



Ottawa Community
Immigrant Services Organization

Annual Report
2021
Rapport Annuel



OCISO President and Executive Director Report

While there is no doubt that this year presented unique challenges with ever changing protocols for service delivery, our teams successfully offered virtual programming and worked to enhance service delivery to the newcomer community. As we return to a greater degree of normalcy, we continue to deliver virtual services and are now delivering in-person services with teams working in the workplace on a part-time, rotational basis.

While some services easily transferred to the online world others encountered challenges, particularly in serving the highest needs clients. To capitalize on what we have learned from each of our core programs, we are assessing both successes and challenges experienced within the past year. Moving forward, these lessons learned will help us develop a hybrid service delivery model that best addresses the needs of our clients. Employees and clients across all of our programs will be actively engaged in developing the way forward for effectively offering hybrid services. We hope to create an enhanced work environment that best addresses evolving client needs while appealing to current and future employees.

Over the year, teams identified the need for additional hardware and digital literacy training in order to successfully deliver virtual services. Supplemental funding from IRCC enabled us to secure much needed equipment for frontline workers, as well as new servers and network enhancing equipment. Our focus for the year ahead: continue improving our digital footprint through digital literacy training and digital service delivery standardization.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers, we opened a fourth location at the transformed Rideau High School, to serve clients in the east end of the city. Now known as the "Rideau Hub," we plan to deliver youth services and supports for newcomer entrepreneurs, as well as, receiving other clients who find this location more accessible.

Administration and Program Managers have worked tirelessly to adjust to the changing conditions brought on by the waves of the pandemic, ensuring that both employees and clients receive the support they required. We are proud to say that all teams have adapted quickly and adjusted to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. They have persevered in an uncertain time to continue providing the services that help newcomers transition into their new surroundings, while staying connected and engaged.



The board continued to provide vital support as we thoroughly vetted and decided on a new organizational structure that will enable us to increase the effectiveness of our programs while aligning the organization for longer term strategic development. We engaged the full board, and navigated the many considerations associated with operating safely during the pandemic to ensure the continual delivery of services to our clients. At a time when we are all experiencing competing priorities, the board's ongoing commitment to OCISO's mandate has been crucial, and it is greatly appreciated.

A huge expression of gratitude to our funders, donors, volunteers & community partners for unwavering support throughout the year. Many volunteers stepped forward to support virtual service delivery. Donors & funders continued to monitor needs in the newcomer community and offer generous supports to OCISO, enabling us to rapidly address those needs. A special shout out to the Run for a New Start virtual race team who raised over \$14,000 in support of OCISO's youth program, through participation in the Ottawa Race Weekend.

Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude to OCISO employees for your continued support, encouragement, and contribution to community and the clients we serve. Your resilience and commitment ensured we were able to engage and effectively support the newcomer community, despite the ever-changing context we found ourselves working within.

Leslie Emory
Executive Director

Eric Agyemang
President



OCISO Vision

OCISO envisions Ottawa as an inclusive city in which all immigrants contribute their gifts, skills, values and culture; strengthening and transforming our community life.



Rapport de la Directrice Exécutive et de la Présidente

Bien qu'il ne fait aucun doute que cette année a présenté des défis uniques avec des protocoles de prestation de services en constante évolution, nos équipes ont offert avec succès des programmes virtuels et ont travaillé à améliorer la prestation de services à la communauté des nouveaux arrivants. Alors que nous revenons à un plus grand degré de normalité, nous continuons à fournir des services virtuels et offrons maintenant des services en personne avec des équipes travaillant sur le lieu de travail à temps partiel, par rotation. Alors que certains services ont été facilement transférés dans le monde en ligne, d'autres ont rencontré des défis, en particulier pour répondre aux besoins les plus élevés des clients. Pour tirer parti de ce que nous avons appris de chacun de nos programmes de base, nous évaluons à la fois les réussites et les défis rencontrés au cours de la dernière année. À l'avenir, ces leçons apprises nous aideront à élaborer un modèle hybride de prestation de services qui répond le mieux aux besoins de nos clients. Les employés et les clients de tous nos programmes participeront activement à l'élaboration de la voie à suivre pour offrir efficacement des services hybrides. Nous espérons créer un environnement de travail amélioré qui répond le mieux aux besoins changeants des clients tout en attirant les employés actuels et futurs.

