Newcomers Playbook

A GUIDE TO WELCOMING NEWCOMERS INTO YOUR CITY

April 2024



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Introduction

Welcome to the City and County of Denver's Newcomers Playbook! We are thrilled that you are interested in creating a welcoming environment for migrants in your city. As part of Denver's welcoming approach, we use the term "newcomers" to refer to migrants, recognizing that they are new to our city and embracing a more inclusive language. This playbook is a guide divided into two sections, offering recommendations and strategies for successfully integrating newcomers into your city.¹

Since December 2022, Denver has welcomed and assisted nearly 42,000 newcomers from the U.S. southern border, providing them with essential services and resources. Our efforts include helping people with onward travel as needed, offering temporary shelter, facilitating the search for permanent housing, and providing vital support in terms of medical and mental health, work authorization, legal assistance, school enrollment, and more.

In April 2024, Denver introduced the new Denver Asylum Seekers Program. This program will open its doors to approximately 1,000 people currently in our newcomer shelter system. We will connect newcomers to housing assistance options for up to six months from the date of their asylum application. Additionally, newcomers will be connected with an innovative pre-work authorization readiness program called WorkReady. They will be able to collaborate with case managers to ensure they are moving on the right track and be connected with workforce training opportunities via partnership with nonprofits, local businesses, educational institutions and training organizations. The program also includes access to language instruction, career pathway explorations, industry-recognized credential training and work-based learning opportunities.

As Denver continues to learn and evolve with its newcomer response efforts, this playbook will be updated with new strategies. In its current form, it serves as a framework for supporting new arrivals in your city. Thank you for joining us in this important effort, and we hope this playbook becomes a valuable resource for your community.

¹ Additional best practices and resources for cities are available in the <u>U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Receiving Communities Toolkit</u>.

SECTION 1

Step 1: Meet with key state, city agencies, community partners, and relevant organizations

Partnerships are key in this work. Specifically, communication and coordination between state and city officials, community organizations, volunteer groups, and schools. These partnerships are vital because they help achieve the most success possible and avoid doing the same work twice or wasting time and resources.

Here are some important steps to consider when convening different partners:

- 1. Schedule weekly or regular meetings with your State Human Services Department and other government entities that provide funding or support for the efforts.
- 2. Keep a document or log of existing community partners and their areas of support. This will help identify how they can contribute to the work and what support can be requested from them. For example, a food bank organization may support with meal and emergency snack support.
- 3. Organize stakeholder meetings based on relevance and category. Create groups like a "Sheltering Provider Workgroup" to discuss challenges, updates, and potential areas of support or a "Newcomer Advisory Council" to discuss policies and future plans for a more permanent program.
- 4. Create a mechanism or meeting to collect feedback from community partners who are doing the work. For example, Denver has a weekly stakeholder meeting to provide updates on policies and processes and to receive feedback.

Step 2: Make decisions and clearly document key policies and procedures

Create a group that has the authority to make the final decisions on policies. Once decisions are made, ensure the policies are documented in writing and include any necessary procedures or guidelines to implement the policies.

Consider covering the following content in your policies:

- Feeding and food available in shelter
- Length of stay for families and individuals
- Onward transportation
- Qualifications for your program
- Shelter rules

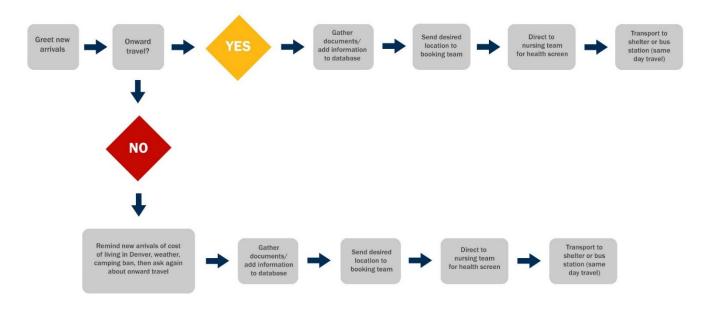


Step 3: Create a single point of entry or reception and intake center

Here are some guidelines for setting up a central location:

- ✓ **Identify a location with enough space and amenities:** Find a central place in the city where newcomers can go. Make sure there is room to accommodate those who have just arrived, those who need shelter, and those who need transportation. Provide plenty of seating, restrooms, and access to water and snacks.
- ✓ **Determine staff and hours of operation:** Decide how many people will be needed to run the center and what hours it will be open.
- ✓ Set up a database: Collect information to gather any relevant details about newcomers.
- ✓ **Determine public health needs, or other nursing support:** Set up health screens for those who are ill and/or need vaccinations.
- ✓ **Train the staff:** Provide consistent trainings on cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed approaches, established center policies, and secondary trauma resources.
- ✓ Provide donations: Ensure donations, like clothes and shoes for all sizes and seasons, are available to newcomers. They may arrive in cities during colder months when the climate is very different than their country of origins.

Example Intake Process



Step 4: Offer onward transportation to another destination

Establish a clear process to purchase tickets and that the carrier can provide services in a timely manner to avoid delays. The carrier may transport new arrivals from the center to the bus depot, or to a shelter site. Determine how frequently this transportation must occur throughout hours of operation and what other resources are available to meet transportation needs.

Step 5: Set up a database and collect information

It is very important to figure out what information to collect and why you need it. Once you know what data you need, come up with a method to collect that data and decide how to report on the information you collect. You may also consider collecting data on resources used, and the effects of policy decisions that will change as the program progresses.²

² More information about data management is available in the <u>U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Receiving Communities Toolkit</u>.

Example List of Data Points to Collect

- Names of individuals
- Family members and how you define a "family"
- Alien Registration Number if you want to access federal support that is available
- Whether or not they entered the U.S. through an appointment with the CBP One app
- Whether or not they have been given information about how to apply for employment authorization



Step 6: Shelter newcomers temporarily

A city needs to decide if they want to use their resources to temporarily shelter newcomers. Some cities rely on community service providers for assistance, such as existing shelter options or hosting families. If a city chooses to provide temporary shelter, there are several important questions to consider:

- 1. What type of facilities will be used for sheltering, such as congregate care facilities, hotels, or other options?
- 2. If there is federal support available, which settings will be eligible for reimbursement and what are the conditions?
- 3. Where is the best location for the shelter, taking into account community resources, transportation needs, public transit options, and school resources?
- 4. How long can individuals and families stay at the shelter?
- 5. How do you define a "family" for the purpose of sheltering?
- 6. How will you ensure that only registered individuals and families are staying at a specific location?

- 7. How many meals will be provided each day, and what other food, snacks, and drinks will be available and how often?
- 8. What nonprofit organizations or food distribution services can provide support and at what capacity and locations?
- 9. What types of donations, such as baby food, formula, diapers, and clothing, need to be onsite or readily available?
- 10. How many staff members are needed for each shift to support the guests, and what communication infrastructure is necessary for consistent communication between decision-makers and shelter workers?
- 11. How will you ensure that the necessary resources to assist guests in their journey are available and ready to be used?
- 12. If onward travel is offered, when and how will guests be able to access this service on demand?
- 13. Will you provide transportation within the city? If so, where will it go and how often will it operate?
- 14. If the shelter space does not provide regular cleaning, how often will the site need to be cleaned and who will perform daily touch-ups?
- 15. If showers and laundry services are not available at the site, how will you ensure these services are accessible? Will you bring in shower trailers and laundry trucks or provide resources for guests to find these services on their own?
- 16. Do you have a protocol in place with local public health authorities to handle illnesses among shelter guests, including proper use of medical resources, ongoing care, and isolation if needed?
- 17. Will families with children be sheltered in the same place as single adults, and if so, how will you ensure their safety?
- 18. Will you need security or law enforcement assistance at the shelters to ensure the safety of guests and staff?
- 19. What will be the rules for those staying in the shelter? How will these rules be communicated, including discharge criteria and consequences for rule violations?

