



Access Alliance Annual Impact Report 2025–2026

# Quality care for better health: Our work in action

# Leadership message

For over three decades, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services has been a vital catalyst for health equity in Toronto. With a focus on immigrants, refugees, and people without status—including those with complex needs—we address the intersecting determinants of health that often prevent people from achieving good health and wellbeing. At the core of our work is a fundamental conviction: **health is a human right, not a privilege.**

To ensure our communities get the care and support they need, we provide a safe place to land in a city that's constantly changing. Acting as a connector within Toronto's complex health and social service ecosystem, we are transforming the primary healthcare experience for our clients. This can be seen in our quality and model of care, our approach to attachment, and the positive impacts in our communities.

## QUALITY OF CARE

Anchored by our commitment to health equity, quality of care serves as one benchmark for our success. Throughout 2025, our services and initiatives yielded clear, measurable impacts that enhanced the health and wellbeing of our clients and communities. Key highlights include:

- **Effective use of health resources:** A shift toward the proactive use of team-based primary care, which shows that our clients are successfully using our services as their primary source of care;
- **Appropriate care alignment:** Stronger alignment between client/patient needs and the right care settings, resulting in appropriate and timely use of our preventative care services;
- **Targeted demographics:** Tailored care for groups like youth and seniors successfully reduced social isolation, built self-reliance, and fostered community inclusion.

## THE ACCESS MODEL

Central to this work is our Access Model, designed to meet people where they are through a robust network of physical and virtual “access points” that deliver comprehensive, team-based care where it's needed. The model addresses both clinical needs and social determinants of health like language, literacy, and economic stability—factors that contribute to how well an individual or community can truly thrive. In our experience this past year, this model was a critical factor in the quality of our care as we supported the provincial healthcare system in managing the intense pressures of displacement and global migration.

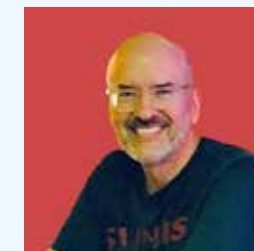
## ATTACHMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

In 2025 we also committed to a larger provincial initiative to attach people not yet connected to a primary care provider. We believe that attachment must be meaningfully balanced with access, equity and engagement, and our work as a trusted leader and partner in community-based health reflects these four core principles. Impacts include our clients' increased engagement in their communities and with our services, as well as:

- **Active client participation:** More clients actively participating in their own care decisions;

- **Holistic health:** Welcoming, newcomer-friendly programs like Green Access and our dietetic services significantly improve both physical and mental health outcomes for participants;
- **Innovative trauma support:** Our Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life project uses art as a tool for trauma-informed care, uniquely suited to addressing stressors associated with domestic, family, and gender-based violence.

We played a vital role in helping newcomers, immigrants, refugees, people without status and their communities navigate intersectional challenges in their pursuit of better health and wellbeing. The following pages provide stories, data, and examples that offer a snapshot of our work in 2025. By bridging service gaps and centering the inherent dignity of every person, we worked—and continue to work—to ensure that newcomers experience greater health equity, a responsive health care system, stronger community connections, and a genuine sense of belonging in Canada.



**CLIFF LEDWOS**

Acting Executive Director  
Access Alliance



**ARSHIA ALI**

Chair  
Access Alliance Board of Directors

**169 lbs**

of food were produced by our Green Access garden. This food was shared with our weekly Community Dining program, and community members affected by food insecurity. Seasonal harvests were shared with garden volunteers.



**90+**

service providers adopted expressive arts or trauma-informed techniques with the help of Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life (HEAL) program toolkits and training.

**4,807,189**

minutes of on-demand remote interpreting were provided via Access Alliance Language Services, ensuring clients could communicate across language barriers whenever and wherever they needed support.

**100%**

of our Women's Wellness program participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved their nutrition knowledge, self-care skills, and overall health & wellbeing.

**43%**

of Canadians aged 50+ were socially isolated, but

**100%**

of our Seniors' program participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program's activities helped reduce social isolation in the community.

**71%**

of participants said that our Immigrant Researchers Support Network (IRSN) contributed to network connections that led to job opportunities.



**80%**

of our Youth program participants reported improvements in communication skills, leadership, and self-confidence.



