

**Focusing on people and adapting to change: A report on the  
Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia during the first  
year of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## Executive Summary

- The transitions ISANS made during the COVID-19 pandemic are best described as adaptations to changing circumstances.
- The organization's culture, which focuses on people first, communications, and embracing technology, helped ISANS navigate the rapidly changing environment during the pandemic.
- Early adoption of online platforms and laptops helped the organization quickly adapt to remote work.
- The decision by key federal and provincial funders to continue to support the organization was essential in allowing ISANS to continue to support clients and staff during the pandemic.
- The organization played a key role in supporting the communication of provincial health protocols and signage that made it more accessible to not only newcomers, but to all Nova Scotians.
- Investing in coordinated communication and office and service delivery protocols helped the organization navigate changing health policy during the pandemic.
- ISANS supported the health and social services systems by helping clients to access health care services and benefits.
- Being nimble and flexible allowed the organization to redeploy staff in the remote work environment.
- The hard work of ISANS' staff, despite the challenges of the pandemic, made ISANS' smooth operations possible.
- ISANS' clients demonstrated adaptability and responded positively to the changes in service delivery.

## Challenges

- It was difficult for staff to balance working hours and childcare when daycares and schools were closed.
- There was a lot of uncertainty associated with the pandemic and its duration, which made it difficult to decide which services to transition to an online platform.
- Some services could not be offered exclusively online, such as Immigrant Health and Settlement Support.
- Vulnerable clients faced the most barriers, and these barriers affected their transition to online service delivery and made it difficult to meet the explicit objectives of projects and funders.
- Clients had varying digital literacy skills, which required the organization to experiment with platforms that worked for service delivery.
- The stress of the pandemic was compounded by the stress of outside events, such as the Portapique mass shooting, which took a toll on the well-being and mental health of clients and staff.
- Stress and fatigue compounded and were cumulative for clients and staff.
- Returning to on-site service delivery caused anxiety for some clients and staff.
- The pandemic affected individuals in different ways and there was no single, generalizable experience.
- Some of ISANS' teams had less work than normal, whereas other teams had increased workloads.
- Navigating rapidly changing Provincial and Federal COVID-19 policies, which at times contradicted each other, added to the other challenges the organization faced.

- It was difficult to document the changing contexts and situations the organization found itself in during the crisis.

## Lessons Learned

- Embracing opportunities that come with challenges allowed the organization to provide a wider range of services.
- Online language and service delivery can allow ISANS to serve clients in a broader geography and across the province.
- Remote service delivery may help clients with children and with more advanced digital literacy and language skills to take classes from home.
- Programs that promote digital literacy are important investments for vulnerable clients.
- The experiences of clients, as well as staff, are varied and recognizing the diversity of experiences and adapting services and programs in light of the wide range of experiences people have makes these services and programs stronger.
- Some services cannot be transitioned to completely remote work, especially services that support the core operations of the organization, such as IT or accounting, as well as services that support vulnerable clients.
- Documenting the experiences of staff and clients during a crisis is key to developing lessons learned. This includes using surveys of clients, staff, and partners, as well as documenting protocols, taking pictures, capturing stories, and investing in consistent record keeping and statistics of programs and outcomes.
- The greatest strength of the organization is its culture, which is people focused and open to embracing innovation.
- Proactively planning for a crisis two to three years ago allowed ISANS to adapt instead of pivot in response to COVID-19.
- Taking time to debrief and evaluate during a crisis can be beneficial for reflecting on operations.

The Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is the largest immigrant-service provider organization in Atlantic Canada. It consists of over 260 staff across three locations (Mumford, Joseph Howe, and Desmond) in Halifax (HRM) and approximately 27,000 people visited the organization's offices or used its services in 2019-2020.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the organization offered a wide range of services to its clients,<sup>2</sup> through seven different teams: Business and Workforce Integration (BWI), Employment and Bridging, Language, Support Services, Community Integration Services (CIS), Refugee Resettlement, and Online Strategy and Learning.<sup>3</sup> BWI provides services that help newcomers with self-employment and business ventures, Employment and Bridging provides services that help clients search for work, and Language provides services that help newcomers to improve their English proficiency. Further, Support Services provides services such as interpretation and translation, CIS provides services that foster connections between clients and the broader community, Refugee Resettlement provides support to refugees, and the Online Strategy and Learning Team supports Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) and other online programs. ISANS also has four operational teams, including: Communications, People and Culture, IT and Office Management, and Accounting. In 2019-2020, the organization offered over 70 different programs with in-person and online options.<sup>4</sup>

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the surge in COVID-19 cases around the world was officially a pandemic.<sup>5</sup> In response, Canada issued a global travel advisory on March 13<sup>th</sup> asking residents to avoid non-essential travel abroad.<sup>6</sup> This was a turning point that soon affected the organization's operations. Due to emerging developments with the COVID-19 pandemic, ISANS chose to transition its in-person services to online platforms on March 16<sup>th</sup>, which was six days before provincial authorities asked businesses to close. It was a rapid transition accomplished in a short period of time. The move to full online service delivery was made possible because of the organization's

culture, and prior investments in remote workspaces and IT support.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the transition during this time for ISANS was an adaptation to changing circumstances, rather than a pivot because of them.

After March 2020, ISANS progressed through several stages of operation, which were internally known as Stage 0, Stage 1, Stage 2, Modified Stage 1, and Modified Stage 2. Stage 0 occurred between March 2020 and June 2020 and, during this time, staff worked remotely while the majority of ISANS’ services were offered online. Stage 1 occurred between July 2020 and August 2020 and is characterized by the return of some in-person services at the main office at ISANS’ Mumford location. Stage 2 occurred between September 2020 and November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and, during this stage, both the Mumford and Joseph Howe locations were open for in-person services. Modified Stage 1 was enacted in response to a rise in COVID-19 cases in Nova Scotia and occurred between November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the guidelines for operations mirrored the guidelines used in Stage 1. The organization entered Modified Stage 2 on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and used the guidelines from Stage 2 until April 2021.<sup>8</sup>

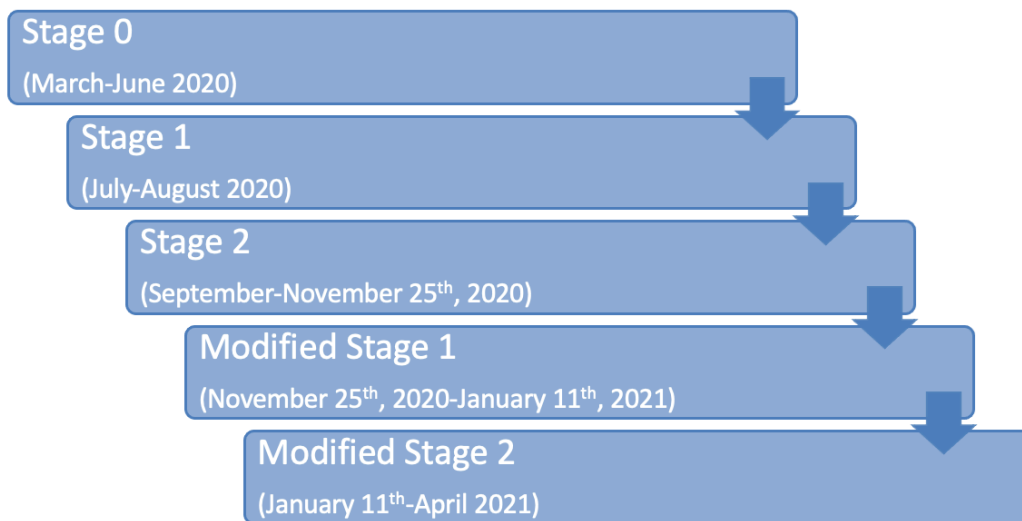


Figure 1. Graphic of ISANS' stages of operation

Throughout each stage, the organization’s culture, which prioritizes people, communication, and technology, allowed ISANS to successfully adapt. The organization emphasized a “people-first” approach, which allowed ISANS to continue supporting both clients and staff throughout the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

