A WELCOMING INFRASTRUCTURE

FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

How to Invest in Long-Term Migrant Inclusion & Equity at the Local Level

WELCOMING AMERICA

WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL

As individuals and organizations in localities across the globe mobilize to support those displaced by war, conflict, and climate disasters, meeting the immediate needs — such as food access and short-term housing — of people moving to safety is critical. Equally as important is building the infrastructure needed to support and engage migrants[1] and non-migrants in the long term, to ensure individuals belong and thrive in the communities they come to share.

This how-to guide outlines five tangible ways that local leaders can help create an equitable and welcoming environment in your locality that is sustainable in the long-term and builds resilience to support residents — now and in the future. The wisdom, examples, and resources below come from many organizations, including the partners in the Welcoming International Alliance who administer national networks that together support hundreds of localities to develop more welcoming communities.

WHAT IS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY?

A welcoming community is one in which everyone thrives, belongs, and prospers. It features policies and practices to achieve equity and inclusion for migrants. It builds a positive culture that embraces diversity and fosters positive social and economic benefits that residents can count and feel. Welcoming communities depend on individuals, institutions, and systems that are inclusive. More than a momentary humanitarian response, welcoming is the long-term work of creating successful multiracial societies in which each resident belongs.[2]

In each of their countries, Welcoming International Alliance partners have set national standards for the policies, programs, and processes that define a welcoming community. See the Welcoming International resource library to access each standard.

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1 Note: In this toolkit, "migrant" refers to people who have moved from one country to another under any migration status, e.g. refugee, asylum seeker, temporary work visa, irregular migration, or other status.

2 This definition of a "welcoming community" was developed by Welcoming America and is further defined by the U.S. Welcoming Standard. Additional definitions of a "welcoming community" can be found in other national welcoming standards and frameworks developed by Welcoming International Alliance partners.

1 Proactively Set Values to Guide Local Decision-Making

War, conflict, and climate disasters are unpredictable, and may happen with increasing frequency in the future. Proactively identifying a few important values to guide decision-making can help localities navigate complex and changing realities in the moment. The values you select should reflect what is important to your community.

RESOURCES TO HELP LOCALITIES DEFINE DECISION-MAKING VALUES

- Sample values from the Welcoming International Guidelines for Standard, Indicator, and Framework Creators:

  › *Diversity, equity, and inclusion:* Where, when, and how a person can access services and take part in policy discussions can significantly impact participation and outcomes. Decisions about response efforts should increase access for people of diverse migration statuses, religions, races, ethnicities, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, physical and mental abilities, and ages.

  › *Local stakeholder engagement:* Migrant inclusion programs and partnerships are stronger when people with both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds are engaged in their design and implementation. The most effective local response efforts prioritize engaging diverse stakeholders in terms of both personal identities and sectors represented.

  › *Partnership:* Collaboration leverages new resources and builds capacity for a more effective, more impactful, coordinated response. Decisions should support collaboration across sectors in order to engage new partners and strengthen community support for migrant inclusion efforts.

- Sample values from the Welcoming Communities Standard for New Zealand (see Principles for Welcoming Communities section on page 15), a tool for local governments in New Zealand:

  › *Two key Māori cultural values, Whanaungatanga and Manaakitanga:* Welcoming Communities enact Whanaungatanga, the importance of relationships, and Manaakitanga, the value of extending hospitality and caring for other people.

  › *Engagement* between newcomers and communities in which they settle

  › *Respect* for the cultural and social capital of community members

> › ***Promote and build on ongoing efforts*** including cultural diversity, inclusion, and settlement work already underway by the local government and community sectors.

- Sample principles from the Inclusive Cities Framework for local authorities and communities in the United Kingdom:

  - › Provide local leadership to create change

  - › Inclusion is a shared responsibility delivered in partnership

  - › Work with newcomers and longer standing residents

  - › Use available data and evidence

  - › Take action at the local level, provide advocacy at the national level, learn from best practice internationally

2 Convene a Multisector Response Network to Mobilize Local Resources

The purpose of a local multisector response network is to connect individuals and organizations — including local government, civil society, and businesses — that can offer different types of community resources in a quick, urgent, and coordinated way.

For example, a network can bring together property owners who lease affordable apartments with faith groups that have a large number of volunteers who could help furnish those apartments.

Importantly, multisector networks should include migrants already living in the locality, as well as migrant-led and serving organizations. These individuals and organizations can provide insights about the barriers migrants face when moving to or living in the locality. Migrants and the community-based organizations that represent them should also have decision-making authority within the network.

