



# Strategic Plan 2021-2023

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# Introduction

Members of the Central Okanagan Local Immigration Partnership (COLIP) participated in a strategic planning event on March 24th, 2021. The purpose of the facilitated session was to complete a comprehensive environmental scan in order to establish renewed strategic directions for the collaborative. Due to the COVID pandemic, the planning session was facilitated virtually.

The planning event provided an opportunity to review the following areas:

- Vision, Context, and Role
- Demonstrated Achievements, Strengths & Competencies
- Challenges Impacting the Coalition
- External (Environmental) Challenges, Threats, & Trends
- Opportunities & Risks
- Identifying New Strategic Directions (themes)

To support the planning event, an online survey designed to gather anonymous input from COLIP members was administered. In addition, interviews were conducted with the COLIP Coordinator to gain background information regarding strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This input was utilized during the planning day and is also referenced in this document.

## The Partnership

Kelowna Community Resources (KCR) received funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to provide coordination of work towards making the Central Okanagan a community that supports and embraces cultural diversity through a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). The Central Okanagan LIP has been active since 2014.

LIPs are community-based partnerships that:

- Foster a systematic approach to engage Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) and other institutions to integrate newcomers
- Support community-based knowledge-sharing and local strategic planning; and,
- Improve coordination of effective services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration.

LIPs deliver indirect services to newcomers that provide a collaborative framework to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable solutions for the successful integration of newcomers that are local and regional in scope.

# Vision, Context, and Role

## COLIP VISION:

“We are committed to the further development of a Central Okanagan as an inclusive, welcoming, and vibrant community where immigrants can realize their full potential, racism is eliminated, and cultural diversity is valued and celebrated.”




## CONTEXT:

Immigrants coming to the Central Okanagan face a number of challenges, including:

- Lack of access to information, support, and mainstream services
- Lack of access to employment and skills development opportunities
- There are opportunities for existing community organizations to mobilize and partner to address these issues.

## COLIP ROLE:

COLIP’s role is to operate in the spaces in between organizations, services, businesses, and service providers by:

-  **Connecting**– interested organizations and individuals with one another and with newcomers.
-  **Hosting/Educating** – conversations, dialogues, and workshops that create common understanding and opportunities to better meet newcomer and *community* needs (*multidirectional learning opportunities*).
-  **Communicating** – ensuring the services and supports offered by COLIP members to meet newcomers’ needs are highlighted and promoted.

# Environmental Scan

The following reflects the high-level results of a comprehensive scan of COLIP's internal and external operating environment. The scan helped identify strategic opportunities and directions (or themes). The scan includes information gathered through the online survey as well as input from the planning event.

## Strengths & Competencies

Understanding and reflecting on areas of strength provided affirmation of the successes achieved by the coalition to date and helps steward future opportunities. This review focused on:

- Overall organizational strengths
- Achievements

### Strengths

The members of COLIP emphasized that the coalition is regarded as valuable by the partners, has effective leadership, and is able to increase community capacity to welcome newcomers. Feedback also identified the following strengths, including:

- Strong, diverse membership; good representation of leading, well connected, public and non-profit organizations represented at the table
- Able to leverage the success COLIP has experienced to date and promote greater awareness and be a positive voice within community; progress and change is occurring.
- Creative ideas and inclusive processes – hearing from everyone at the meetings provides ideas on potential, collaborative programs/services
- Able to educate its members on racism.
- Members that believe there is a better future for newcomers and the community.
- Diverse groups have come together for a shared purpose, meet, and work together.
- Active involvement in COLIP activities
- Leveraging of resources and connections to meet the needs of clients
- Shared values and alignment of similar objectives

## Achievements

These strengths have contributed to several achievements which were highlighted by the members including:

- Enhanced organizational understanding of the needs of newcomers
- Ignite events in 2019 and 2020.
- Connection for newcomers to service and community leadership/advocacy – community leadership
- Participation in and leadership on anti-racism initiatives – a light has been shone on community issues and a voice given to those not being heard
- Ongoing involvement of diverse organizations and individuals
- Bridges have been built – there is a better understanding of the ecosystem that supports newcomers
- Diversity and inclusion curriculum piloted – online teaching skills have been enhanced.
- Advocacy and awareness have been enhanced.

