



# **NEWCOMERS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (N.E.E.D.S.) INC.**

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**APRIL 1, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2024**

# Acknowledgements by CEO Margaret von Lau

On behalf of the agency, I would like to thank:

- All the staff for their ongoing dedication, hard work, and profound impact on our clients
- The Executive and Management teams for sharing their expertise and providing exceptional support
- Our volunteers for their impact and commitment to our agency
- The Board Members for their guiding vision and invaluable contribution
- Our funders for supporting our mandate and making this year such a success

With the hard work, guidance, and support of our entire team, we provided essential and quality settlement services to 4,121 newcomer children, youth, and their families. We are incredibly proud to have had the opportunity to support our clients and to see their individual and collective growth, success, and contribution toward building a more diverse Canada.

I want to give special thanks to Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Province of Manitoba, Service Canada, and The Winnipeg Foundation for their ongoing financial support.



*N.E.E.D.S. Inc.  
CEO Margaret von Lau*

Sincerely,  
Margaret von Lau  
Chief Executive Officer

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# Overview

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, we provided services to **4,121** immigrant and refugee children, youth, and their families.

The Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program provided support for school integration to 3,668 clients, and the Employment Services team supported 658 clients.

A total of 70 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, representing 26 countries of origin, were employed to facilitate programming for newcomer children and youth.

Our Management and Executive teams developed and coordinated programs and services, and supported front-line staff in meeting the needs of our clients. This included ensuring that staff had appropriate technological resources and professional training opportunities. It also included ensuring that there were effective reporting and evaluation processes in all programs.

Our volunteer program engaged 136 volunteers and practicum students, who provided 10,760 volunteer hours of support. This is 2527 hours more than in 2022-2023.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has successfully participated in the Government of Canada's initiative to resettle displaced Ukrainians under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) initiative.

Our agency continued to utilize the Continuous Learning and Improvement Program (CLIP) to nurture a learning environment for staff.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has introduced a new client management system and has made agency-wide use of Microsoft Office 365. The Agency has also strengthened school and employer partnerships to increase staff capacity for collaboration and teamwork, and to better serve clients.





# Agency Statistics

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4,121

Total number of clients served

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2,538

Total children and youth clients

1,583

Total family member clients

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3,524

Total IRCC eligible clients

517

Total non-IRCC clients

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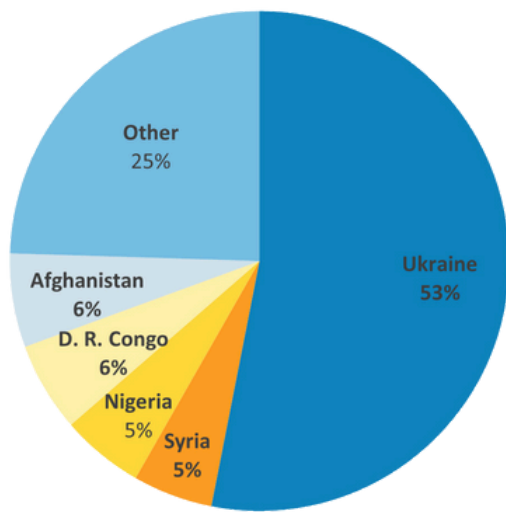
2,102

Total volunteer contacts

10,760

Total number of volunteer hours

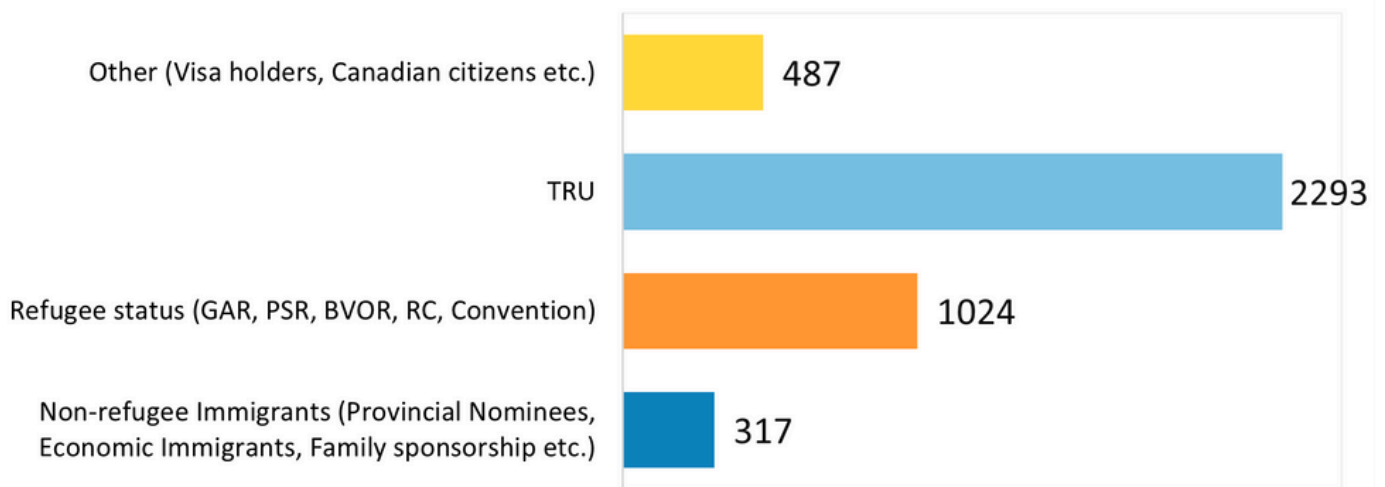
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The demographic composition of our clients largely remained the same as the previous fiscal year. Ukraine remained the top country of origin for our clients, with 53% of all clients coming from this country. Afghanistan made up 6% of total clients, as did Democratic Republic of Congo. Nigeria and Syria each represented another 5% of clients. Other countries of origin account for the remaining 25% of total clients served.



