



LUSO Community Services

GROWING TOGETHER

2017-2018 Annual Report



STAFF & BOARD

Staff at March 31st

Elisabete Rodrigues
Leroy Hibbert
Alejandra Pegg
Questyn Rodriguez
Hind Omer
Mary Yanful
Kathy Milczarek
Mai Ashour
Dalma Merino
Katerina Hertman
Fanny Rosas
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Moustapha Amadou
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Summer 2017:
Calvin Thomson
Kristen Skok
Kavita Ramkissoon

Board of Directors

Christine Wilde, Chair	Kasha McEwen-Doan, Vice-Chair
Jennifer Hryniw	Tyler Gillespie, Treasurer
Samira Dean	Serena Ismail
Pamela Goossens	Janneth Mayorga (Sept. 2017)
Fatima Haq	Janet Porchak (Sept. 2017)
Ryan Parsons	



FUNDERS

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
United Way Elgin Middlesex
City of London
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Thames Valley District School Board (Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership)

London Community Foundation
May Court Club of London
Service Canada
Lambeth Rotary Club



MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

What transformative years the past decade has given me! I have been so immeasurably fortunate to be part of this time of unprecedented growth for LUSO. To be connected through our shared passion and to witness the incredible impact of this organization has been a gift.

Like so many of you, I started this journey with the belief that true change comes only when our actions empower others to find the courage and the tools they need to make their own lives better. All those years ago, I had only one question: “What can I do?”

Little did I know how life would keep holding me to it—and that the person who would benefit most throughout the years would be me!

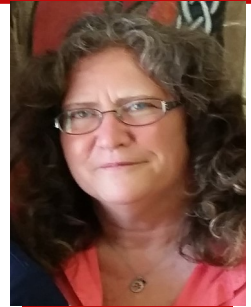
I thank you, Liz, for your friendship and guidance—what an honour it has been to work with you and your teams. And to my fellow Board members, both past and present, it has been a true privilege to serve with you. You are the best of the best!

While in 2018 I step back to clear the way for new leadership, my passion and support remains steadfast. No matter where the journey goes now, time will not change the indelible connection with LUSO in my heart.

To the entire LUSO family, thank you for giving me hope and unwavering faith in the power of youth to change the future. You taught me that the true question is, “What can we do together?”

And you gave me the answer: “Anything!”

Christine Wilde



**Christine
Wilde**



2017-2018



1,367

Books read by Literacy program participants.



6,827

Conversations with Newcomers and Settlement Staff.



1,960

Slices of pizza served in our Youth programs.
(And a lot of healthy food, too!)



73%

Settlement clients served within **two kilometres** of their home.



1,529

Kilograms of food distributed through Basic Needs Program and Emergency Food Cupboard.



3,040

Volunteer hours completed by community members.
(That's 1.5 years of staff time!)



89

Different countries of origin among Settlement clients.



17,212

People attended presentations on racism and cross-cultural understanding.



11

New staff positions created and filled.

IN REVIEW

May 2017- Laughs for Literacy

Annual Fundraiser features hypnotist Jimmy G and raises more than \$10,000 for neighborhood based Literacy programming.



July 2017- Canada 150 Celebration

LUSO staff and volunteers host a Sesquicentennial Festival at Beacock Library; over 100 attend!



October 2017- Y.O.L.O. Haunted House

Youth Leaders create a Haunted House and Family Fun Night to collect food for the neighborhood.



November 2017- Diversity Awards

LUSO is awarded one of London's Diversity and Race Relations Awards for our the Cultural Sensitivity initiative geared for the housing sector



February 2018- Black History Month

LUSO helps raise awareness and plan commemorative events around the city.



March 2018- International Women's Day

Over 100 women celebrate with an afternoon of inspiration and celebration.



COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Every year we recognize individuals or organizations that have made a significant contribution to the community in partnership with LUSO. This year, awards were presented to Museum London and YMCA of Western Ontario. Recipients were presented with framed artwork created by youth from the community.