# By the numbers

# Meaningful connections for health & wellbeing

Support for the mental health and wellbeing of our newcomer clients is proactive and client-centred, addressing the social determinants of health through both clinical services and a wide range of community programs.

By their nature, our programs offer opportunities to connect with others. By design, they foster a sense of belonging, build relationships, and empower participants with tools and resources to improve their physical and mental health.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our [registered dietitians](#) support their clients' mental health and wellbeing through both one-on-one nutrition counselling and group programs like **Women's Wellness** and **Newcomers Cooking Together (NCT) – Brain Health Edition**, which are designed to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of participants.

The hands-on NCT program teaches newcomers healthy, affordable, culturally relevant recipes that support brain health and demonstrate the connection between diet and mental health. Women's Wellness is run by a dietitian, counsellor/therapist, and physiotherapist, and reinforces holistic teachings about how food influences physical and mental health using expressive arts.

Participants in both programs explore food's impact on our health in a dynamic and welcoming space. They're encouraged to build connections by sharing their own cultural foods and knowledge, and empowered to prioritize self-care for better health outcomes.

## WELLBEING THROUGH GREEN ACCESS

Similarly, our [Green Access Program](#) supports clients' holistic wellbeing by fostering connection—this time while engaging with nature. The program prioritizes cultural safety and inclusivity, and is grounded in the understanding that wellbeing can be improved through a sense of belonging and access to meaningful activities. It's designed to meet the diverse needs of newcomers and marginalized populations by offering accessible, responsive programming.

A key component of Green Access is therapeutic engagement with nature. Community gardening and other nature-based activities promote healthy living through "green movement," encouraging physical activity in natural environments, like our organic rooftop garden. This approach helps participants feel more energized and connected while supporting their mental and physical wellbeing.

Environmental workshops and programs such as **Newcomer Therapeutic Gardening** are designed to help improve mood while teaching participants to grow food for themselves and their community, and to share their ideas and experiences.

By working with partners like Community Living Toronto, and accepting referrals from service providers, Green Access collaborates with our wider community to ensure our green space is accessible to those who can benefit most. The gains are significant—engaging with nature programming improves not only participants' sense of belonging, but also their quality of life.

# 94%

of Women's Wellness participants agreed or strongly agreed the program motivated them to practice gratitude when they eat or prepare food.



*"I really enjoyed being part of the Women's Wellness program. It . . . helped me understand the importance of self-image and self-love."*

Vanitha, Women's Wellness program participant

*"I felt free and encouraged to express my ideas and opinions during the course as [program staff] always listened and valued mine and others' insight."*

Enviroleaders program participant



# 100%

of Green Access participants found the program helped improve their feeling of inclusion in the community if they felt uncomfortable or out of place beforehand.

# Engagement & empowerment across the ages

Engaging with newcomer youth and seniors through community programming can be a challenge. By responding to their specific needs through intentional and creative program design, we strengthen connections with—and within—youth and senior communities while improving health outcomes as we reach more people.

## BELONGING BRIDGES BARRIERS

Our [Youth Program](#) actively engages young people by prioritizing relationship-building and meeting youth where they are. Through school-based programming, neighbourhood outreach, and community events, we create safe, inclusive, and youth-centered spaces, designed to foster trust and openness.

Programs like our **Fun-Filled English Chit-Chat Squad** respond to the needs of newcomer youth, with a strong focus on reducing barriers related to language, culture, and access. Saturday, PA Day, and summer **field trips** get equity-deserving youth exploring the city, and help build new friendships, as well as a sense of belonging.

All our programs include free meals and transportation support, to address food insecurity and ensure equitable access and participation. Youth program participants gain hands-on experience through volunteer opportunities, are connected to relevant community resources, and engage with their community at agency-wide events. The impact of this deliberate programming is significant. Our youth report enhanced wellbeing and ability to navigate systems, clearer pathways to education and employment, and stronger confidence and leadership skills.

## STRONG SUPPORTS FOR SENIORS

Our [Seniors' Program](#) integrates community engagement with health care through a two-way referral system—between program staff and primary and allied health professionals—to strengthen attachment and create pathways to care. This coordinated approach improves physical health and mental wellbeing for seniors, who are at an increased risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Recreation programs such as **Tea and Chat** and **Bingo** create welcoming spaces where seniors can build friendships. Our evidence-based, culturally sensitive fitness programs help seniors prevent chronic conditions, reduce falls, and maintain independence.