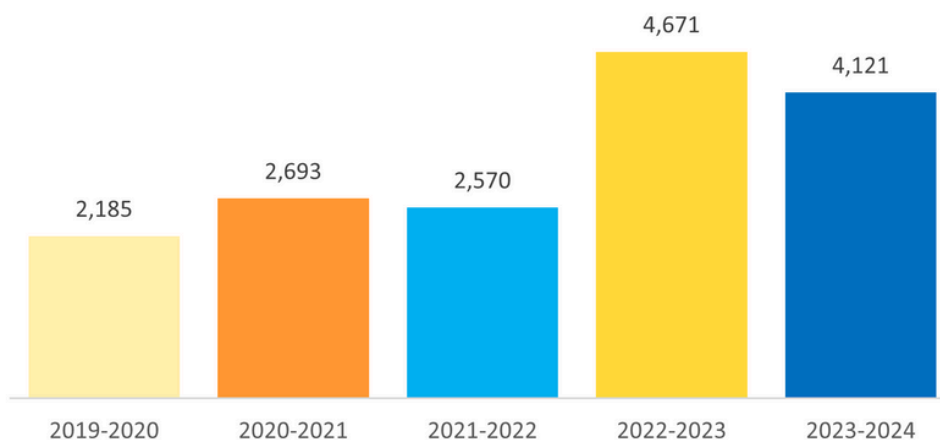
Graph 1: Top countries of client origin



Graph 2: Client Immigration Status

This fiscal year, our largest number of clients accessed NEEDS through TRU/VISA status, at 56%. Refugees made up 26% of clients, and Canadians constituted about 2% of all clients served.

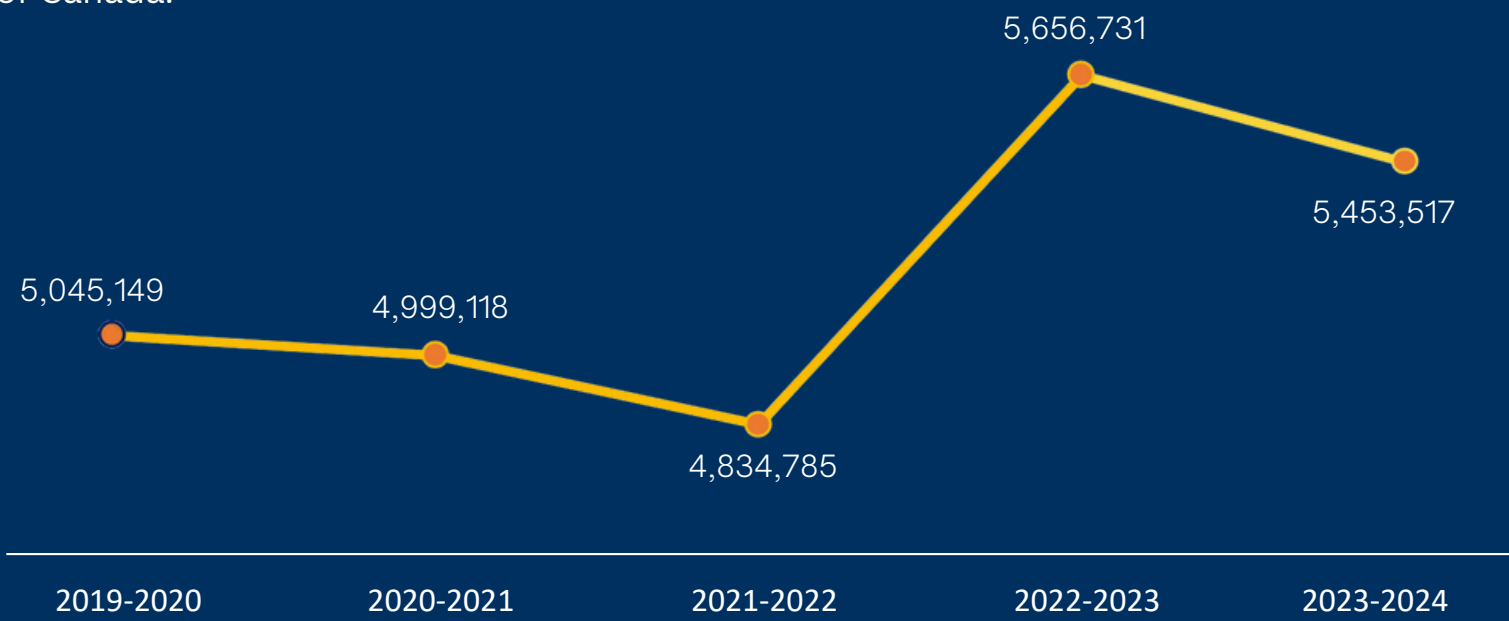
We also served 406 'Manitoba eligible' clients, indicating that funding from the Province of Manitoba's Department of Advanced Education, Skills & Immigration supported non-permanent residents in accessing N.E.E.D.S. Inc. services. Other non-permanent residents, such as international students and refugee claimants, were also able to access settlement services because of this funding.



The conflict in Ukraine continued to influence the Agency's total client number. Consistent with last year's 82% increase in total clients served, the number of clients this year decreased slightly, from 4,671 to 4,121. These historically high client numbers continue to reflect the influx of Ukrainians.