Temporary Sheltering Intake and Discharge

When there was a sudden increase of newcomers from the U.S. southern border, Denver activated its Emergency Operation Center (EOC). This led to the activation of the Department Operation Center (DOC or Mass Care DOC), which involved deploying staff from the Department of Denver Human Services and other city departments to set up and operate shelters and engage with guests.

Step 7: Communicate early and often

Effective communication is essential for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for newcomers. By communicating early and often, you can help newcomers navigate their new city more easily and make them feel supported and connected.

- ✓ Establish clear channels of communication: Create a communication plan that includes multiple channels to ensure effective and efficient communication with newcomers. Provide contact information for key individuals who can address their questions and concerns. Your communications plan may quickly evolve from crisis communications to strategic communications as your city stabilizes with newcomer response efforts.
- ✓ Share important information: Regularly share important information with newcomers, such as local resources, upcoming events, and important deadlines. This can be done through media, newsletters, flyers, signage, social media, websites, etc. In Denver, many newcomers connect and organize via WhatsApp. No matter the platform, ensure that information is easily accessible and available in multiple languages as needed.
- ✓ Be proactive in addressing concerns: Encourage newcomers to voice their concerns and questions. Actively listen and respond promptly to their questions, providing clear and helpful information. Create a supportive atmosphere where newcomers feel comfortable reaching out for assistance.
- ✓ Foster a sense of community: Facilitate opportunities for newcomers to connect with each other and with established residents. Encourage the formation of social groups, organize community events, and promote local initiatives that foster a sense of belonging. This can help newcomers feel more comfortable and integrated into their new city.
- ✓ Conduct an audit and solicit feedback to adapt: Develop an audit of all communications to ensure they are effective. Incorporate feedback from newcomers and other stakeholders to identify areas for improvement in communication. Use this feedback to adapt and enhance your communication strategies. Continuously evaluate and refine your communication efforts to ensure they are effective and meet the needs of the community and staff.
- ✓ **Provide language support:** If there are language barriers, provide language support services, such as translation services or language classes. This can help newcomers overcome language barriers and facilitate better communication with local support networks.

Step 8: Enhance bilingual Spanish-speaking staff

Having Spanish-speaking staff working with newcomers is important for several reasons:

- Language barrier: Many newcomers from the U.S. southern border may have limited proficiency in English. Having Spanish-speaking staff enables effective communication and understanding between staff and newcomers, ensuring that their needs, concerns, and experiences are properly conveyed and addressed.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Spanish-speaking staff can provide a culturally sensitive and inclusive environment for newcomers. They can understand and appreciate the cultural nuances, traditions, and challenges

- specific to the communities from which the newcomers come. This understanding fosters trust, empathy, and a sense of belonging.
- Access to services: Spanish-speaking staff can assist newcomers in accessing various services, such as
 healthcare, education, legal support, and social services. They can provide guidance, interpretation, and
 advocacy, ensuring that newcomers can navigate these systems effectively and receive the necessary
 support.
- Information and orientation: Spanish-speaking staff can provide accurate and culturally relevant information and orientation to newcomers. They can explain local laws, regulations, and processes, and help newcomers understand their rights and responsibilities in their new environment. This empowers newcomers to make informed decisions and actively participate in their integration process.
- Trust and comfort: Language can be a significant barrier when newcomers are seeking assistance or sharing their experiences. Spanish-speaking staff can help create better outcomes in terms of mental health, social integration, and overall well-being.
- Bridging communities: Spanish-speaking staff can act as bridges between newcomers and the larger community. They can facilitate connections, networking, and relationship-building with local community members, organizations, and resources. This promotes social cohesion and encourages a welcoming and inclusive community for newcomers.

