



CANN E-Link: Interim Evaluation Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has been delivering the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN) at Vancouver International Airport (YVR) since 1992. CANN plays a vital role on the continuum of settlement services by offering needs assessments and referrals at the YVR port-of-entry. CANN E-Link is a pilot project funded by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The E-Link pilot is testing the use of technology to proactively connect settlement provider organizations (SPOs) with newcomers. It aims to increase the uptake of settlement services.

Previous studies found that settlement service usages are associated with better settlement outcomes. However, many newcomers are not aware of the free settlement services. Newcomers usually are busy to settle down into a new country during the first few months after arrival. It may not be of priority to search for settlement services. An E-Link SPO can offer settlement services to newcomers proactively if they agree to share their contact information.

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is conducting an independent evaluation of E-Link pilot and this report presents its interim findings. The SRDC team interviewed CANN staff and partner SPOs to learn about E-Link's implementation in the first half of the project. SRDC also collects administrative data from the E-Link system and survey data from CANN and E-Link clients. Combined with focus group interviews of E-Link and CANN clients, this interim evaluation shows that E-Link is delivering substantial impacts and meeting the policy objectives of increasing the uptake of IRCC-funded settlement services.

E-Link has been implemented as it was designed. There were some challenges in the platform development, but the issues have been resolved. Both E-Link staff and partner SPOs found the platform functioned as it was intended. Through E-Link, CANN and partner SPOs built strong partnerships that help to refine the platform and recruitment of other SPOs. E-Link helps newcomers access services faster but getting them to respond is still a challenge. Contact info may be wrong, staff has limited time/resources to reach out to newcomers, and newcomers are skeptical of free services. E-Link SPOs recognize platform's potential in service communication and coordination despite challenges.

E-Link achieved its service provider target ahead of schedule with providers from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. SPOs have used the information to reach over 70% of newcomers and helped over 50% of E-Link participants. E-Link has substantially increased the contact of newcomers with a SPO – from 42% of the status quo to 59% soon after arrival. This impact remains at 19 percentage points within the first three months.

What is more striking is the substantial increase in service uptake. Among E-Link participants, 63% and 67% used SPO services within 1 month and 3 months respectively, compared to the status quo of 52% and 60%. In particular, the usage of employment-related services increased by 7 percentage points. E-Link's impact on the usage of employment-related services is large among job seekers.

These impacts corroborate with the positive experience newcomers have with CANN and E-Link. The process was simple and easy to understand, especially if the CANN staff spoke in their preferred language. Newcomers in the comparison group feel that service providers reaching out to them would be very beneficial during the initial settlement. Also, newcomers reported they did not remember all the details of referrals provided to them at the airport. The proactive reach out to by SPOs in the first couple of weeks become important.

Newcomers want to have a few trustworthy contact points to get their settlement information. E-Link could be a notable entry point for settlement services and information. Since E-Link's interim results are very promising, CANN may consider expand this platform to other major international airports in Canada.

The SRDC evaluation team continues its data collection, including both client surveys and interviews. The team will publish the final evaluation report in March 2024. It will present an update to the implementation research. The final evaluation will also discuss E-Link's impacts on the usages of settlement services and settlement outcomes of newcomers six months after arrival.

INTRODUCTION

CANN E-Link is a pilot project funded through the 2021 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Service Delivery Improvements call for research proposals. The E-Link pilot is testing the use of technology to proactively connect settlement provider organizations (SPOs) with newcomers. It aims to increase the uptake of settlement services.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has been delivering the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN) at the Vancouver International Airport (YVR) since 1992. CANN delivery staff is the first point of contact for many newcomers. CANN offers newcomers need assessments, referrals, and orientation at the YVR port-of-entry. This service is available for newcomers who are destined for BC or are transiting through YVR to another community in Canada.

CANN uses its Client Service System (CSS) to collect contact information and demographic data of landing newcomers. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. provides newcomers with information about settlement services and IRCC-funded SPOs by emails. Newcomers could use the information to contact the local SPO. However, this engagement or communications is a one-way approach and passive. CANN E-Link builds on this existing technology by testing a proactive outreach approach by SPOs to newcomers shortly after their arrival. E-Link SPOs offer immediate settlement services to newcomers instead of waiting for newcomers.

The technology that is being leveraged and tested in this project is an arrival e-notification and information sharing system that informs SPOs of newly arrived newcomers who are settling in their local community/region. To do this, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. developed new technology modules (the Client Referral Service System, CRSS) to add to the existing CANN CSS. These modules capture the newcomer's needs assessment information and contact information. The CRSS sends the information electronically (i.e., e-notification) to SPOs in the community where the newcomer will initially be staying. SPOs who receive the e-notification reach out to the newcomer to engage and support them in accessing settlement services appropriate for their needs.

The goals of the project are to implement and test the effectiveness of this technology to:

1. increase the uptake of IRCC-funded settlement services among recently arrived newcomers, and
2. connect newcomers and SPOs earlier so that their settlement and integration journey is accelerated.

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is the research and evaluation partner of the project. Before S.U.C.C.E.S.S. started delivering CANN E-Link in July 2022, SRDC created

an evaluation framework of the pilot and various data collection tools. SRDC has since been collecting survey data of CANN E-Link users as well as a counterfactual sample of comparison group users of CANN who are not provided with the E-Link services. The report evaluates how E-Link was implemented in the first year and its impact on participants immediately after their arrival. The SRDC evaluation team gathered detailed information about E-Link from both participants and SPO staff during the summer 2023. This interim evaluation also estimates quantitatively the immediate outcomes and impacts of CANN E-Link users (within three months of arrival) using survey data collected up to February 2023.

CANN E-LINK – THE PILOT INTERVENTION

When newcomers land at Vancouver International Airport, CANN delivery staff collect their contact information and administer the needs assessments. The needs assessments cover areas such as settlement-related needs, service language needs, accessibility needs, and so on. Newcomers are deemed **eligible** if the expected destination is within the four provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) covered by E-Link.¹

During the days when CANN E-Link is opened to eligible newcomers (Mode Engage), CANN staff will explain to clients the nature of this pilot project and obtain their consent for sharing their information with three SPOs in the proximity of their expected residence. A person of each arriving newcomer household will be the key contact for participation. Those who consent to participate in E-Link are **E-Link clients**.² There will also be days that CANN E-Link is not open to eligible newcomers (Mode Research). Regardless, all eligible newcomers to the CANN Kiosk will be asked to participate in a research and evaluation study to understand their settlement experience. Eligible newcomers who arrive on days that CANN E-Link is not open will form the **comparison group**. The comparison group is key in learning what difference CANN E-Link is making.

After the E-Link client information is collected and entered into the CSS, the CRSS will share information about individuals/families with the corresponding local SPOs by e-notification emails. Regardless of their E-Link client status, all eligible newcomers will receive a list of SPOs in their expected home area that they could contact directly for settlement services. Newcomers who are not offered the E-Link services (i.e., the comparison group) will not be denied any regular settlement services.

Participating SPOs receiving E-Link notifications of the arrival of newcomers in their area will be provided with the E-Link client's contact information, service language needs, and settlement needs. These SPOs will be asked to record whether they have contacted the E-Link clients and whether they have provided services. Figure 1 presents E-Link's enrolment process as it happens at the S.U.C.C.E.S.S. CANN kiosk.

¹ In practice, E-Link may not be able to match a newcomer to a SPO in the proximity of the expected residing neighbourhood.

² In theory, it is possible that some newcomers arriving on the days of when E-Link is opened may not consent to participate in E-Link. They would be asked to participate in the research, if they consent to the research, they would be considered as part of the "program group" sample. However, there is no case where a newcomer consent to the research without also consenting to E-Link.

After newcomers completed their landing process at the airport, they may go through a few activities depending on whether they are E-Link clients or comparison group members. E-Link clients may:

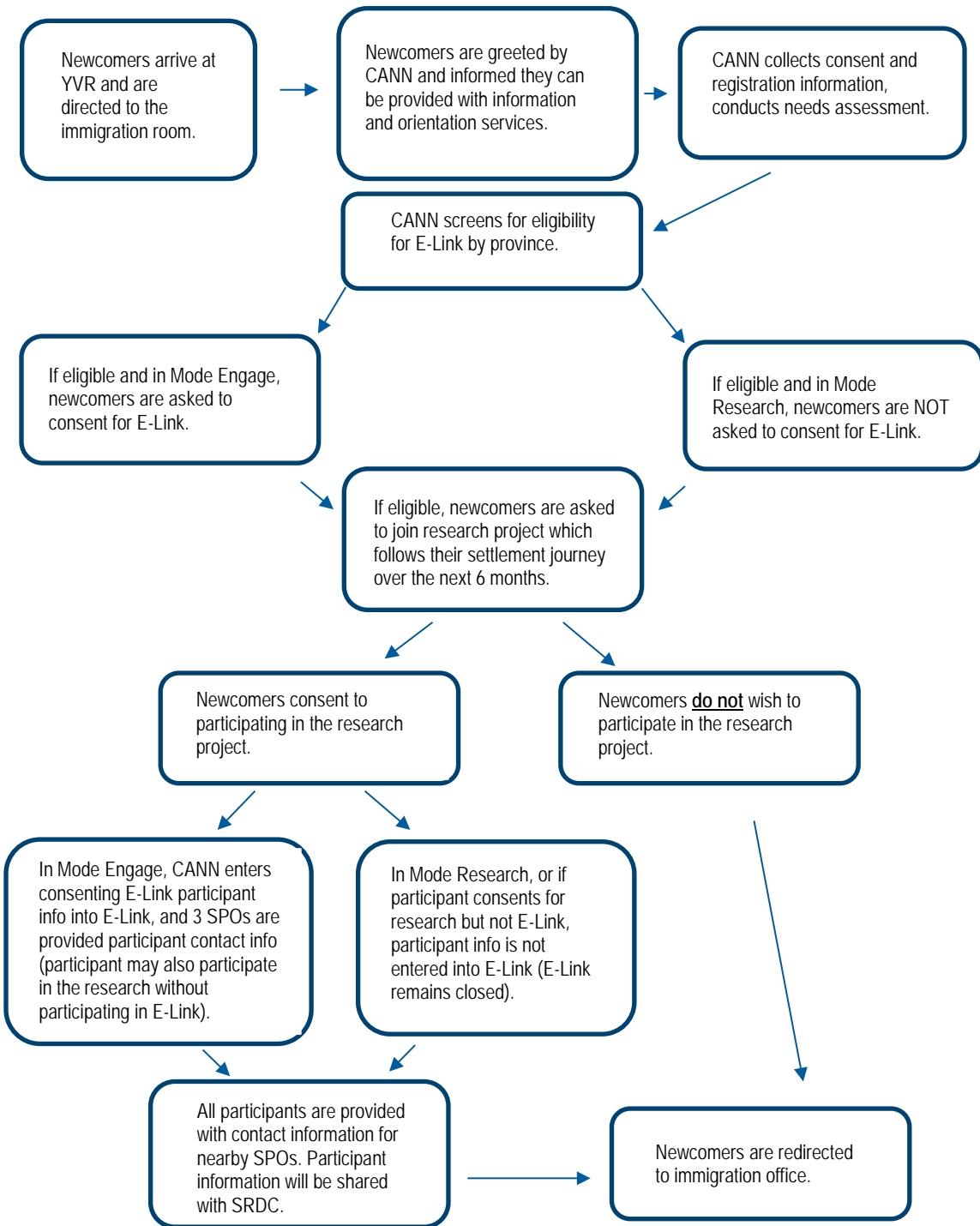
1. Be contacted by the SPOs shortly after arrival and schedule further settlement services.
2. Be contacted by SRDC for a baseline survey.
3. Contact the SPOs directly for services they need.
4. Use settlement services.
5. Be contacted by SRDC for a settlement experience survey 90 days after arrival.
6. Be contacted by SRDC for a follow-up survey 180 days after arrival.
7. Be invited by SRDC to participate in a focus group discussion with SRDC.

