



# MISSION STATEMENT

**To empower people from diverse communities to succeed and achieve their full potential by providing educational, employment and social services.**

## VISION

A prosperous and inclusive Canada built on the success of every individual.

## VALUES

### **Leadership**

- We stand and take action for positive change in our community.

### **Diversity**

- We value and respect each person's differences and unique contributions.

### **Empowerment**

- We acknowledge the potential of every person and facilitate their growth and self-sufficiency.

### **Compassion**

- We support and care for each other.

### **Excellence**

- We are committed to high standards in all we do.

### **Innovation**

- We embrace change, support continuous improvement and encourage new solutions.

### **Accountability**

- We do what we say we will.
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Meeting the needs of a diverse society since 1952, **COSTI Immigrant Services** is a community-based multicultural agency providing employment, educational, settlement and social services to all immigrant communities, new Canadians and individuals in need of assistance.

COSTI strives to be a leader in community service by using a client-focused, proactive, and innovative approach in planning, developing and delivering services. Our programs ensure that regardless of language or cultural barriers, people who arrive in Canada are able to access information, use their existing skills and learn new ones that accelerate their ability to engage broadly and deeply in all aspects of Canadian society.

Operating from 18 locations in Toronto, York Region and the Region of Peel, COSTI provides services in more than 60 languages. We help over 39,000 individuals received assistance.

Services and programs include:

- Specialized employment services for internationally trained individuals, as well as information and referral to appropriate services, employment assessment and counselling, work placement, job search training and job development for adults and youth.
  - English language (ESL and LINC), skills training and Enhanced Language Training (ELT) programs.
  - Settlement services including orientation, information, counselling and cultural interpretation for recently-arrived immigrants.
  - Post-settlement support for settled immigrants who continue to require social and government services.
  - Housing and settlement supports for Government-Assisted Refugees, Refugee Claimants and Privately-Sponsored Refugees.
  - Family counselling and mental health services.
  - Housing support for families facing eviction, or those marginally housed.
  - Help for immigrant women to overcome barriers in their lives and to access opportunities.
  - Services specific to the needs of seniors to help them lead a satisfying and dignified life.
  - Translation and interpretation services.
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# A HISTORY IN PROGRESS

Since 1952 COSTI has been there for those in need. Out of a concern for the needs of recent immigrants in Toronto, COSTI (then the Italian Immigrant Aid Society) was founded in 1952. Over the decades the city has changed, so too have COSTI's responses.

COSTI originated with the amalgamation, in 1981, of two major service agencies, COSTI (formerly Centro Organizzativo Scuole Tecniche Italiane) and the IIAS (Italian Immigrant Aid Society), each of which had a lengthy and proud history of service in the immigrant community.

COSTI is a multicultural organization that has always offered a range of services and opportunities arising out of specific needs in the community. It has strong support from a wide and extremely diverse constituency in Toronto and the Regions of Peel and York. COSTI has evolved into the organization that it is today because its volunteer leaders and compassionate staff have worked with a strong commitment to effect change.

## **The 1950's – Establishing a Tradition of Helping Others**

Formed in 1952, the IIAS emerged as an organization whose main purpose was to provide Italian newcomers with the basic necessities of life. Meeting immigrants at Union Station in Toronto, IIAS workers would assist them with housing and employment, and would follow-up with orientation and counselling designed to help these new arrivals become more comfortable in their new country.

## **The 1960's – Strengthening Ties to the Community**

Ten years later, in 1962, COSTI was established to help recent Italian immigrants obtain the professional qualifications required to practice their trades in Canada. During its early days of operation, COSTI's programs were based in a church basement in Toronto, eventually moving to an old unused mansion at 136 Beverley Street.

To prepare immigrants for the English-language licensing examinations which they were required to pass in order to work in Canada, COSTI workers organized English language instruction programs. As the number of clients increased, a need was perceived not only for vocational counselling, but for general and family counselling as well.

