



BECOME A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Guide to achieving the Certified Welcoming
designation under the Welcoming Standard version 2.0

“Portland takes great pride in our shared immigrant heritage and longstanding history as a community where people from across the globe are celebrated. We recognize that our community is more vibrant and prosperous when all individuals, from all backgrounds, races, ethnicities and countries of origins, are welcomed and valued.

While we celebrate the collective achievements of our community in gaining this recognition, we also realize that it is merely an affirmation that we are on the right track and that there is more work to be done to ensure that everyone here feels included and connected.”

—MAYOR KATE SNYDER, CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

(Certified Welcoming since 2022)

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ABOUT WELCOMING AMERICA

Welcoming America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs. We believe that all people, including immigrants, are valued contributors and vital to the success of our communities and shared future. Through the Welcoming Network, we work to help communities develop the roadmap they need to create welcoming policies and share new approaches to inclusion to create an environment where everyone can truly thrive.

Our mission is to support communities building a welcoming society where every person, including immigrants, can fully contribute and shape our shared prosperity. Our vision is a just world in which we each belong, prosper, and thrive in the place we now call home, no matter where we came from.

◆ Learn more at WelcomingAmerica.org.

ABOUT CERTIFIED WELCOMING

Certified Welcoming is a formal designation for local governments that have created policies and programs reflecting their values and commitment to immigrant inclusion. This innovative program assesses local governments on their efforts to include and welcome immigrants in all areas of civic, social, and economic life in their communities.

With a Certified Welcoming designation, communities distinguish their local efforts, build a competitive advantage, and gain access to opportunities to share their welcoming practices on a regional, national, and global stage.

◆ Learn more at CertifiedWelcoming.org.

INTRODUCTION

Strong communities are ones that connect and include people of all backgrounds. By doing so, communities — and those who live there — will meet their highest civic, social, and economic potential. As local governments look to create more equitable and vibrant communities, welcoming and inclusive policies, programs, and practices will set themselves apart.

To gain this competitive edge, leaders in local governments across the United States can lean on the Certified Welcoming program and Welcoming Standard framework areas to measure, promote, guide, and validate welcoming efforts.

BACKGROUND

Welcoming America launched Certified Welcoming in 2017 as a formal designation for local governments¹ to demonstrate their welcoming values through policies, programs, and practices. Since the program's launch, more than two dozen communities in the United States have undertaken the rigorous process to become Certified Welcoming. Outcomes of Certified Welcoming include accountability and institutionalization of work, opportunity to identify gaps and prioritize next steps, and ability to raise the profile of the locality for investment in welcoming and immigrant inclusion work.

In 2020, Welcoming America embarked on a multi-year project to update the Welcoming Standard and Certified Welcoming to ensure they continue to provide an accurate and user-friendly roadmap for places seeking to become truly welcoming places for immigrants, refugees, and all residents. This was done in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders from local government, academia, nonprofits, think tanks, philanthropy, and beyond, as well as Welcoming Network members — including members that had directly participated in Certified Welcoming.

The updated Welcoming Standard includes several new criteria that better reflect the wide range of institutions and policies that influence day-to-day life in local communities. It is also intended to be more accessible to communities with fewer resources and smaller populations. Because the Welcoming Standard builds upon itself, communities can now envision paths to deepen their work, gain new champions, and set new goals for becoming Certified Welcoming at any level.

¹ Local governments are places with a governing body, and include cities, towns, counties and other local government jurisdictions.