In contrast, those who arrive when E-Link is not opened but agree to participate in the study (comparison group) may:

1. Be contacted by SRDC for a baseline survey.
2. Contact the SPOs directly for services they need.
3. Use settlement services.
4. Be contacted by SRDC for a settlement experience survey 90 days after arrival.
5. Be contacted by SRDC for a follow-up survey 180 days after arrival.
6. Be invited by SRDC to participate in a focus group discussion with SRDC.

The only difference between the E-Link Clients and comparison group in terms of activities is the proactive outreach of local SPOs to schedule further settlement services.

Figure 1 Flow chart of enrolment process



THE THEORY OF CHANGE AND THE EVALUATION

CANN E-LINK THEORY OF CHANGE

CANN and CANN E-Link target the “initial reception” stage of newcomers’ needs and priorities. According to the 2017 IRCC Evaluation of the Settlement Program, only 39% of newcomers who arrived in Canada in 2015 accessed IRCC-funded settlement services (IRCC, 2017). The 2021 IRCC Settlement Outcomes Highlights Report shows that settlement services are linked to successful settlement outcomes (IRCC, 2021). However, about 70% of newcomers surveyed were unaware of the free settlement services available to them. It is also crucial to reach newcomers early on when they need support.

Several factors may contribute to the low uptake of settlement services, including:

- Newcomers may not prioritize settlement services in their first few months after landing in Canada when there are many competing priorities during the settlement journey.
- Lack of awareness of the availability of settlement services.
- Lack of understanding of settlement services.
- Misperception of settlement services’ usefulness.
- Skepticism about unfamiliar organizations or government agencies.
- Reliance on informal source (friends, family, and ethnic community) for settlement information and assistance.

Currently, it is entirely up to newcomers to reach out to SPOs to seek information and help even when they do not necessarily know where to get help and who they can trust. Due to a lack of current mechanisms to share information about newcomer arrivals and needs, it is challenging for SPOs to proactively plan and provide early intervention services that are responsive to newcomers’ immediate needs in a timely manner.

The settlement and integration of immigrants are complex and multifaceted (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). Specifically, the lack of psychological and identity resource and social capital contribute to the barrier of lacking information and guidance on settlement services. CANN E-Link aims to address these factors and barriers in enabling more timely access to the needed settlement services.

The CANN kiosk at YVR raises the awareness of the availability of settlement services to help newcomers. The information and orientation provided should help improve the understanding of and access to settlement services. The difference the CANN E-Link project is testing is to allow SPOs to proactively reach out to newcomers to offer their services. The specialization of SPOs serving newcomers may also address the psychological barrier and identity resource and factor into their settlement self-efficacy. The proactive contacts of SPOs through CANN E-Link will facilitate the following engagement to newcomers:

- The SPO could start building relationships and trust with newcomers and facilitate access to settlement services. SPO delivery staff could provide social support to ease the mental burden and stress of the settlement journey, especially in the early months when many things are new.
- The SPO could help newcomers prioritize the actions they need to take, including getting timely services and support along their settlement journey.
- The SPO could serve as a reliable source of settlement information, referrals, assistance and supports.

The enhanced social capital, psychological and identity resource, and information provided to newcomers early in their settlement journey are expected to speed up the take-up of settlement services and improve settlement outcomes.

Potential mediating factors

In a theory of change, an intervention may affect other factors and indirectly lead to the outcomes. These are called mediating factors.

Even though CANN E-Link is a relatively simple intervention, the early experience of service usage from the initial contact may help build the confidence of further and more extensive settlement service usage. As a result, early service usage is a mediating factor for further service usage and better settlement outcomes.

Early connection with the SPOs may also increase newcomers' connections to the community, and subsequently the community serves as a resource to help newcomers' settlement's journey. Social network is an expected mediating factor of better settlement outcomes.

Potential moderating factors

The context and intersectionality of newcomers may affect the efficacy of an intervention. Moderating factors are those factors affecting the size of the outcomes.

A potential moderating factor for CANN E-Link is the newcomers' knowledge and familiarity with Canadian life. It is expected that those who have temporary resident status from Canada, those who have received pre-arrival services benefit less from the proactive contacts from CANN E-Link.

Since CANN E-Link can identify and provide settlement services quickly, it could be especially helpful for newcomers facing multiple barriers.

Expected outcomes

If CANN E-Link is successful, we would expect newcomers to be better informed about the settlement services available to them upon arrival in Canada so that their settlement and integration journey is accelerated. More specifically, CANN E-Link should align with several outcomes that IRCC aimed to achieve with the Service Delivery Improvement program:

Immediate outcomes (0-3 months)

- Increased understanding of client settlement needs and appropriate linkages to other services: This CANN E-Link outcome is represented by an increase in the number of SPOs making proactive contact with newcomers, as well as an increase in the number of newcomers connected with a SPO and the average number of contacts with newcomers within the first three months.
- Access to IRCC-funded settlement services is facilitated: This outcome will be reflected by an increase in the percentage of newcomers taking up services within the first three months as well as a lower percentage of newcomers who do not know where to get the settlement services they need.

Intermediate outcomes (4-6 months)

- Clients acquire knowledge, skills, and connections to prepare for the Canadian labour market: This outcome has a few dimensions – it is expected CANN E-Link participants display a higher level of self-reported confidence in finding labour market information or accessing employment assistance services, and an increase in the percentage who found (or have a plan to find) employment.

- Partners deliver responsive and coordinated settlement and community services (from newcomers' perspective): It is expected that newcomers served by CANN E-Link will have a shorter time to first post-arrival settlement service use, a higher percentage who report using a service that they needed, a broader range of settlement services used, and a higher likelihood of receiving a referral to other services.
- Consistent and responsive settlement program delivery: On one hand, if CANN E-Link is effective, participating SPOs would have a high level of satisfaction with the platform and the partnership with CANN. On the other hand, newcomers would also display a higher level of satisfaction with settlement services in general, and their stress level from the settlement process should be lowered.
- Clients make informed decisions to settle and integrate in Canada: It is expected newcomers will have better life organization, such as finding a school to enrol their children, finding a doctor / accessing healthcare, getting their health card, getting their SIN card, opening a bank account, etc.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS COMPONENTS

The two goals of CANN E-Link form the overarching research questions for the evaluation:

1. Does CANN E-Link increase the uptake of IRCC-funded settlement services among recently arrived newcomers?
2. Does CANN E-Link connect newcomers and SPOs earlier so that their settlement and integration journey is accelerated?

These two research questions can be readily answered by an impact analysis focusing on the outcome indicators of service uptake at various points of time and metrics of integration. However, as a pilot project, it is also important to assess who CANN E-Link benefits most, the challenges of service delivery, what works well and what needs improvement for its delivery, and its cost-effectiveness. The following are some additional research questions to be answered by this comprehensive evaluation:

3. Who are the clients of E-Link? What are the reasons for participation?
4. How is E-Link implemented? What are the challenges? Which components of E-Link work well? Which components of E-Link need improvement? Are there any surprises?

5. Are E-Link clients satisfied with the services?
6. Who benefits the most from E-Link?

To answer these research questions, there are 4 components of the evaluation analysis:

- A usage analysis of E-Link clients: The usage analysis will include summary statistics of the proactive outreach to the E-Link clients by SPOs, the usages of settlement services by E-Link clients compared to the comparison group newcomers, and E-Link clients' experience and satisfaction with the E-Link.
- An outcome and impact analysis of E-Link: This analysis focuses on how E-Link leads to changes in various settlement outcomes.
- An implementation research of E-Link delivery: The implementation research presents how E-Link is delivered.
- A GBA+ analysis of E-Link's impacts: The pilot's delivery and outcomes will be further dissected to examine intersectionality effects.

This interim report focuses on answering evaluation questions using data collected so far. As the project evolves, the answers to the evaluation questions could change. The final report will use all data collected to provide a comprehensive evaluation of E-Link.

RECRUITMENT AND IMPACT EVALUATION DESIGN

Recruitment for the pilot project and the evaluation started in July 2022 and temporarily paused at the end of November 2022. Recruitments were limited to newcomers to the BC in the first month, but the project expanded to cover newcomers to Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba from August 2022 onwards.

There are two alternating modes of recruitment:

- Mode Engage: If the mode of recruitment of the day is set to "Engage" (during the first half of each month), all eligible newcomers will be asked to participate in (a) A research study to understand their settlement experience (b) The CANN E-Link referral services. Individuals recruited in the engage mode will receive CANN E-Link services.
- Mode Research: If the mode of recruitment of the day is set to "Research" (during the second half of each month), all eligible newcomers will only be asked to participate in a research study to understand their settlement experience. Individuals recruited in the research mode are in the comparison group.

How the engage and research modes are determined

The recruitment period for research and evaluation is divided into **monthly** cohorts. Recruitment starts in Mode Engage at the beginning of each monthly cohort and switches to Mode Research on the 16th day. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. emails CANN Kiosk staff about the switching to the Mode Engage on the first day of each month and the switch to Mode Research on the 16th day of the month.

Regardless of the cohorts and the recruitment modes, any newcomer willing to participate in the research and evaluation component will be emailed to complete a baseline survey within 14 days after arrival. Only those who complete the baseline survey will be used in the research and evaluation analysis as well as followed up with in subsequent surveys.

Since the comparison group newcomers are not offered the CANN E-Link services during the recruitment “Mode Research”, this comparison sample is directly comparable to the program group sample who may or may not take up the CANN E-Link service.

DATA SOURCES

The evaluation collects both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple channels. For surveys and interviews, the evaluation team customizes the instruments and protocols based on the research questions and the context of the target samples. The following lists the data sources used for this Interim Evaluation Report.

Surveys

All volunteer participants to the research and evaluation study are asked to complete an online baseline survey within 14 days of arrival. This baseline survey is a short survey aiming to collect contextual information that is not available from the CANN E-Link system and to establish a connection between SRDC and the newcomer to facilitate follow-up data collection. Respondents to the baseline survey will be provided with an honorarium in the form of \$5 virtual gift card of the person’s choice.

Besides the baseline survey, newcomers are also invited by email to complete two online follow-up surveys that aim to measure immediate and intermediate settlement outcomes. They are asked to complete the first follow-up survey 3 months after their arrival and a second follow-up survey 6 months after their arrival. To demonstrate our appreciation of their time in completing the surveys, each newcomer who completes a follow-up survey will be provided with an honorarium in the form of \$25 virtual gift card of the person’s choice.