Step 9: Establish a city budget, track expenditures, and monitor funding

One important aspect to consider is creating a specific internal newcomer budget dedicated for financial planning and tracking purposes. This allows for better transparency and accountability in managing the funds allocated for the support of newcomers. Additionally, it is crucial to keep track of the sources and uses of funding to ensure proper reimbursement from state and federal partners. This helps in maintaining financial stability and sustainability for the program.

Another important step is to procure and implement strategic procurement for sheltering, food, case management, and other services. By carefully selecting and contracting with service providers, cities can ensure that the needs of newcomers are met efficiently and effectively. These measures not only contribute to a well-organized and coordinated response but also demonstrate a commitment to providing comprehensive support for newcomers in a systematic and responsible manner.

Step 10: Setup a newcomer monetary fund through a foundation

A newcomer fund can mobilize philanthropic interest, address immediate needs, and provide ongoing support for newcomers. Here are some reasons to setup a fund:

• **Integration:** The fund can help newcomers with resources such as language classes, job training, and cultural programs, which assist in their integration into the community.

- Impact and grantmaking: A fund can grant money to local organizations that provide essential services to newcomers. These services may include emergency shelter, transitional housing, basic needs like food and clothing, and wraparound services such as translation and interpretation. To ensure funds are being distributed to the right organizations, a steering committee can be setup.
- **Economic growth:** By supporting newcomers in finding employment and starting businesses, the fund contributes to the economic growth of the city. Newcomers bring diverse skills, experiences, and entrepreneurial spirit, which can enhance a city's economy.
- Diversity and cultural enrichment: Newcomers bring cultural diversity to the city, enriching the local arts, food, and traditions. The fund can support cultural events and activities that celebrate this diversity and promote cross-cultural understanding.
- Talent attraction and retention: By providing support to newcomers, the fund helps attract and retain talented individuals who may contribute to various sectors such as healthcare, technology, and education. This can have long-term benefits for the city's growth and development.

Step 11: Manage in-kind donations and distributions

To determine the need for donations, it is important to consider the following:

- Identify the specific items that are needed and establish a way to inform the community about these needs and request those items.
- Decide if it is best to have a single donation site and determine its location. This will ensure that there is a proper procedure for receiving, sorting, and distributing the donations, as well as managing the space and ensuring equal distribution to those who need them.
- Identify who will operate the donation location and be responsible for distribution. This is a great opportunity to involve volunteers from the community.
- Make sure there is a suitable vehicle available to help transport the donations to the appropriate locations.
- Determine what will be done with donations that are not usable or not needed in order to best meet the needs of the community.
- If there are items that cannot be fulfilled by donations, establish a mechanism within your system to provide those items.



Step 12: Assign a case manager to each family and individual

For individuals and families who are new to the U.S., understanding and navigating the various processes required for success can be overwhelming. To ensure everyone has the support they need to succeed, it is important to provide a case manager to each family and individual. This case manager will help their assigned guests in accessing legal resources, medical, dental, and mental health services, onward travel, potential workforce resources, and housing options.

Here are some things to consider:

- Will one organization provide this support, or will there be several?
- Identify who will coordinate and organize all resources and entities to ensure all sheltered individuals have equitable access to support.
- Assess whether the resources being provided to guests have the capacity to support the potential volume of individuals and families seeking assistance.



Step 13: Provide rapid housing assistance

Street outreach programs designed to serve individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness have long connected people to housing directly from the street through multiple methods. The quickest of these methods is designed to serve individuals who have employment income. It is support with move in costs for market rate housing. With the increasingly intersecting crises of homelessness and an influx of newcomers to the U.S., street outreach programs have pivoted to assist those who have exited shelters. This population is well positioned to quickly self-resolve episodes of homelessness with the intervention of move in assistance for market rate housing. Denver's program success rate with this population far outpaces the rates of success we have previously seen using this intervention with chronically homeless and other unsheltered individuals.

