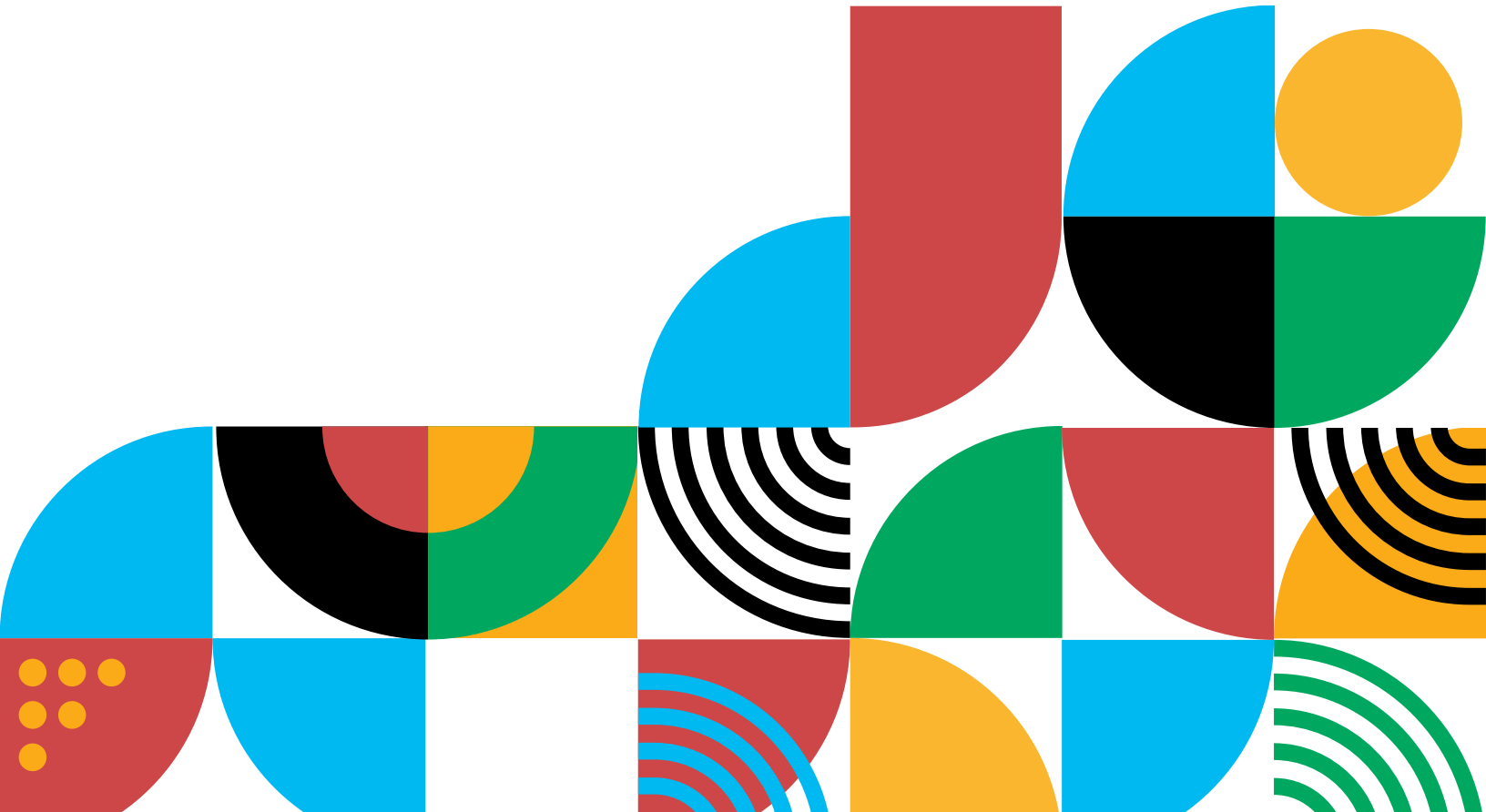
Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services

New Beginnings for Newcomers.

2SLGBTQIA+ NEWCOMER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Program Evaluation Report

April 2026



Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
Toronto, Canada
April 2026

Angela Flor Mateo (MPH Placement Student) prepared this report, supervised by Courtney Kupka (Research and Evaluation Coordinator), in fulfillment of their MPH Practicum Placement Learning Plan at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (Access Alliance). The project was overseen by Dr. AKM Alamgir, Director, Organizational Knowledge and Learning.

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Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
340 College Street, Suite 500
Toronto, ON M5T3A9
research@accessalliance.ca
www.accessalliance.ca

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Executive Summary

Background and Objectives

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Programs and Services is a community-based health promotion and social support program designed to support 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers, refugees, and individuals from racialized and marginalized communities who often face barriers to accessing health and social services. It supports clients through one-to-one appointments, Among Friends group programming, and special events. The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an assessment of the program's reach, accessibility, effectiveness, client satisfaction, and impact.

Methodology

The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach, including an online survey (N=103), client focus group (N=7), staff and management interviews, and a review of program documents, to assess the program across five domains: **reach, access and participation, effectiveness, satisfaction, and impact.**

Key Findings

- **Reach:** The program is successfully reaching its intended population, with majority of clients predominantly being Black-African 2SLGBTQIA+ refugee claimants. Client outreach has been driven primarily by word of mouth.
- **Access and Participation:** 86% (n=89) of clients attended the program in the past 6 months. Barriers to access include clients' competing priorities, transportation costs, and the timing of services. Identified facilitators include TTC tickets and meals provided by the program, recorded sessions, and clear communication from staff.
- **Program Effectiveness:** 97% (n=76) of clients report their needs are addressed through 1-to-1 appointments, and 98% (n=85) find group sessions relevant and useful. Clients report meaningful improvements in their ability to self-advocate and navigate services.
- **Client Satisfaction:** 95% (n=98) rate the program as excellent or very good, and 92% (n=95) would recommend the program to others.
- **Perceived Impacts:** 88% (n=91) report improved mental health, 84% (n=87) report improved physical health, 86% (n=89) have improved sense of belonging, 91% (n=93) feel more integrated into Canadian society, and 55% (n=57) received a support letter that contributed to positive outcomes for their hearings.