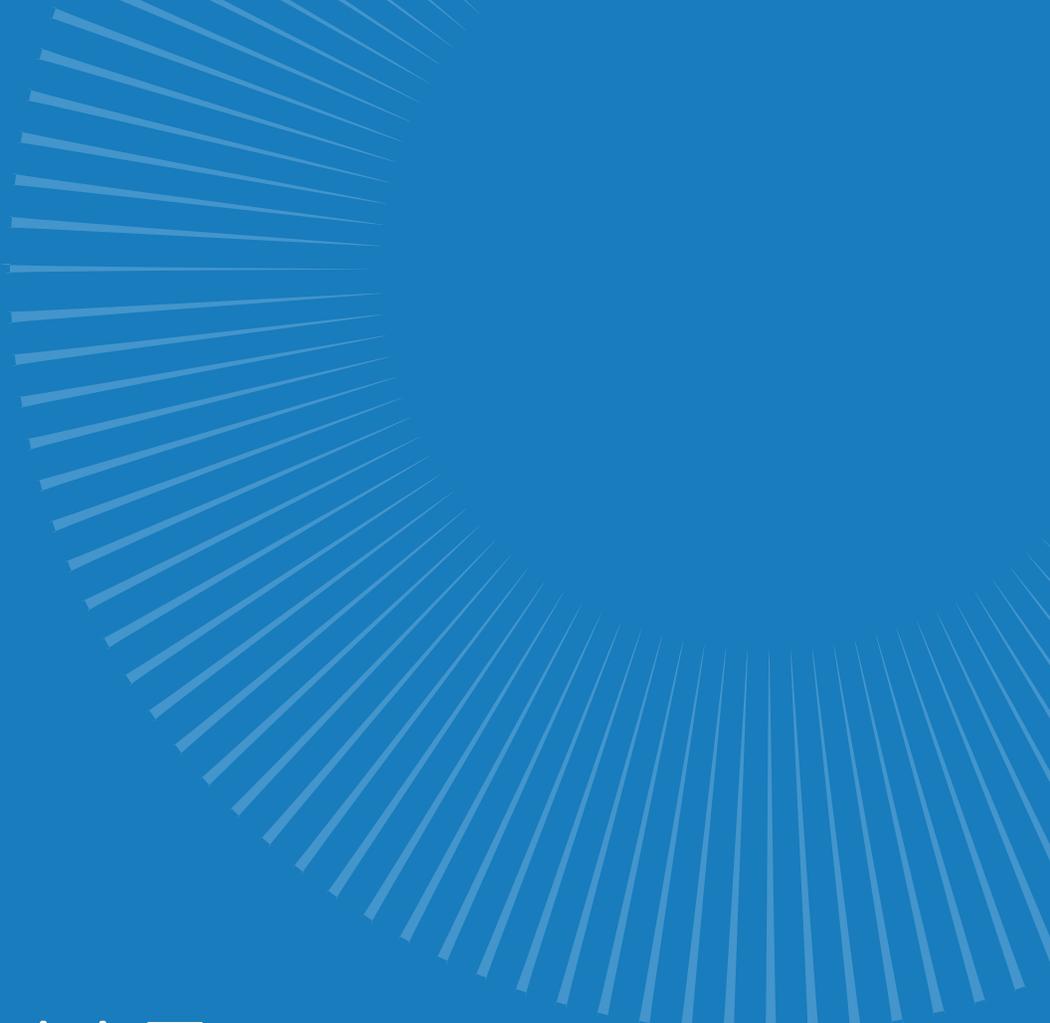
ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide outlines the second iteration of the Certified Welcoming program and the Welcoming Standard that communities must meet to earn the designation of Certified Welcoming. It is intended for those interested in learning more about what it takes to achieve the Certified Welcoming designation.

This guide also captures a new designation system for Certified Welcoming which allows places to achieve one of five star designations for their welcoming efforts. A set of criteria from the Welcoming Standard is tailored to each star designation. Far from being a “rating system,” the Certified Welcoming stars ensure that cities, towns, and counties have a chance to achieve the designation of Certified Welcoming while also providing pathways to advance their welcoming work.

Fostering welcoming and inclusive communities requires continuous work, but it is ultimately achievable. It is a worthy endeavor that we hope becomes more practical through this guide.





HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED WELCOMING

ENSURING YOU'RE READY

Places seeking to become Certified Welcoming should understand the demographics of their community.² We recommend conducting a landscape analysis on the community partners and stakeholders involved in local welcoming and inclusion work.

While Certified Welcoming cannot be achieved without the work of a wide array of community organizations and leaders, the Certified Welcoming designation is for local governments and they must be the lead applicant. Community-based organizations interested in Certified Welcoming will need to engage their local government to apply for the program.

Beyond certification, Welcoming America's Welcoming Network offers opportunities for all of its members to meet the Welcoming Standard, including support for community-based organizations when the local government is not yet ready to be involved.



² Relying solely on data from the American Community Survey or the U.S. Census can be unreliable for foreign-born populations. We recommend collecting additional information from direct service providers, schools, and other trusted community sources to determine the demographics of immigrants in your community.

