2019-2021
Strategic Plan
Charting the Future
International Institute of St. Louis

Connect • Engage • Build
VISION
A diverse, inclusive and thriving community.

MISSION
To build a more connected and productive society to benefit immigrants, their families, and the wider community.

CORE VALUES
Collaboration
Work with partners and clients to create inclusive services and products

Excellence
Strive for outstanding results

Innovation
Remain agile and flexible – responding quickly with services, products, and plans

Integrity
Strong ethical and moral principles

Respect
Utilizing a multicultural perspective, take into account the feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of others
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left: IISTL hosts several US Citizenship ceremonies annually.
FOREWORD

Net international migration is projected to exceed births as the driver of U.S. population growth by 2030.¹ As a result, America is becoming increasingly dependent on immigrants as a source of new population, a youthful workforce, and economic opportunity.

International migration will result in another shift. The U.S. will soon be majority non-white and, as a consequence, is becoming far more culturally and racially diverse. Currently, 52% of today’s 6- to 21-year-olds, also known as Generation Z, are non-Hispanic white.² Additionally, the total foreign-born population in the U.S. surpassed 13.4% in 2017, the highest representation in the past century.³

This demographic shift has resulted in increased hostility towards immigrants. Since his inauguration in 2017, President Trump has proposed numerous cuts in foreign-born admissions to the U.S. in nearly all visa categories. Public opinion is sharply divided on a variety of immigration issues, especially those related to border security and political asylum claims.

Still, immigrant newcomers are essential if St. Louis and other Midwest regions are to achieve their full economic and social potential in a world economy, which now favors America’s coasts rather than its Heartland. To build thriving communities in the Midwest, we must welcome immigrants and learn to better appreciate and respect our common values in addition to our diversity.

The work of the International Institute of St. Louis remains vital to the prosperity of our region, state, and nation. We have a long history, deep roots, and vast multicultural expertise which enable us to fill a critical community integration role. We provide essential adjustment services, connect newcomers with mainstream communities, and build public appreciation of immigrant contributions. By welcoming newcomers and promoting equitable access to opportunities, we can reach the Institute’s vision of a diverse, inclusive, and thriving community.

Amit Shah     Anna Crosslin
Chair of the Board    President & CEO


left: 2018 World Refugee Day activities included a walk on South Grand Blvd sponsored by IISTL.
INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in 1919, the International Institute of St. Louis (IISTL) has served as our region’s immigrant service and information hub. IISTL’s founding goal was to integrate refugees of war into the American mainstream by promoting ethnic identity and leadership, being inclusive, and teaching democracy and self-reliance.

Today, we build on our history and good works to serve as St. Louis’ trusted resource for immigrant services and community engagement. We offer nationally-acclaimed services to more than 6,500 immigrants and refugees annually. Our Festival of Nations is the largest annual multicultural celebration in St. Louis, drawing more than 125,000 visitors each year. We have a deep knowledge of St. Louis’ immigrant communities and engage locally and nationally on a wide range of immigrant issues.

Our compelling mission and broad appeal constitute our fundamental strengths and much of our competitive edge. We strive to serve all immigrants without regard to country of origin, race, age or religion. Our leaders are authorities in the fields of refugee services and immigration policy. They, along with our proven track record in providing excellent, sought-after services, have positioned us as one of our region’s most respected institutions.

During our previous plan period, we made substantial progress toward furthering our mission and strategic initiatives. We purchased and relocated to a new headquarters campus in January 2015. As a result, we now have a multipurpose, centrally-located campus offering ample program and office space plus parking.

Additionally, we have strengthened our services by upgrading technology, introducing and expanding programs, and refining our brand and messages.

At the beginning of the 2019-2021 plan period, our annual operating budget is approximately $7.2 million. In total, 90 full and part-time staff provide services with the support of 1,200 volunteers annually. Our Southwest Missouri branch in Springfield links newly-arrived refugees with supportive services, including English classes and jobs.

