

# **A Systems Approach to Community Sponsorship in the United States**

Leveraging Connection and Collaboration for Sustainable Change in Community Sponsorship

**August 2024**



**Refugee Welcome  
Collective**

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# Acknowledgements

Refugee Welcome Collective thanks its Members for their contributions and support, particularly those who participated in the Gathering and subsequent System Mapping efforts:

- African Community Center of Denver
- Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri
- Church World Service (CWS)
- Della Lamb Community Services
- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)
- HIAS
- Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
- World Refuge

The following agencies and organizations are also recognized for their participation in the Gathering:

- Bureau of Populations, Refugees and Migration (PRM)
- Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
- Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH)
- Switchboard
- Welcome Corps Support Line (WCSL)
- Stanford Immigration Policy Lab (IPL)
- Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS)
- Refugees Welcome Collective (RWC)
- Jessica Therkelsen, subject matter expert and report consultant



Refugee Welcome Collective is a project of Church World Service under an agreement paid for by the U.S. Department of State. Part of this project is funded by Switchboard, a project of International Rescue Committee, through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Grant #9ORB0053

The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

# Glossary

- **Causal Connections:** Actions and relationships between variables within a system
- **Feedback Loop:** Circular “causal chains” that result in dynamic behavior within a system
- **Leverage Point:** Place in a system where a small change or intervention could lead to a significant impact on the entire system
- **Main Variable:** A key element or factor that significantly influences the behavior and outcome of the whole system
- **Mini-System:** A set of related components that work together in a particular environment and function as a subset of a larger system
- **Newcomer:** A newly arrived immigrant of varying legal status who may be seeking services from a resettlement agency or service provider
- **Refugee:** A person with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political affiliation, who has crossed an international border and cannot return home safely
- **Ripple Effect:** The impact caused by variables whose changes have a strong effect on the entire system
- **System:** A set of related components that work together in a particular environment to perform whatever functions are required to achieve particular objectives
- **System Map:** The visual product of a System Mapping process, illustrating relationships between variables, feedback loops, and other components of a system
- **System Mapping:** The process of illustrating elements within a system and how they relate to one another with the goal of providing an overview of how the parts of a system relate to form the whole
- **Variable:** Any one of the forces and drivers at play within a system





# Executive Summary

The field of community sponsorship (CS) in the United States is growing in scope and complexity, following a tremendous amount of change in recent years. The national CS system – or ecosystem – comprises a host of new actors or partners entering at various points. This can contribute to high interdependence between agencies and programs; delays and complications in information sharing and resource learning; and new and evolving programming and partnerships. Communities, organizations, and a wide range of actors often respond to this state of flux and unpredictability with enthusiasm and creativity. Even so, there are rarely opportunities for these partners to convene with the sole purpose of studying and improving the CS system as a whole.

In light of this challenge, Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC) seized an opportunity to spearhead a highly collaborative effort to examine the current field of CS using a systems-level approach. RWC chose to use a System Mapping methodology to “map” the field of CS within the context of refugee resettlement to identify key opportunities for system-wide change. System Mapping is the process of illustrating the relationships between elements in a system, with a goal to facilitate a shared visualization of how parts in a system relate to form the whole (Gray & Bloch, 2020; Impact Frontiers, 2023). Inviting representatives from national and local resettlement agencies (RAs), funders, and other key actors into this mapping process, RWC hosted its second annual RWC Member Gathering. The Gathering took place on May 1 and 2, 2024 in Washington, D.C. with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and Switchboard. Focused on “coordination and connection” in CS, the Gathering aimed to (a) develop a shared understanding of the dynamics, factors and variables of the system; (b) visualize the system through illustration and storytelling; and (c) identify leverage points for improving CS coordination and collaboration.

The process of creating the systems map resulted in the identification of several key shared dynamics and variables. At a high level, the exercise showed that a few critical mental shifts in how community sponsorship programs are perceived could have a tremendous impact on their implementation and effectiveness in improving refugee newcomer outcomes. Specifically, the exercise revealed the importance of shifting from viewing community sponsorship programs as “nice to have” to seeing them as “essential for successful integration.” This shift in mindset would change how the programs are resourced, prioritized, and evaluated – particularly in terms of collecting feedback directly from newcomers themselves.



The exercise also illustrated that different community sponsorship models, such as the Reception and Placement (R&P) co-sponsorship and the Welcome Corps private sponsorship programs, are often

thought about in isolation by implementers. However, they are often experienced similarly by communities. By conceptualizing community sponsorship as a holistic approach rather than siloed programs, there is an opportunity to engage a broader network of community members. This could be enabled by ensuring “no wrong door” access points, leveraging existing refugee resettlement knowledge about the importance of community engagement, and continuing to invest in evidence building for the impact of CS on refugee outcomes and integration.

Additionally, the systems mapping exercise shows community sponsorship as not just a quick fix for capacity challenges, but as an entry point for building long-term community support and advocacy. This underscores the need for well-trained staff and sponsors to maximize the potential of these programs.

Finally, the exercise highlighted the importance of proactive, intentional outreach and partnership-building with diverse community stakeholders, beyond just those who initially approach the programs and understanding the specific needs and desires of newcomers is essential for developing the most impactful partnerships.

The FY24 RWC Member Gathering successfully brought partners together to build a shared “bird’s eye” view of CS, illuminate the intricacies of CS as a complex system, and propose actionable opportunities for positive change. This report describes the methodology for the data collection and mapping process, shares an analysis of findings and themes, and discusses recommendations and areas for further collaboration and dialogue.



# 1. Background

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## About Refugee Welcome Collective

Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC), a project of Church World Service, is a training and technical assistance (TA) provider with a mission to improve outcomes for refugees by expanding community sponsorship (CS) and community engagement in refugee welcome. RWC achieves this mission by collaborating with partners to deliver in-depth training programs and learning resources, providing TA, and facilitating learning and knowledge sharing for organizations and communities.

RWC's Membership is comprised of CS experts representing all 10 national resettlement agencies (RAs) in the United States. These agencies operate in all regions and at both local and national levels. RWC members help define RWC priorities and contribute knowledge and expertise to key RWC materials and resources.

## Community Sponsorship is a Complex System

### What is a System?

In her book *Thinking in Systems*, Meadows (2008) defines a system as an "interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves [a purpose]" (p. 11). Whether biological, ecological, or social in nature, the integrity or "wholeness" of a system relies on the interactions between these components (Meadows, 2008). Complex systems can be characterized by nonlinearity, interdependence, dissemination of information, emergence of new actors, separation between cause and effect, and unpredictability (Snyder et al., 2011; System Mapping Academy, 2024).

## U.S. Refugee Resettlement

As a social system, refugee resettlement in the United States involves a network of national and local RAs; federal, state, and local governments; private and public funders; national and community organizations; service providers; and community members, supporters, and donors working together to welcome refugees through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) every year. Fluctuations in arrival numbers due to emergent global protection needs, annual presidential determinations, and limited predictability of USRAP can strain the system at all levels. Additionally, delays in processing capacity overseas can affect the timing and number of refugee arrivals, impacting the planning and allocation of resources by national and local RAs and Private Sponsor Organizations (PSOs). The national housing crisis, funding streams, and a wide range of competing priorities can further impact the capacity of partners collaborating in a resource-limited environment. In FY 24 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024), the U.S. refugee resettlement system expanded the reception and placement options for refugee newcomers, to include not only Reception and Placement (R&P), but also Cash-Based R&P, Virtual R&P, and the Welcome Corps program. Community Sponsorship programs reach across both R&P through co-sponsorship and the Welcome Corps with private sponsorship. These tracks are further complicated by programs impacting specific populations, such as the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA), Uniting for Ukraine (U4U), and Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) programs, which may not afford participants the same legal status as an officially designated refugee.



## **U.S. Community Sponsorship**

As noted by Meadows (2008), often “[o]ut of one system other completely new, never-before-imagined systems can arise” (p. 12). Such is the case for CS in the United States, which has transformed in recent years with the emergence of new sponsorship pathways for newcomers. CS allows members of the public and private sectors, and peripheral civil society, to participate directly in the welcoming of newcomers by volunteering to advance integration for a sponsored individual or family. While CS has been present in several forms throughout U.S. history, the recently created private sponsorship program, Welcome

Corps, has catalyzed community-led support alongside RA-led co-sponsorship models. Furthermore, organizations and initiatives such as RWC, Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH), and Welcome.US launched in recent years to support and expand CS programming. Agency-led and sponsor-led sponsorship programs have diversified, and so have interactions between new and existing pathways, local and national RAs, government agencies at the national and state levels, national and community organizations, and service providers in local communities. As the CS ecosystem has burgeoned, so has the need for a shared understanding of its interconnectedness and complexity.

### 3. Methodology

As a holistic framework of analysis that considers the interconnections between parts of a whole over time, *systems thinking* can help make sense of complexity, behavior, and change (Morganelli, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2021). In contrast to optimizing singular parts of a whole, systems thinking emphasizes improving the *relationships* between those parts (Meadows, 2008; System Mapping Academy, 2024). Systems theories and related systems-thinking approaches are valuable for problem-solving with greater perspective and organizing resources to support the long-term health of a system (Structural Learning, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2021).

With a systems perspective, RWC selected a System Mapping methodology to identify and address challenges posed by an

Academy, 2024). RWC team partnered with the System Mapping Academy to learn and practice System Mapping to analyze events, patterns, and relationships within a system. By inviting participants to share their own mental models or paradigms, System Mapping uses a shared language to form an integrated “bird’s eye” perspective of a complex system (System Mapping Academy, 2024). The System Mapping methodology for the project draws on the acclaimed work of Donella Meadows (2008) and uses map-specific vocabulary as defined in Section Three.

The methodology includes the following steps, discussed further in Section Three: (1) Framing; (2) Exploring; (3) Mapping; (4) Reflecting; and (5) Identifying leverage points. The RWC team used this five-step

Figure 1: The five steps of the System Mapping methodology used by RWC



increasingly complex and evolving CS ecosystem. System Mapping is the process of illustrating elements within a system and how they relate to one another with the goal of facilitating a shared visualization of how parts in a system relate to form the whole (System Mapping

process to “map” the field of community sponsorship in the United States within the context of refugee resettlement and to identify opportunities for positive change. After framing the current system by creating a “problem statement” as a team, RWC explored the

system through interviews with RWC members, developed an initial map in collaboration with the System Mapping Academy, and finally, completed steps four and five through a group mapping exercise during the Gathering.

## 3. Community Sponsorship System Mapping Process

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### Step One: Framing the Project

The purpose of the mapping project was to create a shared visualization of the relationships within the CS ecosystem and identify opportunities to improve coordination and connection between CS programming. During the initial “Framing the Project” phase, RWC defined the context in which CS programs are currently operating, reoccurring problems, and a set of initial research questions to undergird a system map.

#### Context

With a growing number of resettlement and other entry pathways available, such as co-sponsorship with RAs and private sponsorship through Welcome Corps, RWC was particularly interested in mapping how these programs interact with each other in an increasingly complex ecosystem. Using a System Mapping methodology to examine these relationships, RWC aimed to identify key challenges, leverage points, and actionable opportunities for positive, system-wide changes in CS. RWC identified the following key actors in the system: the organizations implementing CS programs; RAs; PSOs; private sponsor groups, co-sponsorship groups, and community members participating in the programs; federal partners funding the programs; state representatives coordinating state supports, including State Refugee Coordinators (SRCs) and State Refugee Health Coordinators (SRHCs); and service providers with local supports for refugees and newcomers. By harnessing the input and expertise of RWC Members, RWC anticipated the System Mapping model would serve as an invaluable tool to identify gaps and develop strategies to optimize CS program effectiveness, and thereby improve overall success of refugee

resettlement efforts.

#### Problem Statement

Refugee resettlement in the United States is experiencing a period of rapid change that includes developing new models for welcoming newcomers, such as private sponsorship, alongside more established models of entry and support. Diversified resettlement pathways support greater access to resettlement in the United States and greater community participation in welcoming work, yet further complicate the resettlement system. Complications arise from a growing number of CS pathways (both agency-led and sponsor-led) that have undefined interaction with local and national RAs, government agencies at the national and state levels, service providers, donors, volunteers, and communities. Added to this complexity is the fact that newcomers with varying statuses related to their means of entry and status within the country may have access to different programs and levels of support. Co-sponsorship and private sponsorship structures operating within the same CS system can seem disjointed, fragmenting communication processes, flows of information, and resource and knowledge sharing for all actors involved.

As a result, the CS system as a whole can be confusing and frustrating for RA staff, Welcome Corps PSOs, sponsor groups and community members, local service providers, federal funders, newcomers, and refugees. These sector-wide challenges cannot be solved bilaterally but instead require a holistic, participatory systems approach.

## Research Questions

In light of this problem, RWC drafted the following research questions to guide the interviews administered to RWC members:

1. Which factors and dynamics are influencing the level of coordination and alignment of partners, and where are opportunities for positive change in the field?
2. As leaders of community sponsorship programs across the country, how can we develop channels of alignment among partners to improve both co-sponsorship and private sponsorship programs' support to refugee clients that are paired with sponsors as part of the USRAP, including ensuring they are connected to ongoing services?

## Step Two: Exploring the System

After framing the problem, the second phase of the mapping process involved exploring the research questions and validating and refining the problem statement. To that end, RWC initiated a process of preliminary data collection to gather initial thoughts and inputs about the current CS environment. This data was used to begin identifying the mini-systems within the CS system.

## RWC Member Interviews

RWC conducted open-ended, in-depth interviews virtually with 17 RWC Members, who belong to nine national RAs and four local RAs<sup>1</sup>. The goal of the interviews was threefold: (a) illuminate the dynamics and challenges within the CS system; (b) define core themes; and (c) identify driving factors (also known as variables) and relationships that needed further exploration. The semi-structured interviews included key topic questions related to CS coordination, including internal and external partner coordination, barriers to coordination, and the impact of the Welcome Corps. Additionally, a set of probing questions explored service connections in the community, recruitment and goal setting, local office capacities and roles, and information and

knowledge sharing (see Appendix B for the interview template). RWC recorded and transcribed the interviews and committed to maintaining the anonymity of participants while collecting feedback that would be summarized and shared at the Gathering.

## Emerging Themes

Using thematic content analysis, RWC analyzed and coded the qualitative interview data to synthesize themes. This led to the generation of *variables* that formed the basis of four *mini-systems* within the broader CS system. Key themes included: partner coordination; funding and resources; training and support; volunteer engagement and burnout; program flexibility; community involvement; staff roles and responsibilities; local office autonomy; partnerships and collaborations; resource development and dissemination; CS visibility and awareness; and information sharing. Through this process, RWC also identified several gaps in service coordination, namely constraints in capacity and resources at the local RA affiliate level, an absence of organized and user-friendly tools and strategies for establishing service connections, and staffing and capacity issues. Overall, these activities helped RWC understand, in a preliminary sense, the major relationships and factors comprising CS as a system.

## Step Three: Initial Mapping of the System

To better prepare and equip the RWC team to use the System Mapping methodology, RWC received training from the System Mapping Academy. An expert from the Academy provided the team with the necessary terminology, practical insights, and fundamentals of the methodology.

## Map Terminology

During the training, the System Mapping Academy defined a set of terms that are key to the mapping process. A *mini-system* is a set of related components that work together in a particular environment and function as a subset of a larger system. *Variables* are forces and

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<sup>1</sup> RWC invited all 10 national resettlement agencies and all but one were able to participate.

drivers at play that influence other variables in a system, and *causal connections* are actions and interplay between these variables. These variables might be physical manifestations (e.g., number of people); values, beliefs, or norms (e.g., perception, fear, resistance, openness); or social actions (e.g., work hours, communication) (System Mapping Academy, slide 71). *Main variables* are factors that influence the whole system (e.g., the level of coordination and alignment of partners within the CS system). When the changes of variables have a strong effect on the entire system, this is known as a **ripple effect**. Represented as circular “causal chains,” *feedback loops* are driving forces of change or stagnation that lead to dynamic behavior in a system. Feedback loops can also serve as indicators for how an entire system might respond to change (System Mapping Academy, 2024). *Balancing* feedback loops are circular relationships that balance a system from disturbances and drive it toward a goal or limit through self-regulation, while *reinforcing* feedback loops reinforce an initial development through amplification or decline. Relatedly, *leverage points* are places in a system where a small change or intervention could lead to a significant impact on

the entire system (Meadows, 2009; System Mapping Academy, 2024). Leverage points may take the form of events or actions (e.g., reaction to a problem); patterns or behaviors (e.g., rules and processes); underlying structures (e.g., policy); or mental models (e.g., paradigms) (Refugee Welcome Collective, 2024).

