



Annual Impact Report

2023/2024

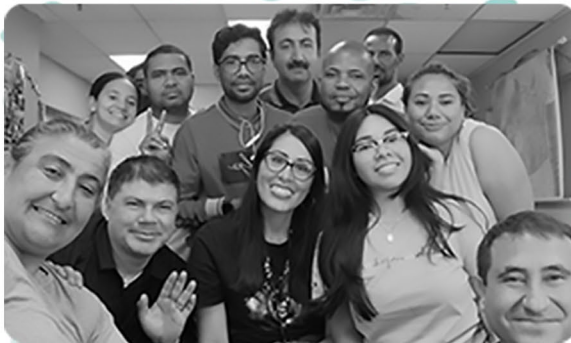


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Letter from the President of the Board

Pina Alberelli-Arone

As President of COSTI, I am proud of our long history of serving newcomers and the most vulnerable, addressing the evolving needs of our community. Since 1952, we have remained steadfast in our mission, delivering essential services to tens of thousands with a client-focused, trauma-informed approach. This last year, I am proud to report we served 39,269 clients and our services were accessed across multiple digital platforms.

As we reflect on this last year, I want to express, on behalf of the entire Board of Directors, how deeply inspired we are by the collective efforts of the COSTI family. Our commitment to supporting newcomers and diverse communities has only grown stronger. We have delivered much needed employment, skills training, housing, mental health and settlement services across the Greater Toronto Area. This success is driven by the passion of our Board, staff, volunteers, donors and partners. Each achievement reaffirms our shared mission to create a more inclusive and equitable Canada.

We have gained insights from the past and we also adapt with the future. The Board and staff have embraced these insights, continuously adapting our programs to improve and evolve.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to excellence and innovation. We will continue to build on our legacy by embracing new opportunities with the same spirit of collaboration and resilience that has defined our journey. While we highly value one-on-one, in-person services, we have also been integrating advanced technology to enhance our digital offerings, allowing us to reach and serve as many clients as possible.

In 2024/2025, the Board will review and update COSTI's strategy to address the challenge of serving more people with fewer resources while responding to our community's changing needs. Our Board and staff are committed to adapting to shifts in our health, social and economic environments. We also aim to continue to enhance our partnerships with community organizations to better serve our diverse communities.

We are immensely grateful to our volunteers for their significant impact and dedication, especially during key projects like the Afghan Initiative. Their efforts have been invaluable.

I extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to my fellow Board members, volunteers, partners and COSTI staff for their unwavering commitment throughout the past year.

Sincerely,

Pina Alberelli-Arone

President



Letter from the Chief Executive Officer

Samina Sami

As I reflect on the past year, I am humbled by the work we have accomplished at COSTI, serving our clients with dedication and excellence. Together with our partner agencies, volunteers, funders, donors and the Board, we have accelerated social and economic security for those we serve.

We continued to provide top quality in-person services while innovating in the digital space. In fiscal year 2023/2024, our services were accessed 192,863 times through both digital and in-person channels.

We made significant impact across multiple fronts. Recognizing that employment is a core pillar to enabling client journeys, we continued to enhance our efforts in employment, skills training, bridging and mentorship, enabling meaningful jobs and economic security for our clients. Additionally, we empowered women through entrepreneurship and digital skills programs, applying a gender-inclusive approach to our programs.

We hosted successful job fairs and established partnerships with major employers, creating vital opportunities for clients to match their skills with career-related jobs, facilitate on-the-spot hires, and build meaningful career paths. We also continued to promote professional networking, bridging and skills training for our clients. These initiatives were acknowledged by third-party recognition, receiving the TRIEC Mentoring Partnership Recognition Award and commendation from WCG-Employment Ontario for successfully employing multi-barrier clients, underscoring our commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

We helped to address the housing and homelessness crisis in the Greater Toronto Area by providing temporary shelter for clients and supporting their transition to permanent housing and long-term social and economic security. Our clients, including single parents with children, come from diverse backgrounds. Several now live independently in permanent housing and have secured necessary services and support.

The COSTI facilitated International Student Connect Program gained further recognition as a best-practice model for addressing the needs of international students. While the Orientation to Ontario (O2O) program gained prominence, demonstrating the positive impact of pre-arrival information and services on the successful settlement of newcomers. Our family and mental health services continued to meet the needs of vulnerable clients and our programs for seniors, youth and women provided spaces for these communities to flourish. We are grateful to our partners across the province for their invaluable contributions to the success of these programs.

We also played a major role in upskilling clients, providing essential English and sector-specific language skills, particularly in health, finance, logistics and entrepreneurship. Our clients' achievements were

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

celebrated at our annual Women's Day Conference, where former clients shared their career journeys, and female entrepreneurs showcased and sold their products in a women-led market.

Our commitment to welcoming and resettling refugees remained strong, including those fleeing conflict in Afghanistan. We secured stable housing, meaningful employment, and integration into Canadian society, effectively resettling newcomers in response to humanitarian crises.

We supported Ukrainians arriving under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) by assisting them with finding temporary housing through COSTI's Housing Host Program.

We were humbled to receive the CanadianSME Small Business Magazine's Small Business of the Year 2023 Award, celebrating our team's passion and hard work in helping our clients build fulfilling lives in Canada.

Our global presence expanded as we hosted international delegations from Finland, Austria, Germany and Italy, facilitating knowledge exchange and best practices.