OVERVIEW OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Certified Welcoming process formally evaluates and assesses your community's efforts to provide an inclusive place for all. Candidates complete an intake form and self-assessment, and receive an evaluative audit (virtual or in-person).

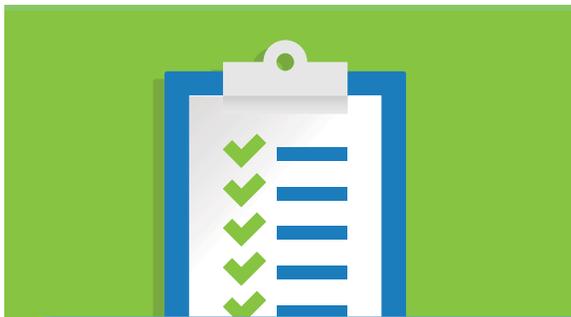
At the end of the assessment process, candidates receive a detailed final report that identifies the community's strengths and provides a roadmap for areas of growth. Depending on the certification team's findings, places either receive the Certified Welcoming designation or implement an action plan to work toward achieving their designation.

Local governments are required to be the lead applicant for Certified Welcoming; however, the designation would not be possible without the work and support of community partners. Community partners — such as refugee resettlement agencies, chambers of commerce, and local schools — typically contribute to the certification process by providing information for the self-assessment and being interviewed during the audit.

From start to finish, the certification process typically takes six months to one year.

Certificates are valid for four years. To maintain certification, local governments must continue to meet the indicators in the Welcoming Standard, address any observations in their certification report, and update their self-assessment before their certificate expires.

PROCESS



1

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Localities seeking certification are required to conduct a self-assessment in which they gather evidence and information to demonstrate compliance with the Welcoming Standard. At this stage, localities select the star designation they would like to be evaluated for.



2

DESKTOP REVIEW / ANALYSIS BY CERTIFICATION TEAM

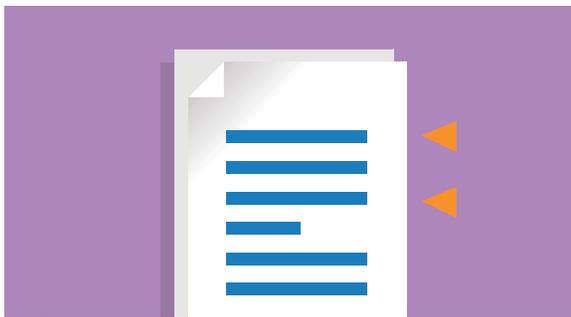
Once the self-assessment is complete, the certification team reviews it and conducts a preliminary analysis of compliance. With this initial assessment, the certification team may request additional evidence or flag items for the audit interviews.



3

AUDIT

The audit, either virtual or in-person, consists of a series of interviews with stakeholders, including community leaders, government employees, and representatives from community-based organizations. The audit provides an opportunity to verify information provided in the self-assessment, gather additional evidence, and gain a better context and understanding of the landscape of local welcoming and immigrant inclusion work.



4

REPORT

The certification team will produce a detailed final report with their findings, including compliance with the Welcoming Standard, as well as local strengths and opportunities for growth. Reports often provide communities with a roadmap for identifying priorities and next steps to continuously improve work.



5

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE, IF REQUIRED

The report identifies any non-compliant criteria and localities have the opportunity and additional time to provide evidence to demonstrate compliance to gain certification.



6

CERTIFICATE AND ANNOUNCEMENT

Once compliant with all of the criteria for the star designation, local governments receive their certificate and coordinate an announcement. Welcoming America communications staff provide additional support to amplify the achievement, including a press release, a quote from Welcoming America, and branded marketing materials to use.

RECERTIFICATION

The Certified Welcoming designation is valid for four years, at which point local governments must apply for recertification to maintain the designation. Recertification follows the same process as the initial certification, but typically takes less time since evidence may be carried over from the previous designation. If localities would like to be evaluated for a new star designation before their certification cycle has ended, they may reapply and go through the same process.

