



Reception House
Waterloo Region



Annual Report

2022-2023





Message from Board Chair and CEO

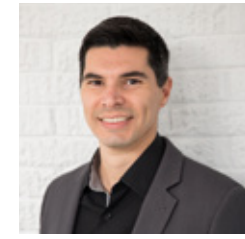
Reception House Waterloo Region is a mission-driven organization proudly committed to welcoming and supporting refugees with their settlement journey. We concluded a challenging yet rewarding year by welcoming and supporting over 1,300 Government Assisted Refugees and their families in 2022-2023.

Reception House staff worked diligently, providing temporary accommodations, needs assessments, orientations and community information, systems navigation, health care referrals and support, housing supports, and relationship building with landlords, employers, and service providers. We walk with people through their settlement and integration journey, responding to each person's unique needs.

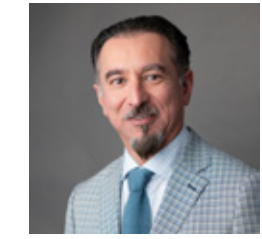
This work is not possible without the support of the community and funders. We recognize the integral role played by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and our many other funders, donors, and community supporters. This support, along with the dedication of our board of directors, staff, and volunteers, makes this work possible.

As we look to the new year ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to building a welcoming and inclusive society and look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners and community leaders to ensure a successful settlement and integration journey for our newest neighbours.

Thank you for everything that you do to make Waterloo Region a caring community!



Rick Silva, Board Chair



Babur Mawladin, CEO

Vision

A sustainable organization helping refugees adapt and integrate into a new community they can call home.

Mission

Reception House provides quality settlement, integration and support services for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), helping them successfully transition to a new life in Waterloo region.

Values

We value relationships, respecting the dignity and agency of those we serve and work with.

Board of Directors

Rick Silva
Board Chair, Governance Committee Chair

Raphael Kanai
HR Committee Chair

Larry Kron
Revenue Diversification Committee Chair

Hilde Bouckenoghe
Vice-Chair, Secretary

Saba Shafiq
Advocacy Committee Chair

Debra Tonin
Treasurer, FAIR Committee Chair

Ash Shinh
Board Member

Saifullah Mohammad
Board Member

Julie Dopko
Board Member

*Welcoming refugees in Waterloo Region since 1987.
Together, we create home.*

Empowering Youth



Newly arrived youth, and those who have moved into their own homes, participate in activities which include homework support, English conversation circles, a variety of recreational activities, and field trips to museums, festivals, and other events around the community. We offer art programming in partnership with a local artist as well as opportunities for youth to create their own music at Kitchener Public Library. Participation allows youth to support each other as they adjust to their new community and encourages them to build social connections, friendships, and a sense of belonging.

Mohammed Saeed, Youth Coordinator



Arriving after a long journey, youth are provided with space where they feel comfortable and welcome. Using art as a tool of introduction and integration into Canadian culture, youth play, learn, gain confidence, express themselves, and build new friendships. There is laughter, and sometimes frustration, as youth enjoy learning about each others' cultures and being introduced to their new home in creative ways.



Artwork by Pamela Rojas



During the summer, children and youth enjoyed exploring different art techniques like ceramics, murals, chalk drawing, watercolour, leaf art, recycled cardboard sculptures, and so much more! Excitement about starting school and navigating a new environment was evident in their eyes as they asked about what to expect on their first day. Messages of "look, listen, think, and be kind" resonate and offer hope amidst uncertainty. As they feel more comfortable in their new community, they also begin dreaming about their futures.

Pamela Rojas, Artist

A Place to Call Home

Even amidst our local housing crisis, Reception House secured housing for 127 families last year. On average, staff spent over 30 hours helping each family find their first home in Canada. Time spent increased exponentially for families or individuals experiencing serious health or mobility concerns. The lack of accessible and supportive housing creates ever greater barriers and leads to extended stays in temporary accommodation.

While we have seen significant success in finding housing for the people we serve, it is not without challenges. Discrimination and lack of Canadian rental history often cause frustration, as landlords are not always open to renting to refugees. We work to cultivate strong relationships with landlords and offer resources to support landlord-tenant relationships.

The current affordable housing crisis has significantly impacted the amount of income that people are spending on housing. Last year on average, families spent 68% of their income on rent. Anything above 50% of income spent on housing is considered 'extremely unaffordable', while housing that costs 30% or less of a household's income is considered 'affordable'. So, while we have been successful in finding people housing, it's not affordable housing. This leads to financial strain and housing insecurity. We continue to advocate at all levels of government around the need for more affordable, accessible, and supportive housing.