We encourage other cities and programs to follow a few guiding principles when activating this rapid exit intervention. First, our work is person-centered. We recognize that people are experts on their own lives and hold the keys to their answers. We encourage progressive engagement from the time that families/individuals enter shelter programs, initiating conversations about the steps towards housing stability throughout time stayed in a shelter. In all our work, we use active listening to explore everyone's strengths and natural supports. We encourage case managers to focus on solutions and connections, towards helping the individual problem solve for their situation.

Program Guidelines and Eligibility

We encourage programs pursuing this work to set eligibility as broad as possible, as funding allows. We recommend that all individuals who are staying in emergency shelter or on the streets be considered eligible for this assistance, regardless of their length of stay in the country. This is because it is most effective to resolve homelessness quickly; avoiding increased trauma and costs the longer a client stays in the homeless service system. The assistance we have found to be most successful includes covering all move in costs: deposit, first month's rent, last month's rent (if required), and all fees.

This intervention is cost saving. The average move in costs per family of the 171 families we have assisted from 10/23 - 1/24 is \$3,011. For a working family or individual to save up enough to cover this upfront

cost, it would take roughly 2 months. If cities and municipalities continue to shelter families while they save for move in costs, they will spend on average \$5,134 for 2 months of sheltering costs during this time. If recent arrivals exit shelter and move to tents in the streets, the city incurs costs for outreach services, enforcement, solid waste removal, and increased emergency room visits. Supporting newcomers with move in assistance springboards families and individuals into self-sufficiency, while avoiding the additional trauma experienced in unsheltered homelessness.

Assisting recent arrivals into leased units also ensures that they are protected by tenant's rights and are less likely to be displaced than if they are staying at a shelter. If the individual decides to leave the unit, and the unit is undamaged, the security deposit is returned to the tenant. This positions the family or individual to use the deposit for a new unit, supporting longer term housing stability.

Move-In Assistance Process Map

The process of navigating newcomers to leased units is similar to housing navigation with many other populations. Case managers first work with individuals to establish and verify income.

• If an individual is recently employed, they may be able to ask their employer for a letter of income verification, in lieu of waiting for several weeks of pay stubs. The letter should include the number of hours scheduled per week, hourly pay rate, and the employer's name and contact information. Property managers will be calling to verify the information provided in the letter.

With the income verification letter in hand, individuals can begin applying to apartments. We encourage individuals to pay for the application fees personally, as a demonstration of income, with the knowledge that they will be supported by our program with all move-in costs. If application fees are a significant burden (e.g., a family of 4 adults with a \$75 per person fee, plus a \$400 holding fee), our program will consider covering that cost.

Individuals should put their contact information into the online application and inform their case managers of their approval status. The case manager should send a letter of intent to pay to the property management company once clients are approved. A company's willingness to accept this letter should be established before the application is completed. Individuals should then be able to sign the lease and receive keys. The case manager will follow up with the property and gather documentation including a W9, an itemized breakdown of move in costs, and the signed lease.

Success of these efforts relies heavily on case managers and a housing navigators' ability to build a network of properties that accept letters of intent to pay and are open to working with the program.

Starting points for building this network include:

- Searching open units in your community at affordable price points and proactively reaching out to
 property managers to see if they are interested in participating in the effort to assist newcomers to the
 U.S. into housing.
- 2. We also depend on individuals to do their own housing searches and rely on their community connections to identify appropriate units.

- 3. We understand it to be primarily the role of the case manager to identify open units and make recommendations to newcomers about where to apply.
- 4. We understand it to be the responsibility of the individual to visit the property in-person and make sure they are interested in living there.
- 5. Individuals should complete online applications with the assistance of case managers.

It is the role of the property manager to vet prospective tenants as they would any other applicants. The property owner is responsible for verifying employment, not the case manager. This is because we want to protect the applicant's privacy by not revealing to their employer that they are seeking rental assistance.

