

# WELCOMING AMERICA



BUILDING A NATION OF NEIGHBORS





[WelcomingAmerica.org](https://www.WelcomingAmerica.org)

**BUILDING A NATION OF NEIGHBORS**

WELCOMING  
AMERICA





# THE WELCOMING STANDARD




 Government and  
Community Leadership

 Equitable Access

 Civic Engagement

 Connected Communities

 Education

 Economic Development

 Safe Communities

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# CERTIFIED WELCOMING 2.0



# WHY GET CERTIFIED?

Raise profile of locality for investment in welcoming and immigrant inclusion work

Accountability and institutionalization of work

Opportunity to identify gaps and prioritize next steps

Benchmark locality against a national standard



# 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.

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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.



“

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.

**Kate Snyder**

Mayor, City of Portland Maine

”

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“

It reinforced the fact with our stakeholders that they were real partners in this. That we were counting on them for what we'd be doing going forward. [...] Strengthened their commitment to both welcoming and their bonds to the city itself.

**Matt Joseph**

Commissioner, Dayton, Ohio

”

# CERTIFIED WELCOMING

Baltimore, MD

Boise, ID

Charlotte, NC

Dallas, TX

Dayton, OH

Detroit, MI

Erie, PA

Lancaster, PA

Louisville, KY

Lucas County, OH

Montgomery County, MD

Nashua, NH

Philadelphia, PA

Pittsburgh, PA

Portland, ME

Salt Lake County, UT

San José, CA

Toledo, OH

IN PROGRESS

Champaign, IL

Cuyahoga County, OH

New Orleans, LA

Salem, MA

San Mateo County, CA

Tulsa, OK

Make it official —  
become a  
Certified Welcoming  
city or county



[CertifiedWelcoming.org](https://www.CertifiedWelcoming.org)



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DISTRICT 4, MIDTOWN  
ASSEMBLY MEMBER RIVERA

WHERE THE  
MUNICIPALITY  
STANDS  
1 STAR CERTIFIED

A SUPERFICIAL SELF ASSESSMENT



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- 1.0: Programs support immigrants in obtaining U.S. Citizenship
  - Check! The Alaska Literacy Project hosts Citizenship Classes to support those who are seeking U.S. Citizenship.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- 1.0: Local government leadership does not make public statements discouraging immigration or immigrant inclusion.
  - Check! No such public statements exist by current local government leadership.
- 1.1: There is ongoing public communication from local government leadership about its commitment to welcoming immigrants.
  - Check! Every year, the Anchorage Assembly approves a resolution celebrating Welcoming Week and in September of 2023, will hopefully approve the first annual resolution celebrating National Immigrants Day.

# CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- 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.
  - Check! No such public statements exist by current local government leadership.
- 1.3: The local government participates in celebrations of immigrant cultures, customs, and beliefs.
  - Check! Various Municipal departments actively participate and table at a variety of community celebrations like Flag Day or Dia del Nino.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1.0: Programs support immigrant job seekers in finding and obtaining employment.
  - Check! Nine Star provides education and employment services for immigrant job seekers.
- 1.1: Programs support immigrant business owners in starting, sustaining, or growing their businesses.
  - Check! The Anchorage Community Land Trust has a Set Up Shop program and hosts Grow North Farms, both programs which help immigrant business owners and entrepreneurs.

# EDUCATION

- 1.0: Programs address barriers to navigating local K-12 school district(s) for immigrant families.
  - Check! Catholic Social Service's Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services provides those navigation services for immigrant families.
- 1.1: Local K-12 school districts provide language accessible information about the school system and services available to immigrant families.
  - Check! The Anchorage School District has an English Language Learners Program to help meet the needs of students and families.

# EDUCATION

- 1.2: Programs work to address barriers to adult English language classes.
  - Check! Alaska Literacy Project has worked to address barriers for English language classes, including eliminating tuition and book fees, offering classes in a variety of formats, including online and in-person, and offering classes at various times.

# EQUITABLE ACCESS

- 1.0: Local government departments disseminate information on government services, resources, and public benefits with the goal of expanding access to immigrants.
  - Check! Various Municipal departments actively provide language access services and there is a current effort led by several Assembly members to ensure all departments are following federal regulations to provide adequate language access.

# GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY L

- 1.0: The local government has one or more staff positions whose responsibilities include advancing immigrant inclusion.
  - Check! One of the roles of the Municipality's Chief Equity Officer is to ensure equitable access to Municipal services, including advancing immigrant inclusion and access.
- 1.1: The local government has a process in place to ensure regular communication with immigrant residents.
  - Check! The Anchorage Assembly has a robust website that is updated regularly. In addition, a variety of press releases, town halls, newsletters and other communications go out into the community and to various community organizations.

# GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY L

- 1.2: Public libraries implement an immigrant inclusion strategy.
  - Check! The Anchorage Public Libraries strategic plan speaks to inclusion and equity as critical parts of the work in our libraries. In addition, the Mountain View Branch of our library system is a part of the CSS RAIS tour of facilities of interest for immigrants within their program. All individuals who take part in that tour are given a library card.

# SAFE COMMUNITIES

- 1.0: Local law enforcement agencies have programs in place to build trust and mutual understanding with immigrant communities and immigrant serving organizations.
  - **NOT DONE!** The Anchorage Police Department previously had an outreach program in partnership with CSS RAIS where they taught a class to immigrant communities and built trust between law enforcement and these communities. This program should be reinstated.
- 1.1: Local law enforcement agencies do not have policies in place where the primary purpose is to detain or deport immigrants.
  - Check! No such policies currently exist within the Anchorage Police Department.

# SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

- Form a sub-committee to do a deeper dive version of a self-assessment.
- Author a resolution to send to the Anchorage Assembly to support the process for the Municipality to become a Certified Welcoming City and to task this committee with spearheading that effort.