingly, a significant proportion of resettled refugees reported that they did not receive adequate information about money and finances, with over 40% of GARs and over a third of PSRs reporting that the information they received met only some of their needs or less. One of the key areas that emerged from the 2017 Settlement Design Challenge which explored how to best support newcomers, included the need to "enhance the communications between IRCC, SPOs and newcomers to ensure clients remain at the centre of what we collectively do.

Refugee settlement is one of the major pillars of immigration in Canada. The refugee program fulfills Canada's commitments under the 1951 Refugee Convention and Universal Declaration of Human Rights while also meeting the country's population and economic needs. In the Fall Economic Statement, the government highlighted that it had not been able to meet immigration targets for 2020. The consequences of that shortfall was predicted to have long term social and economic consequences for Canada. Highlighting immigration as a priority issue, the government invested more money in immigration and settlement increased its targets for the next three years. To do this, the government will need to optimize its refugee program in order to handle more users as well as enhance the user outcomes.

About the opportunity

Typically, IRCC's approach has been that they do not provide information directly to refugees. Instead, they contract their service providers to do this through Vote 10 funding (i.e., Contribution money through RAP and Settlement). For resettled refugees, much of this has been (and continues to be) funding to the International Organization for Migration for material they provide to resettled refugees in the Canadian Orientations Abroad program. In Canada, the IRCC service providers produce material in their own communities for resettled refugee clients. IRCC also funds the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program to produce training and tools for private sponsors – but not for refugees themselves. In a number of recent reports and evaluations it has been identified that IRCC could play a leadership role in providing information directly to refugees and/or ensuring that the service providers and private sponsors are providing consistent national information to refugees. IRCC, through the information and orientation group, is already producing content that is reported to be well received by those who interact with it.

Refugees arriving in Canada are mostly not proficient in either English or French, presenting a huge barrier for them to access information that may be helpful for their integration journey. Furthermore, we have also learned that some refugees have literacy challenges in their own native languages, making the case to further explore multi-lingual, visual, and accessible products. In 2020 a working group, including all those working with resettled refugees: GARs, PSRs and BVORs, both pre- and post-arrival, and Communications, came together to consider what resettled refugee information needs are, where the gaps might be, and what we could be doing to better address them as a department. The working group's primary focus was to support the development of an animated video for resettled refugees translated into top refugee languages, which all agreed was a priority for meeting the information of needs of resettled refugee clients. Through the process, the team realized they have much to learn about resettled refugees' digital access and digital literacy. The IRCC website, in its current form, is difficult to navigate for native English and French speakers, let alone for those with low literacy. The current form and structure of the website is not intuitive and many pages are not mobile friendly. Research suggests that refugees often rely on mobile devices to access this information.

Content catalog and design

During the exploration we heard a lot about the need to meet refugees where they are at. Literacy and access to digital resources are key considerations in designing materials for refugees.

- IRCC has limited content design capacity in-house
  - No direct user testing is done on the content designed
  - Program areas work with communications team and consultants for content design
  - IRCC reaches out to service providers to gain feedback on new content
- Content is not currently designed for the resettled refugee population
  - While IOM is able to translate their information into 14 languages IRCC provides information only in English and French
  - Even then, mother tongue literacy is a challenge
  - IRCC has identified that they could use more images in their produced information and they have plain language as a goal within the organization

    - It is difficult to measure the efficacy of translations and additional content work to justify the cost
- Information needs to be easy to find and presented in on demand way
    - Information needs to be relevant and readily accessible
    - The handbook is very big and difficult to find things in if you aren't sure what you are looking for
    - The in person sessions is a lot of content to go over in a short period
    - There are new channels opening up with opportunities. Syrian refugee groups created Facebook groups to share information organically
    - The IRCC website currently repackages existing content to meet web standards. They don't have the capacity to modify content for different mediums

Prioritize support for the service

Prioritizing and funding information needs initiatives

The information needs of refugees and other newcomers to Canada has always been on IRCC's priority list – however, there are always higher priority items that push information needs initiatives to the side. We identified three core challenges that contribute to this deprioritization of information needs:

- Funding has been a consistent challenge
    - There was a call for a national curriculum to be created by IRCC and delivered by partners, but the program wasn't funded.
    - There are also fears around CDS creating an application that won't be supported and funded long term. The solution doesn't have to be "another app."
- Providing refugees with good, accurate, and up-to-date information, while important, is not the highest priority at IRCC at the highest levels.
    - Refugee information needs has been a revolving interest, not a core priority.
    - Processing speed is always top of the list, not the quality of information.
- Teams are already stretched thin
    - With the increased numbers of resettled refugees over the years, there has not been an increase in resources to match.
    - There is limited capacity on the web communications team to make changes, especially in a timely fashion.