Programming is tailored to meet the needs of newcomers, isolated individuals, racialized seniors, and people living with chronic illnesses. Examples include a **Tigrinya-speaking Seniors Fitness Group** and an **Afro-Caribbean Cuban Dance Group** for Black seniors, which support equitable access and improve health outcomes for marginalized groups.

Through our integrated system of care, seniors can learn from dietitians, physiotherapists, counsellor therapists, and diabetes educators. Interprofessional programs such as **Healthy Living for Seniors**, **Monthly Info Sessions**, and **Understanding Mental Health and Wellbeing Later in Life** empower seniors by sharing skills and knowledge that help them self-manage their physical and mental health.



*"I've been much happier since I started coming ... connecting with new people and being part of the after-school programs has made a big difference. I don't have to go home and be alone after school anymore, and I've even had the chance to volunteer."*

Youth program participant

# 90%

of youth said the program facilitated social integration, taught valuable skills, and encouraged them to improve their English proficiency.

# 94%

of Tea & Chat participants report a stronger sense of belonging as a result of coming to the program.

*"Attending recreational sessions, I have learnt how to communicate and get along with others from different cultures. I am happy mingling with seniors from multicultural backgrounds."*

Seniors' program participant



# Research advancing equity

Focusing on historically marginalized communities facing systemic inequities, our research aims to better understand these inequities' root causes and social determinants to inform upstream, long-term solutions. We use a community-based research (CBR) framework grounded in collaboration, which is proven to make the process more equitable and inclusive.

In 2025, three projects had notable impact on inequities affecting specific Access Alliance communities:

1

Our **Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life (HEAL) Project** started in 2022 as a community-based initiative. In 2025, the project continued to use cross-cultural expressive arts to support the mental healing of newcomer women and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals impacted by gender-based domestic violence. The 72 arts-based sessions, designed with cultural and linguistic relevance, were highly effective. Newcomer participants reported improved emotional regulation, stress management, and self-efficacy. In addition, knowledge-sharing with partners strengthened cross-sector capacity for trauma-informed and culturally responsive care.

2

The 2025 program evaluation of our **Immigrant Researchers Support Network (IRSN)** highlighted its strengths and areas for growth. IRSN supports internationally educated researchers (IERs) through networking and professional development. The evaluation found high client satisfaction and meaningful career benefits, particularly through one-on-one appointments and networking events. It also identified a strong demand for expanded services, which requires sustainable funding. The keen desire to scale the program reflects both the ongoing need and the unique gap it fills for IERs.

3

Lastly, in 2025 the **BETTER for All (BFA) Sustainability Project** explored how to sustain and scale BFA, a community-based cancer and chronic disease prevention program for newcomers and racialized communities in the GTA. Early findings show that BFA is culturally responsive and effective, improving health knowledge, screening uptake, and healthy behaviours. Strengths include peer-led engagement and culturally tailored care, while challenges include staffing constraints and language barriers. The project is identifying what's needed to sustain the program, so prevention can be integrated into routine care over the long-term. This would mean benefits could reach more people consistently, over time, improving the health of our clients and communities we serve.



85%

of HEAL program participants noted improved confidence and self-esteem.

*“Feeling comfortable sharing lived experiences with friends and family, this is not something that is common back home. The arts helped to increase cross-cultural communication, this really stood out to me helping them adapt to a new culture or environment.”*

Farsi peer researcher, HEAL

*“My work ... [creates] inclusive spaces for marginalized populations—including racialized communities and newcomers—to share lived experiences. This process informs responsive service delivery and evidence-based advocacy for policy reform.”*

Peer researcher

77%

of participants said the IRSN contributed to networking knowledge that's beneficial to their career.

# Bridging gaps to language access

Language access is critical to health equity. Evidence shows that language barriers can contribute to lower patient satisfaction, higher provider burnout, misdiagnoses, and worse outcomes. Access Alliance Language Services (AALS) is committed to identifying and mitigating the impacts of language barriers in healthcare, and advocating for a consistent, well-funded, policy-driven system for delivering accessible medical interpretation in Canada.

