



# **PNSG's Collective Impact Report**

## **2019-2024**





**Acknowledgement:**

This report has pulled data from the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group Collective Impact Assessment conducted by Carolina Berinstein Consulting

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methods</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Findings</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Outputs and Activities</i>	<b>12</b>
• PNSG's Role and Actions: An Overall Assessment	12
• PNSG's Strategic Priorities, 2020-2025	14
• Mental Health	15
• Healthcare	18
• Digital Equity and Inclusion	20
• Amplifying the Voices of Newcomers	23
• Regional Accountability Models for Settlement (RAMS)	26
<i>Processes</i>	<b>28</b>
• Network and Stakeholder Engagement, Collaboration and Impact	28
• Deepening Engagement and Impact: Opportunities and Challenges	29
• Furthering Collective Impact: Strategic Priorities for 2025-2030	32
<i>Discussion: PNSG's Collective Impact</i>	<b>34</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix A: Central Planning Table Members</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix B: Evaluation Matrix</b>	<b>38</b>

# INTRODUCTION

Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG) is the local immigration partnership for Peel Region, serving the City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon and the City of Mississauga. Its goal is to achieve successful inclusion and engagement of newcomers into all aspects of the Peel community.

As a community collaborative, PNSG engages stakeholders to facilitate integrated newcomer services based on local data and planning. As a local immigration partnership, PNSG conducts community-level strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, communications, research, policy formulation and project management – to improve social and economic outcomes for Peel newcomers, immigrants and refugees.

PNSG accomplishes this through:

- Community strategic planning
- Stakeholder engagement and communications
- Convening and participating in community advisories and committees
- Conducting research collaborating with communities and formulating policy recommendations
- ImmigrationPeel.ca, the region's immigration web portal

PNSG is guided by a Central Planning Table (CPT), a multi-stakeholder project advisory, which guides and informs PNSG's activities and confirms its strategic priorities<sup>1</sup>. The CPT is convened by PNSG staff and co-chaired by community stakeholders.

In 2020, the CPT outlined five strategic priority areas for PNSG for the 2020-2025 period:

- Mental Health
- Healthcare
- Digital Equity & Inclusion
- Amplifying the voice of newcomers
- Regional Accountability Models for Settlement

<sup>1</sup> For a list of CPT members, see Appendix A.

This report assesses the effectiveness and impact of PNSG's initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for newcomers in Peel Region, particularly in how they influence the organization's collective impact. It considers the ways PNSG has achieved its objectives through its five strategic priorities, and assesses PNSG's stakeholders' experiences, with an eye towards understanding where the organization currently sits in its collective impact journey.

What follows is a brief demographic snapshot of Peel Region and PNSG's role in supporting newcomer inclusion, a description of the methods used for this report, and three areas of focus:

- PNSG's role and activities: what PNSG has done to fulfill its objectives and how well it has worked, particularly through the lens of the five strategic priorities. How does this work contribute to PNSG's collective impact?
- The process by which PNSG carries out its work: how (and how well) does PNSG work as an organization and as a broader collaborative network. How do the processes by which PNSG carries out its work contribute to its collective impact?
- A discussion on where PNSG as a whole and its strategic priorities may sit on the spectrum of collective action, providing a more integrated perspective.



## CONTEXT

In recent years, Peel region has seen significant growth. From 2016 to 2021, the region's population grew by 5%, reaching 1.45 million in 2021. Immigrants account for nearly 52% of Peel's population, according to 2021 census data. The region is expected to receive 34,483 permanent residents in 2024 and 35,000 in 2025.

As many as 670,775 people in the region had a non-official language (English or French) as their mother tongue. The top five languages spoken most often at home include Punjabi (168,795 people), Urdu (60,165), Hindi (35,325), Arabic (33,735) and Gujarati (28,880)<sup>2</sup>.

The PNSG Strategic Plan outlines a number of challenges newcomers face, including employment and income barriers, and a need for more formal, integrated services:

- It takes years for the average newcomer to reach income parity with established immigrants and Canadian-born residents in Peel
- Newcomers are disproportionately unemployed and under-employed despite high levels of education
- Service-providing organizations say they need better support to assist newcomer clients more holistically
- Newcomers rely on informal settlement supports in the community that are not connected to formal service providers

Within this context, PNSG is looking to understand how it has contributed and can continue to contribute to a coordinated and collaborative strategy for the successful engagement of newcomers in the economy and community of Peel. PNSG's intended outcomes include:

- Services for newcomers are accessible, coordinated and sensitive to their needs
- Newcomers are reemployed similarly to non-newcomers
- Greater connections established between informal community supports and formal service providers

With this in mind, this report evaluates PNSG's initiatives in the context of deepening its collective impact, including fostering cross-sectoral partnerships for greater capacity, responsiveness and adaptability of services in Peel region.

<sup>2</sup> Sources:

1. IRCC Immigration Levels Plan 2023-2025: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>

2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/02/new-immigration-plan-to-fill-labour-market-shortages-and-grow-canadas-economy.html>

3. Source of 2021 data: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/f7e5498e-0ad8-4417-85c9-9b8aff9b9eda/resource/1a8171dc-292b-4209-a700-63cb699269ff>

4. Source of 2023 and 2024 data: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>

# METHODS

To address these questions, qualitative and quantitative research methods were incorporated<sup>3</sup>. This included reviewing relevant documents and materials, coding for themes and tracking activities and outcomes related to strategic priorities; hosting a focus group with stakeholders; conducting key informant interviews; and conducting a survey of PNSG stakeholder and partner organizations to gather their perspectives on the collective achievements and impact of PNSG, as well as their experiences as a stakeholder of the collective impact initiative.

Specific documents reviewed for this assessment included:

- PNSG Strategic Plan Progress Update, September 2023
- PNSG Strategic and Ongoing Work Update, April 2024
- PNSG Collective Impact Report 2022-2023
- PNSG Collective Impact Report 2021-2022
- PNSG Collective Impact Report 2020-2021
- PNSG Collective Impact Report 2019-2020
- PNSG Collective Impact Report 2017-2018
- November 27, 2023, Collaborative Learning Forum for Newcomer Youth Mental Wellness in Peel Evaluation
- Equity in the Broader Settlement Sector: Addressing Systemic Racism and Digital Equity across the Settlement Journey
- Newcomer Mental Health and Wellness Through Settlement Sector Lens: A Foundation for Local Solutions in Peel Region
- Google Analytics 2022-2023 Comparison Report
- 2022 IRCC Action Day Report
- Regional Accountability Models for Settlement in Peel, April 2024
- Peel Region Plan to Co-Design a New Funding Settlement & Governance Model (slide deck)

In May 2024, PNSG hosted an online survey for stakeholders to provide their perspectives on the collective achievements and impact of PNSG, as well as their experiences as a stakeholder of the collective impact initiative.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for the Evaluation Matrix.

In all, 90 respondents participated in the survey, with a 96% completion rate, although not all questions were answered by all respondents. About one-third of respondents work in the settlement/ newcomer services sector, with a range of other sectors represented.

### Survey respondents by sector

What sector do you work in?	Responses
Settlement/ Newcomer services	33
Government	10
Health	11
Child welfare/ Family services	6
Non-profit	5
Education	4
Social services	4
Housing	3
Employment services	3
Social work	2
Research	2
Other*	7
Total	90

\*Other responses included private refugee sponsorship, immigration, library, legal, local immigration partnership, Francophone sector, and EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion).

As well, four key informant interviews were held with participants from health, community services, employment services and newcomer services agencies in Peel Region. A focus group was also held in May 2024, and was comprised of 12 members of the Central Planning Table.



## Limitations

This report works with the stated goals for each strategic priority, found in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, to serve as a starting point for assessing how well PNSG has met its objectives. Priority area goals described in the Strategic Plan identify a range of activities and outcomes and are in various stages of development and implementation. The 2023 Strategic Plan update and various other documents provide examples that can be seen as contributing to the success of each priority, although they do not necessarily reflect a consistent set of measurable outcomes.