## **Challenges**

Members of COLIP indicated that they felt that the coalition was providing a strong response to community needs, assisting in fostering welcoming communities, and enhancing awareness of the needs and struggles of newcomers. Despite the achievements, work remains to meet the overall purpose of COLIP which is to further the development of the Central Okanagan as an inclusive, welcoming and vibrant community where immigrants can realize their full potential, racism is eliminated, and cultural diversity is valued and celebrated. The following feedback was provided regarding challenges facing COLIP:

- Challenge is eliminating racism....a huge hurdle for any organization...for the population of the world.
- Finding sufficient time for everyone to meet.
- Limited (finite) resources to implement bolder plans.
- Credentials of newcomers are not recognized in Canada which places them at an economic disadvantage when seeking employment.
- Over the past year, the COVID crisis has taken priority over many initiatives; waiting for the economy to recover.
- Lack of support from local MP and MLA.

- Could use more engagement with the business community.
- The aims are big and wide, so it is difficult to measure success.
- Reaching those beyond (our circle) that aren't automatically interested.
- More frequent communication among partners and sharing of resources/events information to assist with overall success of COLIP in achieving its mandate.
- Community-facing promotions and publicity to ensure that more people (especially newcomers and soon-to-arrive newcomers) knew COLIP's programs and services better.

## External Challenges/Trends/Threats

A review of current challenges, threats and trends of the external environment was completed utilizing a PESTLE framework which encompasses: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal & Environmental factors impacting on the organization. The results of the PESTLE are provided in Appendix A.

## Opportunities

The results of a recently completed environmental scan from Okanagan College (Appendix B) were reviewed, in conjunction with the survey input, and additional ideas which emerged during the facilitated event. The opportunities for COLIP include:

### Community, Networking, and Inclusion:

#### *Newcomers say:*

- Focus on social events which promote interaction and reduce loneliness
- Increase outreach strategies: make calls to people who are isolated
- Increase awareness via social media & community organizations to increase visibility and communication

#### *Service providers say:*

- Leverage capacity of other organizations through increased collaboration
- Introduce new programs (e.g. book clubs)
- Enhance data base and information management tools
- Services for fathers

### Culture:

#### *Newcomers say:*

- Promote awareness of culture & diversity

***Service providers say:***

- Incorporate First Nations culture into strategies designed to build newcomer's awareness

**Employment:**

***Newcomers say:***

- Provide supports for application process to reduce barriers to finding a job
- Work to have country-of-origin skills & credentials recognized

***Service providers say:***

- Promote direct support by involving Downtown Business Association & Chamber of Commerce

**Housing, Health, Medical, Finance:**

***Newcomers say:***

- Improve access to financial and mental health supports
- Emphasize personalized, face-to-face engagement
- 

***Service providers say:***

- Improve access to financial supports for housing, subsidized rent

**Legal:**

***Newcomers say:***

- Improve awareness of rules, laws and expectations in Canada to prevent exploitation and abusive situations in jobs

***Service providers say:***

- Increase awareness of Canadian laws, etc. through information materials, legal resources, and self-help kits for newcomers

**Literacy:**

***Newcomers say:***

- Language support is critical, especially to understand slang and idioms
- Promote language skill support from institutions like Okanagan College to support inclusion

***Service providers say:***



- Approach literacy broadly (computer, internet etiquette, language)
- Ensure that trouble shooting manuals are available to enhance access and comprehension
- Enhance access to core learner needs e.g. how to apply for a driver's licence.
- More support for asynchronous training programs

Additional opportunities received from the survey and planning event included:

- As students return to in-person classes, take advantage of renewing those relationships, especially at the post secondary level.
- Greater profile recognizing the contributions of newcomers, particularly among the general public. Highlight immigrant owned businesses as an example.
- Measuring public perceptions over time may be of value in gauging success.
- Poll new immigrants to continue to learn about their experience.
- Is there some way to tie into community immunizations?
- Working with several new immigration programs/policies. Building a cohort connecting young entrepreneurs and talents with local businesses/employers.
- Partnership with anti racism projects; more active involvement in intercultural awareness building to leverage growing social interest in anti-racism.
- Host an international food festival
- Educate and inform local media...or start our own radio station
- Partner with cultural sector to offer events that build cultural awareness and capacity – involve newcomers in the creation of events that feature their lived experience and voice
- As a network, encourage community leaders/organizations to speak out when they see racism – silence is acceptance and should not be acceptable.
- A bridging program/course focused on language for employment v. general or academic English – people experience shame in having poor English skills which creates isolation.
- Communications and story telling
- Working with community partners on literacy initiatives e.g. library, college, university
- Signage in local businesses to indicate that their location is a “safe” space in the community
- Continue to enhance community awareness of COLIP – champion the cause, relaunch the newsletter.
- Create policy and procedural templates that support diversity, cultural competency and sensitivity to provide to organizations to help shift their culture and practices.

