INCLUSION IN OPEN GOVERNMENT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM A SAMPLE OF WOMEN’S, LGBTQ2S AND NEWCOMER ORGANIZATIONS
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About this document

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the comparative results from interviews led by
Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue with civil society organizations working
with communities traditionally under-served by government. The contents do not necessarily reflect the
opinions of Simon Fraser University, the Government of Canada or the authors.

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in Open Government: A Perspective from a sample of Women’s, LGBTQ2S
and Newcomer organizations.

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services contract.
Executive summary

Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue led a series of interviews with organizations across the country working with communities traditionally under-served by government information and initiatives, or who otherwise face barriers to participation: women, LGBTQ2S peoples and newcomers to Canada. While these communities are but three amongst a variety of under-served populations, they serve here as a pilot with the potential to extend this body of knowledge through future interviews with a wider variety of communities and organizations. Several organisations interviewed also provide perspectives from an intersectional perspective that may be relevant to additional under-served communities.

On the specific issue of Open Data and accessibility, the three communities listed accessibility as one of the areas where improvement was needed. Issues of privacy, lack of accurate or qualitative data for the communities they serve and better integration and coherence with data from other levels of government were also cited as areas for development and improvement.

On the issue of civil society engagement and open dialogue, the most important issue cited by every organization was time. Consultations and engagement initiatives are often planned on a very short time-frame, preventing organizations from bringing the best expertise they can offer to the table and often times preventing them from taking part in the consultations. Lack of funding was the second most cited issue. Organizations often operate with volunteers and very limited funding, thus limiting their ability to travel or send members to consultations that frequently take place close to large urban centres or government offices. Accessibility and safety for their members can also hinder the ability of the most marginalized to participate and share their lived experience. Identifying participants with relevant lived experience, rather than assuming uniformity across a community of interest or relying on proxy organizations, is something that was noted as needing improvement, as well as improving communications and providing sufficient time for information to be shared to marginalized and minority communities. Fostering social innovation could be enabled by encouraging smaller, grassroots organizations and initiatives to provide social enterprises for marginalized communities and by not submitting these organizations to the same standards as larger, well-established organizations.

Finally, on the issue of accountability and transparency, all organizations interviewed wanted more feedback and communication after having been engaged. They wish to be better informed on how or when their input will be used. They also want more honest, candid interactions with the government, including when challenges or hurdles emerge during the implementation process. Organizations stressed the need for government to remain humble and for departments to engage with community-based organizations more often to benefit from their expertise and direct access to community members.

When queried about the policy areas for which government should prioritize the involvement of their community members, interviewees listed the following:

- Priorities for interviewees working with LGBTQ2S communities included: Safety and security; Justice; Immigration; Health; Education; Housing; and Employment and sensitivity training for front-line officers and senior government officials.
• Priorities for interviewees working with women included: Wage equality; Justice and legal rights education; Access to adequate reproductive health care across the country; Inclusion in political arenas such as land claim negotiations; Reconciliation; Housing; Food security; Early learning and childcare; Encouraging training and careers in the STEM sector; and Education, including life-skills education.

• Priorities for interviewees working with newcomers, immigrants and refugees included: Sensitivity training for all government officers who are the first point of contact; Housing; Community partnerships with organizations; Employment; Funding for literacy and language support; Cultural settlement support; and Accountability and transparency of immigration and refugee hearings.

All organizations were willing to continue to engage with the government on the next Open Government Plan and, given sufficient time, were willing to provide feedback and comments on the Plan.

**Introduction**

Canada’s Fourth Biennial Plan to the Open Government Partnership, scheduled to be released in July 2018, presents an opportunity to help strengthen the Federal Government’s engagement with communities of interest who are often under-represented in standard government processes.

Open Government is critical to engaging citizens and stakeholders meaningfully in policy and decision-making so that citizens and stakeholders can:

• expect that information is open by default to increase accountability and, ultimately, public trust;
• understand how tax dollars have been spent and how fiscal decisions have been made in the spirit of transparency;
• use government data to improve the lives of Canadians and to support innovation, prosperity and sustainable development; and
• meaningfully interact with and participate in democracy, knowing that their voices have been heard and considered.

Typically, these conditions for meaningful participation are disproportionally available to those with a high level of resources, education and engagement, or at least familiarity with government systems. In turn, citizens and stakeholders who are typically not well-served by standard government processes for engagement and information sharing face various and often multiple barriers, including but not limited to those related to personal means, literacy, language, power structures or culture.