During the previous three-year plan period, IISTL sponsored more than 2,000 refugees for resettlement. Due to recent deep cuts to refugee admissions by the White House, the total number of refugee arrivals in St. Louis during the new three-year plan period is projected at 615.

left: Festival of Nations, produced by IISTL, attracts more than 125,000 visitors annually to celebrate St. Louis' cultural traditions. Jerry Smith/ International Institute
The International Institute’s 2019-21 Strategic Plan charts the course for the continued growth of the organization while better organizing our work to meet client and community needs. The plan seeks to strengthen our competitive edge and further integrate immigrants in our community.

The Strategic Plan includes two goals and five key strategies.

- **Goal I** pertains to service provision and community relationships. The first of three strategies is to initially connect clients to basic internal and external resources. The second is to engage clients and the community to create longer-term positive outcomes. Together, they build a more inclusive community utilizing activities in strategy three.

- **Goal II** focuses on ensuring agency sustainability. The first strategy is to operate in a fiduciary-responsible manner and to reduce risk. The second is to provide adequate resources to deliver effective services.

Each strategy has been designed with three key objectives in mind: to develop agency-wide service collaboration goals, to demonstrate just-in-time service delivery, and to measure agency and community impact.

The plan differs from previous plans in that its strategies are organized by outcome. This reflects best practices for service delivery. The client-beneficiary need is recognized first and service delivery is designed to address those needs. It also enables IISTL to better pool internal and external resources in a timely, responsible manner to create greater impact.

**GOAL 1: Provide high-quality services and products to strengthen community relationships.**

**Strategy 1.1 Connect immigrants and their families to internal and external services and resources**

Key objectives under this strategy include increased coordination across the organization to identify client needs and make timely connections to service provision.

This strategic area focuses on the initial, first-touch services that most recent arrivals to our region seek from IISTL. Those accessing these services include newly-arrived refugees, work-authorized immigrants, victims of human trafficking, and individuals with physical or behavioral health challenges as well as longtime foreign-born residents and their children.

Activities under this strategy include provision of housing, furnishings, food, clothing, transportation,
1.2 Engage immigrants and their families with the wider community

The key objectives under this strategy are to empower clients to become active members of their community and develop direct relationships with a wide variety of mainstream institutions.

This strategic area targets foreign-born individuals aiming to increase their participation in neighborhoods, city, county, and the region. Those accessing these services include clients served in strategy 1.1 as well as other foreign-born residents who aim to increase their engagement across a variety of sectors.

Activities include U.S. permanent residence application and citizenship preparation for foreign-born, soft skills training and career pathway development for immigrant professionals, and access to credit builder and business loans along with small business technical assistance.

In addition to our core services, clients seeking to engage with the wider community can access services provided by the International Institute Center for Career Advancement (IICCA), the International Institute Community Development Corporation (IICDC), and the International Institute Business Solutions Center (IIBSC).
St. Louis County had the largest concentration of STEM workers

- 174 - 1,081
- 1,082 - 2,802
- 2,803 - 3,781
Under the new plan, we will expand recertification services for immigrant professionals as well as career counseling for new arrival immigrant youth in St. Louis and Springfield, Missouri. We also plan to expand our fee-based remote video and telephonic interpretation services locally and in Springfield, Missouri. Within IICDC we plan to expand micro-lending and credit building services around the state and explore housing and immigrant food entrepreneurship.

One major change has been the shift in provision of refugee social services from the state to the International Institute. In the spring of 2018, the Missouri Department of Social Services notified the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of its intention to withdraw as administrator of ORR-funded refugee social services for the State of Missouri.

After discussions with refugee service providers throughout Missouri, ORR elected to transfer the state refugee program administration to IISTL. In May 2018 we announced the creation of the Missouri Office of Refugee Administration (MO-ORA) based at the IISTL headquarters campus. The establishment of MO-ORA ensures the continuation and oversight of high-quality refuge programs throughout Missouri.

1.3 Build a more inclusive community

The key objectives under this strategy are to advocate on behalf of our constituents, deliver strategic messages to priority audiences, and build strong community connections through events and presentations.

This strategy targets all community members. Some target groups will have familiarity with the agency and our services, while others will have had only limited exposure.