### **Identifying the Mini-Systems**

With the System Mapping Academy's guidance and training, RWC staff used data from the interview analysis to develop four overlapping “mini-systems” within the larger system. These mini-systems were: (a) recruitment and onboarding of community sponsors; (b) service connection and provision; (c) training, resources and knowledge sharing; and (d) key partner engagement for program success. Additionally, for each drafted mini-system, RWC developed a definition and research questions, as well as identified main variables, other variables, and additional questions for further investigation.



## Steps Four and Five: Reflection and Identification of Leverage Points

As the next phase in the project, RWC hosted an in-person Gathering on May 1 and 2, 2024 in Washington D.C. to bring together partners for a highly collaborative System Mapping workshop. Participants included RWC Membership, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), CSH, Switchboard, Welcome Corps Support Line (WCSL), Stanford Immigration Policy Lab, Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS), and RWC staff. The goals of the Gathering were to (a) develop a shared understanding of the dynamics, factors and variables of the system; (b) visualize the system through illustration and storytelling; and (c) identify leverage points for improving CS coordination and collaboration.

### Reflection

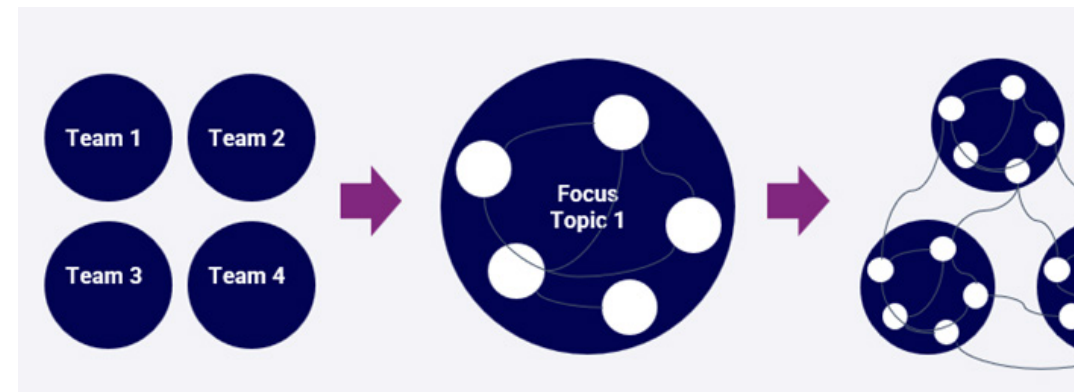
RWC introduced the System Mapping concept to Gathering participants, led a training on the System Mapping methodology, and discussed key themes and challenges previously identified through interviews and pre-Gathering analysis. Divided randomly into four groups or “teams,” Gathering participants then engaged in deep group reflection and discovery within the four mini-systems (see Figure 2). For each mini-system, RWC provided the definition, research questions, main variables, other variables, and additional questions for the Gathering participants to help them conceptualize mini-system maps. During the Gathering, participants examined the definitions and provided edits where necessary. Two overarching research questions served to shepherd group discussions (a) *Which factors and dynamics are influencing the level of coordination and alignment of partners,* and (b) *Where are opportunities for positive change in the field?* In addition, participants amended and discussed the definitions and research questions respective to each “mini-system,” explored further in Section Four.

As part of the hands-on, collaborative exercise, participants used different colored “sticky notes” for various elements and drew

relationships between variables to ultimately create mini-system maps. During three working sessions over two days, participants identified variables, causal connections, feedback loops, and ultimately, leverage points. RWC “coaches,” who led each group through their System Map design, asked questions such as: What are the important drivers of the system? What are the relationships between the variables? Are there any important dynamics that have not been visualized yet?

Finally, RWC led a working session with participants to analyze their respective mini-systems and use map variables and dynamics to tell the “narratives” conveyed through the maps. In this exercise, RWC emphasized that system maps are visual storytelling tools, and sharing these stories with others encourages deeper insights, greater involvement, and mutual understanding of how our actions impact a shared system. RWC then facilitated a large group exercise wherein each group presented their mini-system to the entire Gathering group and discussed relationships between the mini-systems, key themes, leverage points, and actionable steps for system-wide change.

**Figure 2:** An image presented to Gathering participants during an overview of the System Mapping process



Furthermore, RWC used surveys to collect feedback during and after the Gathering to better understand participants’ ongoing priorities and perspectives. This feedback focused on topics that participants wanted to explore, such as capacity, staff turnover, sponsor knowledge

or awareness, cultural components, technical literacy, and access to services. RWC also solicited feedback on the overall Gathering. When asked to use one word to describe their reaction to the Gathering, participants remarked energized, inspired, supported, encouraged, and excited. Participants also noted that the most useful parts of the Gathering included forming connections, networking, System Mapping, finding common understandings, brainstorming with colleagues and friends across RAs, engaging in small group discussions, generating new ideas, and sharing experiences. In their ratings, participants indicated that the Gathering helped uncover key challenges and concerns, identify relevant solutions and leverage points, and enable partners to work more effectively together. While some participants noted the rigorous steps needed in a System Mapping exercise, others appreciated the opportunity to actively contribute to the discussion rather than being lectured at, and valued the provision of a space to work, collaborate, and connect.

After the Gathering, the RWC team digitized the maps using Miro, an online mapping tool, and provided the opportunity for participants to provide additional feedback. RWC engaged in a second round of map simplification to enhance accessibility before including the maps in the report. RWC created the current drafts of the maps using Insight Maker and will present these maps to RWC Members at the September 2024 quarterly Member meeting. It is worthy of note that this is an interactive process involving Members and partners. RWC will continue to refine and use the current version of the maps with Members and partners.

### Leverage Points

In the System Mapping methodology, leverage points refer to specific areas of a system where a small change or intervention can lead to a significant impact on the entire system. Identifying these leverage points involved pinpointing strategic areas or critical junctures within each mini-system where targeted interventions could yield significant improvements and maximize the overall impact of CS initiatives. Figure 3 illustrates that addressing mental models,

though challenging, can yield the most significant impact. The mapping exercise demonstrated that shifting perceptions, adopting a holistic view of sponsorship programs, and fostering proactive engagement from diverse partners are crucial for engaging refugee integration and support. Additionally, the exercise identified underlying structural changes that, if addressed, could have a broad, system-wide impact.

**From “Nice to Have” to “Essential for Successful Integration”:** The system mapping exercise revealed the critical importance of shifting the mental model around community sponsorship programs from being perceived as “nice to have” add-ons to the refugee resettlement system, to being recognized as “essential for successful integration.” This mental shift is fundamental, as it would drive structural changes to ensure community sponsorship is resourced, prioritized, and evaluated accordingly.

Specifically, viewing community sponsorship as essential would require:

- Establishing clear pathways and “no wrong door” access points to connect all interested community members, regardless of which sponsorship program or agency they initially approach.
- Providing standardized, high-quality training and ongoing support for all community sponsors, ensuring they are equipped to fulfill their critical role.
- Investing in well-trained, qualified staff with expertise in managing and overseeing community sponsorship programs, who understand the importance of community engagement.
- Institutionalizing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback from newcomers themselves to drive continuous improvement of sponsorship programs.

**From Isolated Programs to a Holistic Approach:** The system mapping exercise also revealed that different community sponsorship models, such as co-sponsorship and private sponsorship, are often viewed and implemented in isolation by agencies. However, these programs are experienced similarly within communities.

By conceptualizing community sponsorship as a holistic, coordinated approach rather than siloed programs, there is an opportunity to engage a broader network of community members. This shift requires:

- Establishing shared resources, standardized training, and clear collaboration pathways between co-sponsorship, private sponsorship, and other refugee resettlement partners.
- Continuing to build the evidence base on the impact of community sponsorship on refugee outcomes and integration to justify investment in a holistic approach.
- Expanding community consultations to be inclusive of diverse stakeholders beyond just those already participating in sponsorship.
- Establishing opportunities for RAs and PSOs to discuss coordination.

**From Short-Term Response to Long-Term Investment:** The system mapping exercise demonstrated that community sponsorship should not be viewed merely as a quick fix for capacity challenges, but rather as an entry point for building long-term community support and advocacy for refugee integration.

To support this mental model shift, the underlying structures required include:

- Fostering the professionalization of community sponsorship staff through robust training, professional development, and retention strategies.
- Embedding rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices to continuously improve program design and delivery.

**From “Low Hanging” to Intentional Partnership Development:** Finally, the system mapping exercise highlighted the importance of proactive, intentional outreach and partnership-building with diverse community stakeholders, beyond just those who initially approach sponsorship

programs.

The necessary underlying structures to support this include:

- Establishing best practices and providing resources to enable community sponsorship staff to invest in outreach and partnership development with a wide range of community groups.
- Institutionalizing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback from partners and refugees to inform the design of impactful collaborations that meet newcomer needs.

By addressing these mental model shifts and building the corresponding underlying structures, the community sponsorship ecosystem can move towards greater coordination, community ownership, and responsiveness – ultimately enhancing the welcome and integration experience for refugee newcomers.

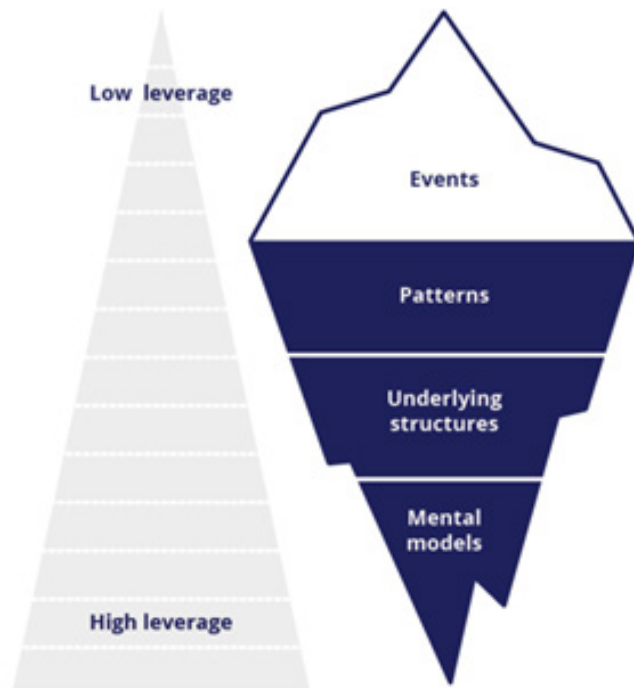
Key action items identified by participants to begin to address leverage points reflected in final maps include the following:

- **Mini-System One:** improving perceptions of program value and program visibility (e.g., increased branding recognition of co-sponsorship as a program), developing shared language, increasing staff knowledge, expanding community partnerships, using engaging storytelling, and implementing a shared communication platform across programs;
- **Mini-System Two:** enhancing coordination, creating a refugee support network, conducting thorough research on available services, and developing local service navigation toolkits across agencies to promote quality and accessibility of services for new arrivals;
- **Mini-System Three:** increasing user satisfaction and promotion and sharing of resources and training; using RWC membership and mentorship, needs assessments, user feedback, and evaluations to improve training materials and develop tools for knowledge and resource sharing; and

- **Mini-System Four:** aligning funding priorities, conducting thorough program evaluations, collecting partner feedback, and prioritizing economic resilience alongside social integration (Mini-System Four).

See Sections 4 and 5 for a discussion of leverage points and opportunities for intervention, as well as Appendix E for a full list of leverage points identified by participants.

**Figure 3:** Types of leverage points that can affect a whole system (System Mapping Academy, 2024)



## 4. Community Sponsorship Mapping Results

### Overview

By mapping the CS system and visualizing the complex relationships that drive coordination, RWC worked through the system as a group and developed a shared understanding of the challenges, variables, leverage points, and opportunities to intervene. Each mini-system diagram revealed a highly complex environment with multiple points of interdependence, such as connections between national and local programming, between local service providers, and between the communities and the agencies themselves.

### Map Symbols

In each of the following mini-system maps, RWC used symbols to represent various elements flagged for deeper analysis. Arrows with dotted lines illustrate connections between elements, while arrows with straight lines flag important connections with an impact that needs to be analyzed further. Snowballs indicate areas in the map with the potential to create ripple effects across the entire CS system. The "+" symbol denotes a positive feedback loop, stars indicate areas where a change or intervention may lead to a significant impact on the entire system, and the "?" symbol refers to areas in need of further improvement or ongoing partner attention.

### Mini-System One: Recruitment and Onboarding

The research question guiding the first mini-system asked: *What factors influence sponsor mobilization, retention, and satisfaction in community sponsorship?* Participants defined CS "recruitment and onboarding" as strategic processes employed by community organizations, particularly RAs, to engage, educate, equip, and empower community partners, sponsor groups, and volunteers in supporting newcomers. This involves attracting sponsor groups or volunteers and guiding them through a structured pathway that includes awareness-raising, training, and legal compliance to ensure they are prepared to

effectively support the resettlement and integration of refugees into the community. The onboarding process includes critical steps such as security clearances, training on roles and responsibilities, and the provision of necessary resources and support to foster successful sponsor-newcomer relationships.

### Mapping the Mini-System

Through the mapping exercise, participants identified key internal and external variables driving sponsor recruitment and onboarding processes. Three interconnected variables were key to all the rest: number of refugee arrivals, funding, and agency leadership and capacity. These variables are largely affected by external drivers such as the political climate and societal trends. Funding and agency capacity directly spur a positive feedback loop in which local staff capacity affects staff onboarding, training and support; understanding of program goals and options; and staff retention. TA also plays a key role in supporting this process. Participants mapped a positive feedback loop based on setting clear program goals and approaches. This feedback loop, which became central to the diagram, enables a recruitment strategy with recruitment materials that deserve review and revision as necessary on a regular basis. The recruitment strategy builds on social capital and connections within the field of resettlement, collaboration with other RAs, diversity of community partnerships, and sponsor motivation.

Participants identified sponsor motivation as a variable driving a third positive feedback loop in which the following elements are cyclical: reaching a potential sponsor, supporting sponsors, supporting newcomers, and sponsor and newcomer satisfaction. Participants flagged this final variable as key to the mini-system and the role of program visibility through recruitment strategy and materials and the sponsor commitment and onboarding process. Relatedly, a significant area of improvement identified is the gap between sponsor interest



and commitment. The mapping exercise also identified connections between partner perspectives in CS, such as perceptions of immigrants and agency profile and reputation. Finally, participants flagged local groups expressing interest in CS but not following through with commitment as an issue requiring further attention. A full list of variables identified for Mini-System One is included in Appendix E.

## Challenges

Participants highlighted various challenges in recruiting and onboarding sponsors. In a system that relies on community engagement, numerous obstacles hinder sponsors from coming “in the door” or joining; each additional barrier further decreases community participation:

- **Confusion between types of sponsorship:** Various CS models may sound similar, but have differing requirements for sponsors, RAs, and participants themselves. This can lead to frustration or “information overload,” and thus, reduced community participation. Unlike Welcome Corps, which is a “universal” program across the United States, co-sponsorship requirements and names vary by location.
- **Lack of system coordination between types of sponsorship:** While RAs fielded questions and directed interested parties to Welcome Corps, the inverse largely did not occur, as the Welcome Corps did not coordinate “no wrong door” efforts to redirect inquiries to RAs or co-sponsorship programs, where appropriate.
- **Uneven pacing of newcomer arrivals:** Participants noted difficulty in keeping groups motivated and engaged during slower seasons, while managing several groups at once during heavy arrival periods.
- **High localization of recruitment needs and strategies:** Each context is different, with many variables influencing community participation. This makes it challenging to create recruitment strategies that are flexible enough to be applied in each community with success.
- **Extensive onboarding processes:** Onboarding is time-consuming

and includes background checks, training sessions, and paperwork, which can deter participants.

- **Lack of internal buy-in:** When CS is perceived as less essential, directors are quick to cut these positions first. Without their buy-in, key staff such as caseworkers are less invested and willing to engage with the program.