This report presents a sample of comments and recommendations made by organizations across the country who work with communities which have been traditionally under-served by government engagement processes.
Methodology

Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue led 15 interviews in early 2018 with a sample of organizations across Canada. These organizations were chosen for their work with the traditionally under-served communities of:

- Women
- LGBTQ2S communities
- Newcomers, immigrants and refugees

While these communities are but three amongst a variety of under-served populations, they serve here as a pilot with the potential to extend the resulting body of knowledge through future interviews with a wider variety of communities and organizations. Several organisations interviewed also provide perspectives from an intersectional perspective that may be relevant to additional under-represented communities.

Organizations were chosen to reflect a variety of perspectives, ranging from national, to regional and local. The list of organizations interviewed is by no means exhaustive but is meant to represent a sample of perspectives. Organizations were contacted by phone and/or email to request interviews. For those who chose to participate in the study, interviews were offered in the official language of the interviewee’s choice and were conducted over the phone. Interviews were recorded to aid with analysis – however, all the results presented here are not attributed in order to preserve the anonymity of the responses.

List of organizations interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Community served</th>
<th>Location of branch interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pauktuutit Inuit Women</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pauktuutit.ca">www.pauktuutit.ca</a></td>
<td>Inuit Women</td>
<td>National Office, Ottawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fédération des Femmes du Québec</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ffq.qc.ca">www.ffq.qc.ca</a></td>
<td>Women of Quebec</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva Foundation BC</td>
<td><a href="http://www.theminervafoundation.com">www.theminervafoundation.com</a></td>
<td>Women in BC, with a focus on leadership</td>
<td>British-Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFLAG</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pflagcanada.ca">www.pflagcanada.ca</a></td>
<td>LGBTQ2S communities and their families across Canada</td>
<td>National Office, Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil LGBT du Québec</td>
<td><a href="http://www.conseil-lgbt.ca/">www.conseil-lgbt.ca/</a></td>
<td>LGBTQ2S communities in Quebec</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out Saskatoon</td>
<td><a href="http://www.outsaskatoon.ca/">www.outsaskatoon.ca/</a></td>
<td>LGBTQ2S communities in Saskatoon</td>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 519</td>
<td><a href="http://www.the519.org">www.the519.org</a></td>
<td>LGBTQ2S communities in Toronto</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibelong program, Mosaic</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/lgbtq">www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/lgbtq</a></td>
<td>Immigrant and refugee LGBTQ2S communities in BC</td>
<td>British-Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Family Resource Society of Edmonton</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mfrsedmonton.org">www.mfrsedmonton.org</a></td>
<td>Newcomers, immigrants and refugees in Edmonton, Alberta</td>
<td>Alberta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bienvenue NDG</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ndg.ca">www.ndg.ca</a></td>
<td>Newcomers, immigrants and refugees in Montreal, Quebec</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Services Association of Nova-Scotia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isans.ca">www.isans.ca</a></td>
<td>Newcomers, immigrants and refugees in Nova-Scotia</td>
<td>Nova-Scotia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adamns.com">www.adamns.com</a></td>
<td>Newcomers, immigrants and settlers of African descent in the Maritimes</td>
<td>Atlantic Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomer Kitchen</td>
<td><a href="http://www.newcomerkitchen.ca">www.newcomerkitchen.ca</a></td>
<td>Social enterprise for refugees in Toronto</td>
<td>Ontario</td>
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</table>

### Interview questions

#### General

1. In what ways do you work with communities that have been traditionally under-represented in federal government decision making and information sharing efforts?
2. Are you aware of the Government of Canada’s open government plan?
3. What does Open Government mean for your organization?
4. How can Open Government address some of the priorities, interests and needs of your community?

#### Open Data

5. Do you use any specific government data to support your work? Do you feel comfortable using government data to develop policy or programs for the communities you serve? What are your barriers to learning?
6. In what ways would better access to data improve the quality of support you provide for your community? Is there any specific type of government data you wished you had access to?
7. Is the data you need readily accessible? What would make it easier for you to access the data you need?
8. Are the communities you are serving running into issues accessing online government services or information? How can the Government help your community gain better access to digital services and information? Any specific areas of concern?