When compared to our work with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness locally, newcomers face less barriers in the specific case of background checks. Because newcomers have recently arrived in the country, they generally do not have past evictions or criminal convictions on record, and this is beneficial when applying for housing.

What about Social Security Numbers (SSN)?

Legally, you do not need an SSN to rent in the U.S. Each adult will need to provide a form of identification. This can be from the individual's country of origin.

- If an application asks if the applicant is a citizen, mark "no" and put in a local ID number.
- If an online application requires an SSN to move forward in the online portal, we have entered 123-45-6789. Based on this, the property manager may follow up to ask for Homeland Security paperwork. Individuals will need to provide this paperwork if they want to move forward with the property. The property may be willing to accept border documents with a photograph on it in lieu of an ID. If a landlord insists on an SSN, look for a different apartment.

Considerations for Working with Newcomers

Individuals may be unfamiliar with U.S. based rental "norms". We have found that it is important to review the lease in full in Spanish, or request a translated lease from property managers. It is helpful to note that the landlord or property manager will still have the right to enter the property (with advance notice) while it is leased to the client.

We have also found it relevant to mention that only the household members on the lease can legally live in the unit. We encourage individuals to contact their property management company before adding people to the household and note that this can be grounds for eviction if ignored. We also recommend talking to individuals about rental insurance. Case managers should review with individuals upon move in the processes for turning on utilities including power, water, trash, and internet services.

After Move-In

Case managers should be sure to have on file the property's W9, itemized move in costs for the specific individual or family, as well as a copy of the signed lease, as these are standard documentation across funding sources. The case manager should follow their organization's specific processes to make sure that the property receives payment and clearly communicate any delays. Case managers should stay connected

with the property managers and landlords, to understand if demands for payment are posted at any point. A program's follow through heavily influences reputation, and our partners' willingness to continue to support newcomers. Case managers should also check in with individuals before their first independent payment of monthly rent is due to ensure they have a plan in place to meet the payment.

If individuals are not able to pay for the second month of rent, it is our recommendation that the program support with up to another 3 months of rent. We have found that this initial investment is cost saving when considering the larger costs of responding to unsheltered homelessness or assisting a family into another unit after they have an eviction on their rental background. Homelessness prevention is an important piece of our broader work. We have found that 80% of families do not need ongoing rental assistance, and 20% would benefit from 1-3 months of additional support.

Summary

Individuals often meet service providers in a state of emergency or crisis. Case managers and service providers are part of a system that gatekeeps assistance. With this knowledge, we should work to find ways to say yes to individuals and be as flexible with our assistance as our funding allows. We should keep in mind that paying application fees, for instance, may resolve an episode of homelessness more quickly for a family, and is cost saving across the homeless services system in the longer term.

Newcomers are well positioned to step into self-sufficiency with minimal assistance. We can rapidly resolve episodes of homelessness by providing move in assistance for market rate apartments. If we can scale up this intervention significantly, we can maximize flow through shelters, integrate newcomers into our communities more seamlessly, and minimize the overall budget impact of the newcomer response on broader city services.

Step 14: Assist with workforce services

The following partners are essential for assisting newcomers with workforce services.

- 1. Legal partners who can support in the work-authorization process and complete applications.
- 2. Local, regional and state workforce development partners who can engage in discussions that allow for potential local, regional and statewide solutions.
- 3. Non-profit and community-based organizations that provide pre- and post-authorization workforce development services. If possible, support capacity building of these organizations to create a network of workforce development dedicated providers who can identify, screen and train potential job seekers.

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Comprehensive intake and upfront skills assessment.
- Data tracking system that includes reliable contact information, previous education and work experience, skills and credentials and desired occupation/industry.