Additionally, we were honoured to host several high-profile leaders, including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Mayor of Toronto and the provincial Associate Minister of Small Business.

While prioritizing these critical initiatives, we also focused on improving our service delivery by refining our organizational structure, enhancing communications and support for our staff.

We established new senior leadership roles, enhanced our organizational design to align with client and program priorities, engaged staff through town halls and other platforms, and strengthened capacity through enhanced staff training programs.

These advancements are the result of our collective efforts. We are deeply grateful for your commitment, which fuels our mission and inspires us as we look to the future with excitement.

Meegwetch,

With gratitude,

Samina Sami
Chief Executive Officer

Mission

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.



Mission

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.



The COSTI Impact

In 2023/24, COSTI embodied its mission of empowering newcomers and diverse communities through its comprehensive, client-centered model that covered housing, employment, language and skills development, and social services. This integrated approach ensured that each of our 39,269 clients received holistic and tailored services for their unique journeys. We pride ourselves on being where clients are, whether they prefer in-person or digital services resulting in 192,863 service engagements across our divisions.

THE COSTI IMPACT

Through strong partnerships and collaborations with over 300 diverse organizations—including community organizations, employers, landlords, health agencies, training institutes and other public institutions—COSTI created a powerful ecosystem that addressed the unique needs of every client, fostering both personal and professional growth. From language training and digital literacy, mental health services through to entrepreneurship programs tailored for women, our initiatives equipped clients with the skills necessary to achieve economic security, social inclusion and independence.

At COSTI, we did more than offer services—we helped support the transformation of lives, fostered resilience and contributed to building a stronger, more inclusive Canada. Our clients bring great resiliency, skills and courage, and each story is one of hope and inspiration. There are countless success stories of clients who transitioned from uncertainty to stability, from learning new skills to successfully joining the local workforce and from isolation to full community participation. We remained focused on strengthening our core programs and deepening our commitment to enabling economic security, addressing broader social issues and celebrating the rich contributions of diverse backgrounds.

192,863

service interactions
(digital and in-person)

39,269

clients served

19

service locations

4

service pillars

38

programs offered

112

volunteers engaged

2,328

volunteer hours
contributed

300+

partnerships and
collaborations



Creating Impact Together

At COSTI, community engagement is vital. By celebrating achievements, supporting education, recognizing staff and championing equity, diversity and inclusion, we strengthen connections and drive meaningful impact in the communities we serve.

CREATING IMPACT TOGETHER

Empowering and Enabling Women:

COSTI celebrated women's achievements and addressed critical issues through two impactful events in March. COSTI's annual Women's Day Conference, titled ***Empower Together: Unlocking Limitless Potential***, honoured our amazing staff and women entrepreneurs. The event featured a panel discussion on creating safe spaces and addressing women's issues. Also present at this event were remarkable women-entrepreneurs showcasing their successful businesses, all of whom graduated from COSTI's Women-Specific Employment Training (WSET) and Nurturing Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Women (NCEW) programs.

Also, in March, COSTI unveiled the ***Together We Thrive: Art Exhibit*** at Toronto City Hall, coinciding with the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. The exhibit showcased artwork by women impacted by Islamophobia, addressing their fears and anxieties while celebrating their identities, strengths and remarkable achievements. Supported by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the program provides a safe space using a trauma-informed art approach to help participants cope with discrimination.

Honouring Excellence through Scholarships:

COSTI supports newcomers to Canada who are pursuing post-secondary education through scholarships funds. In 2023, four recipients were awarded scholarships and recognized for their academic excellence:

- **WCPD Foundation Scholarship Fund** awarded scholarships to two students, one from McMaster University and one from Centennial College.
- **Vittoria Adhami Immigrant Women's Scholarship Fund** honours Vittoria Adhami's 30-year commitment to enhancing services for female clients at COSTI. The 2023 scholarship was granted to a student at Toronto Metropolitan University.
- **Mary Cellucci Women's Scholarship Fund** was established in 2023, to honour Mary Cellucci's legacy and her nearly four decades of service at COSTI, awarding its first scholarship this year to a student at Carleton University.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI):

In 2023/24, COSTI reaffirmed its commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) through meaningful learning, community engagement, observances and celebrations. In September, CEO, Samina Sami kicked off COSTI's ***Journey of Learning*** with a heartfelt message and important learning resources for all staff, highlighting the importance of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, while emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on Canada's colonial history, and engaging in ongoing learning and dialogue towards reconciliation.

During Black History Month, COSTI celebrated the rich contributions of Black authors and activists, sharing resources that encouraged deeper understanding and reflection. Our ***Journey of Learning*** underscored the importance of education in combating racism and promoting inclusion.

Throughout the year, our staff have engaged in a variety of initiatives to help support an inclusive ecosystem for our clients, partners and staff, including supporting marginalized, vulnerable clients and responding with a trauma-informed, inclusive lens to critical incidents, addressing racism, homophobia and transphobia, supporting gender equity, challenging anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and enabling accessibility.

We also shared 30 social media posts on each of our platforms, celebrating diverse cultures and marking commemorations, garnering over 37,000 post impressions. From Indigenous Peoples Day to Sikh Heritage Month, these posts promoted inclusion and engagement throughout the year.