#### Civil society engagement, Open Dialogue and policymaking

9. How could the government better engage the communities you serve to inform its decision-making?
10. What government decisions are most important for your community to be involved in? What priorities for your community would you be most willing to be consulted about?
11. Are you currently participating in any of the Open Government dialogues? What would make it easier for you to consult with the government? What are currently the barriers to your dialogue with the government?

12. What would make your experience of consulting with the government more efficient and worthy of your time?

13. The Government of Canada will release its draft Open Government Plan in spring 2018. Would your organization be willing to help solicit feedback on this draft plan from your members/constituents? How would this work, and how could the government support you? What might your organization want to prioritize?

**Transparent and accountable government**

14. What does “transparency of government” mean to the specific community you serve? In what ways does your community want to hold the government accountable?

15. How can government transparency be improved specifically in regard to the community you serve?

**Organizations’ recommendations by thematic area**

The following recommendations made by interviewees have been grouped by theme.

**Theme 1: Open Data and accessibility**

Most organizations interviewed rely on government data to apply for funding and grants or to develop programs. Their members access government services online with varying degrees of ease and literacy and many organizations provide access or support for clients needing online government services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUES</th>
<th>CONCERNS</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ACCESSIBILITY| Accessibility remains a challenge for all communities, particularly for their most vulnerable or marginalized members. This includes barriers related to language, literacy, and access to computers and technology. Some populations are not aware of what information is available through government portals or online services. Some information can be difficult to find and understand, such as how to proceed when changing | • Work with community organizations to provide training and access  
• Train the trainers, by training organizations and other community gate-keepers and providing them with information on how and where to access data  
• For minority communities, have specific social workers who are from the community be present and available to encourage people to access services and guide them |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUES</th>
<th>CONCERNS</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
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</table>
|        | gender on identification documents. | • Partner with libraries and other community resources to provide access  
| PRIVACY | For some communities, privacy can be a concern. For some LGBTQ2S communities there can be a fear of being unwillingly “outed” by using an online service or by participating in an online engagement initiative. | • Take appropriate steps to ensure data privacy and be explicit when privacy may be breached or personal information may be disclosed. |
| INTEGRATION WITH OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT | Data may be inconsistent between levels of government, making it difficult to acquire comparable data sets.  
Data may be available through other levels of government but not referenced on Government of Canada websites. | • Streamline data sets when possible.  
• Work to integrate or link to Open Data provided by other levels of government |
| INACCURATE DATA SETS | Marginalized or transient populations can be reflected inaccurately or mischaracterized in government data, preventing appropriate programing and funding. | • Work with community organizations and direct service providers to ensure more accurate data collection  
• Work with community-based organizations to ensure proper framing of data sets |
| LACK OF QUALITATIVE DATA | Organizations often have access to good quantitative data, but qualitative data can be sparse or lacking. | • Work in partnership with organizations providing services to determine what qualitative data is needed |
| FINDABILITY AND COMPARABILITY OF DATA SETS | Organizations can find it difficult to navigate the complexity and number of data sets to access the information they need. Language and terminologies have changed, making it difficult to compare data over the years. | • Ensure continuity of data and make data comparable  
• Make information “findable”  
• Provide more training for community-based organizations on how to access and use Open Data |
## Theme 2: Civil society engagement, open dialogue & policymaking

