



NSW
Settlement
Partnership

Advancement in Unity – Case Study

July 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

NSP acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.

NSP • Advancement in Unity - Case Study

July 2024



3 NSP Highlights

- 4 Overview
- 5 The First NSP Consortium
- 7 Model Description –
The NSW Settlement Partnership
- 9 The Second NSP Consortium
- 10 Balancing Needs with Equity

12 NSP Key Impacts

- 13 DEX data outcomes?
- 14 Demography
- 15 Overall

16 Assessing the Impact of the NSP

- 17 Evidence based research
- 19 A Collective Voice
- 20 Practice Consistency and Program Fidelity
- 21 Contact and Connection
- 22 Working Groups
- 24 Communities of Practice
- 25 The Youth Collective
- 26 Advocacy
- 28 DFV Advocacy
- 29 Collective Decision Making and Behaviour
- 30 Exploring Settlement: An NSP Legacy
- 30 The Settlement Innovation Fund (SIF)

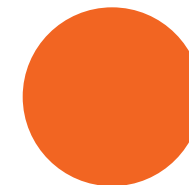
37 NSP Legacy – A Postscript

- 39 The Success of NSP Members
in the 2024 SETS Funding Round
- 39 A Sense of Loss and Void
- 40 Stronger Bilateral Relations
- 40 A Community and Service Delivery Legacy
- 40 Conclusion



Further information
ssi.org.au

NSP Highlights



The NSP stands as an unprecedented settlement sector partnership, acknowledged and celebrated as a leading practice model of excellence across the Australian settlement landscape.

A unique focus on client centred approaches across practice and settlement outcomes, understanding the plethora of needs in recent arrival communities and the nature of geographic settlement of distinct cultural and linguistic communities.

Excelling in delivering capacity building, service delivery, and advocacy in which program fidelity and service quality as its guiding principles for collective action.

Championing partnerships through a strengths-based approach, collective action and focusing on value over size of individual agencies.

Community led and informed approaches to funding innovative and collaborative projects driven by local needs and designed to be able to be replicated in other jurisdictions and environments.

Strengthening evidence-based advocacy through data driven insights in addressing the needs of the sector, clients, and new arrival communities.

Fostering effective relationships that delivers mutual understanding and support for future collaborative initiatives, actions, and projects.

A legacy of partnership where members are seen, heard, and valued for their capacity and service provision, leading to the highly successful Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program funding outcomes for individual member organisations in 2024.



Overview

A case study provides an opportunity to reflect on an initiative that was developed and implemented to achieve outcomes within a given set of circumstances. It tells a story of journey and impact through documenting key features, and embedding internal and external factors.

This case study offers a reflective examination on the New South Wales Settlement Partnership (NSP), exploring why many standalone organisations decided to unite in a joint funding bid, and the outcomes achieved through this initiative.

The motivation in developing this case study is to both document a recent history, and learn from the achievements and challenges in advancing settlement services across a diverse range of organisations varying in nature, size, jurisdiction, and purpose, to create vibrant communities..

This case study will consider both intended and unintended outcomes within a context of environmental and government policy parameters impacting on individual and collective action to achieve community impact. It will also articulate why individual settlement organisations felt the need to unite to create a compelling collective approach to settlement through a unique collaboration under the structural leadership of SSI and the active participation of over 20 organisations.

While this case study provides a crucial chronology for how the NSP formed, grew and disbanded, it is arguably more important to understand the nature of the consortium through thematic analysis. This case study seeks to do both.

This case study is informed by a comprehensive document review and key informant interviews across stakeholders with differing levels of exposure to and involvement in the NSP. It captures records and reflections on the NSP’s recent past to ensure its experiences, outcomes, and the learnings are retained, recorded, and disseminated.

The NSP was a brave and widely praised initiative, achieving significant outcomes and recognition. It demonstrated how collaborative approaches can deliver dividends and benefits far greater than what individual organisations could achieve on their own. However, internal resource allocation methodology, evolving Departmental relationships and contract management changes did impact negatively on the long-term political acceptability of the NSP model.

In essence, the NSP was a consortium of community organisations across Sydney and Northern New South Wales, led by Settlement Services International (SSI) to deliver settlement services in the agreed areas of New South Wales, under the Department of Home Affairs Settlement Engagement and Transition support (SETS) Program.



The First NSP Consortium

A thematic thread in this case study is the role of Australian Government policy as both a determining and disruptive element to the structural provision of settlement services and the funding of organisations for this purpose. Understanding the Government’s priorities and perspectives on the most effective means of providing settlement services is at the core of this case study.

The motivation for a fresh and unique approach to settlement funding arose from concerns regarding government messaging on policy direction for settlement services funding.

It is important to position the NSP in its historical context beginning with the development of a significant piece of settlement architecture, the Migrant Resource Centre funding and development.

The Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) were a structural response to the Galbally Report¹. The Report recommended the setting up of 16 migrant settlement centres throughout Australia. By 1981, there were more than 20 MRCs across Australia and more appeared as settlement needs developed.

For a significant period in Australia’s migration and settlement history, the MRCs were developed and maintained as a key piece of the settlement infrastructure through which arrival communities could receive support in their settlement journeys.

While the MRC funding program guaranteed their existence, settlement support programs such as the previous Grant-In-Aid Program and its consequent iterations provided the organisations with the capacity to meet the changing needs of new arrival communities through the employment of culturally and linguistically relevant

support staff, and direct engagement with new and emerging communities.

When the Australian Government discontinued the MRC Funding Program in 2003, the MRCs became reliant on receiving settlement support funding as the core program. This aligned with keeping with their heritage and identity as settlement service providers, but also proved to be a success over a long period.

Previous government policy had favoured MRCs as a more effective means of delivering settlement services to diverse local ethnic specific communities. However, prevailing discourses and indications from the Australian Government suggests that the traditional role of the MRCs is being challenged by the entry of large generalist non-government organisations (NGOs) and charities. This shift echoes the Grant-In-Aid Program, which provided ear marked resources to ensure that large charities and NGOs would provide focus to migrant and refugee communities.

“The NSP gave us the opportunity to be valued for the work we do and not the size of our organisation. While the small organisation status could be daunting, SSI and the NSP team were able to maximise the capacity and the value of all partners regardless of their size. The NSP championed measuring the SETS program through the outcomes obtained from clients not by the amount of dollars going to any individual organisation.”

Laura Sardo,
Nepean Multicultural Access

1. Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants Migrant Services and Programs Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978, pp 3-13 and 15-28.

The reality of current funding is to create friction and competition between community organisations, so I was surprised to discover the NSP and its philosophy to develop a shared voice, build relationships and build connections to better serve newly arrived migrants and refugees.

Naomi Nash,
New River Leadership

There was a prescient concern by organisations that their service heritage and continuity was being questioned and challenged. The response of the MRC Forum was to be innovative in its approach to protect this core source of revenue and the maintenance of their settlement support role in the broader migration and refugee programs.

An alternative interpretation of the thinking of the MRCs, was that they wanted to be proactive in addressing the settlement funding political noise. Rather than be passive in the face of negative government messaging, the collective decision was to seek a new approach to settlement funding that would bring the collective voice and local legitimacy of MRCs together and work with SSI as a capable and non-competitive lead.

On Friday, 20th June 2014 a meeting was convened by the MRC Forum and SSI Board where SSI and the 11 MRCs came together to discuss the current Department of Social Services (DSS) Funding Round with a specific focus on the Settlement Services Grants which formed part of the DSS Families and Communities Program. The meeting was facilitated by an external facilitator,

Pino Migliorino, who remained an ongoing resource and champion of the NSP.