A commitment to frequent communication with clients and staff during the pandemic was also key and acts as an example of ISANS' efforts to think about the needs of people first. As one Manager recalled, "A lot of clients had the potential to fall through the cracks. And I think that's where ISANS, particularly with a lot of the work that it does with vulnerable clients, knew that if we just sent a text message that's not going to work. We need to pick up the phone."<sup>10</sup> Frequent communication with staff also allowed team members to remain informed on internal operations while working remotely.<sup>11</sup>

Among service providers, ISANS is known as an early adopter of innovative practices. For example, the organization was a pioneer in offering distance and online services, which it has done since 2005.<sup>12</sup> This reflects a focus on innovation and an openness to technology, which is at the core of ISANS' culture. In 2017, staff were given laptops to foster working remotely due to workspaces nearing capacity.<sup>13</sup> Although adopting such "hot desks" was initially a solution to a problem of growth in the organization, it turned out to be an unexpected advantage when staff had to work from home during the pandemic. Because infrastructure such as laptops and IT support were already in place, staff were able to continue their work. Investment in remote workspaces, growing the organization's IT team, and providing education on platforms that could be used for online service delivery all occurred before the pandemic began which, in turn, gave ISANS an advantage in March 2020.<sup>14</sup>

As this report will show, ISANS' focus on people and an openness to new technology were key components of the organization that were present long before the pandemic occurred and were essential to the organization's ability to adapt and continue to provide services throughout the pandemic. These components were also key to the lessons learned and best practices identified by a tumultuous year that took a herculean effort to navigate.

## Stage 0 (March-June 2020)

In the face of the uncertainty of a global pandemic, all of ISANS' staff were asked to work from home on March 16<sup>th</sup>, unless they were identified as providing an essential service for the organization. At that time, April 6<sup>th</sup> was set as the target date for a return to ISANS' offices,<sup>15</sup> which later had to be adjusted due to both the scale of the pandemic and changing provincial health protocols. This was ahead of a Provincial State of Emergency declared by Nova Scotia on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The decision to act quickly exemplifies not only the organization's commitment to putting its clients and staff first, but also its people-focused approach. The Provincial State of Emergency was continually extended from March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 to May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.<sup>16</sup> Under the Health Protection Act, businesses had to maintain a six-foot social distance between employees, were encouraged to work remotely if possible, and individuals were not allowed to gather socially in groups that were larger than five.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of these challenges, ISANS quickly adapted to remote work and virtual program delivery, while still satisfying clients' needs during this period.<sup>18</sup> The first stage of work during the pandemic was defined as "Stage 0," which consisted of almost entirely remote work, followed by four other stages which offered steadily increasing options for in-person service delivery.

In part, this was possible because ISANS' key federal and provincial funders did not alter funding contracts during the pandemic, which meant that the organization did not have to consider layoffs and could re-deploy staff throughout the pandemic.<sup>19</sup> As ISANS CEO, Jennifer Watts, noted: "We were very fortunate not to have changes to our contracts ... which was fantastic. It provided stability for the organization and enabled us to really focus on the work."<sup>20</sup>

The organization's people-focused and innovative culture, investment in remote workplaces and technology support, and pre-existing crisis response plan helped the organization transition to remote service delivery during Stage 0. During this stage, however, it is important to note that there was no singular experience of the pandemic, but rather a variety of experiences, both among and between staff



and clients. Other major events, such as the Portapique mass shooting, also coincided with the pandemic and exacerbated the toll on people’s mental health, contributing to these variations in experience. Yet, throughout it all, ISANS continued operations and took on an enhanced role in supporting federal and provincial communications, and initiatives in social and health services in order to ensure that clients could access the services they required.

Before the pandemic, ISANS offered a wide range of services. Table 1 shows that the Language Team offered 20 services and was the largest component of normal operations, followed by the Employment and Bridging Team, which offered 19 services, and the Community Integration Services (CIS) Team, which offered 14 services. The Operational Teams are listed as having one service each as they do not offer services directly to clients, but they offer services that are essential to the organization’s operations. Additionally, although Volunteering is not a formal team counted by the organization, we documented the volunteering services that were offered during normal operations. When the organization entered Stage 0, the method of service delivery and number of services offered changed for most teams.

**Table 1: Teams and Services in Normal Operations**

Team	Number of Services Offered in Normal Operations
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	11
Employment and Bridging	19
Language	20
Support Services	4
Community Integration Services (CIS)	14
Refugee Resettlement	11
Online Strategy and Learning	3
Volunteering	2
Communications	1
People and Culture	1
IT and Office Management	1
Accounting	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>

Three pillars of ISANS' culture, 1) a focus on people, 2) communication, and 3) openness to new technology, were all essential to the organization's transition to Stage 0 as well as navigating other stages of the pandemic. A report by the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) suggested that, during the pandemic, service provider organizations' staff "were not working from home," but rather, were "at their homes, in a crisis, trying to work."<sup>21</sup> ISANS recognized this, and the organization's people-first approach can be seen in ISANS' decision to require staff to work a minimum of five and a half hours of work a day, rather than enforcing the normal seven hours of work assigned before the pandemic. This decision was made because of the visible strain staff faced as a result of having to balance new responsibilities at home, such as daytime childcare, with their work responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> It was also made in recognition of the fact that many front-facing staff could no longer perform their normal duties through remote work and had to be reassigned tasks. This flexibility in working hours would not have been possible without the continued support and backing from funders, and while many continued to work their normal hours and even worked countless extra hours, having this option in place was a key support for staff.