Au cours de l'année, les équipes ont identifié le besoin de formation supplémentaire en matériel informatique et en littéraire numérique afin de fournir avec succès des services virtuels. Un financement supplémentaire d'IRCC nous a permis d'obtenir de l'équipement indispensable pour les travailleurs de première ligne, ainsi que de nouveaux serveurs et de l'équipement d'amélioration du réseau. Notre objectif pour l'année à venir : continuer d'améliorer notre empreinte numérique grâce à la formation en littéraire numérique et à la normalisation de la prestation de services numériques.

Grâce aux efforts inlassables de notre personnel et de nos bénévoles, nous avons ouvert un quatrième emplacement à l'ancienne école secondaire Rideau maintenant transformée et connu sous le nom de « Rideau Hub », pour servir les clients de l'est de la ville. Cela nous aidera à offrir des services et des soutiens aux jeunes entrepreneurs nouvellement arrivées au Canada, ainsi que recevoir d'autres clients qui trouvent cet endroit plus accessible.

L'administration et les gestionnaires de programme ont travaillé sans relâche pour s'adapter aux conditions changeantes provoquées par les vagues de la pandémie, en veillant à ce que les employés et les clients reçoivent le soutien dont ils ont besoin.

Nous sommes fiers de dire que toutes les équipes se sont adaptées rapidement et se sont ajustées aux défis posés par la pandémie. Ils ont persévéré dans une période incertaine pour continuer à fournir les services qui aident les nouveaux arrivants à faire la transition vers leur nouvel environnement, tout en restant connectés et engagés.

Le conseil d'administration a continué à fournir un soutien vital alors que nous avons soigneusement examiné et décidé une nouvelle structure organisationnelle qui nous permettra d'augmenter l'efficacité de nos programmes tout en alignant l'organisation pour un développement stratégique à plus long terme. L'ensemble du conseil d'administration s'est engagé et nous avons abordé les nombreuses considérations associées au fonctionnement en toute sécurité pendant la pandémie pour assurer la prestation continue de services à nos clients. À une époque où nous sommes tous confrontés à des priorités concurrentes, l'engagement continu du conseil d'administration envers le mandat de l'OCISO a été crucial, et est grandement apprécié.

Une immense expression de gratitude à nos bailleurs de fonds, donateurs, bénévoles et partenaires communautaires pour leur soutien indéfectible tout au long de l'année. De nombreux bénévoles se sont manifestés pour soutenir la prestation de services virtuels. Les donateurs et les bailleurs de fonds ont continué à surveiller les besoins de la communauté des nouveaux arrivants et à offrir un soutien généreux à OCISO, nous permettant de répondre rapidement à ces besoins. Un grand merci à l'équipe de course virtuelle 'Run for a New Start' qui a amassé plus de 14 000\$ grâce à sa participation à la Fin de semaine des courses d'Ottawa pour soutenir le programme jeunesse d'OCISO.

Enfin, nous tenons à exprimer notre profonde gratitude aux employés d'OCISO pour votre soutien continu, vos encouragements et votre contribution à la communauté et aux clients que nous servons. Votre résilience et votre engagement nous ont permis de nous engager et de soutenir efficacement la communauté des nouveaux arrivants, malgré le contexte en constante évolution dans lequel nous nous sommes retrouvés à travailler.

Leslie Emory
Directrice Générale

Eric Agyemang
Présidente du comité
de direction



La Mission d'OCISO

OCISO aide les immigrants à faire du Canada leur chez-soi en offrant des programmes créatifs et adaptés qui sont culturellement et linguistiquement appropriés, en bâtissant une communauté par le respect mutuel et les partenariats, et en favorisant des espaces sains et inclusifs pour un dialogue ouvert au bien-être



Settlement and Integration Program

OCISO's Settlement and Integration Program (SIP) engages with clients, volunteers and the broader community, providing support for newcomer settlement and integration needs. We work closely with communities and organizations in welcoming newcomers to Ottawa.