OUR SERVICES

Building Future-Ready Skills: Education Services

Overview

Language and skills training are crucial for adapting to life in Canada. COSTI's Education Services Division, in partnership with various organizations, plays a vital role in supporting newcomers with necessary knowledge to help them along their settlement journey. In 2023/24, we increased our program flexibility, introduced advanced technology in language instruction, including a suite of online offerings, and strengthened implementation of concurrent classroom models in most of our training programs.

Our Education Services experienced a 21.32% increase in clients compared to the previous year:

- The Vaughan Welcome Centre assisted a total of 7,257 clients, 42% of whom received core services.
- Our language training programs achieved impressive completion rates: 86% for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), 69% for Enhanced Language Training (ELT) and 70.5% for Women-specific Employment Training (WSET) courses.

- In Toronto and Peel, we successfully launched 57 English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for asylum claimants in February 2024, providing timely support to over 400 clients. Additionally, we increased LINC part-time classes in York Region and offered digital literacy classes for Ontario Works clients in Peel Region.
- As the Ontario Settlement Partner for the Canadian Immigration and Integration Program (CIIP), COSTI served 1,212 pre-arrival clients through 44 service webinars.

12,026

clients served through
Education Services

2,273

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) students served

289

Skills & Language Training sessions delivered

1,212

pre-arrival clients supported

Programs

COSTI's Education Services Division empowers newcomers through comprehensive language and skills training programs. These initiatives build confidence, foster independence and promote active community engagement—critical elements for successfully navigating and thriving in their new Canadian lives.

Language Training

- **English as a Second Language (ESL):** Facilitates long-term integration through a provincially funded ESL program, ESL for Visitors, Conversation Circles and Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPPIP) exam preparation.
- **Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC):** Provides full-time and part-time English classes along with Care for Newcomer Children services.
- **Language Training at the Workplace (LTW):** Offers customized on-site language training, tailored to specific workplace needs.
- **ESL Conversation Circles:** Provide a supportive virtual space for practicing English skills.
- **Enhanced Language Training (ELT):** Focuses on workplace-specific language instruction and career support for experienced professionals. In 2023/24, RBC supported paid internships within the ELT program and assisted nine clients with six of them securing jobs and two pursuing further training.

[Learn more: Language Services](#)

Digital and Media Literacy Training

- **Computer Training Program:** Enhances skills in MS Word, Excel, QuickBooks and Google Workspace.
- **Digital and Media Literacy:** Focuses on building essential digital skills for integration and employment.
- **Applied Digital and Media Literacy:** Advances workplace-specific software skills.
- **Learn Everyday Technology (LET):** Addresses the digital divide by providing technology-based training for underserved Peel residents.

[Learn more: Skills Training](#)

Women-Specific Training

- **Graphic Design for Women:** Offers foundational skills training for digital design careers.
- **Nurturing Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Women:** Launched in late 2023, this program helps to foster skills in cake decorating, dressmaking and jewelry design while introducing entrepreneurship principles.
- **Women-specific Employment Training (WSET):** Helps enhance labour market skills and provides comprehensive support in traditional fields, including childcare, food service and customer service.

Learn more: [Women's Services and Programs](#)



Impact Story

Equipping for success: Olena's ELT training


Olena Yeromina, an internationally trained psychologist from Ukraine, arrived in Canada with her son in July 2023, seeking refuge from the war. Facing challenges such as limited English proficiency and unfamiliarity with the Canadian job market, Olena joined our Enhanced Language Training (ELT) program for Internationally Trained Professionals in York Region.

Throughout the program, Olena showed remarkable dedication. She attended classes diligently, completed assignments and worked hard to enhance her workplace communication skills. The individualized

coaching which she received was particularly valuable, helping her to develop self-marketing tools and effective job search strategies.

"Thanks to the ELT course, I became acquainted with the Canadian job search and hiring process, resume and cover letter preparation, job interview procedures, as well as cultural peculiarities in the workplace. Everything I learned in the ELT course was new to me because the Ukrainian employment system is completely different from the Canadian one," shared Olena. "The individual coaching and support helped me understand how to navigate the Canadian job market."

By the end of the course, Olena's confidence had grown significantly. She began volunteering at a community centre and completed First Aid and CPR/AED courses. Despite facing initial job rejections, her perseverance paid off. Olena successfully secured a position as a Mental Health Case Manager at a multi-service agency. Her dedication and the skills she acquired through COSTI played a crucial role in her successful transition into the Canadian workforce.



OUR SERVICES

Enabling Economic Independence: Employment Services

Overview

COSTI's Employment Services Division supports both employers and jobseekers by offering a range of programs and services designed to empower community members, including newcomers, to achieve career success. Job seekers benefit from tailored support that prepares them for the workforce, including training, résumé writing, goal setting, networking opportunities and connections with employers. Our programs continually adapt to address the diverse needs of the Greater Toronto Area with a particular focus on newcomers, vulnerable populations and youth.

In 2023/24, the Weston Road Employment Services location assisted over 1,000 individuals with workshops, skills training and job placements, emphasizing local business engagement and community partnerships. Keele and Vaughan locations delivered career fairs, mentorship and specialized support for youth and internationally trained individuals. Our Internationally Trained Individuals and Federal

Internship for Newcomers programs bridged employment gaps, and our netWORKS and Youth Job Connection programs supported at-risk youth.