While a local multisector response network may be critical in immediate humanitarian responses, it is important to maintain this group over the long term. Many places working to make their locality welcoming and inclusive have networks that meet regularly to identify gaps and opportunities, and coordinate efforts. In fact, local "welcoming networks" or "welcoming committees" often result in community-wide strategic plans and longer-term policy changes.

Developing a multisector network is an investment for the future, as this group can evolve to support long-term needs and opportunities in the months and years ahead.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN CONVENING MULTISECTOR NETWORKS

- **Which leaders and organizations in the locality — including local government, civil society, and businesses — can provide resources relevant to welcoming migrants?**

- **Which organizations or individuals are trusted leaders in local migrant communities? What will facilitate these organizations' effective engagement in the multisector network?** Strategies may include adjusting the time or location of the meeting, providing language interpretation, translating materials, providing compensation for time and effort, using new meeting formats, or other activities to ensure the group itself is inclusive and welcoming.

- **Which organization will convene the multisector network and what support can this group provide?** Effective convening organizations are trusted and influential across sectors. Local government, a well-established community-based organization, or a community foundation may be an effective convener. It is also important for the convening organization to be able to commit staff time to the logistics of gathering and facilitating the multisector network.

- **Who can fund the multisector network in the short and long term, if needed?** Networks require staffing, especially as they grow and become more established. Consider local funding streams that can support the convening organization and the network's activities. See <u>Section 3</u> below.

- **Do cross-sector networks already exist in the locality that could add this issue to their mission or mandate?**

- **Are there existing networks that could share contacts and support with the multisector network?**

- **Is there potential for opposition toward efforts to welcome migrants in the locality? If so, how might the multisector network mitigate the possibility of opposition and/or respond if it occurs?**

PRIORITY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR MULTISECTOR NETWORKS

The following list highlights some of the issue areas the local multisector response network might consider as it identifies needs, priorities, and opportunities for creating a timely and effective humanitarian response. These sector categories can help guide who comprises the multisector network.

As local assets and challenges will differ, it is important to work closely with local migrant and non-migrant leaders to identify solutions based on collective wisdom. More detailed policy and programmatic areas can be found in <u>national welcoming standards and frameworks</u>.

- **LEGAL SERVICES:** National governments sometimes provide temporary legal status for newly arrived migrants. Local multisector response networks may need to support migrants with legal services assistance to ensure eligible individuals can access pathways to legal status, government services, and work authorization.

  Legal services assistance may also be needed to assist individuals in adjusting to a longer-term or permanent legal status, or to support family reunification efforts. Migration lawyers and migration legal organizations may be important members to include in the multisector network.

- **HOUSING:** Securing stable, affordable, and safe housing is often one of the greatest challenges for arriving migrants. Although temporary shelters may be available when migrants initially arrive, finding longer-term housing will likely be a priority for the local multisector response network.

In some cases, national or local public housing assistance may be available, but in many cases, the multisector network should consider engaging private property owners and companies as network members that can help identify and secure safe and affordable housing options.

- **LANGUAGE ACCESS AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS:** A common role of multisector networks is to improve access to information and services. While localities may have a number of services available to arriving migrants, language or method of communication may present a barrier to accessing information and programs.

  The multisector network should raise awareness among local institutions of the need to translate materials and provide language interpretation to ensure that individuals know about and can access available resources. The network itself may need to translate its public communications or provide interpretation at meetings. It is important to invest resources in trained interpreters and translators, and not rely on multilingual family members.

  When sharing information about available services and opportunities, be sure to consider methods of communication — ranging from printed flyers to social media to door knocking — to reach the target audience.

- **EDUCATION:** Schools, universities, and community education programs are often among the first access points to humanitarian support for children and adult learners arriving in a locality. Local multisector response networks can engage school staff to ensure that schools are accessible and prepared to support migrant students and families.

  Multisector networks can serve an important role in coordinating information about local language classes, both public and privately administered. Coordination might involve publishing collated schedules of available classes, making referrals, surfacing emerging patterns for language learning across the locality, and tailoring class offerings to specific populations and career pathways.

  The multisector network might also discuss opportunities for local residents to learn the most commonly spoken languages of new arrivals.

- **HEALTH CARE:** In many cases, people will have traveled through dangerous routes and experienced traumatic events before arriving in your locality. Multisector networks will need to prioritize efforts to identify appropriate mental and physical health services. Engaging local clinics, therapists, or other local health care organizations as members of the network will be important to achieving this goal, along with supporting healthcare partners in providing linguistically and culturally appropriate care.