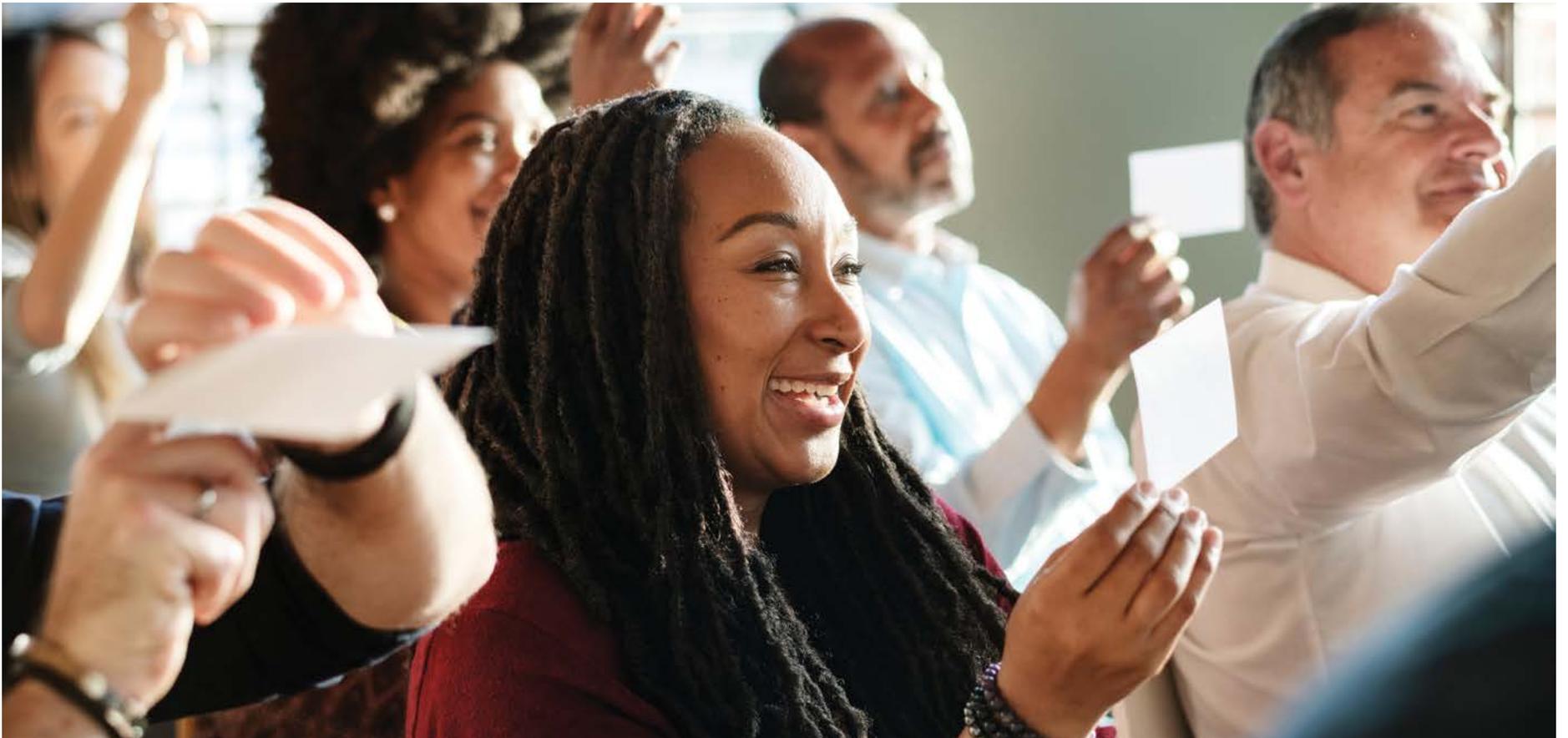
PRICING

Please refer to CertifiedWelcoming.org for our current fee structure.

For scholarship opportunities, send an email to certified@welcomingamerica.org.

CONTACT INFO

Contact certified@welcomingamerica.org for any questions or to get started.





CERTIFIED WELCOMING CRITERIA

WELCOMING STANDARD FRAMEWORK AREAS

The seven framework areas of the Welcoming Standard underpin the Certified Welcoming process. Within each framework area are multiple criteria that local governments must fulfill based on the star designation they choose to pursue.