Graph 3: Total clients over previous five years

Along with a slight decrease in the total number of clients, funding also decreased by 3.6% in the last year. Major funding sources remained the same: IRCC Settlement Services, IRCC Service Delivery Improvement (SDI) initiatives, and the Enhanced Wellness project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.



Graph 4: Funding revenue over previous five years

## Additional funding sources

- **Jewish Foundation of Manitoba**
  - Support the Healthy Meals and Snacks Program
- **Purolator**
  - Support the Healthy Meals and Snacks Program
- **Winnipeg Foundation**
  - Support The Children and Youth Program for meal, backpack and school supplies.
- **Spence Neighbourhood Association**
  - Community Incentive Grant to support the Hot and Healthy Meal Program
- **Central Neighbourhood Association**
  - Community Incentive Grant to support the Hot and Healthy Meal Program



# Volunteers Statistics

136

Volunteers  
and  
Practicum  
students

10,760 Volunteer  
Hours

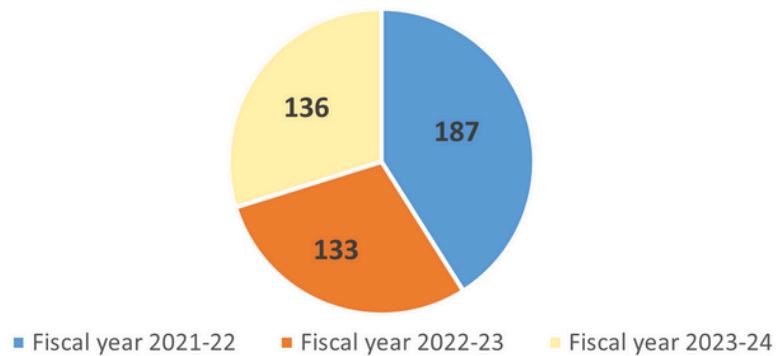
A total of 136 volunteers and practicum students provided Remote Homework, SWIS Introduction to Canadian Education (INTRO) Program, SWIS In-School Programs, and Employment Services to clients. The overall number of volunteers and practicum students increased by 3 volunteers compared to the previous year.

This year, volunteers and practicum students provided a total of 10,760 hours to NEEDS programming, representing a 30% increase from last year's volunteer hours.

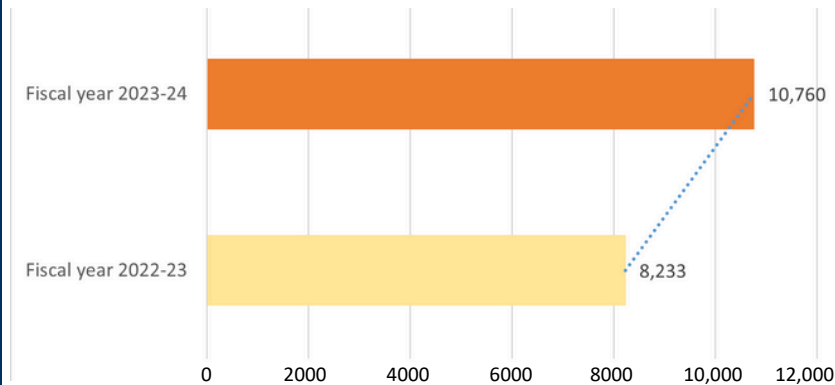
Volunteers and practicum students came from 26 different countries of origin, supporting the cultural and linguistic diversity of our clients. The top countries of origin for the volunteers supporting activities at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. were Canada (35%), India (10%), Philippines (9%), Nigeria (7%), and China (6%).

Volunteers play a crucial role in delivering personalized services to clients and maintaining effective staff-to-client ratios. In addition, volunteers provide interpretation and translation assistance, contribute to group activities and discussions, and help deliver high-demand services like the Remote Homework Club. Volunteers also act as mentors, enhancing the settlement, integration, and sense of belonging for newcomers in their new community. As we continue offering many services remotely, we will continue to rely on the invaluable support of volunteers and practicum students.

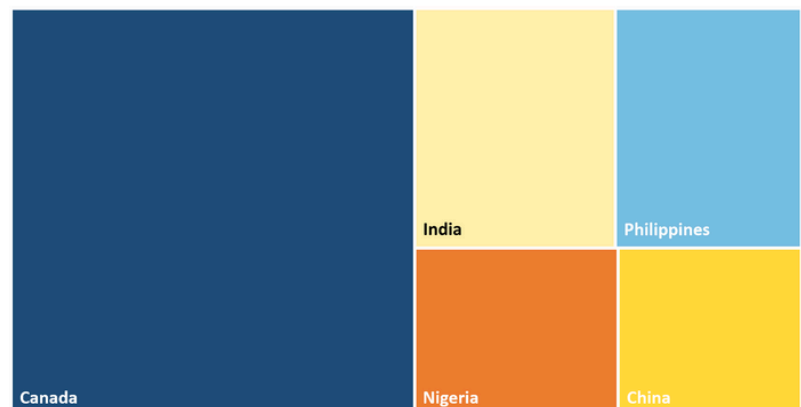
Graph 5: Number of Volunteers & Practicum Students



Graph 6: Difference in Volunteers Hours: 2022-2023 to 2023-2024



Graph 7: Top five countries of volunteer origin



# Service Reports

## SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS (SWIS) SERVICES

SWIS continues to deliver a diverse array of essential services to **3,668** newcomer and refugee children and youth and their families.