Museum London

Museum London has been partnering with LUSO for the past 7 years on the Annual Video contest to commemorate March 21st, the International Day to End Racial Discrimination. In addition to their membership on the advisory committee, Museum London has also hosted the event for the past 6 years and provided technology support, enhanced our food budget, took care of all of the set up & clean up, and provided volunteers to assist the night of the event. Their partnership has made our event a care-free evening in many ways. We are grateful for their support and partnership. Steve Mavers and Lisa McDougall accepted the award.



Family Centre Carling-Thames (YMCA WO)

YMCA of Western Ontario was recognized for the management of the Family Centre Carling-Thames. Lori Gower, Centre Manager, accepted the award. LUSO has been working with the YMCA long before the Family Centre existed in its current state, when it was the Northeast Community Hub. LUSO's philosophy for program delivery is to be in the community, and without key partners like the YMCA/Family Centre we would not be able to deliver some of our Youth and Literacy based programs and events. The partnership is much more than accessing space - we have partnered on programs like Family Literacy Day, the Fitness Matters project, community barbecues, as well as the annual Christmas light tour for families. The YMCA has been a key partner in making the Family Centre Carling Thames an amazing resource in the community and working collectively with LUSO staff to support the residents of Northeast London.

BASIC NEEDS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Basic Needs program provides wraparound support for individuals and families experiencing poverty. The first touch point for clients is often our Community Resource Portable, where we offer food, clothing, and a listening ear. These interactions often lead to follow-up referrals to other community resources, or to advocacy on behalf of our clients to landlords, employers, and caseworkers. This year, 878 people accessed service through our Community Portable, 375 of whom were connected to other opportunities in the community.



Food Depot

For those in the community who cannot travel to the food bank, our Basic Needs program hosts monthly food depots, which served 166 families representing 347 people this year.

*"LUSO really helped me
when I needed it"*

Classes and Workshops

In our journey with clients, LUSO offers a wide range of opportunities for clients to grow and develop. Classes and workshops on financial literacy, sewing, stress management, and parenting all build skills and social networks.



Summer Breakfast

During the summer, our Community Portable becomes a hub for the breakfast program, which serves 50-80 breakfasts daily. This year, we served 2,133 breakfasts to 193 unique children.

*"I have learned how to ask
questions and ask for help"*

LITERACY

Our Literacy team works in schools and communities to help children and families develop literacy based skills. A variety of programs help us achieve this goal:

Shared Beginnings



At Shared Beginnings, parents and caregivers bring young children for open play at educational stations and a circle time with stories and songs. This year, we welcomed **587 individuals** to Shared Beginnings. When asked to describe the most valuable aspect of the program, one parent stated, *"Shared Beginnings provides me with a change of scenery—I get to know my community better. People share about their unique cultures. It is a safe environment for my kids to learn about other ethnicities, cultures, and ask questions before they attend school."*

Family Math



Family Math is a five-week after school program for families who would like their children to experience success in math. Sessions educate parents and family members on how to help their children develop a positive attitude towards math in a fun environment. This year, LUSO visited three schools and involved 27 unique families in a dinner and math-based activities & stories.

One parent reflected on the program: *"The kids are having fun and learning at the same time. It gives us quality time as a family while learning. I intend to have more family nights now."*

Booster Club

Literacy boosters target students in Grades 1-3 who struggle with literacy such as interest in books, reading comprehension, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and writing. We supported 33 unique children this year. Parents appreciated how the program helped their children:

"You are doing amazing work with my child and keep him in school. I think the program helps him in more ways than I even know."

Books and Breakfast

During our summer breakfast program, we make sure that bodies and brains are developing by providing books and literacy-based activities for over 80 children on a daily basis. We invite community partners like Therapy Dogs or Let's Talk Science to help us immerse children in summer learning.



