

2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT

PATHWAYS TO PURPOSE

isans | Immigrant Services
Association of Nova Scotia

We acknowledge we are on unceded, traditional Mi'kmaq territory, and we are grateful for the Peace and Friendship treaties. At ISANS, as we work to settle newcomers to Nova Scotia, we honour and respect the Indigenous people of this land.

Our Vision

A community where all can belong and grow.

Our Mission

Help immigrants build a future in Nova Scotia.

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Rosalind Penfound
Chair, Board of Directors
ISANS

The power of purpose

If there's one thing we have learned this past year – a year of overwhelming challenge, social upheaval, and collective uncertainty – it's that living our values of diversity, inclusion, respect, collaboration, innovation, and accountability will guide us through.

In fact, not only do our values guide us and help us navigate unprecedented circumstances, but they also remind us of who we are and why we're here, strengthen our resolve, and enhance our resilience. Our values keep us moving and determined when things are difficult, and this clear purpose has a reverberating and lasting impact.

ISANS' values have a deep history in this organization, which has made a difference in our communities in so many ways. For the last 40 years, our values have informed and shaped our work to support newcomer settlement in Nova Scotia – from the early days before the merger of the two founding organizations, when we

began providing employment, language, childcare, and business services; to centralizing our services by merging in 2009; to our immediate and dedicated responses to numerous immigration waves and refugee crises, such as those in Kosovo and Syria.

This time last year, at the height of the pandemic, ISANS celebrated its 40th anniversary. While the occasion could have been bittersweet, our long history of settlement service excellence helped us understand we had the fortitude to continue supporting newcomers as we always have. Looking back at this past year, it's truly remarkable to see what rose out of such tremendous challenge. By leaning on our values, ISANS has adapted and learned how to serve our clients even better than before. We have built new delivery methods and developed new programs that will last long after the pandemic has ended. We are immensely proud of the ISANS staff team and all that they have accomplished over the past year.

Never before has the importance of civil society and organizations such as ISANS been brought into such sharp relief. When the storm rages around us, when it knocks us down and casts shadows and doubt in every direction, it is our communities, our many partners, our support systems, and our deep sense of who we are that lift us up, protect us, and help us find our way. While there remain uncertainties ahead, we look forward with hope, optimism, and a renewed purpose to support newcomers to our country and province, and to create communities where all can belong and grow.

We are so thankful for and proud of the work we accomplish together.

Embodying our values, maintaining our purpose



Jennifer Watts
Chief Executive Officer
ISANS

It's hard to believe that over a year has passed since the beginning of the pandemic. In last year's report, we focused on our resiliency as an organization and on the inherent resiliency in our newcomer communities to rise above challenges and come back stronger from them as a result. Although our horizons were clouded with uncertainty at that time, we knew that together we would move ahead successfully in as many new ways as possible.

Since then, we have learned and done so much as an organization. We have learned that when times are at their most difficult, when comfort and normalcy have been stripped away and replaced by anxiety, grief, and loss, we must rely on who we are – our values, beliefs, and purpose – to determine where to go next and how to get there. We have also learned that in addition to the shared, collective impacts of the pandemic, it has affected everyone differently, from our elders, our children, to ourselves, and that each requires unique care and attention.

I am proud to say that in the last year, ISANS has taken these lessons to heart by embodying our values, meeting the individual needs of newcomers, and maintaining our purpose to support them holistically. Among our many endeavours, ISANS safely welcomed over 100 government-assisted refugees and successfully submitted funding proposals for exciting new initiatives such as our "Bridging the Gap" employment program, which seeks to fill skilled positions for personal care workers and carpenters. We also organized a field trip to pick apples in the Annapolis Valley with newcomer families, supported many newcomers in the vaccine program, and our Onboarding Employer Engagers worked with partners to help establish committees to discuss employer and business needs in Truro, Antigonish, and the Annapolis Valley.