### Six Core Activities

2,085

Newcomer and refugee  
children and youth served

2,975

SWIS in school clients

1,533

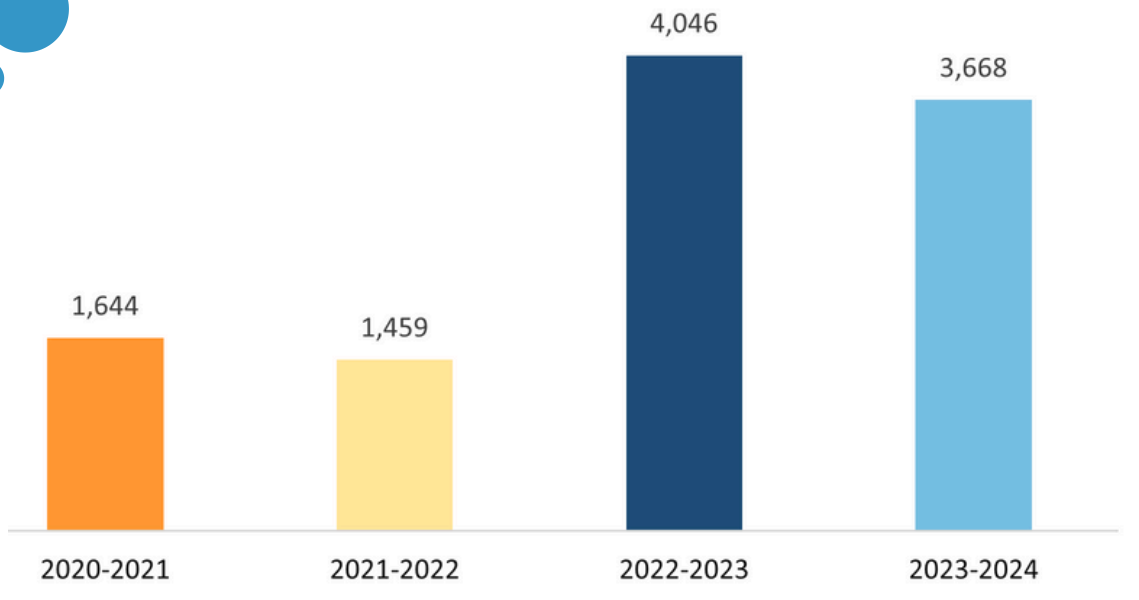
SWIS INTRO Program clients

130

Schools across four school  
divisions in Winnipeg

These core activities served a significant percentage of SWIS program clients. Additional support was extended to family members of primary clients, through referrals and community events, addressing themes such as community engagement, seasonal safety, multiculturalism, diversity, and human and civil rights in Canada.

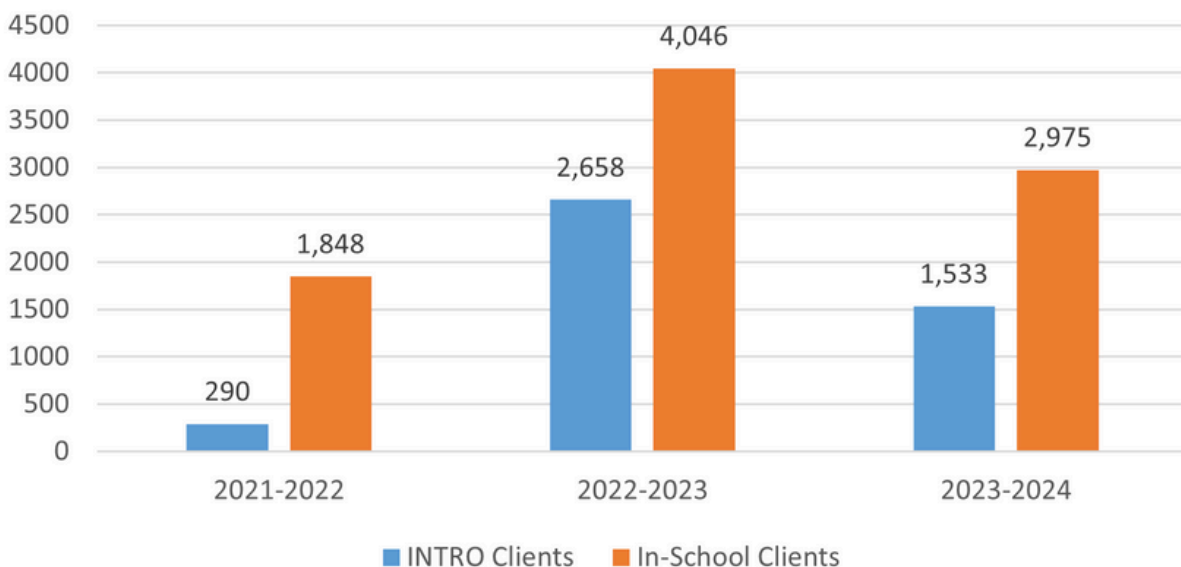
SWIS programming operated in collaboration with over 130 schools across Louis Riel School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, St. James-Assiniboia School Division and Winnipeg School Division. These partnerships facilitated access to SWIS services in schools, at NEEDS Centre, and through remote channels.



Graph 8: Total SWIS clients from 2020-2024

SWIS clients continued to remain high in 2023-24. There were high numbers of clients in all areas of the SWIS program, including the INTRO Program and in school-based SWIS Program activities. SWIS activities provided essential support to school staff, including interpretation services, cross-cultural awareness initiatives, settlement and cross-cultural events, conflict resolution support, and capacity building in trauma and mental health.