## Collective Impact: A Brief Discussion

Peel Newcomer Strategy Group actively fosters cross-sectoral partnerships for greater capacity, responsiveness and adaptability of services in Peel region. Since 2017-2018, PNSG has tracked the collective impact of its work and engagement in publicly available biennial reports.

In its 2017-2018 report, PNSG provides this explanation of collective impact, citing a foundational article by Kania and Kramer:

*“Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem and a shift from the social sector’s current paradigm of ‘isolated impact.’ No single organization can create large-scale, lasting social change alone.”<sup>4</sup>*

The report also outlines PNSG’s perspectives on Kania’s and Kramer’s five conditions for social impact:

- **Backbone support:** Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.
- **Common vision:** Common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed-upon actions.
- **Continuous communication:** Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation.
- **Mutually reinforcing activities:** Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
- **Shared measurement:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.

<sup>4</sup> John Kania and Mark Kramer, Collective Impact, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011.

Collective impact work is organized through “cascading levels of collaboration” which reflect the coordination of an oversight group, working groups (and subgroups) and backbone support<sup>5</sup>. This work also requires continuous learning, adopting performance measures (particularly to track early performance indicators) and other, relevant forms of evaluation to assess the progress of the initiative.

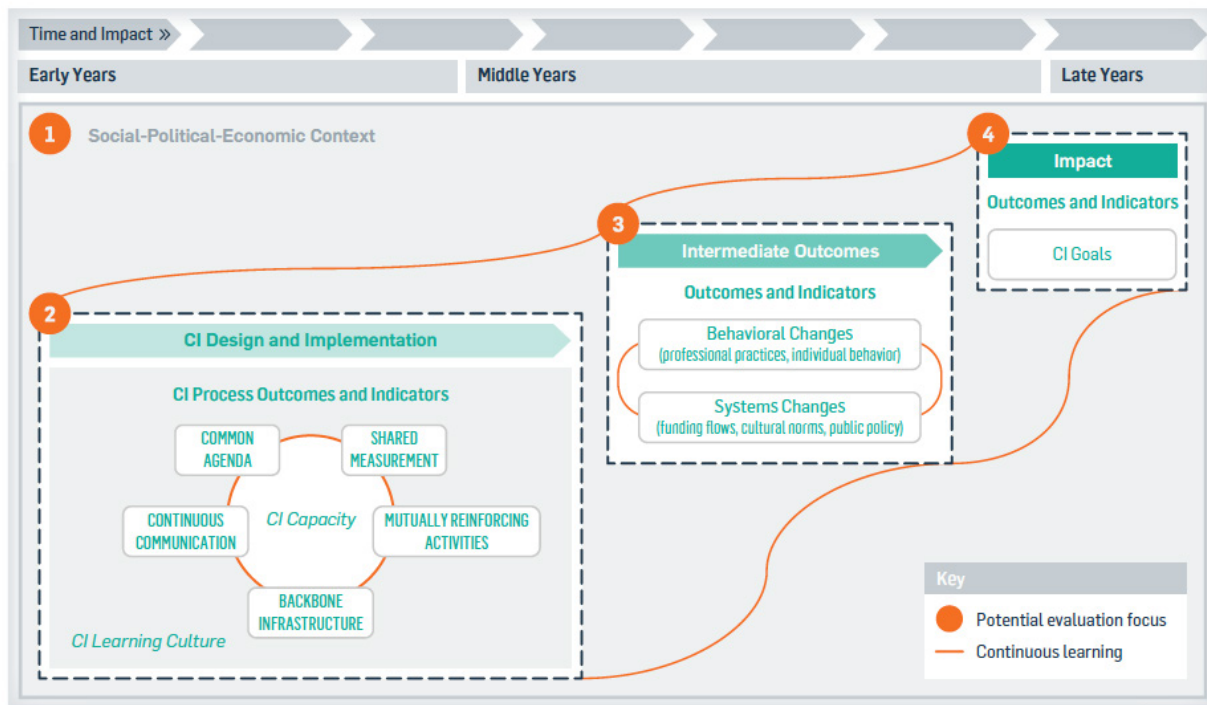
Given the complexity and breadth of PNSG’s engagement, this evaluation approaches its collective impact in three steps. It examines specific activities related to the organization’s five strategic priorities, as well as their progress or outcomes compared with their intended goals. This involves reviewing PNSG documentation and measurement, as well as incorporating stakeholder assessments through interviews, a focus group and an online survey.

Next, it examines the processes by which PNSG engages in its work, incorporating the work and engagement of stakeholders and partners, to understand how well it builds or sustains impact. A third section draws the various threads together to provide a broader assessment of PNSG’s collective impact so far.

The collective impact journey can be described as a progression from design and implementation (to address the social-political-economic context), through intermediate outcomes, and finally, impact. Given that PNSG is approaching the end of its strategic plan for 2020-2025, this evaluation focuses on intermediate outcomes and impact, straddling what Preskill, Parkhurst and Splansky Juster refer to as formative and summative evaluation, or how well is the initiative working and what difference did it make? Formative evaluation can help organizations improve their collective impact work in initiatives that are already underway, as it provides opportunities to reflect on or refine an ongoing process, to ensure greater impact. Summative evaluation can occur in a more mature or established initiative and help assess its significance or value.

<sup>5</sup> Hallie Preskill, Marcie Parkhurst and Jennifer Splansky Juster, Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact: Learning and Evaluation in the Collective Impact Context

Figure 1: Framework for Performance Measurement and Evaluation of Collective Impact Efforts



Source: Preskill, Parkhurst and Splansky Juster

<sup>5</sup> Hallie Preskill, Marcie Parkhurst and Jennifer Splansky Juster, Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact: Learning and Evaluation in the Collective Impact Context

# FINDINGS

## Outputs and Activities

This section examines PNSG's roles and actions, and how stakeholders in Peel Region perceive their impact. It offers a general assessment of PNSG as a whole before moving on to specific strategic priorities, describing relevant activities and outputs and how they are seen in the broader network, in comparison to the stated goals for each priority.

### PNSG's Role and Actions: An Overall Assessment

Reviewing the data reveals a strong and consistent sense of PNSG as a leader and collaborator in addressing the needs of newcomers in Peel Region, particularly through its ability to engage, support and convene relevant agencies, organizations and professionals. Three main themes emerged from the interview and focus group notes and transcripts, and survey responses:

- PNSG plays a strong role as an umbrella organization, convening organizations from multiple sectors across the region to address the needs and challenges of newcomers
- PNSG connects and informs organizations and professionals who work with newcomers, providing them not only with information, but also opportunities for development and engagement
- PNSG is seen as a leader in data gathering and trend watching regarding immigration in Peel Region, able to coordinate multi-level responses to emerging issues by channelling advocacy from across its networks