The meeting was principally concerned with reading the funding landscape and sharing experiences and perceptions. The key issues raised included:

- A perceived governmental preference for a smaller number of larger contracts over a longer period.
- Growing evidence of the Government encouraging partnered approaches such as consortia for funding, arising from both formal ministerial and informal departmental sources.
- A perceived stronger focus on value for money as a specific funding criteria and consideration, underpinning the consideration of a consortia model in which contract management, program fidelity, data collection and reporting could be centralised, and therefore reducing administrative duplication.
- The positioning of employment outcomes as a key Funding Program objective evident in government narratives about their objectives for settlement.
- A strong focus on youth issues especially relating to pathways to employment, again in keeping with government narratives.
- A perceived need for services to have greater responsiveness to smaller ethnic communities, as funding them in their own right was not seen as a priority.

Based on these considerations the collective worked to conceptualise a preferred service funding proposition that was scalable, centrally led and delivered locally through organisations with service history, local connections, and community legitimacy.

The result was the development of the NSP which positioned SSI as the lead in a consortium involving all 11 MRCs.

NSP Members • 2024

Accessible Diversity Services Initiative Ltd

Advance Diversity Services

Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW Inc

Community Migrant Resource Centre

Local Kind
(formerly Community Northern Beaches)

Core Community Services

Connecting Community Services

Gymea Community Aid and Information Services Inc

Illawarra Multicultural Services Inc

Lebanese Community Council of New South Wales

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc

Melkite Catholic Welfare Association Inc

Metro Assist

Mount Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency Inc

Nepean Multicultural Access Inc

Mosaic Multicultural Connections (formerly Northern Settlement Services)

Sydney Multicultural Community Services

SydWest Multicultural Services

Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre Ltd

Model Description – The NSW Settlement Partnership

The ultimate NSP model was developed over an 8-month period and was resourced with significant investment by the MRCs and SSI. MRCs placed pressure on SSI to take the lead role. This was eventually negotiated and SSI took on the potential responsibility for the overall grant leadership and its associated risks. This significant decision was a courageous one led by SSI's CEO and Board recognising the importance of collaboration across the sector in best addressing and delivering client and community outcomes.

This was a first of its kind approach, requiring substantial investment from both MRCs and SSI to ensure that the NSP bid was sound, met the funding criteria, ensured the retention of settlement services within the multicultural sector and was structured to both protect the MRCs and limit the risks and liabilities to SSI.

Ultimately, this was a demonstration of sectoral collaboration without precedent, built on goodwill, and based on an organisational and service principles.

The model components were SSI, as the lead contractor who would be responsible for the development of the partnership and the provision of a range of functions and services that would:

- Provide overall program governance.
- Provide a consistent approach to program identification, measurement, and data capture.
- Provide quality assurance support.
- Take a leadership role on settlement issues.
- Take a leadership role on workforce development.
- Resource and lead a Partnership Reference Group.

The 11 MRCs, as partner organisations each with a specific responsibility to provide settlement services in their geographic jurisdiction, would:

- Determine the size and structure of the bid for their area based on the priority areas identified in the DSS Settlement Grant documents, and the new and emerging community needs in their areas.
- Develop area specific programs with consistent approach to program identification, measurement, and data capture.
- Employ and supervise staff to deliver the settlement programs.
- Participate in the Partnership Reference Group.
- Participate in all measurement, evaluation, and quality performance activities as required by the Partnership.
- Budget for SSI lead agency responsibilities on contract management and funding deliverables.

Within the individual MRC geographic boundaries, several ethnic specific, and local community partners were identified as potential subcontractors to the NSP bid with SSI being the lead.

The NSP Consortium was successful in its SETS funding bid. Following negotiation with DSS the final NSP model was operationalised to include 22 organisations covering the 11 MRCs, ethnic specific community organisations, and local neighbourhood centres.

This version of the NSP ran from 2014 to 2018.



The Second NSP Consortium

The NSP took a long-term proactive approach to considering the nature of the consortium leading into a new round of funding for the SETS Program in 2018. NSP meetings were convened by SSI in November 2017 until the final SETS tender was delivered in June 2018.

This was in the context of understanding government thinking, policy, and program considerations. For member organisations, the perceived threat to funding, and the strong interest in protecting their historic and legacy roles in settlement service delivery reinforced their interest in continuing with a consortium bid through the NSP.

In anticipation of new the SETS funding guidelines, the NSP undertook a significant tender development phase that was based on:

- **Co-design approach:**
Where all member organisations actively participated in setting the substance and parameters to the bid to address existing operational and equity issues within the collaboration.
- **Establishment of the NSP principles:**
These would drive the co-design process and ensure the supremacy of the collective over the interests of individual organisations. A key principle of the second NSP consortium was that members of the first consortium would be supported and accommodated in the second consortium bid.
- **Utilisation of data informed needs assessments:**
To frame the funding relationship between members based on an agreed set of need factors and data sources.

This highly participatory approach ensured that the NSP SETS bid would be reshaped to achieve the following:

- A strong consensus between consortium partners working in a model which delivers

strong leadership, local leadership service provision and preferred provider status across local client groups.

- The need for a comprehensive assessment tool to deliver consistency and program fidelity across the consortium in determining the service level and pathway required for all clients.
- The strategic positioning of services to achieve the 3E (Education, English and Employment) as the key outcome requirements from the Government, across the NSP footprint.
- The consideration and integration of regional issues and the framing of resource allocations considering the needs of service delivery structures in areas with small client numbers but vast geography.
- A focus in the community capacity building component of the bid to target small and emerging ethnic communities and young people across the SETS cohort as communities of interest.
- A continuation of the universal agreement for an innovation fund to be included in the NSP modelling and resource allocation process.
- The maintenance of the NSP as an overarching community of practice and interest that requires SSI to continue to play a practice and program development role and promote the important area of data collection. Of particular interest was the development of accessible mechanisms to allow for information and practice sharing.
- Finally, the co-design process elevated community engagement and community voice as key needs to be built into the community development area of the program. This is to ensure that the needs, wants and preferences of new and emerging communities are understood and influence service development and delivery.

Balancing Needs with Equity

While the first NSP was built on individual partners developing their own dollar bid, the second iteration took a more systemic and evidence-based approach to identifying levels of resourcing of individual members. This was based on an assessment of available settlement data, local area service saturation and a consideration of base level funding to sustain smaller NSP members. It is important to understand the resource distribution approach between NSP members in the second iteration of the NSP.

SSI demonstrated a willingness to lead a bid, and a resource allocation process, which substituted a funding process that would be the domain of government. This included that SSI and the NSP consortium:

- Develop an overall framework for funding allocation between the 21 members and SSI as the lead agency, and includes the identification of a component for SSI administration of the NSP.
- Develop a needs-based assessment process that would rationalise resource allocations in an objective framework that was agreed on by all consortium partners as part of the co-design approach.
- Ensure that the funding model for the NSP would guarantee the survival of smaller members of the consortium.
- Retain an innovation fund to allow for new approaches to servicing clients and to addressing specific needs as they would present themselves.

It should be noted that the final funding which was received and put in place for a three-year period. This fixed and capped funding approach created significant challenges including limited flexibility to address significant changes in the settlement profile of refugees and humanitarian arrivals entering into New South Wales due to significant international conflicts across Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine.

In this case study it is also important to register significant changes in funding administrative arrangements, machinery of government changes and a changing attitude from government officials to the NSP.

- The first of these challenges was the splitting of the policy and administrative roles government regarding funding. The DSS (Department of Social Services) oversaw the community hubs and their responsibility for the administration of SETS funding, while DHA (Department of Home Affairs) retained the policy ownership of the program. This led to weakened bilateral relations between the NSP and the Government as the two-party approach reduced meaningful contact with the NSP.
- The second of these challenges was a growing perception that the DHA bureaucracy (as the policy owner) was less willing to engage with the NSP consortium. The evidence for this is their ongoing refusal to meet with Consortium members or participate in Consortium events. While the reasons for this are not clear, the practical effect was to create suspicion in the NSP as to the level of ongoing government support for the collective and a growing perception that the bureaucracy was being influenced by voices that were negative to the NSP.