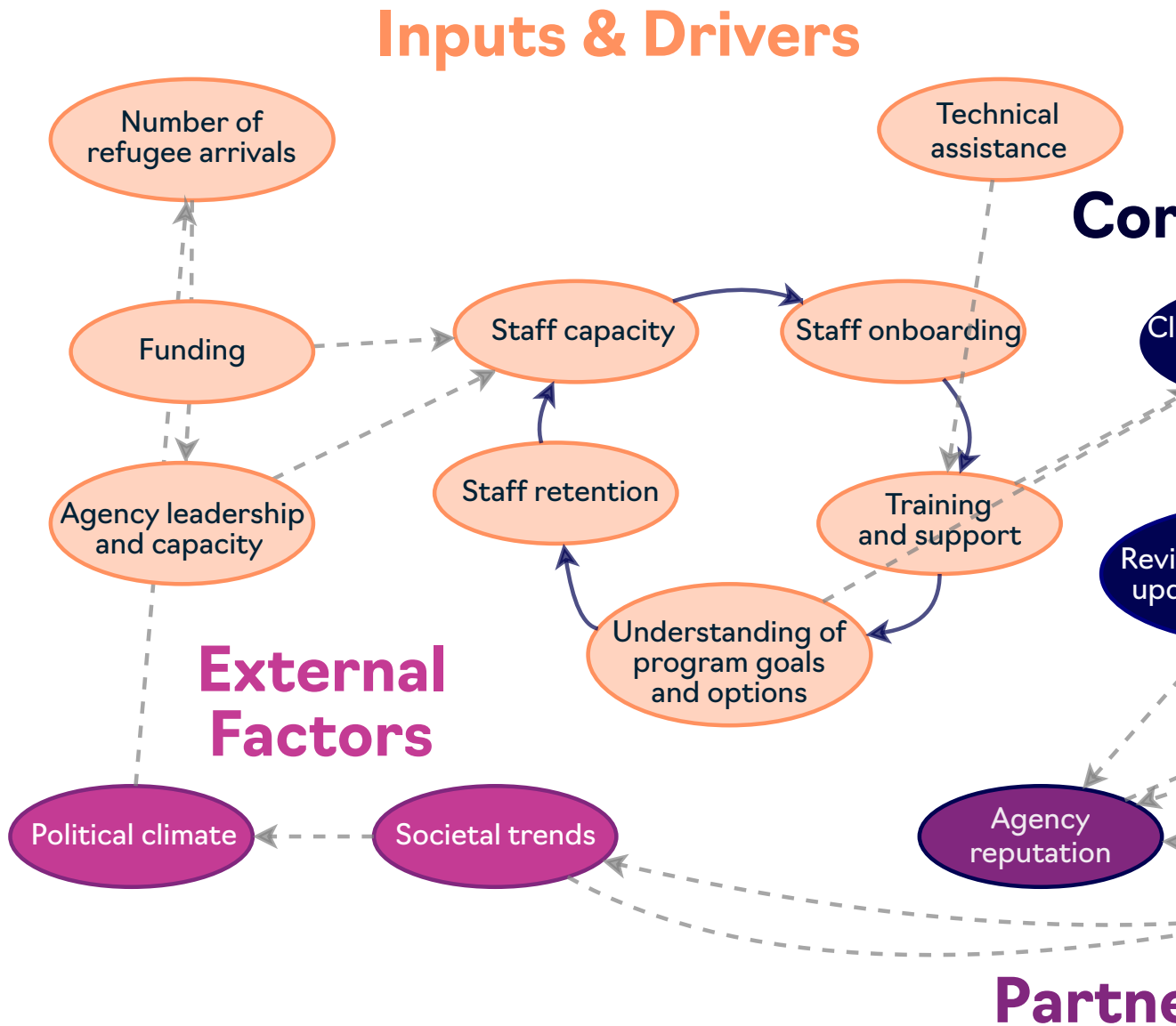
The following quotes from interview participants elaborated on these challenges:

**One barrier is, as already mentioned, the competition between sponsorship models. Another is not finding groups that are interested. . . affiliates are doing a bunch of pitches and just not coming up with any folks who are interested . . . some are facing challenges where local groups are hesitant to take on the full responsibility of co-sponsorship.**

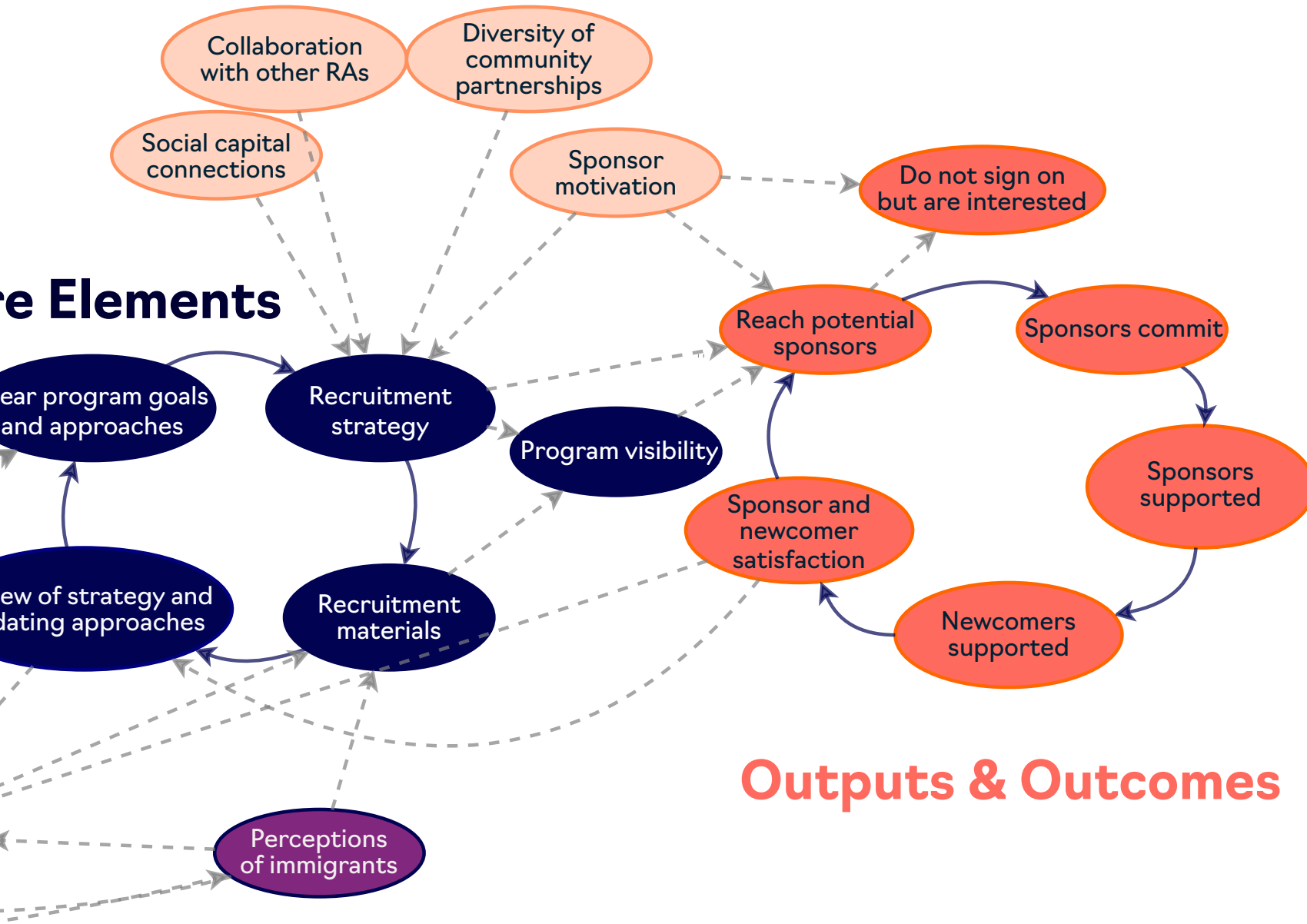
## Leverage Points

Participants identified the following leverage points: improving perceptions of program value and program visibility (e.g., increased branding recognition of co-sponsorship as a program), developing shared language, increasing staff knowledge, expanding community partnerships, and using engaging storytelling. Implementing a centralized communication platform is one approach to addressing knowledge and referral gaps between programs and helping streamline system coordination for sponsor recruitment. Participants also considered areas that may cause ripple effects in the system, such as setting clear program goals and strategizing new approaches to expand the reach to potential sponsors.

Figure 4: Final map of Mini-System One, Focused on Recruitment and Onboarding



## Core Elements



## Outputs & Outcomes

## Immigrant Perspectives

A lot of what we're finding is that a lot of groups want to help . . . we have a lot of people who are saying, "Yes, we'll support you," but then it's actually getting them to that next level of we're going to surround our resources and our people with support of one family and we're going to see this through for the next six months.

The mini-system emphasizes the importance of CS program visibility, clear program goals, recruitment strategy, partner perspectives, and a robust consideration of external factors. It highlights the need for improved collaboration to ensure that sponsors are adequately prepared and supported, as well as the value in understanding the underlying factors that could advance recruitment and onboarding strategies.

### Mini-System Two: Service Connection and Provision

The following question guided group work on the second mini-system: What factors influence the establishment of reliable, long-lasting service connections? Participants defined "service connection and provision" as the process through which sponsors, service providers, local support groups, and RAs facilitate access to essential local services for newcomers and provide continuous support to foster successful integration. This includes identifying, connecting, and empowering newcomers to utilize resources such as healthcare, education, employment, and legal services, and maintaining active involvement through regular follow-ups and adjustments to meet evolving needs.

### Mapping the Mini-System

Through the mapping exercise, participants identified an abundance of connections between variables impacting service connections and

provision. As with the first mini-system map, interrelated drivers stem from the larger resettlement field, impacted by the political climate and societal trends, such as the number of refugee newcomers, funding, and staff capacity. The relationships between CSH, national and local RAs, and PSOs affect staff capacity, thereby driving the number of sponsor groups involved in facilitating service connections. The number of sponsors along with the amount of technical assistance and support, informs the need for organizational coordination and training plans. This functions in a positive feedback loop whereby sponsor, staff, and PSO training positively reinforces the successful implementation of sponsorship coordination plans. Participants flagged the impact of community consultations in the system, which plays a key role in these coordination plans. They also flagged the relationships between SRCs, SRHCs, ORR, and PRM; service provider capacity; overall program funding; and resources such as culturally relevant materials. These connections and processes impact key outcomes, including appropriate services provided and newcomer needs met. A full list of variables identified for Mini-System Two is included in Appendix E.

### Challenges

Participants discussed the following challenges across the mini-system:

- **Absence of a unified service connection strategy:** There is a lack of a shared strategy for service connection among key actors and partners. They are not fully utilizing all available opportunities to establish and enhance service connections.
- **Unclear responsibilities for service connections:** The division of labor between local office caseworkers and sponsor groups is often unclear and uneven. This ambiguity makes it challenging to assign responsibility for service connection tasks, leading to potential oversights or stress due to debates over responsibility, which consume valuable time and energy. Private sponsorship has created further ambiguity, particularly among service providers and potentially between sponsors within a community.
- **Local competition and obstruction of service access:** Despite national RAs collaborating with their affiliates, local affiliates

may perceive themselves as being in “competition” over service connections. This perception hinders collaboration and creates barriers to service access and delivery.

- **Expertise may be needed for complex service navigation for sponsors:** Sponsors often find it difficult to navigate benefits offices and public assistance programs. This is especially true for those who lack prior experience in obtaining public benefits themselves. This complexity indicates that expertise may be required for effective service navigation.
- **Identification of local services for newcomers:** Current processes for identifying relevant and appropriate services and resources can be challenging, duplicative, and time-consuming. Furthermore, community members who do not work in the sector may have a hard time understanding where to find particular services or may forget or lose the information shared in training or resource materials.

The following quotes from interview participants elaborated on these challenges:

**I think we hear more about service connection challenges from affiliates afraid to delegate certain services to their sponsors and that might be because they believe it's a challenge for the sponsors or they think it's better for them [case managers] to do it.**

### **Leverage Points**

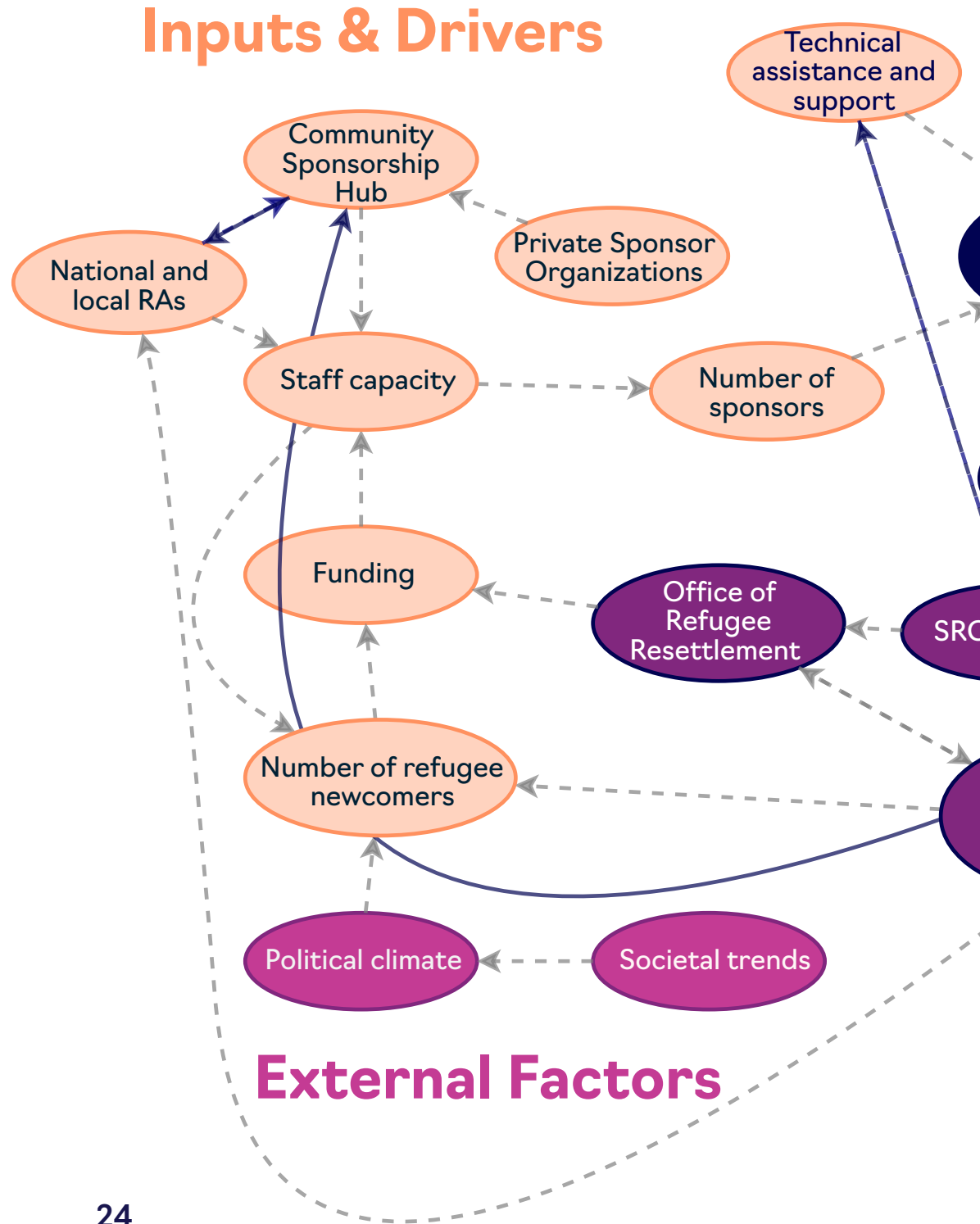
Participants identified funding levels and numbers of newcomer populations as key variables. They identified organizational coordination and training plans as drivers of ripple effects in the system. Opportunities for intervention hinged on the need for greater accessibility of relevant resources and knowledge sharing.