Literacy Events

A variety of literacy events are held throughout the year. In January, we hosted "Camp Read S'More", an educational, nature-inspired event that brought a dozen community organizations and 126 people together for a day of engaging families in literacy-building activities. The day featured stories by the campfire, creating animal habitats, and free books.

“Even though the youth change and the group grows there is one thing that has stayed the same and that is...LUSO’s commitment to supporting youth and their needs while inspiring and teaching them to follow their dreams.”



YOUTH

Beacock Library is usually quiet on Wednesday evenings, but things change when 50 youth show up for Y.O.L.O.’s monthly Open Mic Nights! Bold teens might share a poem, song, or dance, while others hang back to enjoy pizza and meet friends. These successful events are planned and run entirely by youth as a part of LUSO’s Youth Organizing Leadership Opportunities (Y.O.L.O.). In addition to Open Mic Nights, Y.O.L.O. members meet weekly to discuss how they can best serve their community. Events like a Haunted House, Christmas photo booth, and community meals have



reached thousands in the neighborhood. One youth reflected: ***“YOLO has taught me not just skills to become a better leader but a better person. And to me it’s not just a group of youth coming together to work in our community. We are a family of youth that work together to bring happiness to our community while becoming closer together.”***

Another key goal for our youth program is helping youth develop lifeskills.

This year we created a standardized curriculum for our Youth Impact program, with over 40 youth attending a 12 week program to develop skills in areas such as teamwork, leadership, financial literacy as well as receiving useful training like First Aid.

In elementary schools, we work with younger teens through programs such as: Let’s Get Cookin’, a training program that introduces youth to the basics of food preparation. One parent described the outcome of the program: ***“I have tried everything to have my child try healthy foods and nothing seemed to work. After she came to your program she is not only eating healthier foods, but cooking for our family as well. Thank you so much for offering this program in our neighbourhood.”***

Programs are reflective of the youth in the community and their interests. Programs such as H.Y.P.P.E (Harnessing Young People’s Positive Energy) provide youth with opportunities to be engaged in programming that includes arts & crafts, sports, drama and so much more. Targeted programs such as Girl’s Group, Eukele group etc. are also part of the overall youth program repertoire and a way to engage youth from various backgrounds.

MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH



The Multicultural Outreach Program endeavours to assist schools, community organizations and corporations by providing a service that supports their goals for a more culturally and racially inclusive environment. This is addressed through educational workshops and presentations that focus on cultural awareness, race relations, and racial bullying.

Program Highlights

Stop Racism "I Am the Answer" Video Contest

Every year, the program hosts a video contest to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year, dozens of schools submitted powerful films addressing racism in their contexts. More than 400 people attended the awards ceremony, where \$5,000 was awarded to the winning entries thanks to the support of UNIFOR local 27.

17,212 *Individuals served*

343 *Workshops facilitated*

51 *Schools reached*



London Police Service Training

Another significant opportunity for the program this year was facilitating in-service training for 800 employees at London Police Service in cultural awareness and racial understanding with an emphasis on the black community. Participants gained appreciation for cultural and racial challenges as well as practical ways to address them.



"It was one of the best presentations I have attended in our in-service training in my 18 years as a police officer."

The London Black History Coordinating Committee

During the month of February, the London Black History Coordinating Committee provides programming and activities that seek to educate, inform and uplift. The theme for this year was "Voices of Resilience" and the events included: African Food Festival, Black Community Achievement Awards, Lewis Coray Trailblazer Award for Youth and a Closing Gala. LUSO sits on the committee and supports these events.



Committee Membership

1. Safe Schools Committee (TVDSB)
2. Culture for Learning Advisory Committee (TVDSB)
3. Safe Schools Belonging Committee (LDCSB)
4. London Black History Coordinating Committee
5. The Pledge to End Bullying Committee
6. Coaching Boys into Men Committee

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING

In the wake of the Syrian crisis, London welcomed more 1,700 Syrian newcomers. One of the key challenges for these families was to find secure and affordable housing. In response to this need, LUSO provided customized training to housing staff, landlords and building managers about important cultural differences and how to best support Syrian newcomers residing in their buildings.