Following are the goals of each framework area of the Welcoming Standard. In the next section, you will find the full set of criteria based on each Certified Welcoming star designation.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (CE)

Welcoming communities ensure that all residents, including immigrants, are able to fully participate in civic life. Immigrant residents have access to democratic spaces, and shape community priorities and policies. Immigrants hold leadership roles in the community, and local institutions are invested in increasing access to leadership positions for immigrant residents.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES (CC)

Welcoming communities build connections and trust between residents. Community institutions — including local government, businesses, faith communities, and nonprofits — create opportunities and spaces for immigrant and non-immigrant residents to have constructive interactions, develop relationships, and deepen their understanding of one another. Institutions support residents in building their personal capacity to engage with people different from themselves on equal footing and in sustained ways that reduce prejudice and strengthen diverse community relationships.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (EC)

In welcoming communities, all residents — including immigrants — can participate fully in the economy. Workforce and economic development infrastructure address the priorities and needs of immigrant residents and immigrant jobseekers. Programs that support entrepreneurship, business development, and workforce development are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Local businesses are committed to diverse hiring and retaining employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.



EDUCATION (ED)

In welcoming communities, the education system ensures all students, including immigrant students, have the support they need to thrive in school and the knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. Schools and community education programs are informed by the needs and priorities of immigrant students and families, and are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Welcoming and inclusion efforts are not siloed within a single school or program, but incorporated into the schools and school districts that serve the community.



EQUITABLE ACCESS (EA)

Welcoming communities ensure local services are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Immigrant residents provide feedback to local government and community-based organizations to identify and address demographic disparities and gaps in services, and to improve access to programs, particularly in the areas of housing, health, transportation, financial services, and the justice system.



GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP (GL)

Welcoming communities have infrastructure in place to support immigrant participation, inclusion, and equity. The local government and community-based organizations regularly seek feedback from immigrant residents to understand the challenges and priorities of immigrant residents. Institutions work closely together to prioritize and build capacity to implement immigrant participation, inclusion, and equity strategies.



SAFE COMMUNITIES (SC)

Welcoming communities prioritize safety for all residents, including immigrants. Policies and practices are in place that prevent discrimination. Strong, trusting relationships are built between immigrant residents and local safety services, such as law enforcement, fire departments, code enforcement, and emergency response. Effective bidirectional communication between safety services and immigrant residents exists, and programs are in place to address implicit and structural bias. Community partnerships are built to identify and address needs and gaps in services.



CRITERIA BY STAR DESIGNATION

Following are the criteria for each Certified Welcoming star designation. All criteria must be fulfilled in order to receive the designation.

Each star designation builds on the previous star — for example, a 2-star certification requires meeting the criteria for both 1-star and 2-star.

1-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CE 1.0 Programs support immigrants in obtaining U.S. citizenship.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- CC 1.0** Local government leadership does not make public statements discouraging immigration or immigrant inclusion.
- CC 1.1** There is ongoing public communication from local government leadership about its commitment to welcoming immigrants.
- CC 1.2** Local government leadership does not make public statements directly attacking individuals or groups on the basis of their immigration status, national origin, religion, ethnicity, race, gender and gender identity, ancestry, sexual orientation, or ability.
- CC 1.3** The local government participates in celebrations of immigrant cultures, customs, and beliefs.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- EC 1.0** Programs support immigrant job seekers in finding and obtaining employment.
- EC 1.1** Programs support immigrant business owners in starting, sustaining, or growing their businesses.



EDUCATION

ED 1.0	Programs address barriers to navigating local K-12 school district(s) for immigrant families.
ED 1.1	Local K-12 school districts provide language accessible information about the school system and services available to immigrant families.
ED 1.2	Programs work to address barriers to adult English language classes.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

EA 1.0	Local government departments disseminate information on government services, resources, and public benefits with the goal of expanding access to immigrants.
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GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

GL 1.0	The local government has one or more staff positions whose responsibilities include advancing immigrant inclusion.
GL 1.1	The local government has a process in place to ensure regular communication with immigrant residents.
GL 1.2	Public libraries implement an immigrant inclusion strategy.



SAFE COMMUNITIES

SC 1.0	Local law enforcement agencies have programs in place to build trust and mutual understanding with immigrant communities and immigrant-serving organizations.
SC 1.1	Local law enforcement agencies do not have policies in place where the primary purpose is to detain or deport immigrants.

2-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING

In addition to meeting all of the 1-star criteria, places seeking a 2-star designation should also fulfill the following:



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CE 2.0 Programs support eligible immigrants in voting.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

CC 2.0 Programs bring together immigrant and non-immigrant residents to build relationships.