Participants brainstormed several opportunities inspired by leverage points, including enhancing coordination, creating a refugee support network, conducting thorough research on available services, and developing service navigation toolkits across agencies to promote quality and accessibility of services for new arrivals in their local communities. This mini-system reveals that there is significant potential in linking coordination plans with community consultations, particularly when technical assistance is provided to SRCs and SRHCs, and that there is a need for stronger coordination between the Welcome Corps, community consultations, and RAs.

**Everybody is just inundated right now with so many new arrivals. So all of the services are feeling the strain.**

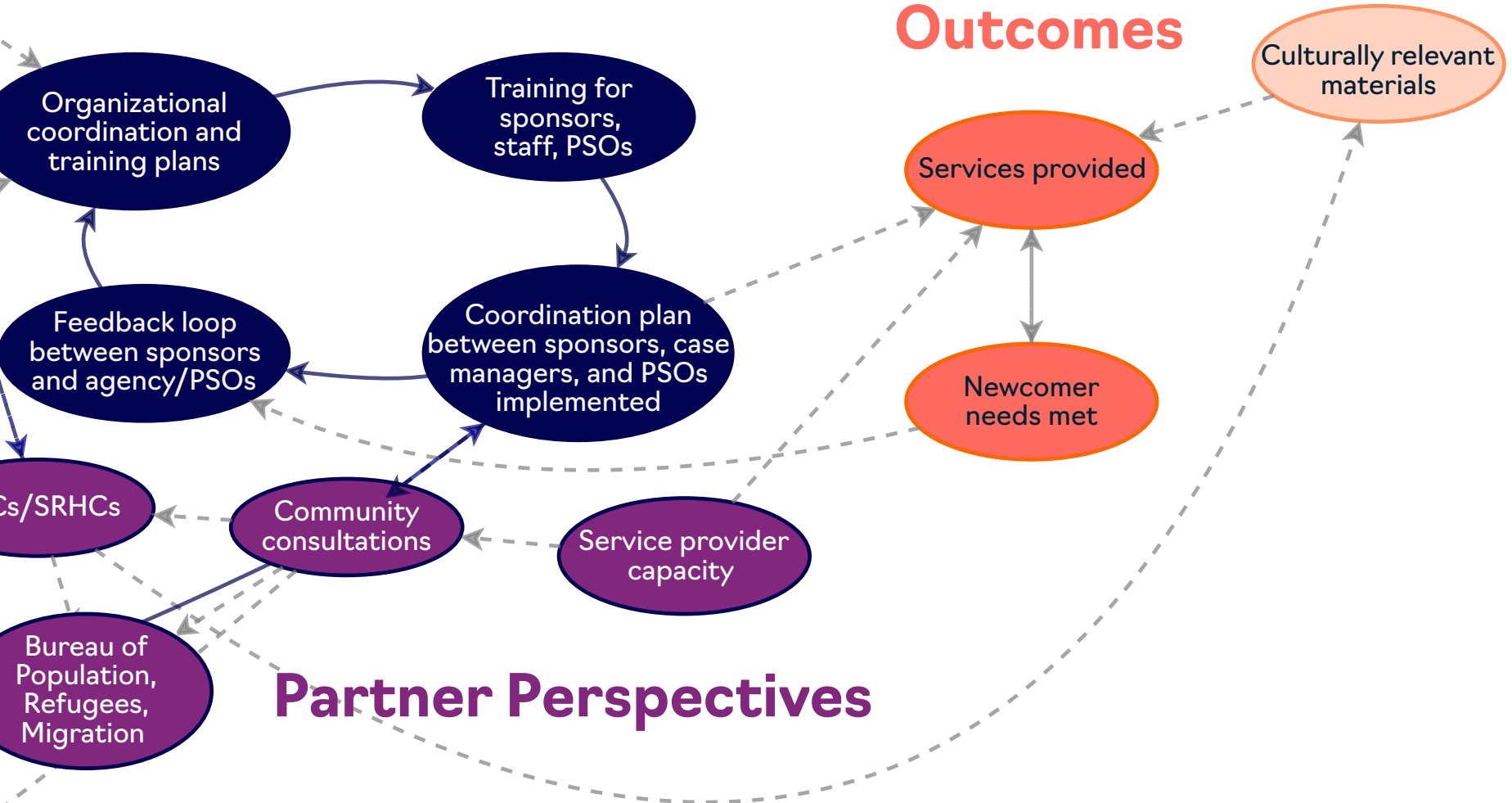


Figure 5: Final map of Mini-System Two, focused on Service Connections and Provision



# Core Elements

# Outputs & Outcomes



## Mini-System Three: Training, Resources, and Knowledge Sharing

The research question guiding the third mini-system asked: *What factors influence the development and dissemination of targeted training, resources, and knowledge sharing?* Participants defined “training, resources, and knowledge sharing” in the context of CS as the systematic efforts to educate, equip, and empower refugees, sponsors, communities, and resettlement staff with the necessary skills, information, and tools to enhance programs to effectively support newcomers. This includes providing structured training programs that cover legal obligations, cultural sensitivities, and specific needs of newcomers; distributing resources such as manuals, guidelines, and access to support networks; and facilitating the exchange of best practices and experiences among partners to enhance the effectiveness and impact of sponsorship activities. The goal is to build a knowledgeable and resourceful community, inclusive of staff, that can provide comprehensive and culturally competent support to newcomers.

### Mapping the Mini-System

Through mini-system mapping and reflection, participants highlighted the key issue of *accessibility* and *adaptability* of resources, training, and knowledge sharing as central to the mini-system. Questions that arose during the mini-system mapping activity included: What role do resources and tools play in enhancing the capacity of sponsors, RA staff, community members, and service providers? How does strategic knowledge sharing among partners affect CS programs? What key factors in training, resources, and knowledge sharing lead to successful/unsuccessful outcomes?

As with the first two mini-system maps, interrelated drivers that participants identified stem from the larger resettlement field, which is impacted by the political climate and societal trends. These include program funding, staffing capacity (e.g., offices to offer training and ongoing support to staff and sponsors), and capacity to offer technical

assistance. In addition to policymaker influence, staff perspectives on resources, training, and knowledge sharing play a role in how these resources are created and used, how often, and by whom. Participants identified the importance of opportunities for CS staff, sponsors, and newcomers to provide feedback on the content and delivery of training, resources, and knowledge sharing. This is key for CS partners to understand and evidence the need for resource allocation and prioritization. A positive feedback loop emerged: the degree to which CS staff, sponsors, and refugees use resources – and find these resources useful – affects the quality and amount of user feedback needed to thus inform the allocation and prioritization of resources.

Participants discovered another positive feedback loop where the promotion and sharing of CS resources, training, and knowledge impact program effectiveness, enhancing not only sponsor coordination, but also sponsorship experiences and overall community impact. Participants observed that increased user satisfaction could lead to sponsors' continued engagement in CS programs, in the form of either sponsoring again or mentoring new sponsors. This positive feedback loop helps determine program efficacy and successful program outcomes, which ties back to the ability to secure funding for resources and training, as illustrated in the mini-system map. A full list of variables identified for Mini-System Three is included in Appendix E.

### Challenges

Participants discussed the following challenges in the mini-system:

- **Inefficient use of time and waste of existing resources:** Local staff spend too much time creating new trainings on topics that are likely covered by other affiliates or even within the same agency in different locations. This leads to lost work hours for already busy staff and is a waste of existing resources.
- **Office capacity and local context vary widely:** The national RA and national TA providers may provide substantial backend support with training, resources, and guidelines, but the implementation of CS programs ultimately relies heavily on affiliate office capacity

and local contexts.

- **High staff turnover affects the continuity of knowledge:** When staff are changing frequently, it means a local office is often operating with gaps in their personal knowledge. These gaps make it difficult to develop the appropriate programs, training, and resources needed.

The following quotes from interview participants elaborated on these challenges:

**We still haven't identified what is the most vital information to share, especially since everyone's core services that they're having volunteers do can be different.**

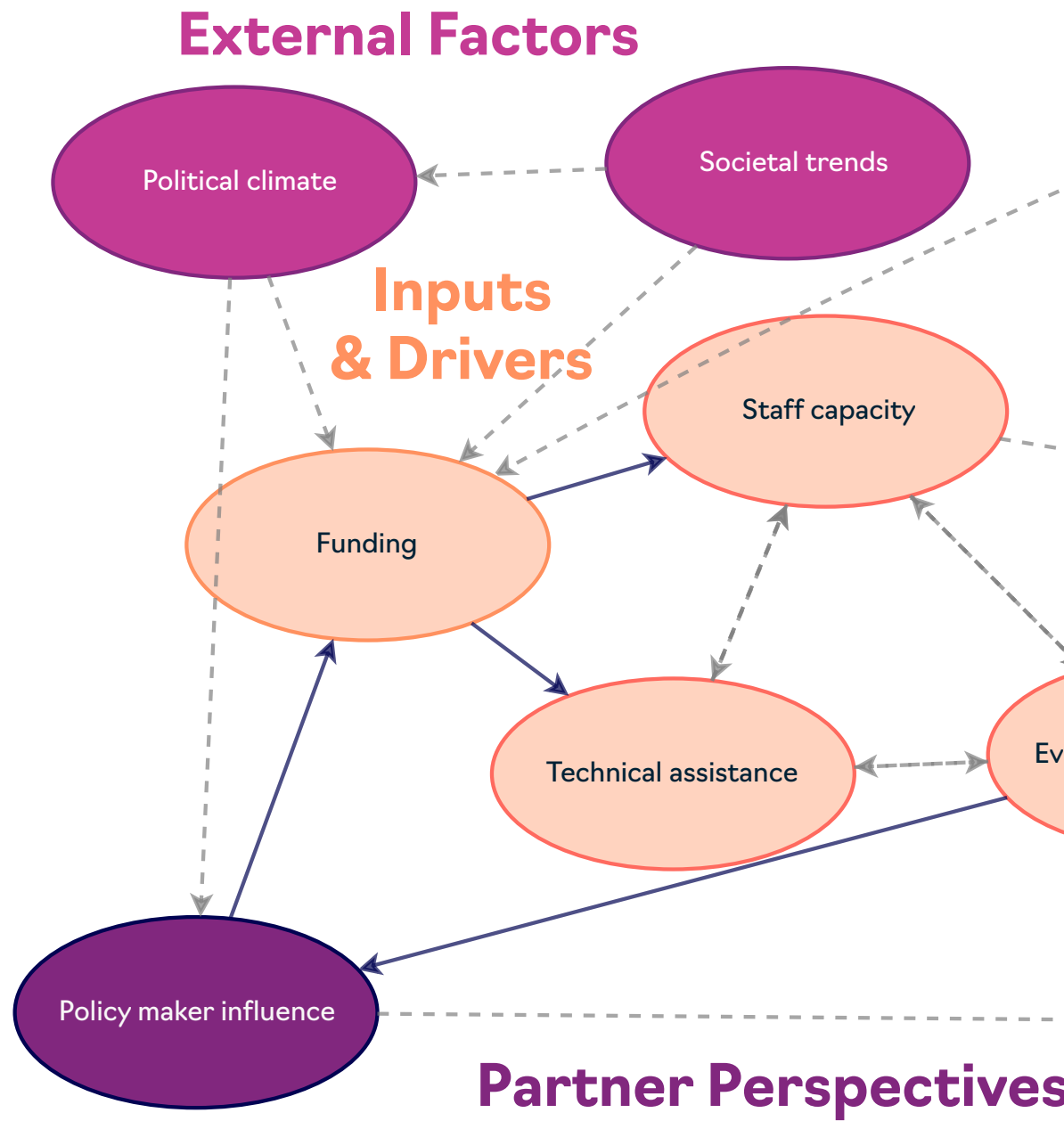
### **Leverage Points**

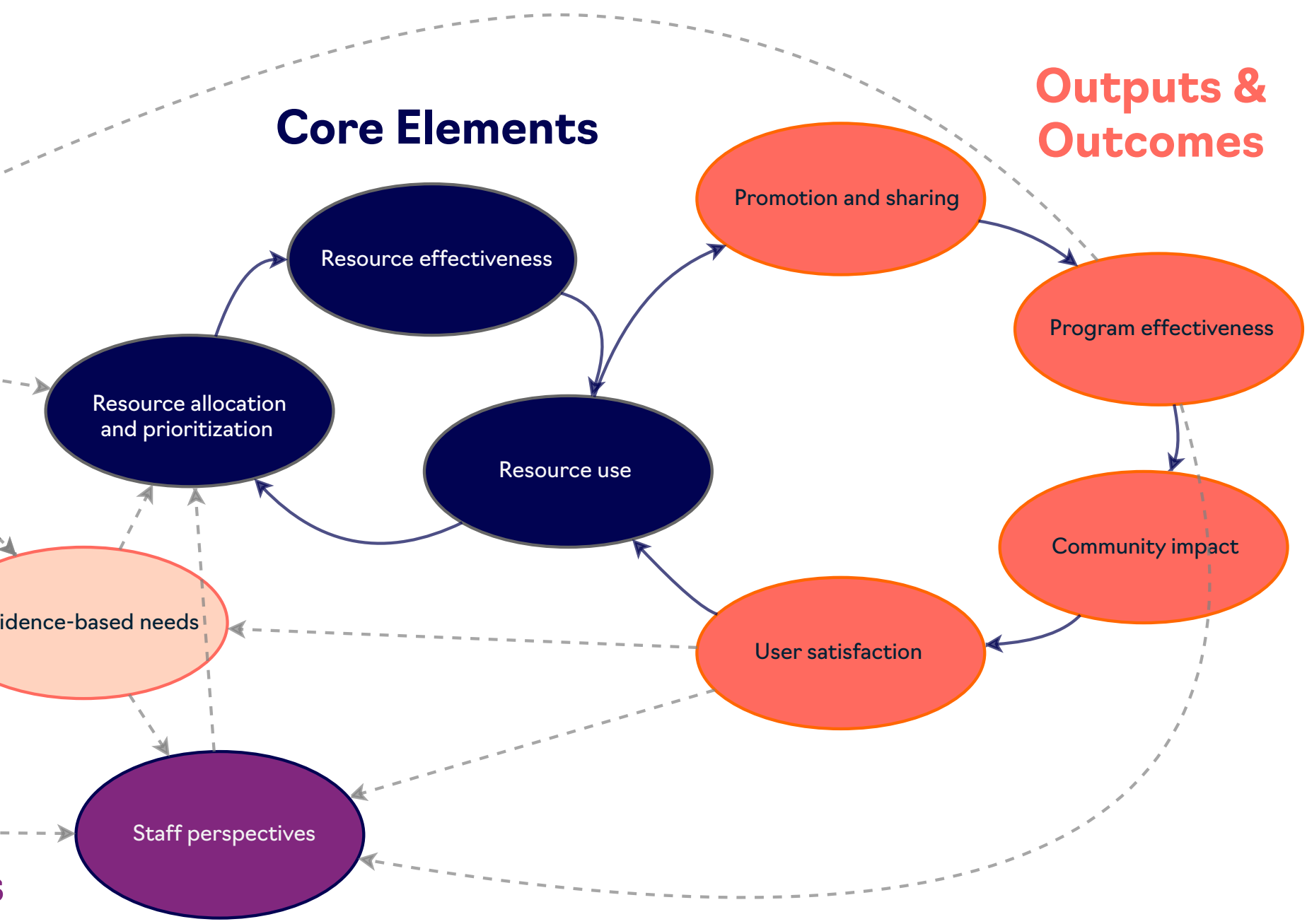
Resource use and resource allocation and prioritization emerged as main drivers of potential ripple effects in the system. Participants discussed both user satisfaction and promotion and sharing as key leverage points. It is critical to leverage the real and perceived value and effectiveness of resources, and the ability for users to adapt and share these materials to address the needs of their program or team.

Participants discussed opportunities such as using RWC membership and mentorship, needs assessments, user feedback, and evaluations to improve training materials and develop tools for knowledge and resource sharing. Participants further proposed leveraging and expanding the RWC website, which serves as a centralized hub for resources and training. CS staff depend on RWC's high-quality materials when training community sponsors and to avoid continually reinventing documents, yet there is an underutilization of these resources across the CS field. Strategic prioritization of resources and training will require partner buy-in and a shared understanding of the value of these resources.