- This data system should also provide information regarding timeline to authorization for individuals so more intentional employer outreach can occur.
- Individual case management and individual employment and training plans.
- Pre-authorization job readiness training prior to and following work authorization.
- Necessary education remediation, English as a Second Language (ESL) training, digital literacy, financial literacy, basic job readiness (job search, applications, interviewing), etc.
- Support to obtain industry-recognized credentials, customized training, post-employment support and wrap-around services for the employee including transportation assistance.
- Customized training leading to direct employment opportunities upon work authorization (including preapprenticeship training programs).
- Opportunities for onsite work-based learning with employer partners.
- Post-authorization support including ongoing education and training until employment is obtained.
- Post-employment and retention support.

It is also important to develop a streamlined process for employers, which can include the following.

1. Create an Employer Interest Form that can be completed online and includes this information:

- o Name
- o Email
- o Phone number
- Company name and website URL
- A link to your job board
- The city you are located in
- The workforce sector you represent
- The number of positions you are seeking to fill
- Whether or not you currently employ newcomers

2. Develop a process for immediate follow up after the form is completed:

- ✓ Review and discuss information submitted through the Employer Interest Form.
- ✓ Review and discuss required employer qualifications.
- ✓ Gain a deeper level of understanding of specific workforce needs.
 - Occupations
 - Minimum qualifications
 - Required skills
 - Preferred credentials
- ✓ Discuss timeline and next steps.
- ✓ Develop a streamlined hiring process for committed employers.
- ✓ Host intentional recruitment events and direct connections based on data.
- ✓ Follow up with employer partners to determine ongoing opportunities for continuous improvement in pre-authorization job readiness offerings.

3. Identify qualified employers based on their ability to:

- ✓ Commit to hiring non-traditional talent.
- ✓ Provide quality jobs to ensure competitive wages and benefits, fostering family-sustaining incomes. Guarantee job opportunities that meet or exceed minimum wage standards.
- ✓ Support career development opportunities and tailor on-the-job training and skill-building programs to the unique needs of newcomers.
- ✓ Offer ESL support and specialized job-readiness training designed to maximize productivity and job expectations.
- ✓ Create advancement opportunities and facilitate transitions to higher-skilled positions.
- ✓ Promote an inclusive and safe workplace, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ✓ Cultivate a safe, healthy, and respectful work environment.

4. Include benefits for employers:

- ✓ Access to a pool of pre-screened and trained job candidates.
- ✓ Streamline recruitment process and prioritize access to this talent pipeline.
- ✓ Provide access to employer education and training programs to assist in workplace preparedness.
- ✓ Develop customized training programs.
- ✓ Deliver access to funding support to offset the cost of training new employees.
- ✓ Support post-employment for new employees.



Step 15: Partner with community, volunteers, and relevant organizations

An important and critical support for the newcomer response, is the various partnerships with local nonprofits, community based and faith organizations and volunteers. Below is a review of each section by the type of partnership.

NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBO)

Best Practices and Recommendations

- A good starting place is to identify an agency or office within the city that is best situated to determine
 the areas of need or gaps in resources that potential partners may fill by leveraging existing networks
 and programs that engage with similar populations.
- Outreach efforts can vary but can include both virtual and in-person opportunities, that address both city efforts and gaps in resources to be supported by the organizations. Requests made to potential partners need to be direct so they can accurately assess the funding needs and any capacity constraints.
- Identify collaborative opportunities between partners by facilitating a decentralized cohort of leaders and teams who operate on different independent programs to identify strengths that align in the common goal at recurring meetings and roundtables. Making space for these conversations allows for open dialogue on capacity constraints, trends in what they are seeing, and areas for collaboration between each other and the city. Again, the ask made to potential partners needs to be direct so they can accurately assess the funding needs and any capacity constraints.
- Coordinated efforts are streamlined by identifying and tracking an organization's programs. Work can be shared by multiple partners by coordinating who is doing what, when, and where. The integration efforts belong to the whole community, not just one nonprofit. For example, case management and resource navigation for newcomers has proven to be successful through nonprofit partners who are on the ground and have a plethora of resources available within the community as well as a line to City resources.
- Transparency through frequent and accurate communication is critical to nonprofit and CBO engagement. Transparency in all areas can establish greater trust in motivation and competence.
- Areas that need transparency include, but are not limited to:
 - **Funding:** Transparency about the constraints of funding or grant and funding opportunities are essential as nonprofits need funding to continue their work.
 - Government Priorities: The city's, Mayor's Office, and City Council priorities need to be relayed to partners to maximize strategy.
 - Decision-making: Allowing nonprofits and CBOs to engage in decision-making processes and considerations is effective engagement. Recognize partners can be the best support for understanding and dealing with the challenges.
 - City Processes: To avoid fundamental lack of understanding, governments need to be transparent and clear about city processes, organizational structure, jurisdictional responsibility, and standards.