A notable new role of the SWIS Program this year was facilitating information and orientation programming in English classes during regular school hours, a departure from previous lunch and after-school sessions. This opportunity marks a significant advancement in the SWIS Program's mission to empower clients with essential knowledge for life in Canada and underscores the growing trust and visibility of the SWIS Program within partner schools.



Graph 9: SWIS Clients by service location in previous three fiscal years



# SWIS Schools

The following School Divisions and schools hosted full-time SWIS workers by providing workspaces, access to the internet, and other collaborative supports:

## Louis Riel School Division

Dakota Collegiate Archwood Darwin École Varennes Dr. D. W. Penner École Provencher Frontenac General Vanier Glenlawn Collegiate	Highbury Island Lakes J.H. Bruns Hastings Minnetonka H.S. Paul Marion Nelson McIntyre Collegiate Niakwa Place	Nordale Sage Creek Samuel Burland St. George Shamrock Tache Victor Mager Victor H.L. Wyatt Windsor Park Collegiate
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## Pembina Trails School Division

Acadia Arthur A. Leach Bairdmore Beaumont Beaver Lodge Bison Run Bonnycastle Chancellor Charleswood Dalhousie Ecole South Pointe	Fort Richmond Collegiate General Byng Henry G. Izatt Laidlaw Linden Meadows Oakenwald Oak Park Pacific Junction Prairie Sunrise Ralph Maybank	River West Park Royal Shaftesbury Tuxedo Park Van Walleghem Vincent Massey Viscount Alexander Westdale Westgrove Whyte Ridge
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## St. James-Assiniboia School Division

Assiniboine Athlone Bruce Buchanan Crestview George Waters Golden Gate	Hedges Heritage John Taylor Lincoln Linwood Phoenix Sansome	St. James Stevenson Britania Strathmillan Sturgeon Heights Voyageur Westwood
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## Winnipeg School Division

Andrew Mynarski Brock Corydon Carpathia Champlain Churchill Clifton Daniel McIntyre Dufferin Earl Grey École Sacré-Coeur Elmwood Faraday Fort Rouge General Wolfe	Gladstone Gordon Bell Grant Park Grosvenor Greenway Harrow Hugh John Macdonald Inkster Isaac Brock Isaac Newton JB Mitchell John M King Kelvin Kent Road Keewatin Prairie	King Edward Laura Secord LaVerendrye Lord Nelson Lord Roberts Lord Selkirk Luxton Meadows West Montrose Mulvey Norquay Principal Sparling Ralph Brown River Elm	River Heights Robertson Rockwood Sargent Park Sir William Osler Sisler Sister Macnamara St. Johns Stanley Knowles Strathcona Tyndall Park Victoria Albert Waterford Springs Wellington
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Through direct requests from teachers, administrators, and other school staff, the SWIS Program provided:

- Interpretation assistance during the school registration process
- Support for parent-teacher conferences and school events
- Follow-up assistance for students with attendance issues or who faced other school-related challenges, including information and orientation for settlement

This year, we also continued to partner with Seven Oaks School Division and DSFM.

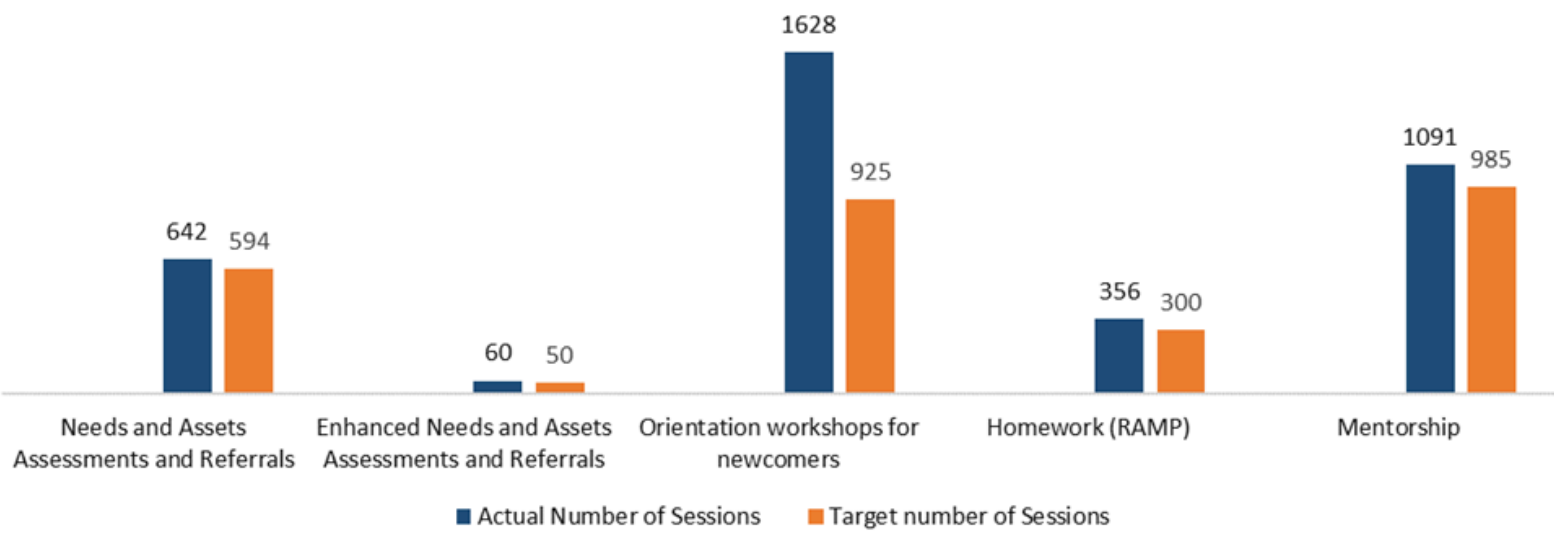
# Introduction to Canadian Education (INTRO) Program



Clients attended Introduction to Canadian Education (INTRO) Program at The NEEDS Centre from Monday to Thursday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. These sessions equipped clients with the knowledge needed to smoothly transition into the Canadian school system.