**We have high staff turnover at the local level and that definitely has a huge impact on knowledge, understanding, training, background experiences, office culture, all of that. And of course, when there's also times where there's significant gaps in staffing capacity at high arrival times, it leads to maybe a lack of desire to try new things or to be open to working with new partners.**

**Figure 6:** Final map of Mini-System Three, focused on Training, Resources, and Knowledge Sharing







## Mini-System Four: Key Actor Engagement for Program Success

The following question guided the mapping process for the final mini-system: *What factors influence partner commitment and involvement in community sponsorship?* Participants defined “partner commitment and involvement” as the systematic involvement of all relevant parties in sponsorship programs, including newcomers, community groups, sponsors, RAs, local and national government agencies, funders, and service providers. This approach to commitment and involvement or engagement incorporates diverse perspectives and resources, fosters robust collaboration, and promotes a shared commitment to enhance program sustainability and client-centered outcomes.

### Mapping the Mini-System

Participants identified the following variables as key drivers impacting the mini-system: stability of funding, allocations for community engagement positions, staff capacity and skills, and training and support. Competition for resources, and thus the stability of program funding, ebbs and flows with the political climate and federal priorities. Wider societal trends and narratives in the media, including the spread of misinformation, play a role in shaping community perceptions of the value of CS. Ultimately, allocations for community engagement positions among RAs and PSOs, such as community developers, depend on the stability of funding.

This organizational capacity for community engagement informs the positive feedback loop central to the mini-system map. In this loop, each of the five elements cyclically reinforces the others: (a) client-centered, trauma-informed program design strengthens (b) partnership management and expansion, which ensures (c) shared resources are appropriate for partner needs, understood through (d) program evaluation processes, which lead to (e) quality and appropriate services. In the CS field, a scarcity mindset and professional gatekeeping can impact willingness to share resources and collaborate across programs. While newcomer input is critical to robust program

design, which is a key variable with the potential for a ripple effect in the system, participants flagged the exclusion of newcomers as a major area for improvement. Accountability to newcomers relies on program evaluation and communication about program effectiveness, and directly impacts newcomers' stability, sense of belonging, and social integration, as well as the greater public's awareness of newcomers and CS activities in local communities. Participants also flagged partnership management and expansion as a key driver in the system, affecting community bandwidth and resiliency. Additionally, participants identified culturally relevant community groups, and how CS staff leverage these strengths in welcoming work and resource sharing, as key connections in the system. A full list of variables identified for Mini-System Four is included in Appendix E.

### Challenges

Participants identified several challenges within this mini-system:

- **Exclusion of newcomers in program design, implementation, and evaluation:** Newcomers are too often overlooked or “left off the list” as key partners. As a result, programs are not tailored or responsive to their needs and priorities. Programs lack feedback mechanisms for program participants to share their experiences with organizations to inform continuous program improvement and local decision-making.
- **Lack of engagement with community groups as leaders in newcomer welcoming and integration:** Culturally relevant community groups are under-utilized as key resettlement resources and social support for newcomers. Instead, RA-led services and programming are prioritized, thereby overlooking the expertise and experience of community-based groups to support newcomer welcome and integration.
- **Engaging effectively with key actors is complex and requires dedicated staffing:** The CS model is complex, and therefore it is difficult to engage effectively across all key actors, who have unique and overlapping roles and responsibilities. Such complexity requires appropriate staffing and dedicated attention to managing

and expanding relationships with all actors in the ecosystem.

- **Politicized misunderstandings about CS programs:** Misinformation about immigrants disseminated in media and sometimes across government levels has further inflamed anti-immigration sentiment at the community level. As a result, any program, such as CS, that aims to engage community members as key resources and support persons for refugees, is threatened if not rejected by anti-immigration sentiments.
- **Unclear roles and responsibilities:** Roles and expectations among key actors are often unclear, resulting in insufficient communication and coordination among various actors. Insufficient communication and coordination lead to a lack of information about available resources and tools, resulting in poor knowledge sharing, underutilized resources, and ultimately, ineffective programming.
- **Community burnout:** Volunteerism and community engagement levels differ by location and can contribute to community fatigue. Further, given competing crises both at home and abroad, many community members feel overwhelmed and forced to limit their involvement in certain activities to manage their own mental health and well-being.

Lack of information about program effectiveness: Limitations in program monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) activities hamper accountability to key actors.

The following quotes from interview participants elaborate on these challenges:

**It's the local buy-in. Do we believe that co-sponsorship has a value as much as a caseworker who provides direct services? It's been really difficult and as we proceed further with budget cuts and restrictions, we see these community positions being the first on the chopping block because they're not a quote unquote direct service provider, it's the easier thing to cut.**

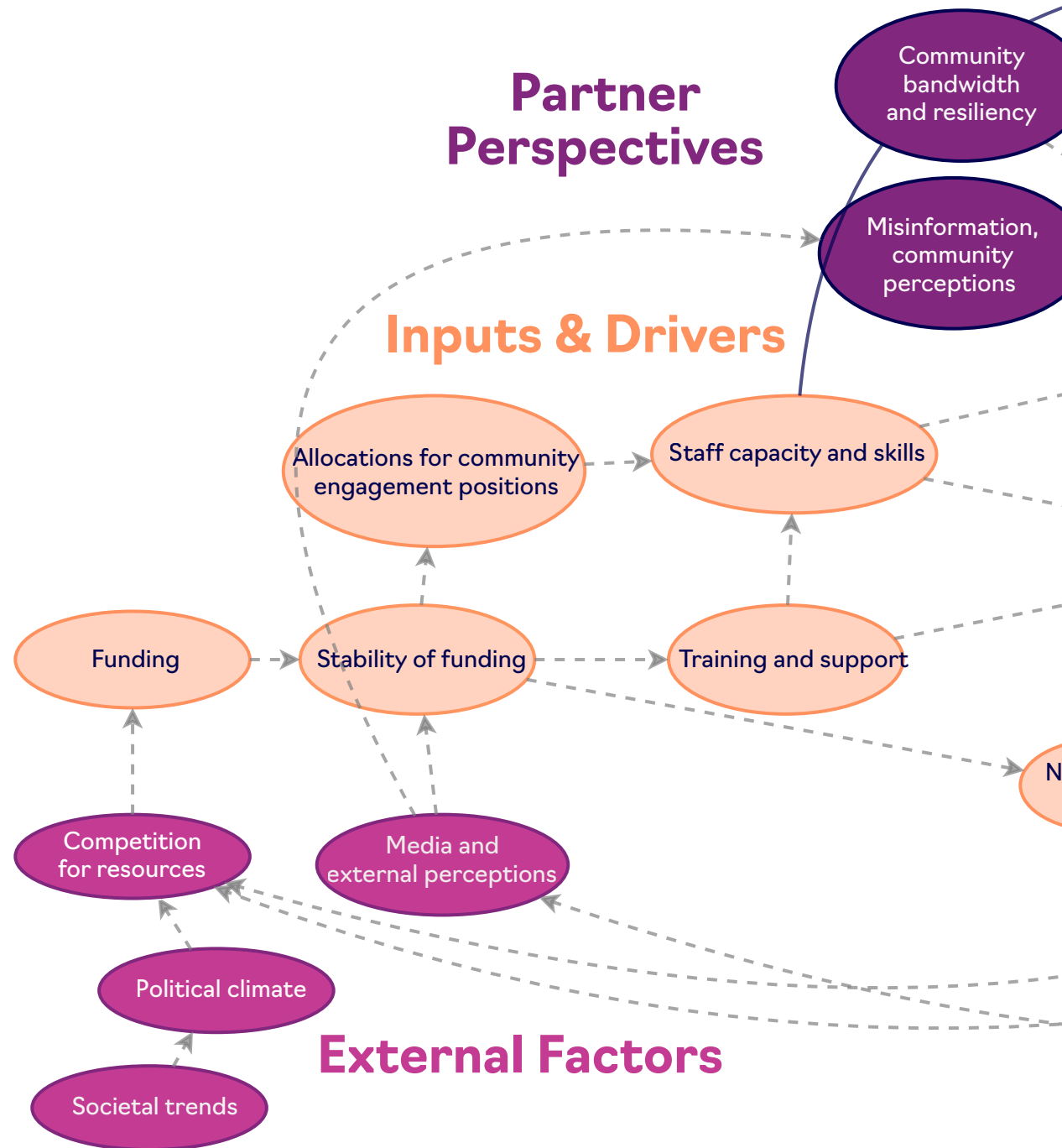
## Leverage Points

Participants involved in the mapping of Mini-System Four prioritized accountability to program users at the center of their mapping process. Participants identified the following leverage points in the system: aligning funding priorities, conducting thorough program evaluations, collecting partner feedback, and prioritizing economic resilience alongside social integration.

**Right now, because just in the last eight or so years. . . it's become so politically charged. There's a lot of confusion about the legality of refugees. . . in political conversations about refugees, it's all kind of jumbled in with people coming across the border. Some clarity there on a national level, which would be really helpful for partners.**

While this map emphasizes the importance of partnership management as a critical factor for the success of CS to coordinate actors, align their goals, and facilitate smooth communication and resource sharing, it also highlights that the involvement of these actors, including national and local RAs, private sponsors, federal partners, and community organizations, is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of CS.

Figure 7: Final map of Mini-System Four, focused on Key Actor Engagement for Program Success





## 5. Interconnected Themes

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Through interviews, conversations, and feedback surveys, several cross-cutting themes emerged from the Gathering. These include the desire for **increasing coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing** among agencies; **centering lived experiences**, voices, needs and priorities of the populations served across initiatives; **bridging gaps** in program scope, unifying messaging, and system coordination; and **using accountable program design models** that allow for responsive adaptation driven by community-level and client-centered data. In many ways, opportunities for positive change can be organized to fit into these broader themes.

### Increasing coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing among agencies

Refugee resettlement and CS in the United States consist of highly nationalized and highly localized models operating together simultaneously. At the national level, 10 RAs maintain direct relationships with the federal government as part of USRAP and obtain federal funding to implement a wide range of resettlement services. At the same time, the economic and social integration of newcomers requires a highly localized and client-centered approach, wherein local actors support and facilitate access to housing, medical and social services, jobs, and social support. Alongside co-sponsorship, where local agencies partner with community groups to carry out R&P services for newcomers, private sponsorship has proliferated, enabling private sponsor groups to do this work independently in local communities with support from PSOs across the country. Within the CS system, these local actors include local staff of the 10 national agencies, community sponsors and local service providers.

Due to this resettlement infrastructure, a very small number of staff can represent a very large national agency in a particular location. Sometimes, multiple agencies and community sponsorship programs may operate within a small geographic area, each with a small number

of staff. Furthermore, private sponsor groups and co-sponsorship programs providing the same forms of support to newcomers in a certain community can seem to be competing for access to local services. Limited coordination in and between CS programs and siloing of resources can cause extraneous or duplicative work that can feel crippling or frustrating for staff, community sponsors, and newcomers. By sharing resources, creating mechanisms for coordination, and collaborating on issues such as training and service mapping, local offices can help close the real and perceived bifurcation in the CS system. These efforts will reduce duplication of efforts, ensure higher quality of services, and minimize confusion and frustration across the field.

### Centering lived experiences, voices, needs, and priorities of the populations served across initiatives

Gathering participants frequently voiced a desire to elevate the experiences, voices, priorities, and needs of the participants at the center of CS programming. Resettlement programs work alongside newcomers in addressing the wide range of barriers to economic and social integration in their new communities. However, the nature of resettlement funding is contractual. An agency is paid based on the numbers of individuals served, with measurable program targets to be achieved and there may be limited flexibility to adjust programs based on the needs of changing groups of newcomers. Private sponsorship pathways, such as the Welcome Corps, depend on achievable R&P goals for newcomers. Furthermore, in response to humanitarian service providers and partners have acted quickly to respond to the urgent need for new and expanded CS programming.

Since funding or programmatic priorities do not always align with or fully capture the holistic, evolving needs of newcomers, there are numerous opportunities to develop enhanced CS programs that are more

responsive or culturally attentive to the newcomers served. Bringing cultural community groups into places of decision-making early on is just one way to elicit and prioritize input on programming, even before a newcomer has arrived. This approach may preempt issues such as language access and cultural needs much earlier. Involving community leaders and culturally relevant community groups should be central to CS practice and research. Programs can engage these groups in the early phases of planning or assessing the need for CS programs or initiatives. For instance, while a small local religious institution might not participate as an official community sponsor, they might become a partner of the RA or PSO, or even be hired by the RA or the Welcome Corps to support the integration needs of newcomers.

### **Bridging gaps in program scope, unifying messaging, and system coordination**

The number and variation of CS models have increased rapidly in the past several years, complicating many aspects of programming. For example, the origin and visa status of a newcomer have implications on program eligibility; the levels of financial engagement and support needed to achieve economic and social integration depend on the type of CS program; CS programs made known to community members may differ by agency or city within a regional area; and multiple pathways exist for private sponsorship. Within one local community, several different CS pathways and efforts may be operating concurrently but in silos. The lack of consistent vocabulary among local, regional, and national offices, and the lack of coordination between CS programs, is confusing for staff, volunteers, and program participants. Potential sponsors are lost in the process, as some may be a good fit for co-

sponsorship programs, and others for private sponsorship programs, but they are not redirected to either option appropriately or efficiently. Only a coordinated, concerted effort across the USRAP CS system will solve the need for unified messaging on CS and open channels of communication between co-sponsorship and private sponsorship programs. CS actors can collaborate towards a more cohesive system by clarifying the scope of respective CS programs, establishing mechanisms for collaboration between programs, and making this information more accessible and comprehensible for the public. First steps may be to agree on standard definitions across agencies, CS programs, and local contexts; coordinate key training across programs; and build consensus on sponsor recruitment and referral within the CS system.

### **Using accountable program design models that allow for responsive adaptation driven by data from the community**

Participants repeatedly raised the need for programming that is more responsive to community needs and priorities. CS programming should rely on appropriate Accountability to Affected Populations principles, including monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) practices that build program participant feedback mechanisms to facilitate continuous program improvement. An effective program cycle uses information to design and implement services, accepts feedback regularly, and adjusts program activities based on inputs and changing needs. This cycle is considered best practice and allows room for responsiveness and accountability to all parties, while reducing the influence of singular perspectives on a particular issue.



## 6. Analysis and Opportunities for Positive Change

During the gathering, participants studied variables, themes, and interdependencies that emerged through the mapping process and identified numerous leverage points that might be used to effect durable change in each mini-system or across the entire CS system. Providing a comprehensive picture of the interconnected nature of the CS ecosystem across the country, the process underscored the critical role of coordination and connection in unpacking challenges and identifying possible solutions. Complex challenges in the system will be difficult to address without this consensus and without partners' shared commitment to this effort.

Through a participatory prioritization exercise, groups reviewed each other's opportunities for immediate change, inspired by leverage points in the system. These reinforced cross-cutting themes and largely centered on resolving frustrations, reducing duplication, refocusing on newcomer success, and investing in strong program design. Collectively, participants chose the following five actionable opportunities for RWC and partners to prioritize:

- 1. Agree upon and use common terminology across the field** to reduce confusion among agencies, organizations, and community groups. As a key challenge identified in Mini-System One, complicated and differentiated language between CS programs hampers community participation. Participants hypothesized that prioritizing shared, consistent terminology across agencies and organizations will benefit the entire CS system and promote visibility and perception of program value for the wider public.
- 2. Collaborate on service navigation toolkits across agencies and organizations** for new arrivals to increase the quality and accessibility of services. In a context in which RA, co-sponsor, and private sponsor actors support newcomers in local communities, local service connections can prove challenging due to unclear division of responsibilities, limited resource sharing, and duplication

of efforts. The development of joint service navigation toolkits would serve as a reference point for large and small agencies, PSOs, and community sponsors who need the information to be accessible and organized.