## Risks

The planning process considered risks that should be managed in order to ensure that the strategic plan will be successful and can be maintained going forward. The risks identified were:

- Concern re: continuity of funding and participation in the coalition
- Membership renewal and turnover within organizations – we should adopt a succession planning strategy.
- White privilege and supremacy gaining traction in the (Okanagan) valley – attitudes are slow to change.

# Strategic Themes & Objectives

The current strategic directions for COLIP were reviewed for relevance.

- **Strategic Direction 1:** cohesive and integrated opportunities to meet the identified needs of newcomers.
- **Strategic Direction 2:** strengthen economic and community involvement opportunities for newcomers.
- **Strategic Direction 3:** Support and engage in community development and advocacy.

Although all three are still considered relevant to the work of the coalition, suggestions were provided to amend the directions in order to enhance the focus of the work. The following reflects consideration of the various data sources described above and the specific goals areas suggested by planning event participants and presented the strategic themes going forward.

We will Achieve Our Vision by focusing on:

## Strategic Theme One:

***Increasing cohesion and integration of work in our communities that meets the identified needs of newcomers.***

## Objectives:

- Enhance awareness of the experience of newcomers to assess successes and gaps in supports

### Suggested Actions:

- Complete a survey of newcomers, from a variety of backgrounds, to learn more about what helped, what they were missing in their move to Okanagan, and what would have helped them in their transition to Canada.
- Formalize connections with our newcomer communities to ensure COLIP's work aligns with their needs.
- Partner with cultural organizations to offer social events at which they are introduced to Syilx land and culture to help build awareness of First Nations' history.

- Expand collaborative opportunities within the region

### Suggested Actions:

- Partner with other COLIPs in the valley on collaborative projects.
- Establish more formal agreements and clarity on what each partner within COLIP is doing and will do (e.g. lead, partner, support) in creating a more welcoming community.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to support relationships with newcomers who are attending these facilities.

- Engage in capacity building among partners of COLIP to sustain their involvement  
Suggested Actions:
  - Actively create succession plans to ensure ongoing participation and engagement of partners at the COLIP table thereby increasing the coalition’s cumulative influence and ability to sustain strategic directions.
  - Advocate for ensuring long term strategies focused on collaboration are built into each partnering organization’s strategic plans.
- Enhance information management resources, including data bases that are able to provide accurate, up-to-date information.

#### **Strategic Theme Two:**

### ***Strengthening economic and community involvement opportunities for newcomers.***

#### **Objectives:**

- Enhance awareness of the vision and role of COLIP within the community  
Suggested Actions:
  - Share events hosted by diverse organizations that support COLIP’s objectives and encourage partners to cross promote and make newcomers aware of them. E.g. host an international food festival.
  - Market the purposes of COLIP to a more diverse audience, including establishing an active presence across social media/networking channels to promote goals and initiatives.
  - Reach out to local social groups (dance, fitness, gardening, theatre, etc.) that can welcome new and diverse members into their existing communities in order to promote welcoming and participation.
- Strengthen newcomers’ capacity to participate in the economic and community life of the region  
Suggested actions:
  - Build support networks (physical and digital) that connect newcomers, groups, and organizations to build a more inclusive community within and beyond the Central Okanagan region.
  - Create accessible supports to enable newcomers to successfully apply for jobs and complete application processes.
  - Encourage social innovation/social enterprise/social entrepreneurship as a means of economic opportunity (via new/existing grants, funding, or loans)
  - Continue to lobby to have country-of-origin skills and credentials recognized to support employment opportunities for newcomers.

- Create information materials, legal resources, and self-help kits for newcomers that provide information on Canadian laws, workplace rules, and employment standards to prevent abuse, exploitation, and increase success and stability in the workplace.