## ADVOCATING FOR ACTIVE OFFER

Since 2025, AALS and Ontario Health West Region have been piloting an initiative that empowers Francophone healthcare clients in the region with **direct interpreting support**.

Working with champions from nine Francophone agencies, access to interpreting has been put, literally, into the hands of patients. By providing contact details and devices, pilot participants can access quality language support when and where it's needed in their healthcare journey. They can then share feedback, providing a fuller picture of their language access experience, including where supports are missing.

As this pilot program works to bridge gaps in language access, it's also demonstrating the need for a widespread "active offer"—where Francophone individuals are supported to communicate comfortably and effectively—at every point of care in our healthcare system.

## ACCESSIBLE SPECIALIST CARE

What started as a proof of concept internally, expanded to a pilot at agencies across Ontario in 2025 when AALS was asked by Ontario Health to support **improving language access for patients accessing specialist care**. Language access at this level of care has been challenging for clients

who report language barriers. They report that they're not able to understand the specialist, or fully communicate their concerns. This results in multiple back-and-forth connections between the primary care provider, specialist, and client, ultimately increasing workloads, occupying additional appointment times, and delaying critical care interventions.

Limited language access often mean clients turn to a friend or family member to interpret. Due to the sensitive and potentially complex nature of specialist appointments, this can result in both conflict, and risks to the client's health.

Through AALS, professional, **over-the-phone interpreting (OPI)** has been made available, and is increasingly adopted as an accessible and cost-effective option during specialist appointments. OPI not only improves the quality of care, but also the patient and provider experience.

These AALS initiatives demonstrate the value of ready, quality language access at every point of care. Investing in continuity of access will result in more effective health communication, cost savings, improved staff and patient experiences, and better health outcomes. AALS will continue collaborating to address continuity and consistency of language access, and advocating for system transformation that ensures language supports are accessible, wherever and whenever they're needed.

*"Our patients have expressed gratitude [for over-the-phone interpreting], as they no longer have to worry about asking someone they know to take time off work to attend appointments with them. Many topics related to health care are sensitive, and oftentimes difficult to bring up with a health care provider, let alone have a friend/family member interpret."*

Primary care provider

**135**  
languages supported

**27,010**  
prescheduled requests processed

**256,355**  
on-demand remote calls answered

TOP  
**10**

languages requested for all customers across Canada:

SPANISH

ARABIC

MANDARIN

PORTUGUESE

CANTONESE

TIGRIGNA

DARI

FARSI

VIETNAMESE

FRENCH

# Our clients & community

## Clients

College Site	8,297
Danforth site	14,309
Jane site	7,836
Refugee Clinics	2,746
NIWIC Clinic	5,860
Other locations	844

Total unique clients: **36,055**



## Volunteers

**7,507**  
volunteer hours

**191**  
community volunteers

**592**  
volunteer board hours

**12**  
volunteer board members



## Students

**53**  
students

**7,967**  
student hours



# Our vision, mission & values

Our vision, mission and values guide our work, providing a solid framework for our programs and services, and uniting and strengthen our organization.

## Vision

Toronto's diverse communities achieve health with dignity.

## Mission

Access Alliance provides services and advocates to improve health outcomes for immigrants, refugees, and their communities, which have been made vulnerable by systemic barriers and poverty.

## Values

### CLIENT CENTRED

Our clients are our most important partners and have the right to self-determination in their health and well-being.

### COLLABORATION

Our partnerships leverage collective action and voice to increase knowledge, capacity, respond to gaps in service delivery, and optimize resources.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions and strive to be transparent about how decisions are made, and how resources are allocated.

### EQUITY, ACCESS, & INCLUSION

We are committed to challenging systemic discrimination by providing inclusive and accessible services and by engaging in health equity advocacy.

### INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE

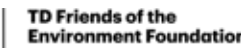
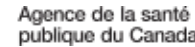
We strive to be a leader in service excellence by investing in a culture of continuous learning and by seeking consistent feedback from clients and partners to improve program design and delivery.



# Our funders and donors

## Thank you to our funders

We gratefully acknowledge our funders. Their support helps us to expand, improve and deliver essential programs and services to our communities.



## Thank you to our donors

### ACCESS VISIONARIES

\$50,000+

Anonymous

### ACCESS TRANSFORMERS

\$2,500–\$5,000

Sarah Crabbe (Agnostic Inc.)