The programs offered at COSTI soon outgrew its facilities, and the organization began working in collaboration with various technical education centres in the area. In 1966, the Workers' Compensation Board (now known as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) contracted COSTI to begin a program to rehabilitate injured workers. This program grew significantly, impacting on the lives of countless injured workers over the years.

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## **The 1960's – Continued**

By the end of the 1960's, the agency had opened counselling offices throughout Toronto, Hamilton, and suburban North York. It was also around this time that COSTI became a United Way member agency, and began expanding its services to immigrants from other countries in addition to those from Italy.

## **The 1970's – Multiculturalism**

During the 1970's, COSTI's services expanded once again to include aid for refugees coming to Canada. Recognizing a pressing need for many of the Vietnamese "boat people" to confirm their true level of education, COSTI developed an examination and certification process in conjunction with George Brown College, the first program of its kind in Canada.

## **The 1980's – A Shared Vision**

Acknowledging the similarities in the goals and work of the IIAS and of COSTI, negotiations were initiated in 1980 to amalgamate the two agencies. On January 24, 1981, this goal was achieved and the organizations were merged under the official name of COSTI-IIAS Immigrant Services.

## **The 1990's – Eliminating Barriers**

COSTI experienced a remarkable period of growth and development during the 1990's. With a focus on addressing the needs of Internationally Trained Professionals, COSTI was instrumental in providing leadership in the community, through the development of unique service delivery models that addressed the needs of individuals arriving to Canada with international work experience. Established in 1997 and the first of its kind, COSTI's Centre for Internationally Trained Professionals provided professionals with intense hands-on experience in the workplace within their field of expertise.

## **The 2000's – COSTI and the Community**

COSTI's collaboration and partnerships with the community significantly increased during the 2,000's. The organization hosted and organized the first African Canadian Council in 2001, bringing together 51 African-serving organizations and community members to a conference to discuss the need for planning and greater coordination of services to the growing community. The result of the conference was the creation of the African Canadian Social Development Council, whose mandate was to coordinate services, provide training and advocate for more responsive public policy. COSTI acted as its trustee.

In 2007, along with four other partner organizations, the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services partnership model was formed. COSTI was the lead for the first centre in Vaughan. Four more locations opened a year later, each led by one of four other partners. A one-stop service in York Region, Welcome Centre Immigrant Services Centres are designed to directly address the settlement needs of newcomers. In addition, recognizing the growing need for individual and group counselling in the Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities, COSTI expanded its family and mental health services to these communities in 2008.

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## **The Present – Accelerating Engagement**

Now known as COSTI Immigrant Services, the organization has expanded to the point where it annually assists over 39,000 people from every corner of the world. While its main target group continues to be recently arrived immigrants, COSTI's programs have expanded to offer services to all disadvantaged adults, youths, and women.

Through its over 400 staff, collectively fluent in over 60 different languages, COSTI is able to reach out to a variety of communities to bring about positive change.

COSTI's collaboration and partnerships with the community continues with the establishment of province-wide programs such as the Orientation to Ontario Program, established in 2011, International Student Connect and the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse.

COSTI continuously strives to be a leader in community service by using a client-focused, proactive, and innovative approach in planning, developing and delivering services. Its programs ensure that regardless of language or cultural barriers, people who arrive in Canada are able to use their existing skills, learn new ones, and participate actively in all aspects of Canadian life.

## **Our Work with Refugees and Canada's Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis**

As an organization that provides services to immigrants, refugees, and the communities that they live in, COSTI was deeply involved in the response to the mass intake of Syrian refugees to Canada, and more specifically in the Greater Toronto Area, helping make Canada home to over 2,200 Syrian refugees since 2016. Just like everyone else who chooses to live in Canada, we work diligently to ensure that Canada's new citizens are engaged in their communities and achieve success.

Today, COSTI continues to work with Government-Assisted Refugees, Privately-Sponsored Refugees and Refugee Claimants, ensuring that the supports and services provided, accelerate their engagement in their local community and new country.

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