SIP has a dynamic program team with diverse language backgrounds, talents and areas of expertise. Our team's knowledge includes 17 working languages, as well as expertise providing general programming and specific services for newcomers including women, youth, seniors and the LGBTQ community.

The Settlement and Integration program experienced a challenging year due to the ongoing pandemic. However, we adapted to changing circumstances, and continued to serve clients without significant interruptions to the services. Health protocols required that we switch to delivering our services in a virtual environment.

Due to linguistic, financial and technical literacy barriers, a number of clients had challenges accessing virtual services. These clients will require proactive engagement when we are able to return to in-person services. Many employees and clients experienced a significantly negative impact on their mental health caused by the isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a sector where in-person support is crucial for creating a sense of community and belonging, this year has been particularly challenging.

This year, SIP provided 8,655 services to 2,348 clients. Through a virtual tax clinic, and the assistance of eleven volunteers, over 100 newcomer families received support completing and filing their income tax returns. This free service was offered to vulnerable and low-income newcomers, who often struggle with completing their tax returns.

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program supported 25 Group of Five applications. This program assists community members wishing to understand and engage in the refugee sponsorship process. Clients receive information, assistance completing the applications, and follow-up services.

Despite COVID 19 restrictions, our social integration program, Friends of the Family, successfully matched 20 newly-arrived refugee families with volunteer groups of friends in Ottawa. Our Friends of the Family volunteers spent over 1,560 hours organizing social events to help newly-arrived refugee families build networks, facilitate their integration process, and reduce social isolation.

Our Diverse Seniors Support (DSS) Program continues to help immigrant seniors virtually, to ease their integration process and battle isolation by providing virtual group sessions on English conversation, orientation and information. This year the DSS program organised 134 sessions for over 1,970 seniors, with the help of 12 volunteers.

In addition, the LGBTQIA+ settlement program has provided support to many LGBTQIA+ newcomers on navigating social, employment, health and other services specific for this community. The program organizes occasional social groups and proudly participate in the yearly Pride parade.


We continue to foster partnerships and collaborate with several organizations. We work with the LASI coalition (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants), providing regular referrals and sharing program information. Our program hosts an employee from Housing Help, who facilitates access to housing for our clients. We receive immigration law support from Connecting Ottawa. The SIP team works with five volunteer lawyers who support newcomer families with their legal matters. Our outreach counsellors are based at OCISO's Bank Street location, the Newcomer Information Centre, and other strategic places to ensure we are accessible to clients throughout the region.

Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) Program

The Multicultural Liaison Officer program provided settlement needs assessment, information and orientation, referrals, and language and cultural interpretation to newcomer parents and students at 174 Ottawa schools. The program also assisted school staff in creating a welcoming environment for newcomers.

The program was delivered in partnership with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) and the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB). The MLOs delivered 12,278 one-on-one, family and group orientation sessions attended by 2,878 clients. Clients also received referral, interpretation and counselling services.





We delivered multiple workshops addressing a wide range of topics. Topics included the educational system in Canada, graduation, education pathways, course selection, culture and values, managing challenges, understanding progress report cards and many more.

The MLO program provided online support to the Family Reception Centre and the Family Welcome Centre, where newly arrived students to Ottawa are registered. MLOs provided support to special initiatives for newcomers organized by both school boards, to improve the online learning and to overcome student isolation.

The Newcomer Orientation Week (Now) was held online in August. 12 newly arrived students participated along with 5 peer leaders. Students participating in the program indicated that they felt prepared for the start of the new school year in a new country.