In December 2023, the Mississauga Employment location celebrated client achievements with the Newcomer Employment Services Festival (NES FEST) and recognized 11 employer-partners. The event led to 14 new partnerships and four internships.

9,304

clients served

Programs & Services

COSTI's Employment Services Division bridges workforce gaps through skills and language training, short-term and first-Canadian work experience and career exploration. Serving newcomers, community members and employers, these programs foster inclusive economic growth and stronger, more resilient communities.

Career Assessment and Planning Services

These help clients create realistic employment plans by evaluating skills, training needs and providing employment support options, offering access to skills-training and grant-programs.

[Learn more: Career Assessment and Planning Services](#)

Employer Services

We connect employers with skilled candidates by understanding their staffing needs, pre-screening applicants and monitoring placements. Additionally, we assist employers with training plans and offer potential subsidies to help offset costs.

[Learn more: Employer Services](#)

Employment Services

We support under-employed and unemployed clients by offering job-matching, placement support and career counselling. We also provide resources like job banks, internet access and training subsidies to help clients not only secure employment but maintain it.

[Learn more: Employment Services](#)

Youth Employment Services

These services provide a strong foundation for those seeking employment but unsure where to begin. Whether pursuing a full-time career, a part-time job or summer jobs, youth can access a wide range of support and resources through netWORKS, Youth Job Connection and other similar programs.

[Learn more: Employment Services](#)

2,515

clients who secured employment

100+

employment partners

36

job fairs hosted

398

employment workshops delivered

84-85%

employment success rate (depending on program)

OUR SERVICES: EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Employment Programs for Newcomers and Internationally Trained Professionals

These programs include the Internationally Trained Individuals (ITI) Solutions, TRIEC Mentorship Partnership and the Federal Internship for Newcomers program (FIN), among others, that offer various services, such as application preparation, interview workshops and sector-specific training.

[Learn more: Employment Services](#)

Mindset Makeover Program: Empowering Professional Newcomer Women of Diverse Backgrounds

This program is delivered fully remote and is specifically designed to empower professional newcomer women of diverse backgrounds, by addressing their mental and physical challenges to boost their confidence and linking mental health with financial success to enhance their economic sustainability.

[Learn more: Mindset Makeover](#)



Impact Story:

Bridging the Gap: Aleksandra's Journey into the Canadian Job Market

Aleksandra Goriacheva, a seasoned Front-end Developer from Russia, arrived in Canada in 2022 under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program. Despite her strong IT background, she struggled with confidence and language barrier, and was unsure how to navigate the competitive Canadian job market.

Her resume lacked the targeted keywords needed to clear the Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), and the competitive nature of the IT sector added to her challenges. Through the Internationally Trained Individuals (ITI) Solutions - Bridging the Gap to Employment program, Aleksandra received personalized support and strategic job search guidance. She learned to tailor her resume to Canadian standards and improved her interview skills through mock interviews.

"Advice on resume targeting and on preparation for the interview are priceless to me. I feel a lot more confident applying for jobs now. Information about Canadian work culture and networking, as well as referrals for the TRIEC mentoring program and for the internship, are beneficial," says Aleksandra.

Her proactive approach paid off, and Aleksandra soon started receiving positive responses to her applications from prospective employers. By the end of the program, she had secured a 12-week internship as a Front-end Developer.



OUR SERVICES

Building Community Supports: Social Services

Overview

As a leader in Canada's settlement sector, COSTI supports newcomers, including refugees and asylum claimants, in starting their new lives in the Greater Toronto Area. Our Social Services Division offers compassionate, culturally responsive programs addressing settlement, housing, family and mental health, domestic violence, and the needs of seniors, youth and women through a range of programs:

In 2023/24, COSTI's Social Services Division delivered:

- settlement services 14,155 times to 4,483 clients
- stable accommodation to over 3,700 clients
- mental health support to over 1,500 clients
- art-based therapy to over 250 women and youth clients

14,155

settlement services delivered

Signature Initiatives

Orientation to Ontario / International Student Connect

As the Provincial Coordinator for the Orientation to Ontario (O2O) and the International Student Connect (ISC) programs, COSTI collaborates with various settlement agencies and educational institutions to offer bilingual workshops and digital resources to support international students and newcomers in meeting their diverse settlement needs, helping them to establish strong roots in their new lives in Canada.

Learn more: [International Student Connect Orientation to Ontario](#)

Calabrian Benevolent Foundation (CBF) Seniors Day Program

The Calabrian Benevolent Foundation Seniors Day Program, facilitated by COSTI, provides culturally sensitive and age-appropriate care to older adults living with early-stage dementia or mild Alzheimer's. The program is generously funded by the Calabrian Benevolent Foundation and the Ontario Health Toronto, with support from our valued partner, Humber River Hospital. Designed specifically for Italian, Portuguese and Spanish-speaking seniors, this program ensures that participants receive care tailored to their unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Learn more: [CBF Seniors Day Program](#)

Together We Thrive: Art Based Support Group Program

This program uses a trauma-informed art-based approach and provides a safe space for Muslim women who have been impacted by Islamophobia. Program participants learn strategies to help them cope with the resulting fear, anxiety, shame and loss of self-confidence due to discrimination.

Learn more: [Together We Thrive](#)

9,712

total individuals supported

4,483

individuals received
settlement services

3,700+

individuals received stable
accommodation

1,542

individuals received
mental health

12,624

housing related support
delivered

Programs and Services

COSTI's Social Services Division provides critical support in housing, mental health, family care, domestic violence prevention and other settlement needs, ensuring newcomers receive comprehensive assistance for successful integration into the community.