Scope the problem space

Multiple providers of information / rich ecosystem

There are a large number of organizations providing services and information to refugees. While some information is relevant to refugees across Canada, each region of Canada also has its own unique programs and imposes different challenges to refugees. Therefore, the information should reflect both the federal and local realities for refugees. IRCC relies on different service organizations to inform refugees.

- SPOs and SAHs are the ones with direct contact with refugees providing them information
    - There are working groups to try to help share these groups share information and provide consistent information to all refugees
    - SAHs are not paid by the government so there is limited control over what they do outside of their agreement terms
    - There is limited outcome data from the information these groups are sharing with refugees
- Regional differences within the country make it difficult to have consistency across RAP
- Other channels and people may be better positioned or trusted to provide information
    - Resettled refugees often rely on friends and family for information therefore the information needs to be accessible so that it can be used by front line and friends and family and others
    - There are many tools in the ecosystem already including informal social media groups that focus on helping refugees settle in Canada.
    - Many people who were once refugees choose to sponsor other people. These individuals serve as a source of information to new arrivals.

IRCC Goals and Scope

During our conversations with IRCC team members there were many different ideas on what the goal of the initiative is and who the end users should be.

- There are multiple goals stated during exploration, including the desire to provide:
    - Accurate, current information - from trusted sources in accessible formats.
    - Better information for all newcomers to Canada - not just refugees.
    - Tools to refugees to live independently in society.
    - More information directly from IRCC.
- There is little agreement internally at IRCC about who these information programs are for:
    - Are they for sponsors or refugees
    - Are they for any, or all, of the three types of clients (newcomers, service providers, or private citizens like teachers or family members)

Align the organization

Aligning the internal structure of IRCC to improve information needs

Refugee information needs span many organizational areas within IRCC, making authority diffuse and presenting challenges to deliberate and strategic improvement.

There is a lot of movement and confusion across business units and groups in IRCC. Resettlement touches every area of the department:

- 5 DGs and 3 ADMs responsible for managing elements of the Refugee Assistance Program
- Each group has their own priorities, and lenses through which improvements can be assessed.
- There are divisions between sectors and programs that each “own” a piece of the refugee journey, leading to a lack of coordination and strategy without a central, holistic vision.

The Client Experience Group has made journey maps to create clarity on the end to end experience to help with this coordination. Two years ago, decisions were made unilaterally from one group or another, though this appears to be changing. There is still some work to do to ensure operational impacts are taken into consideration when making new policy decisions and operations is properly supported across the organization.

Empower a multidisciplinary, iterative approach

Change how IRCC delivers services over time

Working in a multidisciplinary and iterative approach is the cornerstone to delivering services, digital or otherwise. While IRCC includes different disciplines in their working groups, there is a lack of design, content creation, research skills, and leadership on these teams.

- IRCC legal and privacy teams are responsive, and already support innovative solutions as the governing legislation is not limiting
- Working groups include most policy areas, which facilitates iteration across implementation and policy areas.
- Teams are unfamiliar with agile or iterative approaches to delivery, which slows down progress.
- Making a change to the website requires several levels of approval, which impedes iterative improvements to the content and navigation.

Conduct user research with each iteration

There is a desire, expressed by many people across the organization, to understand the needs and constraints of refugees and use this understanding to build truly client-centred services. User research is a mechanism to establish this understanding and incorporate it into service delivery. However, there were several real and perceived barriers to performing user research.

