



Strategic Plan

2021-2025

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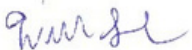
A Message from The Neighbourhood Group

As the lead organization of the Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership (TSLIP) it is my pleasure to present our new transitional TSLIP Strategic Plan 2021-25, outlining how we plan to support our communities and the newcomer serving sector as they navigate the risks and opportunities that are sure to accompany Canada's emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan builds on our legacy of community-driven leadership by addressing those priorities deemed most urgent by our member organizations and by newcomers to South Toronto themselves.

The ongoing pandemic has caused physical, emotional, and economic suffering and exposed painful inequalities within our communities, highlighting the urgency of work seeking to promote racial, economic, and gender justice. Newcomers have been at the forefront of the pandemic, working in essential services including health care, food production, and delivery. They have also been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19, with newcomer neighbourhoods reporting higher infection rates and newcomers with precarious status suffering economically as they struggled to access services and government support. Within the newcomer serving sector, Covid-19 hastened the transition to remote services for some programs and propelled a spate of innovation. The coming years will help determine which of these innovations become permanent as the sector continues to adapt and meet the changing needs of newcomers.

Our world is changed in ways greater than the challenges faced by any single sector or population, and in order to serve newcomers effectively we must build bridges and make common cause with allies who share our commitment to equality and whose own struggles reflect the overarching need to build a fairer society. This includes a willingness to work outside our own silos and geographies, and to engage with issues key to our national narrative, including white supremacy and the need for national reconciliation with indigenous communities.

As a city of immigrants, we know that Toronto thrives when those who arrived more recently than ourselves also thrive. The TSLIP area includes many vibrant neighbourhoods that have hosted high numbers of new immigrants as far back as the nineteenth century. Our member agencies boast many decades of experience working together to welcome immigrants and refugees and their communities. From this history comes our renewed commitment to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all newcomers. Our thanks to our partners for their generous time and support, and to Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and our Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments and United Way which make the activities of our LIP member agencies possible. Please visit our website www.torontolip.com to learn more about our partnerships, our resources and our updates for 2021-2025.



Bill Sinclair
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Neighbourhood Group Community Services