### **Strategic Theme Three:**

## ***Building community capacity to challenge and eliminate racism and champion the interests of newcomers.***

### **Objectives:**

- Increase community awareness of racism

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- Develop and deliver anti-racism workshops to the Boards represented on COLIP to demonstrate solidarity with newcomers in addressing the systemic barriers and discrimination they face.
  - Develop policy and procedure templates that help define cultural competency for use by organizations in the Central Okanagan.
  - Partner with cultural organizations to provide forums for mobilizing the voices of newcomers in building community capacity to challenge racism.
  - Align with academic institutions to support research into understanding systemic racism and the impact on newcomers.
- Enhance community responsiveness to safety and welcoming spaces for all citizens
    - Create a “safe space” campaign, with signage, for community businesses and other locations to show that all cultures and backgrounds are welcome in their space and can seek refuge if feeling unsafe. (Similar to rainbow flags or Safe Harbour signage)

# Appendix A: PESTLE

## **Political:**

- *Our public debt is increasing which may impact on budgets and funding in the future.*
- *Provincial Immigration Policy pits provinces against one another regarding programs to support immigrants – precarious policies for workers and students, Temporary Foreign Worker program needs to be reformed.*
- *Lack of community response to the rise of anti-Asian hate and oppression experienced by people of colour -need to have MP make a statement against community racism and show support for immigrants. Elected officials need to be reminded of their role as leaders.*
- *Election season is almost upon us – both federal and municipal.*
- *Media coverage of vocal minority groups – conflict attracts attention but not productive conversations and yields more polarization.*

## **Economic:**

- *Impact of the pandemic on individuals who have had to leave their jobs due to increased risk for severe illness from the virus.*
- *Affordable housing and childcare*
- *More access to trauma related counselling*
- *Livable wages, tight labour market, impact of working at home, labour shortages across all professionals and entry levels.*
- *Impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry which is an economic driver for our region.*
- *COVID has not impacted everyone equally – non-profit sector has been hit hard and many are vulnerable to closing their doors without an injection of government support. These agencies are critical to supports for individuals and assist with reducing barriers for immigrants and refugees.*

## **Social:**

- *Media bias is influencing the conversation – on a positive note, younger generations are more aware of systemic issues and advocating for change.*
- *Increasing supports for survivors of domestic/sexual violence*
- *Anti-racism panel discussions*
- *Cultural events and methods to showcase other cultures – more was happening pre-COVID*
- *How we connect and learn about community issues – trend to rely on social media as the source is dangerous.*
- *More diverse demographics in our region – need to acknowledge racism is greater as result.*
- *Networking opportunities for graduates – in person and virtual.*
- *Community podcasts could provide discussion on relevant topics.*
- *Widely promote EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) across the community*

**Technological:**

- *Has enabled new and worthwhile initiatives to have a platform globally and it has created an environment where we tend to know far more of what is happening on another continent than in our backyard – double edged – we connect, and we disconnect from others.*
- *Digital training for everyone is needed – seniors, youth, immigrants, parents, etc. to span the digital divide*
- *Newcomer Welcome APP – integrating all community resources into an organized tool*
- *Cost of cell service is high in Kelowna and Canada*
- *Cost of technology and limited access to public technology at community locations.*
- *Some students have been having difficulty using just their phone as an educational platform*
- *Working at home via technology is resulting in isolation for those not online*

**Legal:**

- *Changes to City of Kelowna development framework (town centred focused v. single family development in the hills)*
- *Regulation of cryptocurrency transactions*
- *Recognition of professional credentials of immigrants*
- *MAID is changing the way people value life – often different from mainstream within immigrant communities*
- *The outcome of the two Michael's being held in China may result in legislation changes and impact on international relations.*
- *What will UNDRIP's implementation mean to current laws, legislation and will there be an impact to policies aimed at encouraging immigration.*

**Environmental:**

- *Greater interest in climate change among the young*
- *Considerable increase in climate refugees – people are being displaced.*
- *Change from fossil fuels will impact the ways we move around the community and world.*
- *Potential future pandemics*
- *Improved public transportation options for environmental reasons, also benefit lower-income populations*
- *Cycling is more common – more e-bikes.*
- *More climate friendly initiatives : plant based diets, precision agriculture, sustainable living, alternative transportation, etc.*