“Finding a Home” is a recycled cardboard sculpture inspired by the stressful journey that new families face when they arrive in Canada. It represents the struggle that newcomers experience when trying to find housing and is a call to action for the community to support affordable housing for all.

Navigating Healthcare

Individuals with complex health needs are prioritized by the federal government's humanitarian refugee selection process. Last year, approximately 50% of families served by Reception House included individuals with complex health needs. Systemic healthcare gaps and the lack of family doctors create additional vulnerabilities for people experiencing health concerns. As a result, significant staff time is devoted to helping people access healthcare and navigate health systems.

Long wait times to access specialized services for clients with high medical needs can often lead to the deterioration of health conditions, negatively impact psychological and physical well-being, and decrease capacity to participate in other settlement and integration activities. Through regular engagement and assessments, staff identify services, system gaps, and other barriers that clients face. With this knowledge, staff engage with a wide variety of service providers and watch for opportunities for partnership and advocacy.

We work closely with health partners to advocate for improvements to the healthcare system to better respond to refugee needs. Reception House is thankful to healthcare partners like the Centre for Family Medicine with whom we created the Refugee Health Clinic, Community Healthcaring, and Region of Waterloo Public Health for supporting pop-up clinics, health screenings, and immunization clinics at temporary accommodation locations. In addition, staff work with a wide range of other healthcare professionals and agencies, like dentists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and optometrists, to support client needs.

One key success has been our participation in the development and implementation of the Refugee Health Integrated Care Team. This project was designed to transition refugees who have been in the country for one year or more to a primary care physician, to build their capacity to navigate the healthcare system, advocate for themselves, and support primary care physicians to feel confident in accepting newcomer patients. To date, over 500 refugees have been transitioned to their own primary care physicians. This model was recently promoted as a promising best practice at the North American Refugee Health Conference.



Year At A Glance



Over 1300 people served



696 people arrived from 13 different countries, speaking over 20 different languages



2751 health, employment, language, and life skills orientations and assessments

8836 referrals and system navigation activities



176 families were provided with access to a laptop and digital literacy orientation while staying in temporary accommodation



127 families housed



15 - 20 youth participated in recreation, homework, art, music, and social integration programming every week

427 children and youth registered in schools

31% of head of households indicated that they had previous employment experience before arriving



131 people accessed employment supports through Reception House

64 people secured employment through Reception House employment services



\$10k spent to support health-related services, supports, prescriptions, and/or assistive devices

45 health clinics were hosted at temporary accommodations

500 vaccinations administered

During the past year, Reception House supported over 1,300 Government Assisted Refugees, including 696 newly arrived individuals. The majority of the people we welcomed (88%) came from conflict zones in the Middle East, primarily from Afghanistan and Syria. The remaining individuals came from conflict zones across the African continent and Myanmar. While media attention often focuses on one particular conflict or crisis, we continue to support people fleeing persecution from across the globe.

Thank You to Our Volunteers!



Last year, 71 volunteers contributed 1,900 hours across the organization. By offering their time, talents, and friendship, volunteers help create a welcoming environment and support social integration.



Youth Programs

Youth programs offer support to refugee youth to help them reduce isolation and build a sense of belonging to the community. Activities include a Homework Club, Recreation Nights, English Conversation Circles, and various field trips in the community. Through these activities, youth build confidence, create new friendships, and develop a sense of belonging in their new community.

Family Partnership Program

This social integration and support program partners newcomer refugees with an established local family, community group or two individuals for one year. Partnering groups act as a circle of support providing mentorship, social engagement, and practical guidance for refugee families. Together they share meals, participate in social and community events, practice English, or participate in other activities based on participant and volunteer interests and needs.



Children's Programming

Before moving into their own homes, refugee families stay in temporary accommodation. During this time, adults are busy completing paperwork, attending orientations and assessments, and connecting to resources in the community. However, children are not yet enrolled in school. Activities like games, crafts, and field trips help engage children, help them make new friendships and adjust to life in Canada.



English Outreach Program

Improving English language skills is a path to social integration and a brighter future. However, sometimes refugees experience barriers to accessing language classes in the community, due to lack of childcare, transportation, or other factors. This weekly volunteer program provides English language support for refugees to strengthen their confidence and competency in a new language.

