

PARADIGM SHIFT EVALUATIONS



A Proposed Evaluation of Settle and Integration Services
Prepared for: Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
February 7th, 2015

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To: Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
Re: Settlement and Integration Services

Paradigm Shift Evaluations is pleased to have the opportunity to work with Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) and facilitate the evaluation of the Settlement and Integration Services (SIS) program.

Program evaluation is an important activity that organizations engage in to enhance program functioning and to obtain valuable information that can be used for decision-making purposes. We commend IWSO for undertaking an evaluation of its SIS program and hope that the comprehensive evaluation plan developed by Paradigm Shift Evaluations meets your needs.

Our client base chooses us for our innovative approach to evaluation and our demonstrated ability to work with marginalized populations. Our consulting team, comprised of credentialed evaluators, has extensive experience with regard to developing surveys, facilitating focus groups, conducting interviews, and carrying out records reviews. As well, several members of our team are well-versed in the Theory of Change approach and we have at least one fully bi-lingual team member. Therefore, our strong methodological abilities, coupled with our expertise in evaluating social change programs, will ensure the success of this evaluation.

We sincerely hope that this evaluation proposal will benefit IMWO. We thank you for this opportunity and look forward to discussing our evaluation plan with you further.

Regards,

Paradigm Shift Evaluations

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1. Overview of Settlement and Integration Services

The Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) is a charitable organization established in 1988 to serve immigrant and visible minority women in Ottawa and the surrounding area. In 2009/2010, IWSO introduced the Settlement and Integration Services (SIS) program to provide immigrant women, who have experienced abuse or other violence, with supports essential to ensure a successful integration of a new life within Ottawa.

Upon accessing the SIS program, newcomer women are provided with a tailored settlement needs assessment and referral based on aspects related, but not limited, to motivation for seeking immigration, life experiences to date, educational background, and individual expectations. Referrals are intended to empower newcomer women, enabling them to prosper during their settlement/integration through their social, economic, and cultural contributions within the community within Ottawa.

In addition to the initial referral, the Settlement and Integration Services includes four distinct components for newcomer women: newcomer orientation, employment services, computer training program, and care for newcomer children. Furthermore, the newcomer orientation includes one-on-one counseling, group information/orientation sessions, and social/recreational activities, while the employment services incorporate activities involving job search workshops and French conversation circles. These additional elements aim to support newcomer women in a practical manner to aid in their immediate settlement needs.

Although the SIS program has been successful in providing integration support to an average of 335 newcomer women in the last three years, an evaluation of the program's performance, specifically the long-term outcomes and potential improvements to the program are in need of assessment.

2. Revision of Program Logic Model

The SIS steering committee has indicated an updated PLM may be required. After careful deliberation, we at Paradigm Shift believe that a revised logic model would greatly improve the evaluation efforts of Settlement and Integration Services. The main weaknesses include:

- The PLM does not account for all program activities
- Many short term outcomes listed in the PLM (i.e., “increased access” outcomes) are actually truisms if the activities are operating as intended. For example, if the program offers settlement services, there is *inevitably* increased access to services. Program outcomes “must relate to the *benefits* those...services might have for the participants, not simply their receipt” (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 205)
- The PLM does not illustrate the theoretical linkages between the activities and outcomes, or the theoretical linkages between the different levels of outcomes. That is, it does not outline which activities lead to which outcomes of which short term outcomes lead to

which longer term outcomes. Thus, the current PLM does not illustrate a theory of change.

- The PLM does not address assumptions of the program activities. For example, with the acquisition of new knowledge and skills newcomer women may be able to gain a greater sense of empowerment and independence.
- The PLM currently includes the program deliverables/targets for 2014/15. Program deliverables are generally not modelled within a theory of change (Funnell & Rogers, 2011).

We believe that the revised PLM (Appendix A) is a significant improvement on the previous model for a variety of reasons:

- The PLM has realigned all relevant activities and outcomes into the theoretically appropriate aspects of the program.
- By including arrows (representing “if-then” statements) the PLM now illustrates the causal linkages between activities and both short and long term outcomes. Thus, the improved PLM demonstrates how the different aspects of the program relate to each other.
- Key program assumptions have been outlined in the new model.
- Deliverables have now been addressed within the Evaluation Matrix (Appendix B) as a key component of a proposed evaluation question.