All organizations interviewed have participated in various government consultations or engagement initiatives, including a few specifically on Open Government. All are willing to participate and provide input but require support to do so efficiently and with the best expertise they can bring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUES</th>
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<th>SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
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</table>
| TIME   | Every organization surveyed mentioned that while they are more than willing to participate in consultations or engagement processes, the timelines are often too short. Receiving notice earlier would facilitate participation and enable organizations to provide the best available expertise. When marginalized communities receive a notice of consultation or engagement, they may need to meet beforehand to decide if they can attend and trust the process proposed. Organizations can be overwhelmed by demands for engagement. | • Having a calendar of planned consultations and engagement initiatives spanning the fiscal year would be ideal  
• Give more than a month of notice, whenever possible  
• Have one central organizations tracking engagement initiatives and indicating to departments if specific organizations have received a high number of demands  
• Offer an option to opt-out at the first contact in order to avoid undesired, multiple demands by the same engagement initiative |
| FUNDING | Most organizations report having inadequate funding. In order to participate actively and offer their best expertise and the lived experience of their members, they require adequate funding for flights, accommodation, accessibility, childcare, per diems, etc. Small grassroots initiatives launched by private citizens may have difficulty competing for funding with large, established organizations. | • Plan for adequate funding for any engagement initiative  
• Ensure funding for accessibility needs and do this through partner organizations, whenever possible, rather than relying on one or two proxies to represent a range of diverse community members  
• Encourage private citizens or smaller organizations to participate by having small grants and funds that are accessible through a simplified application processes |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESSIBILITY</th>
<th>Consultations with some communities can be hindered by language barriers or other barriers to accessibility.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• When possible, ensure adequate translation services</td>
<td>• Accessibility should be included in all forms of engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do not necessarily rely on online engagement</td>
<td>• Ensure the needs of participants with disabilities are taken into account</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Ensure the needs of participants with disabilities are taken into account</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION AND DECENTRALIZED ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>Consultations can be done in a variety of ways and locations. However, for more marginalized populations, bringing the consultation to a location in close physical proximity to them will increase the likeliness of their participation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Use face-to-face engagement, when possible</td>
<td>• Decentralize engagement to the regions, when possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decentralize engagement to the regions, when possible</td>
<td>• Partner with community organizations or local gatekeepers such as libraries to organize engagement initiatives and attract participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partner with community organizations to ensure invitations are issued to a wide variety of participants</td>
<td>• More consultations are needed in the North for specifically northern issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAFETY AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY</th>
<th>Marginalized or under-served communities may feel unsafe in some consultation environments or when in direct contact with government agencies or representatives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work with community organizations to ensure processes are sensitive and create a sense of safety</td>
<td>• Ensure consultations and engagement initiatives are in spaces that feel safe for all involved or use neutral environments such as libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consult with community organizations about the engagement process and allow for longer timeframes in order to build the level of trust necessary for genuine and participatory engagement</td>
<td>• Start government cultural sensitivity training at the leadership level and make this an integral part of a cultural shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start government cultural sensitivity training at the leadership level and make this an integral part of a cultural shift</td>
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</table>
GIVING A VOICE TO THE MOST MARGINALIZED AND CONSULTING THOSE WITH THE MOST RELEVANT LIVED EXPERIENCE

The most marginalized of the under-served communities are often left out of consultations despite the wealth of lived experience they can bring to the table.

Often, only major organizations are consulted, leaving out the voices of smaller, regional entities who may have specific needs or experiences.

Issues can be “mashed” together with little distinction. This can be the case for Indigenous issues, where First Nations, Inuit and Metis can be treated as a single entity despite their substantive differences. In certain communities, information about specific needs or challenges may not be sufficiently detailed when governments report back on consultations.

Gender-based analysis is often lacking.

Oppression can be intersectional and reconciliation efforts are needed with all marginalized communities.

• Work in partnership with organizations to ensure all voices are at the table and contributing to discussions
• Consult with a variety of organizations and be cautious about treating any single organization as the spokesperson for the entire community
• Make time to truly listen to participants and community members, and consider sharing a meal together to give time for trust to build
• Identify participants with relevant lived experience, rather than assuming uniformity across a community of interest or relying on a few proxy organizations
• Do not generalize community-specific issues when reporting back on consultation results and be mindful of the internal diversity within any defined communities and peoples
• Apply adequate gender-based analysis
• Reconciliation will help give a voice to others who have been marginalized

COMMUNICATION

Marginalized or minority communities often have less access to traditional media or even online media. Literacy issues can also be a barrier to accessing information on government initiatives.

• Do not rely on traditional media or online media to communicate about engagement initiatives but provide information through community-based organizations or centres to ensure information is distributed and made accessible, and allow for sufficient time to complete this process
FOSTERING SOCIAL INNOVATION

There are many bureaucratic barriers that can stifle social innovation, making it impossible for small organizations or initiatives to access even small amounts of funding to do proofs-of-concept or support on-going programs that are successful and meaningful to the communities they serve.

- Encourage private citizens and small grassroots organizations to provide socially innovative projects by not submitting them to the same criteria and demands as larger, better established organizations.
- Support scaling projects when their social impact, even on a short-term, is demonstrated and lauded by the community affected.
- Encourage collaboration and cooperation between smaller initiatives and organizations and larger, well-established organizations.