- At a contract management level, the almost hands off approach to funding management by DSS, created significant barriers for SSI with NSP members when attempting to ensure that funding kept pace with the growing settlement needs in the community. While ultimately successful, the process of negotiating CPI increases to offset administrative costs and increased client numbers, was made harder by the lack of contextual awareness or deep relationship with the settlement process and outcomes.

Ultimately, while the NSP delivered beyond expectations and with unprecedented levels of innovation, it was plagued by the manifested lack of vocal and visible support from the Government.

With this political context, the NSP continued to pursue and prosecute its role and performance in enhancing the settlement outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants to NSW.



Metro Assist

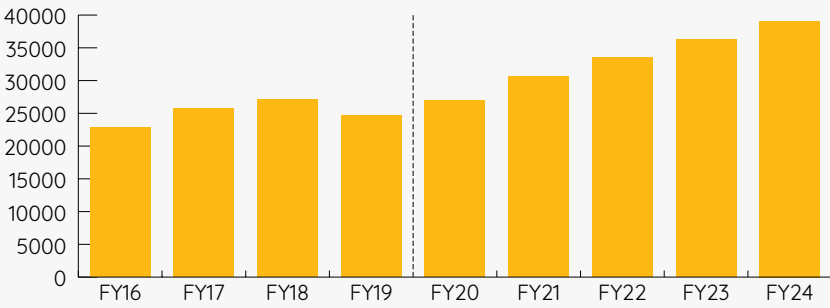
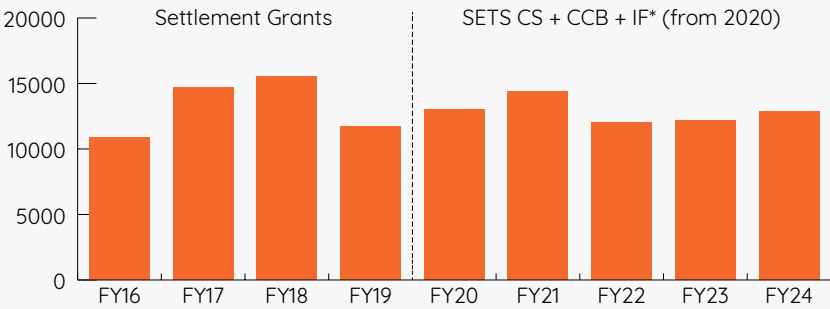


Metro Assist

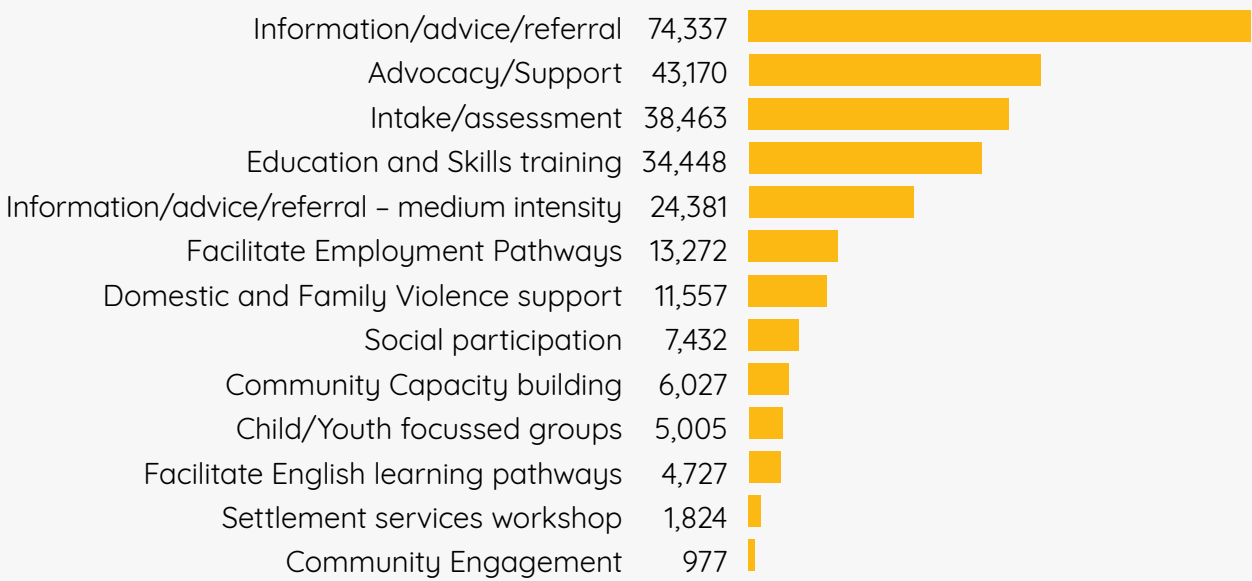


Metro Assist

NSP Key Impacts

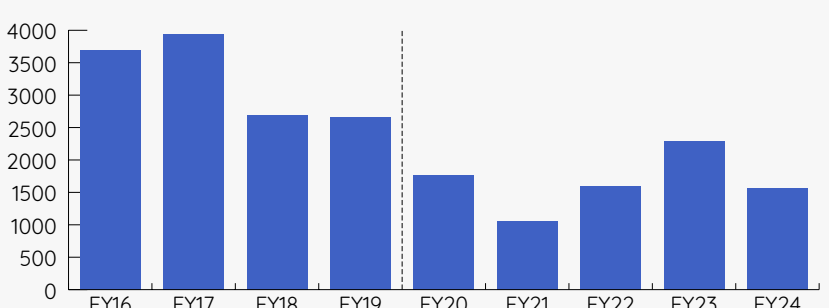
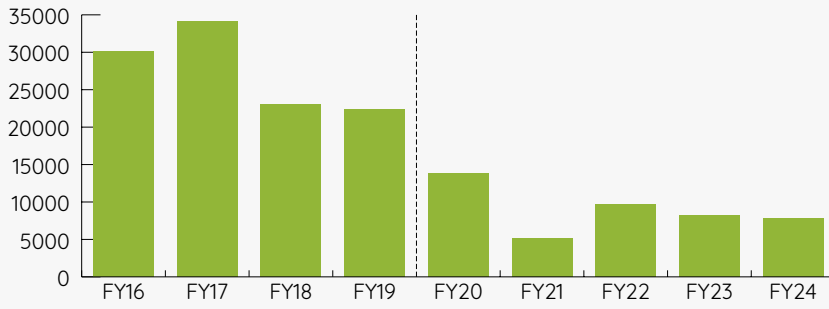


Individual sessions by Services



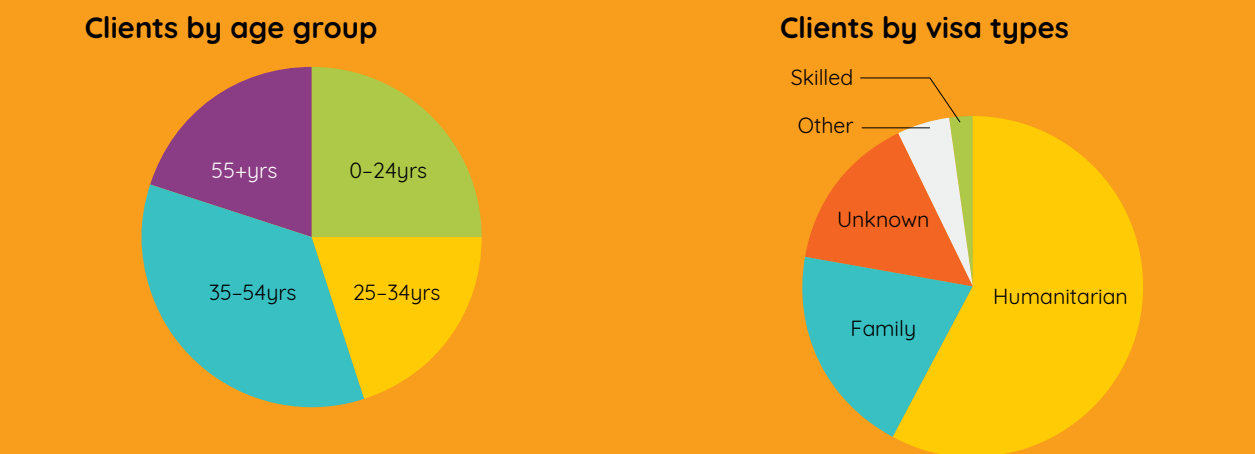
*Based on DEX data from 2015 to 2024 (gather Settlement Grants, SETS CS, SETS CCB and SETS IF)

