



WELCOMING REFUGEES

Building and Sustaining Community Collaborations for Refugee Welcome:

A GET-STARTED GUIDE FOR THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Refugees add economic, social, and cultural vitality to our communities. Creating inclusive environments where all people can contribute to their greatest potential isn't the work of one single organization—it requires effort by all of us. Refugee resettlement organizations increasingly recognize the need to create greater community support for refugees, and to be part of broader community efforts that may benefit refugees but are not focused exclusively on refugees.

This get-started guide will help you start or strengthen local collaborations to integrate and welcome refugees in your community.

The **Community Engagement Toolkit** was created to help organizations and community groups identify their current strengths and consider specific new strategies and tactics for expanding and deepening their collaborations in order to promote welcoming communities. The Toolkit helps you to answer important questions such as: What is the state of our current collaborative effort, and how can we expand it? How can we pursue deeper public engagement and a more robust set of goals? What new strategies and tactics should we implement?

How can you get started? Take these steps to begin to assess and deepen your community engagement work. These steps are flexible and can be accomplished in the order that best meets your needs. More guidance for each step can be found in the full Toolkit, available at www.welcomingamerica.org.

- 1.** Develop a working goal that your broad community might agree is compelling and worthy of the dedication of time, talent, treasure, and testimony, such as: **“Welcoming communities everywhere are inclusive, equitable places where everyone can reach their greatest potential and contribute to a prosperous economy and flourishing culture.”**
- 2.** Inventory the resources and relationships that you currently possess, or need to develop in order to achieve your goal, relative to leadership and organizational capacity, communications and data, and contacts and stakeholders.
- 3.** Review the three platforms in the Continuum of Community Engagement chart (on reverse side) and determine which platform best represents each of your current and proposed efforts, and who in the arriving and receiving communities can help you achieve your goal.
- 4.** Read and discuss the full Community Engagement Toolkit, which was created to help identify current strengths and consider specific new strategies and tactics for expanding collaborations along the continuum.

These three platforms (Inform, Involve, Invest) describe different types of community engagement. Read through each to discover which best reflects your current effort, and consider where you aspire to be on this continuum.

CONTINUUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
INFORM	INVOLVE	INVEST
Leadership defaults to local resettlement agencies, which act as the gateways to refugees as groups with assets and needs, and advocate on behalf of refugees to close any gaps, while individual refugees are spokespersons for how their individual experiences mirror group experiences.	Leadership is shared by local resettlement agencies and partnering organizations in designing programs and opportunities for refugees that offer multiple pathways to integration, while refugees advocate for themselves and their affinity groups.	Refugee resettlement agencies and individual refugee leaders contribute expertise more than leadership in collective impact planning that utilizes frameworks different from refugee resettlement or integration.
Receiving communities develop multiple points of contact to learn from a core group of refugee resettlement agencies about refugees as newcomer groups presenting isolated needs, but not to assume leadership or decision making about refugees.	Receiving communities take the lead to develop a no-wrong-door approach to planning and implementing services, and creating opportunities for engagement, which fully includes the diversity of refugee groups and takes a more holistic approach to individual needs and strengths.	Receiving communities develop whole-of-government and whole-of-city-welcoming plans, and collective impact projects designed to deploy socially motivated capital at scale and for the benefit of all populations in need, including refugees but not focused on refugees.
Communications and learning events focus on general population characteristics of the new arrivals and the role of organizations in meeting their needs, using shared talking points to address the need for information.	Communications focus on needs and assets of refugees, data and case studies selected to complement those from non-refugee programs that still meet resettlement needs, and community concerns addressed through dialogues.	Communications focus on the contribution of refugee-serving agencies and refugees to broaden community initiatives not focused on resettlement concerns, while data and narratives support long-term strategic community goals.
Stakeholder groups become aware that their contacts with refugee resettlement agencies are overlapping, ad hoc, and need more coordination in order to meet both their needs and the needs of refugees.	Organizations adapt to create commissions and committees inclusive of refugees, raising awareness about refugees and including their concerns in coordinated planning initiatives, and braiding non-federal funding between stakeholders.	Community contacts are prioritized according to the specific expertise needed to achieve municipal strategic goals, and refugee resettlement and integration are valued force multipliers in larger community ecosystems.

To learn more about the Inform, Involve, and Invest platforms and how to strengthen efforts in each, see the full Community Engagement Toolkit, at: www.welcomingamerica.org/resources

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