Ukrainian Housing Host Program

Since April 2022, COSTI's Ukrainian Housing Host program has helped over 1,270 Ukrainian newcomers, majority of whom arrived in Canada through the Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) visa, addressing immediate needs such as short-term housing, medical, health, financial support and education for children. Employment opportunities were accessed through referrals and English classes. Through outreach efforts with churches, funders and partners, as well as the recruitment of host families through ads and government support, newcomers were successfully connected with supportive hosts, ensuring a warm welcome and the necessary assistance.

Learn more: [Ukrainian Housing Host Program](#)

Family and Mental Health Services

Compassionate support is provided to individuals, couples and families facing emotional and psychological challenges through counselling, education and community development, fostering resilience and well-being.

Learn more: [Family and Mental Health Services](#)

Gambling, Gaming and Technology Use Services

Culturally appropriate, language-specific counselling is delivered to ethnocultural communities to address and prevent harm from problem gambling, gaming and technology use.

Learn more: [Problem Gambling Services](#)

Housing Support Services

We provide crucial housing assistance to those in need, including the unhoused and the marginalized and those fleeing domestic violence, helping them with securing stable housing as well as strategies to prevent eviction.

Learn more: [Housing Services](#)

1,270

**individuals supported through
Ukrainian Housing Host Program**

31,008

O2O Chatbot accessed

28,716

**O2O and ISC digital resources
downloaded**

24,240

times O2O and ISC webinars accessed

OUR SERVICES: SOCIAL SERVICES

Seniors Services

Through this program, we engage seniors in the community and enhance their digital literacy, helping them stay connected with loved ones and participate fully in community life.

[Learn more: Seniors Services](#)

Settlement Services

We support newcomers specifically in the GTA by providing comprehensive assistance, including needs assessments, counselling, information and referrals, to help them settle and thrive.

[Learn more: Settlement / Citizenship](#)

Violence Against Women Services

To uplift and protect newcomer and refugee women and their children, COSTI offers culturally sensitive counselling to those at risk or affected by domestic abuse, empowering them towards safety and healing.

[Learn more: Violence Against Women](#)

Youth Services

We support youth in finding employment, exploring careers and gaining leadership experience, while also providing emotional support and holistic services for a successful integration into Canadian life.

[Learn more: Children and Youth](#)

Impact Story

From Afghanistan to Canada: Ali's Path to Safety and Settlement

Ali*, a 24-year-old model from Afghanistan, arrived in Canada under the Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) program in 2023, following a harrowing evacuation in August 2021 and a period in a refugee camp in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

As a newcomer, Ali faced numerous challenges, including securing housing, finding employment, coping with social isolation, and navigating the One Year Window (OYW) application process for his family members who were still in Afghanistan. Referred to COSTI's Housing Services, Ali received essential support in securing stable accommodation with peers and finding a job as a customer service representative, which helped alleviate his loneliness and isolation.

"COSTI's housing support has been vital for my settlement and my family's safety. Your assistance in the OYW application was crucial in helping us find a safe place in Canada, where we can enjoy our human rights and freedom," expressed Ali.

Ali also received assistance from a Farsi-speaking settlement counsellor for his OYW application and was connected to valuable resources. With COSTI's assistance, including follow-ups and responses to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) inquiries, Ali's sister and her newborn baby were approved under the OYW program, and their files are now with the visa office in Pakistan. With this support, Ali can now embrace his new life in Canada with safety and stability.

*Name changed to protect identity



OUR SERVICES

Accelerating Humanitarian Response: Refugee Services

Overview

In a world where global crises force individuals and families to flee their homes, COSTI is resolutely committed to addressing the pressing needs of refugees seeking safety and shelter in Canada. Our compassionate support includes essential services such as temporary housing, comprehensive information, and orientation to life in Canada and in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). We assist individuals in navigating local systems, accessing community resources, understanding cultural norms and accessing transformative social support opportunities. These services help displaced individuals and families find stability and build a new life in the GTA.

In 2023/24, COSTI maintained its core refugee services programs:

- **Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP):** Supported 1,647 Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) with immediate services and tailored plans
- **Client Support Services (CSS):** Empowered 5,149 GARs to establish new lives and navigate their communities with intensive, community-based assistance
- **Hostel Services:** Provided temporary shelter and supportive care to over 1,442 refugee claimants and homeless families across four locations in Toronto and York Region.

8,238

newcomers and refugees supported

OUR SERVICES: REFUGEE SERVICES

As a key RAP provider, COSTI has supported 4,950 Afghan GARs in Canada since August 2021, contributing to the national goal of welcoming 40,000 Afghan refugees into Canada since the evacuations began. Operating from four locations, we offered immediate essential services, such as temporary accommodation and orientation on Canadian culture and laws and provided personalized settlement plans including access to language classes, employment services and community connections to aid their integration into Canadian society.

Additionally, COSTI partnered with the Rexdale Community Health Centre for its Community Kitchen Program, a heartwarming initiative that brought together 54 families to cook and share meals, nurturing community ties and promoting well-being.

Programs

COSTI's Refugee Services Division provides essential programs that support displaced individuals and families, ensuring a stable and successful transition to life in Canada. These services address critical needs, fostering resilience and helping refugees build a foundation for their future.

Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)

This program offers immediate essential services to Government Assisted Refugees upon arrival in Toronto, including temporary accommodation, initial needs assessments and extensive orientation on Canadian culture and laws. Collaborating with internal partners like COSTI's Family & Mental Health Services and external organizations such as Access Alliance, RAP employs a wellness-based wrap-around model to address clients' needs. This includes developing case management plans, connecting clients to psychosocial and settlement services and fostering community inclusion.

[Learn more: Refugee Services](#)

1,647

Government-Assisted Refugees supported

1,442

refugee claimants and homeless families served through Hostel Services

5,149

individuals received client support services

54

families connected through Community Kitchen Program

Client Support Services (CSS)

CSS supports Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in the Greater Toronto Area with a 12–24-month intensive case management service. This includes information, orientation, referrals, mental health support and more. CSS focuses on helping GARs navigate their community independently while collaborating with partners like YMCA and Skills for Change.

[Learn more: Client Support Services](#)

Hostel Services

COSTI provides temporary shelter and support services, such as legal aid, education, health and more, to refugee claimants, Ukrainian newcomers and unhoused families at six locations in Toronto and York Region. This year, COSTI led the York Region response for newly arrived Ukrainians and collaborated with the Red Cross on the Vaughan Refugee Program, providing housing and counselling support.

[Learn more: Hostel Services](#)

Community Kitchen Program

The Community Kitchen Program at the Rexdale Community Health Centre offers residents of COSTI's Hostel Services a shared kitchen space to prepare and enjoy meals together. Participants are organized by nationality, allowing them to cook and experience a variety of cuisines while building a sense of community and promoting well-being. Since its inception, the program has empowered 54 families by strengthening social connections and celebrating culinary diversity.



Impact Story

Navigating New Beginnings: Abimbola's Refugee Journey

In September 2022, Abimbola Oluwaseun fled Nigeria from violence and personal threats. When she arrived in Canada as a refugee claimant, she was pregnant and was accompanied by her two-year old son. A former Grade 5 teacher and a post-secondary student, Abimbola dreamed of a career in caregiving.

Shortly upon arrival, she sought refuge at one of COSTI's temporary shelters and later gave birth to a healthy son. With COSTI's support, Abimbola accessed resources, information and training materials, and completed the Personal Support Worker program at Pharma-Medical Science College in November 2023. She now volunteers at a local food bank, giving back to the community.

Abimbola was awarded a bursary from the Community Police Liaison Committee for her educational achievements and community contributions. She moved into her own apartment with her children in October 2023, thanks to the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit program.

She dreams of reuniting with her family, pursuing a nursing career, and becoming a Canadian citizen while continuing to give back to the community that supported her. "This is just the beginning," expresses Abimbola.



Partnerships and Collaborations

Successful client outcomes hinge on strong partnerships and collaborations. COSTI actively engages with a range of community planning networks, umbrella organizations, and advisory committees across Ontario. By collaborating with more than 300 partners—including community groups, employers, public libraries, school boards, universities and colleges, and hospitals—we create a comprehensive support system for our clients.

Our network allows us to provide a variety of services, such as peer activities, support groups, therapy and community connections, ensuring a client-centered approach. These partnerships help us build a holistic support model and offer an extended ecosystem for clients navigating their settlement and life journey.

Key collaborations with influential organizations like the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment

Council (TRIEC), United Way Greater Toronto, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), and Community Development Council Durham, among others, are integral to our mission. Each partner contributes unique perspectives and resources, enhancing our collective efforts and delivering impactful outcomes for adults, youth, seniors, women, newcomers and marginalized individuals.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Some of our key partnerships in 2023/24 achieved significant milestones, including:

Let's Get Together:

A longstanding partner, championing tech equity, Let's Get Together has been pivotal in making education accessible for COSTI clients. This collaboration has enabled COSTI to provide our clients with affordable digital devices, facilitating their connection to community services, events, skills development and job opportunities. By bridging the digital divide, this partnership has successfully empowered our clients to thrive in the digital age.

Access Alliance:

As a Multicultural Health and Community Services provider, Access Alliance has been an invaluable partner to COSTI's Reception Centre. Their trauma-informed approach and unique expertise have enabled government-assisted clients to access primary health services onsite and receive immediate referrals to specialized medical services, including hospitals. Additionally, they facilitated access to the annual flu clinic and vaccinations, significantly enhancing service delivery to newcomer-refugees.

35

new partnerships/collaborations

6

partnered research projects

6

member of umbrella organizations

95

member of planning and coordinating bodies

COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Research Partnerships:

Committed to advancing knowledge and improving service delivery, COSTI engaged in research partnerships last year with the following:

- Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE):** This research partnership resulted in a comprehensive blueprint titled *Wraparound Services for Women from Immigrant, Refugee, Ethnocultural and Racialized Communities Facing Gender-Based Violence*. The blueprint aims to address inequities in access to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services across Canada and to enhance culturally safe, replicable support services nationwide.
- York University:** Research projects included *Singing Our Stories* to explore community musical practices with refugee children, newcomer children and young people, and *Liberating Migrant Labour?: International Mobility Programs in Settler-Colonial Contexts* to examine the impacts of international mobility programs.
- York University and The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):** This partnership focused on evaluating needs and barriers to utilizing burnout prevention programs among COSTI staff.
- Toronto Metropolitan University:** We partnered on the *Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective* project, focused on migrant support and integration.
- Harvard Business School, University of Toronto, and Georgetown University:** This collaboration researched *The Role of Diversity in Organizational Performance*.
- Association for Canadian Studies - Metropolis Institute:** This was a two-hour long qualitative assessment on *Identifying Best Practices in Combatting Discrimination in the Settlement Process*.