DEX data outcomes



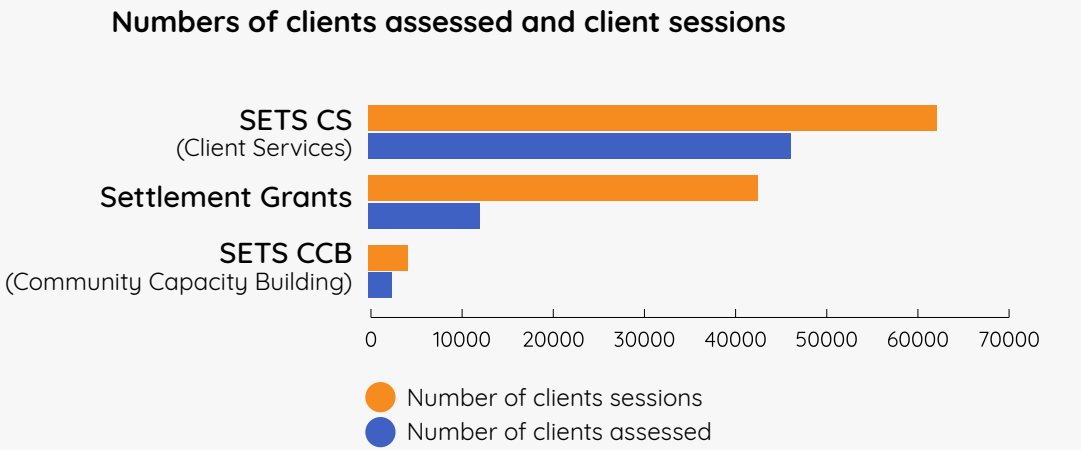
*Based on DEX data from 2015 to 2024 (gather Settlement Grants, SETS CS, SETS CCB and SETS IF)

Demography



Based on DEX data from 2015 to 2024 (gather Settlement Grants, SETS CS, SETS CCB and SETS IF)

Overall



	Clients assessed	Clients positive
Circumstances		
Settlement Grants*	6874	89.70%
SETS CS*	34595	91.30%
SETS CCB*	2086	94.20%
Target 90%		
Goals		
Settlement Grants	5660	90.70%
SETS CS	35495	91.90%
SETS CCB	2229	92.70%
Target 90%		
Satisfaction 		
Settlement Grants	9040	96.10%
SETS CS	30581	92.00%
SETS CCB	2142	93.60%
Target 90%		

*Settlement Grants [2015-2019] - SETS CS [2019-2024] and SETS CCB [2019-2024]

Assessing the Impact of the NSP

The value of a case study such as this is to identify the outcomes achieved through a collective process that may never have been achieved by standalone organisations.

The notion of collective approaches, collective voice and consistent practice is an inherent feature of the NSP.

The following section will both highlight and detail the value identified by key informants through an analysis of the NSP documents and activities.

The overall assessment of the NSP demonstrated that it was highly successful in creating a collective voice, improving service standards and consistent practice, and enhancing member organisation capacity in delivering effective services.

What follows is the identification of key features and outcomes of the NSP that will serve to:

- Record and document the achievements of this unique model.
- Identify the value and effectiveness of collective models to foster positive and upward iterations of collective advocacy.
- Provide a more detailed picture of the complexity of the overall NSP architecture across collaborative management through the NSP Quarterly Meetings, Communities of Practice and Outcome Specific Working Groups.
- Demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of a neutral partnership lead (SSI) in working across organisations to drive consistency and service outcomes, relieve members of a range of funding related burdens and support bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

Through the NSP we have built communities, the impact we have had on both regional and metro communities is incredible. I am proud of being part of the journey and having the opportunity to be involved in supporting the NSPs development and contribution to social and economic life.

Clement Meru, SydWest
(previously Fairfield MRC)

Evidence based research

The NSP's success and effectiveness can be shown not only through the many clients and communities positively impacted but also through evidence-based research. Independent research was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the NSP model for the SETS client-centred service delivery. Evaluation led by ARTD Consultants, aimed to identify key enablers of the NSP model and the SETS program delivery that led to positive settlement outcomes for clients and communities.

Since its formation in 2015, the NSP has provided settlement services to thousands of refugees, migrants, and their communities across metropolitan, regional and rural NSW. Between 2019 to 2021, over 25,000 and 30,000 group and individual clients were supported through the NSP's SETS delivery. This period coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the consortium's capacity to deliver essential services during critical times.

The research also revealed that the NSP provides consistent, valuable, and place-based support, that significantly contributes to positive settlement experiences. Feedback from organisations involved in the evaluation emphasised the consortium's strengths, which outweighed the challenges. Key strengths highlighted included this consortium model allows smaller organisations to offer localised and tailored services, expanding reach and impact. In addition, the NSP's collective sector experience enhanced shared learning, strategic planning, and advocacy, that benefited partner organisations and the communities they serve.

Specifically, the independent research identified other strengths that the NSP model provided including:

- **Successful consortium model:**
The NSP consortium effectively secured SETS funding, enabling multiple organisations to sustain long-term service delivery amidst shifting Commonwealth funding priorities.
- **Facilitated conversations and advocacy:**
As the consortium lead, SSI fostered dialogue within the consortium and advocated strongly to the Australian Government on behalf of the consortium and settlement services for change at the local level.
- **Network and community of practice:**
Consortium members shared information, resources, and supported each other, particularly at the Settlement Manager level. The network fostered additional partnerships and innovative projects through the Settlement Innovation Fund (SIF).
- **Depth of knowledge and experience:**
The consortium leveraged extensive knowledge and experience in settlement services. Regular meetings and working groups enabled collective thinking that drew on the group's insights and expertise.
- **Place-based approach:**
The consortium's non-overlapping geographic coverage ensured a place-based approach across NSW, preventing service duplication. Diversity within the consortium facilitated seamless transitions between HSP and SETS.

Complementing these research findings, another independent study undertaken by researchers from the University of Sydney and Macquarie University, highlighted insights in the use of lateral accountability mechanisms in the NSP.

Lateral accountability refers to a construct that partner organisations of the NSP are accountable to one another and to the consortium as a whole. It also extends as accountability to staff, volunteers, and other community agencies with whom a not-for-profit organisation works. This research highlighted that lateral accountability between organisations is evident in consortia like the NSP.



Core Community Services



Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW Inc

A Collective Voice

A notable and significant theme prominent in all key informant interviews was an acknowledgement of the value and effectiveness of collective action as opposed to individual organisational action.

The NSP was successful in delivering the infrastructure and architecture to allow collective input and action. This created a more ephemeral and conceptual notion of a whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

A key part of this infrastructure was the strong leadership of the NSP by key SSI figures. The first NSP consortium was led Loukia Zinopoulos who was the NSP's first Manager. She demonstrated both agility and sensitivity to develop a funding formula for NSP members that was both fair and effective. Navigating this complex process following the Government's decision to fund one overall amount rather than specify individual member allocations. This task was complex and conceptually positioned SSI as the defacto funding body within the NSP. Her leadership and acknowledgement within the NSP as an effect leader and problem solver set the foundation of the NSP over its 10-year life course.