Communications with staff were also important. This was maintained through Connect, the organization's intranet system which was used to keep staff up-to-date on COVID-19 developments and to suggest ways that staff could maintain morale and productivity.<sup>23</sup> As one Frontline Worker put it, "Connect was our lifeline to all things work."<sup>24</sup> ISANS at Home was one of the intranet resources that staff could access through Connect, and it provided tips for working from home while also facilitating both personal and professional connections between staff members. Additionally, Managers and Supervising Team Leads were required to check-in with team members daily to discuss ISANS' operations during COVID-19, and to assess individuals' wellness.<sup>25</sup> The use of the Communications Team and a dedicated communication strategy to keep staff informed and connected exemplifies ISANS'

people-first culture, and it played a large role in shaping operations in Stage 0. Staff also used social media and online platforms, as well as phone calls, to maintain the delivery of services to clients.<sup>26</sup> A Senior Leadership Team member noted that “Different client groups had different levels of skills, knowledge and access to technology. This meant that staff not only needed to move to virtual services but offer ways to communicate and engage with clients that match with their technology or skill levels.”<sup>27</sup> A combination of new and existing online tools, social media, and homework packages were used to support clients, many of whom had low digital literacy skills, to assure that they could continue to take classes during the pandemic. This was especially the case for CLB 2 who are lower level learners.<sup>28</sup> A survey completed by Literacy to CLB 2 learners revealed that 69.7% of clients used WhatsApp to speak with their instructor, and 42.7% of clients used Zoom.<sup>29</sup> Efforts were made to assure clients could continue their studies, and a Frontline Worker noted how, “We went ahead to start to send out homework packages, ... and then the teacher would give them a phone call, usually on WhatsApp ... and they would go through the homework package together.”<sup>30</sup> In some cases, vulnerable clients received in-person services during this period, given the obstacles that they faced with technology. In-person services were made available only for crucial, time-sensitive situations, and clients who received in-person services were required to go through a thorough screening process before accessing the services in-person.<sup>31</sup> In Stage 0, vulnerable clients continued to receive in-person services through both ISANS’ Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) and Immigrant Health services, as well as Welcome House.<sup>32</sup> The openness to using technology, adoption of social media tools not previously used, and meeting clients where they were at in terms of language and digital literacy skills enabled service delivery to continue despite the challenges of operating during a pandemic.

During Stage 0, the pandemic forced almost all of ISANS’ services online. While some services were deemed essential and still required some in-person delivery, other services could not be offered as a result of the pandemic. ISANS offered 88 services during its normal operations before COVID-19 and

Table 2 shows that ISANS offered 83 services in Stage 0. This demonstrates that the organization continued to provide the majority of their services in some capacity during Stage 0. The Language and Employment and Bridging Teams, for example, offered the most services in Stage 0 with 19 each, all of which were offered remotely. Online classrooms were developed through Moodle,<sup>33</sup> an open-source, web-based teaching tool that helped with the delivery of language services. The only fully in-person service in Stage 0 was offered by CIS, and this service was still semi-remote as it was contactless food delivery to clients' homes. Refugee Resettlement offered six services that were a mixture of online and in-person service delivery. This is because Refugee Resettlement was providing essential services that could have required in-person service delivery for vulnerable clients who faced language, technology, and other barriers that prevented them from accessing online or remote options.

**Table 2: Change in Services in Stage 0**

Team	Number of Online Services Offered in Stage 0	Number of in-Person Services Offered in Stage 0	Number of Services Offered Online and in-Person (Mixed) in Stage 0
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	11	0	0
Employment and Bridging	19	0	0
Language	19	0	0
Support Services	4	0	0
Community Integration Services (CIS)	11	1	0
Refugee Resettlement	5	0	6
Online Strategy and Learning	1	0	0
Volunteering	2	0	0
Communications	1	0	0
People and Culture	1	0	0
IT and Office Management	0	0	1
Accounting	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

During Stage 0, ISANS experienced unexpected opportunities to adopt new technology and accelerate its existing use. When ISANS purchased laptops for staff in 2017 and added 'hot desks,' or shared workspaces, because of growth in the number of people working at the organization, ISANS could not have anticipated that a pandemic would force staff to work remotely and that this would be an asset to draw upon. The investment in laptops allowed staff to work from home, however, many staff members had never done so before March 2020.<sup>34</sup> One Frontline Worker reported that they "Felt very comfortable moving to the online environment,"<sup>35</sup> but other staff members had different comfort levels with the new technology. A member of the Senior Leadership Team noted that, "Some staff who were used to mainly offering in-person services may not have had the knowledge and skills initially to move their services virtually. So some training and support were required."<sup>36</sup> This meant that the first two months of working remotely was a time of adjustment in which ISANS' investments in their IT support team paid off, as IT staff were able to assist with problems related to virtual service delivery.<sup>37</sup> The Online Team within the IT and Office Management Team developed classrooms for online services through Moodle and assisted teachers with online services.<sup>38</sup> Several services used Moodle for online teaching in Stage 0, and Moodle had to be adjusted to incorporate online spaces for both one-on-one teaching and remote classroom learning. In some instances, Zoom and WhatsApp or other video chat, internet-based services were considered more useful for those elements. This is an example of openness to being nimble and adapting new technologies. In other instances, groups that had not used Moodle adopted it to share resources and information and incorporated it as a learning tool. In the later stages, many of the online learning adaptations were shared with other service provider organizations through national conferences, such as Pathways to Prosperity. One of ISANS' partners reported that "ISANS has been very effective in creating online, virtual environments. This means our work hasn't dramatically changed with them."<sup>39</sup> This quote speaks to the quality of the remote working environment that ISANS created. Unexpected opportunities also emerged through remote service delivery as teams provided

services that they normally would not offer as a means of keeping programs running. For example, sending videos through Facebook to pre-school children and delivering food to clients' homes.<sup>40, 41</sup>

Although adapting to online service delivery was a challenge, previous investments in online tools and service delivery allowed the organization to capitalize on unexpected opportunities and excel.

ISANS created a draft for a crisis response plan in December 2018 and adopted this plan in October of 2020.<sup>42</sup> Having the plan in place guided ISANS' response to the COVID-19 crisis<sup>43</sup> because the crisis response plan provided a framework for how to conduct operations during the initial stages of the pandemic.<sup>44</sup> This helped ISANS to adapt, rather than pivot, in response to the pandemic.

Although the transition to remote work in Stage 0 was largely successful, it is important to note that groups of clients, staff, and partners experienced the pandemic differently. Some ISANS teams were overwhelmed with work in Stage 0, while other teams that offered front-facing services lost their regular duties. A few teams had less work than usual and took on different tasks (or a leave of absence in a small number of cases).<sup>45</sup> The organization adapted to these changes and staff were redeployed. The differences in the ebbs and flows of work and new responsibilities, such as providing personal childcare during the workday, meant that the transition to online service delivery was not smooth for everyone.<sup>46</sup> One Frontline Worker described how "I had two children at home who, you know, were used to being in school all the time, but I had full 100% organizational support to say, okay, you can't always be there because you're tending to other things. And so that gave me the presence of mind while I was working to feel really good, but also if I had to step away, to not feel guilt or anything like that."<sup>47</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note that the pandemic coincided with larger events occurring in Nova Scotia during the spring of 2020. In April, a mass shooting took place in Portapique, Nova Scotia that claimed the lives of 22 people.<sup>48</sup> The trauma of the tragedy took a toll on individuals' mental health and added to the strain caused by the pandemic.<sup>49</sup> The toll of the tragedy and other events compounded

into a “quiet exhaustion,”<sup>50</sup> as reported by a Senior Leadership Team member in the later stages of the pandemic.