- **FOOD ACCESS:** Food access programs — whether privately or publicly administered — will also be important to engage as network members. As with other issue areas, translation and interpretation services might be necessary to ensure migrants can connect with these services. Food access programs should also consider culturally appropriate foods when serving migrants. This could include foods prepared and processed in a certain way — such as kosher or halal foods — or ensuring vegetarian options.

- **VOLUNTEERS & RESOURCES:** Large-scale humanitarian events often motivate individuals to give time, money, and goods to assist migrants. The network should consider how volunteers and resources can be used to support local infrastructure, including which network members have the capacity to train and coordinate volunteers and which types of services and events can best use volunteer involvement.

It will also be important to consider how the network will communicate with the public about items most urgently needed by migrants, and whether the network has the capacity to coordinate collection and delivery of donated goods.

As initial media attention towards the humanitarian event wanes, networks can strategize on long-term, sustainable plans for volunteer and resource coordination.

- **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:** Some residents may be concerned or actively opposed to welcoming migrants into the locality. The multisector network should consider proactively preparing a response to any opposition that migrants in the locality or network members may experience.

  Engage diverse leaders, including elected officials, to reinforce a welcoming narrative grounded in the action being taken to manage the tasks at hand. See resources in Section 4 for advice on how to avoid a negative "crisis" framing and use hopeful, action-oriented messages.

  Local leaders and members of the multisector network should also be prepared to answer questions, address concerns raised by residents, and proactively counter misinformation.

- **EMPLOYMENT:** The multisector network should engage organizations that provide employment training and placement, and discuss how to support people with and without current work authorization. When considering how to ensure access to their programs for migrants, workforce agencies and entrepreneur support organizations may need to examine linguistically and culturally appropriate services, agency location and transportation, and appropriate case management that recognizes internationally earned credentials and work experience.

- **RETURN & REINTEGRATION:** Migrating involves many complex factors and decisions. The decision to stay somewhere, move somewhere new, or return to a previous home can change rapidly. Additionally, some people may be forced to leave their new home due to government policies and/or other factors. The multisector network should bear this in mind, and may consider building connections with localities where migrants are returning in order to facilitate pre-departure counseling and post-arrival support for the returnees.

  See more information on the Return and Reintegration Platform from the International Organization for Migration.

  - **ADVOCACY:** See Section 5.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MULTISECTOR NETWORKS

Tool: Welcoming Cities Inclusive Communications Toolkit from Welcoming Australia

Tool: Community Planning Process Guide for Fostering Greater Refugee Welcome from Welcoming America

Guide: 10 Best Practices for Engaging with Refugee Leaders from Refugee Congress, the Refugee Advocacy Lab, and CWS

Policy Briefing: Access to information from Inclusive Cities

Tool: Assessing Community Needs and Resources from the University of Kansas

3 Create a "We Welcome Fund" to Finance Local Response

Individuals often seek ways to financially support migrants during large-scale humanitarian events, conflicts, or climate disasters. Communities can foster thoughtful giving by developing a "We Welcome Fund" to raise and distribute monetary resources that can provide immediate support to migrants and non-migrants, and also build welcoming localities in the longer term. For example, a "We Welcome Fund" may be a good mechanism to support your local multisector response network, discussed in <u>Section 2</u>.

A "We Welcome Fund" can be established at local philanthropies that have the ability to accept donations from individuals, private businesses, and charitable foundations. In many places this will mean establishing the "We Welcome Fund" at a community foundation.

Even after migrants' short-term needs are met, resources for migrant-led and migrant-serving organizations will still be needed; develop your "We Welcome Fund" in a way that will support welcoming in your locality long after the initial humanitarian event.

Once funds are raised, it is important that input from migrant community leaders helps determine what the "We Welcome Fund" supports and how funding decisions are made. You may want to consider establishing a community advisory board for the "We Welcome Fund" including migrant-led and migrant-serving organizations.

CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING A "WE WELCOME FUND"

☐ **What is the purpose of your "We Welcome Fund?"** Your fund's purpose should be developed in consultation with migrant residents and migrant-serving organizations. Being as specific as possible about the fund's purpose will help both with fundraising and in making
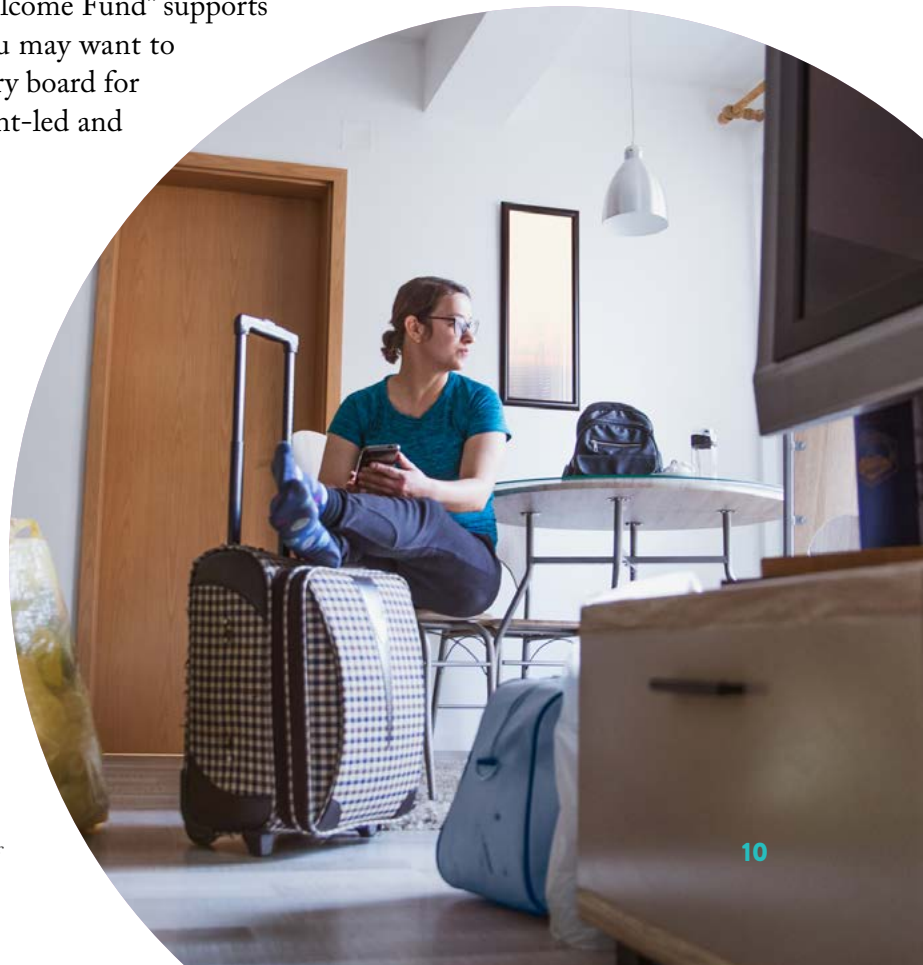
decisions about which grant proposals to fund. The list of priority issue areas in the previous section — including language access, housing, and legal services — provide a starting point for discussing your "We Welcome Fund" purpose.

☐ **How will you involve migrants in your grant-making decisions? What changes might the foundation hosting the "We Welcome Fund" need to make in its usual grant-making process?** Ensuring migrant access and inclusion may include establishing a community advisory board for "We Welcome Fund" grants, changing meeting times to ensure migrants can participate in the process, or translating requests for proposals.

☐ **How will you engage local residents and organizations — including businesses, faith institutions, and others — in fundraising for and donating to your "We Welcome Fund?"** Successful tactics might include events at local businesses, crowdfunding, a corporate giving circle, faith-based fundraisers, and more.

CASE STUDIES ON CREATING A "WE WELCOME FUND"

📍 The Alliance4Ukraine Fund operating nationwide in Germany: In 2022, Alliance4Ukraine bundled financial resources from foundations, companies, and individuals to quickly and flexibly fund the needs of responding organizations and provide support for people migrating from Ukraine. Alliance4Ukraine also coordinated organizational cooperation in issue-area focus groups, and learning exchange for localities in partnership with Bertelsmann Stiftung and Familiengerechte Kommune.

📍 The St. Louis Welcome Fund in St. Louis, USA: In 2021, St. Louis organizations welcomed over 500 people from Afghanistan in just a few months, in addition to ongoing support to other migrant populations. To respond to resettlement needs, philanthropies partnered to establish the St. Louis Welcome Fund. Hosted by the St. Louis Community Foundation, the Welcome Fund helped support a coordinated community response and filled gaps in funding as service providers adjusted to rapidly evolving circumstances.

📍 The People's Panel in the Peel Region of Ontario, Canada: In 2021, the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement — funded by the World Education Services Mariam Assefa Fund — designed and launched a participatory grant-making opportunity in Peel. The People's Panel brought together 12 community residents who met weekly to discuss pressing issues within the Peel newcomer community and design a responsive grant opportunity.