Administrative data collected by CANN E-Link

Every participant's information and program group status captured by the CSS are forwarded to SRDC for its master record. E-Link clients' contact information are forwarded to the corresponding SPOs through the e-notification. S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s CANN CRSS also asks SPOs to report the activities related to the E-Link clients, including:

- Whether (and when) the SPO proactively contacted the E-Link client.
- Whether the contact is successful.
- And whether services are provided.

The administrative data collected is largely used to describe the implementation of CANN E-Link.

E-Link staff interviews

SRDC interviewed the CANN Program Coordinator and Senior Resource Officer in May 2023. The interview focused on the implementation of the pilot, what worked well, what challenges they experienced, lessons learned, and next steps.

E-Link partner interviews

SRDC interviewed 10 E-Link partner organizations in April and May 2023. The organizations were located in British Columbia (7), Alberta (2), and Saskatchewan (1). SRDC selected organizations to interview based on E-Link data from July 2022 to March 2023 related to their referrals and activities.

Newcomer focus group interviews

SRDC evaluators conducted two focus groups in June 2023 with newcomers who participated in E-Link (program group participants) and newcomers who did not (comparison group members). Both groups of newcomers had accessed settlement services six months after landing in Canada as permanent residents. Five participants attended each focus group. In total, seven participants were women, and six participants were married and had children. Their ages ranged from late 20s to early 50s. Participants and comparison group members lived in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Their countries of origin included Indonesia, China, Morocco, the Philippines, Nigeria, Hong Kong, India, and Bangladesh. Participants and comparison group members immigrated under the Skilled Worker, Provincial Nominee, Canadian Experience, and Family Class categories.

INTERIM FINDINGS OF THE E-LINK PILOT

IMPLEMENTATION OF CANN E-LINK

Planned deployment of E-Link

In the original design of project, the field-testing period was supposed to start in May 2022 and last for 18 months. Also, in the original plan, only newcomers to three BC communities with 24 participating BC SPOs would be recruited for the pilot during the first 12 months of the testing. The pilot testing would have expanded to newcomers to other areas with support from 5 Alberta SPOs, 5 Saskatchewan SPOs, and 5 Manitoba SPOs after the first 12 months.

The project also aimed to recruit a total of 1,054 newcomers, including those in the comparison sample, to participate in the research. It was anticipated that approximately 24 BC SPOs would connect to 256 newcomers, 5 Alberta SPOs would connect to 153 newcomers, 5 Saskatchewan SPOs would connect to 57 newcomers, and 5 Manitoba SPOs would connect to 61 newcomers during the project. In other words, the project proposal aimed to recruit 527 newcomers who would be proactively connected to SPOs and 527 newcomers who would be willing to participate in the research component as the comparison group members.

E-Link staffing

The Program Coordinator and Senior Resource Officer work together on E-Link. The Program Coordinator oversees the project budget and liaises with the funder. For decision-making related to the project, she consults with the Senior Manager. The Senior Resource Officer is the liaison for E-Link's SPO partners, works with S.U.C.C.E.S.S.' IT department and external developers, and develops trainings for CANN frontline staff and brochures to promote the pilot. They both manage and adjust the E-Link platform and solve issues. In addition, over 30 frontline CANN staff obtain informed consent from newcomers arriving at Vancouver International Airport to participate in E-Link or to participate in the research and enter their information into the E-Link platform.

Delivery of E-Link

As outlined in the evaluation framework, E-Link switched between recruiting program participants in Mode Engage and comparison group participants in Mode Research in the middle

of each month. If they consent to participating, CANN shares the contact information of Mode Engage participants with three of their E-Link partners based on the newcomers' postal code. Mode Research participants receive regular non-E-Link CANN services, in the form of a brochure with a list of local settlement organizations they can contact for help. Both groups of participants receive the SRDC surveys and are invited to participate in focus groups.

All CANN frontline staff received an initial training for collecting newcomer consent for participation in E-Link. CANN continuously trained new staff and gave reminders each month during their staff meetings. The interviewed CANN staff understood the importance of informed consent.

“What we always want to emphasize is if you see that the client is not quite understanding you, please do not add them. Please just put no and don't get them into the project. We emphasize the importance of the client to consent because we are sharing their email and phone number and some information to SPOs.”

(CANN staff)

As part of onboarding each E-Link partner, CANN provides an introduction to the pilot, training for the platform, and check-ins every 2 to 4 months, in addition to email communications. CANN provided a \$500 honorarium to all partners when they joined the project as an incentive for participation. Based on the numbers of clients contacted and served from June to December 2022, CANN provided an additional honorarium of between \$400 to \$4,500 to E-Link partners. CANN plans to continue providing such honorariums twice per year.

CANN staff identified a few ways in which the delivery of E-Link differed from what was planned. Due to the complexity of building the platform, the pilot launched a month later than anticipated. In addition, CANN originally planned to use their existing system to send newcomer referrals to partner organizations, but in the end, they created a whole new separate platform. Initially, SPO partners would not have had access to the platform but would only receive a referral via email.

“It was better to have the new platform because with this big amount of clients, it's easier to manage and to make all these different changes without affecting our existing one... Also because SPO [partners] can have access [to the new platform]... so it was totally better for them to be able to access the separate system instead of an internal system.” (CANN staff)

CANN also did not expect that recruitment for SPO partners would be ongoing. They have been adding new organizations to the E-Link network as CANN identifies new areas that newcomers are settling in within the four participating provinces. Additionally, CANN had initially planned to deliver E-Link just to newcomers settling in British Columbia for a few months before expanding to Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, but they decided to cover all four provinces

in the second month after seeing the large numbers of newcomers that were coming through the airport and could be recruited to this pilot. CANN surpass its original target of recruiting 39 service providers. Forty-three service provider organizations accepted to join the project in June 2022 and the number of SPOs joining the E-Link continues to grow.

Challenges for CANN

The development of a functional platform was key to delivering E-Link and turned out to be more complex and time consuming than expected. Timelines were extended and the pilot launched one month later than planned. CANN staff noted how difficult it was to find the right vendor and how they did not realize how expensive it would be to include all the features they wanted.

“In the contract, it was mentioned that the first phase would be just... a few months, a couple of months to develop, and in reality, it took over six months until we went live. As I said, we didn’t know how complicated it is to think about every single detail, to be able to pass the information to the developer, to be able to create the platform.” (CANN staff)

CANN staff mentioned a few glitches that they hoped to improve with the next set of modifications. These include being able to assign participants to organizations based on characteristics rather than only based on proximity. For example, currently, some non-Francophone newcomers are being referred to Francophone organizations based on their postal code, which also skews the SPO’s numbers in terms of service activities, since they could not provide services to all referred clients.

CANN staff also mentioned that while they were recruiting E-Link partners, finding the right contact person for each SPO was a challenge, especially in other provinces outside BC where they were not as familiar with the settlement organizations. Their emails would sometimes get lost if they only emailed the general email. However, once they found the right person, most organizations were eager to take part in the pilot and said that they had been waiting for a platform like E-Link. Only two organizations said they did not have the capacity to take part. Another challenge related to SPO recruitment is finding organizations in more rural or remote areas to support newcomers who are moving there.

There were minor challenges at first when CANN frontline staff began recruiting participants for E-Link. Some staff were confused about the switch from Mode Engage to Mode Research each month. To mitigate this confusion, the Program Coordinator and Senior Resource Officer go to the CANN kiosk on the 1st and 16th of each month to ensure the consent forms and brochures have been changed. CANN frontline staff also recruited some ineligible clients at first, who were going to provinces outside of the ones with E-Link partners. As a result, CANN modified their

platform to automatically show the consent questions for each mode, and the eligible provinces and immigration categories.

In addition, some participants did not yet have Canadian phone numbers, and not all E-Link partners had the capacity to call international phone numbers.

Modifications by CANN

As a result of continuous check-ins with E-Link partners, CANN was able to make modifications to their processes to help improve the referral system on a regular basis. CANN heard that some clients do not respond to SPO emails or are reluctant to provide their identification to receive services from SPOs. In order to mitigate this issue, CANN has asked E-Link partners to all use the same email subject line to reference CANN E-Link, in order to remind clients of their interactions with CANN staff where they consented for SPOs to contact them.

In addition, after receiving feedback that from partners that were typos in the client emails, they started using an email verifier and uploading the emails of clients validate their emails. Once they identify an incorrect email, they go back to the paper copy of the form where the client wrote their email to correct the email, and then add a note to the platform that the email was corrected.

What worked well from the perspective of CANN staff

Building strong partnerships with E-Link service providers was a positive outcome of working together on the pilot. Both CANN staff and the E-Link partners interviewed mentioned that the regular check-ins and email communication helped to improve the E-Link platform and contributed to a good working relationship between the organizations. CANN was also able to get direct contact information from their existing partners for potential new partners in other provinces, which made connecting to the right person easier. As news of E-Link spread, CANN noted that some new partners had already heard about them from other SPOs. SPOs from other provinces that are not currently eligible for E-Link have also expressed interest in participating. CANN staff also added that their process of orienting new E-Link partners also seems to be working well.

Lessons learned by CANN staff

CANN staff spoke at length about the challenges of developing the platform, but that it was also a good learning experience for them. They also learned that the platform cannot be completely

automated because there are many times where they need to make changes or resolve issues manually, and there is always the possibility for continuous improvement of the platform.

“For both of us, a lot was the IT part because we didn’t have much background, however now I think we understand of a lot how everything works and what will make it better to help [partners] manage referrals and what will make it easier.”

(CANN staff)

CANN also emphasized the importance of the platform for both newcomers and SPOs. They heard from their E-Link partners how excited they were about this program and how it would help them to proactively reach out to potential clients. CANN also added that introducing newcomers to the services early on will make it easier for them to access them when they need help at a later point, even if they do not access services right away.

Delivery of E-Link at partner SPOs

Most SPOs had a coordinator or administrator who received all E-Link referrals and then distributed the referrals to frontline staff based on clients’ preferred language. Some organizations developed email templates in clients’ first language to communicate with clients, while others mainly used English. In general, the interviewed SPOs indicated that the number of referrals they received aligned with their expectations and capacity, though some SPOs expected higher numbers of referrals, while other SPOs found it challenging to integrate E-Link referrals into their already busy workload. Most SPOs stated that they email the client within 2-3 business days of being assigned the referral from the coordinator; however, one SPO mentioned having a better response after waiting for five business days before contacting clients, as clients were able to settle a bit and recover from jetlag before receiving the email.

Challenges faced by partner SPOs

Client non-response was a challenge for most SPOs, though the response rate varied widely among the interviewed organizations. While some frontline staff experienced higher response rates of around 70%, others had lower response rates from less than 10% to 20%. SPOs also mentioned that newcomer email addresses were sometimes invalid. Additionally, some clients were reluctant to provide the ID SPOs need to record their service delivery into IRCC’s Integrated Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE). As a result, some SPOs provided services without entering the client in their records.

Although most of the interviewed E-Link partners received referral numbers that were in line with or below their capacity, one partner in particular was unable to provide services to the large number of Ukrainian CUAET visa holders that were assigned to them through the E-Link

platform. Because CUAET visa holders already receive settlement support from a designated case manager once they arrive in Canada, this E-Link partner no longer processes referrals for CUAET visa holders but still serves other eligible E-Link clients.