Additionally, we focused this year on virtual service delivery and learning. We took our early childhood education programs into the homes of our youngest clients, and we developed remote curriculum to onboard interpreters, whose work has been invaluable in reaching newcomers still learning English. Building on the momentum of this growth, we also encouraged professional development and continued our own learning by engaging in a cross-cultural workshop on Indigenous relations, and we implemented an organizational restructure focused on strengthening our capacity, innovation, and sustainability now and into the future. As we saw an increase in racism and hate crimes, we also committed to strengthening our equity, diversity, and inclusion work both internally and externally.

For ISANS, newcomers, and our communities both regional and global, we eagerly anticipate what tomorrow has in store. However, we also recognize that so many of you have family and friends who are still very seriously afflicted by the pandemic. Please know that the ISANS community surrounds you with our love and care during these difficult times, especially as you are not able to travel or be with your loved ones.

We are hopeful that the days to come will shine all the more brightly because of the difficulty we've faced. The last year has been one of the most trying, but it has contained many positive accomplishments and joys as well – and it's these we hold in our hearts as we look ahead.

Our Values

Values are essential to every individual and every group because they give us meaning and inform our purpose. They help us decide which goals are worthy of pursuit, and no matter the circumstances, they encourage us to learn, grow, and press forward with confidence.

At ISANS, our values reflect who we are and why we do what we do. They touch every facet of our mission to help immigrants build their futures in Nova Scotia, and they fuel our vision to create communities where all can belong and grow.

Steeped in over 40 years of settlement service experience, our values explain how we ground our work and what drives our decisions; and while they may change over time, they will always influence how we evolve as an organization.

COLLABORATION

- We build relationships in which we can share responsibilities and ideas, and work together to enhance opportunities for all

RESPECT

- We encourage environments of fairness, honesty, and integrity for all clients, partners, and colleagues

INCLUSION

- We welcome and respect diversity in our communities
- We foster a sense of belonging in all

DIVERSITY

- We value and respect differences in experiences and perspectives
- We believe in everyone's ability to enrich Canadian society through their unique contributions

INNOVATION

- We provide service excellence through creativity and flexibility
- We are responsive to clients and partners, and we continually seek new opportunities

ACCOUNTABILITY

- We acknowledge responsibility for our services, tools, actions, and decisions by being transparent and principled in our approach to people and situations



COLLABORATION

Building relationships, sharing responsibilities, and working with others to enhance opportunities for all remained as important to us in this last year as they always have, even with the necessary challenges posed by physical distancing and remote working.

Throughout the year, our Community Connections program – designed to help newcomers settle into the community through activities and supports – collaborated with McIntosh Run Watershed Association (MRWA), Artech Camps Canada, and Wonder’neath Art Society. Together, we recognized the need to maintain newcomers’ ties to their communities, as well as promote their physical and mental well-being during and after prolonged isolation.

In the summer, we worked with MRWA to plan five hiking events for varying skill levels. We arranged interpretation for each hike, which enabled participants to learn about the trails and gain basic safety and navigation skills. Through this collaboration, everyone involved spent time in nature, exercised, and safely socialized, which thrilled children and adults alike, and offered a much-needed reprieve from the difficulty of the pandemic’s early months.

Our collaboration with Artech Camps Canada and Wonder’neath Art Society this year was notable for our efforts to overcome barriers, improve recreation access, and maintain service continuity and connection for newcomer families while they had to break their routines and stay at home. Artech offers creative technology camps perfectly suited for remote delivery, and this year, they developed a more inclusive registration process by allocating spots for newcomer families and simplifying registration.

Meanwhile, we helped families register and ensured they had access to the right technology and information to participate in the camps. With Wonder’neath Art Society, we tailored three art kits for over 60 families, designed to help them express themselves, use their imaginations, reflect on fond memories, and feel engaged in their communities. The first kit, “Memories of the Garden,” included photos of each family’s time spent in community gardens, as well as some of their own finished art pieces from some of the garden’s events. The second kit contained art activities and projects, and the third enclosed wooden ornaments and specialty supplies to decorate expressive, winter-themed windows in view of neighbours and friends.