Conclusion

Overall, this evaluation demonstrates that the 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Program is making a meaningful difference in the lives of its participants. By investing in additional staff and funding, the program has the potential to reach even more people, strengthen its impact, and serve as a model for equitable and inclusive services in the province.

Background

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an assessment of the reach, accessibility, effectiveness, satisfaction, and impact of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Programs and Services. As the program's first in-depth evaluation, the findings will be used to better understand client experiences, and it will serve as a resource to inform staff and management's future decision-making, funding applications, and support quality improvements.

Program Description

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Programs and Services is a community-based health promotion and social support program implemented by Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services (Access Alliance). It has been operating for over 12 years and was developed to support 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers, refugees, and individuals from racialized and marginalized communities who often face barriers to accessing health and social services.

Services are delivered through three main components:



One-to-One Appointments
Tailored settlement support to address concerns related to service navigation, housing, employment, health, and individual needs.



Among Friends Group Programming
This weekly program creates a safe space where participants can engage in peer support, facilitated discussions, and educational presentations on topics relevant to 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers.



Special Community Events & Programming
Mentoring sessions, social outings, job fairs, and Pride events that strengthen social networks and foster a sense of belonging within the community.

The program's overall goal is to support 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers by creating a safe, inclusive space to build community; receive settlement-related support; improve access to services; and enhance health and well-being.

This is planned to happen through the following objectives:

- **Assist clients with resettlement and reintegration through intake, needs assessments, and referrals outside Access Alliance**
- **Increase clients' awareness of available health, social, and community services**
- **Increase clients' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities**
- **Create opportunities for community building and peer support**
- **Foster partnerships to support access to inclusive employment opportunities**
- **Equip clients with skills and knowledge needed to navigate the Canadian job market**
- **Address clients' concerns related to health, housing, employment, service navigation**
- **Make visible and address the structural barriers that prevent clients from accessing equitable services**

Methodology

The evaluation focused on assessing the program's performance between the fiscal years (FY) of 2023-2024 and 2025-2026 and was guided by an evaluation framework and plan (see **Appendix A**) developed to address the evaluation questions outlined in **Table 1**.

Applying a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation process began with a program background review with staff and management to identify evaluation priorities and areas of interest. Program documents and existing data were reviewed to understand program activities, outputs, and client demographics.

Primary data collection included an online survey distributed to program clients (N=1,193) with a total of 103 responses, a focus group with 7 participants, and interviews with program staff and management.

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis, and findings were synthesized to identify key themes and inform program recommendations.

Table 1. Evaluation Questions	
Domain	**Question**
Reach	1. What is the size of the population participating in the program? 2. What are the characteristics/demographics of the client population? 3. What outreach approaches are contributing to current participation patterns?
Access/ Participation	4. What are the facilitators and barriers to accessing the program? 5. What factors influence clients' decision to stay or discontinue participation in the program?
Effectiveness	6. Is the program being implemented and achieving its outputs as intended? 7. What are the strengths and areas for improvement of the program's activities? 8. To what extent does the program build participant capacity, and in which areas (e.g., navigating services, social connection, settlement support, access to healthcare)? 9. In what ways does the program meet clients' needs?
Satisfaction	10. What are the participants' overall experiences with the program?
Impact	11. What are the real/perceived impacts of participation on clients' overall health and well-being? 12. What are the real/perceived impacts of participation on clients' experience of integration into Canadian society? 13. What is the program's capacity to advance advocacy efforts, and in what ways do clients want to participate in advocacy activities?

Client Profile

An overview of the demographic characteristics of clients who accessed the 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Programs and Services demonstrates a relatively consistent pattern across all three fiscal years. **Table 2** presents key demographic indicators, including gender identity, age, racial/ethnic background, immigration status, and sexual orientation.

Table 2. Demographic Charateristics of the 2SLBTQIA+ Newcomer Program Clients

Demographic Indicator	Category	FY 2023-2024	FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026
Gender	Female Male	59.7% (n=172) 38.2% (n=110)	56.0% (n=333) 41.2% (n=245)	62.0% (n=98) 38.0% (n=60)
Age	15-24 24-44 45-64	9.6% (n=31) 76.7% (n=247) 13.7% (n=44)	8.7% (n=55) 76.3% (n=484) 15.0% (n=95)	8.4% (n=18) 13.5% (n=29) 2.8% (n=6)
Racial/Ethnic Group	Black – African	100.0% (n=290)	97.6% (n=580)	92.7% (n=140)
Immigration Status (Current)	Refugee Claimant Refugee Citizen	96.1% (n=269) 3.9% (n=11) 0.0% (n=0)	92.8% (n=556) 4.5% (n=27) 0.8% (n=5)	95.2% (n=140) 0.0% (n=0) 4.8% (n=7)
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual Lesbian Gay Heterosexual Prefer not to answer	46.7% (n=128) 31.8% (n=87) 14.6% (n=40) 0.0% (n=0) 6.9% (n=19)	55.9% (n=317) 24.2% (n=137) 13.1% (n=7) 2.8% (n=16) 4.1% (n=23)	51.0% (n=78) 23.5% (n=36) 11.1% (n=17) 7.2% (n=11) 7.2% (n=11)

The majority of participants are Black-African 2SLGBTQIA+ refugee claimants between the ages of 25-44, with more than half identifying as female each year. The top reported countries of origin include Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria. Income levels are generally low, with many clients reporting annual incomes under $30,000 or preferring not to answer. In terms of sexual orientation, bisexual and lesbian identities were most commonly reported. A full breakdown and trend analysis of all demographic indicators are presented in **Appendix D**.

Findings

Program Reach

As outlined in the **Client Profile** and presented in **Appendix D**, the program is consistently reaching its intended population across all three fiscal years. This suggests that the program is actively engaging individuals who may be experiencing multiple, overlapping barriers related to their identity, migration status, and access to services.

Client Growth

- There was a significant increase in unique clients between FY 2023/24 and 2024/25 (Figure 1).
- The slight decrease in FY 2025/26 reflects incomplete data, as reporting is currently only available through January 2026.