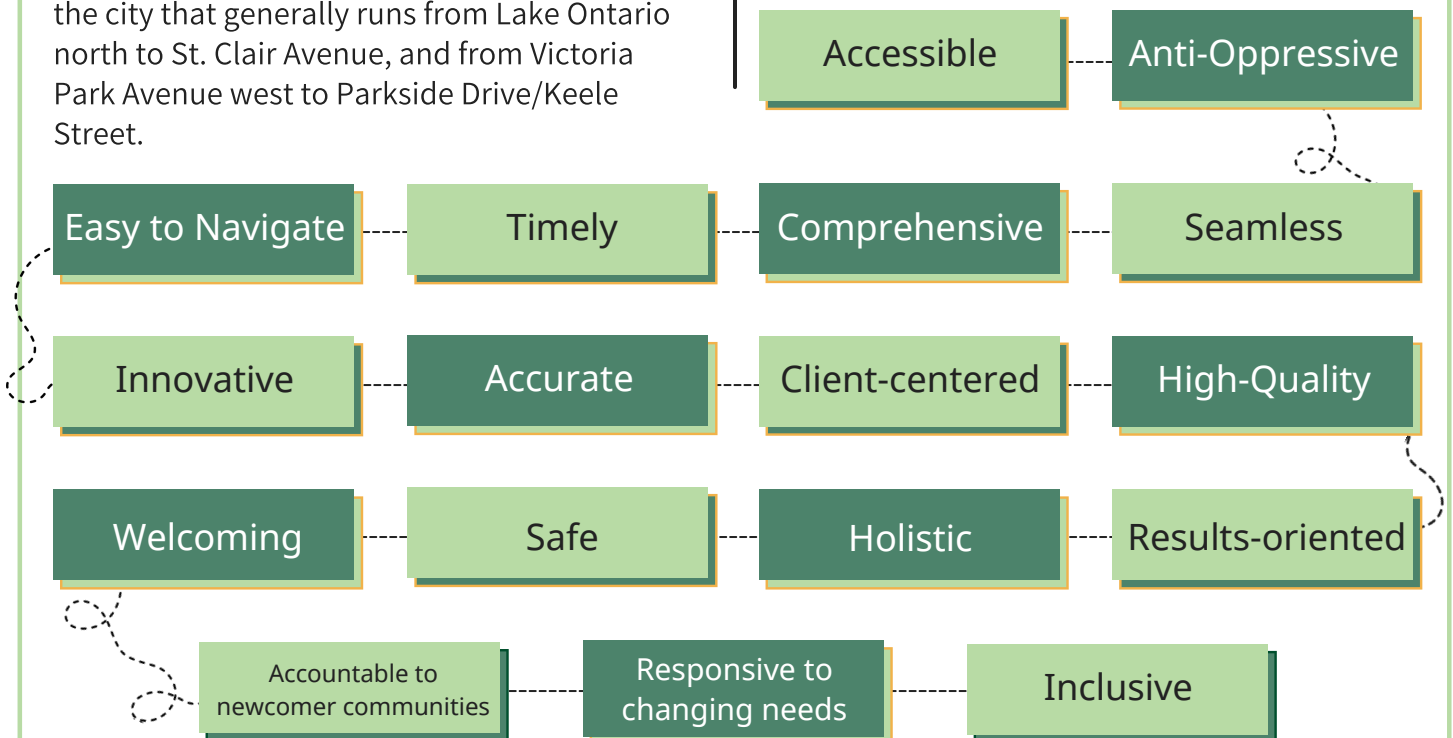
Background and Mandate

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are federally funded planning bodies focused on developing and implementing local settlement strategies that coordinate and enhance service delivery to newcomers while promoting innovation and efficient use of resources. We seek to engage various stakeholders in the partnership development process, including employers, school boards, boards of trade, levels of government, local associations, ethno-cultural associations, faith-based organizations and the community, legal, health and social services sector.

There are 77 LIPs across Canada, with four quadrant community LIPs in Toronto (East, West, North and South) and one municipal LIP (The Toronto Newcomer Office) covering the entire city. The 40 official City of Toronto neighbourhoods that comprise the Toronto South area occupy the central-southern part of the city that generally runs from Lake Ontario north to St. Clair Avenue, and from Victoria Park Avenue west to Parkside Drive/Keele Street.

Our vision is of LIPs as a valuable resource for the local community, facilitating access to information and resources and fostering partnership building and collaboration. As structures that are uniquely connected to a wide range of stakeholders, LIPs have an important strategic role to play in advising on and implementing Canada’s immigration and settlement policy.

In support of this vision, the Toronto South LIP’s member organizations are committed to exploring new ways of communicating, collaborating, coordinating and partnering for the benefit of newcomers in the Toronto South area. We are committed to working together to provide a collaborative network of coordinated information, programs, supports, and services for newcomers that reflect our Service Values by being:



Statement of Guiding Values & Ethics

In January 2013, our Partnership Council adopted the following Statement of Guiding Values & Ethics to encourage effective ways of working together as members of the Toronto South LIP.

The Toronto South LIP’s members are committed to working together in ways that are consistent with the following values and ethics:

Respect

Respect for newcomer assets and contributions, and respect for each other’s unique and essential contributions to an effective service system

Diversity

Valuing and reflecting diversity and cultural differences, and recognizing this as a strength we can build on

Honesty & Integrity

Being honest and transparent in our communication and striving to fulfill our commitments

Trust & relationship-building

Being willing to learn from every interaction, build our relationships, and foster an atmosphere of trust

Newcomer-focus / Client-focus

Prioritizing the best interests of clients and newcomers

Anti-racism, anti-oppression and gender equity

Modelling principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression and gender equity in our work with each other and in our service environments.

Inclusiveness

Including diverse points of view in decision-making

Our Pandemic Year

The last TSLIP strategic plan ended in 2019 and we were poised to embark on a new 5-year strategic planning process when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. The pandemic was a game-changer not only for the newcomer-serving sector but for Canadian society as a whole. In addition to bringing death and illness into thousands of homes, the Covid-19 pandemic and necessary response measures rapidly transformed the way in which newcomer services were delivered, jeopardized the employment and livelihoods of millions of individuals including newcomers, and highlighted pre-existing inequalities in our society including those of class, race, and immigration status.

Given the upheaval and uncertainty surrounding the future, the TSLIP Executive decided to postpone a full strategic planning process until 2021, and focus instead on supporting the newcomer serving sector and its service users as it navigates this unknown territory.

In line with this decision, TSLIP created a transitional one-year strategic plan for 2020-21, focused entirely on Covid-19 recovery.