35

Newcomers participated in 5 hikes

13

Camp registrations facilitated

150⁺

Art kit deliveries for over 60 families



Winter 2020: Newcomer children prepare to participate in winter hike



RESPECT

Digital literacy is a critical priority in our work, but never more so than in this past year. Many struggle with this skill, so shifting to remote service delivery – especially for our 2000+ language learners, some of whom have little or no formal education – required our closest attention.

At ISANS, we understand that every immigrant who settles in Nova Scotia possesses invaluable strengths and that with the right support, not only can they thrive, but they can also enrich our communities and enhance our economy. We are therefore highly conscious of offering fair and equitable learning opportunities that meet individual needs so that every day, newcomers can demonstrate what they're capable of, and continue on their paths with a sense of integrity and genuine contribution.

This year, our Language and Support Services teams embodied this level of respect, which we believe all newcomers deserve. Rather than expect our language learners to maintain their learning on platforms and using technology with which they were unfamiliar, our instructors, early childhood educators, and administrative staff honestly assessed learners' needs and attentively adapted their teaching and service delivery methods to help them in ways that best suited their skills and abilities.

Among many new provisions, our instructors developed homework packages and helped learners adjust to online learning by offering orientations in small groups in which they could devote more time to each learner. Using platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, they also taught and communicated with learners in ways they were most comfortable.

We leveraged staff across our organization to respond to pandemic challenges this year, so to help language learners understand abstract concepts such as participating in class, our early childhood educators produced supporting videos in six languages. Additionally, our administrative staff translated various "how-to" tutorials and audio recordings to help learners access their online learning platform, Settlement Online.

As a result, new language learners have joined their classes better informed and with more confidence. What's more, these materials will be used to onboard and welcome future learners, and they have formed a living bank of supports that we will continue contributing to in as many languages as possible.

50

Orientation sessions
facilitated

85

One-on-one digital
support sessions
provided to 270+ learners

6

Training videos
produced in
different languages

4,400

Homework packages
prepared with 22 distinct
themes

I Thank you for your good planning in the online training program. You have a training program every day, such as grammar, pronunciation, writing, etc. This is great. My family noticed my progress in learning and remembering. My son was your student last year; he was successful at university and he talks about your knowledge . . . I thank ISANS.

- ISANS language learner



INCLUSION

Welcoming and respecting diversity in our communities, and fostering a sense of belonging in all, is key for us. We want everyone to feel included and hopeful about their futures, and to know their unique perspectives, experiences, and contributions are highly valuable and appreciated. This is especially true for those who are often marginalized or who may face more barriers to opportunities.

Many immigrant youth, for instance – especially those with refugee experience – are susceptible to losing interest in and leaving school because they lack support, guidance, and a sense of belonging, and they have difficulty envisioning clear futures for themselves. These losses can have disempowering consequences, which often preclude youth from finding meaningful employment.

Recognizing these risks, our Immigrant Youth Employability Project (IYEP) helps immigrant youth explore career options, gain local work experience, and understand Canadian workplace culture. Alongside IYEP, the Immigrant Youth Career Exploration Project (IYCEP) offers a safe and inclusive space for high-school youth to learn about post-secondary education options and career-based goal setting.

This year, over 70 refugee youth in high school received job-readiness services and explored future careers through IYEP and IYCEP. While the pandemic forced schools to close, these programs kept youth engaged. We offered enhanced one-on-one support to help them overcome language barriers and express their aspirations more freely, and we helped them find employment when opportunities were limited.

Immigrant women also face challenges when entering the Canadian workforce, which contribute to their lack of representation in entrepreneurial spaces. However, through our Immigrant Women Entrepreneurship Program (IWEP) as well as the Immigrant Women Entrepreneur Network (IWEN), immigrant women entrepreneurs have been able to connect with like-minded peers and find support in one another while coping with the pandemic's repercussions.

These programs offer specialized training on topics such as marketing, research, and business structures that this year gave participants new ways of envisioning their businesses. Combined, these programs bolstered their confidence, enhanced their integration in Canadian society (even if virtual at times), and improved their quality of life by helping them succeed and create jobs for themselves and others when opportunities were otherwise scarce.

