

St. Thomas-Elgin
Local Immigration Partnership
**Action Plan 2025:
What We Will Do
Together**

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St. Thomas-Elgin
Local Immigration Partnership



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Executive Summary

St. Thomas and Elgin County continue to grow into a welcoming, caring, and affirming region, one where newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents contribute their experiences, strengths, cultures, and leadership to a vibrant and thriving community. This Action Plan outlines the collective commitments we will take in 2025-2026 to strengthen access to clear and equitable services, deepen belonging, and advance equity across the systems that shape daily life.

Rooted in the Community Plan's three priorities, Build, Connect, and Transform, this plan highlights the work taking place across all sectors: libraries, schools, employers, health providers, community and cultural groups, businesses, government partners, and local services. It reflects the diverse experiences of people who arrive through multiple pathways, including temporary residents, permanent residents, refugees, international students and workers, and people born outside Canada who continue to navigate settlement-related experiences.

This plan also reflects an important shift in our shared approach. Rather than framing the work around "newcomer needs," we focus on strengthening systems and services, ensuring they are clear, accessible, culturally responsive, and equitable. By improving policies, processes, communication, and access, and by centring the voices and lived experiences of newcomers and immigrants, we help shape a community where people are welcomed as they are, supported as they find pathways and opportunities toward their goals, and empowered to contribute their strengths.

Indicators used in this plan are privacy-safe, practical, and aligned with partner capacity. Partners may contribute aggregate information, qualitative updates, or meaningful shifts in practice, each helping us build a shared understanding of progress and move toward an affirming, connected, and prosperous region.

Partners collaborate and share progress throughout the year. The St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (STELIP) leads an annual reporting process each April to highlight contributions, identify emerging trends, and guide our shared commitments for the year ahead. Together, these updates form our annual community snapshot and support ongoing planning, collaboration, and coordinated action.

Introduction

St. Thomas and Elgin County continue to grow into a welcoming, caring, and affirming community where newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents contribute their experiences, talents, cultures, and leadership. This Action Plan brings together the efforts of community members, service providers, cultural groups, schools, employers, businesses, government partners, volunteers, and local leaders to strengthen access to clear and equitable services, build meaningful connections, and reduce systemic barriers so everyone can participate fully in community life.

STELIP plays a unique and essential coordinating role in bringing these sectors together, aligning priorities, and strengthening the pathways that help people navigate services with clarity, confidence, and dignity as they build their lives in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

This work takes place on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Attiwonderonk, and Mississauga peoples, under Upper Canada Treaties 2 and 3 and the Dish with One Spoon Wampum. Today, Elgin County is also bordered by the communities of Munsee-Delaware First Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and Oneida Nation of the Thames. As we work to strengthen belonging and equity across St. Thomas and Elgin County, we commit to building relationships with Indigenous communities and grounding our efforts in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action.

Our work is rooted in dignity, belonging, and shared responsibility. It evolves as we learn from newcomers and immigrants, from front-line service providers, from community and cultural organizations, and from the changing realities of the region. This Action Plan serves as both a roadmap and a collective commitment, guiding how we collaborate to strengthen services, build community capacity, and advance equity across systems that shape daily life.

What This Plan Offers the Community

When these commitments come to life, people can find clear information and navigate community and public services with greater confidence, knowing that welcoming and responsive systems are in place. Newcomers and immigrants build friendships, networks, and confidence through meaningful participation, strengthening their sense of connection and belonging in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Families feel rooted through relationships and systems that contribute to stability and long-term well-being. Organizations across sectors deepen equity and trust, advancing practices that reflect dignity, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

Together, these collective efforts help cultivate a community where everyone belongs, contributes their strengths and leadership, and thrives in an inclusive, vibrant, and prosperous region. This Action Plan is not only a set of commitments, but also a shared vision for the future we are building together.

How To Read This Plan

This plan is designed to be useful for community members, service providers, partner organizations, businesses, government partners, and funders. It offers a clear overview of our shared priorities and how we work together to track progress across St. Thomas and Elgin County.

