

CCI

Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028



*Empowering newcomers,
enriching communities — our
commitment at CCI*



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

CCI acknowledges that the land upon which we live and work is the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe. The Peoples of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation have lived on this territory for millennia. Their culture and presence have nurtured and continue to nurture this land.



INTRODUCTION

CCI is honoured to support, champion, and work with immigrants and refugees in Canada's capital city. We value the richness of their heritage, their unique aspirations, and their desire to live and work in Ottawa, ultimately enhancing the treasures and rewards of a multicultural society.

To recognize their trust and desire to become contributing members of the Canadian diaspora, CCI is committed to providing essential services and programs to assist newcomers in their settlement, adaptation, and inclusion in the many vibrant communities that make up our city.

With this commitment top of mind, CCI has developed the following strategic plan to enhance and maximize our capacity to deliver services, programs, and advocacy that efficiently supports newcomers in our shared goal for an inclusive, dynamic, and prosperous way of life.

We dedicate our efforts to becoming the best we can be to all newcomers - past, present, and future. We also dedicate this plan for improvement to our countless allies, partners, and funders. Finally, we wish to recognize and thank CCI's entire staff. Without their dedication and commitment, we wouldn't be able to stand up and create the impact that defines our cause.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As you will see, the following Strategic Plan's ultimate theme is change. Often, the call for change provokes anxiety. But if we re-frame change and see it as a path towards growth, we are better able to reflect and build on our successes.

Thomas Edison went through years of trial and error before finally creating the electric light bulb. He also didn't do it alone. He had committed team united under a single vision. Of course, the invention changed the world. But perhaps the most valuable point to draw on is the fact that Edison didn't stop working on his invention. He dedicated himself to improving upon it and went on to develop a whole host of inventions that made the use of the light bulb more practical. Beyond, others have built on his work to create more inventions that have added illumination to the lives of generations. But what if he had stopped at the famous shouting of eureka? The truth is, for Edison, there was no eureka moment. His invention and those that followed, required a lot of adjustments in thinking, approach, and design. His successes required a willingness to change and, from that, grow.

I believe that if we embrace this strategy as a means toward growth, we will be able to draw on the impact of our 70-year history and deliver a pathway towards 70 more years of impact. Change is not reflection of failure. It is progress. Like Edison's team, we can build on our successes and improve our approach to solving problems and innovating solutions. I know we can do it. And I believe you do as we Together, we can ensure that CCI continues to shine well into the future.



WHO WE ARE

Since 1954, CCI has been welcoming newcomers to Ottawa. From then until now, we have assisted tens of thousands of immigrants and refugees to settle and succeed as individuals in our nation's capital. Our services and programs have expanded over the years, but everything we have done and continue to do aligns with our mission, vision, and values.

- Our Mission is: **To empower newcomers to realize their full potential in Canadian society and support Canadians in fostering welcoming communities.**
- Our Vision is: **To be a leader in resettlement and integration services in Canada.**

Our values are based on five guiding pillars:

- **To be credible:** This means ensuring our organization is equipped with deep knowledge and experience in the settlement sector.
- **To innovate:** This involves continuously seeking new ideas, methods, and practices to support our clients.
- **To collaborate:** The full scope of our mission and vision can only be achieved by robust collaboration with a wide range of partners, volunteers, and supporters with the ability to leverage their community capital.
- **To be accountable:** CCI is a non-profit organization that supports vulnerable populations. We recognize this as an important responsibility and strive to perform our duties with transparency, oversight, and fiduciary responsibility.
- **To be client-focused:** All our work is conducted with the sole interest of prioritizing the well-being of our clients above any competing interests.