Today it was my last exam of GED, and guess what - I passed it! Now I am just waiting for September to go to college. I am doing so well on my job. I have learned many things in a short time, and now I am doing very well. Everyone is so friendly. I miss you and the class so much. Thanks for sharing your wise words with me.

- Immigrant Youth Employability Project (IYEP) participant

70+

Refugee youth received job-readiness services

92%

IYEP participants gained employment in their desired fields

DIVERSITY

Diversity is a source of strength, and immigrants offer a vast array of experiences, perspectives, and skills that benefit our society. Their contributions increase creativity, innovation, and prosperity in our communities and across the country. Because immigrants contribute so much, we help employers and regulated professions all over Nova Scotia access and retain skilled immigrant talent, diversifying workforces in the process, and fortifying our communities now and into the future.

Through our Onboarding Employer Engagement program, we work with employers across Nova Scotia to build their hiring capacity by connecting them with our employer support services, providing in-house training and resources, and collaborating with local organizations that range from Indigenous community groups, trades and fisheries groups, to regional enterprise networks.



This year, although we faced significant challenges with travel and business restrictions, we continued expanding our networks and reach because we know that creating opportunities for immigrant talent will be key to the future success of our province's economy. We have made hundreds of connections, working closely with employers and educating them about the services they can use to hire, onboard, and retain qualified candidates, such as the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP).

One such employer connection demonstrates the expansive effect supporting and hiring diverse talent can have. Their human resources manager, an immigrant and former ISANS client, has engaged our support to access AIP to fill a skilled position, and has since joined ISANS' Employer Advisory Committee to help us achieve our mission of building a future where all can belong and grow. This full-circle engagement, in turn, is strengthening rural Nova Scotia's workforces.

The Multi-Stakeholder Work Group project also made promising strides for diversity in our workforces this past year. The project was initiated in the early 2000s in recognition that providing employment services is not enough to ensure workforce integration for newcomers in regulated occupations. Since then, the groups have grown to represent 13 regulated occupations in Nova Scotia and are comprised of key, high-profile stakeholders who work collaboratively to identify and address barriers to international qualifications recognition (IQR).

Notable accomplishments among the 13 groups this year include a new observership pilot program for internationally trained lawyers with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, as well as a program to help internationally educated nurses prepare for their profession-specific language exam. Across

the groups, stakeholders also contributed to the development of an inter-professional communications course for all healthcare professionals; an open-source, online orientation program for internationally educated engineers; as well as an observership program for internationally educated teachers.

This work is crucial because it encourages diversity among regulated professions and clear pathways for newcomers working to enter them. Overall, the work groups' collaborations remove unnecessary barriers, offer much-needed orientation support, and address skill and knowledge gaps, increasing opportunities for newcomers in workplaces and in Nova Scotian society at large. In this challenging time, more stakeholder organizations are recognizing the value of diversity and are reaching out to ISANS and the Multi-stakeholder Work Groups to help promote inclusion within their own workplaces, signaling a growing awareness of the power of diversity in Nova Scotia's workforce and a collective willingness to effect positive change.

830

New employer connections across Nova Scotia

423

New connections with employers in rural regions

189

Stakeholders engaged through Multi-stakeholder Work Groups

35

Multi-stakeholder Work Group meetings held

As part of the Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) for Refugees program, we have developed Ready to Work: a unique, innovative course with accessible, mobile-friendly material to help pre-arrival refugees become familiar with the Canadian job market, job-search process, and workplace culture.

An illustration of two hands holding a smartphone. The hand on the right is holding the phone, and the hand on the left is pointing at the screen. The phone screen displays the SOPA app interface with the text 'sopa arrive prepared', 'JOB SEARCH STRATEGY', and a 'START' button. The background is a solid teal color.

INNOVATION

Creativity and flexibility form the cornerstone of service excellence. We continually seek new opportunities to grow and improve, and we pride ourselves on our responsiveness to meet the needs of clients and partners. At the heart of these elements of innovation is a willingness to embrace change, and although this year has highlighted how catastrophic change can be, it has also shown us that change can be a catalyst for progress and good.