- 3. Centralize training and resources** so that RA staff can train community sponsors using high-quality materials without continually reinventing documents. The CS training and resources for teams and community sponsors that RWC has developed can reduce the burden on frontline staff. This will in turn enable them to support community sponsors and newcomers in other ways. By participating in the design and distribution of resources and training that are centralized on RWC's website, frontline staff can better understand their roles and the roles of community sponsors and feel confident that they are using the best materials. RWC is dedicated to expanding the accessibility of high-quality, user-friendly resources and training based on CS needs assessments through a variety of formats, such as videos and interactive modules, to accommodate diverse learning styles and promote successful learning outcomes.
- 4. Invest in learning, accountability, and evaluation** to ensure key actors in the CS ecosystem are responding to the ongoing and changing needs and priorities of newcomers. CS programs have developed quickly at a large scale and operate in a programmatic environment that is contractual, in which contract terms are set by federal government agencies and the frameworks for success are defined within that relationship. By focusing on accountability to end users, CS programs can put in place healthy program cycle models that are more responsive to the needs and feedback of newcomers. Co-sponsorship and private sponsorship programs should learn from one another.

**5. Refocus the resettlement sector mindset on holistic newcomer integration**, placing the lived experiences of newcomers at the center of programming and service delivery. While the federal emphasis on early workforce entry is an important aspect of integration, this is just one aspect of integration for a person or family with needs for housing, health, and community. RWC members can provide thought leadership in inspiring a paradigm shift in which the role of community sponsors in resettlement service delivery moves from a focus on newcomer employment to a focus on holistic integration in the community.

## Role of RWC

RWC is uniquely positioned as a leader in the CS field to bring partners together in leveraging and aligning resources to pursue and implement these opportunities for system-wide change. For example, RWC is interested in spearheading collaborative efforts to create a CS lexicon, or common terminology, to be shared across contexts in the field. RWC has begun work addressing the need for service navigation toolkits through its interactive local-level resource map, with funding from Switchboard through ORR. RWC will continue to play an important role in designing related navigation resources, which will require input from partners to ensure the accuracy of local information. Furthermore, as a central resource hub for CS, RWC will prioritize efforts with national, regional, and local partners to develop and enhance training, resources, and mechanisms for knowledge sharing. RWC will incorporate continuous feedback to promote the accessibility of high-quality resources and materials for all partners involved in CS, with a focus on relieving pressure on local CS staff.

Finally, RWC is committed to championing efforts to amplify newcomer leadership and involvement in program design, implementation, and assessment, as well as to strengthen accountability to partners through MEAL activities that are responsive, robust, and newcomer-centered in the field. In addition to sharing best practices for CS programs, RWC will strengthen its approach to modeling this practice internally, for example through its collaboration with Refugee Advisors. Refugee

Advisors are individuals with lived refugee experience who work with RWC in training and resource development. Additionally, RWC will continue to explore approaches to help shift the resettlement paradigm towards a focus on holistic newcomer integration, for example, through public-facing reports and key partner conversations. Relatedly, future research using a System Mapping component will continue adding value to CS practice. Research collaborations will greatly benefit from centering perspectives of newcomers, local community leaders, PSGs, and service providers in the entire coordination process.

# Conclusion

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The system mapping process undertaken by RWC and its partners has illuminated the complex, interconnected nature of the community sponsorship (CS) ecosystem in the United States. By visualizing the relationships, dynamics, and leverage points within this system, the exercise has yielded insights to guide future collaboration and positive change.

At the heart of the findings is the critical need to shift fundamental mental models about the role and value of CS programs. Transitioning from viewing CS as a “nice to have” add-on to recognizing it as “essential for successful refugee integration” emerged as a pivotal leverage point. This mental shift would drive structural changes to ensure CS is appropriately resourced, prioritized, and systematically evaluated – with a focus on directly incorporating newcomer feedback.

The mapping process also revealed the importance of conceptualizing CS as a holistic, coordinated approach, rather than siloed, isolated programs. This would enable greater community engagement by establishing shared resources, standardized training, and clear collaboration pathways between co-sponsorship, private sponsorship, and other refugee resettlement partners. Sustaining this holistic vision will require continued investment in building the evidence base on CS’s impact.

Additionally, the exercise underscored that CS should be viewed not merely as a short-term response to capacity challenges, but as a long-term strategy for building community support and advocacy for refugee integration. Fostering the professionalization of CS staff and embedding rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices are crucial underlying structures to support this mental model shift.

Finally, the mapping highlighted the need to move beyond “low-hanging” engagement with only those who initially express interest in CS. Instead, intentional outreach and partnership-building with diverse

community stakeholders emerged as a key leverage point. Establishing best practices and providing resources to enable CS staff to invest in these proactive relationship-building efforts will be essential.

By collectively addressing these mental model shifts and building the corresponding underlying structures, the CS ecosystem can move towards greater coordination, community ownership, and responsiveness – ultimately enhancing the welcome and integration experience for refugee newcomers across the United States. RWC is committed to spearheading these efforts in collaboration with its partners, drawing on the invaluable insights gleaned from the system mapping process.

The key areas identified as next steps include enhancing recruitment and onboarding processes to ensure clarity and consistency, improving training and resource management to better equip sponsors, and streamlining communication among partners to avoid gaps and ensure alignment of responsibilities and expectations across different organizations. RWC anticipates these findings will support CS partners in strengthening collaboration, coordination, and shared trust, and in encouraging strategic decision-making and innovation across the resettlement sector.

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# Appendices

## A. The 2024 Gathering Concept Note and Agenda



### RWC Member Gathering 2024

May 1 – 2, 2024

#### Concept Note and Agenda

Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC), in partnership with Switchboard, is thrilled to host the RWC Member Gathering, taking place at the [United Methodist Building](#), Rooms 2 & 3, in Washington D.C.

#### Learning Objective:

During the Gathering, participants will work towards driving innovation and enhancing knowledge sharing and connections in community sponsorship. Using a system mapping methodology (see a brief introduction to the approach below), participants will unpack complexity and identify leverage points that will guide positive change in FY25. Participants will leave the Gathering with enhanced strategic planning tools and an increased capacity to address challenges and opportunities identified in community sponsorship coordination between resettlement agencies, community members, federal partners, state representatives and refugee services.

#### Approach:

System mapping is a method used to visualize the relationships between various elements within a system. It serves as a tool for understanding the structure, dynamics and interactions between complex components of a system. RWC Members will employ this methodology to discuss and identify leverage points for improved coordination in community sponsorship to better serve refugee clients.

Ahead of the Gathering, RWC conducted in-depth interviews with Members to frame the system of coordination in community sponsorship by defining its context, problems, mapping goals, and identifying system variables and common themes. During the Gathering, participants will work in groups to (a) create a causal loop map to see how variables drive system behavior; (b) reflect on the map by creating a system story that synthesizes learnings and insights; and (c) leverage the map by identifying points where small changes could affect positive impacts on the system.

#### Key System Mapping Terminologies:

- *Variables* in system mapping refer to the different parts, elements or factors of a system that form the building blocks upon which system maps are developed. Groups of related variables are called clusters.
- *Feedback loops* represent the circular relationships between variables of a system and drive system behavior. Feedback loops visualize how changes in one part of the system can influence other parts of system, leading to either reinforcing or balancing loops.
- *Leverage points* are specific areas of a system where a small change or intervention can lead to significant shifts or impacts on the entire system.

#### Outcome:

At the conclusion of the two-day RWC Member Gathering, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in community sponsorship coordination. They will develop the skills necessary to create and analyze system maps, identify feedback loops and leverage points within the system. Additionally, participants will have synthesized insights from expert presentations and research findings to inform their system mapping exercises. By collaboratively developing leverage points within the system, participants will be able to identify actionable plans and priorities to enhance coordination in community sponsorship in FY25.

#### Participants:

- RWC Membership
- Bureau of Populations, Refugees and Migration (PRM)
- Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
- Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH)
- Switchboard
- Welcome Corps Support Line (WCSL)
- Stanford Immigration Policy Lab
- Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS)
- RWC Staff

# A. The 2024 Gathering Concept Note and Agenda



## RWC Member Gathering 2024 Agenda

Day 1: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 (meeting times are in ET)	
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	<p><b>Opening and Reflection</b> Led by Jessica Chapman</p> <p>Participants will be able to recall the theme, purpose, and results of the 2023 RWC Member Gathering and describe the aim of the 2024 RWC Member Gathering to prepare for the Gathering's activities.</p>
9:30 AM - 10:45 AM	<p><b>Summary of Interview Findings – (30 minutes)</b> Led by Jordan Klein</p>
	<p><b>Introduction to System Mapping – (30 minutes)</b> Led by Katherine Gambir Khan</p>
	<p><b>Q&amp;A – (15 minutes)</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to summarize interview findings to understand challenges in community sponsorship coordination across resettlement agencies (RAs) and to describe the system mapping approach to establish a foundation for the system mapping process.</p>
10:45 AM - 11:00 AM	Break
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	<p><b>Working Group I</b> Led by Katherine Gambir Khan</p>
	<p><b>Map the System</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to build and design a system map in small groups using variables and clusters to visualize the interconnected variables that comprise the system.</p>
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch

1:30 PM - 2:45 PM	<p><b>Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and Office for Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Panel with Q&amp;A</b></p> <p><i>Effective Refugee Integration: Exploring the Coordination of Community Sponsorship and Service Connections</i> Led by Jessica Ashcraft</p> <p>Participants will be able to synthesize information from PRM and ORR's presentations to formulate questions and apply newfound insights to the system mapping working groups.</p>
2:45 PM - 3:00 PM	Break
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	<p><b>Working Group II</b> Led by Japhet Ajani</p>
	<p><b>Reflect on the System</b></p> <p>Participants will analyze system connections to identify feedback loops in their system maps for the purpose of creating a system story narrative to summarize the dynamics driving the system.</p>
4:00 PM - 4:30 PM	<p><b>Feedback and Closing</b> Led by Jordan Klein</p>
6:30 PM	<p><b>Networking Dinner at Immigrant Food</b> 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20006</p>
Day 2: Thursday, May 2, 2024 (meeting times are in ET)	
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	<p><b>Day 2 Kick-off</b> Led by Japhet Ajani and Jordan Klein</p> <p>Participants will be welcomed to Day 2 of the RWC Member Gathering and recap system mapping goals, objectives, and outcomes from the previous day to set expectations and prepare for additional system mapping activities.</p>
	<p><b>Presentation by Stanford Immigration Policy Lab (IPL)</b> <i>Refugee Co-sponsorship in the United States: Qualitative Findings and Ongoing Research</i></p> <p>Participants will get an update on the findings from the Stanford IPL research which RWC Members have contributed to since the last gathering.</p>
10:30 AM - 10:45 AM	Break



## A. The 2024 Gathering Concept Note and Agenda



10:45 AM - 12:30 PM	<p><b>Working Group III</b> Led by David Sulewski</p> <p><b>Identifying Leverage Points for Driving Change within the System</b> Participants will analyze their system map and identify promising areas for intervention, called leverage points, to develop a theory of change and define their vision for the future of the system that will be shared with the whole group as a flipchart presentation.</p>
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:45 PM – 2:30 PM	<p><b>Group Presentation of System Maps – Group Representatives</b> Led by Katherine Gambir Khan</p> <p>Participants will share, validate, and evaluate different system maps created during the gathering to understand system complexity so that RWC Members can capitalize on newfound insights to achieve a desired purpose. Each group will present their system maps using a flipchart.</p>
2:30 PM -3:45 PM	<p><b>FY25 Plans and Priority</b> Led by David Sulewski and Japhet Ajani</p> <p>Participants will generate next steps and priorities for FY25 by assessing system theories of change, known as leverage hypotheses, with the aim of facilitating coordination in community sponsorship in FY25.</p>
3:45 – 4:00 PM	<p><b>Feedback and closing</b> Led by Jordan Klein</p>

## B. Pre-Gathering Interview Questions and Mini-System Framing

### Interview Discussion Guide

Stakeholders: RAs and PSOs, community members participating in the programs, federal partners funding the programs, SRCs and SRHCs

#### Introduction

*Greeting and thank participants for their participation.*

“We asked you to join this interview today as part of the data collection process for the RWC Member Gathering taking place in May. The theme of this year’s Gathering is coordination in community sponsorship. For the in-person event we’ll be using a System Mapping approach to unpack complexities in this system and identify leverage points where positive change can be enacted to devise next steps and plans for FY25.

The data collected during these interviews will shape the challenges and variables RWC Members will examine during the System Mapping process and create a foundation upon which the System Mapping process can build on. I would like to record and transcribe this interview so that the data you provide can be cleaned and analyzed. The recordings and transcription will be stored in a folder accessible to me, our Associate Director of Resources and Learning, Japhet Ajani and the Deputy Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, Katherine Gambir. Once the data is analyzed and extracted from your interview, it will populate a spreadsheet in a shared RWC folder for our team to analyze. The data collection results will be summarized during the Gathering. Your feedback will be anonymous, and your names or organization will not be shared. Do I have your permission to record and transcribe this interview?

*\*If yes, click record and transcribe\**

*\*If no, take detailed notes of questions asked and answers provided\**

Thank you! Do you have questions about the interview's purpose or how your information will be managed?

Wonderful. Do you agree to begin the interview?”

#### Background

“First, I’d like to ask a few background questions about your role and your agency’s CS programs.”

1. What is your role, and how long have you been in this position?
2. What CS programs do your offices offer (co-sponsorship & support teams)
3. Do offices in your network participate in Welcome Corps and if yes, how?

### Key Topic Questions

#### Community Sponsorship Coordination

“Next, I’d like to ask you questions about coordination within community sponsorship programs.”

1. How are community sponsorship programs coordinated between stakeholders?
2. What areas of internal coordination do you see as most critical for your community sponsorship programs? (example: coordinating with case managers, coordinating on annual sponsor number goals)
3. What areas of external coordination do you see as most critical for your community sponsorship programs? (example: coordinating with other agencies on outreach efforts, coordinating with PSOs also connecting with local services).

4. What have been the most significant barriers to communicating and coordinating with stakeholders to support refugee clients in CS?
5. How has the initiation of private sponsorship pathways impacted co-sponsorship programs in your network?

#### Welcome Corps

1. If offices in your network participate in Welcome Corps, what interactions and parallels do you see between private and community sponsorship coordination?

### Probing Questions

#### Role of sponsors in connecting refugee newcomers with services in the community:

1. How do sponsors collaborate with offices in your network to identify and access services for refugee newcomers in the community?
2. What challenges do sponsors encounter in assisting refugee newcomers with accessing services?
3. How has the initiation of private sponsorship pathways impacted how community sponsors interact with service providers?
4. How do offices in your network evaluate the effectiveness of sponsors in connecting refugee newcomers with services?
5. How are the roles and responsibilities of sponsors defined and communicated to ensure clear accountability and alignment with shared objectives?

#### Recruitment and goal setting

1. How do offices in your network set specific goals and objectives for recruitment?
2. What barriers do offices in your network encounter in recruiting CS sponsors?
3. How has the initiation of private sponsorship pathways impacted recruitment goals in CS programs?
4. What strategies do your offices employ to recruit sponsors to the CS programs offered by your offices?
5. How are recruitment goals and objectives for CS programs communicated to local communities?

#### Local office capacity and role in supporting community sponsors, including private sponsors

1. What are the roles of local RA offices when providing support to community and private sponsors?
2. How does your office’s national RA assess the capacity of local offices to support community and private sponsors in their efforts to assist refugee newcomers?
3. How has the initiation of private sponsorship pathways impacted local RA capacity to support community sponsors?
4. How do local RAs coordinate with stakeholders, such as governmental agencies and community groups, to leverage resources and enhance support for community sponsors?
5. How do local RAs incorporate feedback and input from community and private sponsors into their decision-making processes and service delivery models?

#### Information and knowledge sharing

1. How do offices in your network currently share knowledge and information about the resettlement process, available resources, and local support services for refugees with community sponsors?

## B. Pre-Gathering Interview Questions and Mini-System Framing

2. How do offices in your network and USRAP/PRM currently share knowledge and information about policies, procedures, and guidelines related to community sponsorship programs with offices in your network?
3. What barriers or challenges to knowledge sharing within community sponsorship are faced by offices in your network?
4. How has the initiation of private sponsorship pathways impacted information and knowledge sharing in community sponsorship programs?
5. To what extent do offices in your network have access to community sponsorship resources?

### Closing

“Is there anything else you’d like to share to help inform the RWC Member Gathering on the coordination of community sponsorship programs, inclusive of services?”

Thank you for taking time to share your thoughts and expertise on community sponsorship programming. I will also follow-up this interview with a short form to collect quantitative data. If you have any questions about this interview, or the upcoming gathering, please reach out to me and we’ll be in touch with more information about the Gathering shortly!”