The Action Plan is organized into three Priority Areas: Build, Connect, and Transform. Each section includes:

- Key strategy areas that reflect collective priorities across sectors
- Representative actions that partners are advancing through their mandates, resources, and capacities
- Examples of indicators that show how progress is understood using privacy-safe, practical, and capacity-aligned information
- Real-life examples that illustrate how these actions shape the everyday experiences of newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents

This document provides a community-level overview. It highlights shared commitments and patterns across sectors, rather than listing every operational detail. Behind the scenes, partners continue to collaborate, strengthen capacity, align efforts, and enhance their own internal tracking throughout the year.

Partners advance their respective mandates while contributing to collective goals through shared planning, learning, and coordinated action. They regularly exchange insights at STELIP meetings, task groups, and collaborative initiatives, and provide annual indicator updates that help reflect the community's progress and impact. These contributions support transparent learning, strengthen accountability, and help guide our shared work toward the Community Plan's vision and goal.

Why This Plan Matters

When people arrive in St. Thomas and Elgin County, they bring languages, cultures, skills, lived experiences, and hopes for their futures. They also encounter community systems, e.g., schools, health services, employers, local government, cultural groups, libraries, volunteers, and neighbours, that shape their early experiences of belonging, safety, and participation.

This Action Plan reflects our shared belief that belonging grows through clear information, safe and affirming interactions, equitable and culturally responsive services, and opportunities to participate in community life. Integration is shaped not only by individual effort, but by the systems and environments people move through. Strengthening those systems, improving communication, access, equity, and collaboration across sectors, creates a community where newcomers and immigrants are recognized as contributors and leaders, not just participants in transition.

Everyone in the region has a meaningful role in this work: service providers, educators, employers, government partners, cultural and community organizations, volunteers, and residents. Their collective actions help people feel welcomed, navigate confidently, share their strengths, and contribute to the vibrancy and well-being of the whole community.

This work is both practical and relational. It includes helping someone understand a school letter, access a healthcare appointment, meet a mentor, or attend a community event where they see their culture reflected. These moments help people feel rooted, valued, and supported, and they enrich the broader community as people contribute their experience, talents, and aspirations to healthy, thriving neighbourhoods.

Our Commitments at a Glance

Build: Strengthen access to services and opportunities

We commit to ensuring newcomers and immigrants can:

- Access clear, trustworthy information in the languages they understand.
- Navigate community and public services with confidence, supported by interpretation and equitable service pathways.
- Experience trauma-informed and culturally responsive care that honours their histories, strengths, and identities.

What this can look like in real life:

A person walking into a service for the first time feels respected and understood. They leave with clearer information, a sense of direction, and confidence that the community is here with them, opening doors as they find pathways and opportunities toward their goals.

Connect: Foster relationships, collaboration, and belonging

We commit to fostering meaningful relationships and strengthening shared responsibility across the community by:

- Creating opportunities for newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents to connect through programs, cultural celebrations, events, and shared public spaces.
- Expanding mentorship, volunteering, and leadership pathways that support newcomer engagement and deepen community collaboration.
- Strengthening cross-sector engagement through STELIP, workforce tables, sector partnerships, and service protocols that enhance coordination, capacity, and responsiveness to lived experience.
- Supporting community learning, anti-racism conversations, and public education that deepen understanding and reduce stigma across all sectors.

What this can look like in real life:

A person attends a community event where their culture is represented and meets someone who later becomes a mentor or colleague. At the same time, organizations, businesses, government partners, and service providers collaborate through shared tables and partnerships to address gaps, share resources, respond to lived experiences, and create the conditions for belonging and contribution.

Transform: Shift systems and policies toward equity

We commit to strengthening the systems that shape daily life by:

- Embedding anti-racism and anti-oppression practices across sectors and organizations.
- Supporting leaders to understand demographic change and centre equity in decision-making.

- Expanding equitable access in housing, healthcare, employment, education, and public services.
- Building inclusive systems that support participation, belonging, and community vibrancy.

What this can look like in real life:

A newcomer interacts with a public service and finds a process that is clear, accessible, and welcoming. They navigate confidently, pursue opportunities, and contribute their skills and leadership to a community that grows stronger, more vibrant, and more equitable because of shared commitment across sectors.