This concept is a familiar one to refugees, who are forcibly displaced from their homes in growing numbers every year. To help them build bright futures here and successfully integrate in Canadian society, it is of utmost importance to our work at ISANS that we mitigate the difficulties refugees experience from forces beyond their control.

We know that preparing for life in a new country can be overwhelming, and that access to various forms of technology isn't widespread. So, as part of the Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) for Refugees program, we have developed Ready to Work: a unique, innovative course with accessible, mobile-friendly material to help pre-arrival refugees become familiar with the Canadian job market, job-search process, and workplace culture.

We have made great strides on this course over the last year. In the fall, we piloted Ready to Work with a test group of 17 refugees in camps throughout Africa and the Middle East, all of whom enthusiastically and successfully completed the course. Next, we're preparing to conduct a final pilot with refugee camps in Jordan, and we're thrilled at the prospect of expanding this program's reach to help refugees around the world.

As with pre-arrival support, access to the right supports and information upon arrival is critical for a refugee's settlement success. While the pandemic forced closures and halted global travel, government-assisted refugees continued arriving in Nova Scotia, and our Refugee Resettlement team worked tirelessly to meet their early settlement needs, instantly adapting to new health and safety measures during this extraordinary time.

In coordination with many colleagues, our resettlement team welcomed new arrivals at the airport and arranged temporary accommodations at the ISANS Welcome House. They creatively adapted countless supports to accommodate mandatory self-isolation periods and beyond by safely arranging food and supply deliveries, facilitating virtual health and mental health appointments, addressing mobility needs, keeping children engaged with indoor activities, and arranging virtual apartment tours for permanent accommodations.

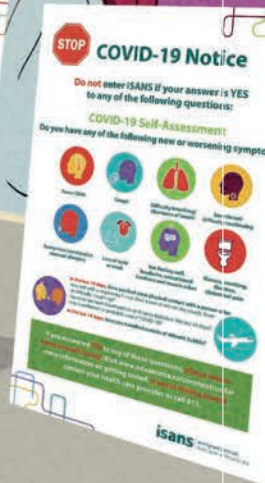
Incredibly, despite the many logistical, safety, and health-related challenges brought about by the pandemic, most new arrivals' immediate needs were successfully addressed through orientation, advocacy, commitment, and the unwavering dedication, flexibility, and creativity of our Refugee Resettlement team.

17
Refugees in three
countries completed
Ready to Work

113
GAR arrivals
welcomed

222
Grocery deliveries
during GAR arrivals'
first two weeks

100
Welcome packages
donated by IKEA



ACCOUNTABILITY

Through transparency, and by being principled in our approach to people and situations, we consistently acknowledge responsibility for our services, tools, actions, and decisions. Our accountability is important for everyone we work with, including our staff, partners, funders, and communities – but first and foremost, it is essential for the newcomers we serve. They are the driving force behind everything we do, and each day, we are honoured and privileged to support them with integrity, and to offer them settlement pathways abundant with possibility and purpose.

This last year, although the pandemic upended our lives in countless ways – indeed, because it did so – it was urgent and paramount that we continue supporting newcomers as we always have. However, as it did for so many all over the world, this year forced us to adapt how we maintained that critical support. Remaining accountable to our newcomer clients and to our staff, partners, funders, and communities meant undergoing monumental shifts as an organization.

Every one of our services changed in some way as a result of the province's vital health and safety measures. Programs that we traditionally delivered in person transitioned to online, which in many cases required additional coordination with participants and interpreters, or expansion of our technical prowess. More importantly, this transition helped us re-conceptualize our service delivery and identify approaches to improve accessibility.

For essential in-person services, we overhauled our offices, installing traffic markers and shields, separating classroom desks, and completely re-envisioning our reception areas with enhanced cleaning and sanitization throughout. As a further step to support our clients, we also collected mask donations and distributed them among newcomer communities.

