NORTH EAST TORONTO
Local Immigration Partnership

NAARS CoP for North East Toronto

Minutes

Tuesday June 23, 2026 | 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Hybrid – Working Women Community Centre Victoria Park Hub & Zoom

In attendance:
Sharon Neumann (**ACCES Employment**), Jamillah Mananghaya, Tracy Yu (**ACSA Community Services**), Ghatool Maiwand (**Afghan Women's Organization**), Lisa Loong (**Catholic Crosscultural Services - CCS**), Tracy Wu (**Centre for Immigrant and Community Services - CICS**), Maimou Wali (**Collège La Cité**), Amy Li (**Community Family Services of Ontario - CFSO**), Tanaz Pardiwala (**COSTI**), Connie Russell (**Deaf Services Canada**), Maria Roelin (**Flemigdon Park Ministry)**, Nicolas Arnaud-Goddet (**FrancoQueer**), Helen Nguyen (**HF Care**), Laura Gold (**JIAS Toronto**), Irene Vaksman, Marina Ayvazyan (**JVS Toronto**), Rizza Solis (**Kababayan Multicultural Centre**), Jackie Eunjoo Kim (**KCWA Family and Social Services**), Prescilla Magne (**La Maison/ Maison d'hébergement pour femmes francophones**), Kheda Denieva (**Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District**), Zena Birhany (**Madison Community Services**), Cathy Mwanza (**Malvern Family Resource Centre**), Jennifer Hollis (**Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills / Travail, Immigration, Formation et Compétences**); Kimona Hudson (**New Circles Community Centre**), Bassem Haydar (**Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services**), Stacey Van Vliet (**Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services**), Getahun Gebrekidan (**Progress Career Planning Institute - PCPI**), JeanClaude Nda (**Réseau en Immigration Francophone Centre-Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario - RIFCSO**), Radhika Sharma (**Skills for Change**); Erica Groome (**Société écomique de l'Ontario**), Patria Quines (**Strides Toronto Support Services**), Sancika Gunasegaran (**TESOC Multicultural Settlement and Community Services**), Peter Chiu (T**he Cross-Cultural Community Services Association**), Kavitha Chandran (**The Housing Help Centre**), Carolann Barr (**The Neighbourhood Organization - TNO**), Patricia Berney (**Toronto Catholic District School Board**), Pooja Chaudhary (**Toronto District School Board**), Elsa Ngan (**Toronto Public Library**); Alexis Ramgulam, Sanga Achakzai (**United Way Greater Toronto**); Arunthathy Ratnasingham (**University Settlement**), Ryan Berg (**WCG International**); Neda Farahmandpour (**Wordswell Association for Community Learning**); Yaqin Zhai (**YMCA of Greater Toronto**), Karine Vodopianova (**Yonge Eglinton Community Centre**), Sandeep (Sunny) Singh (**Youth Assisting Youth**), Joanna Jaskielewicz (**YWCA Toronto**)

Also in attendance: Esther Tauhid (IRCC), Rezvan Abdollahi Sichani, (**IRCC)**
Meeting facilitated by: Isobel Goddard, Srna Stambuk, Giovanni Rico, Sahar Sayedy, Farnoosh Saneei, Astha Priya– **NET LIP**
English/French Interpretation by: **UN Language Services** | ASL Interpretation by: **Asign Interpreting**
Note: These minutes could be read in conjunction with the meeting's presentation deck.

Item	Discussion
Welcome & Opening, Introductions	The meeting began with a welcome to all participants, both in-person and online. This was identified as the first NAARS Community of Practice (CoP) meeting for the 2026–2027 cycle. NET LIP Manager outlined the agenda, which included updates, discussion of resourcing, review of the scope of work, and opportunities for participant feedback. Technical and audio issues affected the start of the meeting, particularly affecting virtual participants and ASL interpretation, but were resolved.
Updates and Background	Participants were reminded that IRCC shared guiding principles for Communities of Practice in December 2025. The first CoP meetings took place in February 2026, and the North East Toronto LIP was selected to lead this CoP in March 2026. The CoP was described as a collaborative and community-led network that will help guide the local implementation of the NAARS transformation, with IRCC providing support in an advisory capacity.
Purpose of the Community of Practice	The purpose of the CoP is to support the transition toward the Designated Network Service (DNS) model. This includes ensuring that newcomers are effectively assessed and connected to appropriate settlement services. The CoP will play a key role in shaping how this system works locally by identifying challenges, developing solutions, and informing future design. Any organization who feels they should be attending both CoPs and is not so contact the organizer (Isobel, NET LIP) to be put in touch with TSW LIP who are organizing the parallel CoP in Toronto for the South West.
Scope of Work	The group discussed several key areas of work. 1. First, there is a need to better understand NAARS and the NSAT tool, including how assessments are conducted and adapted for different populations. 2. Second, participants emphasized the importance of service mapping to clearly identify available programs, their locations, and target populations.

Scope of Work (continued)	3. Third, the development of referral pathways was identified as a priority. This includes clarifying how referrals are made, how information is shared between organizations, and how follow-up is managed. 4. Fourth, the group discussed the need to standardize settlement plans, including what they should contain and how they can be shared securely and effectively across organizations. 5. Finally, participants discussed the future DNS model, including the need to define selection criteria, required capacity, and a nomination process for identifying the DNS organization.
Key Discussion Themes	Participants raised several important issues throughout the discussion including: 1. There is currently inconsistency in how the NSAT tool is used across organizations, and in some cases, clients are required to repeat assessments. 2. There is also a lack of clarity around referral processes, including who to refer to, how referrals should be made, and who is responsible for follow-up. 3. Participants highlighted challenges in the client experience, noting that clients often have to repeat their stories multiple times and may feel overwhelmed by unclear or excessive referrals. There is a need for consistent messaging so that clients understand the purpose of assessments and referrals. 4. Technology was identified as a significant barrier. Many organizations use multiple systems, such as iCare and OCMS, which do not integrate well and result in duplicated data entry. Additionally, there is limited ability to share client information, including settlement plans, across organizations. 5. Equity considerations were also discussed, particularly the need to better support Francophone clients, Deaf clients, and other specialized populations. Finally, participants expressed concern that performance targets could negatively impact client-centered service if not carefully managed. For a **complete list of questions** organized by NAARS CoP Scope of Work Area – please see document in attachment titled: Questions – NAARS CoP – June 23, 2026. This document will be available at the NET LIP Website shortly: https://torontonorthlip.ca/en/resources/needs-and-assets-assessment-and-referral-services-naars-communities-of-practice-cop/

Action Items	The following action items emerged from the meeting: 1. The draft Terms of Reference will be shared with participants for review and feedback. 2. The questions and issues raised during the meeting will be compiled and organized to inform future discussions. 3. A case management information session with relevant service providers will be planned. 4. The group will also review best practices from other regions that have implemented the DNS model.
Next Steps	The next meeting is scheduled for September 29, 2026. The proposed focus for that meeting is to develop a shared understanding of NARS and the NSAT tool, including current practices and future expectations. Future meetings will address service mapping, referral pathways, and DNS planning in more detail.
Closing	The meeting concluded with an emphasis on collaboration and the importance of ongoing engagement. Participants were encouraged to continue sharing questions and ideas. It was noted that the work of the CoP will play a critical role in shaping the future system ahead of the anticipated DNS implementation.