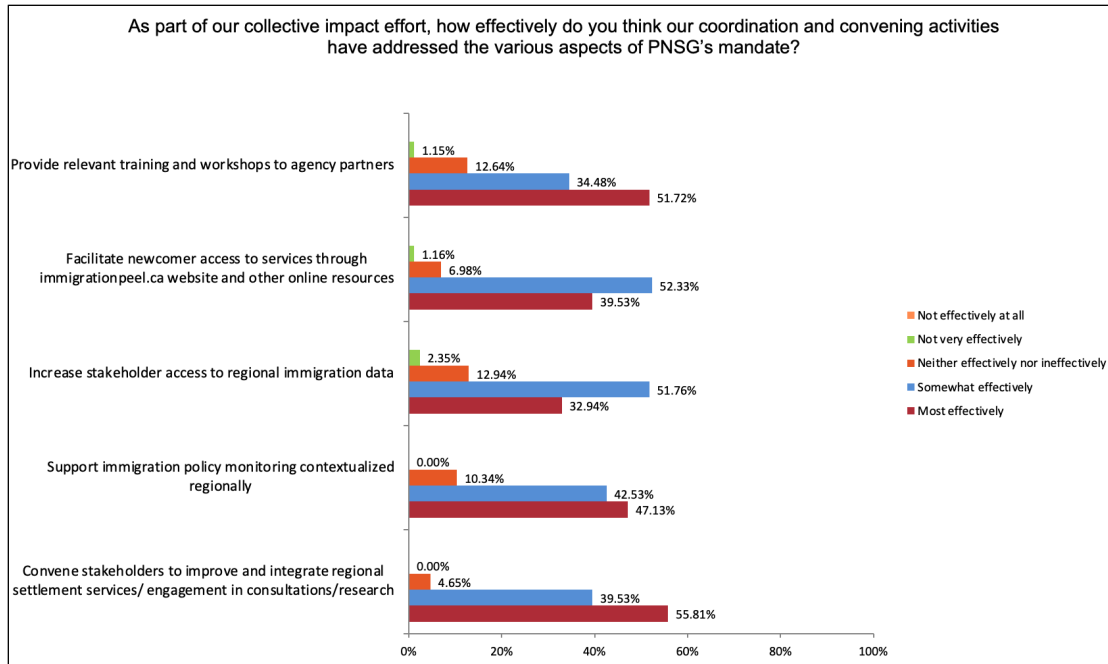
Interview participants praised PNSG for its ability to bring together relevant players across the region to work collaboratively and remain objective:

*"As an umbrella organization, they harness the views of all agencies, settlement and not, to keep us focused, have the big picture, show where there are gaps and amplify strengths, share information, look at trends and help us understand them"*  
(community services provider interview).

*"PNSG is a support to the [newcomer services] structure, independent and not partisan. PNSG provides a service to the sector regardless of who funds you"*  
(employment services provider interview).

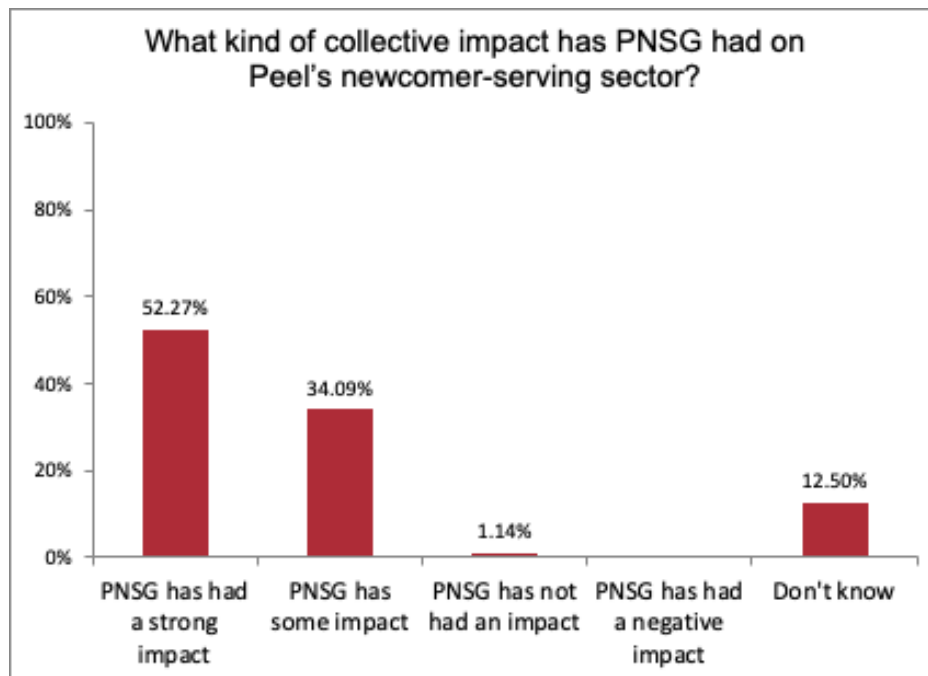
In general, stakeholders believe PNSG's activities reflect its mandate. Survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that overall, coordination and convening activities addressed the various aspects of PNSG's mandate. Two activities in particular saw agreement that they addressed PNSG's mandate "most effectively": convening stakeholders (56%) and providing training (52%).

Table 1: PNSG Activities and Mandate



Stakeholders also believe PNSG has had a significant collective impact on Peel Region's newcomer sector. Most survey respondents (52%) said that PNSG has had a strong collective impact on Peel's newcomer-serving sector. More than one-third (34%) said PNSG has had some impact, while 12.5% said they don't know.

Table 2: PNSG's Collective Impact



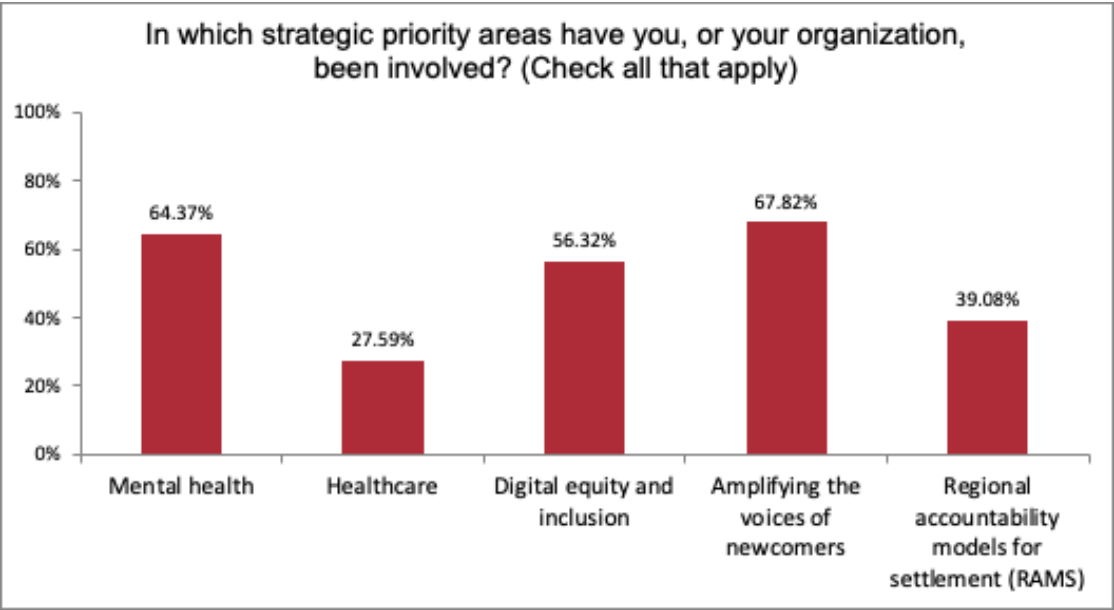
**PNSG’s Strategic Priorities, 2020-2025**

To support its work with stakeholders on building a coordinated and collaborative strategy for newcomer engagement and integration in Peel Region, PNSG has identified five strategic priority areas for the period of 2020 to 2025:

- Mental health
- Healthcare
- Digital equity and inclusion
- Amplifying the voices of newcomers
- Regional Accountability Models for Settlement

Survey respondents showed a strong engagement with multiple priority areas, with more than half of respondents saying they or their organization have been involved in amplifying the voices of newcomers (68%), mental health (64%) and digital equity and inclusion (56%).

Table 3: Involvement in Strategic Priority Areas



This section outlines the goals of each priority area, describes priority area activities in relation to their goals, and assesses their collective impact through interview, focus group and stakeholder survey data.



