



# 2022–2024 Strategic Plan

We aspire to make St. Louis an inclusive, diverse, welcoming, and prosperous region — a region that provides equitable opportunities for everyone to achieve their greatest potential and contribute to the development of this vibrant community.

This vision for St. Louis is made possible by individuals, civil society, businesses, and government working together to create pathways for inclusive growth. For over a century, the International Institute of St. Louis has played its part by welcoming immigrants and refugees from around the world, fostering inclusive growth in the process. Regardless of nationality, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, the International Institute gives people the opportunity to rebuild their lives in St. Louis after escaping the adverse circumstances of their home countries.

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Decade after decade, the International Institute has supported these immigrants, and in doing so, has served the Greater St. Louis community. When immigrants settle in a region, planting their seeds and growing their roots, the whole garden of St. Louis flourishes. Beyond the social and cultural diversity that immigrants bring to a

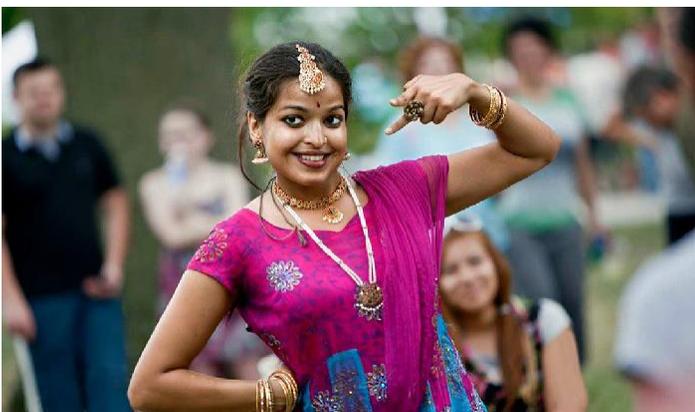


region, studies have shown that their participation in the labor force undoubtedly grows our economy. Just as each unique flower makes a garden stronger and more beautiful, so too immigrants help strengthen and transform our region.

Globally, humans are more connected and more interdependent than ever before. In a world plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the increasingly perceptible and catastrophic effects of climate change, our collective experience and interdependence as humans have never been more obvious. Even so, by the end of 2020, we saw 85 million people (about twice the population of California) uprooted from their home countries — the world's highest recorded number of refugees.<sup>1</sup> Anti-immigrant hostility propagated by social media and xenophobic leaders only further compounds this crisis. In times like these, we must remember that we are alike. We all have the same fears, the same wants, and the same needs — the fear of the unknown, a want to prosper, and a need for a place to call home. Like flowers, we all need sunlight and water to grow.

We are the International Institute, and we will transform St. Louis into a flourishing garden, an inclusive community where all types of flowers can grow. We will **serve** to the best of our ability. We will **advocate** for a more welcoming region. We will **connect** this community to resources that inspire growth. We will **diversify** our income sources and invest in a sustainable financial model that ensures continued support for immigrants, their families, and the community at large. We will **build** the capacity to lead our community forward by leveraging the talent and experiences of the immigrant population for our common growth.

As we adapt to our ever-changing world, we will uphold the values on which our organization was founded: diversity, democracy, prosperity, and inclusion. We will transform St. Louis into a more inclusive and prosperous community for all. We are the International Institute of St. Louis.





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# Mission and Vision Statement



The International Institute of St. Louis provides opportunities for immigrants and refugees to thrive in order to create a welcoming, prosperous, and healthy region for all.

We envision a welcoming, prosperous, and healthy St. Louis region for every individual in our community. To achieve this vision, IISTL creates opportunities for the immigrant and refugee community in St. Louis to achieve its greatest potential. These opportunities span all facets of life: family, health, community, career, culture, and much more. We know that when our neighbors thrive, our region thrives, and when our region prospers, we have even more chances to prosper.



# Serve

As the St. Louis region's leading immigrant service provider and information hub, serving the immigrant and refugee community remains at the core of the International Institute's mission. Over many years, IISTL has built a robust foundation of comprehensive programs for resettlement, social services, education, language access, immigration services, career development, and community engagement. We will expand on this foundation to address more needs, serve a larger population, and strengthen the region's foreign-born workforce and economic impact.