### Mini-System Framing

#### Recruitment and onboarding

**Definition:** The strategic processes employed by community organizations, particularly resettlement agencies, to engage, educate, and equip community stakeholders and volunteers in supporting newcomers. This involves attracting sponsor groups or volunteers and guiding them through a structured pathway that includes awareness-raising, training, and legal compliance to ensure they are prepared to effectively support the resettlement and integration of refugees into the community. The onboarding process includes critical steps such as security clearances, training on roles and responsibilities, and the provision of necessary resources and support to foster successful sponsor-newcomer relationships. This process not only enhances the capacity of the community to assist in resettlement efforts but also strengthens community ties and the overall resettlement infrastructure.

**Research question:** What factors influence sponsor mobilization, retention and satisfaction in community sponsorship?

**Main Variable:** Sponsor mobilization, retention and satisfaction –the process of actively engaging and maintaining a network of sponsors through effective recruitment, ongoing support and resources, and ensuring their satisfaction and thus commitment to continued involvement.

#### Variables:

- Sponsor retention
- Public perception and awareness
- Communication and expectation management
- Trainings
- Local outreach
- Community partners buy-in
- Funding to support staff roles
- Understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Development of effective recruitment strategies
- Availability of volunteers
- Time for outreach (at local level)

- Marketing materials
- Resource accessibility for sponsors
- Volunteer mobilization
- Contextualized recruitment resources (specific to local context and target group)
- Feedback on recruitment and outreach materials and strategies
- Support and evaluation

#### Additional questions:

How do recruitment strategies influence volunteer retention and satisfaction in community sponsorship programs?

What impact does the onboarding process have on the effectiveness of community sponsorship in supporting newcomer integration?

How do different models of community sponsorship affect the recruitment and onboarding experiences of sponsors and volunteers?

What are the key factors in the recruitment and onboarding process that predict successful outcomes in community sponsorship programs?

#### Service connection and ongoing service provision

**Definition:** The processes through which sponsors and resettlement agencies facilitate access to essential local services for newcomers and provide continuous support to ensure successful integration. This includes identifying and connecting newcomers with resources such as healthcare, education, employment, and legal services, and maintaining active involvement through regular follow-ups and adjustments to meet evolving needs. The goal is to ensure a sustainable integration process that empowers newcomers to become self-reliant and active members of the community.

**Research question:** What factors influence the establishment of reliable, long-lasting service connections?

**Main Variable:** Reliable and long-lasting service connections – enduring partnerships between refugees, local affiliates, communities and local services that consistently provide necessary support and resources, ensuring the effective and sustainable integration of newcomers into the community.

#### Variables:

- Roles and responsibilities of case managers and community sponsors in connecting newcomers to ongoing services
- Sponsor role in connecting newcomers to services
- Case manager role in connecting newcomers to services
- Identification and access to services for refugees
- Established partnerships with community organizations
- Local affiliate collaboration (within same city/locality)
- Sponsor compliance to MOUs
- Case manager management of sponsors
- Effective resource distribution
- Tools and knowledge to navigate service landscape
- Adaption to local context

## B. Pre-Gathering Interview Questions and Mini-System Framing

- Resources provided by local affiliates to support sponsors
- Public benefits management
- Tailored approaches to service connections
- Broad approaches to service connections

### Additional questions:

How do different community sponsorship models affect the efficiency and effectiveness of service connections and ongoing provision?

What support is given to sponsors to better connect their clients to services?

What collaboration exists between service providers, local affiliates, state agencies and national networks to connect clients to services?

### Training, resources and knowledge sharing

**Definition:** The systematic efforts to educate, equip, and empower refugees, sponsors, communities and resettlement staff with the necessary skills, information, and tools to enhance programs to effectively support newcomers. This includes providing structured training programs that cover legal obligations, cultural sensitivities, and specific needs of newcomers; distributing resources such as manuals, guidelines, and access to support networks; and facilitating the exchange of best practices and experiences among stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness and impact of sponsorship activities. The goal is to build a knowledgeable and resourceful community, inclusive of staff, that can provide comprehensive and culturally competent support to newcomers.

**Research question:** What factors influence the development and dissemination of targeted training, resources and knowledge sharing?

**Main variable:** targeted development and dissemination of training, resources and knowledge sharing – the strategic creation and distribution of educational content, practical tools and shared insights.

### Variables:

- Quantity and quality of training resources
- Updates to training and resources
- Training and technical assistance provided by national headquarters
- Information sharing and training opportunities within national network
- Collaborative knowledge sharing practices (e.g. communities of practice, discussion calls, shared resources)
- Sharing best practices, lessons learned and challenges
- Continuous trainings
- One-time trainings
- Development of centralized information systems
- Channels for regular updates and communication
- Partnerships for resource development
- Feedback mechanism
- Needs assessment mechanisms

### Additional questions:

What role do resources and tools play in enhancing the capacity of sponsors/RA staff/community members/service providers?

How does strategic knowledge sharing among stakeholders affect community sponsorship programs?

What key factors in training, resources and knowledge sharing lead to successful/unsuccessful outcomes?

### Stakeholder engagement for program success and sustainability

**Definition:** The systematic involvement of all relevant parties, including community groups, sponsors, resettlement agencies, local and national government agencies, funders, and service providers, in sponsorship programs. This engagement ensures that diverse perspectives and resources are incorporated, fostering robust collaboration and shared commitment. The goal is to enhance the effectiveness of the sponsorship program, ensure its adaptability to changing needs, and secure ongoing support to sustain long-term success.

**Research question:** What factors influence stakeholder commitment and involvement in community sponsorship?

**Main variable:** stakeholder commitment and involvement – the active participation and dedicated support from relevant parties in the execution and ongoing development of community sponsorship programs.

### Variables:

- Partnerships with external organizations (faith based, corporate, community, etc.)
- R&P office staff buy-in
- Community buy-in
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Expectation alignment
- Strategic action plans
- State office engagement
- Politicalization of refugees
- Value of volunteerism and community belonging
- Marketing at a national level
- Direct service provider value
- Funding sources
- Financial commitment of sponsors

### Additional questions:

How does the level of stakeholder engagement and collaboration impact the success and sustainability of CS programs?

What are the inputs and outputs of stakeholder contributions?

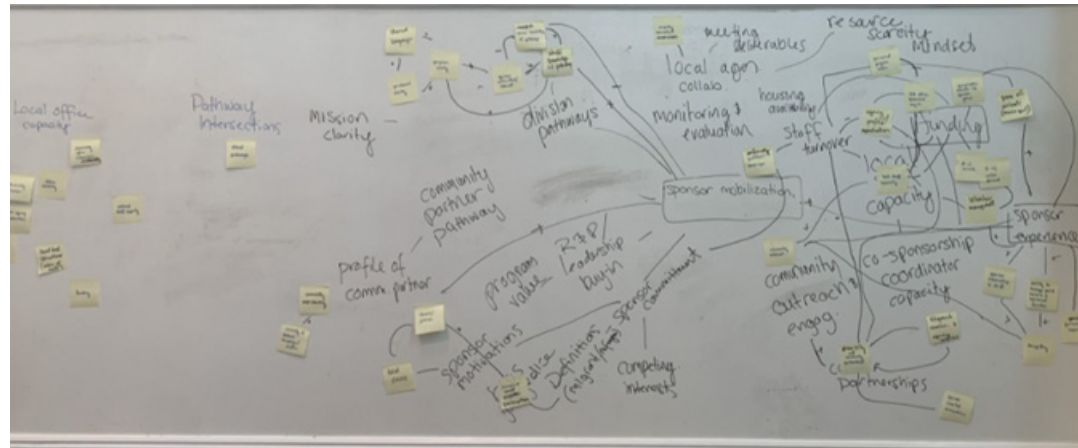
What strategic channels of communication and collaboration exist among stakeholders?

What strategies enhance stakeholder commitment and involvement and contribute to the sustainability of CS programs?

## C. Images of System Mapping Process

### First Phase: Group Visualizations of Mini-Systems

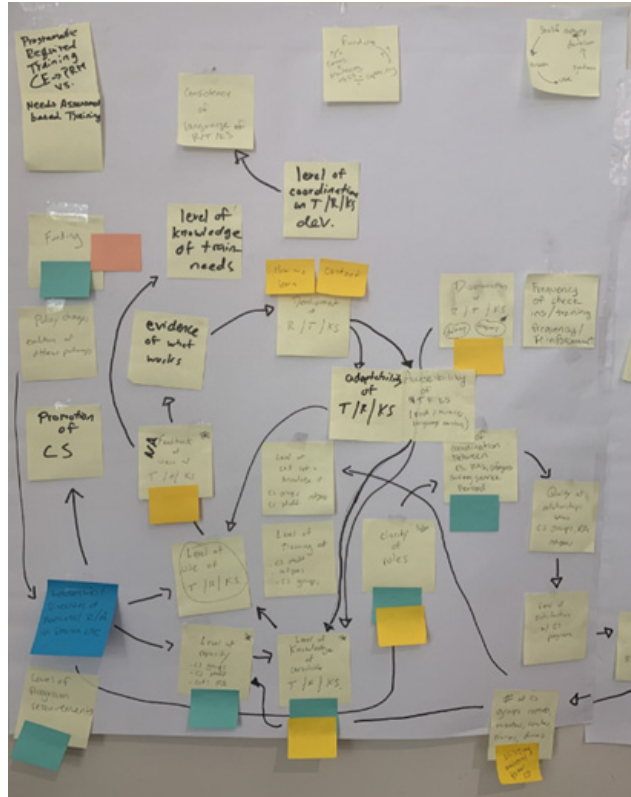
#### Mini-System One: Recruitment and Onboarding



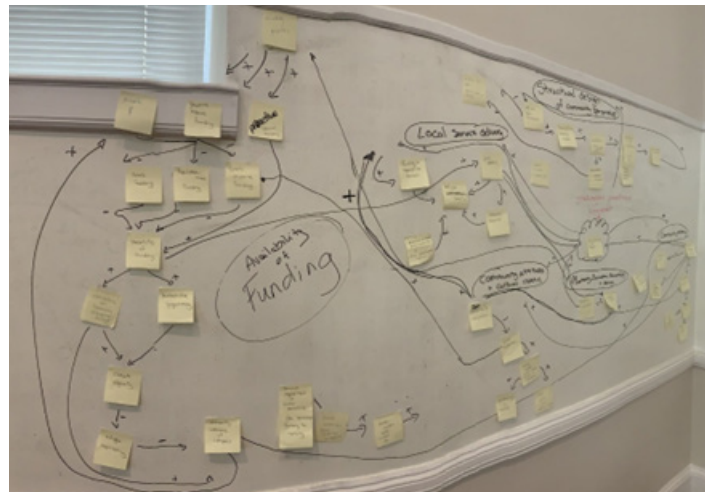
#### Mini-System Two: Service Connection and Provision



### Mini-System Three: Training, Resources, and Knowledge Sharing

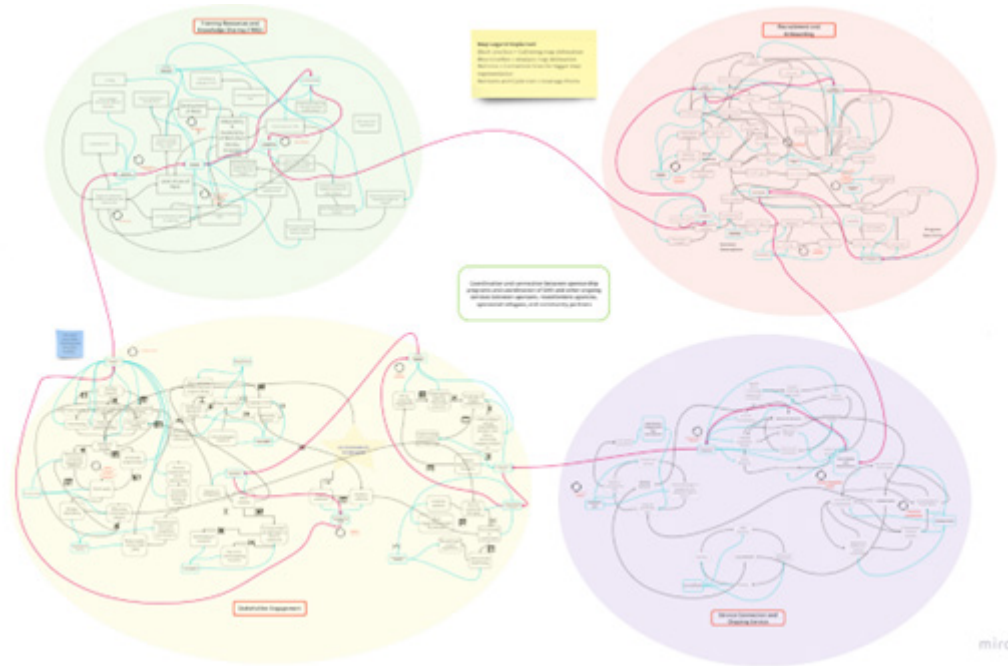


### Mini-System Four: Key Actor Engagement for Program Success

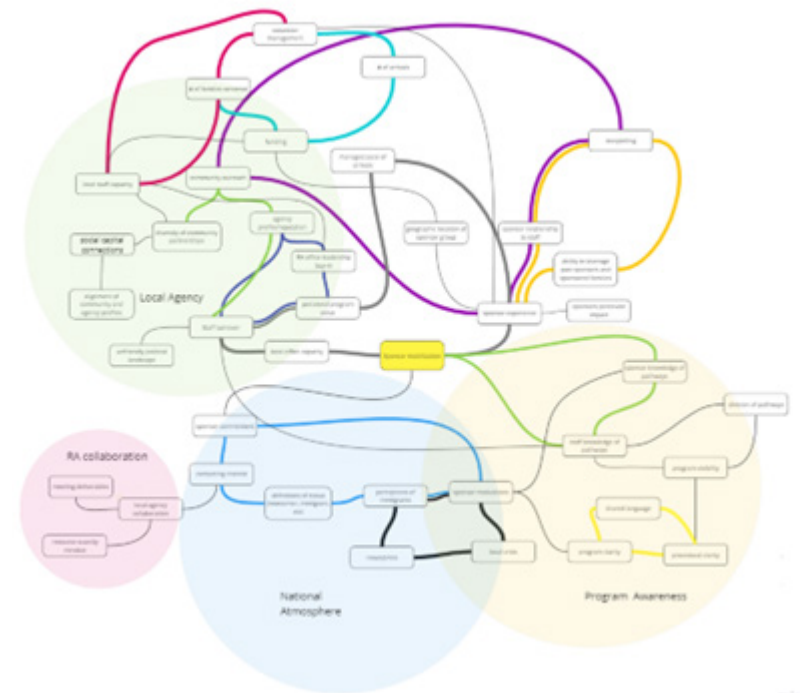




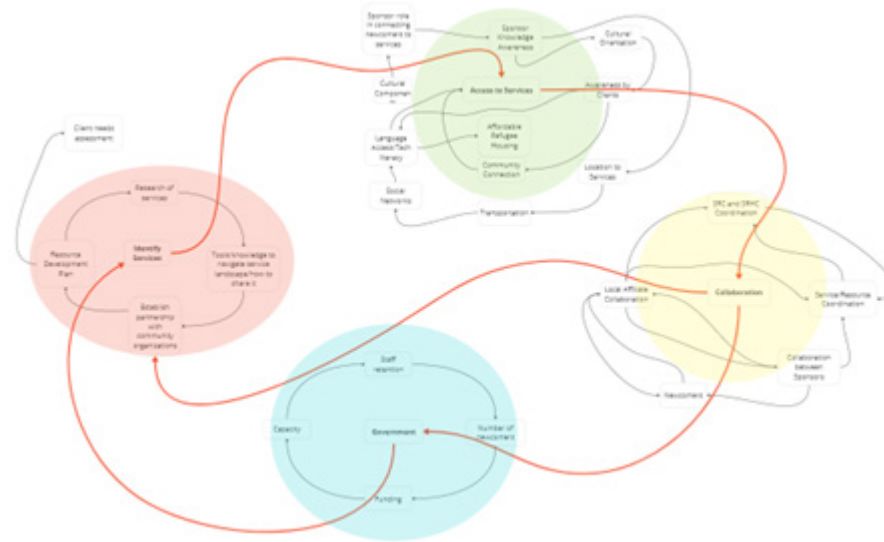
## Second Phase: Initial Rendering of Large System Map Using Participant Feedback