The project funded by the United Way Elgin Middlesex began with in depth consultations with refugees, sponsors, and housing staff about some of the challenges they were experiencing. To address common challenges, LUSO created a training package that included a video series, Useful Phrases cards, and booklet outlining some cultural and historical background information that was important for housing staff to have knowledge of for successful interactions.

After developing these resources, LUSO conducted training sessions with housing sector representatives and other key organizations serving immigrants, to introduce the resources and to provide housing staff with tools to better understand some of the families they work with. Housing staff were very grateful for the resources developed. One reflected: *“Thank you so much for coming in today to speak with us regarding the Syrian Newcomer Initiative. What you have put together is absolutely amazing and helpful!”*



Syrian Newcomers

A Guide for the Housing Sector

The Useful Phrases cards was particularly popular with the housing sector as it provided a tool that could be used in daily interactions with tenants. One housing company ordered resources for some of their building managers in other cities. When surveyed about their use of the resource, one third reported using the resources weekly, with others using them several times per month.

“We LOVED the session and have been talking about it since. My colleagues in Kitchener are jealous that we have someone like you, so I will be sharing all the information you provide us.”

Many of the housing staff that we worked with requested that we develop similar resources for other cultural groups. We are exploring other funding opportunities to continue this initiative in 2018-2019. We look forward to growing this initiative to serve more cultural communities.

As a result of our initiative, LUSO was selected as one of the recipients for the 2017 City of London *Diversity, Race Relations & Inclusivity Award*. One beneficiary wrote “Yes, this is really essential and such a nice resource”. We look forward to all that is ahead for this project.

SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

Settlement Workers in Schools continued to provide crucial services to families across Northeast London, serving over 1200 clients in 33 locations. In schools, we encounter diverse clients with significant needs. This year, SWIS helped welcome clients in their first moments in the Canadian system, and watched others graduate and go on to bright futures.

Ishmael* and his family are Syrians who arrived in Canada in 2016. Ishmael began school at JP11 but struggled because mobility issues left him unable to walk effectively. When a SWIS worker at JP11 met Ishmael, she was able to help the family access funding for a walker, wheelchair and physiotherapy. She also helped the mother communicate with the school so they could best accommodate his needs. In the summer, Ishmael was able to attend an Easter Seals summer camp.

"We are very happy that our son will be getting a wheel chair to help with his mobility. Our son has never been away from home but he is very happy that he will be going to a camp. We are so happy that you have helped us so much. Thank you."



1,200 Clients Served

121 Workshops Hosted

4 new Staff positions funded

Settlement Workers provide in depth service for individuals and families, helping them navigate through education, employment, social assistance, and immigration issues. SWIS also host workshops to introduce newcomers to cultural norms and community resources. This year, we held over 120 workshops on topics like Canadian school system, Healthy eating, Substance abuse, Citizenship, Volunteerism etc.



LIBRARY SETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Library Settlement Partnership allows two LUSO Settlement workers to serve clients at Beacock Branch Library. This year was a very successful year for LSP, with more clients served than ever before! **LSP served more than 1,000 different people from 77 different countries speaking 34 languages.** Staff had over 3000 conversations with clients. By our final quarter, staff were serving 67% more clients than in the first three months of the year.

In addition to drop-in support in the library, LSP staff offer workshops and Canadian Citizenship Preparation classes. As a result of attending the classes, over 40 people passed their citizenship tests! Beyond this, LSP offered 46 workshops on various topics.



LSP continues to provide a popular and highly accessible service.

A survey conducted in the fall of 2017 revealed that overall, **94% of clients agreed that the assistance they received was relevant and useful.**

“Whenever I need help I come to the library. They helped me with health card, PR application process. Thanks a lot for LSP.”