The second iteration of the NSP was also led by senior staff within SSI. Both Yamamah Agha and the the Consortium Manager Dor Akech Achiok-a credentialed and qualified settlement practitioner who arrived in Australia as a refugee when he was 13 years old, continued Loukia's legacy and led the NSP with continuing sensitivity and belief in the capacity and effectiveness of the collective. Key to this leadership was their firm belief that the NSP partners were all experts in their fields, delivering high quality, innovative services at a local level built on their expertise and commitment in supporting migrant and refugee settlement.

Moving deeper into the operations of the NSP, and considering member participation, the NSP developed structures and mechanisms that allowed both small and large member organisations the opportunity to identify key community and service issues, develop priority areas and take action and advocacy based on strong evidence base. These mechanisms are explored later in this case study.

It is important to note that the NSP created a platform for collaboration rather than competition in the important area of refugee and humanitarian settlement. It moved organisations from spaces in which domains needed to be protected and settlement resources fiercely contested to one where collaboration was the prevailing principle which impacted on the NSP member behaviour.

The significance of a move from a contested settlement context to one in which member organisations were both willing and supportive of working together to meet the needs of refugee and humanitarian clients cannot be overstated.

The positioning of clients at the centre of the NSP and the creation of mechanisms to ensure that client needs were elevated in importance over individual organisational funding levels, across the NSP was and should be considered the greatest achievement of the NSP.



Practice Consistency and Program Fidelity

The Role of the Lead Agency (SSI)

Quite often the value of the thing is made obvious through its absence. This was certainly the response from the NSP members when they were informed of the decision that the NSP partnership would not be pursued in the 2024 Funding Round given the impact of the guidelines precluding consortia of more than 10 members.

In this context, NSP member organisations acknowledged and appreciated the role that SSI played during the 10 years of the NSP specific to:

- The provision of overall program governance in terms of contract management, compliance, and reporting.
- Quality assurance initiatives and support to ensure that members were able to comply with SETS requirements especially on service delivery and data collection.
- Performance measurement, data collection and funding reporting.
- Overall leadership of the NSP, with the ability for SSI to leverage its size and existing infrastructure to enhance the profile and capacity of the NSP to undertake its work, maintain its identity, and champion the Partnership as a unique settlement service structure in Australia.

The ability for SSI to provide this leadership and associated functions was the cumulative result of an organisation that was prepared to maximise the value of the partnership, and NSP member organisations who were willing to work with SSI, and support SSI in this leadership role.

“The most significant legacy of the NSP is that the settlement ecosystem in NSW is the strongest it has been. The Partnership though it collegiate approaches, its communities of practices, the bilateral and multilateral relationships that have been forged, has left an enduring legacy; providing higher quality services to individuals and communities to overcome barriers, thrive and become independent.”

Sharon Daishe,
Mosaic Multicultural Services

Contact and Connection

A significant achievement of the NSP was the maintenance and facilitation of contact and connection between the members through a series of structures and mechanisms. These platforms were geared to focus on service issues, practice issues and the broader political context in which the settlement program was operating.

At the program and strategic level, members participated in NSP Quarterly Meetings. These meetings were a key part of the NSP agenda to ensure there were ongoing opportunities for members to consider joint strategic and operational issues. These meetings also provided a collaborative space for members to express their concerns and seek to address programmatic issues. The ability to use these meetings to negotiate service standards such as data collection and reporting, while sometimes contentious, was an important means of ensuring that the collective was able to meet its funding objectives and outcomes and deliver consistency of practice.

At the operational level, the NSP was hosted by bi-monthly Settlement Managers Meetings. These meetings involved senior practice leaders in the collective to focus on operational issues within the SETS program, including opportunities to strengthen and share sector knowledge and settlement practice.

The final piece of key infrastructure in the NSP was the development and operation of an NSP/HSP Advisory Committee.

The positioning of SETS as the practice mechanism to ensure ongoing support for refugees and humanitarian arrivals after exiting the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), was necessary and important.

Being able to understand the demographic considerations of the HSP cohort and their exit pathways into areas for long-term accommodation was a key benefit of the relationship between the NSP and SSI.

Within the NSP, each partner had clearly defined geographic or cultural community boundaries, and had a strong vested interest in understanding the HSP and the exit flow of clients. While separate programs, the two main settlement mechanisms needed to work together to ensure a continuity of service provision to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants.



Metro Assist

Working Groups

The other notable mechanism that brought NSP members together for particular issues or purposes was the formation of Working Groups.

The value of the Working Groups was to provide opportunities to address key program and practice issue in which there was a need for collective understanding and consistent actions. Participation in the Working Groups was generally open to all NSP members, with consideration given to ensuring the group included members reflecting the diversity the NSP.

Some working groups such as the Data Working group, and the Government Relations Working Group were convened to address systemic issues within SETS and the key performance and relationship issues emanating from and specific to the funding requirements.

NSP Working Groups

- Settlement Innovation Fund Working Group
- Communication Working Group
- Data Working Group
- Government Relations Working Group
- Exploring Settlement Working Group
- Youth Collective

As an example, the Data Working Group was established to provide support to the NSP on data and reporting issues, particularly in relation to DEX. While the Communications Working Group was concerned with developing communications protocols.

The other effective use of this mechanism was to pool resources to consider broader settlement issues and develop evidence based strategic pieces such as *Exploring Settlement*.

Overall, the Working Groups:

- Allowed focused attention to critical aspects of SETS performance and requirements.
- Led to the co-design of protocols and guidelines to guide consistent practice and collaboration.
- Created efficiencies in maximising opportunities for external and government relations, advocacy, and representations.
- Created structural mechanisms to deal with specific issues such as youth engagement and domestic and family violence (DFV).
- Reflected the practice needs and capacities of the diversity of organisations, generated bilateral collaborations or focused attention to emerging issues or needs of particular cultural communities.
- Provided a real time mechanism to address program and practice issues.

It needs to be acknowledged that this level of infrastructure and the member participation placed a significant administrative burden on both SSI and member organisations. The overall assessment of the value of this level of participation was that it was extremely important and led to a range of intended and unintended outcomes.

The intended outcomes were to ensure member organisations were informed and able to contribute to both strategic and practice issues. The unintended outcomes were to strengthen the significant bilateral and multilateral relationships between members.

The importance of these informal relationships cannot be overstated in terms of its value in providing a sense of support, collaboration and being part of something bigger than sum of its parts.



SydWest Multicultural Services

For me, the most significant achievement of the NSP was our ability to collectively put our clients first.

The impact of the NSP in aligning services and practices to deliver client outcomes and to ensure that their needs were at the centre of our service delivery was exceptional. From SSI's perspective, developing a continuum of services from the HSP and through SETS was essential for service continuity and successful settlement. This could not have been achieved without the NSP and the commitment and passion of our members.

Yamamah Agha,
SSI

Communities of Practice

Program fidelity is an important concept, that is the “extent to which delivery of an intervention adheres to the protocols and program model originally developed.”²

Given the organisational variability within the NSP specific to size and resource capacity, the objective of creating consistent and effective settlement services through SETS was a key objective, and one that the evidence suggests was achieved.

The mechanism utilised for building and delivering program consistency was the development of a series of Communities of Practice (COPs):

- **Regional COP**
A community of practice for members of the NSP who were based in regional or rural locations to consider and develop approaches and resources to the issues applying to refugee and humanitarian settlement in regional areas. (Mosaic, Manning Valley Neighbourhood Service, Illawarra Multicultural Services, Nepean Multicultural Access, Connecting Community Services Dubbo).
- **Community Capacity Building (CCB) COP**
This mechanism was established when the CCB commenced as a separate contract under the auspice of SSI as the NSP lead agency. The CCB funding included a workplan, reporting requirements and was aligned to but distinct from the SETS contract.
- **Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) COP**
This was established to provide support to the NSP in DFV work, and was strengthened when additional funding to provide DFV services was secured in 2021.

The COPs added to the already significant administrative burden on member organisations. The question that needs to be considered in this case study is whether the value of participating in these collaborative mechanisms was greater than the administrative burden required?