WHAT WE DO

As the leading settlement agency in Ottawa, CCI provides a wide variety of services and programs to assist immigrants and refugees settling in our city. Every client is different, and we use a tailored approach to support streamlined inclusion into Canadian society. Of course, integration does not mean subjugation, but a fulsome appreciation of how intercultural communities can complement each other and add value to our social fabric. We do not believe in the melting pot theory but in the special gifts and rewards of a pluralistic, multicultural society. Our city and country have long recognized the value and benefits of diversity. We know it is a strength, and by supporting newcomers, CCI is invested in reinforcing it.



HOW WE DO IT?

The Catholic Centre for Immigrants in Ottawa offers a variety of services and supports for immigrants and Government-Assisted-Refugees. Settling in a new country is not as simple as arriving at an airport with aspirations for a better life. Of course, there is no universal definition for the meaning of a better life, but there are basic requirements, such as the need for food, shelter, health, employment, and a sense of community. CCI's services and programs provide tools for obtaining these within a Canadian context. To do this, each client is assigned to a case manager that conducts a needs assessment. Based on this assessment, individualized settlement plans are created, implemented, and tracked for progress. Depending on a client's needs, CCI provides warm, friendly, personalized services and programs. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Case management** in multiple languages and flexible locations (including online)
- Practical information and guidance concerning life in Canada, including **information and orientation sessions** covering topics such as Canadian systems of government, law, citizenship, culture, housing, our medical system, banking services, and enrolling children in school.
- **Assistance with documents** such as applications for a driver's license, healthcare cards, work permits, and permanent residency status.
- **Monthly workshops** to help newcomers prepare for the Canadian Citizenship test and application.
- Tailored **referrals to other government and community services** equipped to assist immigrants and GARs settle in their new community.



- Help **navigating access to healthcare.**
- Assistance **finding long-term housing.**
- **Transportation support** in the form of no-cost bus passes.
- **Oral Interpretation** during appointments, and **written translation** of informative/essential documents.
- Short-Term **Crisis Counselling.**
- **A bank of over 456 volunteers** ready, willing, and able to offer mentorship and other forms of support.
- Informal **language learning** circles.
- Comprehensive **employment-related services.**
- **Community-based activities** that connect newcomers with social outlets, access to networks, friendships, intercultural exchange, and a general sense of belonging and well-being.
- A wide range of **youth-focused activities** such as recreational activities, school support, and employment coaching.
- A **Pastoral Program** that helps newcomers find additional means of support by connecting them to the faith community of their choice.



In addition to these programs and services, CCI is fortunate to have additional assets and initiatives to do its work and provide added support to newcomers. Among them are:

- Our centrally located headquarters at 219 Argyle Street. Since **1991**, this has been our centre of administration, and where our management and staff oversee programs, services, and clerical duties. This is where we conduct needs assessments, deliver workshops and orientation sessions, hold meetings, provide employment services, and short-term crisis counselling.
- In **1988**, with generous support from the Daughters of Wisdom/Filles de la Sagesse, we were able to open the Maison Sophia Reception House. This facility provides temporary residence for government-assisted refugees and refugee claimants. It can accommodate and feed approximately 100 individuals.
- In **1996** CCI was able to secure charity status and created an independent foundation to raise money that goes towards supporting newcomers and initiatives that benefit them. Last year, the foundation was able to raise approximately 400,000 dollars.
- In **2018**, we opened the Welcome House in cooperation with the city of Ottawa, thanks to generous support of the Portuguese Community. Also accommodating approximately 100 individuals, this facility provides transitional housing for homeless immigrants in need of a temporary, welcoming home.



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WHERE WE ARE NOW

CCI has been in the settlement sector since 1954. Over the course of **70** years we have developed expertise and significantly increased our capacity to become the leading settlement agency in Ottawa. Last year, CCI provided services, assistance, and referrals to 6,123 individual newcomers from 124 countries.

Working with each of these individuals, and all those that came before has qualified our understanding of the sector, newcomer needs, and the knowledge that every client is unique. Our roots are strong, and our core set of services has evolved to execute positive, concrete outcomes for the clients we serve, and the community we share. Our staff brings great dedication and skills, with a diversity of language, origin, age, gender, and experience. Our work is informed by these multiple perspectives, insights, and abilities.



