

US-ITALY WELCOMING COMMUNITIES EXCHANGE

OVERVIEW

The US-Italy Welcoming Communities Exchange program brings together migrant* inclusion practitioners for meaningful peer-to-peer learning about community navigator and mentoring models in the U.S. and Italy. The exchanges will take place virtually in June 2022, with some pre- and post-engagement. Participants will attend three, 90-minute virtual learning exchanges, prepare for the exchanges through pre-work, and implement at least one innovation learned in the exchanges. Participants will apply as part of a three-person cohort from their locality representing local government, the local nonprofit sector, and community volunteers.

The US-Italy Welcoming Communities Exchange program is administered by Welcoming America in cooperation with Refugees Welcome Italia and the International Rescue Committee, with the support of the U.S. Embassy.



*Note: In this program, “migrant” refers to people who have moved from one country to another under any migration status, e.g. refugee, asylum seeker, temporary work visa, undocumented, or other status.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

SELECTED PARTICIPANTS CAN EXPECT TO:

- Meet new professional contacts in the U.S. and Italy.
- Interact directly and meaningfully with peer practitioners through engaging virtual exchange sessions. These exchanges are participatory, not a listen-only webinar experience.
- Learn new ideas for accompaniment and mentoring models, multi sector collaboration, migrant leadership development, and more. You will be prepared to apply these innovations to your own programming.
- Gain context for migrant inclusion in the US & Italy through orientation materials such as articles and videos.
- Be challenged to think about your programming from another perspective.
- Receive resources to deepen your work, including toolkits and an Innovation Roundup.



WHAT ARE MENTORING AND COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR MODELS?

Mentoring and community navigator models are two related but different community-based approaches to ensure migrants can access the necessary resources to thrive socially, civically, and economically in their new homes. Many varied models of mentoring and community navigators exist, which recruit migrants, non-migrants, or a combination to serve in the role.

Generally speaking, mentoring (sometimes called “accompaniment”) models tend to emphasize a mutual relationship of friendship or mentoring between a newcomer and a person who is more established in the community. The latter usually provides guidance on topics such as accessing housing, registering children for school, and applying for jobs, and may also make social connections and/or advocate with or on behalf of the newcomer. Mentors may receive training and orientation on topics such as community resources, intercultural competence, and principles of solidarity and allyship. An example of a mentoring model is [Refugees Welcome Italia Mentoring](#).

Community navigator (sometimes called “natural helper” or “promotores”) models often share characteristics with mentoring models but tend to emphasize recruiting proximate leaders from migrant communities. Navigators are usually people who are fairly established in the place they live, and often come from the same country or speak the same language as the people they assist through the program. Navigators typically have an inclination to share resources that they themselves benefited from with people who are newer to the locality. Community navigator programs often include training on community outreach, grassroots organizing, leadership skills, and institutional resources. Examples of community navigator programs include [Portland Natural Helpers Leadership Program](#) and [National Partnership for New Americans Community Navigators](#).

PARTICIPANT COMMITMENTS

SELECTED PARTICIPANTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO:

- Attend and actively participate in all 3 virtual exchange meetings on June 14, 21, and 28 at 11-12:30 a.m. EDT / 5:00-6:30 p.m. CEST
- Share experiences - both successes and challenges - in an open and honest peer learning environment
- Implement at least one local inclusion innovation learned in the exchange into your own inclusion practice, with at least initial progress on this implementation by November 2022
- Share what you learn by:
 - Posting on social media about participation in the program, following the program's guidelines
 - Completing a program evaluation survey, which will inform a collective blog post to publicly disseminate learning from the exchange



APPLICATION PROCESS

The application period begins January 17, 2022. The final deadline to apply is March 4, 2022, at midnight in your local time zone.

Applicants will be notified of their selection decision by April 1, 2022 via email.

Applicants should apply alongside two other people from your locality, making a cohort of three people total including:

- One local government employee or representative
- One local nonprofit organization employee
- One community volunteer

Each person in your cohort should fill out their own application.

Applicants in the US: Jenny Diaz, jenny@welcomingamerica.org

Applicants in Italy: Anna Lodeserto, anna.lodeserto@refugees-welcome.it

PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA

- Bilingual abilities in English/Italian are not required to participate, but those desiring to use their bilingual skills will have opportunities to do so. Simultaneous interpretation and translation will be available during the virtual exchanges.
- Interest in mentoring and community navigator models is required.
- Applicants who are currently involved with a community navigator or mentoring program, or broader inclusion effort will be prioritized. However, those not currently involved but who demonstrate a strong commitment to developing such an effort are still welcome to apply.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA CONT...

- Participants living and working in small and mid-size cities and counties will be prioritized.

For US applicants only:

- At least one person in your three-person cohort must work for a Welcoming Network local government or local nonprofit member in good standing.
- Those with a personal lived experience of migration will be prioritized.

For Italy applicants only:

- Your cohort must have a Refugees Welcome Italy presence in your locality.

[CLICK HERE](#)
[TO APPLY](#)