At the same time, during this stage, and throughout the pandemic, ISANS took on an enhanced role in supporting the federal and provincial health and social services systems during the pandemic. A Royal Society of Canada report stated that “Newcomers, whether refugees or immigrants, experienced, on the whole, inequitable access to up-to-date health advisories and information on income supports available through different levels of government. In the immediate crisis, there was no centralized source of health information in multiple languages and accessible formats about what was going on, rules, and how to access government resources.”<sup>51</sup> One of ISANS’ Frontline Workers reported that “gaps in the system are even more visible and more pronounced right now,”<sup>52</sup> and ISANS worked with the health and social services systems to ensure that clients were gaining access to the services that they required during the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>53</sup> An example of this was ISANS’ role in assisting clients with applications for CERB and benefits.<sup>54</sup> For example, one Frontline Worker who recounted working with a client to help them apply for CERB recalled that:

I had the client who does not speak Arabic, and I had an interpreter as well. So on the phone conversation we had a Service Canada Officer, myself, client, and the interpreter. And the officer said, this is too much people, and then she start asking us to say number 1, number 2, number 3. And then we start saying well I’m number 1, but then we didn’t, couldn’t go on in the conversations. So I said okay how about I present myself as ISANS, and the client said I am the client, and the interpreter would say I’m the interpreter. It was really, really interesting.<sup>55</sup>

The worker’s recollection exemplifies how ISANS took on an enhanced role in supporting their clients throughout the pandemic while assisting the health and social services systems. At the same time, the Communications Team worked with Public Health to ensure that the COVID-19 messages

being released by the Nova Scotia government were accessible to all Nova Scotia residents, and this arguably helped the province communicate better with all Nova Scotians, not just newcomers.<sup>56</sup> Jennifer Watts, the CEO of the organization, also participated in frequent meetings with other organizations across Nova Scotia and Canada, and joined a group formed by The Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA) which met weekly. This group enabled ISANS to discuss protocols and differences in COVID-19 responses with other organizations in the Atlantic region. ISANS also participated in other working groups, such as the Special Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) group that the IRCC formed, a Nova Scotia non-profit coalition, and the Nova Scotia Labour and Economic Council. ISANS' involvement in these national, regional, and local groups helped the organization to gain a perspective on how other organizations responded to the pandemic, and allowed these groups to work together.<sup>57</sup>

Between March and June 2020, ISANS prepared to advance from Stage 0 to Stage 1 of its in-person service delivery plan, and the themes identified in Stage 0 can also be seen in Stage 1.<sup>58</sup> For many, Stage 0 was the most vivid period of ISANS' work during the pandemic. It was filled with a continued focus on people, staff and clients, and many adjustments that overshadowed staff's memory of the later stages of the pandemic. These adjustments, however, seeded being able to make other transitions in future stages. As one Frontline Worker reported "Honestly, most of the things [we did] are really a blur."<sup>59</sup> While another Frontline Worker noted how, "It was painful and there was tears, but yeah we got there."<sup>60</sup> This struggle paid off, as seen in reflections of yet another Frontline Worker who pointed out that, "Now we have a [new] curriculum and a method of delivery to, to provide that across Nova Scotia. So that's something, a positive, that came out of ... the requirement to go online."<sup>61</sup> This silver lining was made possible by ISANS' culture and innovative and early use of technology, which can also be traced to several other unexpected opportunities that emerged between Stage 0 and Modified Stage 2.



## Stage 1 (July-August 2020)

On June 8<sup>th</sup>, a timeline was generated for moving from Stage 0 to Stage 1, which set the path forward for a resumption plan.<sup>62</sup> The timeline in the plan used the month of June to install protective equipment such as plexiglass barriers at ISANS' Mumford location, order personal protective equipment (PPE), and finalize the safety protocols that would be enforced for in-person services. ISANS was deemed an essential service because of its work with vulnerable clients, a designation that helped the organization to acquire PPE.<sup>63</sup> All staff members returning to work in-person received Safety Orientation and Program Protocol Orientation training programs, and the plan was to open the Mumford location on July 13<sup>th</sup> to clients with appointments who required an in-person service. Those staff who were uncomfortable with returning to in-person service delivery were also able to participate in a Return Readiness workshop, where they were able to discuss their concerns and strategies for addressing those concerns. This workshop was distinct from, and in addition to, safety orientation sessions.

During Stage 1, nearly all of ISANS' teams transitioned their service delivery to provide a mixture of services that were online or in-person, or a combination of online and in-person. This can be seen in Table 3. The delivery of in-person services was made possible by the re-opening of the Mumford location to clients during Stage 1. As in Stage 0, ISANS' culture, its adoption of technology, a focus on communication, unexpected opportunities, differing pandemic experiences, other major events, and ISANS' enhanced role in supporting the health and social services systems continued to be key characteristics of how the organization navigated Stage 1. That is, ISANS' emphasis on people, recognition of the importance of communications, and openness to new technology all helped with the preparations for re-opening the organization's Mumford location.

**Table 3: Change in Services in Stage 1**

Team	Number of Online Services Offered in Stage 1	Number of in-Person Services Offered in Stage 1	Number of Services Offered Online and in-Person in Stage 1 (Mixed)
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	10	1	0
Employment and Bridging Language	18	1	0
Support Services	1	1	2
Community Integration Services (CIS)	9	2	1
Refugee Resettlement	2	0	9
Online Strategy and Learning	1	0	0
Volunteering	2	0	0
Communications	1	0	0
People and Culture	1	0	0
IT and Office Management	0	0	1
Accounting	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>

ISANS' people-focused practice can be seen in a survey that was sent to staff on June 9<sup>th</sup>, which assessed staff members' comfort level on the prospect of delivering in-person services.<sup>64</sup> The survey was sent to 281 staff members, and 205 staff members completed the survey. Staff expressed a range of different views on the prospect of resuming in-person services.<sup>65</sup> Some staff looked forward to resuming services with COVID-19 protocols in place and others expressed concern and worries over health and safety. Feedback from the survey was used to revise and inform ISANS' protocols,<sup>66</sup> and ISANS also conducted safety orientations with staff ahead of the re-opening, which helped staff members to feel more comfortable with the return to in-person service delivery.<sup>67</sup> These actions speak to the organization's respect of staff concerns and its desire to put people first. The use of communications

and new technology can also be identified in the protocols developed by ISANS to promote staff and client safety. Protocols included having staff wear a face shield and/or mask, installing plexiglass barriers, and the use of self-assessments for both clients and staff.<sup>68</sup> Classrooms were also adjusted to safely distance clients and instructors, and tape was used to demonstrate appropriate social distancing.<sup>69</sup> The use of new technology was accompanied by an increased use of communication in terms of using interpreters, visual aids, and modified signage to communicate COVID-19 protocols to those with beginner levels of English proficiency at the Mumford location.<sup>70</sup> ISANS also continued to work closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority during this time to ensure that COVID-19 signage had similar messaging to allow for effective communication with all Nova Scotians.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 2. Taped social distance markers at the Mumford location. Source: ISANS' COVID-19 Resumption Plan

An unexpected opportunity that emerged during Stage 1 was ISANS' ability to help clients to improve their digital literacy skills. When the majority of services went online in Stage 0, some clients struggled to access services due to limited digital literacy.<sup>72</sup> When ISANS was able to offer services in-person again during Stage 1, instructors seized the opportunity and offered computer, tablet, and

