The Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework

Introduction

The Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework (the Framework) articulates Australia’s vision of successful settlement and integration in the Australian context. It builds on the strong foundation of our world-class settlement services currently in place, that are internationally recognised for their expertise and breadth of support to refugees and humanitarian entrants, to reach their full potential and fulfil their unique aspirations as they make new lives in Australia. The Framework has been developed to improve our settlement services with a view to further enhancing positive settlement outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

This Framework has been informed by a widespread consultation process that included input from peak settlement bodies, refugee and community organisations, people with lived refugee experience and other government agencies. It also draws on international models, domestic models being used within the Australian settlement sector and relevant academic work.1

Collectively, they are intended to achieve Australia’s overall settlement policy objective of ensuring that “people who settle in Australia as refugees or humanitarian entrants are able to participate fully in the nation’s economic, democratic and social life, as well as identify with Australia.”

The Framework comprises eleven interrelated and mutually reinforcing domains and two underpinning principles outlining a structured approach to good settlement and integration outcomes. Each domain and principle reflects an area critical to successful settlement and integration.

The Framework is intended to guide government agencies delivering settlement services from settlement planning through to programs and evaluation. The indicators that support the Framework’s domains provide a useful guide for measuring progress against settlement outcomes and permit an overarching evaluation of Australia’s performance in supporting the successful integration of refugees.

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Overview of the eleven integration domains

The Framework draws on international models and academic research to cluster factors (domains) considered necessary for successful settlement and integration into three groupings – facilitating factors, community factors and personal factors (see Visualisation chart below).

1. Facilitating factors

Six facilitating outcome areas (domains) form the centre of the Framework and are considered critical to facilitating the integration of refugees and humanitarian entrants. With appropriate outcomes and indicators, they may serve as useful measures of that integration.

The facilitating outcome areas are economic participation, health and wellbeing, language and digital literacy, education, housing and transport and understanding host culture. While these domains overlap at several points with priority areas identified in the National Settlement Framework, the emphasis on digital literacy and culture is specific to this Framework. In brief, the domains can be described as follows:

- **Economic participation** includes employment, self-employment, participation in pathways to employment (eg. apprenticeships, mentoring/shadowing schemes) and financial literacy, including an understanding of welfare rights and obligations. It also considers the quality of employment in relation to an individual’s skills, experiences and qualifications. We acknowledge the importance of prior skills and qualifications recognition and dedicated economic participation pathway programs as facilitators of outcomes in this domain.

- **Health and wellbeing** adopts a holistic approach to the person, comprising physical, mental and spiritual health, as well as broader wellbeing. Wellbeing reflects an individual’s perceptions of their quality of life and may intersect with social domains. We recognise that refugee and humanitarian entrants often present with health needs that differ from the mainstream Australian population, and require suitably tailored and resourced responses, including around trauma recovery and mental health. We also understand that health outcomes are intrinsically linked to other settlement outcomes and are critical enablers to active engagement in a new society.

- The **Language and digital literacy** outcome area is a combination of reading, speaking and writing in the English language as well as the ability of refugees and humanitarian entrants to use digital technology to access services, media and the wider society. The inclusion of digital skills recognises that access to people, services and rights are often now either dependent on, or facilitated by, technology, a situation exacerbated by the uptick in digitisation services witnessed during the Covid pandemic. Digital literacy also encompasses practices of digital safety, safeguarding refugees as they interact with digital platforms.

- The **Education** domain concerns access to, and progress within, the education system and training programs. It recognises that education is a fundamental facilitator of refugees’ integration, creating pathways to employment and improved language skills, as well as the building of social connections. We recognise that people’s education needs and strengths will vary significantly, with tailored responses needed to address the individual’s circumstances.
• **Housing and Transport**, specifically suitable housing, includes the physical size of residences, their quality, availability of facilities and amenities nearby and the safety and security they provide. Key concerns within the housing domain include overcrowding, safety, affordability, home maintenance literacy and access to transport. Housing also includes building entrants’ skills to source and secure appropriate accommodation over time, including an understanding of relevant housing and rental laws. ‘Transport’ reflects the significance of clients having access to public transport or support to obtain drivers’ licences as a facilitator to access other domains (for example employment, education, social connections).

