

St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership **Community Plan** **2025-2028**

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Guiding Principles

These principles shape how the plan is implemented and how partnerships are built, grounded in a commitment to equity, justice, and belonging. They recognize and celebrate the diverse identities, strengths, and contributions of newcomers and immigrants:

- **Affirmation:** Ensure voices of newcomers and immigrants are centred in decision-making and community-building. Create spaces where newcomers do not just adapt - they feel safe and proud to share their culture, lead, teach, and shape the community.
- **Collaboration:** Work across public, private, and non-profit sectors, communities, and cultures to co-create solutions rooted in shared responsibility and collective care.
- **Empowerment:** Support and resource newcomers in exercising agency, shaping their own journeys, and contributing meaningfully to community life.
- **Sustainability:** Strengthen systems, relationships, and practices that are equitable, resilient, and adaptable to evolving community needs and realities.

Vision

St. Thomas and Elgin County will be a welcoming, caring, and affirming community that uplifts the dignity and contributions of culturally diverse newcomers and immigrants, including those with temporary and permanent immigration statuses. By actively addressing systemic barriers and fostering equity, the community will nurture belonging and grow together to call St. Thomas and Elgin County home.

Community Goal

Within five years of arrival, 80% of newcomers report feeling supported, connected, and engaged in community life, recognizing that integration timelines vary and progress depends on equitable systems and collaborative community action.



Community Priorities

Build

- **Audience:** Newcomers and immigrants, including permanent and temporary statuses.
- **Focus:** Short-term to medium-term
- **Goal:** Support early settlement by ensuring timely, equitable, and culturally affirming access to services and opportunities that enable newcomers to participate fully and thrive in community life.
- **Key Strategies:**
 - **Settlement Navigation & Information Access**
 - Increase awareness of settlement supports through multilingual outreach and community partnerships.
 - Provide clear, accessible information about life in Canada, including rights, responsibilities, and local systems.
 - **Employment & Career Pathways**
 - Promote bridging programs and connect job seekers with employers through fairs, mentorship, and placements, while linking aspiring entrepreneurs to small business resources, training, and mentorship.
 - Collaborate with institutions and government to share labour market trends and immigration pathways.
 - Provide career counseling and mentorship to explore education, enhance skills, or transition to new fields, and guide access to training programs and employment benefits aligned with personal goals.
 - **Health Access & Interpretation**
 - Improve access to healthcare by supporting trauma-informed culturally responsive services.
 - Expand interpretation services across public institutions and community organizations.
 - **Language Learning**
 - Increase access to English language supports, including flexible class schedules, childcare, and digital learning options.
 - **Housing Access**
 - Advocate for and support affordable housing initiatives that meet the needs of newcomers.
 - **Safety, Equity & Anti-Discrimination**



- Address experiences of discrimination by improving reporting mechanisms and providing support for those impacted.

Connect

- **Audience:** Newcomers and immigrants, community members, including service providers, employers, residents, and local leaders.
- **Focus:** Medium-term to long-term
- **Goal:** Foster meaningful connections between newcomers and the broader community by promoting mutual understanding, collaboration, and shared responsibility for building a welcoming, caring, and affirming St. Thomas and Elgin County.
- **Key Strategies:**
 - **Community Education & Awareness**
 - Offer public education on immigration, cultural diversity, anti-oppression, and anti-racism.
 - Engage local leaders and influencers to promote diversity and equity in public messaging and decision-making.
 - **Social Interaction & Community Engagement**
 - Create opportunities for newcomers and long-time residents to connect through events, storytelling, and shared activities.
 - Expand volunteering opportunities for immigrants to build networks, gain experience, and contribute to community life.
 - **Employer Engagement**
 - Educate employers on the value of hiring newcomers, cultural competency, and equitable workplace practices.
 - Strengthen referrals between employment services, local businesses, and entrepreneurship supports to help newcomers start and grow businesses.
 - **Youth and Family Support**
 - Support newcomer youth and families through school-based programs, peer mentorship, and family engagement initiatives.

Transform

- **Audience:** Systems and institutions, including government, healthcare, education, employers, housing, and community leadership.
- **Focus:** Long-term
- **Goal:** Advance systemic and institutional change by identifying and addressing barriers, promoting equity, and strengthening policies, practices, and partnerships that support sustainable integration and meaningful participation.



- **Key Strategies:**
 - **Policy Advocacy & Leadership Engagement**
 - Engage local leaders and decision-makers to promote diversity and equity in policy and planning.
 - Advocate for affordable housing policies that meet the needs of newcomers.
 - **Systemic Access Improvements**
 - Advocate for increased access to healthcare, including culturally responsive and trauma-informed care.
 - Expand interpretation services across public systems to reduce language barriers.
 - Increase access to English language learning supports, especially for adults balancing work and family.
 - **Employment Supports & Benefits**
 - Advocate for expanded eligibility and access to employment-related benefits and training programs for newcomers and immigrants.
 - Provide clear, multilingual information and expand free or subsidized training opportunities, including programs for entrepreneurship and small business development.
 - **Workplace Equity**
 - Educate employers on equitable hiring practices, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and anti-oppression policies, and the value of a diverse workforce.
 - Promote the value of a diverse workforce across sectors.
 - **Human Rights, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression**
 - Promote anti-discrimination, anti-racism, anti-oppression awareness campaigns and training across sectors.
 - Strengthen reporting mechanisms and support systems for individuals experiencing discrimination, racism, or systemic barriers.
 - Support community-led initiatives that celebrate identity, build solidarity, and foster safe and affirming public spaces.



Key Impacts

These impacts reflect meaningful progress toward newcomer integration and community transformation:

- **Economic & Structural Equity**
 - Employment equity: Newcomers achieve parity with the local workforce, with outcomes reflecting opportunity and recognition of diverse skills.
 - DEI policies integrated: Municipalities embed diversity, equity, and inclusion in governance, planning, and decision-making.
- **Knowledge, Confidence & Systems Navigation**
 - Improved service navigation: Immigrants independently access services and participate in civic, cultural, and social life with confidence.
 - Settlement needs met: Housing, healthcare, and language supports are addressed through equitable systems.
- **Social Connection & Community Engagement**
 - Reduced isolation: Immigrant social connections and community engagement increase, fostering inclusion, and well-being.
 - Increased public engagement: Community members demonstrate awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity through attitudes and actions.
- **Belonging & Emotional Integration**
 - Sense of belonging: Immigrants report feeling welcomed, safe, and emotionally connected to the community through inclusive and affirming spaces.