The team demonstrated flexibility in adapting and reacting to emerging needs of newcomer students, parents and school boards throughout the year. As schools offered both in person and virtual learning, the program adapted its service delivery accordingly. We constantly supported clients to access and adjust to the learning systems. Many parents experienced challenges as they maneuvered between family and work responsibilities, and the challenge of having children at home, learning in the virtual classroom. Community Facilitators provided additional interpretation services as appropriate to help ease this transition.

Multicultural Inmate Liaison Officer (MILO) Project

The Multicultural Inmate Liaison Officer (MILO) project provided supportive counselling to inmates with an immigrant background at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. The MILO officer assisted 95 inmates with one-on-one supportive counselling. This project facilitated community connections for inmates by providing support and assistance in rebuilding their relationships with family and community.



**Language Instruction
for Newcomers
to Canada (LINC)**

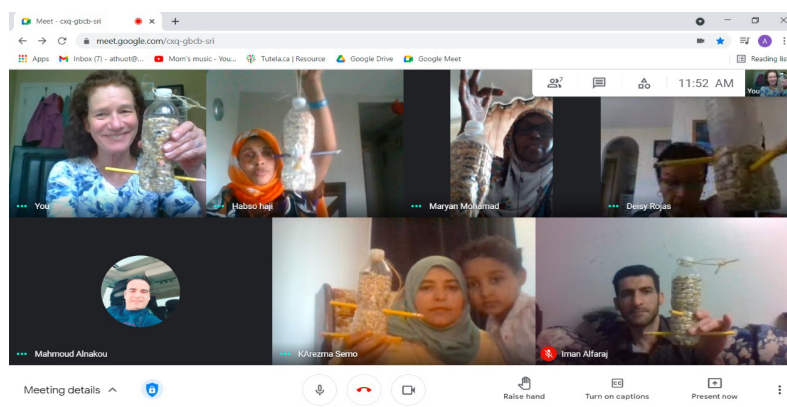
The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program provides English language training to newcomer adult clients in the context of settlement and community integration. Eight full-time classes, from literacy to advanced English train up to 152 clients per day. We also provide childcare for 32 children per day.

This past year, we served 271 clients from various countries of origin, with most arriving from Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya and Morocco. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LINC program offered its classes virtually through blended learning. To help students join their classes, we distributed bi-weekly learning packages to the literacy classes, offered digital literacy support, and distributed used laptops and other devices. We also ran virtual childcare sessions and distributed monthly educational packages to the children we serve.

Many community partners supported our work this year, including Ottawa Public Health, and the City of Ottawa Recycling. We hosted Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (CTESL) interns from Carleton University, Algonquin College, and the Community Health Nursing program at the University of Ottawa.

The volunteer program continues to be an integral part of LINC and the community we serve. This year, volunteers ran virtual reading groups and conversation circles. They also provided students with one-on-one support with academic tasks.

The Real English program, funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, completed its three-year pilot period ending in March 2021. This year, the two sub-programs, the Real English hands-on literacy class for non-progressing learners and the Mom and Me drop-off class ran virtually.



Our literacy students learning virtually and creating their birdfeeder.



YOCISO Program

YOCISO continues to provide inclusive, collaborative, and safe youth-targeted programming to a population of immigrant, refugee and first-generation immigrant, racialized, and marginalized youth between the ages of 13 and 24. These programs are facilitated through workshops on employment and orientation, academic support, after-school recreational activities, sports programs, artistic expression, creative writing, and life skills workshops. In addition, the Newcomer Youth Centre serves as a gathering place for youth to learn new skills and information, while building relationships.

The YOCISO Program continues to be an accessible, inclusive, diverse, and safe space for our clients. With this COVID-19 pandemic, YOCISO aligned and readjusted, offering quality programming on several online platforms. With the support of our valued volunteers, we piloted an E-Homework Help Program and provided academic support to 444 students remotely throughout the Ottawa area. This project was a great success, which we hope to continue in the coming year.

During the year, YOCISO launched the Youth Foundations Employment project and its second Wrestling with Champions Project. These projects are housed in OCISO's newest location, The Rideau HUB, where OCISO has newly renovated offices.

We onboarded 58 new volunteers, logging 320 hours of support in numerous workshops. We offered services to 3,408 clients during the year.