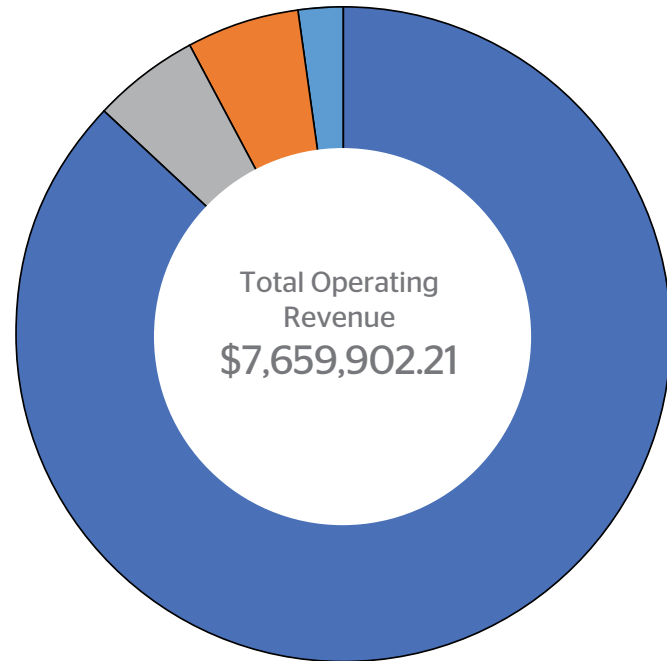


Art with Pamela

Facilitated by renowned local artist Pamela Rojas, this program uses diverse art techniques as a tool of introduction and integration into Canadian culture. Through art, youth are introduced to English vocabulary, practice self-expression, develop self-confidence, and begin asking about going to school, Canadian culture, jobs, and voluntary opportunities.

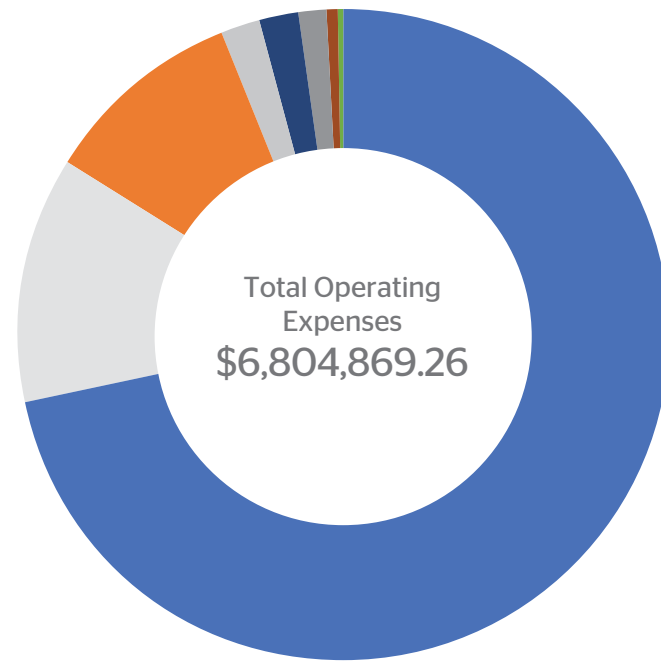
Financial Snapshot

Where our support comes from



- 87.22% Federal Funding
- 5.01% Grants
- 5.71% Donations
- 2.06% Interest and Settlements

Where your support goes



- 71.92% Housing, Life Skills, Initial Integration
- 12.16% Client Support Services
- 9.88% Operations and Governance
- 2.15% Employment Services
- 1.90% Other Programs
- 1.28% Communications, Fundraising, Special Events
- 0.48% Children and Youth Programs
- 0.23% Health and Wellbeing

You Make a Difference!

We are deeply grateful to our incredible funders, donors, community partners and supporters. Together we make Waterloo Region a more welcoming place for refugees.

Thank you to our major funders and donors who contributed \$10,000 or more during the last year:



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION



Cotton Mendes Investments Inc.

3 Anonymous Individual Donors



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Thank you also to the 382 other organizations and individuals who made donations to support the work of Reception House. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!



Support Our Mission

Volunteer

We offer many meaningful volunteer opportunities, for a variety of interests and skills. Help create a welcoming community and build relationships that support newcomers to integrate into Waterloo Region .

Visit receptionhouse.ca/volunteers for details.

Donate

Your financial support strengthens our service delivery. Consider including Reception House in your annual giving by making an one-time donation, or becoming a monthly donor. Contact heather@receptionhouse.ca for more information.

Advocate

Very often, the most significant issues facing refugees are the same issues facing many other vulnerable groups struggling to meet their basic needs in our community. Please lend your voice in support of affordable housing, food security, equitable healthcare, and inclusive labour practices.

Offer a Roof

If you are a landlord or have a space to rent or share, connect with our housing team. Refugees face much discrimination in an already competitive rental market. Join our list of housing partners by contacting housing@receptionhouse.ca

Together we can create a supportive and welcoming community for all!



Reception House
Waterloo Region

Phone: 519-743-0445
56 Regina St. N
Waterloo, ON N2J 3A3

www.receptionhouse.ca

info@receptionhouse.ca