It is interesting to note and somewhat counterintuitive, that the smaller member organisations with the least available resources, placed greatest value in their participation in these collaborative mechanisms as a key benefit of being in the NSP. They demonstrated both their appreciation and understanding that engaging with these mechanisms would ultimately benefit their services and the service delivery they provided to their clients.

Throughout the life of the NSP, the level of member participation was universal and consistent. Regardless of any negative narratives around the NSP, the operational truth was that member organisations demonstrated the value of the NSP by their sustained and consistent participation across all aspects of the Partnership.



Capacity building was a driving motivation of the NSP, from fostering the participation of smaller organisations so that the voices of their communities could be heard, to developing and supporting systems to improve service delivery and ensure program fidelity across SETS activities in the NSP. The NSP legacy is stronger, enabled community structures that have championed their local or cultural community needs in an approach that has favoured collaboration over competition and through this delivered beyond expectations.

Dor Achek,
SSI

The Youth Collective

Another success of the NSP was its championing of intersectional initiatives including focusing on young people from multicultural, migrant and refugee backgrounds to address their needs and to support in realising their potential.

This was elevated through the Youth Collective initiative. It was designed to bring young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, together with multicultural service providers to create a platform to participate in activities that help shape service delivery, planning, implementation, and outcomes that impact them across education, employment and several other areas.

The guiding aim was to improve service delivery outcomes for multicultural young people in NSW, through innovative and collaborative initiatives. By participating in this initiative, young people had the opportunity to build their confidence, resilience, leadership skills, and more importantly have a culturally safe space to have their voices heard.

The Youth Collective initiative also included the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) Youth Workers Network, a group of youth workers from across 20 settlement service providers in the NSP. This Network collaborated on projects, shared resources, and learnt from each other on how to successfully deliver services and support to young people.

A recent highlight for the Network was its collaboration with the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service, Primary Health Networks and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) to co-design resources for the Multicultural Community Wellbeing campaign.



² Mowbray, C. T., M. C. Holter, G. B. Teague and D. Bybee
Fidelity Criteria: Development, Measurement, and Validation,
American Journal of Evaluation, 2003, 24(3): 315- 340.

Advocacy

The nature of advocacy in the NGO sector and more importantly in the settlement sector has tended to be both guarded and managed as an organisational risk in terms of any potential impact on funding success because of advocacy work.

In this context the NSP can be seen as using the collective strength of the broad-based membership to create a safe place for advocacy and to support this with a significant evidence base rooted in an analysis of client services and the ability to harness client voices to set the expectations of the settlement agenda.

Given the changing international landscape and vastly different outlook for migration and settlement services in post-pandemic Australia, developing a strong, coordinated, and consistent approach to government relations strengthened the NSP's capacity to advocate effectively for both CALD communities and settlement services.

The real value of the NSP was its elevation and support of smaller ethnic specific and local area services.

The collective supported and resourced smaller organisations to both receive SETS funding and to benefit from an informed and active community practice.

Paul Power,
Refugee Council of Australia

The NSP was able to clearly articulate its role and the strengths it brought to the sector through service delivery and thought leadership.

As with other aspects of the NSP, initiatives and work around advocacy were framed and supported by a Government Relations Strategy that delivered significant cohesion, consistent messaging, and targeted opportunities to engage with the government on key policy issues.

Rather than stifle the voice of individual member organisations in the relationships of government, the NSP provided significant opportunities for broad-based participation in advocacy and government relations activities. The construction of a broad-based approach involving member organisations of different sizes with different client needs both enhanced and substantiated the sector's positioning around key policy areas and issues.

The hallmarks of a successful approach to collective advocacy were:

- Instituting a Government Relations Working Group with its own terms of reference, active participation, and articulated work program to strengthen collective activism and aligning key messaging across the NSW Settlement Partnership.
- Coordinating and submitting responses to a range of government inquiries and policy process which included:
 - Pre-budget submissions.
 - Responses to government inquiries such as the review of SETS, and other substantial settlement related information gathering approaches.
 - Coordinating delegation and ministerial interactions.

- Developing a key messages document, aggregating, and profiling key issues faced by settlement organisations. A key feature of this approach was the identification and utilisation of case studies and client stories, so that the lived experiences of refugees and humanitarian entrants could be captured in substantiate policy positions and advocacy initiatives.
- Developing a Social Media Strategy to both elevate the NSP as a source of informed commentary around settlement issues, and mechanism to highlight key service delivery areas needing policy and program attention.
- Maintaining a government relations activity register as a means of scheduling an understanding both collective and individual member engagement with all three tiers of government in prosecuting issues specific to the settlement sector, as well as those issues specific to refugee and humanitarian clients.

Over the course of the six-month period in the second half of 2022, with the sector and the broader community coming out of the COVID-19 restrictions, the NSP and its members undertook 28 separate representations, meetings, delegations and hosted Ministerial and local member visits to individual settlement providers.

- Being an industry representative (for its members and the wider settlement sector) across issues of program sustainability and financial viability including representations of grant indexation, SACS Award increases and their affordability, Superannuation rate increase ramifications, and the impact of cuts to interpreting costs.

This evidence based and lived experience informed approach to advocacy permeated all relations and interactions with governments, key Departments, and wider settlement stakeholders.



GyMEA Community Aid and Information Services

DFV Advocacy

The NSP's advocacy efforts in the area of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) has been a longstanding priority, even preceding the formal establishment of the NSP where SSI self-funded internal positions to drive advocacy and policy formulation and led and aligned the strategic work with the NSP. Recognising that newly arrived women often experience DFV and have established trust in settlement services and staff, the NSP pushed for DFV services to be integrated with or situated alongside settlement programmes.

This integration was crucial because mainstream DFV support services often failed to engage these women effectively. The NSP produced several submissions to the government highlighting the need for settlement service funding to include dedicated DFV support, emphasising its critical importance. These submissions also addressed the necessity of extended support for humanitarian entrants over a five-year period, particularly for women experiencing DFV who were likely to be transitioning through the SETS programme.

A notable achievement of the NSP for me was the focus members were able to give to domestic and family violence (DFV) issues in our client populations. We were able to focus on this important area, access funding resources and work collaboratively to achieve both consistent and effective engagement and services around DFV. Without the NSP and without SSIs leadership around DFV I am left wondering at the potential loss or fragmentation of effort in addressing DFV.

Nina Shani,
Metro Assist

Collective Decision Making and Behaviour

A unique feature of the NSP was its ability to sustain a sense of valued participation and a belief in the principles of collective decision making and mutual respect. Emphasising that all partners were equal in their ability to contribute to and claim expertise in settlement service delivery.

Collaboration was a key principle throughout all facets of the NSP. It was a tool in the provision of responsive, innovative services. The cumulative years of working together in a collective, through meeting regularly and working in communities of practice, developed a strong sense of trust amongst the members. This was the foundation of a range of codesigned initiatives including the settlement innovation fund, the advocacy and political engagement strategy, and the broader communications and social media strategy.

Throughout this case study the presence and active participation of smaller organisational members has been a key fissure. Skill and knowledge sharing across the NSP improved the sustainability of the collective, as well as that of smaller organisations, supporting them to apply for grants leveraging membership of the group and associated governance requirements to access was impossible three funding, and the collective support for small ethnic specific organisation working to ensure that they did not disappear.

The most prominent aspect of this collective decision-making and behaviour was the institution and maintenance of a series of communities of practice, leveraging from the unique experiences of the members, and through codesign developing approaches that advance the interests of both individual members and the collective. More importantly was use of these collaborations to improve the services being provided to the settlement cohort and the outcomes achieved for both broader new arrival communities as well as their individual members.



GyMEA Community Aid and Information Services

Exploring Settlement: An NSP Legacy

Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia was a collaborative project of the NSP to strengthen relationships and collaboration with clients, community partners and frontline workers.

