



**CANADIAN**  
C O N N E C T I O N S

# Bringing Leadership to Refugee Settlement in Canada

3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (2024 - 2026)

# VISION

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To be a leader in building a welcoming Canada, one that embraces refugees, values their contribution to the social and economic fabric of our country, and eases their integration so they can be their true selves.

# MISSION

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To provide meaningful, low-barrier settlement support to refugees navigating new lives in Canada.

# VALUES

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**We value People, Trust, and Resilience.**

People come first. Trust is paramount. Resilience is our core strength.

Everything we do begins with an unshakable belief that people come first. People are listened to, respected for their opinions, and encouraged to contribute in the best way they can. We will only achieve our vision when we bring out the best in each other.

With trust, we foster safety, optimism and open communication. Trust builds respect and is the foundation upon which healthy communities thrive.

Long-term goals require patience, adaptability, and resilience. When things are difficult, we help each other remain calm and positive, devise timely solutions, and keep working toward our vision.



## PILLAR 1

### Support refugees upon arrival (first year in Canada)

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Current systemic biases push newcomers toward settling for the bare minimum, regardless of their education and language skills. They are often forced to take whatever they can to provide for their family, limiting potential and locking them into a cycle of poverty.

The Outcomes and Major Initiatives in Pillar 1 help offset this. Canadian Connections believes immediate intervention is the cornerstone of successful refugee resettlement. We provide essential goods and services quickly; such as furniture, housewares, a laptop for school and job searches, and pantry staples. This 'soft landing' gives newcomers breathing room to look at their options and to explore the education and employment resources we share with them.

#### OUTCOMES:

##### 1. Clients have the basic tangibles (goods)

- Laptop program
- Gift card program
- MOVE program (furniture, household items)
- Other tangibles (sewing machines, fans, food, clothing)

##### 2. Clients have access to essential intangibles (services and information)

- Re-launching our WhatsApp Channel and sending regular newsletters with information on current training and education opportunities
- Creating a newcomer portal accessible from our website with links to resources
- Maintaining and expanding our community partnerships to provide referrals to specialty services, such as:
  - ABRAR Trauma and Mental Health Services
  - ACCES Employment's Connecting Newcomers to Good Jobs Program

## PILLAR 2

### Support newly-arrived refugees (month 13 to end of year 3)

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Year 1 has come and gone. It's month 13 when GARs no longer receive government financial support. The children are registered in school, but dad still hasn't found a permanent, full-time job fitting his skills and education. Mom stays mostly at home. The Outcomes and Major Initiatives in Pillar 2 address the challenges faced by refugees once they no longer receive or qualify for government support and must rely primarily on themselves.

#### OUTCOMES:

##### 1. Adult clients maintain their relationship with Canadian Connections

- Regular surveys to determine specific newcomer needs and areas of interest after their first year in Canada
- Monthly newsletter to provide information on the topics identified via surveys
- Hold in-person check-in (focus group, social gathering), one for men, another for women

##### 2. Adolescent clients benefit from age-appropriate support

- Volunteering opportunities for high school hours
- Life and leadership skill building (e.g., introduction to Girl Guides, Scouts, Cadets, Duke of Edinburgh)
- Sports activities and clubs (e.g., Outward Bound, Scarborough Simbas Soccer Club)
- Education pathways (e.g., vocation schools)



## PILLAR 3

### Be a career launch pad for refugee women

Why do refugees struggle to find meaningful employment in Canada? Lack of Canadian experience, credentials that are not recognized, poor language skills, lack of childcare, continued trauma and mental health challenges - the list of barriers is long. No one organization can address them all, but the Outcomes and Major Initiatives in Pillar 3 will illustrate the many benefits of hiring refugees.

#### OUTCOMES:

1. Canadians Connections becomes a more diverse and inclusive organization with culturally-specific expertise
  - Directly hire and train refugees to perform its key tasks - walk the walk
  - Partner with companies offering training leading to employment (IKEA, ACCES)
  - Share employment opportunities through WhatsApp channel
  - Help refugees build their professional networks (e.g. LinkedIn workshop)
2. Canadian Connections establishes a social enterprise to provide consistent revenue to help fund other programs
  - Give refugee newcomer employment opportunities
    - Darzee - Tailoring Business
    - House 2 Home Toronto
  - Give refugee newcomers opportunity to give back to Canadian Connections
    - Speaker's bureau or TED Talk-style presentations to share the refugee experience

## PILLAR 4

### Strengthen connections with community and corporate partners

The Outcomes and Major Initiatives in Pillar 4 address ways to strengthen connections to the wider community, by both refugees and Canadian Connections. For refugees, becoming more involved is a key indicator of successful integration. It reflects a feeling of safety and belonging. For Canadian Connections, strengthening partnerships, both community and corporate, enhances our programming, reduces costs, and positions ourselves as a leader in building a welcoming Canada.

#### OUTCOMES:

1. Clients become volunteers helping with settlement of newcomers
  - Development of volunteer welcome package
  - Development of volunteer roles and volunteer recruitment drive
  - Volunteer CC Ambassador Program
  - Speaker's bureau or TED Talk-style presentations to share the refugee experience - in person, videos
2. Canadian Connections establishes corporate partnerships
  - Corporate sponsorship for MOVE program
  - Corporate sponsorship for Laptop program
  - Identify companies amenable to hiring refugees



## PILLAR 5

### Build out operations and programming for future growth

The Outcomes and Major Initiatives in Pillar 5 reflect a comprehensive effort to strengthen the organization's foundation, streamline its daily functions, and equip it with strategies that not only address present challenges, but also position it for sustainable development in the future. By building out our operational systems and refining our business strategies, we ensure Canadian Connections remains agile, efficient and adaptable, capable of meeting current demands and embracing new opportunities as they arise.

#### OUTCOMES:

1. Canadian Connections secures diverse and consistent streams of funding for operations and programming
  - Hire a fundraiser or fundraising consultant/firm
  - Continue relationship with Small Change Fund
2. Canadian Connections strengthens its technical and administrative infrastructure which, in turn, ensures the success of programming
  - Recruit for governance, fundraising, and other committees
  - Continue building Apricot to be a robust CRM (data integrity)
  - Research options for enhanced cybersecurity and implement solution(s)