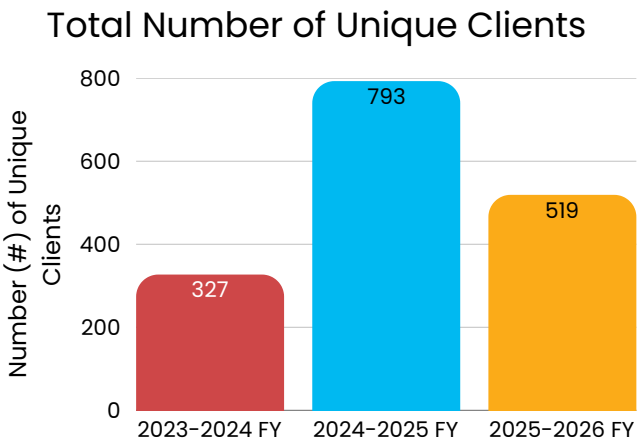


Figure 1. Total Number of Unique Clients by Fiscal Year

This pattern suggests that there is a **growing awareness** of the program, **high demand**, and **sustained engagement** over time. It also shows that there is an ongoing need for this type of service. Since there are very few programs that exist for 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers, Access Alliance regularly receives inquiries from individuals outside of Toronto but are unable to receive support from the organization due to their geographic location.

SYSTEMIC GAP

Some clients need to travel significant distances to access this program because no equivalent service exists where they live. The lack of 2SLGBTQIA+ settlement services across municipalities means that for many newcomers, Access Alliance is their only option. Reduced funding for these programs has not reduced the need; rather it shows that communities are left without services.

How Clients Hear About the Program

Word of mouth is the most common way through which clients are learning about the program, which is a strong indicator of the community's trust, as well as client satisfaction. Staff noted that as the program has grown, outreach has become less formal and more ***client-driven***, where existing clients are actively referring others within their social networks.

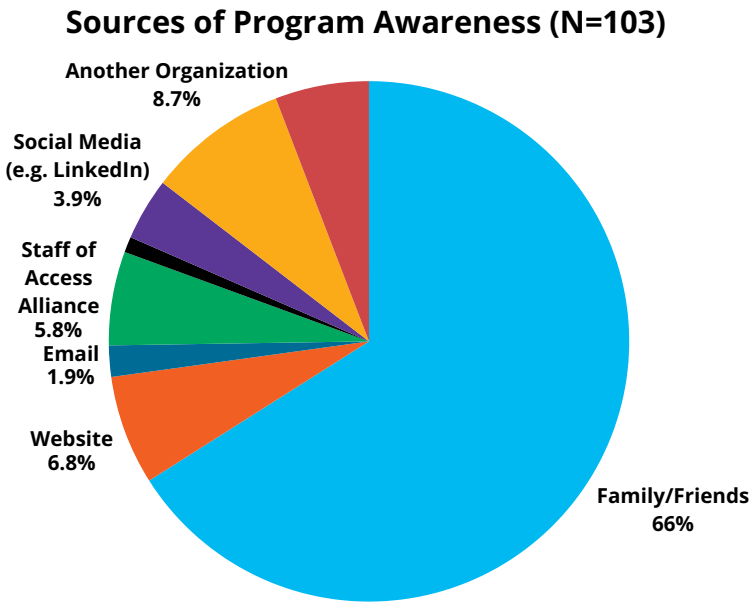


Figure 2. How Clients Heard About the Program (Survey Responses)

- From the survey, **66% of respondents** reported hearing about the program through family/friends.
- Other common pathways include: Community organization referrals, Access Alliance website, and occasional referrals through community events (Figure 2).

> A lot of our growth came from just word of mouth. Other folks would hear about the program, be referred to the program from their friends, and then it just really grew from there.
>
> **– Program Staff**

Access and Participation

Overall, clients are able to access and engage with the program, and they report a positive experience with the registration process. The majority of the survey responses described registration as **simple**, **straightforward**, and **easy to follow**, with many additional comments about the **friendly and supportive nature of staff**. At the same time, the evaluation identified meaningful barriers that are rooted in the unique experiences of newcomers.

86% (n=89) attended the program in the past 6 months

90% (n=93) "agree" and "strongly agree" the registration process was easy

Why Clients Stay

The most common reason why clients continue to participate is that the program offers a **safe, non-judgmental space** where they can be themselves and openly express their identity without fear of judgment or discrimination. The support they receive from staff and the access they have to resources are other reasons that keep clients engaged.

Safety & Sense of Belonging
A space where clients can express their identity freely, and be surrounded by others who share similar lived experiences.

Staff Support
Clients consistently highlight staff's kindness, encouragement, and responsiveness as key reasons they stay.

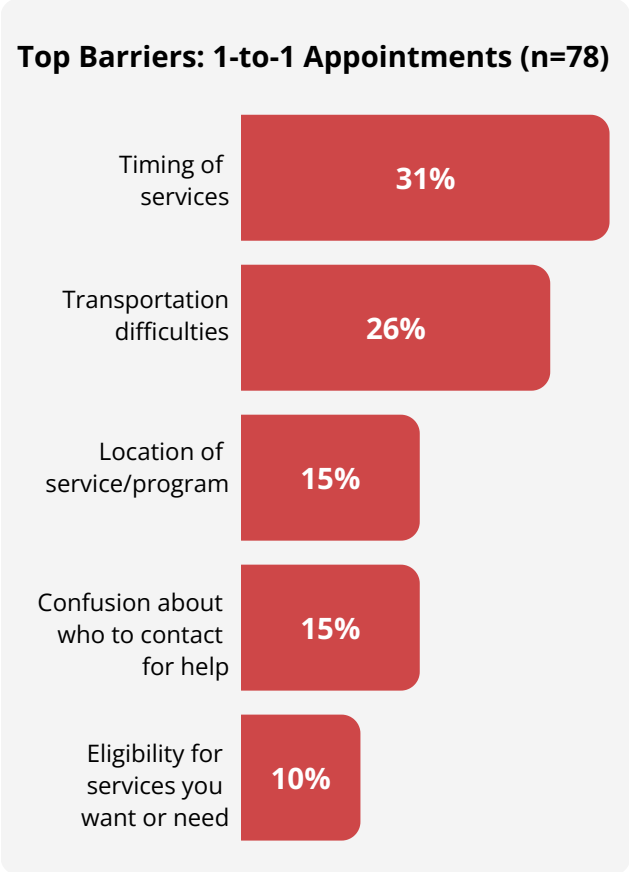
Community Connection
Opportunities to connect with others who share their identities and experiences, volunteer, and support other newcomers.