3. Scope and Type of Evaluation

The purpose of the proposed evaluation is to gauge whether SIS is operating as planned, how its service delivery could be improved and the extent to which it is achieving its intended long-term outcomes. To this end, we recommend a combined process/outcome formative evaluation of this program. As this initiative has only been in operation since 2009/2010 it is important to confirm if the program is functioning as planned. This can be achieved via a process evaluation, which involves an assessment of whether a program is operating in accordance with the program design (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). The process evaluation will involve a focus on fidelity of implementation, which concerns developing an understanding of the extent to which the program activities have been implemented as intended (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010). The outcome evaluation will allow us to investigate if SIS is having its intended short term, intermediate, and long term impact on newcomer women and the greater community. Lastly the proposal addresses the specific concerns IWSO outlined for the evaluation. The outcome evaluation will specifically investigate SIS’s long-term effects on newcomer women. It is anticipated that the results of this evaluation can be used by IWSO to improve the SIS’s service delivery and gain insight into how it is contributing to the community of Ottawa.

4. Theoretical Approach

We suggest the evaluation be guided by two theoretical approaches to evaluation: a contribution analysis (CA) approach (Mayne, 2012) and a utilization-focused approach (Patton, 2008). We

suggest CA approach because of the emphasis in the call-for-proposals on assessing the long-term outcomes of the program. Typically, agencies find it helpful to know, not only if long-term outcomes are being achieved, but also, if their program is a causal mechanism behind that change. Using a CA approach provides an argument with evidence from which it is reasonable to conclude with confidence that SIS has made a contribution to the positive change in newcomer women and why. In the CA approach, causality is inferred when the evaluation confirms:

1. The intervention is based on a well-structured theory of change: the chain of results, and the assumptions behind why the intervention is expected to work are reasonable, logical, and supported by existing research, literature, and key stakeholders
2. The activities were implemented as intended
3. The chain of expected result occurred and the supporting factors or assumption of the theory of change were met
4. Any external causal factors – plausible rival explanations – have been accounted for (Mayne, 2012)

We also suggest a utilization-focused approach as this model focuses on gathering information that will be most useful for the evaluation's intended users and dictates that evaluation decisions will be made in collaboration with this identified group of primary users (Patton, 2008). In order to be most responsive to the needs of the IWSO, we suggest the creation of an Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC), including members from all stakeholder groups, which will provide guidance and support throughout the proceedings of the evaluation. To this end, key stakeholders and their relationships to the program and each other have been identified (see figure below). Stakeholders at the top of this figure (white) are considered to be essential to the successful implementation and continual operation of SIS. The stakeholders at the bottom of the figure (grey) are those who are involved with SIS but do not interact directly with the program. Including all stakeholders in the ESC will allow all stakeholders to provide valuable input, liaise, and facilitate dissemination and use of the evaluation findings.



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A primary demonstration of the utilization-focused approach will be in building capacity for the IWSO. The IWSO's senior management and the Board's Policy and Program committee have an interest in building internal evaluation capacity. Thus, Paradigm Shift suggests the IWSO should play a more prominent role in the steering committee. They will be included in the evaluation, as much as they are available, to analyze logic models, plan data collection methods, and articulate indicators. Further, Paradigm Shift plans to conclude the evaluation by building a multi-use framework with the IWSO and for the IWSO to use in future evaluation.

The current proposal reflects our initial evaluation plan; however, Paradigm Shift looks forward to working closely with the ESC at all stages of the evaluation in order to ensure it best reflects the specific needs of IWSO. To further ensure maximal quality and integrity while conducting this evaluation, Paradigm Shift will adhere to the standards set out by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE; Yarborough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011), which have been adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society.

5. Methods

The proposed evaluation questions, indicators, and methods of data collection are summarized in the evaluation matrix, which can be found in Appendix B.

Paradigm Shift recognizes that all methodological approaches have specific advantages and inherent challenges. Therefore, we will use a variety of complimentary qualitative and quantitative methods in this evaluation. This triangulation and interpretation of data strengthens validity and ensures the highest standard of evaluation possible. All data collection will be guided by the ethical principles of competence, integrity and accountability adopted by the Canadian Evaluation Society.

