KoraWay Brief

The Problem

Sub-saharan international students arriving in the US face a wave of challenges before even stepping on campus–isolation, housing uncertainty, food insecurity, cultural adjustments, finance issues and much more. Most are the first in this journey requiring them to face these adversities alone with nobody waiting on the other side for them

The Insight

I watched my cousin arrive in Canada surrounded by family and still struggle to find his footing. He told me: “Le Canada est dur. C'est une nouvelle vie, un nouvel environnement. D'ailleurs, c'est maintenant que je connais la vraie vie." — "Canada is hard. It's a new life. It's only now that I understand what real life is."

He wasn’t alone but many others are. That’s the gap that KoraWay aims to close.

What I Built

A fully functioning two-sided prototype–both the student and host experience are live and working.

AI host matching - students browse vetted host families scored by language overlap, cultural background, support areas, and availability. Each card includes an AI-generated compatibility score, reasoning blurb, and strengths and considerations breakdown
AI arrival plan generation - when a host accepts a student, AI generates a personalized 4-week plan based on the student's country, language, school, and needs. Not a template — built for that student
Shared arrival plan - host and student both see the plan, comment on tasks, and track progress together in real time
AI assistants on both sides - students ask about banking, housing, and campus life. Hosts ask how to prepare for their specific student — cultural context, language, first-week advice
Messaging - direct thread between student and host throughout the hosting period

Key Product Decisions

Why Boston first: Massachusetts has the highest demographic of international students at 18% of all higher education enrollment. Additionally, it had a dense west african diaspora and 6 major universities making it the perfect city to test before expanding.

Why host families over peer mentors: peer mentors are a common solution and quite accessible—making long-lasting community connections is not. A vetted host family creates accountability on both sides, a physical anchor in the city, and a relationship that extends beyond surface-level facets.

Why AI matching: The use of AI provides value in that it is a personalization explanation of why a host is a strong match for the specific student. This streamlines processes and helps build trust before the student ever meets the host.

Key Future Metrics

Match acceptance rate - what % of students who browse hosts send a request. Low rate signals poor match quality or unclear host profiles

Plan task completion rate - what % of arrival plan tasks are completed before the student arrives. This is the core outcome metric

30-day retention - are students still using the platform 30 days after arrival, or does engagement drop off immediately after the hosting period ends

What's Next?

Expand on market research - conduct interviews with sub-saharan african students to understand their use of the app and improvements that can be made. I'd interview students currently in the US and back in Senegal and Mali

Pilot cohort - recruit a small pool of students and host to run the experience manually and gather data

University partnerships - target schools with a large African international student demographic to endorse the platform. Universities will increase credibility for the app and increase brand reputation.

This is an honest prototype. Data lives in the browser (localStorage), not a real database. Two users on different devices can't interact live. Authentication is simulated. In production this would require a real backend, proper auth, and a host recruitment pipeline. The prototype exists to validate the experience and the concept — not to simulate scale.