IISTL has long operated programs to help immigrants share their cultural traditions and to serve as a two-way communications bridge between immigrant newcomers and native-born in our community. Festival of Nations, our celebration of multicultural diversity, draws more than 125,000 annually. We also offer smaller, more intimate activities and events, such as our Bagels & Coffee, Wine & Cheese, and community lunches. In addition, we will add host food-sharing events, including fine dining with IISTL-affiliated chefs.

Recent widespread anti-immigrant rhetoric and xenophobia as well as misinformation about refugees and immigrants will continue to present significant challenges in the new plan period.

To address these challenges, we will take a more active role in advocacy through education. Leaders will more publicly weigh-in on issues that affect the mission of the Institute, and we will fact-check and distribute findings related to immigrants and immigration. To share accurate information with those with limited access, we will offer presentations to African-American, low-income students, and elderly audiences and also ensure our presentations are live-streamed or posted for remote access viewing.

left: IISTL debuts a study funded by the William T. Kemper Foundation that provides data about immigrant professionals and their potential to fill employment gaps.
IISTL will help empower immigrant communities by developing leadership trainings for immigrant group representatives. Thus, immigrant communities can engage more directly with the wider community and vice versa. True integration will not occur until connections are two-way and direct.

Key messages on immigrants and immigration will be refined with a goal of promoting a fairer and more balanced perspective. Staff will be trained on messages and methods of outreach. We will collaborate with the Missouri Immigrant & Refugee Advocates (MIRA), the Immigrant Service Providers Network (ISPN), and others to share accurate information with elected officials and conduct advocacy training as appropriate.

We will expand our cultural competency training by working with sister agencies in the International Institute network with a goal to build a national network of cross-cultural competency training providers. We will also explore opportunities to offer refugee immersion learning experiences for students.

**GOAL 2: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the International Institute for the benefit of its clients and stakeholders.**

*2.1 Operate in a fiduciary-responsible, well-managed manner to ensure the overall provision of strong, impactful programs and manage risk*

The key objective in this area to ensure program and agency excellence.

In the face of uncertain economic and political times and evolving funding landscapes, we will be challenged to continue offering high-quality services and products across the agency. The Institute remains committed to providing top-notch services and products and to doing so in a diverse work environment in which our staff has access to the best possible management, facility, and work tools.

In this period, IISTL will focus on maintaining our accreditations, expanding our business continuity plan, offering a safe and secure workplace, and ensuring high fiscal and quality standards. Well-trained staff and volunteers are also a priority. We will add more staff development and skills training for all staff.

We will continue to review and address issues related to technology, including hardware upgrades, staff training, and vulnerability to a cybersecurity attack. As part of our MO-ORA contractual responsibilities, we will select and modify new software to ensure uniform data capture among all federally-funded refugee service organizations in Missouri.

We will also maintain a strong Board of Directors which is diverse, engaged, and broadly representative of St. Louis. We will routinely review pipeline issues to ensure continuity of Board leadership and availability of essentials skills to properly inform and complete the work of the Board.

*left: Fred Bird, St. Louis Cardinals’ mascot, visits participants at JCRC organized summer camp at IISTL*
Finally, the Institute’s long-time CEO will retire toward the end of the 2019-21 plan period. In 2016, the Board of Directors approved a Permanent Succession Plan. Accordingly, a responsible recruitment and transition process is being developed in the initial strategic plan year to ensure a largely seamless executive transition.

2.2 Provide adequate financial and non-financial resources to deliver effective services

The key objective in this area is to ensure agency sustainability and growth.

In 2018, we introduced a multi-year Fund Development Plan (FDP) based on IISTL’s strategic plan. The FDP focused on new funding strategies to address diminishing federal grant sources coupled with uncertain political and governmental funding changes. In the next period, we will continue to focus on achieving our strategic fundraising goals that have been informed by key charitable giving demographics. The plan assumes that revenue generation goals are focused on attracting more individual giving, which in 2016 accounted for 30% of IISTL donations compared to a 72% national average. Priorities will include new donor engagement including Millennials and Generation Z, major gifts solicitation, donor retention and stewardship, corporate support, and foundation giving. Donations will be sought through increased online giving, high-yield special events, and customized asks for individuals and corporations.

