

## **Framework of Guiding Principles**

This framework outlines the principles that will guide the development and implementation of voluntary organizational standards for Ontario's immigrant and refugee serving sector. The organizational standards and self assessment tools will reflect the sector's approach to settlement and the values that drive our work\*.

The settlement process is multi-dimensional, complex and long-term in nature. It is an ongoing, two-way process of accommodation and adjustment. Responding to the complexity of needs, settlement services include services that are focused on frontline activities, which address the individual needs of immigrants and refugees, as well as community capacity building and advocacy initiatives that address the context or conditions in which they live.

Values that drive the sector include anti-oppression and equity, client-centered and user defined approaches, supporting empowerment, being accountable to communities and funders, appreciation for holistic approaches to services that cover physical, social psychological, and other needs, prioritization of community capacity building, and an orientation towards positive systemic change and advocacy.

### **Principles to guide standards development & implementation**

Based on the above and taking into consideration the trends and challenges described earlier, we present a framework of principles, which are concrete statements of values that act as a guide to action. The aim is to develop a concise set of standards representing organizational development priorities for OCASI members and partners. These principles provide the frame by which we prioritize some organizational issues over others. We welcome your feedback.

#### **1. Benefits to Immigrant & Refugees**

The standards and self assessment process ultimately should benefit immigrants and refugees, and support community capacity building and leadership. They will support agencies in taking a client-centered approach, taking into account a holistic understanding of their community members' needs.

#### **2. Valued Human Resources**

The standards and self-assessment process acknowledges that individuals working in immigrant and refugee serving agencies are one of the most valuable resources in the sector and fair workplace practices and retention of staff are key to organizational success. There is recognition that immigrants and refugees make up a large proportion of our workforce and therefore our workplaces need to accommodate diverse needs, cultures, religions and family situations.

#### **3. Anti-Oppression**

The standards and self-assessment process is guided by an anti-oppression approach that provides direction in governance, leadership, administrative systems, HR management and program management.

#### **4. Diversity & Uniqueness**

The standards and self-assessment process respect the diversity and uniqueness of each organization. The process acknowledges the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the settlement process and subsequently, a diverse range of services in the sector. There are organizations centered around geographic locations and there are community or ethno-specific agencies. The standards need to be adaptable to the needs and capacities of each organization and facilitate creativity and innovation by recognizing and supporting the multiple means by which organizations can work towards organizational excellence.

#### **5. Autonomy & Self-Governance**

The standards and self assessment process are based on voluntary participation, respecting the autonomy and self-governance of each agency and recognizing and supporting the self-responsibility and self-monitoring capacities of each agency. Through participation in the process, an organization can obtain recognition for good practices.

#### **6. Accessibility & Relevance**

The standards and self-assessment process needs to be understandable to all participants such that implementation is straightforward and effective. The process supports the sharing of knowledge and sound practices and policies across the sector. The aim is to develop standards and a self assessment tool that can be embedded into an agency's everyday operations, management and strategizing necessary to build, strengthen and maintain a healthy organization, while encouraging ongoing development, growth and innovation.

#### **7. Consultation / Transparency**

The standards and self assessment tool will be developed through full consultation with the sector and will be guided by an advisory committee, representing the membership. Key priorities throughout the project include transparency and ongoing communications.

This initiative will build on, and where appropriate harmonize with, existing standards and organizational assessment initiatives. Additionally, there are a number of framework documents, legislation, research on organizational development, and funder requirements that will inform the standards development.

*\*This approach and these values have been described in a number of documents, namely the Canadian Council for Refugees, [Best Settlement Practices: Settlement Services for Refugees and Immigrants in Canada](#), February 1998. Available at: <http://www.ccrweb.ca/bpfina1.htm>; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and COSTI, [The Development of Service and Sectoral Standards for the Immigrant Services Sector: Discussion Document](#), June 1999; and documents from the [Voluntary Sector Initiative](http://www.vsi-isbc.org) at [www.vsi-isbc.org](http://www.vsi-isbc.org).*