By participating in a school-like environment, clients learned English and school routines. Each day, clients worked in small groups with language interpretation support as needed. Healthy snacks and a hot lunch were served as part of the daily program.

In 2023-2024, a total of 1,533 clients attended the INTRO Program. This increase was partially due to an influx of refugees from war zones. Some clients, because of visa-related issues, spent an extended period in the INTRO Program. Many components of the INTRO Program were offered in French.



Graph 10: SWIS Program service outputs 2023 - 24

# Other activities and services offered through the SWIS Program



## NAARS: Needs Assessment and Referral Service

NAARS provides a way to triage client needs, offer necessary referrals, and document client backgrounds and potential supports, ensuring continuity across programs. N.E.E.D.S. Inc. offers NAARS in both French and English. In 2023-2024, we provided 702 NAARS sessions, exceeding our target of 644 sessions, including 60 Enhanced NAARS (E-NAARS) sessions.

## Post-Secondary Bridge Program (PSBP)

The program provides clients in grades 10-12 and recent graduates with essential knowledge about the transition from high school to post-secondary education. Activities include answering questions, providing information, and guiding clients through application processes. In 2023-2024, PSBP conducted two cohorts of eight sessions each (16 sessions total) in both in-person and online formats.

## Psychosocial Education (PSE) and Enhanced Wellness

Psychosocial Education Workshops ran throughout the fiscal year at various Winnipeg schools, covering topics like identifying emotions, trauma triggers, and self-regulation. The 10-12 week after-school sessions were highly effective, with several schools requesting extensions due to visible client benefits. Additionally, individual psychosocial support was offered, addressing stress management, friendship building, and self-regulation.

## Remote After School Mentorship Programming (RAMP)

The program ran from Monday to Thursday, 4:00-8:00 p.m., providing clients with volunteer mentors for one-on-one or small group sessions. These sessions were delivered online via MS Teams, offering homework help, English language tutoring, and mentorship through educational activities. In 2023-2024, RAMP experienced a surge in registrations due to the high number of clients seeking to improve their English language skills.

## Stand Up to Racism

This series of workshops encourages youth to share their personal experiences of racism and discrimination. The workshops also helped participants develop strong messages to combat racism by using graphic arts and digital applications to produce a poster campaign.





## Circle of Security Parenting Groups

The workshops are offered to parents and guardians of clients. The COS program promotes caregiver confidence for parenting in the new Canadian setting, providing insights and tools for raising children from a trauma-informed perspective. Each COS training session has been well-received, often leading to requests for further workshops, especially for workshops focusing on teens. The training also helped improve participant computer skills. Each COS training consisted of eight sessions. Delivering the sessions exclusively online led to a higher success rate in program completion due to the reduction of barriers like transportation and childcare needs.



## Making Sense of Trauma Training (MSOT)

Making Sense of Trauma (MSOT) training is an accessible and comprehensive program provided to employees at N.E.E.D.S. Inc. and to service providers within other organizations.

It is also offered to staff in partner schools. The training equips participants to identify trauma and support clients from a trauma-informed perspective. In 2023-2024, MSOT was delivered to 79 practitioners, professionals, and service providers.

## English and French Language Programs

English and French language clubs provide clients with opportunities to practice and improve language skills. This year, we have also been able to conduct NAARS in French, and deliver many components of our INTRO program in French. Additionally, we support French-speaking clients in our Employment Services program, assist with registration in francophone and French immersion schools, and make appropriate referrals to community agencies.

English language support is integrated into all our programs, providing a safe environment for practice. In 2023-2024, we saw an increase in clients over high school age needing English learning opportunities. Due to long waitlists for benchmark evaluations, we invited clients aged 18-21 to join the Introduction to Canadian Education program as a stop-gap measure.

The gap in English language services in the community, coupled with the notable increase in requests for English language learning opportunities in RAMP, may provide new opportunities in the coming year to offer more extensive and focused English language programming for our clients.

# Employment Services

Through five core activities, our Employment Services program continues to provide essential employment supports to newcomer youth (ages 16-29). Clients receive in-depth employability skills training through sector-specific workshops, internships, and individual employment coaching. Many of our employment services are now also available to French-speaking clients.