Some E-Link partners mentioned a few challenges with operating the platform. Issues included not being able to sort clients by referral date, last activity, or assigned staff member, not knowing the difference between some of the service definitions such as service provided vs. service completed, not being able to add multiple office locations to user accounts, and not being able to stay on the same page after completing an action. Most of these challenges are described in more detail in the ‘SPOs’ suggestions for improvements’ section below.

What worked well from the perspective of partner SPOs

E-Link partners enjoyed being able to connect with clients proactively. They also liked that the referral comes with a basic needs assessment that outlines what types of settlement support clients needed. They felt that the information they receive about the client along with the referral is similar to their own intake process, which speeds up service delivery.

In general, E-Link partners felt that E-Link helped newcomers to access services faster.

“E-Link helps newcomers access a service in a timely manner and can connect with service providers more easily without having to look for providers themselves.” (Staff at one E-Link partner SPO)

“I think it definitely has helped bridge the gap between clients needing help, especially right after they arrive because some clients, from what I understand from the frontline staff, sometimes clients may not know that we’re out here. So if we are able to connect them with an SPO, like pretty much immediately after their arrival, I think that can help. You know, it would lessen the burden on them because they’ve already got so many other things.” (Staff at one E-Link partner SPO)

Like CANN staff, E-Link partners also enjoyed their working relationship and how responsive CANN staff were with resolving issues.

“It’s been wonderful. I really liked the professional way of training that we received at the beginning. [CANN staff] have been very supportive and always looked for feedback, and different ideas for them so that they can adjust and adapt according to what we’re hearing on this side.” (Staff at one E-Link partner SPO)

Some SPOs were happy with the training they received for the platform, and felt the system was simple and easy to use. Other SPOs listed some challenges in using the platform, as described below.

SPOs' suggestions for improvement

Partner organizations suggested the following improvements for E-Link:

- Verify client email addresses before making the referral to a partner organization. Many E-Link partners mentioned receiving referrals attached to invalid email addresses.
- Emphasize to newcomers in a brochure that settlement services are free, and what services are offered.
- Add information in client file about age range, children, and level of education.
- Add a notification in the system to let partners know when an issue has been addressed. For example, partners can let CANN know when a client email address is incorrect, but they do not receive any notifications or emails when the email address has been corrected. As noted below, this issue is something that CANN has plans to address.
- Fix the date sorting mechanism in the client referral database. The sorting mechanism cannot sort by newest or oldest referral or assignment dates. It appears to sort by month alphabetically but does not take into consideration the entire date.
- Add the ability for E-Link administrator to sort client list by assigned staff member so that they can monitor staff performance.
- Add ability to sort client list by activity date to make it easier for staff to follow up.
- Remain on the same page of referrals after completing an action. Several E-Link partners mentioned that after clicking through each page to find a client referral, the system brings them all the way back to the first page after they have completed the action.
- Streamline adding multiple sites to user accounts. Some frontline settlement workers work from multiple office locations, but their user account is only tied to one location in the system. This makes referrals more time-consuming as the coordinator must manually make the referral to the frontline staff.
- Share contact information via email with clients of the three service providers they are being referred to.

- If referral numbers increase, increase funding to partners so that they can increase their staff hours.

UPCOMING CHANGES TO E-LINK

CANN plans to continue with ongoing partner check-ins, recruiting new partners, and making modifications the platform and other processes. They listed the following upcoming changes:

- Including the names of E-Link partners in the email that participants receive when they consent to participating in E-Link, in order to increase their response rates and reassure them that it is safe to share personal identification with the SPOs in order to access services.
- Adding an alert button within the platform so that CANN and its partners can more efficiently communicate with one another. Currently, users can add notes to client files, but the system does not notify any other users when information has been modified. Adding an alert button can make it easier for users to communicate within the platform.
- Decreasing the radius size for assigning SPOs to clients. The current maximum distance works for rural areas but does not work as well for cities.
- Enhancing the reporting capabilities of the platform to more easily report on client numbers and other activities.
- Customizing assignment to SPOs based on client characteristics. For example, assigning only French speakers to Francophone organizations, or assigning only women to women's organizations.
- Adding more information about clients to the E-Link platform, such as their age range.

E-LINK PARTICIPATION

Recruitment of newcomers

Soon after the evaluation framework was drafted in March 2022, SRDC and CANN realized the number of newcomers coming to the CANN Kiosk has been substantially larger than the number that the project had planned for. However, it is unlikely that the majority of CANN or E-Link users would respond to research and evaluation invitations. SRDC added a baseline survey to make sure the contact information collected at the CANN Kiosk is accurate and the participants are willing to be followed up with regarding the research and evaluation. Despite SRDC's

difficulties in getting a response from E-Link participants, it was apparent that the project would be able to reach the target research number of participants substantially earlier than the 18-month pilot period. SRDC paused recruitment for the research component of E-Link for 3.5 months between mid-December 2022 and April 2023, since the number of research participants recruited was already close to the original target at that point in time. SRDC and CANN also decided at that time to increase the target number of participants for the evaluation from 1,054 to 1,500.

Usages (up to November 2022)

Between July 2022 and November 2022, a total of 1,097 newcomers were eligible and recruited for CANN E-Link and they were referred to 32 SPOs in the proximity of their destination.³ A few recruited newcomers were eligible but there were no participating SPOs in the proximity of their destination and they were not referred. Among the 1,097 referred, participating SPOs were not able to reach 241 of newcomers. Among those referred and contacted, 553 received services from the referred SPO, 34 received services from other SPOs, while the remaining either rejected services or there were no suitable services. Table 1 presents the numbers by city.

The proportion of newcomers making a contact with SPOs are presented in Figure 2 for 3 different time frames: at the baseline survey, and during 1 and 3 month(s) since arrival. At the baseline survey, the 58.9% of E-Link clients had had a contact with SPOs, and then 79.5% and 83.2% of the same group had had a contact with SPOs within 1 and 3 month(s) from arrival. The comparison group, in contrast, had lower contact rates in these time frames: 41.9%, 54.2%, and 63.5%, respectively. If these estimate proportions are representative to the 1,097 E-Link participants' experience, E-Link would increase the number of newcomers in connection with a SPO from 595 to 872 in the first month of arrival, and from 697 to 913 in the first 3 months of arrival. The differences in contact rate between these two groups amount to the impact of 16.4, 24.7, and 19.2 percentage point increase for the corresponding time frames, which are all statistically significant.⁴

At the 3-month follow-up survey, newcomers were asked whether they knew where to find the settlement services they needed. While 12.9% of the comparison group indicated that they did not know where to find the settlement services needed, the corresponding figure among the

³ Recruitment for research and evaluation paused from December 2022 to March 2023. All newcomers who arrived at the CANN Kiosk from December 2022 to March 2023 were eligible for E-Link. As a result, the implementation of E-Link up to the time of writing surpassed all the initial targets. The figures presented in this interim report focus solely on the research and evaluation period from July 2022 to November 2022.

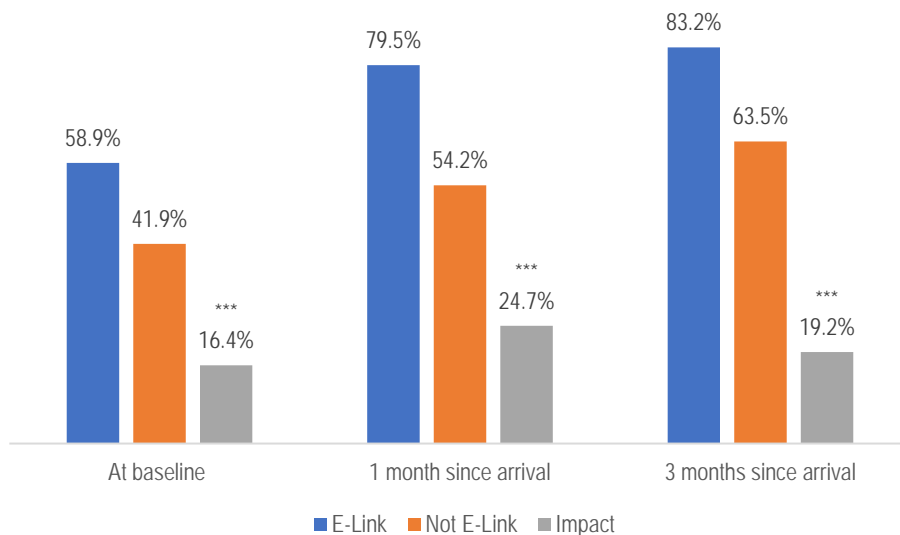
⁴ Statistical hypothesis testing was conducted at the 10% level of significance for this report.

E-Link clients is lower at 8.6%. The difference amounts to a 4.3 percentage point reduction in lack of knowledge of settlement service location, though it is not statistically significant.

Table 1 E-Link referrals

City	Number of SPOs	Number of E-Link participants referred	Number in contact with the referred SPO	Number received service from the referred SPO	Number received service elsewhere	Number – service rejected, no suitable services, or no information
Alberta	2	139	116	107	1	31
Calgary	1	55	55	54	0	1
Edmonton	1	84	61	53	1	30
British Columbia	28	872	585	402	33	437
Abbotsford	1	23	17	14	0	9
Burnaby	2	68	51	31	3	34
Coquitlam	2	91	58	37	5	49
Fort St. John	1	0	0	0	0	0
Langley	2	36	35	26	3	7
Nanaimo	1	9	8	8	0	1
New Westminster	1	34	7	3	2	29
North Vancouver	1	24	24	23	0	1
Richmond	3	162	80	58	7	97
Surrey	4	162	104	37	6	119
Vancouver	10	263	201	165	7	91
Manitoba	1	32	7	1	0	31
Winnipeg	1	32	7	1	0	31
Saskatchewan	1	54	44	43	0	11
Saskatoon	1	54	44	43	0	11
Grand Total	32	1,097	752	553	34	510

Figure 2 Proportion of newcomers having a contact with SPO since arrival



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Profile of E-Link participants

Based on the administrative record for the program and baseline survey responses, the E-Link clients have the following profiles (Figure 3):