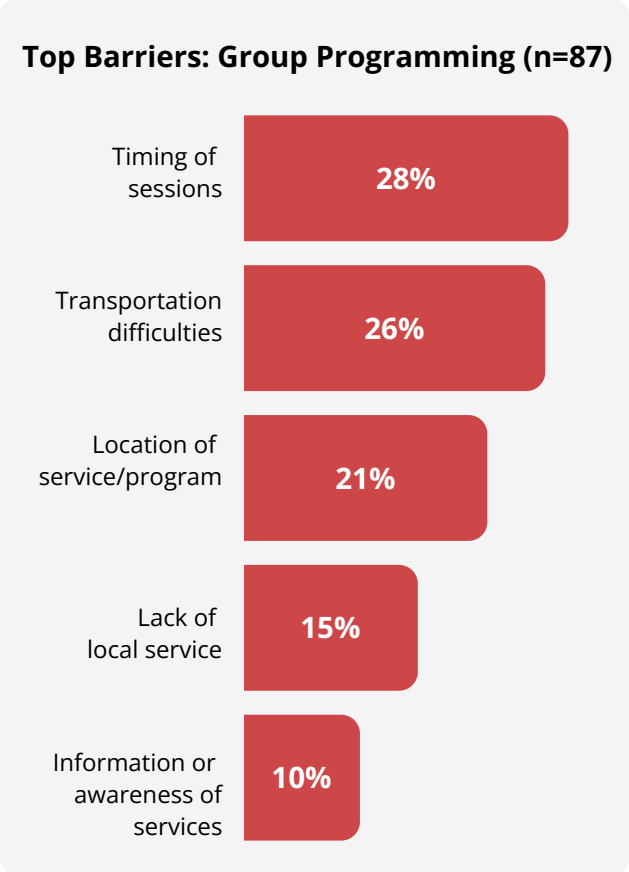
Resource & Service Navigation
The program's ability to assist with housing, employment, settlement, and legal needs in one place.

> After joining Access Alliance, I realized the program is where I want to be. It's a safe and supportive community where I can be myself without fear. When I joined, I realized they have volunteer opportunities, and then the staff there were very friendly and welcoming, so it keeps me wanting to come back all the time. That's the main reason why I joined Access Alliance. And it has also helped me build connections with other people who have also gone through the same thing as me.
>
> **– Program Participant (Focus Group)**

Barriers and Facilitators

Clients who have taken a break or stopped attending most often expressed that it was due to having **competing needs and priorities**, such as employment, housing, immigration processes, and the general challenge of settling in a new country. Scheduling conflicts, transportation costs, and distance were also identified as reasons. This highlights that reduced engagement is often not because of a lack of interest, but it's mostly due to the realities of newcomer experiences.





> We are committed to the body, but, you know, sometimes wanting to find the balance, to create a balance between having to survive, having stability, having employment, and all those stuffs, could take you away from the activity sometimes.
>
> **– Program Participant (Focus Group)**

> We have so much going on in our lives right now, because you're looking for housing, for a job, to study and maybe add on your documents to see that you move forward. There are many things pulling us since we are newcomers in this place. So, there's so many things that are coming up in our lives, so we find ourselves told to go do other things. Sometimes you might find yourself not coming in as you used to before, and others, maybe their cases are onto their heads they have to deal with their lawyers and all that. So, there's so many things pulling people that much, however much they would have loved to be there.
>
> – **Program Participant (Focus Group)**

To address these barriers, the program provides TTC tickets and meals during group programming and services in both in-person and virtual (Zoom/phone) formats. However, focus group participants noted that TTC tickets often do not fully cover travel costs for those commuting outside the TTC network. Flexible scheduling, recorded sessions, and clear communication from staff (e.g., emails and reminders) were also highlighted as important access facilitators.

STAFF CAPACITY

With only one community health worker supporting over 700 unique clients in 2024-2025 FY, appointment slots filled up quickly and at one point, program registration was capped. As a result, staff are unable to conduct follow-ups due to their heavy workload. This is a significant barrier that directly limits clients' access to the program and required supports.

Program Outputs and Effectiveness

The program is **highly effective** in meeting the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers. Both survey and focus group respondents strongly emphasize that across all program components, they have gained knowledge, confidence, and connections to support their health, settlement, and integration.

Why Clients Join

TOP 5 SERVICE NEEDS

#1 Community & Belonging
Safe space, peer connection

#2 Settlement Support
Refugee process, hearings, PR

#3 Resource & Service Navigation
Health, LGBTQ+ services

#4 Employment
Job search, resume, networking

#5 Mental Health
Counseling support

Clients come to the program with a range of needs. The top identified reason for joining is **community and belonging**. Many come to the program seeking a safe space where they can connect with people who share similar beliefs and lived experiences. **Settlement support** and **resource navigation** are the other top needs expressed by clients.

Staff and management have also observed that clients initially come to the program for one reason, but they end up staying after experiencing the community and amount of support that is available to them.

1-to-1 Appointments

76% (n=78)	96% (n=75)	97% (n=76)
attended at least one appointment	**"strongly agree" and "agree" that their needs are addressed**	**"strongly agree" and "agree" appointments are useful**

1-to-1 appointments are deeply valued by clients due to their tailored and person-centred approach. The key strengths of this service identified in the survey responses is that it provides a space where clients feel comfortable to be open and honest to ask questions, understand their rights, and receive information and solutions to their situation.

