

2020 Annual Report



We enrich the vitality of community by helping immigrants achieve an empowered life with dignity, connection, and belonging.

20 Olive Street Suite 201 | Akron, Ohio
www.iiakron.org

A Message From The Executive Director

First and foremost, I hope you are safe and well. This “Great Pause” has given our world an opportunity to focus on our greatest priorities. We are so thankful that you have always valued immigrants and the vitality they bring to our community.

As you may know, in March 2020, IIA transitioned all our services to remote from home and in the field, with only a small rotating staff in the office each day. This allowed us to continue our essential services to immigrants, many of whom were left out of federal relief payments issued in the early months of the pandemic. While our federal refugee resettlement program halted, we pivoted to serve those already here, some of whom were working as front line grocery store clerks, medical workers, and manufacturing plant workers and contracted COVID in the early days of the pandemic. Others lost jobs and suffered food and housing insecurities.

The good news is that we were able to provide much needed support to struggling immigrants and their families because of you. During Covid-19, many families were subjected to job loss and were on the brink of eviction. Unemployment benefits took several weeks. Many families were not eligible at that time for public benefits. Thanks to the support IIA received, we were able to assist families with rent while helping them apply for unemployment benefits.

While the COVID-19 global pandemic presented many obstacles, IIA continued to serve both those who recently resettled or immigrated to our community and those who came throughout the years. We celebrate their growth, successes and contributions in 2020.

With sincerest gratitude,



Madhu N. Sharma, Executive Director

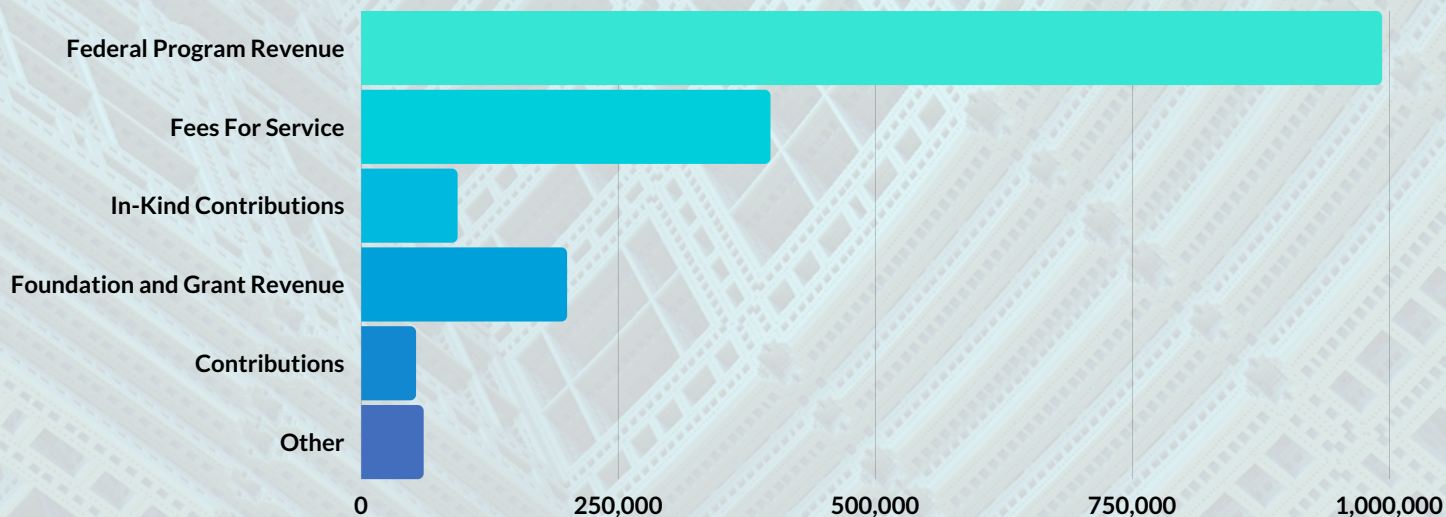


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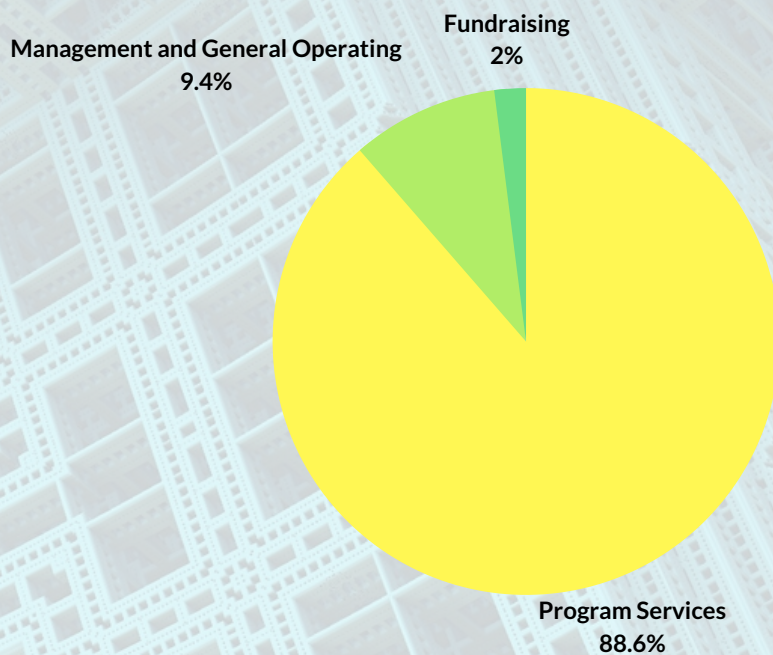
Refugee Countries of Origin