By obtaining a collective insight into a client centred view of settlement, the project was able to:

- Clarify priorities for advocacy.
- Highlight possibilities for change and innovation.
- Identify opportunities for service improvement and increased collaboration.

The heart of the project was the design and facilitation of 56 listening conversations, where clients were invited to share their story of building a life in Australia.

More than 250 clients participated, and the findings forms the core of the preliminary report and final report. SSI and the NSP resourced this initiative across two stages of development.

The first stage involved listening to clients, community, and frontline workers as they shared their experience of settlement. The preliminary report contains the results of this listening, including initial commentary from NSP frontline workers and managers.

The second stage involved collaboratively identifying improvements and advocacy priorities based on client voice. The preliminary report is an invitation to work alongside the NSP in making changes from the ground up.

The NSP's *Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia* remains a substantial NSP legacy which during the latter period of the NSP, drove collective thinking and advocacy.

The Settlement Innovation Fund (SIF)

Overview

The Settlement Innovation Fund (SIF) was a catalyst to promote innovative practice, collaboration and exchange of program ideas. This successful project was initiated by SSI and provided the NSP with a unique and effective mechanism to realise projects tailored to client needs. The SIF was established to develop and test new approaches to delivering settlement grants activities, consistent with the settlement program's objectives, and aimed to build the capacity to address emerging and unmet needs.

Funding

The SIF operated as a dynamic, self-allocated fund, fostering innovation within the NSP through client services funding from the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) (2015-2018) and the SETS program (2019-2024). It offered funding flexibility to complement the fixed nature of the SETS funding and recognised the importance of reserving resources for emerging community settlement needs. Funding for the SIF was set aside from the client services funding pool and allocated towards specific innovative projects. At various stages, the SIF functioned as an internal grant application initiative focused on innovation in settlement practice and later as a self-directed allocation for innovative projects.

Priority areas

The SIF provided opportunities to develop and trial new collaborations and partnerships, supporting engagement and input from settlement target groups. This enabled NSP members the opportunity to innovate, leveraging their core areas of expertise.

Key priority areas within the SIF included:

- Fostering collaboration with other NSP members, community groups, and organisations.
- Identifying emerging areas of need.
- Prioritising projects that foster community involvement and build community capacity and agency.
- Prioritising initiatives that benefit young people and women.
- Ensuring projects that do not duplicate existing services and support.
- Projects that meet emerging and unmet settlement needs.
- Incorporating and building evaluation into project design and delivery.
- Demonstrating community participation and amplifying community voice.

Overall, SIF projects were conceptualised and implemented to deliver key settlement outcomes in employment, education, English language acquisition, housing and tenancy support and rural and regional settlement. They addressed both client and community needs, while driving organisational and systemic innovation.

Settlement Innovation Fund (SIF)

- Delivered over 50 funded projects to NSP members.
- Enabled joined capacity to meet the needs of small communities, (Tibetan, Nepalese, Ukrainian).
- Supported regional settlement planning and service delivery.
- Funded project diversity from arts to driving skills.
- Fostered collaboration between member organisations.
- Enabled projects aligned with key settlement outcomes (employment, education, and English acquisition).



MECA – Mount Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency

SIF projects in partnership: Driving the change

Over the duration of the SIF, NSP partners worked collaboratively to successfully launch numerous innovative projects. From addressing critical transport issues to tackling mental health challenges, these projects exemplify the power of partnership and impact of dedicated and innovative effort.

GyMEA Community and Information Service

The SIF provided funding to GyMEA Community and Information Service to spearhead a driver learning program for new arrivals. This initiative provided driving lessons and additional support in obtaining learners permits including the language requirement support. Over time the program's success led to the adoption by other NSP partners including Illawarra Multicultural Services, Advance Diversity Services, Community Northern Beaches, and Accessible Diversity Services Inc. Additional funding was successfully received from the Transport for NSW Community Safety Fund where other partners (7) were able to successfully connect to the NSW Government funded Driving License Accessing Program (DLAP).

Manning Valley Neighborhood Centre

The Manning Valley Neighborhood Centre utilised SIF funding to develop a Women's Learn to Drive Program, tailored to the needs of migrant women. This program addresses the additional barriers that migrant women who cannot drive face including their difficulty in building community connections, applying for jobs and attending educational pathways including English learning. The driving lessons provided ongoing positive social impact towards the women by boosting their confidence, encouraging them to apply for Australian licenses and ultimately leading to higher participation in the community, education, and employment.

Community Migrant Resource Centre

The SIF was able to support the Community Migrant Resource Centre undertake a pioneering youth oriented mental health program to address the concerning mental health challenges experienced in the settlement process and journey. The Youth Reach was developed to promote help seeking behaviours in refugee young people in mental health, break barriers to disclosure and increase mental health literacy. This program was identified as a high priority following the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on the mental health of communities including young people. This encouraged a growing understanding and focus on barriers and bias that exist for diverse communities in mental health services.

SIF insights

The SIF biannual workshop provided collaborative learning opportunities to NSP members to learn about initiative SIF programs. This became a platform that acted as an informal community of practice focused on innovation in the settlement practice. Diverse and impactful insights in the settlement practice were gained through this engaging platform. Insights included:

- **Soft skills in employment:**
Programs that focus on building confidence and interpersonal soft skills in areas including education and employment were seen as highly valuable by clients.
- **Sporting and creative opportunities:**
Sports and other creative opportunities in the arts were successful vehicles for client engagement.
- **Non-traditional partners:**
Engaging with service providers, organisations and businesses that are not usually associated with the settlement sector was encouraged as these partnerships yielded the best outcomes.
- **Strengthening social connections:**
Strengthening the social relationships and connections within groups can encourage ongoing participation and commitment.
- **Sensitivity and safety:**
Participants value a safe environment to discuss sensitive topics in an openly.
- **Investing in community events:**
Public events are a positive strategy for encouraging contact between locals and newly arrived communities.
- **Social enterprise:**
Projects that employ a social enterprise model can provide additional resources to support new arrival.

Practice Outcomes

The SIF ensured there was a strong focus on measurement, evaluation and identification of project outcomes. It opened avenues for understanding the effectiveness of programs that enhance collective settlement knowledge as well as develop benchmarked effective projects that could be replicated and led across other NSP members. This initiative fostered sharing of knowledge where partners learnt from each other where sometimes encouraged to directly replicate a project in a new area.

Client Outcomes

Client outcomes moved beyond the traditional scope of settlement support (connecting with services, meeting practical needs) towards people's deeper needs – fostering a sense of leadership, community, and empowerment. The outcomes of the SIF projects were as diverse as the range of SIF projects undertaken and included:

- Kitchen Table Conversations in Manning Valley which gave participants the opportunity to share their needs and dreams and provide input to program ideas.
- Tibetan community research, which documented the profile, demographics and needs of Tibetans in the northern beaches area of Sydney. The NSP also held a workshop to better understand the unique needs of the Tibetan community and learn how to support this dispersed and growing community.
- Western Sydney Women's Leadership and Networking Project, which gave CALD women the opportunity to represent themselves and included providing women the opportunity to go to Parliament House in Canberra.