- Client



SETTLEMENT COUNSELLING

"I'm so happy my daughter will be a Canadian Citizen!"

Fatima* was confused and overwhelmed when her daughter's application for Canadian Citizenship was denied. Fortunately, she was able to connect with a Settlement Counsellor at LUSO. The counselor went through the returned application with Fatima and guided her in the process. A month later, she came back to the office to thank us: her daughter's application had been approved!



Though London is one of the major destinations for new immigrants arriving to Canada, adjusting brings many challenges. Finding housing, getting a job, adapting to a new culture, re-building careers, and learning or improving English are all significant barriers for newcomers.

The Settlement Counsellors at LUSO understand these challenges well; and use a holistic and client centered approach to support newcomers in their transition. In a safe and private setting, our counsellors develop a professional relationship and plan to follow. The goal of this service is to see newcomers successfully participating in their communities and contributing to Canadian societies. This year, Settlement Counsellors served **394 unique clients** in a one-on-one setting, helping with filling out government applications, filing taxes, drafting resumes, and connecting clients to community resources. Beyond this, over **600 people attended workshops** on topics like domestic violence, and fire safety.

Anaya* was one of these clients. Her experience as a software engineer in India overqualified her for entry level jobs in Canada, but was not enough to get her a job in her field. Feeling stuck, she reached out to our program. A Settlement Counsellor was able to walk her through different options, eventually helping her get into a retraining program at the YMCA.

Of 394 Clients...

- 107** *Received employment advice and connection to job training.*
- 98** *Filled out application for child tax & other benefits.*
- 93** *Learned to fill out tax forms for the first time.*
- 50** *Were guided through OHIP application forms.*



Women-Centred Services

LUSO completed our MCI-funded Women Centred services initiative which began in 2016. This was an exciting chance to reach a niche population. Our weekly “Women and Daughters” group attracted two dozen mothers and their daughters to the workshop series. Guest speakers introduced topics like personal finance, mental wellness, and sexual health. Within this safe group, mothers and daughters were able to share openly and ask questions about some of these difficult issues. Mothers reflected that the group helped them in their parenting skills in Canada. Even in the cold winter weather, women came out every week to learn together!



One woman who attended the program had just arrived in Canada a few months before. Parenting was very difficult in the transition to Canadian culture and norms; however, after attending the program, she told staff that she was better able to cope with life in Canada.

Participants also attended several field trips to introduce women to local markets and community resources. At the end of each 12-week session, participants were presented with a certificate and celebrated together with music, food, and dance!

Neighborhood Based Integration for Newcomers

In January 2018, we began a new initiative in partnership with three other Neighborhood Resource Centres. The *Neighbourhood Based Integration for Newcomers* project seeks to enhance the settlement and employment supports available to vulnerable newcomers, with a focus on refugees and refugee claimants, to facilitate their social and/or economic integration. The project funded until March 2019 will provide targeted and specialized programming adapted to the needs of clients who face significant settlement barriers due to factors such as low education, low official language fluency, high health or mental health needs, and/or disability.





“Though the weather is cold and [it is] hard to go outside, I will never miss your session because it’s very beneficial to me and every time I learn new information”

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Information & Orientation

Bayan came to Canada in 2017 after fleeing conflict in Iraq. When she arrived in London she started ESL classes; however, with no foundation in English, classes were discouraging. Fortunately, Bayan was connected with LUSO’s Community Connections staff and began to attend Conversation Circles. In the relaxed and supportive environment, her language skills improved. Bayan concluded: “I am very fortunate to be able to attend the conversation circle because it is helping me to improve my English and allows me to feel more confident in my ESL course.”



Bayan is just one of almost 200 people who attended one of our Community Connections programs. Along with bi-weekly Conversation Circles, staff run infor-

mation sessions, field trips, and community events. One client was greatly helped after hearing a presentation about tenant’s rights from Western Law. Sessions with London Police, WIL Employment, and Merrymount gave participants a better idea of the resources available in their community.