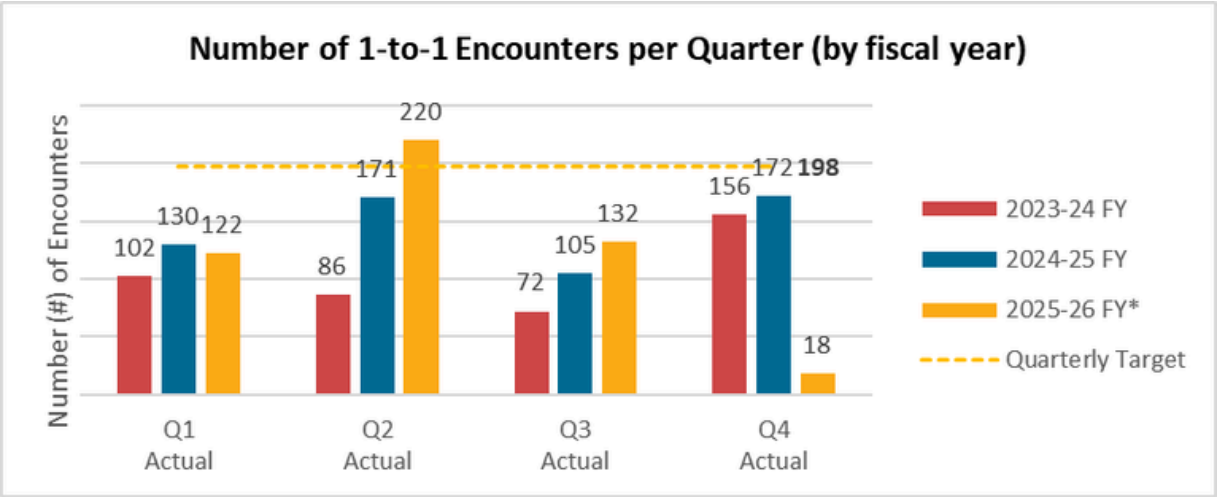


Figure 3. Total Number of Quarterly Encounters, by Fiscal Year

**Note: At the time of the evaluation, Q4 of 2025-2026 FY is in progress and incomplete data is reported. This does not necessarily reflect a decline in activity.*

As shown in **Figure 3**, the number of encounters has grown across each fiscal year, with numbers moving closer to meeting or exceeding the quarterly target. In 2025-2026 FY, Q2 recorded the highest volume of encounters and exceeded the quarterly target. This reflects the growing demand for 1-to-1 appointments. It's important to note that this growth was achieved with only one community health worker while maintaining high client satisfaction. This highlights the commitment staff have to ensure they are delivering high-quality care. The data also suggests that with additional staff, the program could serve even more clients. See **Appendix E** for a breakdown and trend analysis of the total number of encounters per month by fiscal year.

From the EMR data, the top reasons clients schedule appointments are to receive LGBTQ+ support, address refugee and immigration concerns, request for documentation and letters, community resource navigation, and for new client intake (see **Appendix E**, *Top Assessments*).

Clients' Suggestions for Improvement

- Increase appointment length to allow more time for questions and deeper understanding
- Conduct follow-ups with clients after initial appointments
- Hire additional staff to reduce wait times and allow for more support
- Offer appointments on the weekends
- Support clients' comfort during appointments by remaining politically neutral

(See **Appendix F** - *Question 15*, for the full list of suggestions)

> **I think the one-on-one sessions are very helpful because the facilitator is able to know, based on the personal needs, what somebody needs, or where their interest is, especially when it has to do with finding a job. Like, me, for instance. I told the staff I had my bachelor's degree in hospitality management from back home, so I'm interested in working in the hospitality industry. So, they gave me the information with regards to hospitality workers, training center, and I gained some trainings from there.**
>
> **– Program Participant (Focus Group)**

Group Programming

Group sessions play a key role in helping participants build community and feel less isolated. They consistently describe these sessions as a welcoming and inclusive environment where they feel safe to share and be themselves, and report that hearing others' experiences builds a sense of connection and encouragement. These sessions cover a wide range of topics such as 2SLGBTQIA+ identity, healthy relationships, employment, settlement supports (e.g., refugee hearing process), and many more.

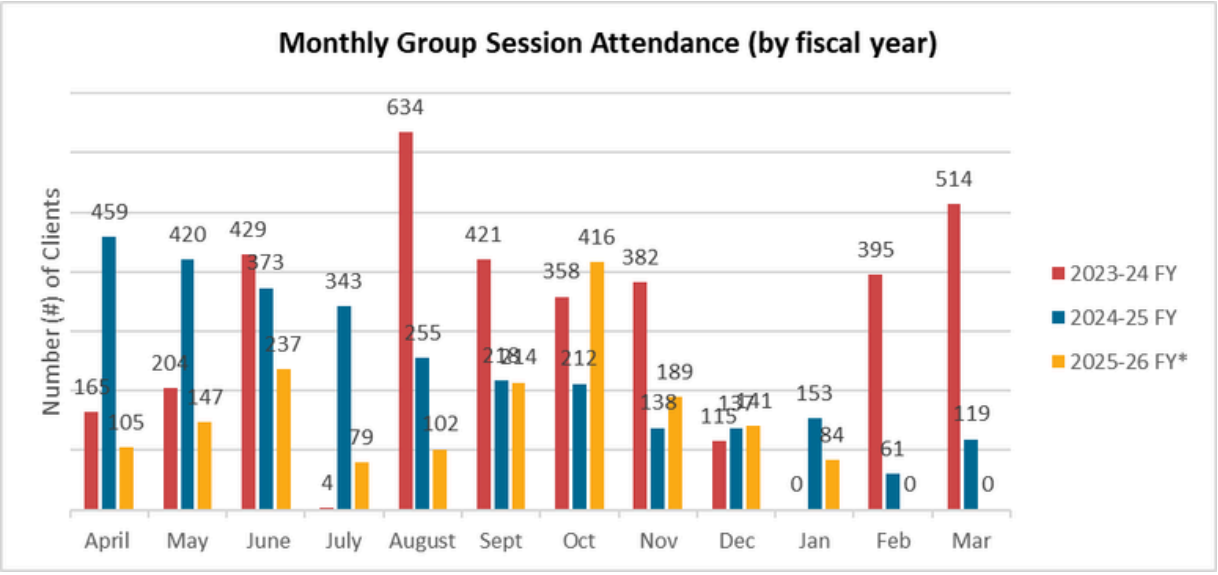


Figure 4. Monthly Group Session Attendance

**Note: At the time of the evaluation, Q4 of 2025-2026 FY is in progress and incomplete data is reported. This does not necessarily reflect a decline in activity.*



As seen in **Figure 4**, monthly attendance for group sessions is very high across all fiscal years. The program's goal is for clients to attend at least one session per month (i.e., minimum of 4 sessions per month). Therefore, from this figure, for example, in August of the 2023-2024 FY, the program was seeing nearly 158 clients per session. This high level of participation is not only an indicator of the high demand for this service, but it also demonstrates how engaged clients are with the program. The consistent attendance each month also speaks to the trust and value clients place in these sessions (see **Appendix E** - *Group Sessions*).