## Mental Health

Peel Newcomer Strategy Group worked with members of its Service Delivery Network (SDN) table and other stakeholders to develop a report on the role of the settlement sector in supporting mental health for newcomers, which has been identified as a strategic priority. The report identified key issues related to settlement service delivery and the mental health needs of clients. The goals for this priority area are to actualize the report recommendations:

1. Increase collaboration between Ontario Health Teams, mental health service providers and settlement providers to create culturally responsive programs and services.
2. Clearly delineate the short-term counsellor role in relation to other adjacent positions across IRCC-funded agencies to ensure role consistency and provide tailored training.
3. Improve staff mental health by providing staff with adequate supports for their own self-care needs to prevent and mitigate burnout, compassion fatigue and stress.
4. Detect mental health challenges early in the settlement process to ensure faster referrals to appropriate services.
5. Create and adequately resource more emergency mental health services for immigrants and refugees needing urgent care.
6. Foster partnerships with local faith groups to promote mental health, support referrals and reduce stigma.
7. Explore a family-centred approach to mental health care, with particular attention to newcomer children, youth and seniors.<sup>6</sup>

The report also provided infographic descriptions of newcomer mental health needs and challenges, and pathways to newcomer mental health supports.

A number of activities in support of these goals occurred in 2023, including:

- Hosting a virtual discussion, Building Bridge connecting 83 organizations, connecting mental health providers and newcomer service providers (February)
- Hosting an in-person senior leader discussion, Advancing Newcomer Mental Health (May)
- Releasing the Newcomer Mental Health and Wellness Through a Settlement Lens report (June)
- Hosting professional development days for settlement and employment professionals (June)

<sup>6</sup> [Newcomer Mental Health and Wellness Through Settlement Sector Lens: A Foundation for Local Solutions in Peel Region.](#)

- Coordinating a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan initiative focused on improving mental health supports and services to newcomer young adults and international students (June)
- Hosting an in-person Professional Development and Wellness forum the third addresses the call for greater support for mental health service staff (June)
- Supporting a community learning event, Collaborative Learning Forum for Newcomer Youth Mental Wellness in Peel, with the aim of building a cross-sectoral network of mental health and wellness providers with newcomer youth, young adults and international students (November):

- Nearly 100 people attended, representing healthcare, settlement services, mental health, education, funding and other sectors.
- A post-forum evaluation<sup>7</sup> reported noted an overall increase in participants' knowledge of other sectors following the forum. As well, most participants agreed the forum was effective, and there was support for continued cross-sector engagement on newcomer mental health.



- Forming task groups with leads on a multilingual mental health 101 video series with the Peel District School Board leading: provided training development and implementation; formed a community advisory board of 12 newcomer youth and another with 12 international students to share feedback and insights on mental wellness spaces
- Collaborator/ Co-investigator on a research project focused on newcomer family-centered approach to mental health services by a lead researcher at Trillium Health Partners
- Supporting connections on 'tests of change' through Mississauga Health table in partnership with organizations from the Service Delivery Network

These activities address priority area goals of connecting service providers, Ontario Health teams and mental health teams to create culturally responsive services (Recommendation #1); providing training and support to mental health staff (Recommendation #3); and exploring a family-centred approach to mental health care (Recommendation #7).

<sup>7</sup> [November 27, 2023, Collaborative Learning Forum for Newcomer Youth Mental Wellness in Peel: Evaluation](#)

## Network Engagement with Mental Health

Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents said they or their organization engages in supporting mental health for newcomers (see Table 3 above). Respondents reflected a range of involvement when asked to expand on their engagement, from planning and coordinating services, to direct service provision:



*“We partner with mental health organizations to ensure seamless access to services for immigrants and refugees” (survey respondent).*

*“We provide newcomer youth supports, focusing on integration into western communities through mental health services, academic supports and social integration” (survey respondent).*

*“We helped plan and attended the mental health forum” (survey respondent).*

*“I work as a settlement worker who also supports clients by helping them navigate their mental health challenges and provides short-term counselling to newcomers” (survey respondent).*

*“I facilitate trainings for frontline staff in areas of Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Informed Approach, Cultural Competency and Compassion Fatigue” (survey respondent).*

The impact of PNSG and stakeholder work in the area of mental health has seen greater collaboration and partnerships, information and resource sharing, and development opportunities for staff and professionals. It has also seen greater engagement with newcomers, particularly through the lens of family and youth centred approaches.

## Healthcare

In its Strategic Plan update, PNSG describes how it has formed an advisory committee of healthcare practitioners, settlement agencies and government stakeholders to support the writing of a report on refugee healthcare access.

The proposed report will incorporate quantitative analysis of Statistics Canada datasets to explore healthcare trends among newcomer populations, established immigrants and Canadian-born residents. It will also incorporate qualitative interview data collected through discussions with refugees, frontline healthcare providers and healthcare policy makers.

The goal of the research report is to identify inequities in refugee health and mental health outcomes, as well as needed supports for health promotion in Peel. In 2023, an advisory committee was formed to guide the work. The report objectives and framework have also been identified by the advisory committee. The report is scheduled to be released in the spring of 2025.

PNSG participated in a healthcare sub-table of the Anti-Black Racism and Systemic Discrimination Collaborative in Peel, which co-authored a health equity position statement in February 2021.<sup>8</sup> The statement included a number of calls to action, including urging healthcare system decision makers to co-design services with diverse groups that have been historically marginalized; calling for healthcare professionals build personal capacity to work with diverse members of the community; greater openness from government and healthcare organizations about how equity is built into funding decisions, and how data collected by these organizations is used to inform their decision making.

In its 2022-2023 Collective Impact report, PNSG noted it had coordinated with CarePoint Health to provide primary healthcare to clients at various settlement agencies. This included episodic care, consultations and referrals, helping newcomers navigate the regional healthcare system. PNSG also hosted 13 professional development sessions, three of which focused on healthcare and mental health:

- Mental Health Crisis Support Pathways in Peel & Halton For Newcomer Adults
- Trauma Informed Care and Support Programs for Displaced Populations
- Healthcare Service Navigation for Newcomers

As well, PNSG Director is a part of the 'unattached patient strategy development workgroup' of Mississauga Health (OHT).

<sup>8</sup> [The Outcomes of Oppressive Systems And a Collective Call to Co-Design an Equitable and Inclusive Health System in Peel](#) – February 01, 2021.

## Network Engagement with Healthcare

Although ranked fifth in terms of responses from survey participants about their involvement with PNSG strategic priority areas, respondents reflected a range of engagements when asked to elaborate. Responses covered direct service provision, facilitating connections and collaborations among healthcare organizations, and training:



*“We do crisis counselling, wellbeing assessment, episodic care, coordination for complex chronic diseases, community and umbrella partner support” (survey respondent).*

*“We facilitate connections between internationally educated healthcare professionals and primary care providers to address labour shortages in healthcare and the underemployment of licensed healthcare professionals” (survey respondent).*

*“We offer healthcare provision for specific aspects like immunization, sexual health, or infant feeding programs” (survey respondent).*

In an interview, one stakeholder who works in the healthcare sector identified other ways PNSG has made an impact in the sector, including supporting an unattached patient strategy to connect newcomers to primary healthcare, and helping with building direct episodic care pathways for asylum seekers, including online booking links and translation services. The stakeholder suggested PNSG extend its work on connecting newcomers to primary care and convene organizations from across different sectors to participate:

*“If newcomer groups can start to create the pathways to connect folks to primary care, beyond giving a flyer – doing a warm connection and navigation piece will help people find the right place” (stakeholder interview).*

PNSG and associated stakeholders are building stronger connections across health, settlement and other sectors and providers. This work has also brought to light the challenges of connecting newcomers with primary care (and vice versa), leading to new strategies, such as the unattached patient care strategy development workgroup. The forthcoming report on health inequities in Peel region will be well-timed to inform further work in this priority area.