- Members of the organisation see client experience as the organization that conducts user research. They do not see it as their domain.
    - In an isolated project, they did some journey mapping for refugees.
    - It is not clear whether they could provide further or ongoing support to continue this research.
- Currently, there is no direct contact with refugees.
    - There are privacy and ethical considerations when working with this vulnerable population. Refugees do not currently consent to participate in research.
    - If the research is tied to an evaluation, then IRCC has a clear funding mechanism for user research. If not, IRCC lacks the funding and capacity to conduct user research with refugees.
    - IRCC does survey refugees and there is an opportunity to add survey questions that examine user needs or other topics of interest for refugee information needs.
    - The teams only have a vague understanding of the digital literacy, needs, constraints in which refugees operate.
- There are several enabling conditions that could support user research:
    - The organization works with academic and other partners to conduct research on topics relevant to the current effort, but this research is not always used when developing products.
    - Privacy policy group has creative ideas on how to collect informed consent to recruit participants. POR group has a clear understanding of user research versus POR.

Appendix B: Explorations Background

About the Canadian Digital Service

The Canadian Digital Service (CDS) was established in 2017 to help address the gap between Canadians' expectations and federal service delivery, and the Government of Canada's track record delivering IT projects. CDS works with partner organizations to improve government services for the people who use them, builds capacity across government for human-centred service design and iterative development, and provides advice to inform government decisions about digital investments.

About CDS Explorations

Often departments approach CDS for help, but it is hard to know how we might best support them without having a better picture of the service opportunity and the delivery conditions and practices in place. By conducting an Exploration, we help the department take stock while building our own understanding to inform potential next steps.

Through discussions with executives, team members and departmental representatives across a variety of functional areas, like policy, IT, program delivery, communications, legal, and privacy, CDS looks at the existing conditions and practices and the extent to which they enable digital service delivery. CDS uses the following criteria to inform recommendations to improve digital delivery within a particular service context and opportunity:

- establishing and empowering multidisciplinary teams;
- conducting user research to make service design decisions informed by user feedback;
- practicing continuous improvement;
- working in the open;
- cultivating a culture of collaboration; and,
- shifting to a service delivery model (i.e., ensuring prioritization and funding for digital services, including talent development and recruitment and access to modern tools and infrastructure).

This structured look-under-the-hood approach helps us deliver timely, incremental value to the department, and gives us the information we need to inform if and how CDS might continue to partner. This could be, for example, through consulting, an embedded service design and delivery team, or by connecting them to CDS platform services.

Appendix C: Enabling Conditions for Digital Service Delivery

Establishing and empowering multidisciplinary teams

Multidisciplinary teams – combining design researchers, designers, software developers, and a product manager into a single team – are the core unit of digital service delivery. Traditionally, IT projects are delivered by isolated IT teams, adding significant overhead, eliminating important feedback loops, and leading to legacy systems and services. Overcoming this requires changes to departmental processes, funding priorities, and structures.

Conducting user research

User research – direct research and testing with the people who will use a service – is instrumental in building user-centred designs. It ensures that services meet real needs and provide a smooth user experience. Many departments are not equipped to conduct this type of research due to perceived policy constraints, including public opinion research and privacy, and/or because they lack the in-house expertise to do so.

Practicing continuous improvement

Making small, steady improvements to a service – and quickly deploying them to get feedback from real users – is how leading technology firms build great products. Traditionally in government, IT projects lock in requirements based on lengthy upfront planning, without the ability to course correct based on feedback from users, and changes to services are deployed very infrequently. Overcoming this requires changes to how projects are approved and funded, how infrastructure (e.g., cloud) is accessed, and the tools available for software development and web publishing.

Working in the open

Working in the open – sharing lessons-learned, successes and failures, performance data, and software code publicly – is an important function of service delivery teams. This can be a significant departure for some risk-averse IT and service delivery teams. Navigating existing government communications approval processes and culture can discourage teams from working in the open.

Cultivating a culture of collaboration

A collaborative, or generative, culture is one of high cooperation, skilled communicators, and shared risks. A high-trust culture that supports creativity and change cultivates an environment of continuous improvement. Innovation and failure are viewed through a lens of curiosity and learning. This kind of generative, adaptive culture has been shown to be a predictor of both productivity and job satisfaction.

Shifting to a continuous delivery model

A delivery model reflects the purpose of an organization or program, and articulates what it does, how it works, and who is involved to create or enable public value.
Delivery models in government can avoid becoming path dependent or over reliant on existing ways of working when continuously improved and responsive to shifting contexts and needs.
They can position the organization or program, and the value it is aiming to create, relative to and interconnected with, other actors and organizations aiming to influence the same system and people, and enable similar outcomes.