84%
(n=87)
attended at least one group session

97%
(n=84)
"strongly agree" and "agree" topics aligned with their needs

98%
(n=85)
"strongly agree" and "agree" sessions are useful for their needs

> **When you come for the in-person stuff where we have to meet other people that have similar challenges, [it] kind of gives you the feeling that, "Oh, you're not alone in this". There are other people who are also having the same challenge that you have, and talking to one or two persons in relation to the challenges you're faced with, "This person has been able to get through this. Definitely, it's obvious that I will also be able to get through with mine". And so, that's the contribution that I feel Access Alliance have been able to impact upon participants or clients meaningfully."**
>
> **– Program Participant (Focus Group)**

Topics clients want more of:

- **Settlement** (e.g., PR application, citizenship, hearing prep, how to handle immigration hardships)
- **Financial Literacy** (e.g., taxes, budgeting, credit scores)
- **Health and Wellness** (e.g., stress management, mental health, winter blues, giving birth in Canada, healthy living)
- **Employment and Job-search skills**
- **Education and Certification Pathways**

Clients' Suggestions for Improvement

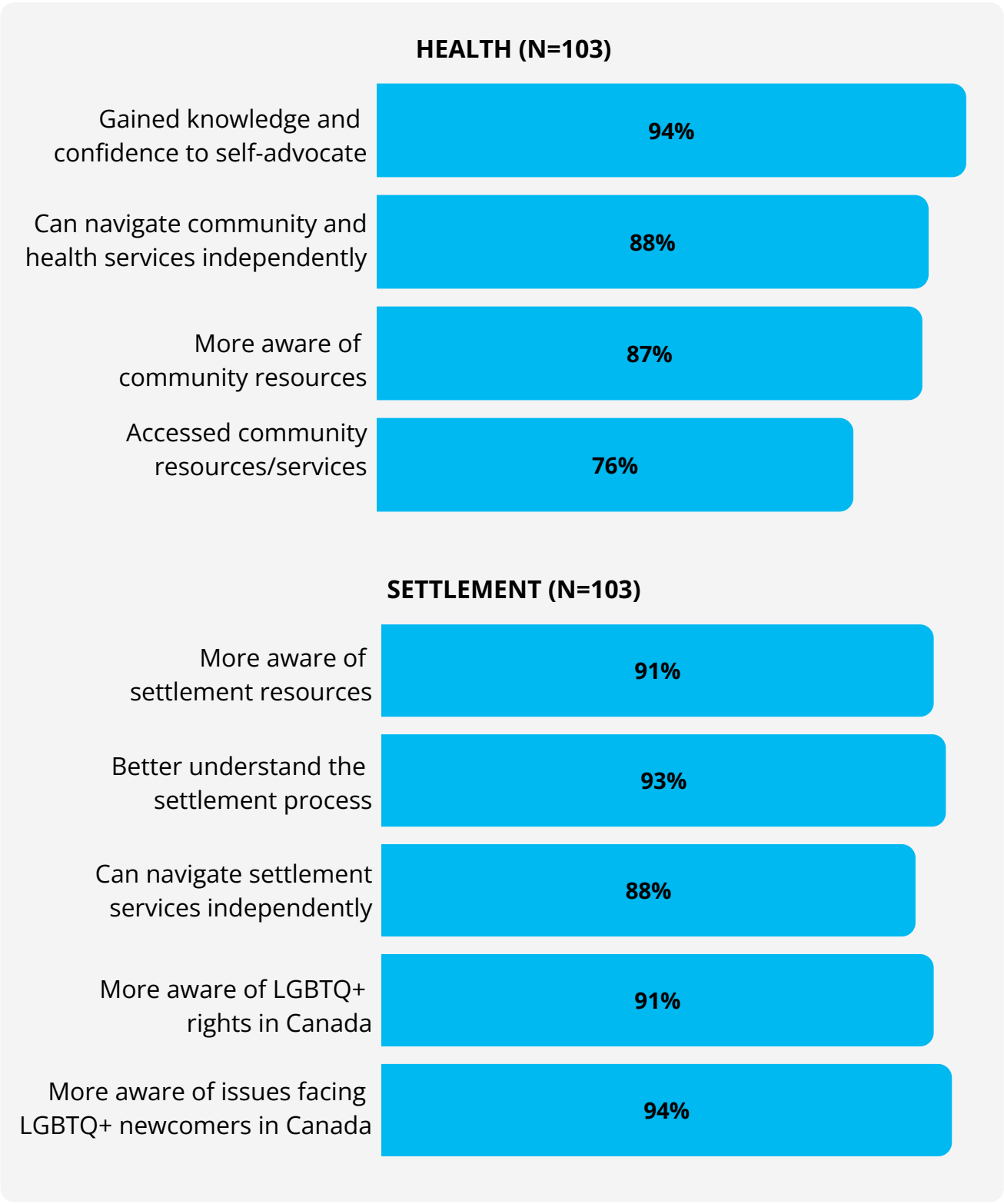
- **More opportunities for interaction** (e.g., breakout groups, role playing, games, discussions to share personal experiences)
- **Offer group programming twice a week**
- **Expand to additional locations**
- **Incorporate more online/hybrid options**

See **Appendix F** – *Question 21* for the full list of suggestions

Knowledge and Capacity Building

Survey findings indicate that clients experienced improvements in both health and settlement-related areas, which shows how the program is supporting their independence and confidence.

> **I've learned 3 things. One is how to self-advocate. Through workshops and working with staff, I learned how to explain my needs clearly, and ask for specific supports, like navigating, house law, healthcare. I didn't have that confidence before. And also, the value of community. I saw how much faster people settle when they have others with shared experience. The program taught me that asking for help and building community and awareness…are how you build a stable life in a new place.**
>
> **– Program Participant (Focus Group)**



Note: The data presented in the charts above represent the combined total percentage of survey respondents who selected "agree" and "strongly agree" for the statements.