Some of YOCISO's most memorable events over the year include: The Black History Month event celebrating Black Joy and Resilience; A discussion on Internalized Sexism for International Women's Day; Weekly Self Care Series; Mental Health Workshops; Financial Literacy Supports; Employment Supports; and many more.



Counselling Program

The counselling program offers clinical support within a multilingual, culturally responsive model, providing services to individuals, families, couples and groups. In 2020-2021, our languages of service included: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi, Dari, Tigrigna, Urdu, Bengali, German and Czech. Many of these individuals are dealing with the direct consequences of having suffered traumatic life events prior to migrating to Canada, or are victims of war trauma. They also face the mental health challenges associated with the post-migration adaptation and integration process. We continue to support this population and all immigrants in addressing their mental health needs.

OCISO's counselling program contributed to the COVID-19 community response through the City of Ottawa Human Needs Task force, Champlain LHIN Mental Health and Addictions Table, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership, Family Service Ontario, and Counselling Connect. As a result of changing COVID-19 restrictions, we also quickly pivoted our program to provide phone and video counselling services.

The Time for Change (T4C) program continued as part of this year's counselling program. T4C is an initiative dedicated to male and female young adults, adults, and their families, who are impacted by gang involvement and street violence.

This year, the counselling program served 292 clients from 58 countries, for a total of 2,318 hours of direct service. The majority of our clients originated from the countries of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Nigeria, Congo, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Egypt and Mexico. We provided 120 hours of indirect service, supporting clients through case conferences, clinical consultations and the provision of reports for immigration hearings in collaboration with over 150 community partners. Our program also attracted and benefited from 350 hours of student, administrative and IT volunteer time.



**Community
Economic
Development (CED)**

WMN IMMIGRANT WOMEN MENTORING NETWORK
Advancing Together

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
Awarded to
NICOLE OSSA

For having successfully completed and contributed to
IWMN Mentorship & Learning Modules:
Communication and Conflict Management
Resilience & Self-Management
Culture and Values
Peer to Peer Support Groups

Awarded on Nov 15 2017



The Community Economic Development (CED) program delivers employability development programming to support newcomers in obtaining employment in their field. The program helps newcomers develop an understanding of Canadian workplace culture, build networks, and develop an understanding of employment maintenance and advancement within the Canadian workplace. CED programs include Career Mentorship, Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Mentoring, Refugee and Immigrant Supports to Employment, Workplace Language Training, ONE Hub Entrepreneurship Mentorship, Foreign Credential Recognition Mentorship, Ottawa Connector and Pre-Arrival Mentoring.

To build capacity in this program, the CED team continues to mentor organizations in the region, to embed mentorship within their employment initiatives. This year, in partnership with participating Settlement Agencies, CED launched the Federal Internship for Newcomer Mentorship program.

As co-lead with World Skills, OCISO launched an exciting new entrepreneurship program for newcomers, Ottawa Newcomer Entrepreneurship (ONE Hub). This new program supports newcomers in their journey to launch new business ideas in Canada.

This year, CED programs matched 600 newcomer clients with mentors and connectors (professionals from Ottawa and across the country). The CED program case-managed a monthly average of 200 active mentorship matches. At the core of CED programming is the continued support of over 680 active mentors and connectors, representing over 100 organizations and federal government departments.

The CED team thanks the community's generous and benevolent spirit in helping to support newcomers as they integrate into the Canadian workforce. We would like to recognise Richard Tobin, an OCISO mentor for 11 years, who received a surprise call from the Governor General's office saying that he would be receiving the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers. "I was quite surprised to be nominated by one of my mentees," remarks Richard. "I am humbled by this award."



Thanks to our generous Donors!

We are very grateful to our generous donors who continue to step up and support our work. With your contributions we are able to reach more people and deliver critical services when they are needed.



With Deep Gratitude to our Volunteers!