CC 2.1 Arts and creative placemaking programs highlight the diverse artistic traditions of the community in public spaces.

CC 2.2 Community efforts advancing immigrant inclusion are connected to broader equity work.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EC 2.0 Programs support immigrant adults in accessing additional education to obtain the skills and degrees required to meet their employment goals.

EC 2.1 Programs address barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs and business owners.



EDUCATION

ED 2.0 Programs support immigrant family engagement in their child's education.

ED 2.1 Programs support immigrant students in understanding and accessing higher education opportunities.

ED 2.2 Programs address barriers to the adult education infrastructure for immigrant adults.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

EA 2.0 Information from the local government (EA 1.0) is communicated through outreach methods that are proven to be effective in reaching immigrant residents.

EA 2.1 Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating preventative healthcare.

EA 2.2 Programs inform immigrants of workers' rights.

EA 2.3 Programs address barriers to digital inclusion for immigrant residents.



GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

GL 2.0	The local government leadership has an immigrant inclusion strategy for its departments and agencies.
GL 2.1	A group of local leaders and residents regularly convenes to advance immigrant inclusion efforts.
GL 2.2	Participants of the group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) reflect the diversity of the community in demographics, constituencies, and sectors.
GL 2.3	The group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) has a process in place to ensure regular bidirectional communication with immigrant communities.
GL 2.4	The group (GL 2.1) informs local government staff and is able to provide direct feedback on issues impacting and priorities of the immigrant community.
GL 2.5	Local recreational programs implement an immigrant inclusion strategy.



SAFE COMMUNITIES

SC 2.0	Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with local law enforcement and the legal system.
SC 2.1	Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with immigration enforcement and the detention system.
SC 2.2	Local law enforcement agencies have programs to ensure regular communication with immigrant residents.
SC 2.3	Programs connect immigrant victims and witnesses of crime with community resources.

3-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING

In addition to meeting all of the 1-star and 2-star criteria, places seeking a 3-star designation should also fulfill the following:



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CE 3.0	Programs support immigrants in developing civic leadership skills and are accessible to speakers of languages other than English.
CE 3.1	A program connects immigrants with local government departments and community resources with the goal of supporting immigrants in navigating and accessing these services.
CE 3.2	The program (CE 3.1) is accessible to speakers of languages other than English.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

CC 3.0	Local government efforts to advance immigrant inclusion are connected to and reinforce the local government's broader equity work.
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EC 3.0	Local workforce agencies have information on current and projected demographic trends of the local immigrant population and the unique barriers faced by immigrant job seekers.
EC 3.1	Programs support immigrant job seekers in communicating foreign work experience and skills for U.S. employers.
EC 3.2	Chambers of commerce and/or economic development agencies are engaged in immigrant inclusion work.



EDUCATION

ED 3.0	Programs train K-12 educators and staff on teaching and supporting diverse student populations, including immigrant students.
ED 3.1	Programs support immigrant students in accessing career technical education.
ED 3.2	K-12 schools support immigrant students that have limited or interrupted formal education to attain their educational goals.
ED 3.3	Programs provide contextualized English language classes for adult English learners.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

EA 3.0	Information from the local government (EA 1.0) is provided in languages other than English.
EA 3.1	Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing immigration legal services.
EA 3.2	Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating maternal and infant healthcare.



GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

GL 3.0	Local government departments know the demographics of the immigrant population and have access to tools to serve these residents.*
GL 3.1	The local government has a language access policy that includes interpretation and translation protocols for all externally facing government departments.*
GL 3.2	The local government provides regular training to its staff about language access requirements, available resources to provide meaningful language access, and working with speakers of languages other than English.*
GL 3.3	The local government regularly assesses language access needs and usage across departments in order to improve each department's ability to conduct business in languages other than English.*



SAFE COMMUNITIES

SC 3.0	Law enforcement staff receive regular training, over the course of their career, on working with diverse residents, including immigrants.
SC 3.1	A policy is in place that clarifies the jurisdiction and separation between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement agencies.
SC 3.2	Local emergency management agencies have a plan to inform immigrants of community emergencies, and that plan includes communication methods that are effective in reaching speakers of languages other than English.