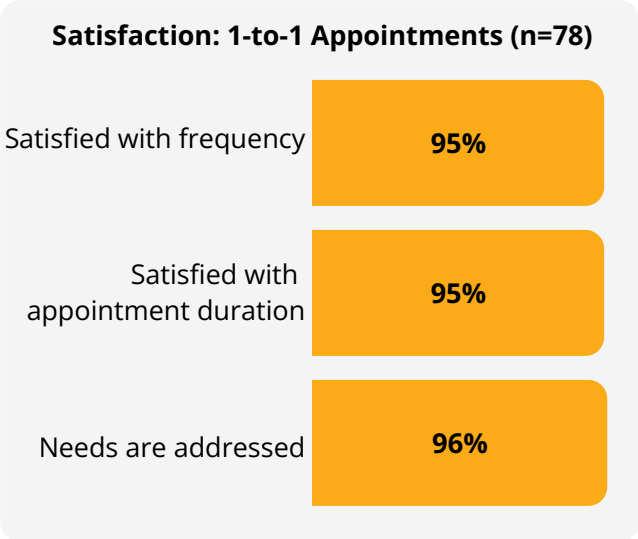
Client Satisfaction

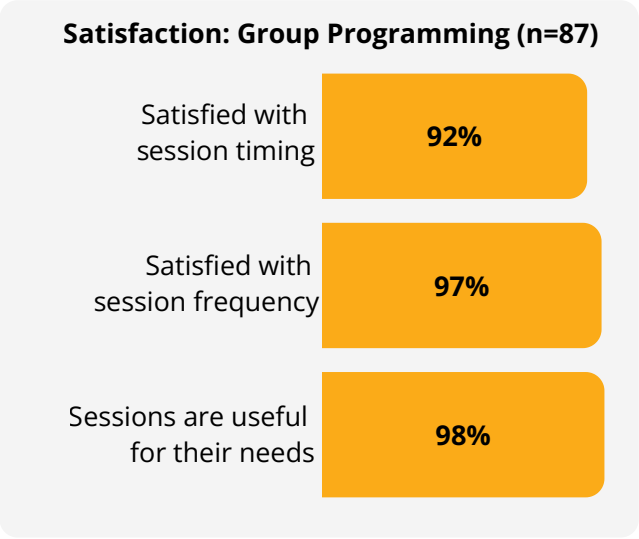
Client satisfaction with the program is very high across every indicator measured. Both the survey and focus group respondents consistently described feeling welcomed, respected, supported, and simply grateful; a large majority also expressed that they would definitely recommend the program to others.

98% (n=101)
feel comfortable and welcomed in the program

95% (n=98)
rate the program as "excellent" or "very good"

92% (n=95)
would "definitely" recommend the program to others





Note: The data presented in the charts above represent the combined total percentage of survey respondents who selected "agree" and "strongly agree" for the statements.

When asked for suggestions on how the program can improve, **70% of survey respondents had no specific suggestions**; instead, they expressed that the program is doing great work for the community and that they are satisfied with the current services offered at Access Alliance.

Among clients who did share suggestions, the most common requests were to expand to more locations, offer group programming twice a week, add more employment-related supports and content (e.g., discuss types of jobs for newcomers in Canada), and create more opportunities to connect with other participants during sessions.

Perceived Impacts

Participation in the program has made meaningful impacts on clients' health, integration, sense of belonging, and ability to navigate life in Canada. These impacts are also extending beyond the individual as participants are becoming more active in their communities, supporting other newcomers, and expressing interests in advocacy.

Health and Well-being

88% (n=91)

"strongly agree" and "agree their mental health has improved



84% (n=87)

"strongly agree" and "agree" their physical health has improved



Improvements in mental health were most commonly described among survey respondents. They commented about having reduced anxiety and depression; overcoming fears related to the refugee hearings; reduced feelings of isolation; gaining a greater sense of hope and courage; increased self-esteem and confidence. Many also noted improved physical health habits, greater awareness of healthcare resources, and some have connected with a family physician for the first time. See **Appendix F** for a full description of survey responses.

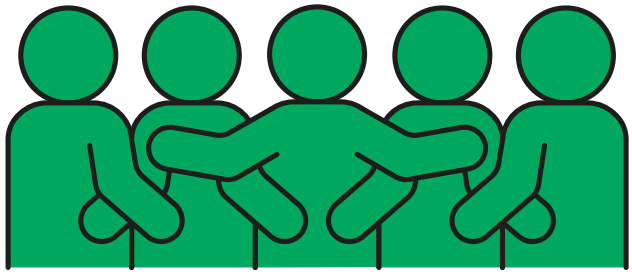
> Before the program, I struggled with [e.g., sleep, appetite, stress headaches, avoiding doctors]. After participating, I noticed [e.g., fewer physical symptoms of anxiety, better ability to attend medical appointments, more energy because I feel less alone.
>
> – **Program Participant (Survey)**

Sense of Belonging and Community

46% (n=47)
rate their sense of belonging as "very strong"

86% (n=89)
"strongly agree" and "agree" their sense of belonging has improved

68% (n=70)
made more than 2 new positive relationships through the program



According to the survey, the program has helped clients build community in various ways. For example, they have joined local groups such as churches, gyms, and volunteer organizations; they formed friendships with other 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers; and they gained confidence to express their identity freely. Clients also described feeling a greater sense of acceptance and love, and they have learned to appreciate and connect with people from other cultures.

Settlement and Integration into Canadian Society

When asked to define what feeling integrated means as a result of their participation in the program, survey respondents described it as **feeling part of the community**, which included being safe, welcomed, and wanted; having a sense of trust and belonging; feeling secure in Canada; and being at peace with those around them. The second most common response was related to identity, for example, having the confidence to speak up for themselves and be open about their sexuality.

91% (n=93) "strongly agree" and "agree they feel more integrated into Canadian society

55% (n=57) of those surveyed report receiving a support letter from the program

> To me, feeling integrated means I no longer feel like an outsider. I feel like my voice is heard, my identity is respected, and I have a seat at the table.
> – **Program Participant (Survey)**

For many clients, receiving a support letter from Access Alliance played a big role in their refugee claim process. They described the letters as helpful in securing legal status, presenting stronger cases at hearings, and helping them to win their claims. Many also expressed deep gratitude, not just for the positive outcome, but for the sense of safety and relief that came with it.