TSLIP's 2020 - 2021 Transitional Strategic Plan

1. Supporting Newcomer Serving Sector efforts to ensure a “just recovery” from Covid-19 through: anti-racism/anti-xenophobia initiatives, stakeholder engagement and feedback, support for sector transition to blended service provision and National LIP Secretariat infrastructure work.
2. Addressing Emerging Newcomer Needs (in particular in the areas of Employment, Health and Mental Health, and Access to Services/Access to Technology)



In pursuing activities under this transitional strategic plan, TSLIP in partnership with its members was able to:

1

Offer multiple Professional Development opportunities to TSLIP members and to LIP staff across Canada, including a 5-part anti-racism workshop series for LIP staff organized through the National LIP Secretariat and one-off workshops for service providers on “Shifting to Engaged Virtual Volunteering” and “Digital Messaging Apps and Newcomer Outreach” (organized by Newcomer Services Collaboration Working Group – previously Settlement Services Working Group.)

2

Serve as a communications conduit between newcomer serving organizations, grass-roots groups, and various stakeholders through our involvement with the National Settlement and Integration Council (NSIC), the Weekly Update, Newcomer Cluster Meetings, Neighbourhood Cluster Meetings, and the Toronto city-wide Covid-19 Community Response Table.

3

Create tools and repositories of information to support our members, including the Repository of resources on workers’ rights, tenants’ rights, and financial benefits during Covid-19 and an info sheet on access to healthcare during Covid-19 for newcomers without OHIP.

4

Conduct research aimed at better understanding how the needs of newcomers and the newcomer serving sector were impacted by Covid-19, including by participating in three Toronto Inter-LIP joint newcomer needs assessments and publishing a comprehensive “Access to Technology” report (via the Systemic Issues Working Group) in November 2020. This report outlined how the transition to online service delivery by government and community agencies impacted newcomers, especially those in vulnerable situations, with the intent that findings be used to inform policy and drive social change. The report was later cited in the national-level NSIC Technology Task Group report on technology.

5

Create an online front-line support network intended to support member staff as they navigated working from home, burnout, and safety concerns related to returning to work during the pandemic.

Strategic Plan 2021- 2025: Process

The current TSLIP strategic planning process incorporated extensive stakeholder consultation, as outlined below.

Newcomer Needs Assessment

Since the arrival of the pandemic in Ontario in mid-March 2020, the Toronto LIPs have jointly administered three SurveyMonkey surveys intended to provide a snapshot in time of emerging newcomer needs. The first of these surveys was administered in mid-April 2020, with the findings indicating that top newcomer concerns early in the pandemic included employment, access to services, housing, food security and mental health. A follow up survey was conducted in July, and showed that employment, access to services and mental health continue to preoccupy newcomer communities in Toronto. The final survey was conducted in January 2021. It was completed by 56 representatives of 36 organizations located throughout the GTA.

Emerging themes included continued struggles with access to/use of technology (particularly in the context of online learning), an increased emphasis on challenges facing youth (unemployment/risky employment, social and mental health issues stemming from isolation), employment (lay-offs/reduced hours, fear of contracting Covid, lack of childcare) and health and mental health (increased barriers to access, acute issues increasing).

Member Consultation

The January 2021 newcomer needs assessment was used as a starting point for discussion in our working groups throughout May 2021. Themes emerging from these consultations were rolled up into a SurveyMonkey sent out to all members in June. Thirty-one respondents completed the survey. Top newcomer needs identified once again included employment, access to technology, and mental health. Housing was also flagged as a continuing top concern. Respondents further indicated that they were concerned about the stability of funding in the newcomer serving sector, staff health and mental health being impacted by burnout, and the need for more collaboration among stakeholders. When asked about short-term concerns in particular, agencies listed potential funding cuts, the effectiveness of hybrid service delivery models, a safe return to the office, staff burnout/mental health, and access to technology.

These findings were presented to the TSLIP Executive Committee on June 15, 2021 and subsequently

to our Council on June 29, 2021, affording Executive and Council members the opportunity to further refine and explore emerging themes. Six focus groups (Health and Mental Health, Sector Transition, Employment, Anti-Racism, Youth and Newcomer Council) were then held between July and August 2021 to discuss each theme and possible approaches. All TSLIP members were invited to attend the Health and Mental Health, Sector Transition, Employment and Anti-Racism focus groups, while participants for the Youth and Newcomer Council group were specifically recruited to ensure proper representation. The Youth and Newcomer Council focus groups covered each of the four priority areas identified above.