## Digital Equity and Inclusion

Spurred by the need to move to an online/hybrid format as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, settlement agencies have had to navigate new challenges in providing services to newcomers. In response, PNSG is working with its Service Delivery Network to assess agency capacity for delivering digital services, the quality of services and access for newcomers, and to identify gaps regarding digital equity and inclusion.

### **The Strategic Plan update outlines four goals related to digital equity and inclusion:**

1. To develop a framework of equitable hybrid service delivery strategies in the settlement sector through coordinated partnership in Peel region
2. To implement early coordinated action on key areas of the framework
3. To build organizational and newcomer capacity to interact digitally
4. To explore a benchmark for minimum level of digital maturity and whether that can provide data insights on client services

PNSG has participated in a number of activities related to digital equity and inclusion.

In 2021-2022, the PNSG Service Delivery Network began focusing on optimizing digital service delivery in the settlement sector.<sup>9</sup> As part of an IRCC Planning Day held in February 2022, participants recommended pursuing innovations in digital access and post-pandemic service delivery to enable successful client outcomes, and in the fall of 2022, the IRCC Action Days included a focus on “Actioning Digital” which included discussions on integrating intake and referral, fostering online collaborative spaces for Executive Council members, and ways to develop and share data insights from across the sector.<sup>10</sup>

In June 2022, the organization hosted an online presentation of a study on advancing hybrid service delivery.<sup>11</sup>

As part of its professional development activities in 2022-2023, PNSG provided training on a number of areas related to accessing and using technology. Sessions included:

- Optimizing use of zoom
- Employment supports and digital platform for refugees
- Online service navigation platforms for newcomers

<sup>9</sup> [Collective Impact Report 2021-2022](#)

<sup>10</sup> [2022 IRCC Action Days](#)

<sup>11</sup> A recording of the presentation [Strengthening Hybrid and Digital Service Delivery: Models for Consideration by Marco Campana](#), has received nearly 500 views to date on YouTube.



In 2023, PNSG, with support from IRCC and working with the Peel-Halton Settlement Partnerships Executive Council, contracted Code 4 Canada to develop a report on digital access and integration in Peel Region, including:

- A current state audit of digital maturity, digital tools and data management used by organizations in the Peel-Halton Executive Council.
- A roadmap for aligning systems to allow for regional data to support Executive Council organizations’ and sector planning.
- Recommendations for tools to support project management, communications and referral.

The final report was released in March 2024 and provided a digital transformation roadmap to address the needs of Peel-Halton settlement agencies. It called for increasing organizations’ levels of digital maturity, the creation of a collaboration hub for the sector, engaging IRCC for support in implementing central intake, and increasing data sharing among agencies.<sup>12</sup>

In 2023 and 2024, PNSG partnered with the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) and the Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership (WRIP) on a study on racialized newcomers and digital equity.<sup>13</sup> The report offered a number of recommendations for flexibility in service provision and capacity building in the sector. PNSG has also led, in collaboration with Peel Multicultural Council and Peel Children’s Aid Society’s Child Welfare and Immigration Centre of Excellence, research into digital equity in accessing settlement services.

The Immigration Peel Web Portal (*immigrationpeel.ca*) has also seen significant increases in engagement over the past four years. It was built as a one-stop online resource to help newcomers find information on local services, programs and events that facilitate their settlement, employment, education and integration in Peel region. The number of users accessing the site has doubled from 2020 to 2023.

Table 4: Immigration Peel Web Portal Audience Overview, 2020-2023

Type of Interaction	2020	2021	2022	2023	Increase 2020-2023
Users (total number of active users)	43,281	53,484	60,734	85,688	98%
Sessions (a single visit by a user within a given time frame)	50,965	63,262	73,465	102,627	101%
Pageviews (total number of web pages viewed on the site)	78,278	92,656	105,927	134,248	72%

<sup>12</sup> Advancing Settlement Sector Planning Through Digital Alignment and Data Insights Collaboratively: Final Report

<sup>13</sup> The report, [Equity in the Broader Settlement Sector: Addressing Systemic Racism and Digital Equity across the Settlement Journey](#), was presented to the Peel-Halton Settlement Partnership’s Executive Council in March 2024.

## Network Engagement with Digital Equity

More than half of survey respondents (56%) said they or their organization had been involved with the digital equity and inclusion priority area. Respondents identified direct service, as well as planning and research activities when asked to elaborate:



*“We have initiated a joint community-based research project on digital equity for newcomers” (survey respondent).*

*“We plan and coordinate digital literacy programs” (survey respondent).*

*“We have been involved in the introduction of Learn Everyday Technology program at COSTI (in person and online classes), as well as a Chromebook loaning system, and offer desktop access in our office” (survey respondent).*

In an interview, one stakeholder in the employment and community services sector, said PNSG’s collaborative approach to advocacy on the issue has seen support from funders:

*“They are advocating with the ministry around trends that we’re hearing about from organizations. With the help of PNSG, they’re understanding digital maturity of organizations and are looking for ways to resource them” (stakeholder interview).*

Members of the stakeholder focus group also identified the digital equity and inclusion strategy as one aspect of PNSG’s work that has had the greatest collective impact and saw greater opportunities for cross-ministry collaboration.

The number and type of activities in the priority area of digital equity point to its strong resonance with the sector. The recently released digital transformation roadmap can help organize and extend further the impact of this work in coming years.

## Amplifying the Voices of Newcomers

Working with agencies in Peel Region and across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), PNSG is seeking to understand the challenges faced by immigrants and refugees with an eye towards serving them better. This priority specifically looks a ways to:

- Improve access to and the coordination of services that facilitate newcomer settlement and inclusion
- Improve access to the labour market for newcomers
- Strengthen local and regional awareness and capacity to attract, receive, integrate and retain newcomers
- Enhance partnerships and participation of multiple stakeholders in the planning, delivery and coordination of services

PNSG has undertaken a number of activities to build newcomer resilience. In 2022, the organization partnered with the Tamarack Institute for a participatory grant making pilot project. Six projects were awarded a total of \$600,000 in grants and included providing employment training; providing business training and support for self-employment; researching how to build an equitable economy for immigrants and refugees in Peel; cooking and culinary training; and developing a new role with the Peel District School Board to support career goals of adult learners.

**In its evaluation report, Tamarack noted ways the collaboration had bolstered the initiative's collective impact:**

*"Tamarack's direct relationship with PNSG was also crucial to the pilot's success, as it allowed for connections with the broader Peel network and facilitated the communication flow all along the pilot" (19).*

*"From the local partner organization, PNSG, being involved in the different activities proposed by Tamarack (e.g., People's Panel co-design and grantmaking sessions, ongoing conversations) has made a significant contribution to their own capacity to integrate participatory approaches" (22).<sup>14</sup>*



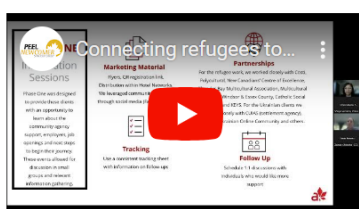
<sup>14</sup> [Evaluation Report. Participatory Grantmaking Pilot: Building Equitable Economies for Immigrants and Refugees in Peel, 2021-2023.](#)

PNSG has also worked with a number of newcomer population groups as part of this priority area:

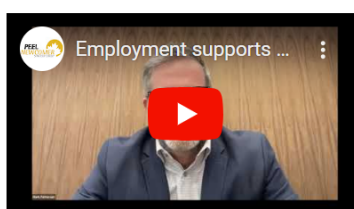
- **A Resettlement Support Working Group** was formed to coordinate support for Afghan refugees, Ukrainian evacuees and refugee claimants seeking asylum. It worked with stakeholders to provide address challenges accessing housing, healthcare and employment opportunities; initiated a micro-credit course for settlement sector staff (in collaboration with Sheridan College); and provided training sessions on Afghan and Ukrainian culture to help orient more than 100 staff.
- In collaboration with educational institutions and stakeholders, PNSG also worked to identify solutions to **challenges face by international students**. This saw the creation and dissemination of an infographic on policy directions and issues faced by international students; the sharing of key data through a needs assessment report; and participating in an international student summit organized by Sheridan College in July 2022.