Our programs offer opportunities for newcomer families to build social connections and learn about Canadian culture. Families went bowling, visited the Sugar Bush, and more than 50 people attended monthly Family Games and Movie Nights at Beacock Library. One participant reflected on the impact of these opportunities: “I am very glad to join your session and programs because it’s like a combination meeting new people and having new friends and at the same time learn and getting useful information.”



Youth Outreach

This September, we began a Newcomer Youth Outreach Program. The goal of this program is to provide newcomer youth with meaningful opportunities for social contact, skill building, and language development. In its first seven months, the program has reached over 75 youth through craft classes, field trips, movie nights, and one-on-one support.

One highlight was a trip to the Fanshawe College Open House, where newcomer youth were able to tour the college, speak with staff, faculty, and current students to learn about various programs and ask questions. Youth gained program and career information on a variety of programs available at the college and learned about financial aid options.

I love making new friends!

Another program, *Crafts & Conversation* is an inclusive and welcoming program where newcomer youth get together to create art and craft projects. This program allowed youth the opportunity to gain different art skills, learn the history of the pieces, gain confidence, express themselves, and develop friendships and communication skills through assisting each other in completing their projects. One youth from Syria reflected: *"I learned new crafts and new words in English. I love making new friends"*

Youth also went on a pottery painting field trip, got help with exam preparation, and connected with the community through a volunteer fair. Through a variety of programs we are able to reach a wide spectrum of youth.



"I love this program because I have made a lot of friends, and learned how to make different crafts"

– Youth from Guatemala



"We all enjoyed your program because it was very useful and interesting"

– Youth from Iraq



Newcomer Youth Programs include:

- Crafts & Conversation
- Family Games Nights
- Youth Orientation Sessions
- Let's Get Cookin'
- Community Trips/Activities

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Along with direct service provision, LUSO is actively engaged in building systems for a city that works for everyone. We are members in a variety of working groups, networks, and initiatives that are building lasting change in our communities.



Northeast Basic Needs Community Group

This group includes service organizations, faith groups, and community members gathering to take coordinated action on issues related to food security and basic needs in Northeast London. As a chairing member, LUSO coordinates the group's projects, such as providing over 1500 breakfasts for kids in summer camps.



Child and Youth Network

As a member of the Child and Youth network, LUSO provides a voice in the larger strategy of London's efforts to create opportunity for every child. LUSO contributes to the *Literacy and Ending Poverty sub-groups* groups.



London Food Coalition

Rescue, Recover, Redistribute

London Food Coalition

We are proud to be a member of this coalition, which rescues food that would otherwise be thrown away. In its first year, the Coalition has rescued tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables which we use within our programs and at our Emergency Food Cupboard.



Healthy Kids Community Challenge

The HKCC sets a community-wide agenda on children's issues. As a part of efforts to increase health and literacy, LUSO has used HKCC resources to offer cooking programs and literacy programs in the community.



London Middlesex Immigration Partnership

As one of London's largest providers of settlement services, LUSO is engaged in this community partnership dedicated to making London a welcoming place for all. We participate on the Settlement Sub-Council and the Education Sub-Council and participate in various events and campaigns.