4-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING

In addition to meeting all of the 1-star, 2-star, and 3-star criteria, places seeking a 4-star designation should also fulfill the following:



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CE 4.0	Programs build immigrant youth leadership.
CE 4.1	Programs address barriers to immigrant participation in public hearings and meetings.
CE 4.2	Programs address language access needs for participation in public hearings and meetings.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

CC 4.0	Programs that serve diverse immigrant and non-immigrant residents embed strategies to build relationships between immigrant and non-immigrant participants.
CC 4.1	Programs work to address biases about others held by non-immigrant residents.
CC 4.2	Programs work to address biases about others held by immigrant residents.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EC 4.0	Programs support immigrants in meeting occupational certification and/or credentialing requirements.
EC 4.1	Programs support immigrant business owners in accessing capital to start, sustain, and grow their businesses.



EDUCATION

ED 4.0	Programs work with K-12 schools to regularly collect feedback from immigrant families on the school environment.
ED 4.1	Programs address barriers to participation in family engagement programs for immigrant families.
ED 4.2	Programs address barriers to early childhood education and care for immigrant children.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

EA 4.0	Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating mental health services.
EA 4.1	Programs address barriers to accessing rental housing for immigrants.
EA 4.2	Local mobility planning efforts address the needs and priorities of immigrant residents.
EA 4.3	Programs address barriers to immigrants in accessing civil legal services.



GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

GL 4.0	A community-wide strategy for immigrant inclusion is set through a feedback process including immigrant and non-immigrant residents representing the diversity in the community.
GL 4.1	There is a process in place to regularly update the strategy (GL 4.0) with feedback from immigrant and non-immigrant residents.
GL 4.2	Local government departments annually set and monitor goals for immigrant inclusion informed by the needs of immigrant residents and the community-wide strategy (GL 4.0).*



SAFE COMMUNITIES

SC 4.0	Local emergency notification platforms are available in languages other than English.
SC 4.1	The local government has a process in place to identify the priorities and goals of immigrant residents for creating a safer community.

5-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING

In addition to meeting all of the 1-star, 2-star, 3-star, and 4-star criteria, places seeking a 5-star designation should also fulfill the following:



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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|---------------|--|
| CE 5.0 | Programs address barriers to immigrant participation on local government commissions and boards. |
| CE 5.1 | Programs address language access needs for participation in public boards and commissions. |
| CE 5.2 | Programs engage state and/or local election offices on barriers to voting for eligible immigrants. |
| CE 5.3 | Programs provide training to immigrant residents on accessing and using local government data and information. |



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| EC 5.0 | Programs work with relevant state agencies to address barriers to occupational licensing for immigrant residents. |
| EC 5.1 | Programs work with employers to build welcoming work environments. |
| EC 5.2 | Programs work with employers to identify and address barriers to hiring immigrant job seekers. |
| EC 5.3 | Programs work with employers and immigrant employees to identify and address barriers to retaining immigrant staff. |
| EC 5.4 | Programs address barriers to obtaining local government procurement and contracting opportunities. |



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| CC 5.0 | The local government accommodates diverse cultural and religious practices in its daily operations. |
| CC 5.1 | Programs resource initiatives that bring immigrant and non-immigrant residents together to identify and work on common interests or challenges. |



EDUCATION

ED 5.0	K-12 schools accommodate diverse cultural and religious practices in daily operations.
ED 5.1	Programs support immigrant students in accessing mental health services.
ED 5.2	Programs engage the state government on expanding access to adult education programs for immigrant adults.
ED 5.3	Programs engage the state government on expanding access to early childhood education and care programs for immigrant children.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

EA 5.0	Information from the local government (EA 1.0) is proactively written and designed with translation and the diversity of residents in mind.
EA 5.1	Programs address barriers to homeownership for immigrants.
EA 5.2	Programs work with the state government and/or regional transit authorities on expanding access to transportation, including addressing the needs and priorities of immigrant residents.
EA 5.3	Programs provide training to those in the legal system on the potential impact of criminal convictions on residents with different immigration statuses.



GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

GL 5.0	Local government departments have programs that build relationships with immigrant residents.*
GL 5.1	Local government departments have programs that address the needs and priorities of immigrant residents.*
GL 5.2	Local government departments receive training on working with diverse populations, including immigrants.
GL 5.3	Programs engage regional jurisdictions on adopting and implementing welcoming policies and programs across the region.
GL 5.4	The local housing authority implements an immigrant inclusion strategy.