WHERE WE WANT TO BE

We want to build on who we are and what we do. We want to modernize, be more effective, efficient, innovative, and prepared to meet the challenges of the future. We want to be trusted and stand as a model of integrity. We want to participate in the process of securing a safe and inclusive society that is rich with opportunities for everyone. We want to be the best settlement agency we can be.

HOW DO WE GET THERE

To identify our needs and develop concrete goals that will lead to meaningful change, we need to zoom out and reflect on the big picture with a critical eye. Not for lack of optimism, but to reinforce our foundation and grow with a level of efficiency that meets the impact we wish to have.



Everything begins with our mission and vision. Are they inspiring? Do they resonate? Are they appropriate in 2024?

All organizations need to evolve in order to remain connected to their time, place, and purpose. Understanding this, we have drafted the following to be in a working format and serve as inspirational statements to consistently reflect on, review, and adapt.

OUR MISSION IS

To champion newcomers as they work towards realizing their aspirations and establishing a sense of home in Ottawa.

OUR VISION IS

To inspire Ottawa to continue embracing the rewards of multiculturalism as a conduit for making a community that is equitable, prosperous, and rich with opportunities for everyone.

Our values are also key representations of our big picture. To get to where we want to be we must consider them thoughtfully and determine if we are living up to the standards they set.

Innovation

Are we on the cutting edge, up to date, and efficiently able to meet all our challenges? Are we trusted by our community and government funders? Are we living up to our funding agreements with transparency and accurate data?

Collaboration

We remain highly invested in collaboration as a means for achieving the best possible outcomes. And we know there are countless individuals and organizations with an interest in our cause. Are our efforts strategically coordinated? Do we have the appropriate infrastructure in place to appropriately recognize and work with our collaborators? What processes do we have in place to identify, attract, and retain new partners?

Credibility

When was our last major innovation? What can we offer or dream to offer that will improve the lives and experiences of newcomers, as well as those they are neighbours to?

Client-Centric

In our hearts we believe this to be true. But as with all relationships, partners need to listen to each other, consider multiple points of view, and work out solutions that strengthen the relationship as a whole. We may love our clients, and do what we think is best for them, but what we think is rarely as important as what they feel. Are we listening and responding appropriately?

To address these points and further our efforts to establish goals, we have conducted a SWOT analysis to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

STRENGTHS

- Looking back over our 70-year history we have demonstrated **a track record** in Ottawa as a leader in settlement services. Our resume counts. People knock on our door, be it to get help, or lend it.
- CCI has developed and acquired **the trust of multiple committed funders**. We are supported by IRCC, the City of Ottawa, and the province of Ontario, among others. We currently have **an annual operating budget of 20 million**. Of course, we are a non-profit organization but, for better or worse, financial health is a strength. It allows us to be the change-makers we aspire to be.
- CCI has **countless community partners and allied service-providing agencies**. We need allies on our shores to fight the good fight, and we are fortunate to be supported by other non-profit agencies, housing organizations, medical clinics, government entities, and private sector advocates.
- A combined strength that we cannot ignore is our current **bank of over 456 volunteers** ready, willing, and able to lend their time, talents, and genuine dedication toward helping newcomers.
- Our Staff is the heart that circulates the good we do. We currently have 760 employees, and each of them comes to work with a level of commitment and dedication that is inspiring in and of itself. Our staff is diverse in terms of language, origin, age, gender, and experience. This brings multiple perspectives, insights, and talents that inform our work. Without our staff, and their combined character, CCI would not be where it is today.