Literature/record Review and Environmental Scan

A literature review of empirical evidence surrounding the learning of a new culture's accepted behaviors, values, beliefs, and practices will be conducted to ensure that the theory of change underlying SIS is supported (evaluation question 1). This literature review will also help inform ways by which service delivery may be improved (evaluation question 4). In other words, scholarly peer-reviewed research deemed to be relevant and of high quality will be summarized and synthesized in order to obtain a current and comprehensive knowledge base concerning what is currently known about the techniques and processes of how an individual learns a new culture's assumptions and expectations. This will be compared and contrasted with SIS's theory that employment training, increased language skills, group information sessions, and social/recreational activities contribute to increased knowledge of a new culture.

In addition a thorough records review of all program strategy and implementation documents (e.g., participation/completion rates, employment statistics) are recommended in order to: 1) determine whether services are implemented as intended; 2) determine whether or not program deliverables are meeting output targets; 3) to assess if newcomer women's employment skills have increased, and; 4) to assess whether barriers to participation in SIS have been diminished

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(evaluation questions 2, 3, 7, 8, 10). We propose to critically examine all documents to ensure that the most accurate and relevant information is obtained.

Similarly, an environmental scan will be conducted (Cook et al., 2004) of all similar programs related to helping newcomer women learn the accepted behaviors, ideals, beliefs, and practices in Canadian society to determine whether or not the trends and drivers of change supporting SIS is supported (evaluation question 1).

Advantages of literature/record review/environmental scan

- Efficient and economical way to ensure program is empirically supported
- Assess extent to which proper records are being kept and maintained
- Does not interrupt program implementation
- Effective and efficient means of obtaining comprehensive and reliable data.
- Allows economic and efficient comparison with existing programs.

Limitations of literature/record review/environmental scan

- Research demonstrating positive results and favourable outcomes may be reported more often than those demonstrating negative results and unfavourable outcomes
- Relies on accuracy and completeness of previously recorded data
- Lacks flexibility; data is restricted to what already exists
- Results in other contexts may not translate to SIS

Interviews

We recommend conducting semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a purposeful sample of key informants involved with the program (program staff, past participants in the program) to gather information regarding their perceptions of the underlying theory of SIS in addition to the design, implementation, and outcomes of service delivery (evaluation questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10). Interviews will also assess the degree to which newcomer women feel comfortable and competent in the labor market, with the Canadian model of living (e.g., language, typical cultural practices), and overall integration into Canadian society (evaluation questions 5, 9, 11, 12). It is in informant interviews that we anticipate the majority of data regarding this evaluation will be collected. This being said, interviews will be tailored to reflect the differing levels of engagement with the program experienced among different staff members and past participants.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts will be analyzed with the general inductive approach that allows for emergent themes related to evaluation questions to become apparent (Thomas, 2006). Specifically, links to the evaluation questions will be established and a framework for the underlying processes and experience of the program will be developed (Braun & Clarke, 2008). We believe that compensation by way of a \$25 gift card to a local grocery store will increase participation in interviews.

Advantages of Interviews:

- Obtain detailed and informative responses from those with the most program knowledge and experience
- Allows for the emergence of unanticipated issues

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Limitations of Interviews:

- Requires extended time and resource commitment

Focus Groups

Conducting focus groups with newcomer women participants is recommended to gather evidence of the theory, design, implementation, and outcomes of SIS (evaluation questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). All focus groups will be facilitated by an experienced Paradigm Shift employee and will be conducted using the best practices outlined by Krueger and Casey (2000). A translator will be present to provide any necessary translation during focus groups. Member participants will be self-selecting. Focus groups will not exceed 10 participants in order to allow adequate participation from each member and will be standardized with open-ended questions developed in conjunction with the steering committee.

Advantages of focus groups:

- Obtain rich, qualitative data
- Potential to obtain unanticipated data
- Facilitate interaction and exchange of ideas among participants

Limitations of focus groups:

- Self-selection of participants
- Potential for self-report bias
- Potential for peer pressure or for few members to dominate conversation

Activity Observation

One component of program implementation will be assessed through a non-participant observation of activities. Non-participant observation allows the evaluators to have a glimpse into the implementation of program activities while staying separate from the activities being observed. This method often used in tandem with other data collection methods, and can offer a more, "nuanced and dynamic" appreciation of situations that cannot be as easily captured through other methods (Liu & Maitlis, 2010). Using relevant program documents (e.g., staff training manuals, activity materials/outlines) the evaluators will attend selected activities to assess whether what transpires is consistent with what was planned (evaluation question 2).