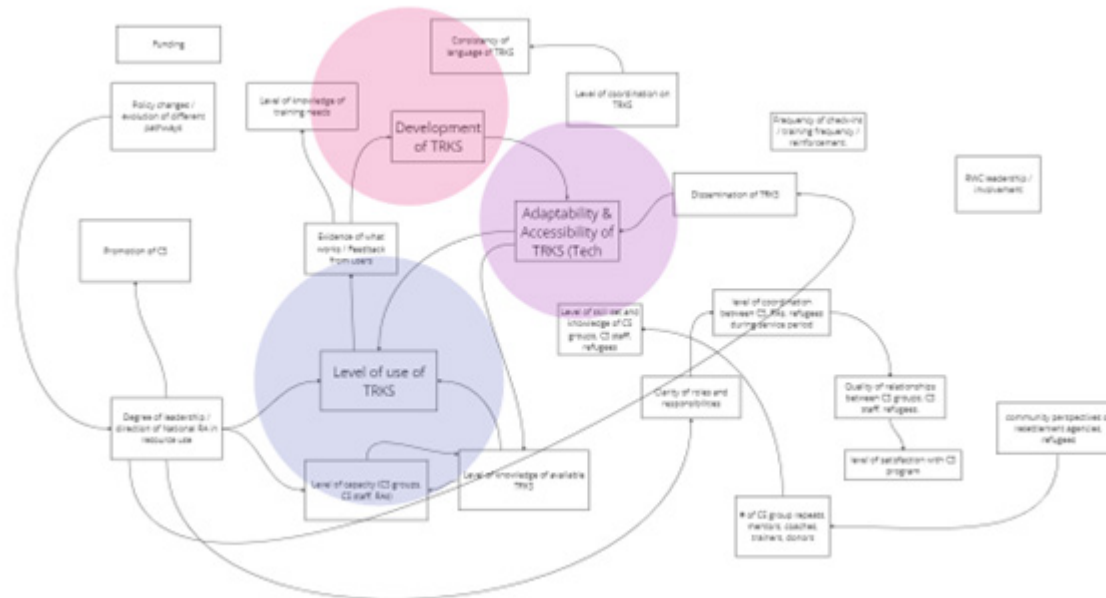
## Third Phase: Digitization of Participants' Mini-System Maps Mini-System One: Recruitment and Onboarding



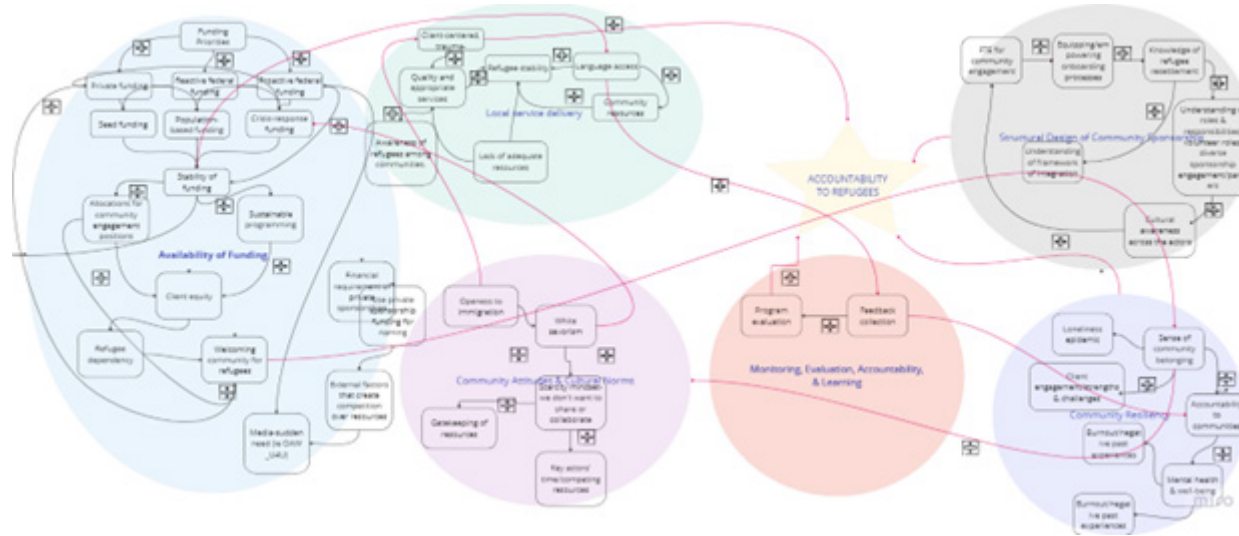
## Mini-System Two: Service Connection and Provision



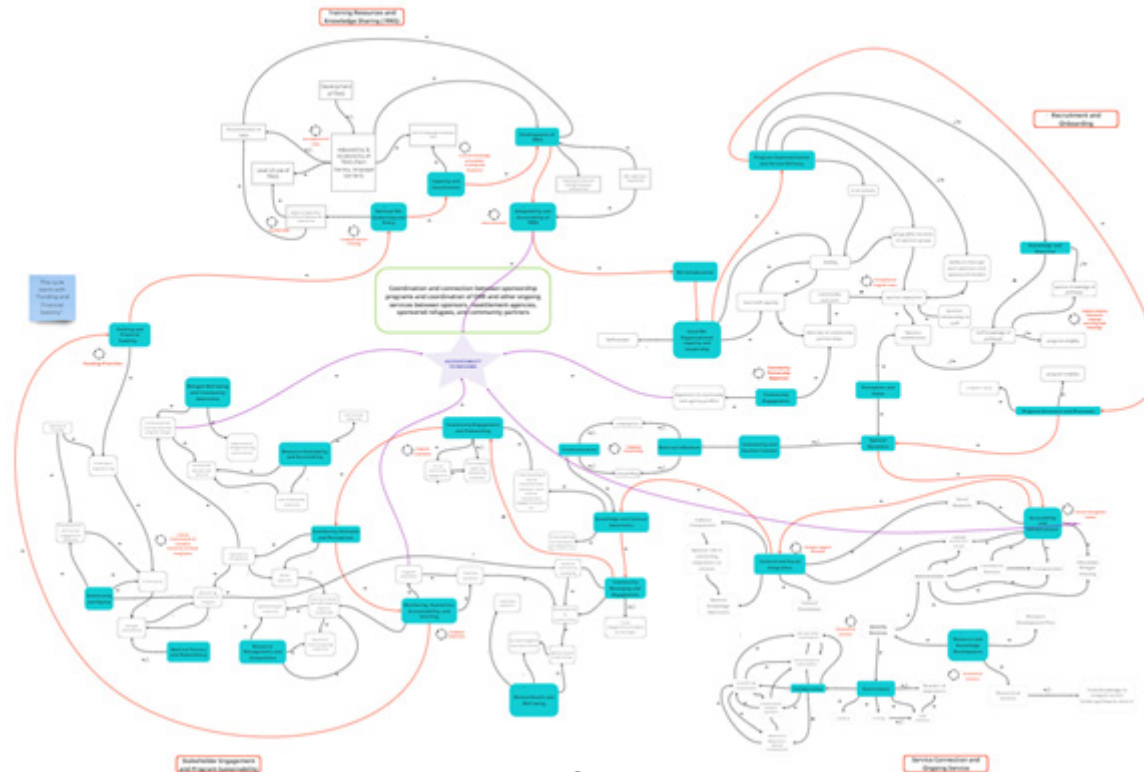
## Mini-System Three: Training, Resources, and Knowledge Sharing



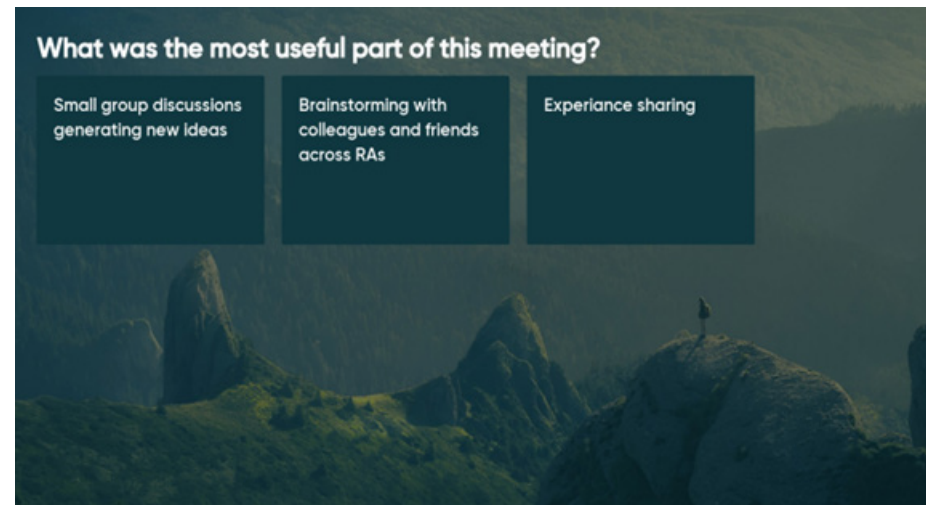
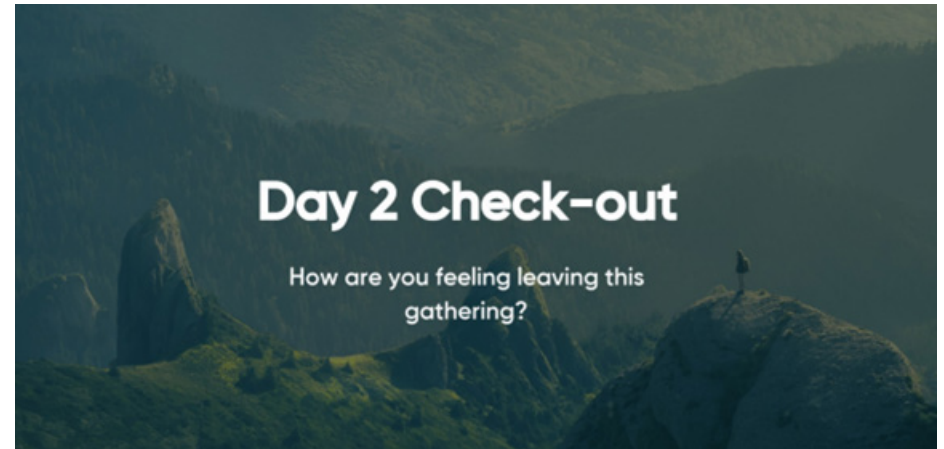
## Mini-System Four: Key Actor Engagement for Program Success



## Simplified Large Map Highlighting Connections Between the Mini-Systems

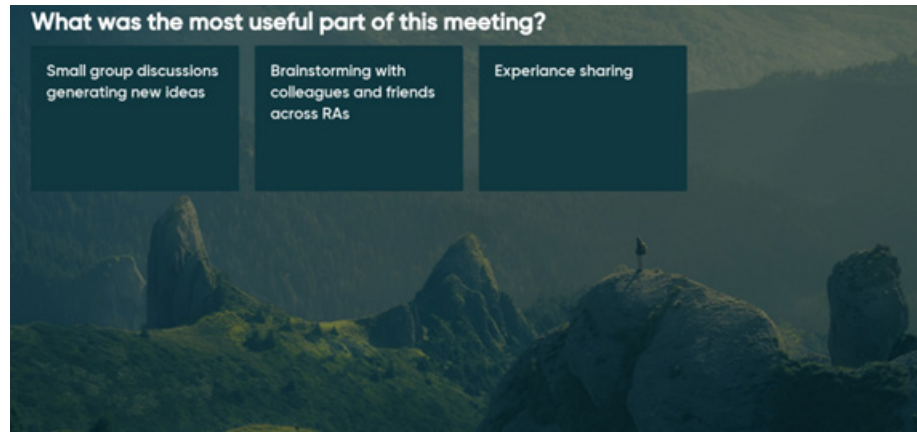


## D. Post-Gathering Feedback Questions





## D. Post-Gathering Feedback Questions



## E. Summary of Mini-System Analyses

Mini-System One: Recruitment and Onboarding	
Focus question	What factors influence sponsor mobilization, retention, and satisfaction in community sponsorship?
Definition	The strategic processes employed by community organizations, particularly resettlement agencies, to engage, educate, equip, and empower community partners, sponsor groups, and volunteers in supporting newcomers.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion between models</li> <li>• Competition between models</li> <li>• High localization of recruitments needs and strategies</li> <li>• Extensive onboarding processes</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intersection of various pathways and programs</li> <li>• Local staff capacity and competing with other local affiliates</li> <li>• National political atmosphere</li> <li>• Sponsor relationships &amp; experience</li> <li>• Feeling a part of the team</li> <li>• Geographic location vis a vis service</li> <li>• Profile of the agency – in terms of reputation (abortion or no) and who they will help</li> <li>• Housing availability</li> </ul>
Leverage Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of Program Value</li> <li>• Program Visibility and Shared Language</li> <li>• Increasing Staff Knowledge</li> <li>• Community Partnership Expansion</li> <li>• Engaging Storytelling</li> </ul>



## E. Summary of Mini-System Analyses

Mini-System Two: Service Connection and Provision	
Focus question	What factors influence the establishment of reliable, long-lasting service connections?
Definition	The process through which sponsors, service providers, local support groups, and resettlement agencies facilitate access to essential local services for newcomers and provide continuous support to foster successful integration.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of a unified service connection strategy</li> <li>• Unclear responsibilities for service connection</li> <li>• Local competition and obstruction of service access</li> <li>• Expertise may be needed for complex service navigation for sponsors</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying relevant and appropriate services – understanding what exists</li> <li>• Accessibility of relevant tools and knowledge to navigate them</li> <li>• Political will</li> <li>• Funding levels</li> <li>• Numbers of newcomers (refugee and asylum and other)</li> </ul>
Leverage Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching Services</li> <li>• Service Navigation Toolkit</li> <li>• Enhanced Coordination</li> <li>• Refugee Support Network</li> </ul>

## E. Summary of Mini-System Analyses

Mini-System Three: Training, Resources, and Knowledge Sharing	
Focus question	What factors influence the development and dissemination of targeted training, resources, and knowledge sharing?
Definition	The systematic efforts to educate, equip, and empower refugees, sponsors, communities and resettlement staff with the necessary skills, information, and tools to effectively support newcomers.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inefficient use of time and waste of existing resources</li> <li>• Office capacity and local context varies widely</li> <li>• High staff turnover affects the continuity of knowledge</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of available resources</li> <li>• Capacity of local affiliates to offer training and ongoing support</li> <li>• Clarity of roles between the various actors in the system</li> <li>• Retention of information by co-sponsors and self-sufficiency in obtaining information</li> <li>• Needs assessment and feedback related to training and resources</li> <li>• Community perspectives on pertinent information and further training needs</li> </ul>
Leverage Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback-driven Training</li> <li>• Data collection</li> <li>• RWC Membership</li> <li>• Mentorship</li> <li>• Development of training, resources, and knowledge sharing</li> <li>• Level of knowledge of available resources</li> </ul>

## E. Summary of Mini-System Analyses

### Mini-System Four: Key Actor Engagement for Program Success

Focus question	What factors influence partner commitment and involvement in community sponsorship?
Definition	Involvement of all relevant parties, including newcomers, community groups, sponsors, resettlement agencies, local and national government agencies, funders, and service providers, in sponsorship programs.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of newcomers in program design, implementation, and evaluation</li> <li>• Increased program MEL is needed</li> <li>• Culturally relevant community groups are under-valued</li> <li>• Engaging effectively with partners, is complex and requires dedicated attention</li> <li>• Key actor engagement is complicated by politics</li> <li>• Roles and expectations are often unclear</li> <li>• Volunteerism and community engagement differs by location</li> </ul>
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional gatekeeping</li> <li>• Community attitudes and perceptions</li> <li>• Community bandwidth and resiliency</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Client/newcomer strengths and challenges</li> <li>• Federal priorities</li> </ul>
Leverage Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding priorities</li> <li>• Program evaluation</li> <li>• Feedback Collection</li> <li>• Prioritization of economic resilience versus social integration</li> </ul>