SAFE COMMUNITIES

SC 5.0	Local law enforcement has one or more staff positions whose responsibilities include advancing immigrant inclusion.
SC 5.1	Law enforcement agencies publicly share data on arrests, jail population, use of deadly force, resident complaints, and language access usage and disaggregate this data by race, ethnicity, gender, and geography.



A NOTE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP CRITERIA:

Criteria in 3-5 star designations for Government and Community Leadership reference local departments as a whole. For criteria designated with an asterisk (*), all local government departments are expected to meet these criteria. To assess these criteria, we collect data from the departments listed below — if under the jurisdiction of the local government — during the assessment process. The Certified Welcoming team may also request information from 1-3 additional departments during the certification process to check compliance.

- Child protective services
- Communications
- Department(s) that enforce building, construction, fire, health, and housing codes
- Economic development
- Emergency dispatch
- Emergency management
- Emergency medical services (EMS)
- Fire
- Human resources
- Law enforcement
- Neighborhoods
- Planning
- Purchasing
- Public health
- Zoning



BECOME A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

WHAT COMMUNITIES SAY ABOUT BEING CERTIFIED WELCOMING



“Philadelphia has worked tirelessly to be a place where people — from all walks of life — feel a sense of belonging. Our greatest strength is our vibrant diversity and that is largely in part due to the tremendous and continuous contributions made by our immigrant communities. This special recognition is not the end of our efforts, but a true testament to the commitment and hard work of City departments and partner organizations.”

—**MAYOR JIM KENNEY,**
City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(Certified Welcoming since 2023)



“We wanted to change the narrative in Detroit and show that what’s happening in Detroit is different from what’s happening across the country, that we were welcoming to all. Having the Certified Welcoming designation would separate us from other communities and show that we were proud to be a community of immigrants and refugees.”

—**ROBERTO TORRES,**
Director of Immigrant Affairs and Economic Inclusion, City of Detroit, Michigan
(Certified Welcoming since 2022)



“In practice, we have always strived to be a welcoming city to all; having this recognition helps us reinforce the assertion that we are passionately dedicated to ensuring that everyone feels safe and supported here in Nashua. Our cultural diversity is what makes our city the vibrant, exciting place it is, and we are happy to share this wonderful certification news with our community.”

—**MAYOR JIM DONCHESS,**
City of Nashua, New Hampshire
(Certified Welcoming since 2022)



“First, I think the achievement of becoming a Certified Welcoming city was truly a recognition of the work that community partners put in. We got to this point together and this is how you can see if people feel like they belong: by being able to accomplish something like this together. The City of Pittsburgh and community partners know that this isn’t a one-off accomplishment or a box that is checked. The work is ongoing and our community partnerships and commitment will continue to carry forward.”

—FEYISOLA AKINTOLA,

Special Initiatives Manager, Office of Equity,
City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

(Certified Welcoming since 2021)



“Being Certified Welcoming strengthens and affirms [the welcoming work] you’re doing. It is a very rigorous process because someone else was evaluating us, telling us what we were doing well and what could be improved. The Certified Welcoming process puts a name towards that work.”

—JEANNETTE HORWITZ,

Program Coordinator, City of Dayton, Ohio

(Certified Welcoming since 2017)



“Salt Lake County has a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees from all over the world. New Americans continue to enrich our community with their unique cultures and contribute to the economic and political vibrancy of Salt Lake County. As the first county in the nation to become Certified Welcoming in 2018, regaining this designation reaffirms our commitment to welcoming and supporting immigrants and refugees. My Office for New Americans continues to identify and address barriers to the integration of our neighbors so that they can maximize their civic, social, and economic potential in Salt Lake County, where we all belong.”

—MAYOR JENNIFER WILSON,

Salt Lake County, Utah

(Certified Welcoming since 2018)

See more stories about Certified Welcoming at CertifiedWelcoming.org/blog.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The updated Certified Welcoming program and Welcoming Standard version 2.0 is the outcome of two years of conversations, feedback, and knowledge exchange with experts and stakeholders in a broad range of fields, including members of the Welcoming Network, partners, academia, local government, the private sector, and beyond. Additionally, Welcoming America received more than 100 responses on a draft of the Welcoming Standard over a 60-day public comment period. We thank everyone who contributed their support and generous contribution of time and resources.

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