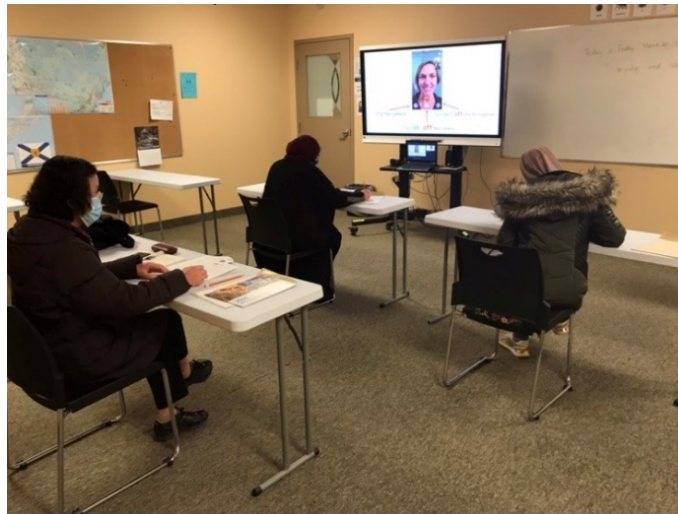


Figure 3. Clients participating in a digital literacy orientation. Source: Setsu Kawahara

smartphone orientations to help clients improve their digital literacy skills.<sup>73</sup> One Manager recalled: “It’s very staff-heavy. You know, we would have 2-3 staff with 6-8 clients because every client comes in with something different ... We sent off, I think it was, 183 very happy clients who are now actually in online classes.”<sup>73</sup> Without the pandemic, opportunities such as this one would not have been seized. It also shows a lesson learned that can be the focus of future programming.

In Stage 1, pandemic experiences continued to differ among ISANS’ Teams. For instance, while some teams continued to have an increased workload, other teams continued to have less work.<sup>75</sup> Refugee Resettlement, for instance, provided essential services throughout the pandemic. The team had an increased workload as they worked with Public Health on communications,<sup>76</sup> supported over 800 vulnerable clients who were identified in Stage 0, and welcomed newcomers in July 2020.<sup>77</sup> One member of the Refugee Resettlement Team noted, “We were struggling tremendously, and I would say the whole summer was a blur for me because we were working ... I feel like we were working 24/7.”<sup>78</sup> Staff from other teams, who were not overrun with work, were encouraged to work on other projects.<sup>79</sup> One Manager described that for her team, “[in the] first month we had to transition everyone into new roles, some IT training ... it was very demanding having to reorganize my whole team and shift them into new roles. They became message delivery, they were supporting community gardens, translation projects.”<sup>80</sup> As one Senior Leadership Team member put it, “We tried to just find meaningful work for people to do where there was interest in doing that.”<sup>81</sup> The adaptability of teams and the ability to cross over to other work is a lesson learned from the pandemic, as well as flexibility around work hours. Pandemic experiences also differed among clients. This was demonstrated, for example, by some clients reaching out to ISANS’ employment services because they had been laid off, others reaching out because they no longer felt safe going to work, and some reaching out because they were looking for a job.<sup>82</sup> The pandemic affected everyone, but the varying pandemic experiences for both staff members and clients speaks to the unique impact the pandemic had on people.

Major events during the pandemic continued to amplify the experiences staff and clients had. As CEO Jennifer Watts described, “There were other things that also contributed to our crisis mode. Black Lives Matter had a significant impact on our community, but also on ISANS in terms of the impact around that, and also the Portapique Murders that happened as well.”<sup>83</sup> During Stage 1, the Black Lives Matter movement and food shortages caused stress that compounded the stress from the Portapique mass shooting earlier that spring. All of these events triggered past traumas for a number of staff and community members.<sup>84</sup> For example, for refugees, it reminded them of their distrust of authorities or the need to flee repression, as well as experiences of lockdowns in more authoritarian countries. The pandemic was already having a negative impact on people worldwide, and these events added to the toll that was being taken on individuals’ well-being.<sup>85</sup> One Senior Leadership Team member noted that “People are starting to get fairly exhausted because it’s both been a personal situation and a work-related situation and it’s taking its toll.”<sup>86</sup>

Concerns about mental health also extended to clients. A Royal Society of Canada report stated that “Mental health issues have significantly increased among newcomer populations, including refugees, during the pandemic.”<sup>87</sup> A Supervising Team Lead at ISANS explained that “ISANS clients who were relatively more affected in terms of their mental health were the ones who had arrived late 2019 or early in 2020, because they hadn’t had the opportunity of establishing connection with their communities. They also felt lost about whom to connect to, or what services to access to get support in their initial months of arrival.”<sup>88</sup> The Supervising Team Lead also described how “the lockdown produced a lot of uncertainty in many clients who were on standby regarding their plans of learning English, getting a job, being able to visit families abroad and the academic outcomes of their kids. In addition, newcomers had to cope with the fear of having their families in unsafe situations due to conflict, poverty, and lack of safety regulations to prevent the contagion of the virus.”<sup>89</sup> The differences among

staff and client experiences demonstrate that people were not only dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, but also with other world and life events that exacerbated the effects of the pandemic.

During Stage 1 operations, ISANS continued to support the health and social services systems in order to facilitate access to services for their clients. For instance, in Stage 0 ISANS supported clients applying for CERB<sup>90</sup> and helped with Public Health communications<sup>91</sup>, and ISANS continued to offer this assistance in subsequent stages. In Stage 1 the organization also played a crucial role in assisting newcomers who were navigating Nova Scotia's health care system.<sup>92</sup> The Refugee Resettlement Team made messages from the health care system accessible to clients.<sup>93</sup> ISANS took on this role in order to ensure that clients received important, health-related messages and services in a timely-manner, and this assistance would have also benefitted the health care system as it was dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. One of ISANS' partners remarked that, "A willingness on the part of ISANS and other organizations to continue to support each other throughout the pandemic for the benefit of newcomers and the broader settlement sector" allowed them to continue working together during the pandemic.<sup>94</sup> ISANS' community-minded attitude has benefitted the community and allowed collaboration and work to continue despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The organization's culture, its embrace of unexpected opportunities, different pandemic experiences, larger events coinciding with the pandemic, and ISANS' enhanced role in supporting the health and social services systems all continued to characterize the organization's ongoing work in Stage 1. These themes were also features of operations during Stage 2, which began in September 2020.<sup>95</sup> Some of the key lessons learned from this time during the pandemic revolve around adaptability, embracing challenges as opportunities, promoting digital literacy, working collaboratively with other organizations, and that ISANS can offer assistance to provincial and federal health and social services support systems.

## Stage 2 (September-November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, ISANS progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the organization’s in-person service delivery plan. The objective of this stage was to increase the number of in-person services while continuing to use online platforms as the preferred method of service delivery.<sup>96</sup> In Stage 2, the Joseph Howe location was opened for in-person services and services could also be offered in the community, such as at employer sites.<sup>97</sup>

The method of service delivery continued to evolve in Stage 2, as seen in Table 4. During this stage, 29 services were offered in-person or mixed, which was an increase from the 20 services that were offered in-person or mixed in Stage 1. This increase occurred because ISANS was committed to increasing the number of in-person services available to clients in Stage 2 as much as possible, and in light of health and safety protocols.