77

Workshops and  
presentatnions

190

Work placement  
clients

45

YEN Program  
clients

658

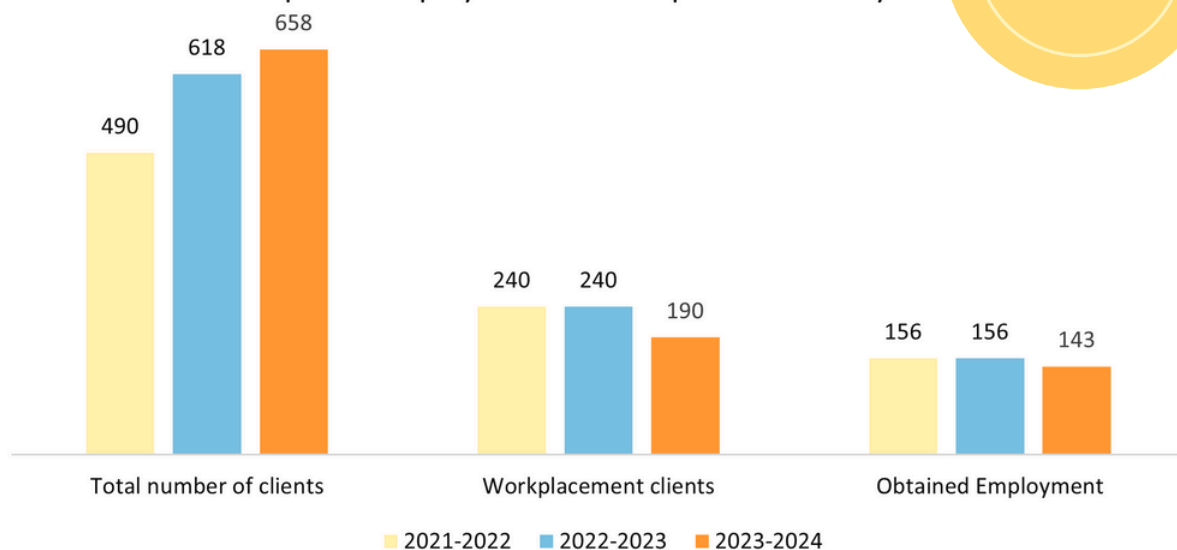
Total number of  
clients served

143

Clients obtained  
employment

Employment Services delivered 77 workshops and presentations to prepare clients for employment, covering topics such as Moving to Canada, Self-Discovery, Goal Setting, Career Exploration, Resume Writing, Cover Letters, Job Searching, Preparing for Work, Positive Work Behavior, Maintaining Employment, Money Management, and Interview Preparation. Additionally, our Employment Services staff engaged clients in mock interviews, which helped increase their self-confidence. These sessions took place in six partner schools.

Workshops in the Youth Employment for Newcomers: Career-Driven Internship (YEN) Program were delivered onsite and at Glenlawn Collegiate, Dakota Collegiate, Seven Oaks School Division, Fort Richmond Collegiate, Oak Park School, and Vincent Massey School. Workshops incorporated the Nine Essential Skills model and reflected the SEmployment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Skills for Success model, which includes social and emotional skills, as central components for labor market preparation.



Graph 11: Employment Services clients - previous three years



To facilitate work placements, our agency partnered with 21 employers, arranging job placements, setting up interviews, conducting workplace monitoring visits, and scheduling check-ins to support the onboarding and transition of clients in their workplace. Some of partners include the City of Winnipeg, McDonald's, Winners, Giant Tiger, FreshCo and Safeway.

In 2023-2024, the youth labor market saw an increase in competitiveness. In a tightly constrained labor market, entry-level positions have become scarce. Consequently, newcomer youth are facing significant hurdles in securing employment without prior work experience or specialized skills.



Despite the tightly constrained labor market, our Employment program has seen a growing number of service requests from Manitoba-eligible clients seeking support and one-on-one training to help them develop and refine their employability skills. Additionally, we facilitated the successful hiring of 25 Manitoba-eligible clients throughout the year.

One of the challenges this fiscal year was a considerable increase in service requests from recently resettled refugees and protected individuals. While supporting these groups, we identified several unique resettlement challenges and barriers, which often made it difficult to provide these clients with adequate support to succeed in finding and retaining employment.



In the past year, the Employment Services Program established a new partnership with the Seven Oaks School Division, which opens opportunities to provide employment support and work placements to clients within this school division. Additionally, there has been a notable increase in engagement from high schools interested in our employment programming.



# PARTNERSHIPS

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has consistently upheld its dedication to grounding its services in community partnerships. In pursuit of this commitment, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. actively engages in strategic collaborations with an array of service providers, educational institutions, employers, community groups, and other networks. Our robust partnerships have played an indispensable role in the fulfillment of our organizational mission.

Given the continued influx of newcomers this year, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. took proactive measures to reinforce existing partnerships and forge new ones. The following Frame outlines some of the key partnerships that supported the delivery of our programs and services in 2023-2024.

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. maintains partnerships with employers who provide a range of opportunities for our clients. These partnerships ensure that we can provide on-the-job training, job fairs, mentoring, and work placements.

The employer partnerships established for the fiscal year of 2023-2024 encompassed diverse sectors of employment, such as community organizations, food and hospitality, personal care work, retail, and sports and recreation.



# SUCCESSES & PROMISING PRACTICES

N.E.E.D.S. Inc. experienced many successes in 2023-2024. Some major successes are highlighted below:

## NEW CLIENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Over the past year, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. has implemented a new client management system to streamline processes. This included automating routine tasks, tracking client interactions, and managing documentation. The system enables staff to undertake administrative duties more efficiently and thereby devote more time to meeting clients' needs. Additionally, the system has significantly improved our ability to manage referrals to other service providers. Moreover, it serves as a powerful data collection and analysis tool, enabling us to gather valuable insights into client demographics, service utilization trends, and program outcomes. This information helps us measure service impacts, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions to enhance program effectiveness.



## NEW OR STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023-2024, the Employment Program established a new partnership with Seven Oaks School Division. This marks a significant development for N.E.E.D.S. Inc., providing new opportunities to offer employment support and work placements to clients within this school division.

## NEW USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE SERVICE DELIVERY



In the past year, we tested an innovative, technology-supported approach to engaging volunteers in the remote delivery of settlement services (e.g. webinars, virtual events). A comprehensive evaluation of this approach found it effective in volunteer recruitment and retention, and in promoting volunteer satisfaction and sense of belonging to N.E.E.D.S. Inc. Given our dependence on community volunteers, there is significant potential for scaling this approach.