This work is guided by the voices and lived experiences of newcomers and immigrants, whose perspectives, leadership, and participation help shape meaningful, equitable change across our community. Together, these commitments strengthen the relationships, systems, and everyday experiences that shape how people build their lives, form connections, and help transform St. Thomas and Elgin County into a place where everyone can participate fully and belong.

Priority Areas

The following three Priority Areas outline the collective, cross-sector work that strengthens equitable services, relationships, and systems across St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Build: Strengthen Access to Services and Opportunities

Why Build Matters

Timely access to clear information, welcoming services, and responsive pathways lays the foundation for long-term participation and belonging.

In the early weeks, months, and years after arrival, newcomers and immigrants make critical decisions about work, schooling, health, housing, and community life. When systems are accessible, culturally responsive, and grounded in dignity, people navigate these pathways with greater confidence and stability.

Build recognizes that integration is shaped not only by what services exist, but by how they are experienced. When information is easy to understand, when interpretation is available, when navigation support is offered with care, and when people feel safe asking questions, they move through unfamiliar systems more confidently. Strengthening access to services and opportunities is one of the most immediate and powerful ways our community builds equitable conditions for contribution, connection, and long-term well-being.

Key Strategy Areas

The Build priority includes six interconnected strategy areas that reflect the realities newcomers navigate and the strengths of local partners who play a role in shaping equitable service pathways:

- Settlement Navigation & Information Access
- Employment & Career Pathways
- Health Access & Interpretation
- Language Learning
- Housing Access
- Safety, Equity & Anti-Discrimination

Representative Actions

Below are examples of actions advanced across sectors, e.g., libraries, settlement services, employment services, health partners, schools, and community organizations. They illustrate the breadth of collaborative work without limiting or excluding any partner.

Settlement Navigation & Information Access

- Create and share multilingual and plain-language materials through public-facing services such as libraries, schools, community centres, health providers, and digital platforms.
- Provide clear information about local systems, rights, responsibilities, and community resources.
- Coordinate community orientations and “Welcome to St. Thomas–Elgin” sessions that support confident navigation.

Indicators

- Number of multilingual/plain-language resources created and shared
- Number of referrals or warm hand-offs to navigation supports
- Attendance at orientation sessions

Employment & Career Pathways

- Share labour market insights and immigration pathway information with jobseekers, employers, and schools.
- Connect newcomers to job fairs, employer events, mentorship, and leadership opportunities.
- Strengthen access to entrepreneurship pathways through small-business supports, training, and networking.

Indicators

- Employers engaged
- Participation in job-related events
- Mentorship matches
- Access to newcomer-inclusive business programs or funding

Health Access & Interpretation

- Strengthen access to interpretation across public systems using scalable models suited to partner capacity.
- Promote trauma-informed and culturally responsive care across sectors.

Indicators

- Interpretation sessions delivered
- Participation in training
- Descriptions of language-access models used

Language Learning

- Offer flexible English- and French-language learning options through in-person, online, and hybrid formats, supported by childcare, digital assistance, or transportation where possible.
- Promote language learning through libraries and digital platforms.

Indicators

- Enrollment and attendance
- Borrowing of ESL/LINC/multilingual resources
- Self-reported confidence

Housing Access

- Share information about housing services and system navigation supports.
- Strengthen collaboration between partners serving newcomers and the housing sector.

Indicators

- Housing referrals made
- Notes on collaboration with housing providers

Safety, Equity & Anti-Discrimination

- Increase awareness of reporting pathways for discrimination and available supports.

- Support community observances, awareness days, and initiatives that promote inclusion, belonging, and safety.

Indicators

- Number of awareness initiatives
- Youth and community participation
- Qualitative notes on impact

Build Snapshot

The following table provides a summary of the strategy areas, actions, and indicators described above.