WEAKNESS

- There is wisdom in experience, and we have a history of accomplishments we can be proud of. But we are 70 years old, and our joints are not as nimble as they could be. That is to say, many of the systems and policies we currently use are outdated and do not support our current size/operations. We must re-evaluate our infrastructure and modernize it to become the organization we wish to be.
- Because of our outdated infrastructure, our systems of governance and administration have remained static. This has impacted CCI's leadership and placed unnecessary burdens on our managers.
- CCI has become a large organization, with a big staff, and multiple departments. This happened over the years, in staggered, extemporaneous ways. Despite us being a team with the same goals, staff and departments are working in silos, unfamiliar or even unaware of what is happening where and how it all connects. Essentially, our internal communication procedures aren't working. This has inadvertently created alienation, a lack of shared knowledge, and impacted the importance of relationships and the benefits of collaboration.
- Likewise, **our external communication is not as effective as it could be.** For example, the population of greater Ottawa is roughly one and a half million. And last year we assisted 6,723 newcomers. However, we only have approximately 4,000 social media followers. Communicating with the public is our best tool for promoting advocacy, attracting supporters, and validating the importance of our work.

- The nature of our work is complex, and **we rely on partners to help us solve problems**. Often, the problems that we need to solve are urgent, multifaceted, or outside our bounds. So we need help, make calls, and do referrals. But because we assist a lot of people, and the door never stops revolving, despite our good intentions, **we forget to send the figurative thank you note to our partners**. Or worse, we become overwhelmed and find ourselves either unaware or unable to lend them our support. Unfortunately, this can **negatively impact our reputation and profile as a partner in alliance with those we call on for help**.
- Directly related to the above, **our brand has not evolved with the times**. It is not modern and comes with potential baggage influencing our profile and standing in the community.
- Although we believe in diversity, equity, and inclusion **we have limited capacity when it comes to addressing issues not historically appreciated as settlement agency work. This includes supporting newcomers with in/visible disabilities or offering programs for immigrants and refugees identifying as 2SLOBTQI+**.
- To say our HR department is strained is an understatement. **For 160 employees we have only one person dedicated to HR duties**. Not only is this a monumental task and burden to place on an individual, it directly **impacts our ability to recruit talent, onboard new staff, and address employee concerns**.
- **Funding is never guaranteed, nor does it cover unpredicted/emerging needs**.
- As mentioned elsewhere, CCI's staff is its lifeblood. Whole-heartedly dedicated to our cause and supporting our clients, they consistently go above and beyond, often to the point of burnout. **Employee wellness doesn't get the attention it needs** and without proper addressing this issue we cannot thrive as an organization.



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OPPORTUNITIES

- The world is changing. But while change can provoke anxiety, it also offers opportunities. Therefore, **our first opportunity rests in this strategic plan, which is intended to help us improve, modernize, prepare for what lies ahead, and address the challenges associated with change.**
- Although the government has announced a slight decrease in the number of refugees it will support, they are still planning to assist 73,000 refugees in 2025. Worth noting is that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees applauds "Canada's leadership on refugee resettlement." Of course, nothing is guaranteed, **but it is safe to assume that the settlement sector isn't going away anytime soon. Indeed, new needs are emerging, and we have the opportunity to get in front of them with new ideas, approaches, and services.**

- **Political:** part of living in a democracy means that governments change. At present, **the Canadian political environment is uncertain.** With a federal election on the horizon, **there is the possibility of changes in policies and government priorities.** CCI must remain aware of this, especially in the context of immigration. **Will this affect us, our work, or newcomer needs?** We cannot predict, but we can prepare by paying attention.
- **Economic:** According to the Government of Canada's Department of Finance, the country's current **economic** situation has remained resilient, with a low unemployment rate. Regardless, **inflation has placed a heavy toll on the cost of living for all Canadians. Immigrants and Refugees are even more vulnerable, especially in terms of employment. It is difficult to thrive if you're struggling to meet basic needs.**
- **Social:** There has been **a rise in hate and extremism.** This has led to division and polarization which is feeding the presence of **racism and anti immigration among some Canadians.**
- **Technology:** We are all familiar with the benefits of technology, but we also know that it comes with downsides, some of which impact our sector in ways average Canadians may not consider. For example, and for various reasons, **some newcomers struggle with digital literacy.** This impacts their ability to **access essential services and be competitive in the workforce.** Furthermore, social media, despite its advantages, **has demonstrated an unfortunate rise in misinformation, some of which is fueling the rise in racism and bias against immigrants.**
- **Environmental:** Perhaps our most pressing "environmental threat" at the moment is the **severe lack of affordable housing.** This has impacted newcomers exponentially and we need solutions to address it. Also, as per environmental threats, we need to begin thinking about climate change. **Current estimates suggest that by 2050, as many as 200 million environmental migrants will be forced to seek asylum in other countries.** We need to start having this Conversation in the settlement sector.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2024-2028