4 Craft Communications that Inspire Local Support

When communities act to swiftly welcome individuals fleeing war, conflicts, or climate disasters, there is potential for misinformation and harmful anti-migrant narratives to take hold. It is critical at these moments to reinforce shared and visible local values supported by concrete actions of a welcoming community.

Focus your messaging on how communities are ready and able to welcome migrants, how neighbors, residents, and business owners who migrated to the locality are vital contributors to communities alongside people who already lived there, and how welcoming benefits everyone.

In these communications, point to concrete actions being taken locally, such as the efforts of multisector response networks and volunteers (see Section 2). Knowing that there is a plan in place helps calm concerns and counteract zero-sum "crisis" thinking.

Engage spokespeople who are racially and ethnically diverse, including individuals who come from migrant and non-migrant backgrounds. Consider asking trusted community leaders to share messages of welcome. Faith leaders, elected officials, small business owners, school representatives, and others have the power to reach many residents who trust them. These leaders can adapt messages to speak to group values, explain what they are doing to welcome newcomers, and invite participation.

COMMUNICATION IDEAS THAT INSPIRE LOCAL SUPPORT

- **Share stories of migrant and non-migrant residents working together on a common project.** For example, tell the story of two people who started a new restaurant together. Or, feature two faith leaders or artists who have developed a friendship and are collaborating on an event. Local media outlets are great places to publish these stories.

- **Participate in Welcoming Week.** You may see a benefit to participating in a longstanding campaign such as Welcoming Week. Since 2012, Welcoming Week has served as an annual global celebration of the growing movement of places striving to be welcoming for all, including migrants. During

Welcoming Week, organizations host events that bring people of different backgrounds together to find common ground and lift up the values of welcoming communities. Hosting an event and sharing messages of welcome on social media are opportunities to demonstrate a long-term commitment to inclusion.

- **Make statements of welcome.** Encourage trusted local leaders to share statements of welcome in their public-facing materials, such as newsletters, and reference concrete actions taken to welcome migrants. This may be part of the commitment made by members of your local multisector response network.

RESOURCES TO CRAFT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Example: Welcoming Salt Lake Photo Project from Salt Lake County, USA

Article Series: Counteracting Dangerous Narratives Design Process from Overzero

Tool: Shaping the Public Narrative on Migration and Migrants from the Global Forum on Migration and Development

Tool: Toolbox on Migration Narrative Change from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report: From Fear to Solidarity: The Difficulty in Shifting Public Narratives about Refugees from the Migration Policy Institute

Briefing note: Building an Inclusive City Narrative from Inclusive Cities

Tools: Messaging toolkits with worksheets and examples from Welcoming America

Academic article: How an Interdisciplinary Approach to Narrative Can Support Policymaking on Migration and Integration at the City Level from Jacqui Broadhead, Inclusive Cities

5 Ensure that Diverse Voices Inform Local Policymaking

Elected leaders at all levels of government should develop policies to ensure newly arrived individuals are able to thrive and belong. Many of the challenges experienced by people displaced by war, conflict, or climate change are also faced by other migrants arriving under varied circumstances, and by other non-migrant residents.

When leaders ask what they can do now, it is a prime time to elevate policy changes that will not only assist people arriving at the moment but also support broader migrant communities in the long term. Begin conversations now with elected leaders to promote proven policies and programs that support migrants and make communities more welcoming, better places to live for all residents — such as the policies and programs outlined in national welcoming standards and frameworks.

Ensure that migrant residents are part of the agenda-setting process from the very beginning, and also create opportunities for input from a wide range of residents. As people settle in the locality, design civic opportunities such as public meetings, leadership programs, and government committees so that they are open and accessible to newcomers. When civic institutions are responsive to all the people they serve, everyone benefits.

A good starting point is to consult local governments with strong community engagement strategies and organizations with a history of effective advocacy in your locality, region, or country.

About this Tool

This tool was produced by the Welcoming International initiative, with input from Institutul de Cercetare Făgăraş and Welcoming International Alliance partners Bertelsmann Stiftung and Inclusive Cities. It is an adaptation of the tool Tips to Build and Sustain a Locally Welcoming Infrastructure, written in 2021 by Welcoming America and organizational partners for community leaders managing arrivals of Afghan migrants in the United States.

ABOUT WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL

Welcoming International is an initiative of Welcoming America consisting of several programs, including the Welcoming International Alliance of national welcoming networks, global learning exchanges for local leaders, and technical assistance to advance multisector welcoming strategies.

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