Table 1. Build: Strategy Areas, Actions & Indicators

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Settlement Navigation & Information Access	Multilingual resources; orientation sessions; navigation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # multilingual/plain-language resources created/shared • # referrals to settlement services • Attendance at sessions
Employment & Career Pathways	Employer information; job fairs; business training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # employers engaged • # participants in job-related events • Employment outcomes
Health Access & Interpretation	Clinic/mobile care; culturally responsive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # interpretation sessions delivered • Description of language support models • # staff trained
Language Learning	Flexible ESL/LINC; library ESL resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESL/LINC enrollment • Attendance • # ESL/multilingual resources borrowed

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Housing Access	Connection to housing supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # housing referrals • Partnerships with providers
Safety, Equity & Anti-Discrimination	Awareness days; reporting pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # awareness events • Youth participation • Qualitative impact

What This Could Look Like in Real Life

- A newcomer walks into a service for the first time and is welcomed in their language, without needing to repeat their story to multiple people.
- A parent or caregiver understands a school letter because interpretation is available and navigation support is easy to access.
- A job seeker meets a mentor at a community event and receives guidance on steps toward meaningful employment.
- A newcomer who once felt isolated now attends community events, uses local services, and begins to feel rooted in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

These everyday experiences show how coordinated, cross-sector efforts help people find pathways, build stability, and move toward their goals.

As these foundations strengthen, the next priority, Connect, focuses on the relationships, shared spaces, and collaborative community efforts that nurture belonging and create opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Connect: Foster Relationships, Collaboration, and Belonging

Why Connect Matters

Belonging grows through relationships, through moments where people feel seen, welcomed, respected, and connected to community life. For newcomers and immigrants, opportunities to build friendships, participate in community activities, engage in cultural and learning events, and contribute their skills all play a vital role in well-being and long-term integration.

Connect recognizes that inclusion is not only about accessing services, but also about becoming part of the social, cultural, and civic fabric of the region. This includes welcoming spaces, community celebrations, shared learning, youth engagement, and employer practices that foster affirmation and representation. Multiple sectors, libraries, schools, youth programs, cultural groups, employers, volunteers, community organizations, residents, and government partners, all help create spaces where people feel valued, connected, and at home.

Key Strategy Areas

The Connect priority includes four strategy areas that strengthen belonging and community collaboration:

- Social Interaction & Community Engagement
- Community Education & Awareness
- Youth & Family Support
- Employer Engagement

Representative Actions

Below are examples of actions advanced across sectors, e.g., libraries, cultural groups, schools, youth programs, employers, community organizations, and volunteer networks.

Social Interaction & Community Engagement

- Create opportunities for newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents to meet through community events, cultural celebrations, storytelling, and shared activities.
- Strengthen newcomer-inclusive volunteer pathways that build confidence, social networks, and community contribution.

- Reduce barriers to engagement through supports such as childcare, transportation, fee assistance, or access to digital tools.

Indicators

- Event attendance
- Number of volunteers engaged
- Participation supports provided

Community Education & Awareness

- Promote booklists, resource guides, and displays that highlight cultural diversity, belonging, and community stories.
- Host learning opportunities including anti-racism, anti-oppression, and cultural understanding sessions.
- Engage local leaders and influencers to amplify welcoming, affirming public messaging.

Indicators

- Number of sessions
- Participation levels
- Social media engagement

Youth & Family Support

- Offer school-based and community-based programs that strengthen social-emotional well-being, belonging, and leadership for newcomer youth.
- Support youth leadership opportunities through culturally responsive programming.
- Provide family-focused navigation and orientation supports (e.g., through Settlement Workers in Schools) to help families understand schools, community resources, and extracurricular opportunities.

Indicators

- Youth participation
- Number of leadership or mentorship opportunities
- Caregiver feedback

Employer Engagement

- Provide workshops and conversations that support inclusive hiring, clear workplace expectations, and strategies for welcoming newcomer employees.
- Strengthen connections between employers and job seekers through job fairs, networking, and referral pathways.
- Offer skill-building workshops for job seekers on communication, soft skills, and workplace norms.

Indicators

- Employers engaged
- Participants in training
- Interview/hiring outcomes

Connect Snapshot

The following table provides a summary of the strategy areas, actions, and indicators described above.