Advantages of observation

- Setting is natural, flexible, and unstructured
- Can be combined with a variety of other data collection methods
- Generates relevant, quantifiable data

Limitations of observation

- The evaluator has less control over the situation in a natural environment
- If the group is aware that they are being observed, resulting behavior may be affected

Surveys

Surveys will be employed to evaluate aspects of the immediate and intermediate outcomes (evaluation questions 5,6,7,9 and 10). One component of assessing newcomer women's settlement transition, integration, and employability will be the perceptions of other community agencies to

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which they have been referred by SIS. It will be of interest to gather their opinions of the women's success at integrating into Canadian society. A web-based survey will be developed in order to elicit the opinions and perceptions of a purposive sample of other community agencies that are providing services to the newcomer women. The survey questions and design will be developed by Paradigm Shift in conjunction with the steering committee and will adhere to best practices from survey research (Posavec & Carey, 2007). The survey will be kept to minimal length as to encourage participation, and Dillman's (2000) method of survey implementation (e.g., sending invitation e-mail and subsequent reminders) will be used to increase the response rate.

Advantages of Surveys

- Can obtain a larger number of respondents than interviews or focus groups
- Cost-effective
- Allows for anonymous responding, which can help reduce social desirability and issues of peer pressure that may arise in interviews or focus groups
- A web survey eliminates mailing costs and enhances ease of access to participants
- Reduces the burden of data entry.

Limitations of Surveys

- Often have a low-to-moderate response rate
- Self-selection bias i.e., respondents may differ from non-respondents
- Does not allow for conclusions to be made about the direct causes of the program on the changes in the lives of the newcomer women.

Most Significant Change

For the evaluation of the long term outcomes (evaluation questions 11 and 12), we recommend using a Most Significant Change (MSC) technique (Dart and Davies, 2003). Storytelling, through the MSC technique, provides a powerful way to gather information on the program's outcomes from the viewpoint of the newcomer women. This method can highlight both the strong points and weaknesses of the program, as well as any unintended consequences. In asking newcomer women to provide a story of their experience in the program, it asks *them* to evaluate the program, rather than provide information for someone else to place a value on. First, steering committee involvement will be sought for the implementation of the technique. The domains of change under study will be clarified and agreed upon (e.g., empowerment and integration into Canadian society). After having participated in the program, it is assumed that the women will have sufficient language skills to record their stories themselves. The key questions regarding change will be developed (e.g., *looking back at your participation in the SIS program, what would you say is the most significant change that you've seen to your feeling of empowerment and ability to integrate into Canadian society?*) and these questions will serve as the basis for the narratives of the newcomer women. Stories of change will be reviewed by Paradigm Shift along with the steering committee and stories that are most representative of the whole group will be selected. These narratives will be a useful data source in combination with the other methods to evaluate the influence the program has had on newcomer women. In addition, the active participation of the steering committee will allow them to see potential formative improvements as they are exposed to what is most valuable to the women. If desired by the steering committee, and upon approval of the newcomer women, the change stories could be highlighted on the SIS website.

Advantages of Most Significant Change Technique

- Gain an understanding of the project from the viewpoint of the newcomer women
- Acknowledges the possibility of unintended outcomes and consequences

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- Allows a means for the newcomer women to be engaged in the evaluation
- Reflects the importance of context and its impact on outcomes

Limitations of Most Significant Change Technique

- Time consuming
- Requires involvement from multiple levels
- Language and cultural barriers could arise

6. Potential Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Potential Challenges	Proposed Solutions
<p>Working with a Diverse and Vulnerable Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity • Difficulty in gaining participant trust and building rapport (i.e., newcomer women may not trust unknown individuals perceived to be in positions of authority) • Language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluators will adhere to all CES Core Competencies, particularly: 5.9 Attends to issues of diversity and culture and 1.4 Considers human rights and the public welfare in evaluation practice • Interested program participants will be recruited as language translators and assist with development of multilingual resources • Staff from Settlement and Integration Services will be asked to assist with recruitment because they will likely be trusted more by the target population • Data collection methods will be designed to accommodate language diversity (e.g., use of symbols and diagrams where appropriate; use of translation services)
<p>Potential Difficulty with Contacting Former Clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspecified exit strategy for the program and lack of current program indicators makes it difficult to clearly identify former participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from Settlement and Integration Services will be asked to assist with contacting past program participants • When possible, use current program participants as key informants and to employ snowball sampling technique
<p>Exit Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the lack of knowledge of the exit of participants, it may not be possible to determine whether all participants leave the program when they are ready to leave (i.e., they have learnt all necessary knowledge and skills and are ready to apply them in the community and labour market) • Participants may also leave due to other external causes such as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised PLM (Appendix A) outlines the proposed program outcomes • The Evaluation Matrix (Appendix B) outlines proposed evaluation questions which will address relevant program outcomes and indicators • Paradigm Shift will provide recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding the development of a program exit strategy as well as an ongoing monitoring process
<p>Social Desirability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants may feel pressure to respond that the program has benefitted them because they feel pressure to give the “correct answer”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide complete and language-appropriate information outlining what “informed consent” and “confidentiality” means within the evaluation context • Examine alternative explanations for outcomes to either rule out or clarify they have only a limited influence

7. Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice

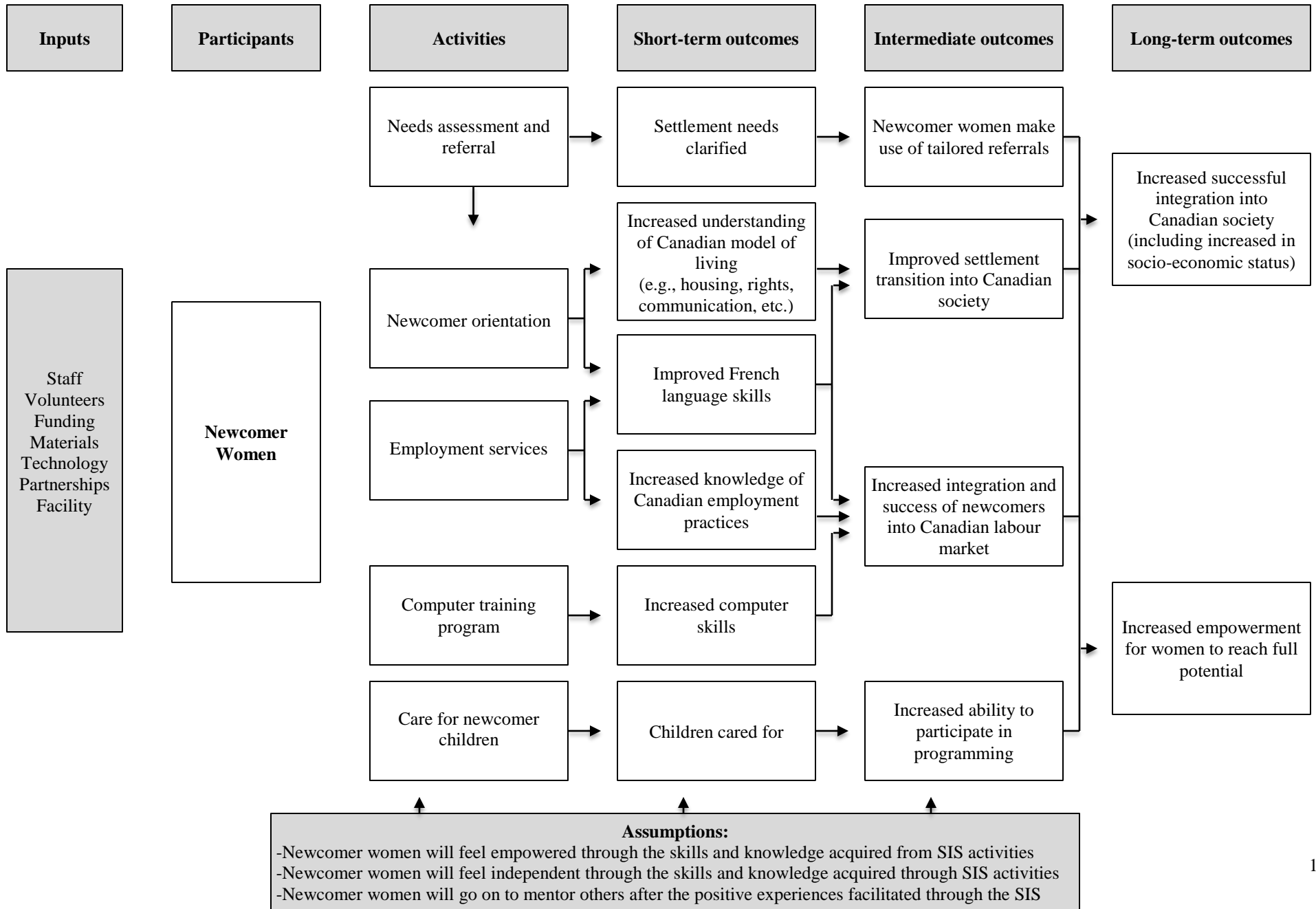
The Paradigm Shift team is made up of evaluators credentialed through the Canadian Evaluation Societies Professional Designation Program (PDP). As such, the three pillars of the PDP credentialing program will guide the recommended evaluation design and data collection methods outlined in this report. The three pillars include: the code of ethics, the standards of practice, and the evaluation competencies (CES, 2010). The way we have designed our proposed evaluation demonstrates the following five competencies in particular:

Competency	Evidence of Demonstration
Technical Practice Competency 2.2: Specifies program theory	As demonstrated by our improved PLM (Appendix A): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradigm Shift clearly understands the component parts of the program theory of change/logic model and the linkages between component parts (e.g., inputs, activities, outputs; levels of outcomes) and we have clearly identified the connections between and within the component parts and identified logical and practical flow to the anticipated achievement of outcomes
Situational Practice Competency 3.3: Identifies impacted stakeholders	As evidenced by our stakeholder diagram including primary and secondary stakeholders, Paradigm Shift has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the key stakeholders for the evaluation • Identified stakeholders impacted indirectly by the evaluation
Situational Practice Competency 3.5: Serves the information needs of intended users	As demonstrated by our proposal’s utilization-focused approach and stakeholder engagement Paradigm Shift has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed the communication styles of the stakeholders • Developed a communication plan that meets the needs of the intended users and the evaluators
Management Practice Competency 4.7: Identifies and mitigates problems/issues	As demonstrated by our proposal’s anticipated challenges and mitigation strategies section, Paradigm Shift has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified potential problem areas to inform the steering committee of the potential challenges, and provided remedial suggestions • Identified and decreased the probability and impact of negative events on the evaluation • Considered previous lessons learned in evaluation and applied them to this project
Interpersonal Practice Competency 5.9: Attends to issues of diversity and culture	As demonstrated by our proposal’s anticipated challenges and mitigation strategies section as well as our chosen evaluation methodology, Paradigm Shift has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the needs of diverse constituents and communities including: ethnicity, language, social class, culture, religious beliefs and practices, local customs, and organizational cultures • Displayed sensitivity to issues of diversity • Responded proactively to address issues of diversity, striving to be both equitable and inclusive

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Appendix A: Immigrant Women Services Ottawa- Settlement and Integration Services Program Logic Model



Appendix B: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Methods
Program Relevance		
1. Is theory of change underlying the program supported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical evidence • Staff member perceptions • Newcomer women perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Environmental Scan • Interviews • Focus Groups
Program Delivery		
2. Are program activities implemented as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff member perceptions • Newcomer women perceptions • Evaluator assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Observation of Activities • Records Review
3. Are program deliverables meeting output targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output numbers (e.g., # of women served) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records Review
4. In what way(s) can service delivery be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Other community agency opinions • Empirical evidence • Steering Committee perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey • Literature Review • Most Significant Change Technique
Short Term Outcomes		
5. Do participants have an increased understanding of the Canadian model of living?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Other community agency opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey
6. Is the referral process meeting newcomer women's needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Other community agency opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey
7. Do newcomer women have increased knowledge of employment practices (including computer literacy)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Other community agency opinions • Completion rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey • Records Review
Intermediate Outcomes		
8. Has the childcare provision allowed for increased participation in programming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Program attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Records Review
9. Are newcomer women experiencing improved settlement transition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Other community agency opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey
10. Are newcomer women experiencing increased integration and success in the Canadian labour market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment statistics • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Past participant opinions • Other community agency opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records Review (Statistics Canada) • Interviews • Focus Groups • Survey
Long Term Outcomes		
11. Are newcomer women experiencing successful integration into Canadian society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer narrative of success • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Past participant opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Significant Change Technique • Interviews • Focus Groups
12. Do newcomer women have an increased sense of empowerment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer narrative of success • Staff opinions • Newcomer women opinions • Past participant opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Significant Change Technique • Interviews • Focus Groups