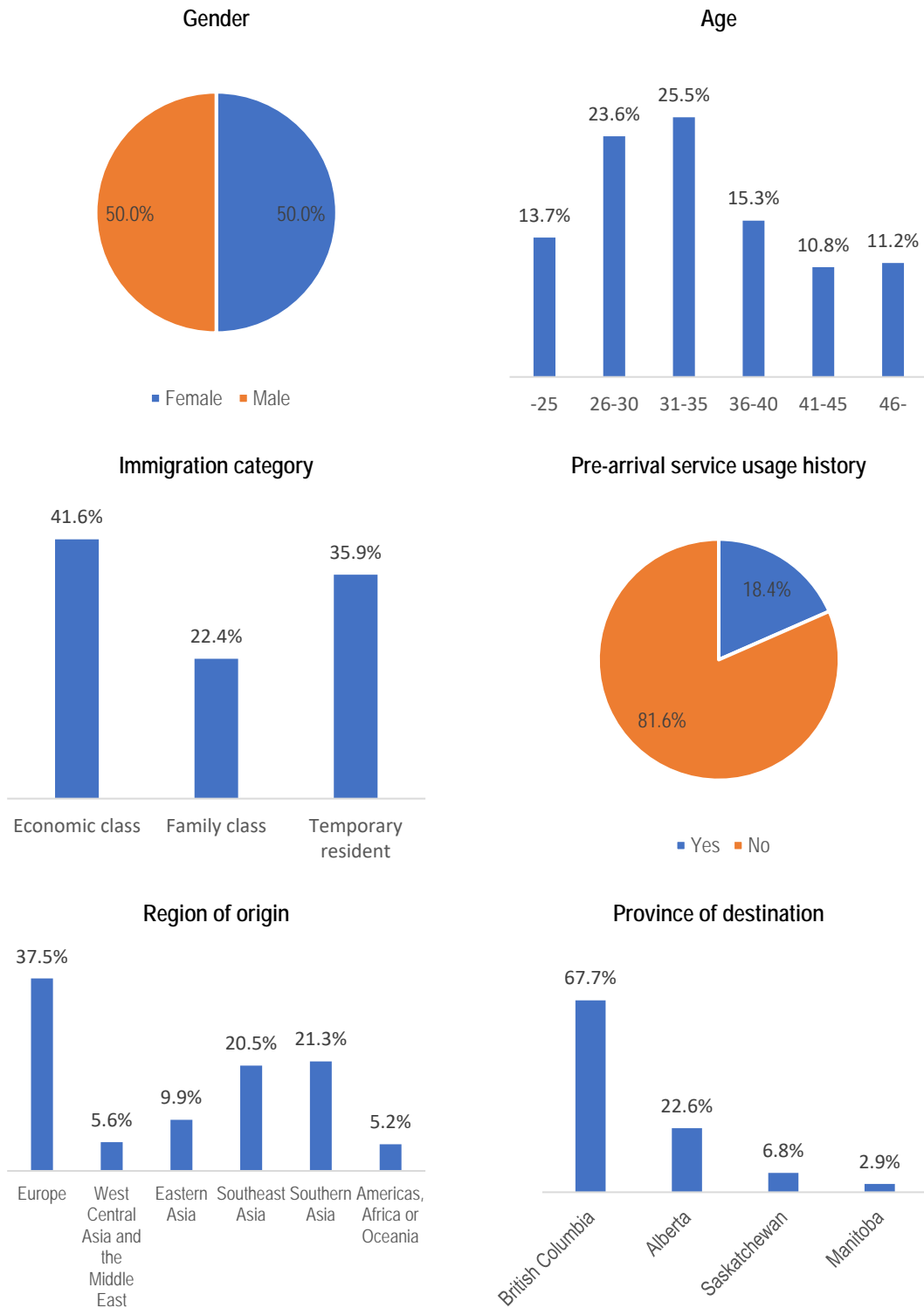
- The clients are evenly split between women and men. Their average age is 34.
- Forty-one point six percent of the clients arrived in Canada as economic class immigrants and 22.4% as family class immigrants. Thirty-five point nine percent of the clients were temporary residents, most of whom came to the country under the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel measure.
- Thirty-seven point five percent of the clients arrived from Europe, most of whom were Ukrainian. Southern Asia and Southeast Asia each account for 21.3% and 20.5% of the clients respectively, while 9.9% are from East Asian countries, and 5.6% from West Central Asia and the Middle East. The remaining 5.2% of the clients are from the Americas, Africa, or Oceania.
- Over two-thirds of the clients intended to move to British Columbia, 22.6% to Alberta, 6.8% to Saskatchewan, and 2.9% to Manitoba. These numbers are expected to change when more SPOs outside of BC join E-Link.

- Over two-thirds of the clients are either married or in common-law relationships, and less than half are living or expected to live with children.
- Three-quarters of the clients have family or friends living in Canada to help them with their settlement needs.
- Eighteen point four percent of the clients reported as having received pre-arrival settlement services before arriving to Canada.
- The majority of clients are unemployed and looking for job, while 18.2% have jobs or job offers, or are or plan to be self-employed, and 9.1% of the participants are out of the labour force for various reasons including study or retirement.
- The five most common immediate needs reported by the clients are getting Canadian ID (91.7%), opening a bank account (81.8%), finding a job (64.8%), finding housing (46.6%), and adapting to a new culture (44.1%). A significant proportion of clients also report the following as their immediate needs: making friends (35.2%), finding a doctor or accessing health care (30.8%), learning English or French (29.0%) finding employment services (28.6%), registering themselves or their children in school (22.4%), and skills training (19.5%).

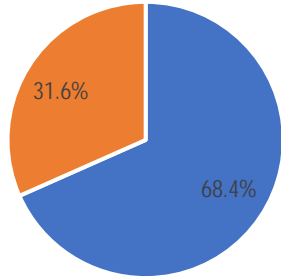
The comparison group members are very similar to the E-Link clients in terms of these characteristics, which suggests that the quasi-experimental approach adopted by this project is successful in balancing the profiles of the E-Link clients and comparison group. One notable exception is that the comparison group has a lower proportion of jobseekers but higher proportions of newcomers with a job or job offer, or out of the labour force. This difference in the distribution of jobseekers is statistically significant.⁵ Therefore, we use regression adjustment to account for this difference when estimating the impact of the E-Link program.

⁵ Even with a randomized controlled trial, it is possible that some characteristics would be misaligned by chance. Regression adjustment improves the precision of the estimated impacts.

Figure 3 Profile of participants

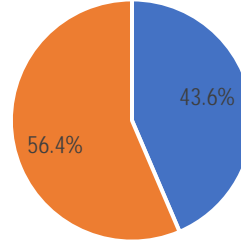


Marital status



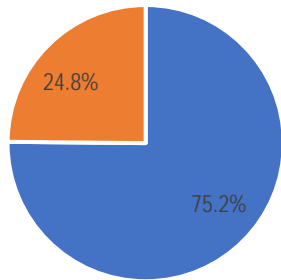
■ Married or in Common-law relationship ■ Single

Presence of children



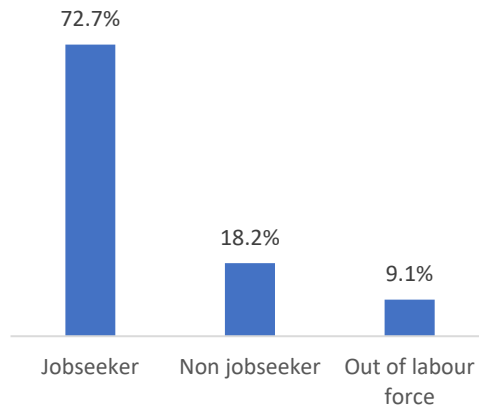
■ Living or expected to live with children
 ■ Neither living nor expected to live with children

Presence of family or friend in Canada who can help

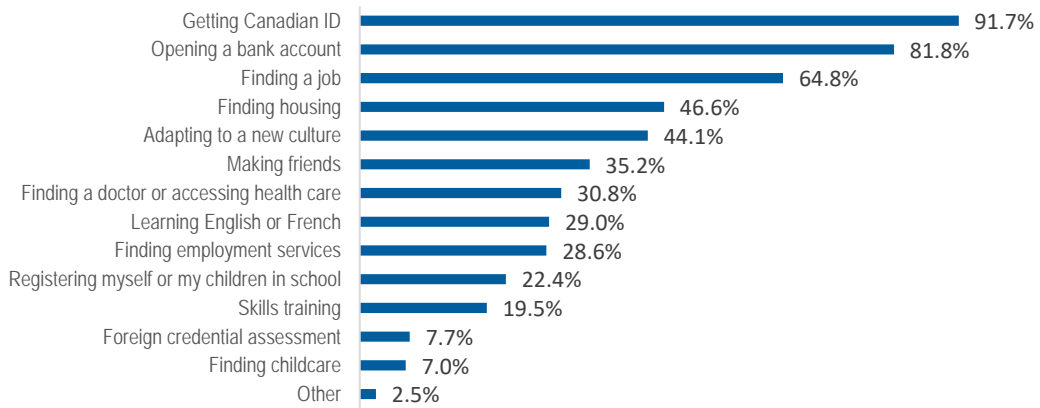


■ Yes ■ No

Job seeking status



Immediate needs



EXPERIENCE OF NEWCOMERS

Experience with CANN and E-Link

E-Link focus group participants recalled having positive interactions with CANN staff at the airport. They mentioned receiving pamphlets and that staff highlighted specific organizations in their communities that could help them. They also mentioned that the consent process was straightforward and easy to understand. However, most respondents did not remember whether they were contacted by a service provider because of participating in E-Link. Most participants had proactively reached out to SPOs, so they could not recall whether it was the SPO or themselves who made the first contact. According to their self-reported baseline survey data, one participant was not contacted by any CANN-referred SPOs, two reached out to CANN-referred SPOs, and two were contacted by CANN-referred SPOs.

Similar to E-Link participants, comparison group members had positive experiences with CANN staff when they landed at the airport. Comparison group members said that they appreciated being able to speak to someone who spoke the same language as them, and they generally found CANN staff to be welcoming and kind. All comparison group members remembered receiving pamphlets from CANN staff that included useful information about settlement organizations in their final destinations. One comparison group member shared, *“I still remember the day we came to Canada. I appreciate how different cultures are embraced here. There was a man who can speak in my language and welcomed us. I feel very warm about that. And he gave me a lot of information and pamphlets for my province. It did help me a lot.”*

Settlement needs and integration experience

E-Link participants and comparison group members had initial settlement needs including finding housing, finding daycares or schools for children, obtaining identification and a driver’s license, finding a family doctor, and finding employment. While the majority of E-Link participants had family or friends in Canada who helped them with some of their settlement issues, only one comparison group member spoke about having friends in Canada who supported her with her family’s settlement needs. Other comparison group members indicated that their neighbours and co-workers have been welcoming and supportive of their settlement needs and helped them to learn about Canadian culture. One comparison group member, however, shared that because she and her husband did not know anyone in Canada, it was difficult to find references who could speak about their work experience, which hindered their ability to find employment. Some E-Link participants attended newcomers’ welcome events and connected with others through these events or through volunteering.

Experience with settlement service organizations

Several E-Link participants mentioned receiving pre-arrival services prior to landing in Canada. The ones who received pre-arrival services were highly satisfied with the services they received to prepare for their immigration to and settlement in Canada. Participants received help to prepare for what they would need to do in the first two weeks in Canada, and some received support with finding employment. As noted in the theory of change, E-Link focus group participants who received pre-arrival services seemed to indicate that the pre-arrival services were more helpful in addressing their settlement needs compared to post-arrival services. One participant mentioned that he still contacts his pre-arrival settlement organization for support even after landing in Canada.

E-Link participants and comparison group members' experience with post-arrival services varied from a "light touch" to personalized support. E-Link participants who received less personalized services were overall less satisfied with the services they received. Participants also mentioned that for certain issues such as health care, they did not receive in-depth information or support from SPOs. Participants described having to navigate the health system mostly on their own or received information from friends. Furthermore, comparison group members were able to access immigrant serving organizations within their province by reaching out to organizations listed in the pamphlets provided by CANN staff or through referrals from organizations or their children's school board. All comparison group members voiced satisfaction with and gratitude for the services they received. Comparison group members mentioned that they were able to apply for child benefits, find out about how to enroll their children into school, about where to take English language examinations and where to access English courses, and learn to find and apply for jobs in Canada.