Figure 4. Youth on a field trip to the Halifax Public Gardens. Source: Youstina Awad

**Table 4: Number of Services and Method of Service Delivery in Stage 2**

Team	Number of Online Services Offered in Stage 2	Number of in-Person Services Offered in Stage 2	Number of Services Offered Online and in-Person (Mixed) in Stage 2
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	8	0	2
Employment and Bridging	18	2	0
Language	18	1	0

Support Services	0	1	3
Community Integration Services (CIS)	6	3	3
Refugee Resettlement	0	1	10
Online Strategy and Learning	1	0	0
Volunteering	2	0	0
Communications	1	0	0
People and Culture	0	0	1
IT and Office Management	0	0	1
Accounting	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>

In Stage 2, ISANS continued to emphasize putting people first as well as taking advantage of unexpected opportunities. Additionally, people continued to have different pandemic experiences, and lessons learned from earlier stages played a role in operations.

ISANS increased the number of in-person services during Stage 2 and asked staff to complete 100% of their contract hours<sup>98</sup> instead of the minimum of five and a half hours of work a day that was permitted in previous stages. This new requirement was mandated in order to increase the number of available services for clients.<sup>99</sup> ISANS continued to prioritize the needs of staff despite moving to full contract hours, as seen through the offering of accommodations where needed, and through recognizing that working full contract hours could only be done once children could return to daycares and schools.<sup>100</sup> An unexpected opportunity emerged in Stage 2 when early childhood education (ECE)

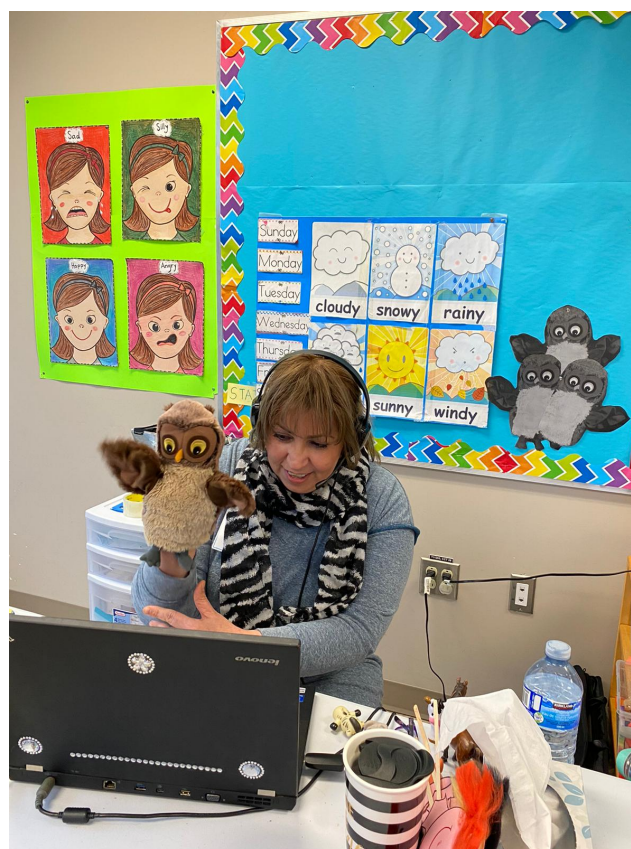


Figure 5. Online ECE at the Joseph Howe location. Source: Li Wang



services were able to resume at the Mumford and Joseph Howe locations at 50% capacity.<sup>101</sup> Instead of reverting back to being a completely in-person service, ECE services continued to be offered online to 30 children.<sup>102</sup> A Senior Leadership Team member noted that, “In Stage 2, we opened up [ECE] and we found there were many that didn’t come, and we noticed there was a need for ECE online. For example ... we are did arts and storytelling through online services for the children ... we have also have had parents joining the children ... so that is a new thing we have never thought we would get into.”<sup>103</sup> The online format of ECE was an unexpected opportunity that was useful for checking in on both children and their families, and it allowed staff to provide parents with support and advice during the pandemic.<sup>104</sup> The continuation of online ECE services during the pandemic is an example of ISANS capitalizing on an unforeseen opportunity, and illustrates a lesson that ISANS learned: some clients prefer accessing services online, and offering services in this format opens the door for unique opportunities, such as having family check-ins during ECE programming. One Manager noted that offering online services “increased the participation of clients ... especially the clients who have childcare issues or transportation issues.”<sup>105</sup> Through such adaptations, the pandemic allowed ISANS to acquire knowledge that can contribute to new, long-term service delivery, and potentially help the organization to reach and serve additional clients through online services. For instance, it could help ISANS to access rural parts of the city or clients who live across the province. This innovation could expand the organization’s program delivery going forward.

Additional services were offered in-person in September 2020, and ISANS CEO, Jennifer Watts, described how “By September there was a sense of optimism. People coming back to work, it wasn’t easy, we had programs to bring people in ... but generally, it was building along to progressively more and more programs. People were excited in talking about their work.”<sup>106</sup> However, while some of ISANS’ teams were excited about the prospect of increasing the number of in-person services, many teams that had been operating at full capacity since the pandemic began were having a different experience. In the

case of the Refugee Resettlement Team, for example, “Their work was continuing to grind because as more people came in, it’s harder to respond to very complicated cases.”<sup>107</sup> These different experiences are captured by another observation from Jennifer Watts, who noted that “Some teams actually were kind of very enthusiastic about being able to get back ... but other parts of the team ... were slowly being buried under by the amount of sense of responsibility, the need to do the work ...”<sup>108</sup> Differing staff responses to opening up in Stage 2 exemplify how the pandemic created unique circumstances for individuals that resulted in different pandemic experiences and perspectives.

In Stage 2, ISANS continued a people-centred approach and seized upon unexpected opportunities. The organization continued to be reflexive, using lessons learned from Stage 2 and earlier stages to help navigate the later stages of the pandemic. A case in point was the abrupt need to move to a Modified Stage 1 in November 2020 due to rising COVID-19 cases in Nova Scotia.<sup>109</sup>

## **Modified Stage 1 (November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020-January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021)**

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, new gathering restrictions were announced for the majority of HRM, which were in place from November 23<sup>rd</sup> to December 21<sup>st</sup> due to a rise in COVID-19 cases.<sup>110</sup> Individuals could closely socialize with a maximum group size of only five people instead of ten, and only five houseguests were allowed to visit at any given time. On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, ISANS reacted to the rise in cases by making the decision to move to Modified Stage 1 of the organization’s in-person service delivery plan on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.<sup>111</sup>

In Modified Stage 1, the Joseph Howe location that had been open in Stage 2 was closed, and in-person ECE services were cancelled. The organization followed the guidelines that were outlined for Stage 1 operations,<sup>112</sup> which resulted in Welcome House remaining open, and the Mumford location continued to offer limited in-person services when required, such as Intake, Resettlement, and

Translation and Interpretation.<sup>113</sup> This came as a response to lessons learned from earlier stages, which pointed to the needs of vulnerable clients requiring in-person service delivery.

As Table 5 shows, the method of service delivery in Modified Stage 1 closely mirrored service delivery in Stage 1. This is because service delivery in Stage 1 and Modified Stage 1 followed the same protocols.<sup>114</sup> In Modified Stage 1, the impact of ISANS' culture, unexpected opportunities, differing pandemic experiences, the pandemic's coincidence with larger events, and drawing on lessons learned from earlier stages all shaped the organization's operations.