Professional development and training also reflected PNSG's engagement with amplifying the voices of newcomers. In 2022-2023, the organization held a number of sessions related to building cultural understanding and employment resources for settlement professionals:

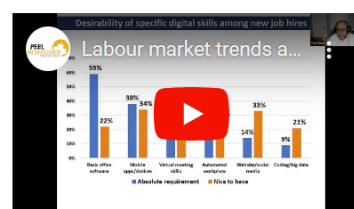
- Resettlement of displaced Afghan people: Orienting to culture
- Unique language training and other supports for refugee youth and adults
- Labour market trends and supporting employment in settlement
- Connecting refugees to employment: Customization for optimal client support
- Knowing Ukrainian Nationals: Resettling Migrants Through the Humanized Lens



Connecting refugees to employment:  
Customization for optimal client support



Employment supports and digital platform  
for refugees



Labour market trends and settlement  
supports for finding employment

## Network Engagement with Amplifying the Voices of Newcomers

More than two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents said they were involved with this strategic priority area, the highest response among the five options. When asked to elaborate, respondents reflected on their roles in planning, advocacy and research:



*“We have been helping to amplify voices of newcomers in strategic planning tables, through Regional Resettlement Working Group and Service Delivery Network (survey respondent).*

*Through attending meetings, proposing policy changes, airing the views and needs of newcomers. Inform the collective about services gaps and also forming collaborative efforts with other stakeholders and service providers (survey respondent).*

*Our evidence-based approach to workforce development has positioned us to amplify the newcomer journey (survey respondent).*

*We have started collaborating with PNSG as a member of the International Students Collaborative, which will amplify the voices of international students in addressing diverse challenges (survey respondent).*

The impact of PNSG's work in this priority area has been to support greater collaboration across different sectors, with an eye to building cultural awareness and providing professional development for settlement and employment providers, and to support initiatives based on the needs and experiences of specific population groups as they emerge (e.g.: international students).

## Regional Accountability Models for Settlement (RAMS)

In collaboration with the Centre for Community-Based Research (CCBC), PNSG launched the Regional Accountability Models for Settlement Project in 2021. The project aimed to facilitate a community consultation process to develop a specific plan for how the IRCC funding could be governed in Peel regions going forward. Notably, PNSG asked: “What might newcomer settlement sector funding and governance look like with regional level disbursement and accountability in Peel?”

The model was developed over two years in collaboration with Peel-based newcomer-serving agencies, and was carried out over three phases:

- **Project formation:** An advisory committee of 11 partners from settlement and related organizations was founded in early 2022 to guide the project.
- **Environmental scan:** Conducted from March to December 2022, this phase saw a review of existing funding models in other sectors or regions, conducted a survey with Peel service providers on how newcomer programs are currently funded, hosting issue-based focus groups with service providers, and facilitating a community forum to share outcomes.
- **Model development:** From January to March 2024, this phase of the project identified and consulted different potential funding hosts, facilitated conversations between the advisory committee and funding hosts about how settlement funds might be governed, and developed the final Peel-specific model to share with IRCC.

Throughout this process, four community forums and one participatory workshop were held to help determine approaches to regional accountability, how to model the newcomer journey and how to plan for regional accountability, systems planning and funding accountability. Terms of reference were also developed for the model host, as was a list of potential candidates, which was voted on at the final community forum. While regional government received a higher percentage of votes (35%) than other possibilities, participants also showed uncertainty about the overall approach, with 43% saying that Peel is not ready for a pilot project (33% said it was, and 23% said they need more information). The report is now with IRCC.



## Network Engagement with RAMS

Nearly 40% of survey respondents said they or their organization had been involved with RAMS and related. This included belonging to the advisory committee and attending meetings about RAMS.

An evaluation of the project indicated strong and consistent interest among stakeholders involved with RAMS:

“

*“For instance, consistently 88-96% of respondents said that they believe more collaboration around settlement services is needed in Peel and 60-80% agreed that a regional approach to settlement planning in Peel is needed.”<sup>15</sup>*

While the final decision over a regional accountability model is yet to emerge, RAMS consistently engaged stakeholders in presenting different approaches to funding, reporting and accountability for the settlement sector from a regional perspective, and presented a range of perspectives and options for consideration.



<sup>15</sup> [Regional Accountability Models for Settlement in Peel, April 2024.](#)

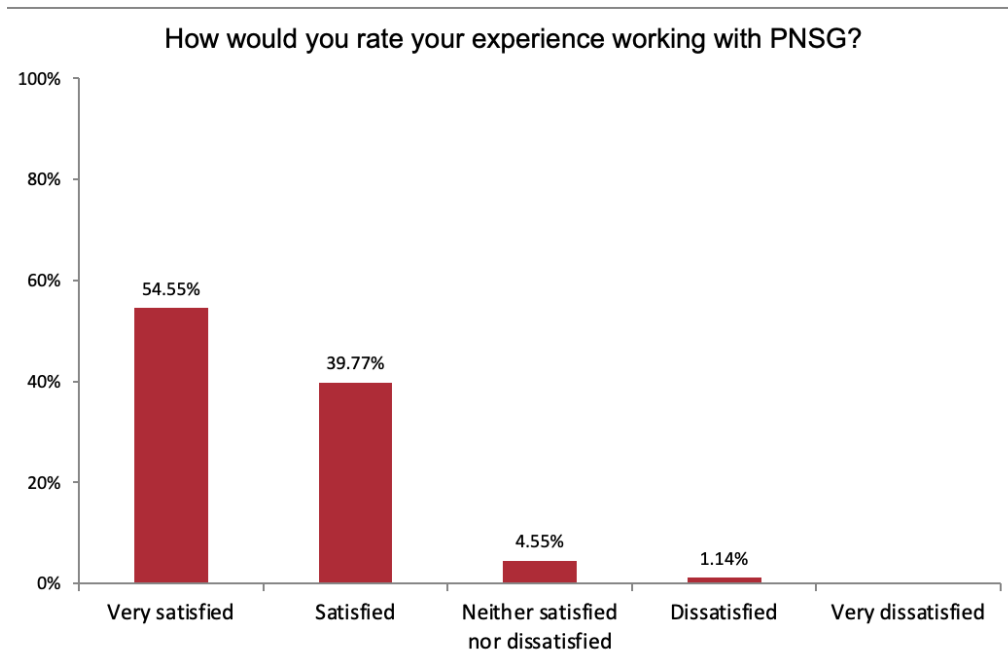
## Processes

### Network and Stakeholder Engagement, Collaboration and Impact

PNSG is perceived as a key facilitator for engaging the various organizations, agencies and leaders in the newcomer sector and beyond in Peel Region. This section examines how – and how well – PNSG fulfills this role, notably in bringing stakeholders together, informing the sector, and enabling stronger collective impact in the region.