In terms of service accessibility, participants' responses varied. In certain communities, it was hard to access in-person services without a car. It was also difficult to find specific services outside of regular business hours, which made them inaccessible for people who worked full-time. For example, people who worked full-time could not access live workshops, and could only rely on emails from SPOs. Comparison group members on the other hand all said that it was generally easy to find and access services in their communities. One comparison group member explained that he had researched settlement services before arriving in Canada which made it easy for him and his family to find and access services. Other comparison group members mentioned that booking appointments with settlement organizations was fast, staff from settlement organizations were quick to respond to their needs, and that settlement organizations were close to their home which made it easy to seek supports in-person. Only one comparison group member said that there was a 15-day waiting period to obtain an appointment with a settlement organization which may have been because of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to settlement organizations' mode of working. Comparison group members shared

that if one settlement organization could not answer their questions, they would be referred to other settlement organizations where they could find appropriate support.

Newcomers' suggestions for improvement

For CANN or E-Link

E-Link participants suggested that it would be helpful if CANN could reach out to them prior to their arrival at the airport to let them know what to expect. They expressed that the landing process was a bit hectic. In addition to the pamphlet with settlement organizations, participants suggested including a summary document that lists what to do or who to contact for various settlement needs, such as housing or employment. Comparison group members shared that information should be separated by topic into individual pamphlets, such as one pamphlet for employment. A couple of comparison group members who had personally experienced scams shortly after arriving in Canada suggested that pamphlets should also address topics related to workplace rights (e.g., minimum wage and legal employment contracts) and how to avoid being a victim of fraud or scams in Canada as many newcomers lack knowledge about these topics and newcomers are easy targets.

When comparison group members were asked if they would have liked if CANN staff asked them if they wanted to share their contact information with immigrant serving organizations so that they could be contacted directly, all comparison group members said yes. One comparison group member further explained that it is difficult for newcomers to think of questions to ask as soon as they land in Canada due to the hectic landing process as also described by the E-Link participant above. She further explained, *“because when I first came to Canada, we have a lot to settle, we have a lot of things to do. So, if you can drop me an email and I could get back to you when I have time, then I could get through what I have to do before I reach out to you. It would be more convenient.”* Comparison group members, however, did not necessarily think that having been contacted by settlement organizations would have helped them to find and access services more quickly. Many comparison group members contacted settlement organizations a few days or weeks after arriving in Canada to find emergent supports, such as finding employment, obtaining SIN cards and driver's licenses, or information about daycare or their children's school.

For settlement organizations

E-Link participants had the following recommendations for settlement services in general:

- A hotline that newcomers could call to find services.

- A matching program that introduces a newcomer to a community member who has lived there for a longer period of time (whether immigrants or people born in Canada).
- Videos or webinars that can be accessible at any time, about various settlement topics.
- More personalized guidance and information.

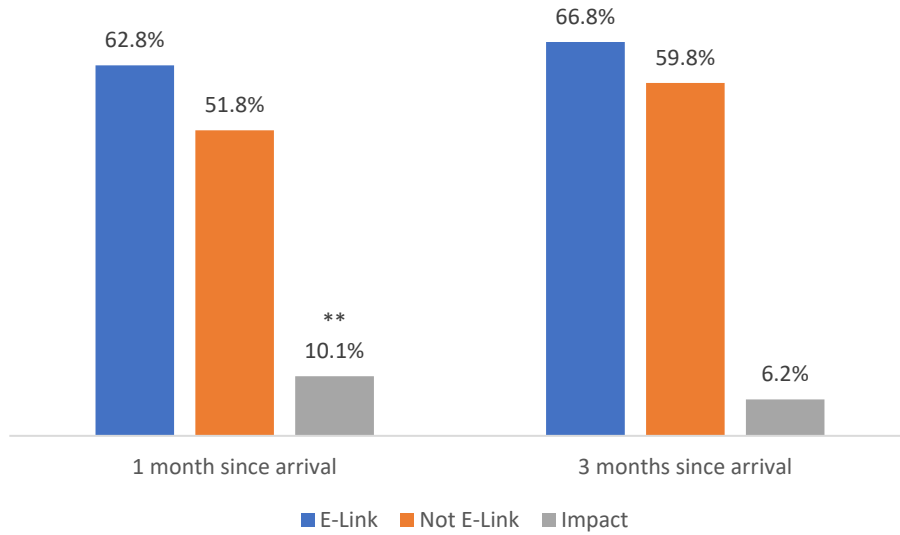
IMPACTS OF E-LINK ON USAGES OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

o presents the proportions of the E-Link clients and comparison group members who used services offered by SPOs (usage rate) and the average number of services used (usage frequency) within 1 and 3 month(s) since arrival, together with estimated impacts of E-Link on these measures. The service usage rate is 62.8% and 66.8% for the E-Link clients, and higher than the corresponding figures of 51.8% and 59.8% for the comparison group. If these estimated proportions are representative to the experience of the 1,097 E-Link participants, E-Link would have increased service usage from 656 newcomers to 733 newcomers within 3 months.

Corresponding to these differences, the usage frequency is higher among the E-Link clients than among the comparison group (Figure 5, 1.81 vs 1.71 times within 1 month since arrival, and 3.55 vs 2.04 times within 3 months since arrival).

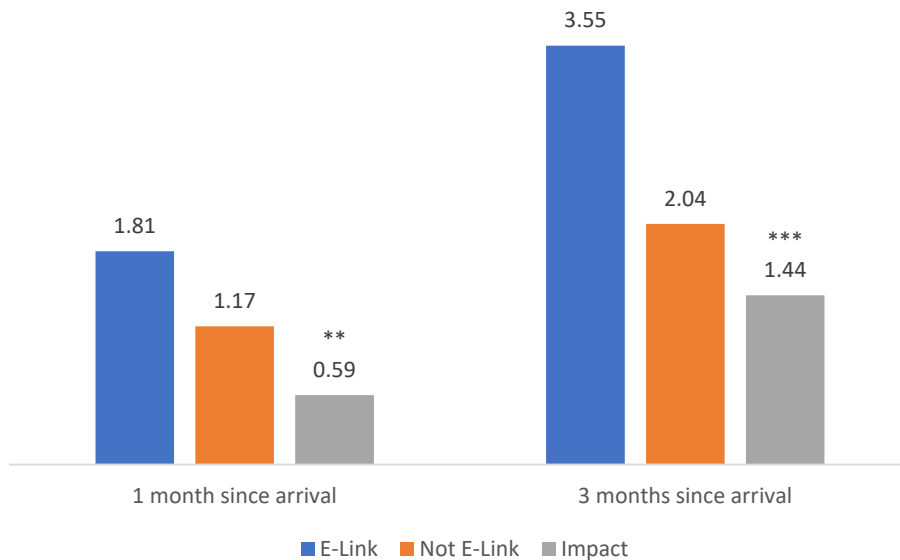
The impact on usage rate is positive and statistically significant within 1 month since arrival (10.1 percentage points), and positive but not statistically significant within 3 months since arrival (6.2 percentage points). However, the impact on usage frequency is positive and statistically significant in both time frames (0.59 and 1.44 times within 1 and 3 month(s) since arrival, respectively).

Figure 4 Proportion of participants using SPO services after arrival



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Figure 5 Average number of services used by newcomers



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Table 2 breaks down the service usage rate and frequency within 3 months since arrival by service type. The service usage is higher among the E-Link clients than the comparison group for all types of services. In particular, E-Link clients have substantially higher take-up rates of general settlement services, employment services, and community connection than that of the comparison group, which yields positive and statistically significant impacts on usage rates for these services (13.1, 7.3, and 6.4 percentage points, respectively). The impacts on usage frequency for these services are also all positive, and statistically significant for settlement service and community connection.

Table 2 Usage rate and frequency by service type during 3 months after arrival

Service type	Service uptake (%)			Frequency		
	E-Link	Not E-Link	Impact	E-Link	Not E-Link	Impact
Settlement service	40.9%	27.1%	13.1% ***	0.86	0.46	0.37 ***
Employment service	37.6%	29.1%	7.3% *	1.29	0.81	0.42
Language assessment	14.6%	13.8%	0.5%	0.21	0.12	0.08
LINC/CLIC	11.3%	9.3%	2.1%	0.56	0.29	0.29
Community connection	25.2%	18.6%	6.4% *	0.79	0.44	0.33 *
Other service	6.2%	6.5%	-0.3%	0.16	0.06	0.11

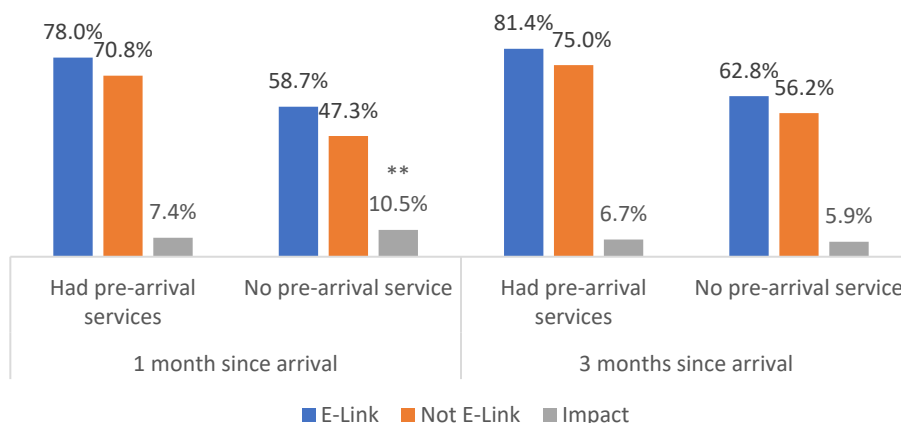
Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

GBA Plus – Variation of impacts

The survey responses from newcomers also reveal various differences in service usage behaviours across different characteristics. Notable differences related to the intersectionality (via the lens of GBA Plus) are described below.

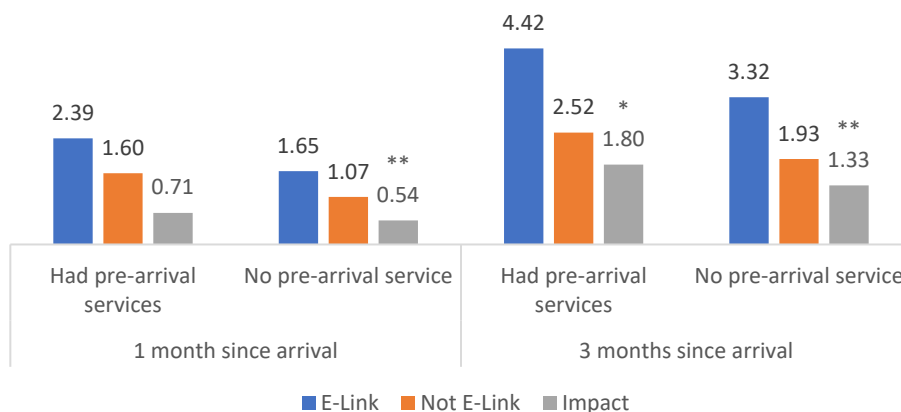
Pre-arrival service history: In general, usage of settlement services is higher for newcomers who received pre-arrival services than those who did not. E-Link has positive impacts on service usage rate (Figure 6) and frequency (Figure 7) for those who received no pre-arrival services, but only the impact on usage frequency remains statistically significant for both time frames. Among those received pre-arrival services, the impacts on usage rate are positive and insignificant while the impact on the usage frequency is positive and significant within 3 months since arrival.