TSLIP Executive Approval and Council ratification

Draft strategic directions were proposed by TSLIP staff based on collective member input and were approved by the Executive Committee on September 7, 2021. A full draft of the strategic plan was subsequently prepared and forwarded to all members of TSLIP Council for final comments. The final version was ratified by TSLIP Council on October 28, 2021.





Strategic Directions 2021 - 2025

Preamble

Our most recent strategic planning process coincided with the sector's and Canada's slow emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic during which organizations and communities alike have been asking big questions – what kind of world do we want? What does it mean for a society to be “fair”? What constitutes essential work? Whose voices deserve to be heard?

It's no surprise that these questions also found their way into many of our consultations and informal stakeholder discussions. Issues of racial and economic justice in particular permeated almost every conversation. Our members told us that they wanted the TSLIP to engage in work that addressed tensions between the colonial aspects of “settlement” work and reconciliation through partnership building with Indigenous communities and sustainable learning/work, both at the sector level and for newcomers. They also called for more analysis of the work of newcomer serving organizations through an anti-racist lens, including identification of how systemic racism impacts newcomers and efforts to address them through research, concrete action, and policy engagement.

We believe that the resulting Strategic Plan is one that deliberately centres social justice work and seeks to shift long standing patterns of inequality impacting not just newcomers, but our society as a whole.

Between November 2021 and March 2025, the Toronto South LIP intends to focus on securing a “just Covid recovery” for all newcomers by working to combat social inequality caused by systemic factors including poverty and racism. TSLIP will pursue this goal by adopting the following strategies:

1

Policy and Research

2

**Support for
Newcomer Success**

3

**Strengthening the
newcomer-serving sector**

Policy and Research

TSLIP will seek to shed light on issues impacting newcomers and work towards creating a welcoming community in Toronto South by:

Community Research

Conducting community-based research in partnership with members and other stakeholders on issues identified as key to newcomer success (eg. housing, community-based funding and service coordination models).

Augmenting Member Voices

Augmenting our Members' voices at stakeholder tables both nationally and locally, including through participation and collaboration with NSIC, OCASI, TNO, and others.

Addressing systemic racism

Working with members and other stakeholders including LIPs across Canada to address systemic racism and other inequities and to advocate for a "just recovery" from Covid-19.

Strengthening Connections with BIPOC Communities

Building strategic alliances with other sectors (eg. employment) and seeking to strengthen our connections to BIPOC communities.

Centering Newcomer Voices

Ensuring newcomer voices are represented and amplified within TSLIP and in the policy decisions made at stakeholder tables.

Support for Newcomer Success

TSLIP will support newcomer communities during Covid-19 recovery by working closely with our members to address service and accessibility gaps in the following areas:

Health and Mental Health

TSLIP will work to decrease the social isolation of newcomers, help to eliminate discrimination in accessing health and mental health supports, and play a systems navigation role in ensuring newcomers are able to access culturally appropriate care.

Employment

TSLIP will work towards the elimination of barriers faced by newcomers in obtaining and maintaining decent jobs, focusing in particular on barriers that are a result of systemic racism and other forms of discrimination.

Emerging Challenges

TSLIP will step up and support our partners as they seek to respond to new issues and challenges affecting newcomers that emerge in the wake of Covid-19.

Strengthening the newcomer-serving sector

TSLIP will support our members as they navigate Covid-19 recovery and strive to ensure newcomers are able to equitably participate in Canadian society. This will include:

Supporting New Service Delivery Models

Supporting members' efforts at navigating the transition to new service delivery models—TSLIP will strive in particular to promote accessibility of services for all newcomers whether in-person or remotely.

Bridging Newcomer and Indigenous Communities

Supporting efforts to build bridges between organizations serving newcomers and Indigenous communities, including by engaging in a structural review aimed at enhancing TSLIP's own ability to further reconciliation and anti-racism. .

Sharing Research

Serving as a communications and knowledge translation conduit between our members, funders, academia and other stakeholders to ensure timely sharing of relevant information.

Professional Development Opportunities

Offering professional development opportunities to our members in areas aligned with this strategic plan, including access to technology, Covid-19 recovery, anti-racism and reconciliation.

Coordination Initiatives

Supporting newcomer serving organizations through participation in systems navigation/coordination initiatives.

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