Theme 3: Transparency and government accountability

Transparency and accountability are particularly important for marginalized populations and, as such, to all the organizations interviewed for this study. While all organizations acknowledged the effort made by Government to improve transparency and accountability, all mentioned the importance of building trust with the more marginalized and vulnerable members of their communities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUES</th>
<th>CONCERNS</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP</td>
<td>Most organizations interviewed have had the experience of being consulted and never hearing back about the impact of their contribution. Often, reports or documents are difficult to find on government websites.</td>
<td>• Send feedback and follow-up with organizations on how their information or input was used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Keep organizations abreast of the progress of policies or initiatives, including when there are challenges or barriers to implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• When announcing a policy or decision the organization was consulted on, send the press release to the organization ahead of the media so they can prepare their comments adequately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Make any report or document pertaining to the engagement initiative “findable” and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONESTY</td>
<td>Trust can only be built if there is honesty.</td>
<td>• Acknowledge when there are short-coming or challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Be open and honest about expectations and the scope of consultations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMILITY</td>
<td>The Government should remain humble and solicit the lived experience of communities to craft better policies.</td>
<td>• Solicit partnerships and expertise from the communities involved in the engagement initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Be present in the communities and attend their events whenever possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTENTION FROM THE HIGHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Marginalized or minority communities may feel like they are not worthy of the attention of higher levels of government or officials because of their statistically small numbers

- Do not consider the needs of communities only through the lens of their percentage of the general population but consider the legacy of prejudice against them and what is needed to ensure their inclusion
- When engaging with minority or marginalized communities, ensure the higher levels of government are present and listening
- Initiate cultural sensitivity training at the highest levels to make this part of the culture of government

ACCOUNTABILITY

Funding for programs and initiatives can be perceived as being opaque, bureaucratic and favouring larger, well-established organizations. Government can be risk-adverse with innovative programs and small-scale initiatives and can be perceived as funding larger, established programs, even when their results are not clearly demonstrated.

Funds do not necessarily benefit directly affected populations.

- Provide better transparency on the processes to request funding and grants and on how funding decisions have been made
- Provide small pools of funding in a transparent manner to support innovative and small-scale projects
- Ensure some of the funding provided goes directly to affected populations as opposed to agencies and organizations

Community priorities

When queried about the policy areas where government should seek the involvement of their communities, interviewees listed the following priorities. These viewpoints were transcribed from the perspectives of interviewees and are presented in their own words.

Priorities for interviewees working with LGBTQ2S communities:

- **Safety and security** – Many communities are marginalized in an intersectional way (e.g. racial, class, etc.) and have legitimate concerns about their safety and security in their interactions with government, including, but not limited, to immigration services, police and justice.
- **Justice** – Access to legal services can be challenging, as is navigating the justice system in general.
• **Immigration** – LGBTQ2S immigrants face unique challenges and often have been victims of violence and discrimination by the governments of the countries they originate from. Building trust with these immigrants, including when they have not self-identified, and providing safe settlement services, is of the utmost importance.

• **Healthcare inclusivity** – The federal government has a role to play in facilitating better access to inclusive healthcare. Potential roles include promoting programs and training to increase the sensitivity of healthcare providers, who are sometimes reluctant to serve LGBTQ2S peoples, and providing adequate resources to provinces and territories to serve clients, in particular trans clients who currently have difficulties accessing adequate care, both for transition-related care but also for other forms of care.

• **Adequate health services, including mental health** – Many LGBTQ2S peoples have faced trauma due to interactions with government, law enforcement, family members and societal prejudice more generally. Mental health support remains a great challenge for many in the community and is inadequately addressed by current health systems across the country. The accessibility and quality of healthcare provided across the country should not be determined by the political leaning of individual provinces and territories but should be enforced by the federal government as an essential human right for all Canadians. There is also a great discrepancy between accessibility of health care in rural areas and large urban centres. Regions like the prairies are severely lacking in resources for all areas of healthcare. Much funding is tied to the issue of HIV/AIDS, which may or may not serve a local community’s greatest need.

• **Education** – Bullying in schools remains a salient issue for the community. Social change comes from education and there is a role for the federal government to play in providing guidance for inclusive and informative curriculums across the country.

• **Housing** – Finding adequate and safe housing is an issue for many marginalized people in the LGBTQ2S communities, particularly for youth and refugees.

• **Employment** – Many members of LGBTQ2S communities, and in particular Trans members, have difficulty finding employment where their rights are respected and they are treated in ways that are fair and recognize their humanity. Issues related to the recognition of sex work can lead to further marginalization.