Based on the analysis outlined above, we can see that CCI remains a strong, important institution in the community. We can also determine that there are areas where we can be stronger, more efficient, and better equipped to have short, medium, and long-term impacts that position us to be a more modern and forward-thinking settlement agency.

The next step is to outline our goals for 2024-2028. The following objectives are the result of thoughtful analysis and careful observations performed by our Board, the Executive Director, and third-party entities.





STRENGTHEN

- Re-evaluate our mission and vision to better reflect who we are and what we can do.
- Refresh our brand as an example of our commitment to growing, changing, and becoming a modern, innovative settlement agency prepared to meet the challenges of the future.
- Consolidate our governance by updating policies addressing the Board's responsibilities, including codifying the relationship with the Executive Director, reviewing committee structure and roles to ensure they follow appropriate frameworks and reporting guidelines, and developing a solid risk management procedure.
- Update our infrastructure to establish policies and procedures that will make us more agile, connected, and set up to work smarter - not harder.
- Review our programs in consideration of emerging needs, client feedback, and an eye on duplication within the sector.



IMPROVE

- Expand and diversify our financial base to maximize our resources by identifying new sources of revenue, working with government partners to negotiate higher levels of support, and expanding our donor base – including corporate donors.
- Identify, validate, and attract new community partners by creating and implementing a partnership management strategy that streamlines our relationships, rewards support, and leverages buy-in under a win-win framework.
- Improve accessibility to our services by embracing bilingualism, making it easier for clients to access CCI information and services through technology, offering more flexible hours of service delivery, increasing our capacity to accommodate and include newcomers with in/visible disabilities, and creating programming to support 2SLGBTQI+ newcomers.



ADVOCATE

- Be an active and respected contributor at key discussion tables relevant to our mission in our city and province by raising our profile and presence in the media, community forums, academic circles, and government conscience.
- Develop, create, and deliver a comprehensive anti-bias, intercultural communication module that can be delivered to community members and entities to address strategies for approaching racism, differences in culture, and embracing multiculturalism as a value that benefits everyone.



COMMUNICATE

- Conduct an internal communication audit and from that a strategy for improving how we can be more efficient, accessible, and transparent in the way we share information, gather knowledge, and effectively perform our duties.
- Evaluate our current external communication protocols to evaluate what is working and what isn't to create a plan that will boost our profile, attract and retain supporters, and leverage our capacity to advocate on behalf of newcomer causes.



SUPPORT

- Expand our Human Resources Capacity to better meet the needs of our employees and recruit new talent.
- Increase encouragement and resources for leadership to best meet the challenges impacting their capacity.
- Develop an employee wellness program to lessen the toll of heavy workloads, focus responsibilities so that staff do not exceed their ability to work sustainably, and reward good work through incentives and social gatherings.



IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

- Management team will develop an Operational Plan to implement the Strategic Plan, and this will guide the work of the organization.
- Executive Director will be accountable for implementation and will report to the Board quarterly on progress, including achievements, challenges and recommended adjustments to the Strategic Plan.
- Management team will develop and implement an evaluation framework to collect and analyze data that measures impact and outcomes in a way that is meaningful without being onerous.