In addition, we transferred all Agency data and documents to a cloud-based system, using Microsoft Office 365, and initiated Agency-wide applications of an array of cloud-based tools. This initiative has significantly increased overall efficiency of Agency administrative functions and has enhanced staff capacity for collaboration and teamwork.

# CHALLENGES & ADAPTATIONS

The high influx of newcomers and the continued arrival of refugees from war zones, particularly Ukraine, has had several impacts on our programs and services. Below is a summary of the notable challenges that arose.



## Volunteer Reliance

RAMP relies on volunteers to support clients with homework and informal language learning. This reliance can pose challenges as volunteers may cancel their shifts at any time or sometimes volunteer for only a short period. This can make it difficult to plan and ensure that clients are getting the support they need. Volunteer recruitment is ongoing, and we have developed a number of volunteer retention strategies.

## Technological Hurdles

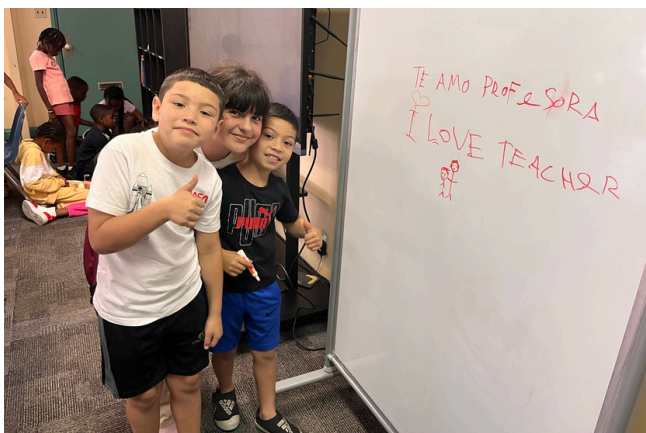
Throughout the year, our organization encountered technological hurdles that impeded the delivery of services to clients. Internet speed and stability issues continue to be a challenge, sometimes limiting smooth access for staff to our client database. More importantly, the shift to cloud-based computing has revealed the limitations of older devices, particularly laptops with outdated capacity to manage fast internet speeds. We continue to address this issue through ongoing upgrades to our internet infrastructure, but our budget remains limited for the purchase of new laptop and portable devices.

## Surge in Service Needs

A significant challenge involved the surge in service needs with the ongoing influx of Ukrainian refugees. This ongoing influx put pressure on staff and stretched program capacities. It created longer waiting period for clients to receive services. Furthermore, this occurred during a period with no increases to staffing. As a result, staff felt overburdened and some experienced diminished morale and increased fatigue.

## Client Hiring Limitations

In the employment program, technical and logistical limitations impeded the hiring of our clients. Some employers could not proceed with hiring due to training and certification requirements, or the lack of a client's driver license. Connecting clients to driver's licensing programming does not necessarily solve the problem as there is often a lack of access to a vehicle after obtaining a license. Some employers declined to hire newcomers based on assumptions about their language proficiency. Other potential hiring opportunities were lost because of employer staffing turnover, leading to setbacks in securing new placements for clients.



## Staffing Challenges

Internal challenges stemming from N.E.E.D.S. Inc. staff turnover necessitated the training of new staff, diverting resources away from our targets. These staffing challenges reflect the need for ongoing support and professional development initiatives within our organization.

## Complex Needs of Ukrainian Clients

A high number of Ukrainian clients demonstrated complex needs, such as anger management, trauma responses (fight, flight, freeze), and difficulties with peer relationships. An increase in individual PSE sessions and hours was needed for these clients to help meet this trend.





# *Success is a Story:* Celebrating 25 Years of N.E.E.D.S. Inc.

In 2024, N.E.E.D.S. Inc. proudly celebrated its 25th anniversary, marking a significant milestone in our mission to support newcomer children and youth in Winnipeg.

To commemorate this occasion, we hosted "Success is a Story: Celebrating N.E.E.D.S. Inc. 25th Anniversary" on February 22 at The Masonic Memorial Centre. Over 250 guests, including government officials, and community partners, joined us in recognizing the remarkable success stories over the past 25 years.



The evening featured a keynote from Zahra Al-Harazi, an award-winning entrepreneur and former Canadian Ambassador to UNICEF. We were also moved by the stories of our former clients, now thriving young professionals, who shared how N.E.E.D.S. Inc. helped them overcome challenges and build brighter futures. Their achievements serve as a reminder of the transformative impact of our programs.

The evening was further elevated by the presence of Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, along with representatives from the Government of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, and our valued partners. Their participation highlighted the support collective commitment that has been essential to our success over the years.

As we look back on this journey, we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of N.E.E.D.S. Inc. . We look forward to continuing this work together, building brighter futures for generations to come.





# CONCLUSION

In 2023-24, we served a high number of clients, echoing a trend that began last year due to the Ukraine influx. However, with the experiences we have gained, we have been better equipped to serve a high number of clients. We continued to establish new school and employer partners, and introduced a new client management system, technology, and software to enhance our capacity to serve our clients. As a result, this fiscal year has been marked by continued expansion of our capacity to meet client needs.

We have been a dependable partner for the Government of Canada, as well as for other newcomer-serving agencies in Manitoba. Receiving fundings from different community foundations and corporate organizations indicates greater community recognition of N.E.E.D.S. Inc. as a newcomer and youth serving agency. We embrace the view that continuous learning and dedication to services are essential in responding to community emergencies and meeting client needs.