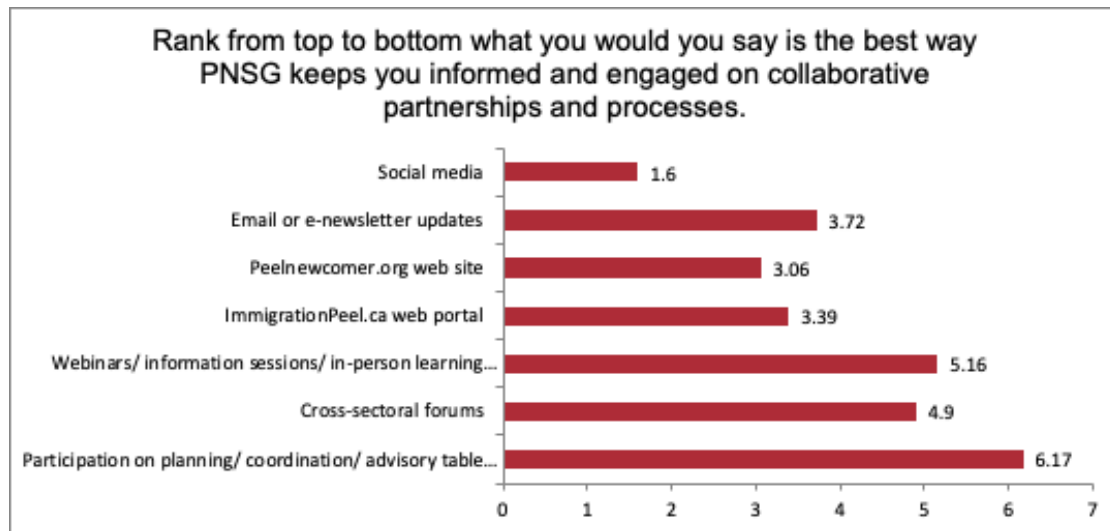
When asked to rate their overall experience working with PNSG, most survey respondents (55%) said they were very satisfied (54.5%) and 40% said they were satisfied. Only 1% said they were dissatisfied, while 4.5% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 5: Satisfaction Working with PNSG



Respondents indicated a preference for active participation and engagement with PNSG, over simply receiving information. When asked to rank the ways PNSG keeps them informed and engaged, respondents identified participation on planning/ coordination/ advisory table meetings as their top choice. Webinars and information sessions were ranked second highest, closely followed by cross-sectoral forums. Online methods received lower rankings, with social media being the least-favoured option.

Table 6: Ways PNSG Keeps You Informed and Engaged



## Deepening Engagement and Impact: Opportunities and Challenges

Although they are for the most part satisfied with PNSG's ability to inform and convene the newcomer sector in Peel, interview, focus group and survey data show stakeholders see opportunities to deepen engagement and collective impact.

When asked if they were satisfied with how PNSG engages stakeholders, the vast majority of respondents said yes (92%). Those who said no were asked how stakeholders could be better engaged. Their replies reflected a lack of awareness of all of PNSG's activities, bolstering efforts to reach target communities, and doing more to publicize PNSG's work:

*"Expand processes in which you reach target communities. Amplify your mission a bit more to those who do not know your work" (survey respondent).*

Additional input from the final survey question, which asked for any final thoughts from respondents, also generated suggestions for bolstering stakeholder engagement:

*“I think that there are many new players in the region and PNSG should hold an in-person meeting to showcase all the work that they do as well as show folks all the streams of engagement” (survey respondent).*

*“PNSG should consult and involve all Newcomer serving organizations in their collective efforts. Currently PNSG is working with a few organizations. All organization play part in shaping the future so all should be invited to give feedback and work with PNSG” (survey respondent).*

When asked if any stakeholders were missing from the local immigration partnership network, nearly one-third (31.5%) of respondents said yes. When asked who was missing, respondents identified a range of organizations across different sectors, including health and settlement. Top suggestions included:

- Additional health partners, including Ontario Health Teams, family doctors, mental health services, clinics and hospitals (4 responses)
- Churches and faith-based organizations (3 responses)
- Representatives of newcomers and refugees themselves, people with lived experience (3 responses)
- Funders (2 responses)

Interview participants echoed many of these suggestions, including deepening connections with local/regional groups and Ontario Health, expanding the network of stakeholders and continuing to review who they reach out to – and how.

*“The need to have more insight on who they reach out to, so they don’t alienate organizations” (stakeholder interview).*

*“It’s about funding, but also policy and advocacy – identifying potential risks and having a think tank collaboration to address those gaps” (stakeholder interview).*

*“PNSG can advocate for a better flow of funds to meet changing needs of newcomers. We need to be able to respond quicker, look at trends rather than just react. PNSG can advocate for those types of changes” (stakeholder interview).*

Similarly, focus group participants saw opportunities for PNSG to expand the network and deepen engagement with different stakeholders in different sectors, from engaging employers to learn about their work as a way to build connections with the regional labour market, to increasing efforts for cross-ministry collaboration in settlement work.

*“PNSG is well placed to try to get commitment from various ministries to work with a single purpose” (focus group participant).*

When asked to identify challenges that have detracted from PNSG’s collective impact, respondents pointed to a range of issues, including:

- **Competition for resources, a lack of trust and a sense of disconnection among providers**

*“Not everyone is there, in terms of working collaboratively. That reservation stops people from collaboration” (focus group participant).*

*“Agencies work in silos” (stakeholder interview).*

*“There is competition if there’s a focus on one community over another – turf protection” (stakeholder interview).*

- **Systemic, organizational and jurisdictional barriers**

*“Systemic structures, which are inherently biased – and having to work within those structures are a major barrier” (stakeholder interview).*

*“There are some things PNSG can’t move the needle on without IRCC support. For instance, international students are a huge issue. We don’t have funding to support them; we can’t move the need on it because of eligibility” (stakeholder interview).*

*“It’s important for PNSG to have certain roles funded for longer periods, for example having a research on a full-time, long-term basis. Staffing need to be strengthened and address the diverse needs in Peel” (focus group participant).*

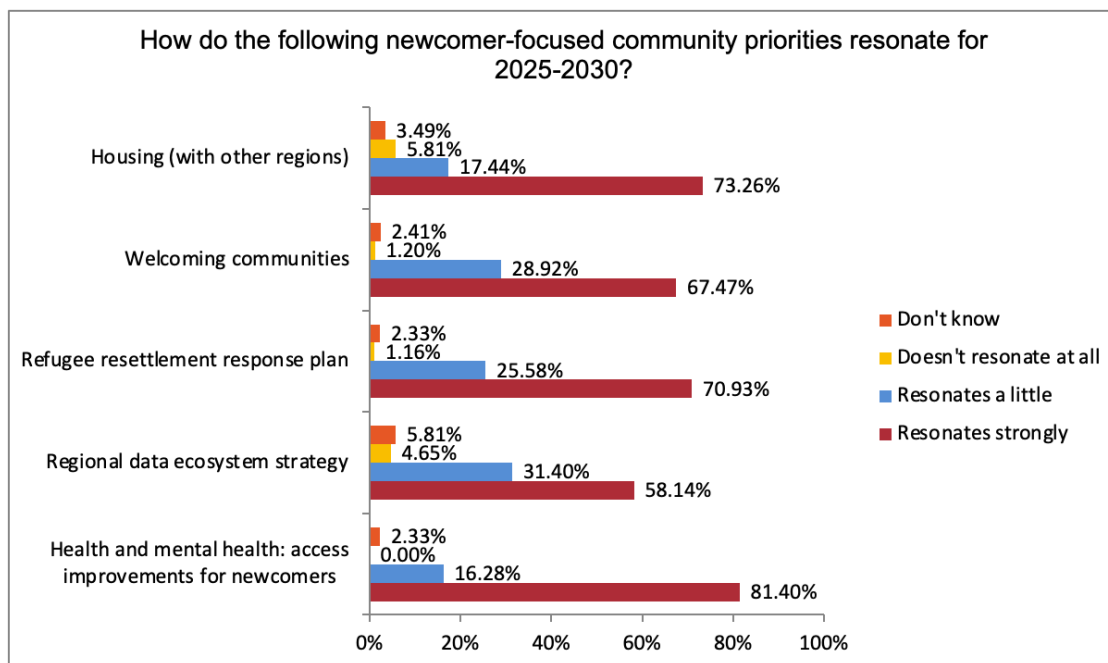
## Furthering Collective Impact: Strategic Priorities for 2025-2030

Looking ahead, PNSG has proposed refined/ identified community priorities for 2025 to 2030:

- Housing (with other regions)
- Welcoming communities
- Refugee settlement response plan
- Regional data ecosystem strategy
- Health and mental health: Access improvements for newcomers

When asked how strongly these proposed priorities resonated with them (if at all), a strong majority of survey respondents said they resonated strongly with them, with health and mental health the strongest (at 81%).