As our world continues to evolve — particularly on account of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic — we must evolve with it, such as expanding remote access to our programs in light of social restrictions. Adapting our services over time only strengthens our leadership in immigrant service provision.

By the end of 2024, we will:

- Implement a range of community integration services, strengthening the connection between the foreign- and native-born communities
- Increase access, including remote access, to our services and programs, reaching more people in our region
- Promote the region's foreign-born workforce and strengthen the economic impact of and for immigrant entrepreneurs

# Advocate



Our nation continues to face anti-immigrant rhetoric, political extremism, misinformation, and divisiveness. It is our responsibility as a nationally acclaimed resettlement agency to correct misinformation, as well as to advocate with and amplify the voices of immigrants and refugees. Moreover, we must leverage the public's surging engagement with social movements (for example, the youth climate justice movement) and enter the field of advocacy in a concerted, strategic manner.

For decades, IISTL's Festival of Nations has helped bridge the divide between native-born and immigrant communities, but it is time to grow beyond a communications bridge and into an education hub. Greater St. Louis needs a trusted resource for non-immigrants to learn about issues immigrants face and the benefits of welcoming more foreign-born individuals into our community. We will begin to actively engage the non-immigrant community in our activities, forging stronger relationships and transforming our region in the process.

By the end of 2024, we will:

- Be an advocacy leader, amplifying immigrant and refugee issues on the local, state, and national levels
- Engage and build a strong connection with immigrant communities to help advocate for immigrant-friendly policies locally, nationally, and globally
- Advocate for language access within the community
- Become the region's leading resource for education about immigrant matters for the native-born community



# Connect

Our rich history and reputation for excellence have allowed us to forge strong relationships with Greater St. Louis leaders across government, business, and civil society. To have such a strong network is a privilege that we must use wisely. IISTL will prioritize communication and engagement with our community — both native- and foreign-born, agencies and neighbors, clients and supporters.

We must champion active participation from our neighbors to ensure that the programs we develop are client-centered, efficient, and sustainable. Over the next three years, we will leverage our community partnerships to foster inclusion and multiculturalism in our region.

By the end of 2024, we will:

- Engage with and lead coalitions of like-minded agencies to foster multiculturalism and inclusion in our region
- Build a strong communications, public relations, and marketing infrastructure
- Promote multiculturalism with the launch of the Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence
- Increase our Board of Directors' engagement with our programs, activities, and services, strengthening their connection with IISTL and leveraging their community ties

# Diversify

The International Institute heavily relies on federal grants to fund our services and programs. As a result, our programs are constrained by access to resources. Over the next three years, we will diversify our core funding sources to enable agility, flexibility, and innovation in our programs and activities.

By the end of 2024, we will:

- Diversify our core funding sources and minimize our reliance on federal grants to ensure financial sustainability, withstand potential adversity, manage risk, and capacitate innovation and agility
- Grow our existing endowment
- Develop a system of self-sustainability for our programs using creative methods
- Maximize our building and facilities to generate income
- Leverage the power of events, such as the Festival of Nations, to generate income for the organization

# Build



The International Institute has cultivated a history of excellence by investing in the resources needed to advance our mission and vision. However, the fast-changing nature of today's world necessitates we adapt this internal investment.

As technology rapidly evolves, becoming increasingly ingrained in our daily lives, we must capitalize on new opportunities to increase both our service capacity and our clients' access to those services.

Over the next three years, we will also invest in our staff by developing and implementing an employee retention plan to better support them. As the cornerstone of the organization, our employees are our most valuable resource and investment.

By the end of 2024, we will:

- Rebuild our technology infrastructure to improve efficiency and communication, build capacity, and enable greater access to our programs and services
- Prioritize and implement a staff retention plan, concurrently improving our competitive advantage to recruit the most passionate and dedicated experts in the region
- Renovate the IISTL campus to improve accessibility to our programs, create opportunities for client entrepreneurs, and improve our agility in refugee resettlement



# Conclusion

When we envision St. Louis in 2024, our region is a more inclusive community, and the International Institute of St. Louis leads the efforts towards becoming a more welcoming place for everyone. There is increased awareness of the importance of welcoming and supporting immigrants. The voices of immigrants are now amplified; they are being heard, and they are participating in the development of each facet of their community. We are the International Institute of St. Louis, and we have played our part!

<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/>