FINANCES



Total 2020 Revenue: \$2,011,853



Total 2020 Expenses: \$1,815,555

Stepping Up to Help Our Community

In 2020, IIA gave \$40,000 in CARES Act emergency funds to immigrants in need. We distributed over 13,000 in Personal Protective Equipment within our community, and provided non-perishable food items to 72 families.

The breadwinners of a family of 12, the "Ilunga's", lost their jobs and were on the brink of eviction. Unemployment applications were delayed several weeks. IIA's social services and employment teams stepped in, covering their rent for two months and helping them apply for unemployment insurance. These are the things we do for each other as members of a community, when others are in need. We could only do this thanks to the generosity of IIA supporters.

Expertise and Adjustment to Meet the Client's Needs

Resettlement in the United States is not the end, but the beginning of another journey. We worked with a middle-aged woman from the Congo who brought years of trauma and lack of trust with her—as anyone would. Her mental and physical challenges, though, strained at the limits of the typical 90-day resettlement program.

Our staff used their extensive knowledge about the resettlement life cycle and the tools available to meet individual needs to design a path forward for this client. We walked her through a lengthier plan, ensuring she could obtain health care for chronic illnesses and building trust. By her 180th day in the United States, her self-confidence had improved exponentially. She was gainfully employed and embarking on the next stage of building a new life in her new home.

Immigration Legal Services

**Over 400 people served
from more than 70
countries.**

Although the global COVID-19 pandemic caused nearly all in-person court proceedings to be cancelled, our Immigration Legal Services team was able to assist more than 400 people with citizenship applications, travel documents, and family petitions.

Interpreting and Translation Services

More than 4000 requests filled

Language access can be a life or death matter. As the COVID-19 virus spread, our translation team quickly mobilized to translate important health guidelines from the CDC into the native languages of the refugee community. As a result, we were able to share up-to-date health guidelines as the situation continued to evolve.

While many organizations and IIA staff moved to the “virtual office,” IIA interpreters continued their work out in the community. We adopted COVID protocols like masks, social distancing, and appointments for in person interpretation. IIA is known in the community for our face-to-face interpretation services, and we are proud of our essential Interpreting and Translation team.

OUR IMPACT

Education Services

Despite the COVID-19 global pandemic having forced us to discontinue in-person classroom learning, our education team adapted to the situation and continued to provide the refugee and immigrant community with important educational services.

*As we shifted our classes to an online classroom format, we were able to continue to provide a learning environment to increase English proficiency and job skills for our students. Additionally, we were able to provide free laptops to over **15 families** to ensure they were able to continue classes remotely.*

*As the pandemic continued, IIA identified the need for in-depth COVID-19 information to be shared with the community to help keep everyone healthy. With the help of members of the refugee and immigrant community, our education team conducted a series of informational sessions about COVID-19 protocols reaching **more the 170** individuals, to stress the importance of following safety protocols to keep the community safe.*

OUR IMPACT

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Our employment team assisted more than 75 people with job placement, COVID-19 related unemployment insurance claims, and employment training and counseling.

*In 2020 the labor market tightened, and businesses began to rely even more on the hard work of immigrants and refugees. Industry publication *Baking Business* and the podcast *Since Sliced Bread* highlighted IIA's long-standing employment partnership with *Main Street Gourmet*.*

Main Street Gourmet Director of Human Resources Kelly Loebick-Frascella said: "We took a chance on giving [a newly resettled refugee] a job, and that was when the lightbulb went off that there could be more to this. And that young woman is still employed with us today. She's a line leader now and she's done an amazing job."

Today, the company's workforce is 42% foreign-born. Immigrants are not just "part" of U.S. communities, they are full-fledged members.

SOCIAL MEDIA



International Institute of Akron

3,844 Followers

@iiofakron

730 Followers



@iiakron

1,086 Followers

IIA IN THE NEWS

Over 10.5 million People Reached

As the pandemic set in, IIA took on the vital role of sharing accurate health and economic information with English-language learners. "Our focus is actually picking up where government leaves off, and it's always been that at IIA," Madhu said in an interview with WKSU.

Honors for IIA Leadership and Staff

Cleveland Magazine named Madhu one of the most interesting people for 2020. They said Madhu is "a go-to resource and support system for communities facing U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement raids and the threat of deportation in Ohio, as well as a welcoming face for Akron's only refugee resettlement community."

Bhim Dhungana, IIA's Interpreting and Translation Coordinator, was chosen for the inaugural class of the Purposeful Leadership Program. Launched by Heart to Heart Leadership, the program works with emerging leaders like Bhim to deepen their skills and impact.

Foundation Support



2020