Some of our partners:





Donors, Funders and Foundations

Donors & Contributors

\$95,000+

Toronto Foundation

\$50,000+

The Bennett Family
Foundation

\$10,000+

Gift Funds Canada
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\$2,000+

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Friends of COSTI

\$1,000+

Mario J. Calla
Lisa van Dijk

\$1,500+

The Benevity Community
Impact Fund

\$500+

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James Tulk
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Nousiainen
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DONORS, FUNDERS AND FOUNDATIONS

\$400+

Charities Aid Foundation of Canada
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\$300+

Elisa R. Suppa
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Ottawa, Lanark and Renfrew Counties

\$200+

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Marcellina Galvan
Peter Schatz
Rosie Mecca
Tosh Weyman

Funders

Government Of Canada

- Department of Women and Gender Equality
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Government Of Ontario

- Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
- Ministry of the Attorney General
- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Calabrian Benevolent Foundation

City of Toronto

Colleges and Institutes Canada

Region of York

Success

The Regional Municipality of Peel

United Way Greater Toronto

World Skills Employment Centre

York Catholic District School Board

Foundations

Gifts Funds Canada

Ontario Trillium Foundation – Infrastructure Grant

Ontario Trillium Foundation – Resilient Communities Fund

RBC Foundation

Telus Friendly Foundation

TIDES Foundation

Other

Financial Statements

Statement of Financial Position As At March 31, 2024

	Operating Fund (\$)	Capital Fund (\$)	Special Fund (\$)	Total 2024	Total 2023
Assets					
Current					
Cash	2,068,218	-	-	2,068,218	2,386,805
Short-term investments (Note 4)	12,971,128	-	-	12,971,128	12,000,000
Grants and subsidies receivable	10,348,025	-	-	10,348,025	7,124,321
Miscellaneous accounts and other receivables	4,132,039	-	-	4,132,039	3,405,680
Receivable from MLTSD	258,842	-	-	258,842	244,789
Prepaid expenditures	842,558	-	-	842,558	1,010,592
Interfund balances (Note 5)	(8,471,128)	-	8,471,128	-	-
	22,149,682	-	8,471,128	30,620,810	26,172,187
Capital assets (Note 6)	-	7,295,829	-	7,295,829	7,955,021
	\$22,149,682	\$7,295,829	\$8,471,128	\$37,916,639	\$34,127,208
Liabilities and Net Assets					
Current					
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (Note 7)	8,364,018	-	-	8,364,018	7,405,927
Deferred contributions (Notes 8 and 9)	5,295,805	118,806	-	5,414,611	8,973,611
Current portion of lease inducement	7,308	-	-	7,308	7,308
	13,667,131	118,806	-	13,785,937	16,386,846
Deferred contributions related to capital assets (Note 9)	-	910,065	-	910,065	1,015,632
Deferred lease inducement	27,406	-	-	27,406	34,715
	13,694,537	1,028,871	-	14,723,408	17,437,193
Net Assets - Fund balances	8,455,145	6,266,958	8,471,128	23,193,231	116,690,015
	22,149,682	7,295,829	8,471,128	37,916,639	34,127,208

Commitments (Note 11)
Contingent liabilities (Note 13)

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Statement of Operations As At March 31, 2024

	Operating Fund (\$)	Capital Fund (\$)	Special Fund (\$)	Total 2024	Total 2023
Revenue					
Government grants and subsidies (Schedule 1)	114,638,137	125,486	-	114,763,623	84,797,567
WCG International Consultants Ltd. (Schedule 1)	3,232,316	-	-	3,232,316	2,678,485
Investment revenue	1,376,239	-	-	1,376,239	350,527
Fees for services (Schedule 2)	915,599	-	-	915,599	913,839
United Way Greater Toronto	971,793	-	-	971,793	808,059
Foundation grants (Schedule 1)	172,410	-	-	172,410	327,252
Partnership revenue (Schedule 1)	307,480	-	-	307,480	319,580
Income from property	154,430	-	-	154,430	242,595
Donations, memberships and fundraising	32,912	-	-	32,912	147,006
	121,801,316	125,486	-	121,926,802	90,584,910
Expenses (Schedule 3)					
Salaries and benefits (Note 10)	31,953,527	-	-	31,953,527	26,995,193
Program partnerships	445,037	-	-	445,037	441,987
Client program costs	71,978,093	-	-	71,978,093	45,872,731
Building occupancy	4,893,496	-	-	4,893,496	5,045,770
General	4,001,896	-	-	4,001,896	3,199,142
Office	1,138,710	-	-	1,138,710	1,900,771
Costs of goods and services sold	353,635	-	-	353,635	425,211
Amortization	-	659,192	-	659,192	617,493
	114,764,394	659,192	-	115,423,586	84,498,298
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$7,036,922	(533,706)		\$6,503,216	\$6,086,612



Our Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of COSTI, embodying our mission and vision through their diverse skills, knowledge and shared experiences. They promote equity, diversity and belonging, enhance client integration and strengthen community connections. By supporting our programs and fostering cultural understanding, they empower communities to achieve their full potential, contributing to a more inclusive Canada. Their dedication and invaluable contributions extend beyond client services, supporting the very foundation of our organization.