Rotary Club of East York

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The Heller/Smith Family Foundation

Thomas McCormick

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\$1,000–\$2,499

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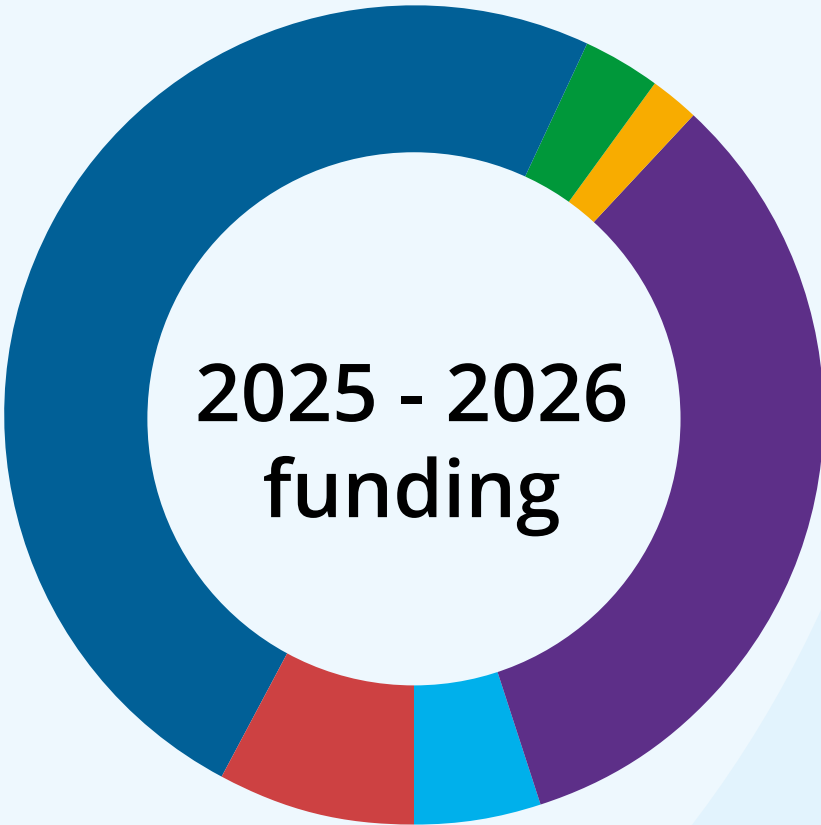
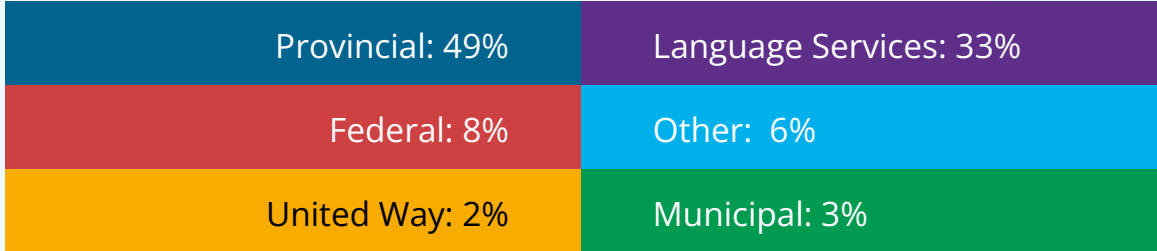
We are deeply grateful to the hundreds of other donors whose generous contributions, though not individually listed here, have made a meaningful and lasting impact.

# Our financials

Statement of combined expenditures and revenue for the year ending March 31, 2026.

EXPENDITURES	2025	2026
Personnel expenses	9,961,521	10,273,220
Service delivery	8,160,400	9,663,187
Operating expenses	2,628,958	3,363,387
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>20,750,879</b>	<b>23,299,794</b>

REVENUE	2025	2026
Federal Grants	1,713,189	1,868,197
Provincial Grants	9,835,096	11,685,533
Municipal Grants	715,233	798,076
United Way	433,769	429,932
Foundations/Other	1,283,721	1,145,065
Language Services	6,898,960	7,752,598
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>20,879,968</b>	<b>23,679,401</b>





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Our free, online library of multilingual resources related to health and community care.



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