> It impacted my life in major way, I have successfully won my court hearing because of that support also with my evidence and claims.
> – **Program Participant (Survey)**

How clients applied/plan to apply what they learned:

Settlement
To prepare for their refugee hearing, work permit applications, and overall integration into life in Canada.

Employment
To prepare their resume, practice for interviews, network with others, and update their LinkedIn profile.

Health Services
They are aware of how and where to find a family physician, how to obtain a health card, and how to access mental health support.

See **Appendix F** - *Question 27* for the full list of examples.

ADVOCACY

Two-thirds of survey respondents (67%, n=69) expressed interest in participating in advocacy activities. The types of advocacy activities that clients would like to engage in include outreach, volunteering, speaking at events, and sharing their stories with other newcomers, community leaders, and people within their social networks.

Staff also identified this desire to give back as one of the program's assets. They shared that clients' social capital and community leadership are strengths that the program can continue to build on.

Recommendations

1) Maintain and Sustain Practices that are Impactful for Clients

Clients speak volumes to the accessible, approachable, and welcoming environment of the 2SLGBTQIA+ programs and services at Access Alliance. They note key components to maintain and sustain, including a welcoming environment, opportunities to engage with others, practical information sessions (i.e. employment, settlement, health, etc.) and connections to needed services. Of note, clients also recognize the support the program provides related to accessing the program in the form of Presto cards and letters to support them in their immigration hearings.

2) Address Physical Access Barriers for Service Attendance

The TTC tickets currently being provided to clients have been helpful; however, they do not fully support those who report travelling outside the TTC network. The program could look into expanding transportation supports by ensuring it is a key item in funding applications to continue providing resources such as Presto cards. Other routes include understanding and sharing information on transit subsidies or promoting the use of transit discount programs in other municipalities (e.g., City of Brampton).

3) Assess capacities to increase group programming frequency and implement suggestions for improving group sessions

Given the significant impact the program has, clients are consistently asking for more opportunities to connect and engage. Exploring options to increase the offerings of group sessions, having sessions at earlier times in the day, and with virtual options would make the program more accessible to those with competing schedules or transportation barriers. Clients also expressed wanting more peer interaction and fun within the sessions, which could be achieved through activities like breakout groups, games, and shared discussions. They would also like more space for emotional support and a genuine connection with others. This highlights how for many participants, community building is just as important as the information they receive.

4) Incorporate More Cultural Programming

The food provided during the Thursday group sessions is a resource that clients value. A recommendation is to expand this into a more intentional cultural component where participants take turns bringing or sharing food from their own cultural backgrounds. This would not only help address food security needs, but it also celebrates the diversity within the program, encourages new clients to engage, and it helps existing clients feel seen and connected.

Recommendations

5) Leverage partnerships to expand geographic access for inclusive 2SLGBTQIA+ services

Clients report they are travelling from outside Toronto to the program and services offered by Access Alliance. While this speaks to the inclusive nature of the programs and meeting clients' needs in an impactful way, it demonstrates the need for 2SLGBTQIA+ services more broadly in the province. There is an opportunity for Access Alliance to be an effective leader in supporting and advocating for access to 2SLGBTQIA+ services through partnerships. For example, partnerships could be established with community centres and organizations in other cities to deliver programming in their local areas. To support this, staff could deliver workshops to train other organizations on best practices for supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers. This may contribute to the management of attendance at Access Alliance while providing more accessible local services that do not require clients or community members to travel great distances for services.

6) Enhance 1-to-1 Support

There has been feedback from clients to increase the length of appointments, as this would allow them more time to ask questions and work through their needs. Furthermore, it is recommended to implement structured follow-ups after appointments to help maintain connection, track clients' progress, and ensure they are able to apply what they have discussed. Both of these changes could help improve long-term outcomes, strengthen client retention, and improve the program's ability to document and demonstrate impact over time.

7) Secure Stable Funding to Invest in Program Sustainability

Funding instability has made it challenging to plan for future activities, limited staff capacity, and affected the program's ability to provide additional supports, such as TTC tickets, which often run out before the end of the fiscal year. This evaluation offers clear evidence that in the coming years, the program will only continue to grow, given its high demand, securing a stable source of funding is essential to support the growth of this service. With additional funding, the program could invest in more staff, take on more clients, expand available resources and supports, and engage in more advocacy activities that address the systemic gaps discussed.

Additionally, over the course of the fiscal years included in this report, the program has seen hundreds of unique clients. In combination with the understanding that one staff member who transitions between full-time and part-time hours and is responsible for offering both 1-to-1 services along with group programming raises the question of sustainability and meeting client needs in a quality manner. An influx of stable funding would support the program to better meet clients' requests for providing more responsive support, timely follow-ups, and reducing the overall wait time for services. This would also allow time to plan more 2SLGBTQIA+ specific programming, which has been harder to prioritize given the high volume of settlement and refugee-related needs.

Limitations

When interpreting this evaluation's findings, the following limitations should be considered. First, the survey link was sent to 1,193 clients of which 280 attempted the survey and 103 completed it, which may limit how representative the findings are for the full client population, as clients who are more engaged or satisfied may have been more likely to complete the survey. Furthermore, the focus group was confirmed to have 12 participants, but only 7 attended. Although their responses provided valuable insights, a larger group could have provided a broader range of perspectives. Lastly, program data for the 2025-2026 FY is only available through January 2026, which limits full comparisons across each year. Despite these limitations, the consistency of findings across all data sources supports the conclusions of this evaluation.

Conclusion

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomer Programs and Services at Access Alliance are doing meaningful work that is not easily found elsewhere. The findings of this evaluation clearly demonstrate that the program has been effective in meeting its objectives. Across all five evaluation domains, the evidence consistently shows that the program is reaching its intended population, building trust, and are making a real impact on the lives of participants, including increasing their knowledge, confidence, and community connection. At the same time, the demand for this program continues to grow, and current staff and funding capacities are not enough to keep up with this trend. Increasing the number of staff and securing stable funding will be some of the key factors to maintain service quality and improve clients' access. Overall, this program is a strong example of what inclusive, community-centred 2SLGBTQIA newcomer services can look like, and with more investments, it has the potential to reach even more people.



Access Alliance
Multicultural Health and Community Services

340 College St Suite 500,
Toronto, ON M5T 3A9

+1416-324-0927 ext.3236

www.accessalliance.ca

research@accessalliance.ca