SIF initiatives

The SIF was a successful achievement that exemplified the great possibilities of growth and innovation in the settlement practice. Initiatives supported by the SIF included:

Topic	Organisation and project
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sydney Multicultural Community Services Driving Success: Empowering New Migrants on the Road
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liverpool MRC Lead the Way• Metro Assist FRESH: Focusing on Refined Enhanced Skills and Habits• Sydney Multicultural Community Services New Job, New Start Employment Workshop for Women• Northern Settlement Services Employment Mentoring Project• MECA Activate – Youth refugee volunteering program• MECA MECA & FoodFaith SEED program – employment and business development
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Migrant Resource Centre Youth reach• Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Kitchen Table Conversations• GyMEA Community Aid Multicultural Women’s Group – Health & Wellbeing program
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community MRC Welcome to the neighbourhood• Community MRC & SSI Housing Parramatta Home Access Project
Language Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liverpool MRC Wandering Books
Civic Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance Diversity Services Faith in Action• GyMEA Community Aid Link Together Project• SMCS & ADS Working in Partnership – Thai Community• ADS & ADSi Working in Partnership – Nepalese community• SydWest Refugee Youth Radio• Core Community Services My Voice, Our Journey• SydWest Small and Emerging Leadership Communities• Auburn DSI Working in partnership – Nepalese Community• Focus Connect 100 Life Stories• Western Sydney MRC PENPower Giants• GyMEA Community Aid Young People’s Business: Creating Pathways to Social Cohesion• SydWest & MECA Neighbourhood Buddies• MECA From Amazing race to welcome lunch

Topic	Organisation and project
Family and Social Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illawarra Multicultural Services Men mentoring men• Macarthur Diversity Services Strong Families = Safe Families• MECA Iftar unity dinner
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre Practical safety workshop for migrant women in the Manning Valley
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core Community Services Women in Harmony• Melkite Community Welfare Courageous Journeys: A Family Portrait• Core Community Services My Voice, Our Journey• Community Northern Beaches My Settlement Journey
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nepean Migrant Access Hawkesbury LGA settlement awareness• Northern Settlement Services Mingoola Resettlement Initiative
Internal Capacity Strengthening Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liverpool MRC ‘Circles of Social Life’ in Liverpool, at the intersection of settlement & disability• MDSI Standards Project - RBA Project• Advance Diversity Services Gender and Sexual Diversity Project• Auburn DSI Auburn Afghan Community Capacity Building Project



Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW

NSP Legacy – A Postscript



SMCS – Sydney Multicultural Community Services



Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW



Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW



CORE Community Services



GyMEA Community Aid and Information Services



Metro Assist



Our work with the NSP demonstrated our ability, enhanced our credibility and allowed us to access resources and support to grow and serve our clients in a more efficient way. Overall, our partnership with the NSP showcased our capabilities and ability to line with SETS goals contributing to our current funding success.

Monica Chahoud,
Melkite Catholic Welfare Association

The cessation of the NSP was seen to be the direct result of SETS funding guidelines and Q&A clarification that:

- The guidelines neither preferred nor advised against consortia, while messaging that several providers had experienced a range of challenges under the consortia model.
- An administrative restriction in which organisations could only lead one bid, “You (an individual agency) can only submit one application for this grant opportunity regardless of whether you are applying in your own right or as the lead member of a consortium.”
- Consortia bids were limited with DSS restricting consortia bids to no more than 10 organisations including the lead agency.

The SETS guidelines were in effect a significant change and represented a move away from large consortia which meant in effect the NSP could no longer exist in its current form, noting that the guidelines did not allow space for more than 10 partners.

It is not within the scope of this case study to speculate about the motivations or the causes of this provision within the funding guidelines, yet their impact was unmistakable. The NSP could not be free funded in its existing form.

A thread that ran through the informant interviews for the case study was the development over time of internal member disruption which some saw as a key factor in influencing government perspectives on the NSP.

Whether in the form of direct or inferred complaints about the role SSI took in its leadership of the NSP, or references to organisations no longer seeing a collective

approach as being in their organisations best interest, the destabilisation of the NSP needs to be identified and understood in the increased questioning of the consortia model in content of the review of the SETS, as well as in the SETS guidelines.

A possible factor underpinning internal disruption was the significant increases in settlement populations in particular local government areas and MRC jurisdictions. The inability to have these population changes resulting from enhanced settlement numbers influence increased levels of funding (even within the last SETS grant period, had a material impact on the level of service burden for individual members and heightening of perceptions and arguments for a larger allocation through SETS to meet these needs.

Structurally with the grant being given to SSI to administer, SSI unwillingly has to assume a defacto governmental role. As a result, it was the target of grievances, without having the resource capacity to respond to emerging needs as they were occurring. Again, these increasing needs should be understood as an impact because of Australia’s response to international events causing increased refugee and humanitarian waves from Syria, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

In terms of considering a postscript for this case study, it is important to reflect on the legacy across individual organisations, the collective and the communities served.

The Success of NSP Members in the 2024 SETS Funding Round

The first is an interpretation of the outcome of the 2024 SETS funding round in which all but one NSP member was successful in attaining SETS funding (including 4 NSP members forming a regional consortium).

While the larger organisations (MRC type organisations) would always have claim to being independently funded to provide settlement support services, the same cannot be said for those smaller organisations in the NSP. It is therefore important to reflect on the reasons for their success including:

- These organisations had been protected and nurtured within the NSP funding approach to ensure their survival through the second iteration of the SETS.
- Their active participation in NSP activities and initiatives, and their prominence in government relations activities reinforced their visibility within the settlement services environment.
- Their capacities were enhanced through collective support and bilateral engagement with other NSP members.
- Mostly their involvement in SETS service delivery demonstrated their ability to meet particular geographic or cultural and religious communities at a high level of service quality and outcome achievement.

A Sense of Loss and Void

While many of the NSP member organisations have achieved funding in their own right, there is a clear sense that the void left by the demise of the NSP would be difficult to fill especially in those important areas identified in this case study on collaboration, innovation and program fidelity.

Whether individual organisations can establish collaborative arrangements to try to replicate the characteristics of the NSP is not yet known. Though without any form of resourcing for a coordination role, or the brokering of bilateral and multilateral relationships, the role filled by SSI in the NSP is unlikely to be continued by any of the previous member organisations. The ramifications of this for organisations would be:

- Seeking practice support from any broader SETS Community of Practice which would by its nature be less specific to individual the mantle responsive to local geographic considerations.
- The need to develop internal capacity sense and systems to manage SETS contracts including the reporting and compliance requirements attached to this funding.
- Not having an unaligned arbiter (SSI) to address issues of jurisdictional overlap or service duplication in areas in which multiple organisations receive SETS funding.
- Losing the sense of coordination and leadership provided by SSI, across policy service and industry considerations.

Stronger Bilateral Relations

On the positive side, the NSP has demonstrated and delivered a maturing of bilateral and multilateral organisational relationships which have both currency and depth. Organisations who have worked together across a 10-year span, who have shared similar concerns and aspirations, and who have had their reliance on an effective and proactive NSP removed will at least in the short term seek to maintain these relationships. Like most relationships it should be anticipated that these will wane over time without a structural mechanism to keep organisations connected.

A Community and Service Delivery Legacy

The final consideration in this case study is appropriately and suitably framed around whether the NSP impacted on the lives of recent arrival refugees and humanitarian entrants, their families, and their broader communities.

While this case study is not informed by the service clients and recipients of SETS support, the sheer level of activity delivered through the more than 20 organisations over 10 years in direct casework, group sessions, sporting and recreational activities delivered, volunteers engaged and an extraordinary number of instances of advice and information provided, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the NSP was and should be acknowledged as a unique and successful model of collaborative settlement service provision.

Conclusion

The NSP leaves behind a powerful legacy of excellence in collaborations in the settlement service sector.

Despite the challenges posed the consortium's strengths and achievements remain indisputable. The collective capacity and expertise of the NSP members organisations strengthened their ability to lead their own initiatives, driving impactful change across the settlement services landscape. Over its decade-long operation, the NSP delivered outstanding outcomes through client-centred approaches, capacity building, and advocacy. The programme's impact on refugees, humanitarian entrants, and their communities was profound, evidenced by the extensive range of services and activities including successful and impactful community-led initiatives, ensuring that settlement services were tailored to local needs and culturally appropriate. Ultimately, this model stands as a benchmark for collaborative settlement service provision, celebrated for its innovative practices, strength-based partnerships, and commitment to communities.



SMCS –
Sydney Multicultural Community Services



The NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) is a consortium of community organisations, led by SSI, and funded by the Department of Home Affairs.



info@ssi.org.au
www.ssi.org.au