Table 2. Connect: Strategy Areas, Actions & Indicators

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Social Interaction & Community Engagement	Cultural celebrations; social gatherings; volunteer connections; barrier reduction supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event attendance • # volunteers engaged • # participation supports
Community Education & Awareness	Booklists; displays; learning sessions; DEI messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # sessions • # participants • Social media engagement
Youth & Family Support	School-based programs; youth leadership; family orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth participating • # mentor/peer support opportunities • Caregiver feedback

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Employer Engagement	Inclusive hiring workshops; skill-building; employer-jobseeker connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # employers engaged • # training participants • Job interviews/hiring outcomes

What This Could Look Like in Real Life

- A newcomer attends a cultural festival, meets new neighbours, and begins feeling connected to community life.
- Youth participate in a program where they feel welcomed and encouraged, building confidence and new friendships.
- An employer updates their hiring and onboarding practices after attending an inclusion workshop, creating a more supportive workplace.
- A family visits the library and finds resources that reflect their culture, identity, and languages, helping them feel represented and understood.

These everyday experiences reflect coordinated, cross-sector efforts that create opportunities for connection, learning, and belonging.

Together, these collective efforts help create relationships, shared spaces, and collaborative community environments where newcomers, immigrants, and long-time residents feel welcomed, valued, and connected. As these connections deepen, the next priority, Transform, focuses on strengthening the systems and policies that shape daily life, ensuring equitable access, fairness, and belonging across the region.

Transform: Shift Systems and Policies Toward Equity

Why Transform Matters

Long-term inclusion depends on more than programs and services; it depends on the systems that shape people's daily lives. When these systems are responsive, equitable, and culturally aware, newcomers and immigrants can participate fully, contribute their strengths, and build long-term stability in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Transform focuses on strengthening the structures that influence access to healthcare, housing, employment, education, public services, and civic life. It recognizes that equity is not simply a value but a practice—one that grows when organizations, institutions, and leaders commit to understanding demographic change, addressing systemic barriers, and embedding anti-racism and anti-oppression in everyday decision-making.

This priority area is about creating durable, long-lasting change so that newcomers and immigrants experience fairness, safety, and opportunity at every level of community life. Transform moves beyond responding to individual challenges and instead helps build systems where inclusion is intentional and sustained.

Transform also recognizes that systems change is most effective when it is shaped with, not just for, the community. The lived experiences, insights, and leadership of newcomers and immigrants play a significant role in identifying barriers, informing decisions, and co-creating equitable, responsive systems.

Key Strategy Areas

Transform includes five interconnected strategy areas that support meaningful, sustainable systems change:

- Workplace Equity
- Human Rights, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression
- Employment Supports & Benefits
- Systemic Access Improvements
- Policy Advocacy & Leadership Engagement

Representative Actions

Below are examples of actions advanced across sectors, e.g., employment and training services, workforce development bodies, public institutions, education partners, health systems, and community organizations.

Workplace Equity

- Support employers to strengthen inclusive hiring practices, equitable onboarding, and anti-discrimination approaches.
- Promote inclusive workplaces through recognitions and community-awareness initiatives that celebrate equitable practices.
- Increase access to workplace learning tools, including sector-specific language supports.

Indicators

- Number of employers adopting or updating inclusive practices
- Inclusive practice stories and employer feedback
- Number of workplace learning resources accessed

Human Rights, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression

- Coordinate anti-racism and anti-oppression training, awareness campaigns, and community learning opportunities.
- Strengthen awareness of reporting pathways for discrimination and ensure access to follow-up supports.
- Support community-led initiatives that foster solidarity, belonging, and safety in public spaces.

Indicators

- Number of sessions or campaigns
- Attendance and partner engagement
- Qualitative notes on reporting access
- Participant reflections on community-led initiatives

Employment Supports & Benefits

- Advocate for expanded access to training, upskilling, credential recognition, and employment-related benefits for newcomers and immigrants.
- Strengthen coordinated, system-level referral pathways between jobseekers and employers through regional partnerships that recognize talent, experience, and workforce needs.

Indicators

- Number of employers engaged
- Number of participants supported
- Training or employment outcomes
- Number of newcomer-owned businesses started

Systemic Access Improvements

- Collaborate across sectors to expand access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed healthcare, education, housing, and public services.
- Strengthen language access across public systems through scalable, partner-aligned interpretation models.
- Increase the availability of multilingual and plain-language public information to support navigation across services.

Indicators

- Number of information sessions; topics covered
- Number of interpretation sessions delivered
- Number of system partners engaged
- Number of multilingual/plain-language resources created or accessed

Policy Advocacy & Leadership Engagement

- Support leaders and decision-makers to understand demographic change and integrate equity within planning and policy development.
- Collaborate with regional, provincial, and federal partners on policy approaches that enhance access, inclusion, and equity.