Figure 6 Proportion of participants using settlement services by pre-arrival service history



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Figure 7 Average number of settlement services used by pre-arrival service history

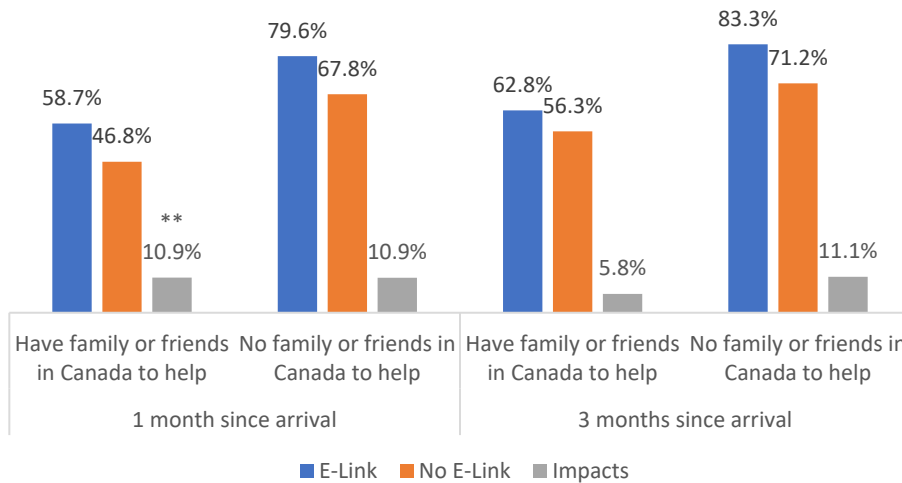


Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Presence of family or friends in Canada who can help newcomers: Unsurprisingly, newcomers without family or friends in Canada to help them seem to have higher needs for the settlement services, with 83% of the clients in this group taking up services within 3 months since arrival as opposed to 63% of the clients who has family and friends in Canada (Figure 8). The impacts on service usage rate are comparable between the two groups (a 6-11 percentage point increase in usage rate for both groups for both time frames), but the impact is only

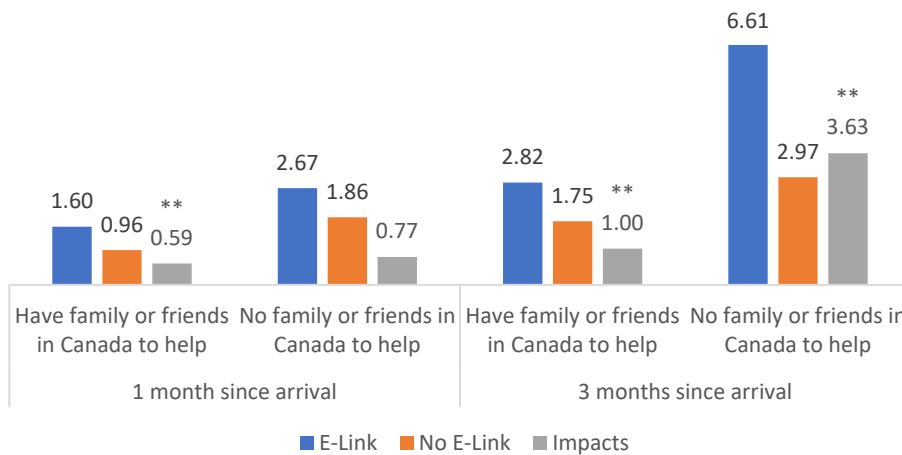
statistically significant for those with family and friends in Canada for 1 month since arrival. The impact on service frequency (Figure 9) is positive and statistically significant for both groups 3 months since arrival, but the impact is greater for those without family and friends (3.63 vs 1.00 times).

Figure 8 Proportion of participants using settlement services by presence of family or friends who can help



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

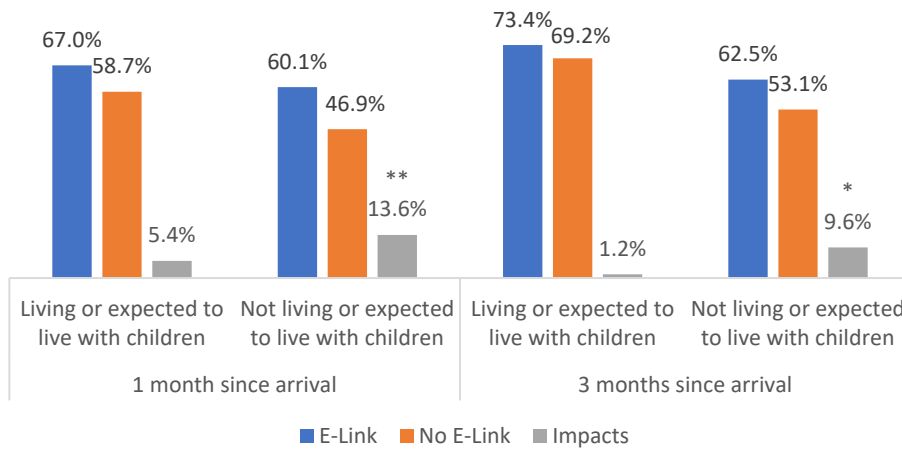
Figure 9 Average number of settlement services used by presence of family or friends who can help



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

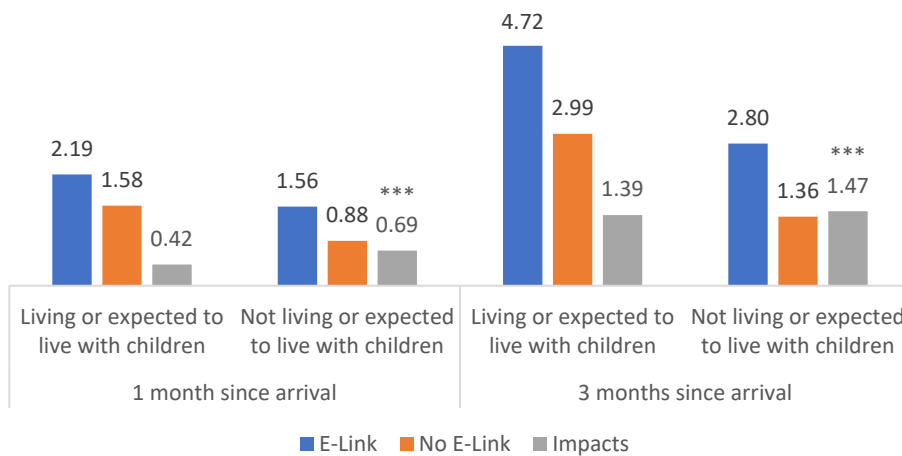
Presence of children in household: Newcomers living or expected to live with children have a higher service usage rate and frequency than those without children living or expected to live with them (the usage rate of 73.4% vs 62.5% (Figure 10) and the usage frequency of 4.72 vs 2.8 within 3 months since arrival (Figure 11)). For both time frames, the impacts are only positive and statistically significant for those without children (a 9.6 percentage point increase in usage rate and an increase in usage frequency of 1.47 times within 3 months since arrival).

Figure 10 Proportion of participants using settlement services by presence of children



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Figure 11 Average number of settlement services used by presence of children

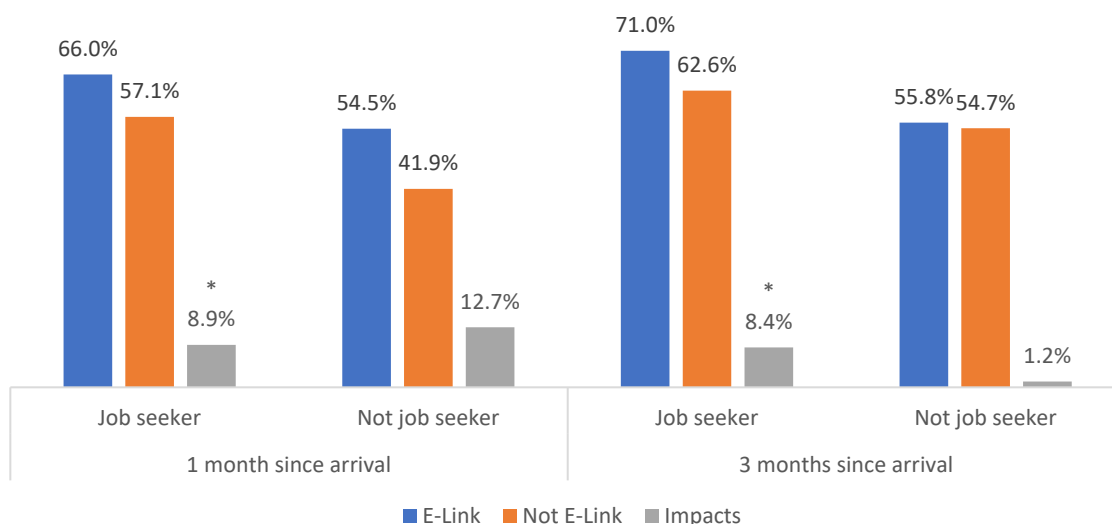


Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

Job seekers: The E-Link clients looking for a job had a higher usage rate and frequency than those not looking for a job (71% vs 55.8% and 4.06 vs 2.23 within 3 months since arrival). The impacts on usage rate and frequency are positive and statistically significant for jobseekers for both time frames (a 8.4 percentage point increase in usage rate and an increase in usage frequency of 1.86 times within 3 months since arrival). In contrast, only the impact on usage frequency within 1 month since arrival is positive and statistically significant for non-jobseekers (an increase in usage frequency of 0.57 times).

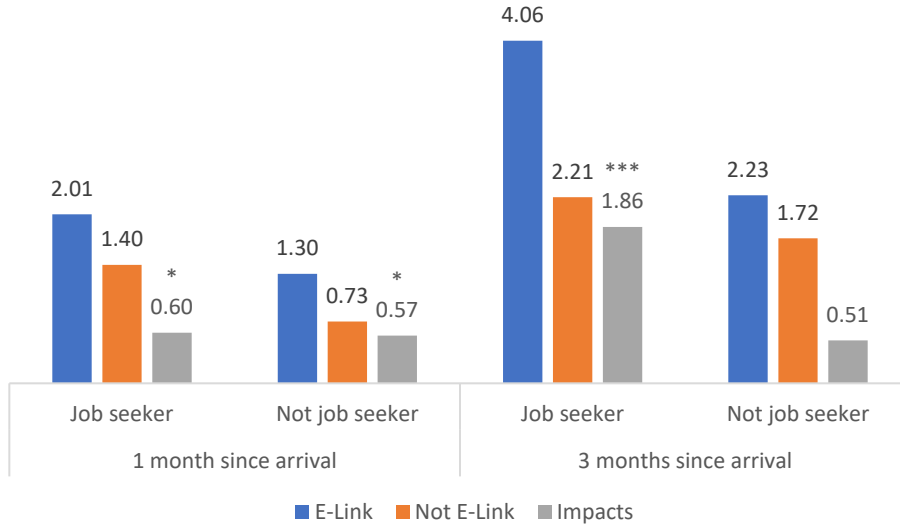
Unsurprisingly, job seekers have a higher usage rate and frequency of employment services than non-jobseekers (43% vs 24% and 1.6 vs 0.5 times among E-Link participants within 3 months since arrival, for example). The E-Link program has no positive and statistically significant impact on usage rate and frequency of employment services for non-job seekers, while it has a positive and statistically significant impact on usage rate for job seekers within 3 months since arrival (a 9.4 percentage point increase).