• The last facilitating domain, **Understanding host culture**, refers to an everyday understanding of cultural, social and legal norms and expectations in the community within which people are integrating. Culture includes knowledge of national and local protocols, customs, (Australian) values and in some cases laws (e.g. child discipline, family dispute resolution mechanisms). Understanding cultural norms is critical to effective integration, and is balanced by the host community’s efforts to understand and welcome newly arriving entrants (see ‘community welcome’ below).

2. **Community factors**

The ‘social’ or community domains in the Framework describe relationships between refugees and humanitarian entrants and other individuals, groups and institutions within Australian society. Community outcome areas reflect the connection refugees and humanitarian entrants have to the people and institutions in their environment. Three community outcome areas are included in the Framework: social connections, community welcome, and access to institutions:

• **Social connections** include both social bonds and social bridges – the connections made with one’s own ethnic/national community and those made with people and groups within the wider community. These connections are key to successful integration as they generate social capital – the invaluable networks and resources linking newcomers to opportunities across other domains (for example employment, housing, language and belonging). Research indicates that integration outcomes are optimised when both social bonds and social bridges are forged. We recognise that while these may occur organically, social connections are enhanced through intentional resourcing and activities, notably including volunteer programs.

• **Community welcome** refers primarily to the sentiment of Australian individuals and communities towards humanitarian entrants and Australia’s Humanitarian Program. Unlike the social connections domain, community welcome may not require actual interaction or relationship with refugees and humanitarian entrants. Instead, this domain captures the attitudes and beliefs of the general public and is defined by positive, inclusive and supportive community attitudes, as well as positive public discourse around migrants, particularly as linked to social issues (for example crime or demands on the welfare state). While there is widespread support for Australia’s Humanitarian Program, community goodwill is strengthened by intentional community capacity building programs highlighting the positive role of refugees in Australia.
• Access to institutions refers to the ability of refugees and humanitarian entrants to interact with and benefit from institutions within Australian society, including government services and programs, local government and community programs, private sector institutions (e.g., banks) and civic and political processes. It also highlights the changes institutions and agencies can make to support refugees to access and receive goods and services, and recognises the role of capacity building work needed to support institutions adapt services to refugee needs. Practical measures may include the use of interpreting services and translated materials.

3. Personal factors

The personal areas within the framework include an individual’s own sense of belonging and sense of safety and security. Research indicates that these also play an important role in ensuring successful integration in Australia. Briefly, they can be described as follows:

• Belonging refers to an emotional attachment – feeling at home and safe. A sense of belonging is associated with perceived acceptance in one’s local community and perceived social status in one’s larger community. It may also be expressed in uptake of Australian citizenship and participation in Australia’s democratic processes. Experiences of discrimination and exclusion impact on refugee wellbeing and their sense of belonging. We include this domain in the Framework to reflect our ultimate goal of refugees and humanitarian entrants feeling as though they belong as Australians and participating within its democratic processes.

• Safety and security is the feeling that one’s position in the country and community are stable and permanent. This includes personal safety from violence (both perceived and actual), economic security and stable immigration status within Australia. It also includes practical support (e.g., road and pedestrian safety, water safety and, as noted earlier, digital safety).

Overview of the two underpinning Principles.

Community consultations strongly supported adding the principles of self-agency and self-efficacy to the Framework, as expressions of how clients will be supported to engage with the settlement services model and how that model will in turn support these outcomes within clients.

Self-agency involves the ability to exercise control, influence and responsibility over one’s environment. In the settlement context, it is about a client’s ability to influence and take appropriate responsibility for their settlement journey and outcomes including the services allocated to support their needs, goals and aspirations. It is balanced by the provision of tailored and appropriate support for client’s needs, including those requiring higher levels of support.

Self-efficacy involves a person’s belief in their capacity to act in the ways necessary to reach specific goals (‘perceived ability’). Self-efficacy differs from self-agency in being the belief in one’s ability to act with agency, self-agency is actually being able to act so.
Visualisation of the Integration Outcomes Framework

**Overall objective**

People who resettle in Australia as refugees or humanitarian entrants are able to participate fully in the nation's economic, democratic and social life, as well as identify with Australia.

**Outcomes framework**

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