

STARTTS and Ukrainian Council NSW: Support for Ukrainian Community



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

Displaced Ukrainian nationals who arrived in NSW

Aim of program: To support newly arrived Ukrainians in NSW through various therapeutic and community support activities.

Organisations involved / partnerships:

STARTTS, Ukrainian Council NSW, Be Kind Sydney, NSW Refugee Health Service, TAFE, Metro Assist, Australian Federation of Ukrainian Associations, House of Welcome, NSW department of Education (particularly Kogarah and Central Sydney Intensive English Centres).

Location: Ukrainian Youth Centre – Lidcombe, STARTTS offices – Auburn, Carramar, Dee Why.

Funding: Jointly funded by Sydney Community Foundation; Multicultural NSW; Centre for Multicultural Women's Health; Northern Sydney Primary Health Network; Western Sydney Primary Health Network, SETS funding; STARTTS core funding.



STARTTS Team at the UkiFestival Stall

INTRODUCTION

At the time of Russian invasion of Ukraine, STARTTS was commencing the implementation of the Witness to War Project – a multilingual phone line providing support to NSW residents affected by overseas conflict. This enabled STARTTS to rapidly engage with the Ukrainian community and employ 4 casual bi-cultural staff of Ukrainian background.

Staff brought their significant skill sets (including counselling and interpreting/translating) and extensive connections with Ukrainian community and organisations. Their community networks enabled a roster of STARTTS staff to attend weekly 'meet and greet' events organised by the Ukrainian Council of NSW at the Ukrainian Youth Centre in Lidcombe. These events were designed to provide newly arrived Ukrainians with connections to relevant services and their communities, material aid, and psychosocial support.

STARTTS' existing relationship with Be Kind Sydney and newly developing relationship with the Ukrainian Council of NSW led to the creation of the Ukrainian Helping Hand Project.

The Ukrainian Helping Hand Project was funded by Be Kind Sydney, auspiced by STARTTS and implemented by the Ukrainian Council of NSW. The project employed two highly skilled Ukrainian women.

The project delivered a wide range of activities from June 2022 including:

- Informational sessions on Centrelink, financial literacy and health with partners such as the Department of Human Services, Commonwealth Bank and Refugee Health respectively.
- A wide range of material support, such as cash raised by the Sydney Women's Fund, opal cards for travel, Optus phones and sim cards, Woolworths gift cards, free medication, distributing RAT tests and masks.
- Support with a wide range of health needs, such as organising BUPA medical check-ups (with cost reimbursement arranged for 353 people to date); arranging medical assistance through GPs for people without Medicare cards in partnership with Refugee Health; and immunisation clinics.
- Social, safety and well-being activities such as UkiFest, a senior's psychosocial support group, women's social club, art therapy, yoga classes, and regular "meet and greets" at Dim Molodi.

The Witness to War Project continued to receive calls from people displaced by the invasion of Ukraine, with Ukrainian and Russian being the top languages spoken by callers. A Witness to War staff member is also a skilled translator and writer who ensured all relevant STARTTS materials are translated into Ukrainian and STARTTS services are promoted in Ukrainian language media.

STARTTS work with the Ukrainian community expanded into and influenced all other sections of the organisation. For example, other areas of the organisation organised a youth camp, various STARTTS resources were quickly translated into Ukrainian, the training area rapidly rolled out training on Ukrainian culture, community and experiences for both STARTTS staff and external partners.



Malanka, Ukrainian New Year Celebration organised by the Ukrainian Council of NSW

Outcomes

The program supported **1,930 individuals** across NSW, with quantifiable outcomes achieved across a range of National Settlement Outcome Standard (NSOS) areas. For example, a small snapshot of these outcomes include:

- **Family and social support** outcomes were achieved by:
 - distributing 250 Optus phones and SIM cards via Good360, allowing individuals to remain in contact with family and friends in Ukraine.
 - organising a Christmas event and gifts from a variety of charities and businesses for 240 children.
 - 98 individuals benefited from the swimming program and the Ocean Safety Program with separate swimming sessions for children and adults with special needs.
- **Transport** outcomes were achieved by distributing 364 Opal Cards which enabled recently displaced persons freedom of movement.
- **Financial outcomes** were supported through the distribution of over 2,500 kilograms of food from partners Harris Farm Markets, Addi Road Kitchen, OzHarvest and others.
- **Health outcomes** were supported through vaccinating 152 people against COVID-19, providing 156 people with free medications, and supplying 400 RAT test and mask kits.
- **Employment outcomes** were achieved by 168 people who found employment in Australia, and 180 people accessed mentoring and professional courses through the educational program in partnership with TAFE.

We continue to collect data to evaluate all the initiatives mentioned in the project description. STARTTS approach to evaluation is highlighted [here](#).



**Ukrainians at the ferry race event – Australia Day
Organised by Ukrainian Council of NSW**

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

This initiative has demonstrated the benefit of strong collaboration between a large service provider such as STARTTS and a community-led partner such as the Ukrainian Council of NSW. The synergy between partners has enabled a large-scale and rapid collaboration.

Additionally, this is an excellent example of a systemic model providing interventions on all levels of the social system, including the individual, institutions and wider society. The model used also promotes a focus on building social capital and enhancing wellbeing and recovery from trauma.

The STARTTS Social Capital Model used is articulated [here](#).



STARTTS Witness to War Ukrainian speaking staff member at an information session for schools.



STARTTS Witness to War Senior Project Officer presenting at Ukrainian meet and Greet session



Malanka, Ukrainian New Year Celebration organised by the Ukrainian Council of NSW

Challenges

- Newly arrived Ukrainians are scattered across various suburbs of Sydney as well as rural and regional NSW making it difficult to organise activities to cover most of the community. Many are in areas with limited settlement of people with refugee backgrounds.

- Currently, the direction and outcome of the conflict in Ukraine is unclear. This creates a situation of uncertainty and ongoing fear for family and friends overseas.

- The majority of newly arrived Ukrainians are on a mix of temporary Safe Haven and Tourist Visas with some having applied for Bridging Visas. This impacts on access to services and support and contributes to the lack of certainty already inflicted by the ongoing conflict.

KEY LEARNINGS

1. The importance of partnerships with community-led organisations cannot be overstated. STARTTS has found a skilled, strong, well-connected and well-organised partner in Ukrainian Council of NSW. This has also enabled STARTTS staff to rapidly learn and engage with a client group new to us.
2. Using the health Promotion framework relying on social determinants of health coupled with STARTTS systemic and social capital frameworks, ensured that our engagement with the Ukrainian community is responsive and comprehensive.
3. Working with communities of refugee backgrounds is much more than a single project contained by the requirements of a single funder– it is a long-term journey and a partnership that requires strong relationships and adequate resourcing.
4. Rapid engagement of skilled and committed bi-cultural staff was essential to community engagement and ongoing collaboration. However, the wellbeing and health of staff with lived experience needs to be supported at all times.
5. Staying trauma-informed and inclusive while navigating language and cultural safety of newly arrived Ukrainians was essential.

For more information visit:

[STARTTS Website](#)

['The Glue that Binds' Final Report - Social Capital in Refugee Communities Settling in Australia](#)

[STARTTS – Families in Cultural Transition Program](#)

[STARTTS Services Evaluations](#)