To support these adaptations, and to ensure everyone's health and safety in every possible situation, we prioritized transparency and communication. We spent dozens of hours developing clear and comprehensive protocols, from contact tracing to supporting vulnerable clients. Another significant part of our focus was amplifying the new versions of our services to ensure no one who needed them was left behind. We disseminated service updates often and consistently, in addition to critical public health information, and we maintained connections through monthly newsletters and creative virtual initiatives.

Above all, however, we came together as an organization and as communities throughout the entire year with care, compassion, and a clear purpose: to lean on our values, to keep pressing forward, to stay flexible and adaptable, to maintain openness and a willingness to learn, and to continue supporting those in need.

51

Detailed operational protocols developed for health and safety

65,000

Newcomer clients, staff, partners, and community members reached with our communications

1,100

Masks donated to individuals in need, thanks to the generous contributions of eight donors

2020/21 YEAR IN REVIEW

6,042

Visits to our offices

6,487

Phone calls to reception

1,688

Refugee newcomers received settlement services

2,000+

Language learners in over 110 active language classes

403

GARs and 70 PSRs supported in their first year*

20+

Specialized language programs offered

40

Applications to privately sponsor 111 refugees

1,500+

Language program referrals processed

1,949

Newcomers received business services

1,328

Clients found employment, 70% of whom became employed in their field or a related one

1,749

Employers engaged in Diversify Your Workforce programming

2,859

New clients welcomed through our intake services

358

Participants attended 40 Workplace Culture training sessions

843

ISANS volunteers supported our newcomer services

566

Newcomers participated in business training

78

Newcomers volunteered in the community

1,244

New clients received employment services

ISANS pre-arrival clients live in

400+ international cities

11,400+

Employment counselling services given to 2,781 newcomers

We actively work with newcomer clients in

75 communities across Nova Scotia

209

Businesses listed on ISANS' Immigrant Business Marketplace App

3,937

Clients from all over Canada and the world supported through our online services

GARs - Government Assisted Refugees
PSRs - Privately Sponsored Refugees

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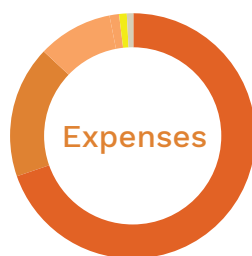
Highlight from the 2020-2021 Financial Report

REVENUE	2020 - 2021	2019 - 2020	% CHANGE
Federal	\$15,551,990	\$15,510,293	0.27%
Provincial - Nova Scotia	\$4,740,138	\$4,613,045	2.76%
Other funding sources	\$856,848	\$1,402,030	-38.89%
TOTAL	\$21,148,976	\$21,525,368	-1.75%

EXPENSES	2020 - 2021	2019 - 2020	% CHANGE
Amortization of capital assets	\$328,613	\$306,369	7.26%
Overhead and operation	\$2,584,159	\$2,370,728	9.00%
Professional fees	\$291,104	\$292,448	-0.46%
Program delivery	\$3,031,102	\$3,577,639	-15.28%
Salaries and benefits	\$14,397,667	\$14,601,209	-1.39%
Travel	\$7,152	\$95,382	-92.50%
TOTAL	\$20,639,797	\$21,243,775	-2.84%



74.0% Federal
22.0% Provincial
4.0% Other Funding Sources



69.8% Salaries and benefits
14.7% Program delivery
12.5% Overhead and operation
1.6% Amortization of capital assets
1.4% Professional fees
0.0% Travel

2020/21 ISANS FUNDERS

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
Canadian Women's Foundation
Colleges and Institutes Canada
Emera
Employment and Social Development Canada
Halifax International Airport Authority
Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
J and W Murphy Foundation
MEC Community Investment Grant
Nourish Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness
Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration
Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council
Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)
Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
SUCCESS
Trucking Human Resources Sector Council Atlantic
United Way Halifax
WES Mariam Assefa Fund
World Skills Employment Center

THANK YOU

A thick teal line starts from the top right edge of the page, curves downwards, and then extends horizontally to the right edge.

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