We are very grateful to the 715 volunteers who supported us to extend our services into the community enhancing the settlement and integration experiences of Ottawa newcomers. Our volunteers supported our programming within the Settlement and Integration Program (SIP), Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) Program in schools, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, Community Economic Development (CED) Program and YOCISO Youth Program. We would like to thank all of you for your continued commitment and service to the newcomer community.



Refugee 613 Project

In the past year, Refugee 613 met the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing to combine communications and mobilization services with deep community connections, to reduce gaps in information equity.

We launched the Newcomer Information Hub to improve newcomers' access to COVID-19 information, creating and curating multilingual resources, while also building cross-sectoral national collaborations in digital spaces. We led a coalition of health and settlement partners to co-produce a popular Vaccine Bulletin series in 16 languages that has been viewed or downloaded more than 16,000 times and we developed a resource bank of 500+ multilingual resources on COVID-19. More than 350 people attended the Digital Messaging Summit, the signature event of our Digital Messaging for Settlement and Integration project, which provided training and information about using apps like WhatsApp and Telegram for delivering settlement information and services.

Our partnership with OCASI on the Allies for Refugee Integration moved into the pilot-testing phase, highlighting the importance of intentional connections between refugee sponsors and service providers. The ReSpo project convened government and civil society partners to study the “sponsor the stranger” ecosystem and undertake exciting market research for sponsor recruitment.

Throughout, our team continued to provide strategic advice to government and service delivery partners. We have been grateful to our host agency, OCISO, and to our partners and funders, including IRCC, the Shapiro Foundation, the United Way and the Ottawa Community Foundation.



Summarized Statement of Operations and Changes in Fund Balance

	2019-2020	2020-2021
Revenue:		
Grants	7,057,706	7,423,961
Fundraising and Donations	151,209	82,831
Other Revenue	83,413	84,314
	\$7,292,328	\$7,591,106
Expenses:		
Program expenses	5,994,911	6,122,723
Occupancy	703,178	797,159
Administrative and Related costs	249,481	275,317
	\$6,947,570	\$7,195,199
Excess revenue over expenses	\$344,758	\$395,907
Assets:		
Cash and prepayments	1,561,915	2,897,299
Investments	134,279	215,957
Grants and Trade Receivable	668,575	311,171
Long-Term Assets	302,666	352,238
	\$2,667,435	\$3,776,665
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Liabilities:		
Bank debt and other payables	1,667,380	2,333,759
Long-Term debt and other obligations	203,640	250,584
	\$1,871,020	\$2,584,343
Changes in Fund Balance:		
Fund Balance (Deficit) - Beginning	451,657	796,415
Excess (Deficit) for the year	344,758	395,907
Fund Balance (Deficit) - Ending	\$796,415	\$1,192,322
	\$2,667,435	\$3,776,665

Board of Directors

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2020 MDSF Recipients



My name is Leenah Abdelrazeq and I am currently a student at the Carleton University in the Health Sciences (Concentration in Disability and Chronic Illness) Program. The CO-OP with Big Brothers Big Sisters and HEART Specialist High Skills major program inspired me to pursue a career of a doctor that allows me to connect with other people and help them live healthier and happier lives.



My name is Mohamed Aboudlal. I was born in Tripoli Libya and I came to Canada at the age of two. I currently attend the University of Ottawa. I'm pursuing an Honours Bachelor of Science in Human Kinetics with an emphasis on Biophysical Science. My goal in the future is to continue my involvement with Special Olympics Canada, and use the knowledge obtained from my kinesiology degree to ameliorate the accessibility of physical activity to children with disabilities, thereby increasing physical literacy in children and youth.



My name is Suvansh Chhabra and originally I am from India. Being a student with both a high academic standing and involvement in a diverse range of extracurricular, I believe I have the determination and skills to pursue my goals. Currently I am a student at the Carleton University in the accredited accounting program, so will obtain my Chartered Professional Accountant designation in the future.

Valued Funders



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and Citizenship Canada

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OTTAWA-CARLETON
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Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

959 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 2X5
Phone: 613-725-5671
Fax: 613-725-9054

www.ociso.org