- Facilitate community conversations that highlight systemic barriers and advance shared solutions.

Indicators

- Leadership briefings
- DEI commitments in municipal and organizational plans
- Policy presentations and cross-sector advocacy actions
- Number of community conversations and organizations engaged

Transform Snapshot

The following table provides a summary of the strategy areas, actions, and indicators described above.

Table 3. Transform: Strategy Areas, Actions & Indicators

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Workplace Equity	Inclusive hiring; DEI supports; recognition programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # employers adopting/updating inclusive practices • Employer engagement • Examples of inclusive practice changes
Human Rights, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression	Training; campaigns; community conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of trainings/campaigns • # attendees • Qualitative notes on reporting supports
Employment Supports & Benefits	Training/upskilling access; referral pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # employers engaged • # participants supported • Training outcomes
Systemic Access Improvements	Health access; language access; multilingual information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # information sessions • # interpretation sessions • # system partners engaged

Strategy Area	Representative Actions (Examples)	Progress Indicators (Examples)
Policy Advocacy & Leadership Engagement	Briefings; DEI planning; policy presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # leadership engagements • # policy presentations/council delegations • Inclusion of equity/DEI language in planning

What This Could Look Like in Real Life

- A resident reports discrimination and receives clear, respectful support that leads to safety and resolution.
- A newcomer visits a healthcare provider and feels understood through culturally responsive, trauma-informed care.
- An employer strengthens hiring and onboarding practices, creating a workplace where diverse employees feel valued, supported, and able to contribute their strengths.
- Local leaders embed equity into planning decisions, resulting in more accessible, inclusive public services and community spaces.
- Community systems recognize and value newcomer talent, helping attract, recruit, and retain diverse workers who strengthen local businesses and innovation.

These examples show what Transform is all about: strengthening the systems and structures that shape daily life, so that fairness, inclusion, and equity become part of how our community works.

How We Will Track Progress

Partners share insights and progress throughout the year through STELIP meetings, collaborative initiatives, task groups, and ongoing communication. These regular touchpoints help identify emerging trends, strengthen alignment across sectors, and inform shared planning and action. STELIP serves an essential role in bringing sectors together to share information, align actions, and maintain a community-wide view of integration and equity.

Each year, STELIP coordinates an annual reporting process (April for the April–March cycle). Partners contribute indicator updates that reflect their mandates, capacities, and existing tracking systems. Indicators are designed to be privacy-safe, practical, and aligned with the diverse tools and data systems available across organizations. Some partners report aggregate totals; others contribute qualitative examples, narrative reflections, or descriptions of meaningful shifts in practice. Together, these updates offer a rich picture of community progress in access, navigation, participation, inclusion, and equity.

This shared information supports transparent learning and helps inform the community about how collective efforts are advancing the Guiding Principles, Vision, Community Goal, and Priority Areas in the Community Plan. It also highlights bright spots, identifies barriers or gaps, and strengthens our ability to respond collaboratively as needs and conditions evolve.

Tracking progress is not just about measurement, it reflects our commitment to shared responsibility, continual improvement, and strengthening the relationships, systems, and everyday experiences that help people participate fully and feel at home in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Partners

This Action Plan comes to life through the dedication, collaboration, resources, strengths, and priorities of local organizations, institutions, and community partners across St. Thomas and Elgin County. Each partner contributes to the indicators and actions that align with their mandate, expertise, and tracking capacity. Participation is indicator-specific and reviewed annually to ensure alignment with evolving community priorities, capacities, and collaborative goals.