Fundraising events will be kept to a minimum, given the limited amount of staff and volunteer support IISTL can dedicate to such purposes. The Young Friends of the IISTL will support events and also focus on social and cultural engagement of the next generation of volunteers and supporters.

In January 2019, we sold our previous headquarters on South Grand Blvd and thereby significantly reduced our mortgage debt. In the new period, we will assess the potential to launch a capital campaign in a future period to raise additional capital and program funds.

Robust volunteer and social network engagement programs are essential to engage new Millennial and Gen Z donors by meeting them on their platforms for one-on-one and group engagements, which may or may not be in-person. Accordingly, we will target our messaging, focusing on video storytelling and volunteerism to engage these generations. Our website will transition to a mobile-friendly platform early in the new period.
To advance our strategic goals, the International Institute’s products, services, and staff must remain agile and flexible, adapting to evolving client, customer, and community needs. We cannot wait for change to happen – in many cases we must lead the charge. We must systematically identify opportunities to build strategic alliances both locally and nationally.

The re-emergence of overt anti-immigrant hostility and xenophobia, supported by high profile officials and pundits, presents a significant challenge in advancing our mission. It is imperative that we build community appreciation about diversity and immigration and leverage our position in the community to support inclusive policies and practices.

Our role in setting strategic direction for the region has grown significantly and will continue to grow in the new plan period. We are positioned to partner with businesses, government and higher education – all of which seek access, knowledge, and training to expand their customer and client markets and workforces. Everyone will benefit from more cultural, social, and economic inclusion.

Immigrant entrepreneurs are among our region’s engines for job growth. Immigrants also offer high value as a new source of population. They are new customers for local businesses from real estate, to retail to health services, and more. They are also an increasingly important source of workers. To attract more newcomers, we will continue to work with the St. Louis Mosaic Project, which recently announced a new program goal – to attract 25,000 more immigrants to the St. Louis region by 2025.

The Institute is poised to appeal to a new generation of donors. Some 48% of Generation Z is non-white, the highest share of any generation. As a consequence, they don’t always view issues of immigration through the same lens as older generations. This demographic shift may lead to more positive attitudes toward diversity and immigration. We need to find more ways to harness the energy and support of the young generations.

This strategic plan will provide a solid framework to implement actions that will move our mission forward. Achieving our strategic imperatives will enable the International Institute of St. Louis to realize the potential we have to make a significant difference in our community and beyond.

Through the unyielding commitment to our mission, we will move closer to achieving our vision of a diverse, inclusive and thriving community.
America is a nation of immigrants. Like our forefathers, immigrants of today are escaping persecution, seeking economic opportunity, and desiring education and opportunity for their families. They are valuable employees and colleagues, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and consumers. Since 1919, the International Institute has helped ensure that immigrants successfully integrate by providing essential connecting services and by sharing American culture and values.

Annually, our wide array of adjustment services reaches more than 6,000 immigrants from 80 countries. Thousands more attend and participate as performers and volunteers in our annual Festival of Nations. We are respected by and have strong multigenerational ties to most local immigrant communities. Our staff are key consultants on a broad range of issues affecting the social, cultural and economic health of our region.

The many ways we assist immigrants, their families, and the wider community...

**CONNECTing new arrivals with first-touch services & resources**
- English Classes for Adults
- Social Work & Health Services
- Job Training & Placement
- Refugee Resettlement
- II Southwest Missouri @ Springfield
- Missouri Office of Refugee Assistance (MO-ORA)

**ENGAGING foreign-born with the wider community**
- Small Business Center & IICDC
- Credit & Asset-Building
- II Global Farms
- Career Path & Recertification
- Immigration Application Services
- II Business Solutions Center

**BUILDing a more inclusive community**
- Festival of Nations
- Community Presentations
- Cultural Competency Training
- Service Learning
- Immigrant Leadership Training
- Advocacy

Visit us on the Web!

www.iistl.org
www.festivalofnationsstl.org
www.iibscstl.org
We are a Missouri non-profit corporation with full 501 (c)(3) status.

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