Figure 12 Proportion of participants using settlement services by job seeker status



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

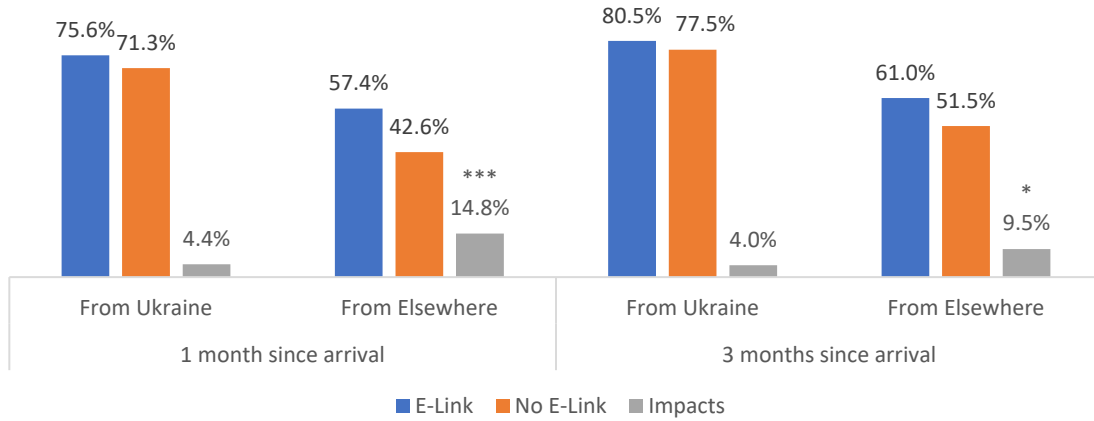
Figure 13 Average number of settlement services used by job seeker status



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

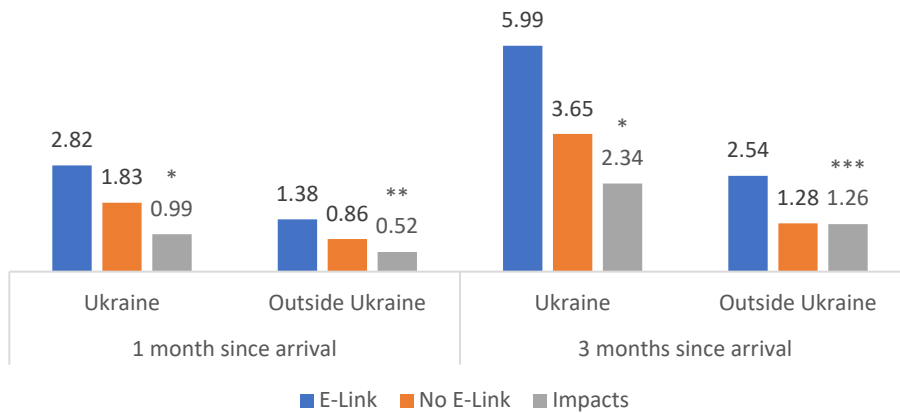
From Ukraine: A non-trivial number of newcomers in the sample are Ukrainians who came to Canada through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET). Unsurprisingly, newcomers from Ukraine used more settlement services (o) but E-Link has no significant impact on settlement service usage rate among them. However, E-Link’s impacts on usage frequency (Figure 15) are slightly higher among Ukrainians. Since many Ukrainians arrived through the CUAET visa have organizations supporting them before they arrived in Canada, it is not surprising that there is no usage rate impact, but their complex needs could be further supported through more services if they are proactively contacted by SPOs.

Figure 14 Proportion of participants using settlement services by source country



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

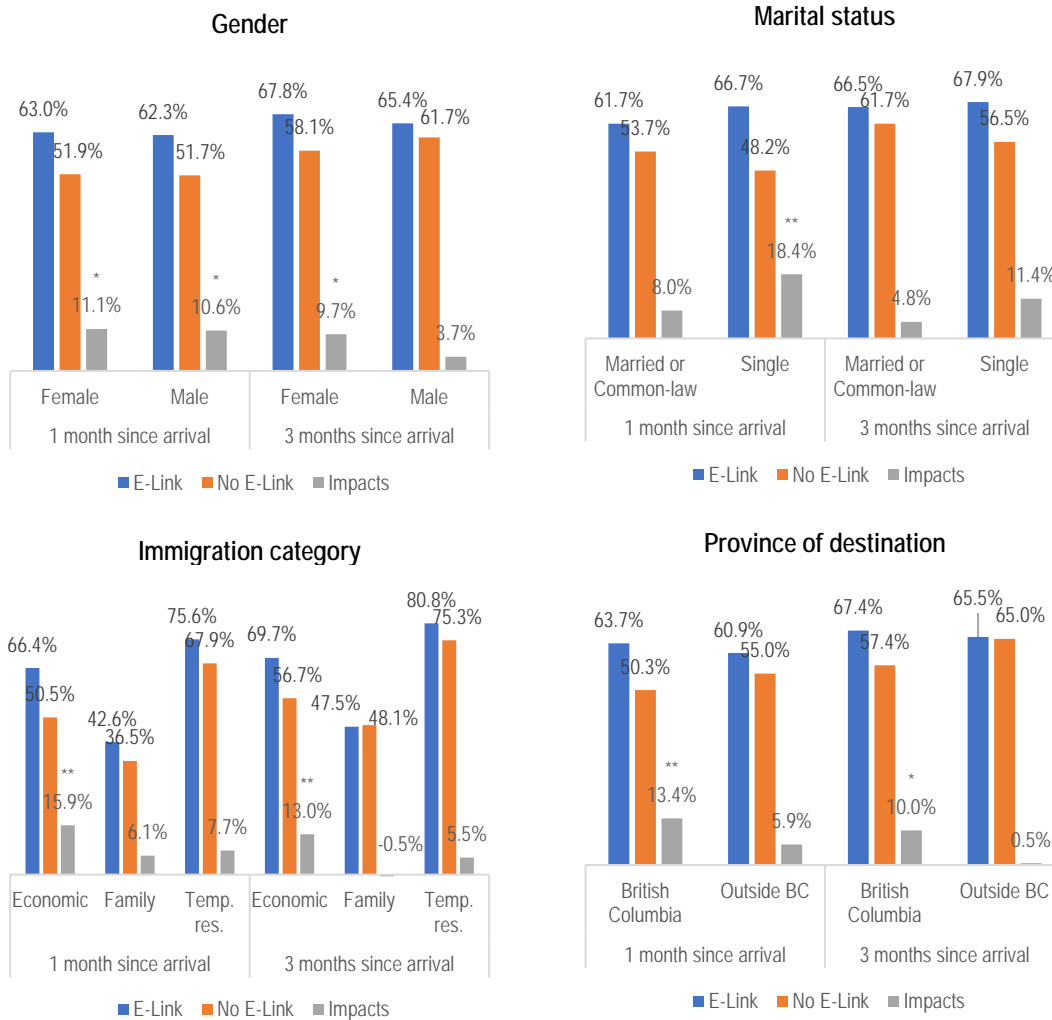
Figure 15 Average number of settlement services used by source country



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

SRDC also examined the variations of impacts by gender, marital status, immigration category, and province of destination. However, the variations of impacts are not notable (Figure 16).

Figure 16 Variation of the proportion of participants using settlement services by characteristics



Note: Statistical significance of the estimated impacts are denoted by asterisks. *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.1.

LESSONS LEARNED AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

The interim analysis of survey and administrative data collected show three highly encouraging findings that CANN E-Link is delivering substantial impacts and meeting the policy objectives of increasing the uptake of IRCC-funded settlement services among recently arrived newcomers and connecting newcomers and SPOs earlier so that their settlement and integration journey is accelerated.

In general, E-Link has been implemented as it was designed. There were some challenges in the platform development, but the issues have been resolved. Both E-Link staff and partner SPOs found the platform functioned as it was intended. Through E-Link, CANN and partner SPOs built strong partnerships that help to refine the platform and recruitment of other SPOs. E-Link helps newcomers access services faster but getting them to respond is still a challenge. Contact info may be wrong, staff has limited time/resources to reach out to newcomers, and newcomers are skeptical of free services. E-Link SPOs recognize platform's potential in service communication and coordination despite the challenges. E-Link SPOs suggest using different proximity thresholds in rural and urban areas to match newcomers to SPOs.

E-Link achieved its service provider target ahead of schedule with providers from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. SPOs have used the information to reach over 70% of newcomers and helped over 50% of E-Link participants. E-Link has substantially increased the contact of newcomers with a SPO – from 42% of the status quo to 59% soon after arrival. This impact remains at 19 percentage points within the first three months.

What is more striking is the substantial increase in service uptake. Among E-Link participants, 63% and 67% used SPO services within 1 month and 3 months respectively, compared to the status quo of 52% and 60%. In particular, the usage of employment-related services increased by 7 percentage points when the status quo update rate is merely 30%. E-Link's impact on the usage of employment-related services is large among job seekers.

These impacts corroborate with the positive experience newcomers have with CANN and E-Link. The process was simple and easy to understand, especially if the CANN staff spoke in their preferred language. Newcomers in the comparison group feel that service providers reaching out to them would be very beneficial during the initial settlement. Also, newcomers reported they did not remember all the details of referrals provided to them at the airport. The proactive reach out to by SPOs in the first couple of weeks become important.

Given that those who received settlement services found the services useful, it is important to reach newcomers as early as possible. Although some newcomers wish that they were offered pre-arrival settlement services, it might be difficult for IRCC to facilitate proactive reach out.⁶ In that sense, CANN and E-Link could be crucial for those who have not received any pre-arrival services. Besides E-Link's proactive reach out, newcomers also want clearer and easy-to-access information about settlement services and settlement topics, and they suggest several ways to improve the accessibility of contacting SPOs during the hectic period of initial settlement. **E-Link could be a notable entry point for settlement services and information. Since E-Link's interim results are very promising, CANN may consider expand this platform to other major international airports in Canada** if there is a good partner operator of information kiosk.

The SRDC E-Link evaluation team continues to follow up with E-Link clients and comparison group newcomers to understand their settlement experience after their arrival. Since more SPOs are partnering with E-Link and CANN will further improve E-Link, the SRDC evaluation team will conduct another round of interviews in late 2023 to examine the details of implementation and newcomers' settlement journey. The team will publish the final evaluation report in March 2024. It will present an update to the implementation research. The final evaluation will also discuss E-Link's impacts on the usages of settlement services and settlement outcomes of newcomers six months after arrival.

⁶ Because of IRCC's role in handling immigration application and approval, it might not be appropriate for IRCC to seek consent from newcomers to share their contact information with non-governmental organizations.

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