Table 7: Proposed Community Priorities 2025-2030



Respondents called the proposed priorities topical and relevant in their comments, while highlighting a need for cross-sectoral work to address the needs of newcomers:

*“All priorities resonate. PNSG has had an important role in ensuring a cross-sectoral, newcomer settlement perspective to address ongoing and emerging issues in Peel. This perspective and collaboration will continue to be important as Peel’s population needs grow in diversity and complexity” (survey respondent).*

*“Updated and shared regional housing database and subsidized housing availability list will be very helpful” (survey respondent).*



*“These are all critically important pieces of the holistic approach needed to building strong and welcoming communities for newcomers to Canada” (survey respondent).*

*“These priorities are the issues of the day and deserve to be addressed” (survey respondent).*

The survey also asked respondents how they or their organizations could contribute to PNSG’s collective efforts in the future. Reviewing the responses, three main themes emerged:

- **Continued and expanded overall collaboration with PNSG** (20 responses). This included calls for more joint advocacy, cross-sectors partnerships, coordinating and connecting related services:

*“We will continue working closely with PNSG in developing new initiatives, planning, implementation and evaluation of these initiatives” (survey respondent).*

*“We are happy to amplify PNSG’s work and will stay connected about how we can coordinate our strategic planning, engagements, and research and policy work” (survey respondent).*

- **Greater participation or engagement in activities, planning tables and committees** (22 responses). This included joining community tables and participating in professional development.

*“By being more active and by participating in all committees and tables assigned for various tasks. PNSG provides a platform for everyone to come and work together and collaborate.” (survey respondent).*

- **Greater participation in research, knowledge mobilization and community engagement** (19 responses). This includes supporting/participating in research activities and sharing information.

*“My organization would be pleased to participate in implementing PNSG’s research outcomes” (survey respondent).*

*“We will continue to benefit from its multiple resources while also sharing our own best practices and insights across each priority area” (survey respondent).*

## Discussion: PNSG's Collective Impact

As PNSG approaches the end of its current five-year strategic plan in 2025, it is possible to identify different ways it has built or contributed to collective impact in each priority area. Some priority areas, for instance, include a set of goals (e.g.: the mental health priority area) which have been addressed to varying degrees, while others (e.g.: RAMS), have been completed. Others (such as amplifying the voices of newcomers) do not necessarily have a straightforward set of measurable outcomes, but look to improve, enhance or strengthen processes or services in Peel Region's settlement sector.

A number of **intermediate** collective impact outcomes can be identified, drawing on Preskill, Parkhurst and Splansky Juster. These focus on behavioural systems changes, including improved understanding and knowledge, and the responsiveness of stakeholders to this increased awareness.

Specifically, the information and data collected and shared by and through PNSG and the broader sector have influenced changes in awareness of newcomer trends, needs and challenges among stakeholders. As a result, PNSG and stakeholders have shown increased responsiveness to community needs, conducting research, convening partners and implementing services to service different newcomer groups or address emerging and ongoing issues.

Examples include developing or participating in initiatives to address issues facing specific newcomer populations (including cultural and language training, and advocacy for and with groups who may be largely excluded from the settlement sector, such as international students); developing a digital strategy roadmap that blends data collection and analysis with inclusion and access for newcomers and service providers; and engaging with primary care providers to connect newcomers to healthcare (an urgent, ongoing issue) while simultaneously deepening research into their health needs and barriers.

Interview and survey data reflect not only a growing understanding of the issues – and responses – among stakeholders, but also potential organizational or system changes, as a number of individuals and organizations are applying what they learn and experience through the various forms of collaboration that PNSG enables. As well, although undetermined at this point, the RAMS initiative may see significant reorganization of funding, reporting and accountability within the sector in Peel Region.

Other **outcomes or impact indicators** (which come about at the completion of an initiative), are still emerging, but some results can be assessed. For instance, the digital equity and inclusion roadmap and the report on Regional Accountability Models for Settlement have been successfully conducted. As well, the newcomer information hub continues to see significant year-over-year growth, as reflected in the analytics summaries in the PNSG's collective impact reports.

Other questions about process can be addressed, working with examples from Preskill, Parkhurst and Splansky Juster. For instance, what aspects of how PNSG goes about its work have been most effective, and what (if any) ripple effects has PSNG's work had on other parts of the community or system?

Interview, focus group and survey data show that convening agencies and individuals in or connected to the sector works well. In particular, regular and consistent consultation and collaboration are appreciated, as is ongoing sharing of data and information. PNSG's role as facilitator was also appreciated, as many respondents felt that allowed the organization to operate objectively and avoid conflict or competition.

In terms of ripple effects, survey data reflected interest in expanding the PNSG network to engage other stakeholders in settlement-adjacent sectors, and to extend engagement across different government agencies – possibly expanding PNSG's role as convenor and facilitator.

## CONCLUSION

In many ways, PNSG is greater than the sum of its parts. Through the tables it convenes and stakeholders it engages with, the initiatives it pursues to address specific issues newcomers and settlement service providers face, and the data and information it gathers, analyzes and shares, PNSG is fulfilling its intended outcomes and building collective impact across the sector.

Looking ahead, PNSG has an opportunity to begin measurement and evaluation planning for its strategic priority areas for the 2025-2030 period. This would allow the organization to incorporate specific collective impact measures throughout the next phase of strategic planning, and to build on its prior successes.

<sup>1</sup> For a list of CPT members, see Appendix A.

## **Appendix A: Central Planning Table Members**

- ACCES Employment
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
- COSTI
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD)
- Moyo Health & Community Services
- Newcomer Centre of Peel
- Peel Children's Aid Society
- Peel District School Board
- Peel Halton Workforce Development Group
- Peel Multicultural Council
- Punjabi Community Health Services
- Region of Peel
- Regional Diversity Roundtable
- Trillium Health Partners
- United Way of Greater Toronto

## Appendix B: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Criteria	Data Collection Methods
To what extent and in what ways has PNSG achieved its objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison between desired (initial objectives) and actual (observed and reported) outcomes</li> <li>Strengths and opportunities for improvement</li> <li>Unintended impacts/outcomes observed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document analysis of project reports, meeting minutes, progress summaries, and post-workshop surveys</li> <li>Focus groups with Central Planning Table members</li> </ul>
What has contributed to or hindered the achievement of PNSG's objectives?		
What else is needed to continue supporting the initiative's progress?		
What are stakeholders' (partners and collaborators) experiences with, and perceptions of PNSG and its work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction levels and perspectives across different stakeholder groups</li> <li>Structures and processes in place to engage partners and collaborators, keeping them informed and inspired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys targeting key stakeholders</li> <li>Key informant interviews (3-5)</li> <li>Focus groups with Central Planning Table members</li> </ul>
What difference has PNSG (as a collective impact initiative) made on its stakeholders and their capacity to address complex problems?		
What is the collective impact of PNSG on service and sector capacity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope and diversity of partnerships and collaborations, information-sharing and engagement (e.g., strengthening alliance, base of support)</li> <li>Awareness and capacity to support newcomer settlement and integration in Peel, including improved responsiveness to newcomer needs and service delivery capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews (3-5)</li> <li>Focus groups with Central Planning Table members</li> <li>Document review and analysis</li> <li>Google analytics report on the ImmigrationPeel.ca portal</li> </ul>
How effective are the key interventions in achieving strategic priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness in meeting goals of the 5 strategic priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document analysis (participation rates and feedback in key interventions)</li> <li>Focus group with Central Planning Table</li> </ul>