**Table 5: Number of Services and Method of Service Delivery in Modified Stage 1**

Team	Number of Online Services Offered in Modified Stage 1	Number of in-Person Services Offered in Modified Stage 1	Number of Services Offered Online and in-Person (Mixed) in Modified Stage 1
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	10	0	0
Employment and Bridging	19	1	0
Language	18	1	0
Support Services	1	1	2
Community Integration Services (CIS)	9	1	1
Refugee Resettlement	1	0	9
Online Strategy and Learning	1	0	0
Volunteering	2	0	0
Communications	1	0	0
People and Culture	1	0	0
IT and Office Management	0	0	1
Accounting	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>

A core pillar of ISANS' culture is communications, and the detail that ISANS went into when creating protocols in earlier stages was an investment that had payoff in Modified Stage 1.<sup>115</sup> As one Senior Leadership Team member put it, "I'm happy that we went into the detail that we did [in initial planning], because now we have a lot of that to go to."<sup>116</sup> The transition to Modified Stage 1 was easier because of the documentation and protocols created months earlier. The organization learned that documentation of organizational operations created a record of protocols, and these protocols could be reused to aid in efficient operations through rapid transitions due to the changing severity of the pandemic.

Another pillar of ISANS' culture is its focus on people and innovation. As a Senior Leadership Team member described, "We benefit from the innovation culture ... that is part of ISANS' values ... we benefit from the organization culture a lot."<sup>117</sup> In other words, innovation was a key component allowing for the continuation of service delivery during the pandemic.

ISANS made an announcement to staff in December 2020 that, after months of consultations, the organization would go forward with its restructuring plan.<sup>118</sup> The restructuring plan was delayed because of the pandemic which was an unexpected opportunity. The overall goal of the organization was the continued prioritization of people and communication, and implementing the restructuring process in December 2020 allowed ISANS to incorporate the lessons learned from the pandemic into the restructuring plan while prioritizing what has always served the organization well: putting people first and communicating frequently and fully.<sup>119</sup> ISANS' operations during the pandemic demonstrate the organization's ability to adapt in the face of extreme challenges, and how ISANS sees change as something to embrace rather than as an obstacle to overcome. When describing the restructuring plan, Jennifer Watts explained that "It's not a pivot for us, it's a commitment to the future."<sup>120</sup>

The investment in vulnerable clients' digital literacy in Stage 1<sup>121</sup> helped staff and clients transition to Modified Stage 1. This is because the majority of services returned to online delivery, and

clients who could not access services in Stage 0 due to limited digital literacy could now use these online services.<sup>122</sup> One Frontline Worker noted that, “The preparation that the head instructors did to prepare clients for coming into the [online] classroom definitely paid off. They were ready to come in and they could navigate around the classroom.”<sup>123</sup> This exemplifies the implementation of a lesson learned because, by taking advantage of unexpected opportunities, such as improving clients’ digital literacy skills, the organization was able to increase clients’ access to ISANS’ services.

As with other stages, during Modified Stage 1, experiences continued to differ for clients and staff. One Senior Leadership Team member described how “More people got some flexibility, however there’s also other teams, they were still at the frontline doing all that work and more critical and so I think that when people compare with their situation, there’s an emotion part.”<sup>124</sup> This demonstrates how pandemic experiences were unique across ISANS and across teams, and that all pandemic experiences need to be considered instead of generalizing a single pandemic experience to the organization.

After a long spring and summer, the move to Modified Stage 1 was met with some strain.<sup>125</sup> One Senior Leadership Team member described the exhaustion their team felt during this stage: “Before maybe it was more speak, but now it’s just quiet. And ... it’s not that much that we just have to continue ... but it’s just it’s not so much spoken about, but Managers are talking about the energies in the teams.”<sup>126</sup> This illustrates the importance of not only considering the stress caused by the pandemic

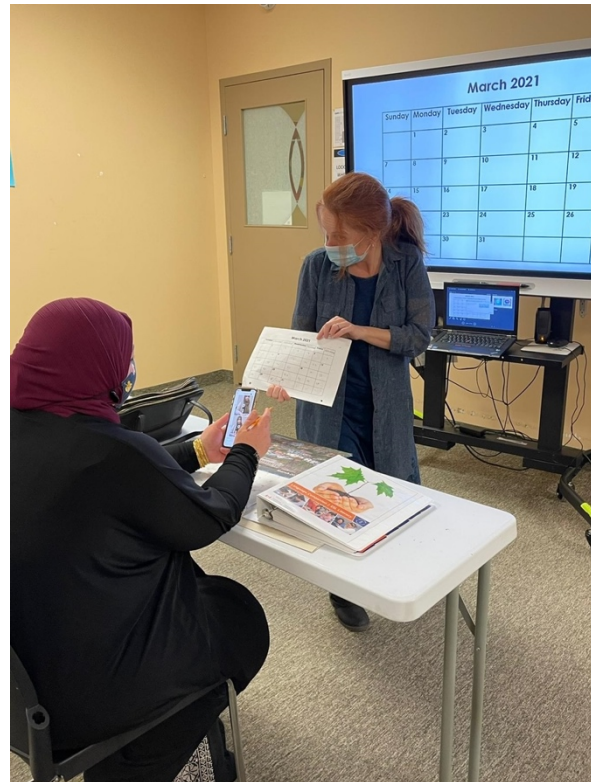


Figure 6. A client participating in a digital literacy orientation. Source: Setsu Kawahara

when discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health, but also the outside factors that exacerbated stress and exhaustion and how experiences were cumulative through the pandemic.

Despite Modified Stage 1 being a step backwards in terms of the number of services offered in-person, it provided the organization with the opportunity to accelerate by revealing lessons learned that can help the organization to identify best practices going forward. With the one-year anniversary of the pandemic approaching in March 2021, ISANS entered Modified Stage 2 on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021.<sup>127</sup>

## **Modified Stage 2 to One-Year Anniversary of the Pandemic (January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021-March 2021 and beyond)**

When ISANS entered Modified Stage 2 in January 2021, the organization returned to using the protocols and guidelines that were outlined in Stage 2 for service delivery and operations.<sup>128</sup> During Modified Stage 2, the Joseph Howe location was re-opened, and additional services were offered in-person once again.<sup>129</sup> This showed how the investment in documenting practices and protocols helped ISANS to move from one stage to another. Additionally, ISANS continued to support the health care system during Modified Stage 2 by assisting with Nova Scotia's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out.<sup>130</sup>

The number of in-person and mixed services increased from 18 in Modified Stage 1 to 28 in Modified Stage 2, as seen in Table 6. This again demonstrates that ISANS was committed to offering as many in-person services as possible. Additionally, operations in Modified Stage 2 closely mirrored operations in Stage 2 as both stages followed the same protocols.<sup>131</sup> Through discussions with Frontline Staff, Managers, and the Senior Leadership Team, it became clear that, while memories of Stages 0 and 1 were distinct, memories of the later stages became increasingly blurry. The blur in the later stages was characterized by routine, rather than uncertainty. The organization's use of protocols normalized COVID-19 practices, which meant staff carried out their revised roles using muscle memory.