• **Sensitivity training for front-line officers and workers and all other levels of government** – Government officers are often the first point of contact for members of the LGBTQ2S communities seeking urgent help. Providing sensitivity training to workers on the front lines could help prevent re-traumatising community members who may be reluctant to seek help when they most need it. This cultural change has to start at the highest levels of government.

• **Social isolation of seniors** – Senior members of the community may not only lack access to services, but also to social recognition and support.

**Priorities for interviewees working with women:**

• **Wage equality** – Wage inequality is one of the greatest challenges of gender equality in the country, with the added issue that it is often approached without at Gender-Based Analysis (GBA+) perspective. In order to achieve true gender equality, approaches must be intersectional and start from the least advantaged women rather than from looking at the statistical average across all women.

• **Justice and education on legal rights** – The justice system is still ill-equipped to appropriately address gendered violence and discrimination. Marginalized women are often disadvantaged by the current system and represent a large proportion of victims. Indigenous women are over-represented amongst women who are incarcerated due to prejudice and lack of adequate access to legal services. Providing education on legal rights and resources to women is one avenue that needs to be explored more.
• **Access to adequate reproductive health care across the country** – This can be particularly challenging in rural or remote areas.
• **Inclusion in political arenas such as land claim negotiations** – Inuit women in particular are not typically present and not included in such negotiations.
• **Reconciliation** – Advancing reconciliation throughout the country would have a positive impact on intergenerational trauma for Indigenous women and would also help to advance Indigenous women’s leadership.
• **Housing** – All other social determinants of health can be enhanced with adequate housing.
• **Food security** – Food insecurity affects women disproportionately, particularly in the North.
• **Early learning and childcare** – Early learning and childcare are determinants of social health and should be available to all women, but in particular to Inuit women.
• **Encourage training and careers in the STEM sector** – With more women working in the STEM industries and sectors, better prosperity can be achieved for all.
• **Education, including life-skills** – Providing education for topics such as financial literacy can greatly help women move out of poverty and dependence.

**Priorities for interviewees working with newcomers, immigrants and refugees:**

• **Sensitivity training for all government officers who are the first point of contact** – A sense of trust has to be built from the very first interaction with government officials. If this first contact is a success, subsequent interactions and engagement will be greatly enhanced.
• **Housing** – Housing remains a high priority for many newcomers. As housing is a lynchpin for other social determinants, access to safe housing will greatly facilitate settlement.
• **Community partnerships with organizations** – Newcomers from certain countries may have a sense of distrust towards government in general. By working in partnership with community organizations that will act as trusted and neutral third parties, the government can achieve better settlement results.
• **Accountability and transparency of hearings** – Many newcomers and particularly refugees have their hearing postponed or cancelled without receiving information as to why. Receiving information and follow-up on their next hearing opportunity as well as support in the meantime would greatly enhance their trust in government.
• **Employment** – Finding meaningful paid employment increases the chances that newcomers will better integrate within Canada and enhances further participation in civic life. This can be limited by policies that claw back social benefits or by relying only on “corporate welfare.”
• **Literacy and language funding** – Many newcomers, particularly refugees, have considerable literacy challenges. The funding for language classes often stops after newcomers acquire their citizenship, when more time is required. This is particularly the case for women who may have postponed their language classes due to childbearing, or for seniors, who often require more time.
• **Cultural settlement support** – Making newcomers feel welcomed and facilitating the transition into a new culture and environment is an important step for successful settlement and reduces feelings of loneliness and disconnect. Providing adequate support to community-based organizations that deliver community-building and integration support is much needed. Many smaller initiatives provide meaningful engagement but are not equipped to deal with the complicated bureaucratic process to request grants and funding.
• **Support on immigration sponsorship** – Newcomers are often preoccupied with sponsoring family members and may require additional support in navigating the process.
Next steps

All organizations interviewed indicated they were willing to be consulted for the next Open Government Plan, if given sufficient time to provide feedback. Most organizations mentioned that receiving the plan by email is the best way to provide this feedback.

If the government wished to solicit feedback from their respective communities, providing time and adequate funding to address accessibility issues such as language barriers would highly improve the likeliness of full or representative participation.

The Open Government Team will review the results presented in this document in conjunction with other inputs received through their consultation process and use this information to identify potential actions for the Fourth Open Government Plan. They will also consider the potential to extend this pilot by interviewing additional under-served communities about their Open Government priorities.

All organizations interviewed will receive a copy of this report upon publication.