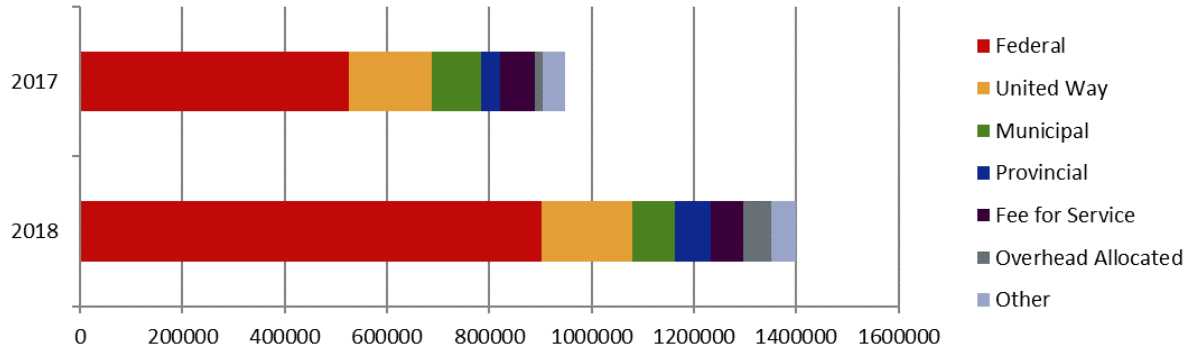


Networking for an Inclusive Community

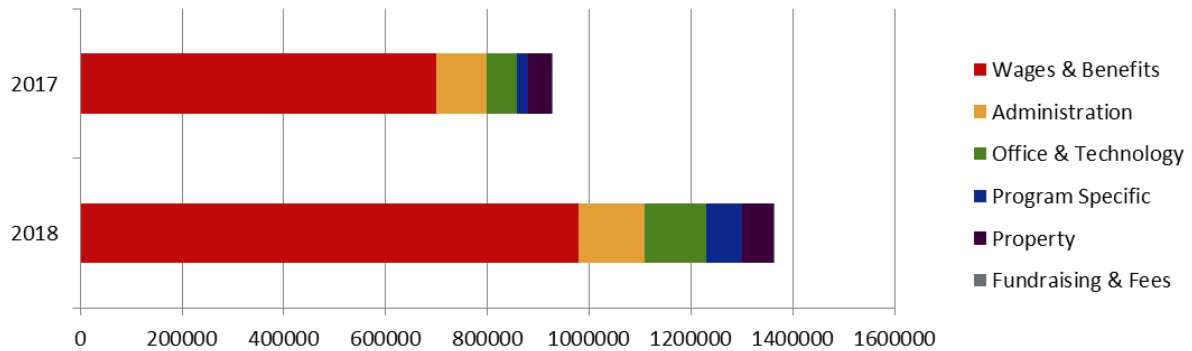
This network of community members and agencies offers resources, training, and connections for members involved in immigration and settlement issues. LUSO helps organize and benefits from these learning opportunities.

FINANCES

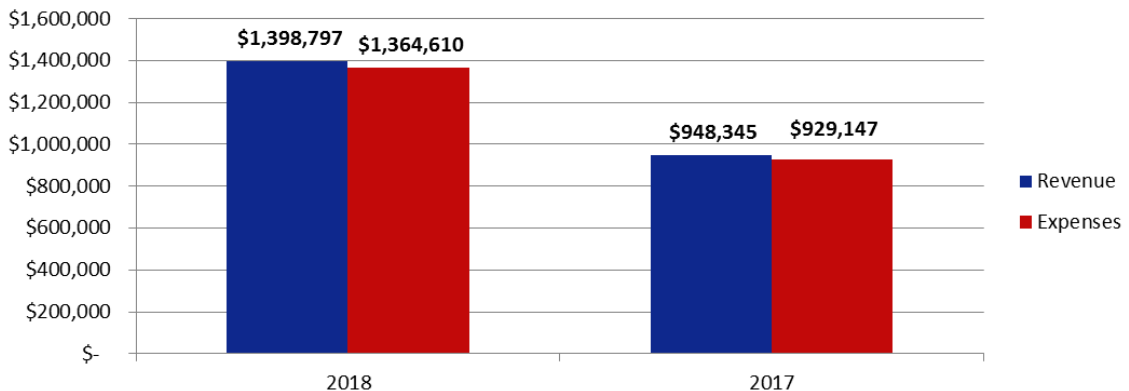
Revenue



Expenses



Overall Financial Position



Audit completed by Lunick and Company. Full audited statements available upon request.



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LUSO Community Services



COMMUNITY SERVICES