**Table 6: Number of Services and Method of Service Delivery in Modified Stage 2**

Team	Number of Online Services Offered in Modified Stage 2	Number of in-Person Services Offered in Modified Stage 2	Number of Services Offered Online and in- Person (Mixed) in Modified Stage 2
Business and Workforce Integration (BWI)	8	0	2
Employment and Bridging	18	2	0
Language	18	1	0
Support Services	0	1	3
Community Integration Services (CIS)	6	2	3
Refugee Resettlement	0	1	10
Online Strategy and Learning	1	0	0
Volunteering	2	0	0
Communications	1	0	0
People and Culture	0	0	1
IT and Office Management	0	0	1
Accounting	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>

This demonstrates a lesson learned through the pandemic on the importance of documenting practices and normalizing their use, which promotes smooth operations even in the midst of a crisis.

As the organization reached the one-year anniversary of the pandemic and reflected on the events of the previous year, it was clear that ISANS' operations during the pandemic could be characterized by the organization's culture, ISANS' ability to take advantage of unexpected opportunities to accelerate, the existence of different pandemic experiences, the coincidence of larger events with the pandemic, and the organization's role in supporting the health and social services systems. Additionally, COVID-19 provided ISANS with the opportunity to learn lessons that can inform future operations, with one of these lessons being to embrace technology. ISANS has already begun to employ this lesson with

clients and within the organization itself. In the spring of 2021 ISANS started laying the groundwork to create a technology library for clients, and this library will aim to fill the technology gap by lending tablets to clients.<sup>132</sup> Another initiative ISANS pursued was collecting and distributing donated cell phones to clients in need. This program could become a part of the technology library in due time.<sup>133</sup> Additional efforts ISANS is undertaking to further incorporate technology into the heart of the organization include transitioning partially online programs, such as training for interpretation, to an entirely online format<sup>134</sup>, and expediting the organization's adoption of an online training platform called Get2Know.<sup>135</sup>

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While the future of online service delivery is promising, it must also be taken into consideration that clients have varied service delivery preferences. For instance, ISANS sent out a survey to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) who arrived in the past two years and it showed that 95% of participants would prefer services to return to in-person service delivery.<sup>137</sup> ISANS' Language Team surveyed their clients and found that 26% of their CLB 5-7 clients,<sup>138</sup> 31% of their CLB 3-4 clients,<sup>139</sup> and 60% of their Literacy to CLB 2 clients<sup>140</sup> wanted their class to be entirely in-person with no online learning component. These surveys demonstrate that clients not only have different service delivery preferences, but also varying pandemic experiences.

COVID-19 provided ISANS with the opportunity to learn lessons, and these lessons can inform best practices going forward. Some of the main findings presented here include the importance of documentation and the advantages of embracing unexpected opportunities.



The report was drafted by Howard Ramos, Western University ([howard.ramos@uwo.ca](mailto:howard.ramos@uwo.ca)), Summer Fox, Dalhousie University, and Nabiha Atallah, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).

## **Methods**

This document used the “ISANS Stage 2 and Modified Stage 1 v1” document to track changes, and the section on Modified Stage 2 is based on the work of the project team.

For this project we consulted with a Project Steering Committee bi-weekly, conducted three focus groups, and had a targeted interview with Jennifer Watts, the CEO of ISANS. In addition, the project team conducted a survey of ISANS’ partners between January and March 2021. The research team also used data from a survey ISANS sent to their staff in June 2020, data from a survey that was sent to GARs, and data from surveys that the Language Team conducted with their higher-level learners online during a one-week period, and with their Literacy learners on an individual basis using an interpreter and phone calls. Additional information was collected through document analysis, the ISANS’ database, and email correspondence.

The research team is very grateful and appreciative of the feedback it received and the consultations that they had with the Project Steering Committee, focus groups members, and Jennifer Watts. Listed below are the members of each consultation group and when the research team met with them:

### **Project Steering Committee (met bi-weekly October 2020 – May 2021):**

Nabiha Atallah, Advisor, Strategic Initiatives

Wenche Gausdal, Director of Programs: Settlement, Community Integration and Support Services

Shadi Aljendi, Online IT Support Technician

Josh Boyter, Manager of Communications

Setsu Kawahara, Supervising Team Lead, Language Services

Doaa Al Dahdooh, Supervising Team Lead, Refugee Resettlement

Hilary Thorne, Coordinator, Community Connections Program

Sharon Stacey, Coordinator, Immigrant Youth Employability Project

Louise Van Wart, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI)

### **Frontline Workers Focus Group (met January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021)**

Ann Botross, Employment Specialist

Pam Barrett, Language Services

Jennifer Palmer Language Services

Sadiya Farzeen, Early Childhood Educator

Crystal Cowie, Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA)

Christine Wall, Business and Workforce Integration

Zrinka Seles-Vranjes, Immigrant Health Coordinator

**Managers' Focus Group (met December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020)**

Andrew Leverman, Manager of Business and Workforce Integration

Carol Derby, Manager of Language Services

Gina Moynan, Manager of Support Services

Josh Boyter, Manager of Communications

Kathy Burnett, Manager of Online Strategy and Learning

Maria Cain, Manager of Community Integration Services

Mohja Alia, Manager of Employment and Bridging

Tim Davis, Manager of IT and Office Management

Vesna Miroslavljevic, Manager of Refugee Resettlement

**Senior Leadership Team (met December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020)**

Nabiha Atallah, Advisor, Strategic Initiatives

Jennifer Watts, CEO, ISANS

Tessa Dixon, Senior Executive Administrator

Li Jin, Director, Operations

Wenche Gausdal, Director of Programs: Settlement, Community Integration and Support

Julie-Ann Vincent, Director of Programs: Business, Employment, Language and Online

**Interview with Jennifer Watts (met December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020)**

Jennifer Watts, CEO, ISANS

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55. Focus Group with Frontline Workers, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021
56. Project Steering Committee Meeting on ISANS' Operations Before COVID-19, During Stage 0, and in Preparation for Stage 1, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020
57. Interview with Jennifer Watts, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020
58. Internal ISANS Document, ISANS' COVID-19 Resumption Plan for Transition to In-Person Service Delivery Feb 21, 2021
59. Focus Group with Frontline Workers, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021
60. Focus Group with Frontline Workers, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021
61. Focus Group with Frontline Workers, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021
62. Internal ISANS Document, ISANS' COVID-19 Resumption Plan
63. Interview with Jennifer Watts, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020
64. Project Steering Committee Meeting on ISANS' Operations Before COVID-19, During Stage 0, and in Preparation for Stage 1, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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73. Focus Group with the Senior Leadership Team, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020
74. Focus Group with Managers, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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93. Focus Group with Frontline Workers, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021
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97. Internal ISANS Document, ISANS' Resumption Plan Stage Two August 2020
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99. Focus Group with the Senior Leadership Team, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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105. Focus Group with Managers, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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115. Focus Group with the Senior Leadership Team, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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118. Email Correspondence with a Senior Leadership Team Member, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021
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120. Focus Group with the Senior Leadership Team, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020
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130. Email Correspondence with a Manager, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021
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132. Project Steering Committee Meeting on the Executive Summary of ISANS' Pandemic Operations, Lessons Learned from the Pandemic, the Challenges ISANS faced, and ISANS' Responses to Challenges
133. Email Correspondence with a Senior Leadership Team Member, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021
134. Project Steering Committee Meeting on the Executive Summary of ISANS' Pandemic Operations, Lessons Learned from the Pandemic, the Challenges ISANS faced, and ISANS' Responses to Challenges, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021
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