112

volunteers

30

welcome packages delivered

200

shoes received from partners

31

families matched with Together Project

2,328

volunteer hours contributed

OUR VOLUNTEERS

In 2023/24, our 112 volunteers contributed 2,328 hours (about 3 months) in support of our community. In partnership with MakeWay, they matched 31 families in the Together Project, including 28 from the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and three from the Ukrainian Housing Host Program.

30 welcome packages were also delivered to refugees and refugee families. Additionally, collaborating with Kids Up Front Foundation, COSTI received 200 uniquely decorated pairs of shoes with personalized notes from The Miller Group.



Impact Story

From Refugee to Resettlement Counsellor: Shihabeldean's Path to Helping Newcomers

Shihabeldean Abdelrahim Ali Sabil left his home country of Sudan, ten years ago due to instability and sought refuge in Jordan. During this time, he discovered his passion for humanitarian work, particularly while volunteering in refugee camps with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society ActionAid Global Platform and Jesuit Refugee Services (JUSIT). Shihabeldean's dedication to social work earned him a scholarship at Regis University, Denver Colorado, where he graduated with a social work diploma in May 2021 before immigrating to Canada in 2021 under a private sponsorship program.

Upon arrival in Toronto, Shihabeldean faced the challenge of finding employment in a post-pandemic

job market with no Canadian experience. He enrolled in COSTI's ESL classes, where he made lasting connections and improved his language skills. His interest in social work led him to volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross, and eventually with COSTI in 2022.

At COSTI, Shihabeldean made a significant impact. He provided life skills support to newcomer families at temporary shelters, escorted clients to appointments, assisted with interpretation and supported events and activities. His dedication and empathy were evident in his interactions with clients, who often expressed their gratitude to him.

"Helping others is always fulfilling," Shihabeldean expressed. "Volunteering with COSTI helped me gain the experience I needed in the settlement sector. I learned more about the Canadian workplace and received invaluable support, guidance and resources from the stakeholder engagement coordinator whenever I applied for a job. Because of my volunteer work, I was hired as a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Counsellor in a settlement agency in 2023."

Shihabeldean's story illustrates the transformative power of volunteering and underscores COSTI's crucial role in supporting newcomers to Canada. Through this experience, Shihabeldean not only advanced his career but also discovered a sense of purpose and belonging in his new home. We are thrilled to have been part of his journey!



Looking Forward

At COSTI, supporting newcomers and diverse communities is core to our mission. We are committed to advocating for and developing affordable housing solutions and accelerating career and education pathways, ensuring the stability and success of clients through comprehensive services and partnerships.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to adapting to the evolving needs of our diverse clients and community. Guided by our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, we will continue to tackle critical issues like housing, employment, skills development, and mental health, while upholding our dedication to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our goal is to ensure that every individual, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background, can thrive and contribute meaningfully to Canadian society.

In our pursuit of a more accessible and innovative future, we are excited to explore innovative approaches and leverage digital platforms to enhance our service

delivery. We will continue to seek out new partnerships to drive systemic change, focusing on the unique needs of our diverse client-group. By addressing the intersectionality of needs and systemic barriers, we aim to foster a more inclusive and just environment for our clients.

Together with our dedicated partners and supporters, we look forward to continuing our journey with renewed passion and determination to build a stronger, more inclusive Canada where everyone can succeed and contribute to our shared future.

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Service Locations

Calabrian Benevolent Foundation (CBF) Seniors Day Program

2115 Finch Avenue West,
Suite 100
289-843-3212

Corvetti Education Centre

760 College Street
416-534-7400

Employment Services, Brampton

10 Gillingham Drive, Suite 300
905-459-8855

Employment Services, Mississauga

6750 Winston Churchill Blvd,
Unit 8A
905-567-0482

Employment Services, Toronto

2301 Keele Street, Suite 102
416-789-7925

Employment Services, Vaughan Centre

3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102
905-669-5627

Employment Services, Weston

1885 Weston Road
416-588-2240

Enhanced Language Training Services, North Brampton

10 Gillingham Drive, Suite 109A
905-451-7147

Enhanced Language and Skills Training Services, South Brampton

7700 Hurontario Street, Building D,
Unit 601
905-459-6700

Family and Mental Health Services

Sheridan Mall, 1700 Wilson
Avenue, Suite 105
416-244-7714

Language and Skills Training Services, North York

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 206
416-244-9980

Language, Settlement and Skills Training Services, Vaughan

9100 Jane Street, Building H,
Units 56-67
905-761-1155

North York Centre

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 114
416-244-0480

Ralph Chiodo Family Reception Centre

Toronto, ON
416-922-6688

Vaughan Centre

3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102
905-669-5627

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Markham North

8400 Woodbine Avenue, Suites
102-103
289-846-3597, 289-846-3645

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Markham South

7220 Kennedy Road (Hollywood
Square), Unit 8
905-479-7926

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Newmarket

16655 Yonge Street, Unit 26
289-841-3032

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Richmond Hill

9325 Yonge Street, Unit 31A
289-842-3124



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