- Canadian Mental Health Association – Elgin
- Community Representatives
- Elgin Business Resource Centre (EBRC)
- Elgin County Economic Development
- Elgin County Library
- Elgin County Pride
- Elgin Ontario Health Team (EOHT)
- Employment Services Elgin (ESE)
- Family & Children’s Services/Family Education Support Program (FESPA)
- Fanshawe College & Fanshawe Employment Services
- Indo-Can Punjabi Cultural Association – St. Thomas
- Kerala Association of St. Thomas, Ontario (KATSO)
- Latinos in St. Thomas
- London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB)
- Mennonite Community Services (MCS)
- Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs
- Private Schools (local)
- Réseau en immigration francophone du Centre-Sud-Ouest de l’Ontario (RIFCSO)
- Service Canada
- Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC)
- Southwest Ontario Local Immigration Partnership (SWOLIP)
- St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce
- St. Thomas Economic Development
- St. Thomas Islamic Centre
- St. Thomas Police Service (STPS)

- St. Thomas Public Library (STPL)
- St. Thomas Social Services
- Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB)
- Volunteer Elgin
- WILL Employment Solutions
- Workforce Planning & Development Board (WPDB)
- YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin

Closing note

This Action Plan is a living document. As our community grows and as we continue learning from newcomers, immigrants, partners, and local data, we will refine our actions and indicators to keep this work responsive, meaningful, and centred on belonging.

Each partner's annual updates help us understand what is changing, where progress is taking shape, and where deeper collaboration may be needed. This shared insight strengthens our ability to plan together and respond to the realities of our community with care, intention, and collective responsibility.

Together, we are shaping a St. Thomas and Elgin County where everyone can participate fully, contribute their strengths and leadership, and feel at home. This work is ongoing, shared, and rooted in hope, and we are honoured to carry it forward alongside the many people and organizations who make this community vibrant. As the backbone for cross-sector collaboration, STELIP ensures that the systems shaping daily life remain connected, responsive, and aligned with the lived experiences of newcomers and immigrants. We are grateful to every partner who contributes to this shared journey, and we look forward to continuing this work together

Appendix A. Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary offers shared definitions for key terms used throughout the Action Plan, supporting clarity, accessibility, and a collective understanding across partners and community members.

Anti-Oppression: Approaches that identify, address, and reduce unfair treatment and power imbalances that impact individuals and communities based on identity, including race, religion, ability, gender, and immigration status. These approaches aim to create systems and interactions grounded in dignity and equity.

Anti-Racism: Actions and practices that actively recognize, challenge, and reduce racism and discrimination within programs, services, systems, and institutions. Anti-racism involves both learning and action to build equitable, inclusive environments.

Belonging: A feeling of safety, inclusion, and connection within a community, where people feel valued, respected, and able to participate fully in social, cultural, economic, and civic life.

Culturally Responsive Services: Services that honour and reflect people's cultural backgrounds, histories, languages, values, and lived experiences. These services often include trauma-informed and person-centred practices that promote safety and trust.

DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion): A framework that guides organizations in creating fair, accessible, and welcoming environments by ensuring representation, equitable access, and meaningful inclusion for people of all identities.

Equity: Fair access, opportunities, and outcomes for all people, recognizing that individuals and groups may need different supports to participate fully and thrive. Equity involves identifying and removing systemic barriers so that everyone can experience inclusion and belonging.

ESL (English as a Second Language): Programs, classes, and tools that support newcomers in learning English for communication at home, at work, in school, and in the community. ESL may include in-person classes, online learning, conversation groups, or self-paced materials.

Indicators: Practical measures, numerical or qualitative, that partners use to show progress in access, participation, navigation, inclusion, and equity.

Interpretation Services: Language supports that help newcomers and immigrants communicate effectively with service providers, schools, healthcare settings, and community organizations. These services promote understanding, accuracy, and safety in important interactions.

Leader: Individuals or groups who influence decisions, practices, or culture within an organization, institution, workplace, or community. Leaders may include managers, educators, service providers, volunteers, cultural and community organizers, employer representatives, and policy or decision-makers. Their role is to help shape equitable, welcoming environments.

Newcomer: A person who has recently arrived in the community. This may include immigrants, refugees, protected persons, temporary residents, international students and workers, and others beginning to build their lives in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Plain-Language Resources: Information written clearly and simply to support understanding of local services, rights, responsibilities, and everyday systems. These resources are often available in multiple languages to increase accessibility.

Settlement Services: Services that help newcomers navigate life in Canada, such as information and orientation, language learning, housing support, employment pathways, community referrals, and system navigation.

Systemic Barriers: Policies, practices, or structures within systems or institutions that limit people's access to opportunities or full participation in community life. These barriers can disproportionately affect groups such as newcomers and immigrants.