



CONSULATE GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
Toronto, Canada

Media Advisory

Consulate General of the United States of America • 360 University Avenue • Toronto

December 19, 2016

For Immediate Release

U.S. MISSION TO CANADA AND COSTI TO IMPLEMENT REFUGEE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The U.S. Mission to Canada is pleased to announce a grant of USD\$150,000 from the U.S. Department of State to implement a Refugee Youth Leadership Program in the Greater Toronto Area. The two-year program for high-school students in grades 9-12 will provide after school or weekend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for newly arrived refugees. The program will also have a leadership training and educational counseling component. At the end of the two-year program, the students will participate in a visit to the United States centered on leadership development and engagement with community organizations that assist refugees.

The project received funding in a grants competition conducted by the U.S. Department of State's Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Projects selected for funding build upon the September 20, 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees. Co-Hosted by President Barack Obama, on the margins of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Leaders' Summit galvanized significant new global commitments in response to the largest mass displacement crisis since the Second World War. One of the main goals of the Leaders' Summit was to increase refugees' self-reliance and inclusion through opportunities for education and legal employment. The Refugee Youth Leadership Program will prepare refugee students to succeed in Canadian schools and to serve as mentors for future arriving refugees.

COSTI Immigrant Services has been resettling refugees in the Toronto region for more than 28 years. "Refugee youth have the greatest challenge in integrating," said Mario J. Calla, Executive Director of COSTI. "Adolescent insecurities combined with a lack of English language skills sometimes conspire to marginalize these young people. We are grateful for the American government's support in establishing a leadership program to engage and inspire confidence in them." COSTI has engaged the YMCAs of Mississauga and Scarborough to host ESL programs twice weekly and to provide social and recreational programs. George Brown College will provide a customized leadership training program for the project.

The Refugee Youth Leadership Program will start in January 2017. The partnership between the U.S. government and COSTI Immigrant Services will span two years. The U.S. Consul General in Toronto, Juan Alsace, stated, "We are thrilled to have COSTI Immigrant Services as a partner in this program. As the son of immigrants myself, I know how the diversity of thought and culture and experience brought by immigrants and refugees has strengthened and enriched the United States. The Refugee Youth Leadership Program will provide supplementary English classes, leadership training, educational counseling, and community-building activities that will support academic success for newly arrived high school-age refugees."

For general media-related inquiries, please contact: Madina Turdieva, Media Specialist for U.S. Consulate General Toronto at TurdievaM@state.gov.