Tips

- ✓ Recognize the funding constraints and financial capacity of nonprofits.
- ✓ Reserve a space for nonprofit leadership, stakeholders, and government to collaborate.
- ✓ Understand what nonprofits do and the value of their work.
- ✓ Update nonprofit partners on any policy updates or situational updates in a timely manner.
 - When updates are shared consistently, nonprofits can adjust and/or alert staff to a shift a priority.
- ✓ Strategize outreach to potential partners by also considering the locations of nonprofits.

 Identifying partners in immigrant or refugee dense communities will help resources become more accessible to these communities.

Resources

<u>Strengthening Relationships between Local Governments and Nonprofits</u>
How Companies, Governments, and Nonprofits Can Create Social Change Together

FAITH PARTNERS

Best Practices and Recommendations

- Engaging faith partnerships is usually done through the Mayor's Office and led by a point of contact in a
 community engagement role. Denver has seen many faith partners actively engage with the city to
 support the community with spaces to sleep and eat, with donation collection and distribution, meals,
 and general fellowship.
- General areas of support asked of faith partners include, but are not limited to:
 - Temporary Sheltering: Considerations for faith community can depend on length of shelter (overnight, during cold weather only, family's vs single adults, long term vs short term) to determine the best way forward for each community. For example, Denver faith partners have supported newcomers in overnight accommodations for up to 7 days or when cold weather reaches a certain temperature.
 - Day Sheltering: Often, city shelters for unhoused residents do not have enough shelter space to support 24/7 assistance. A "day" shelter is a consideration whereby a faith partner would offer meals, showers, phone charging, resource sharing, and/or access to donations such as hygiene kits and clothing. Hours of operation and duration, staffing, and supplies will need to be coordinated among partners.
 - Transportation/Shuttle Services: Recognizing that not every person may stay in your city, having free transportation services to and from either main transportation hubs in the city or the intake center is an invaluable support. In Denver, we continue to work with faith partners to offer coordinated transportation to and from the intake center to the main transportation hub.
 - Donation Management: Discussed in Step 6 above and in more detail below. Faith partners have utilized their space and communities to support donation drives and/or collection, sorting, and distribution sites.
 - o **General Volunteer:** Faith communities often have large congregations and communities who want to be of service in their cities. Offering volunteer opportunities on a city web page that nonprofit and community organizations can reshare has been very successful in Denver.

Tips

- ✓ Many best practices for nonprofit and CBO engagement also apply to faith partnerships.
- ✓ City fire and building departments will be key partners for building use processes and procedures.
- ✓ Many faith partners work in collaborative efforts and use each other's community for volunteer supports.

- ✓ Utilizing online sign-up tools to organize multiple efforts like Google Forms or SignUpGenius is very helpful.
- ✓ A centralized location for information such as <u>Denver's newcomer support website</u> is helpful to direct efforts.



Donations

Donations are critical to the success of providing newcomer support and need to be effectively organized and planned out. Ensuring that there is a project manager and/or leader at the forefront of the oversight of donation collaboration is critical. This support is also referenced above in Step 6. There are two areas to consider when looking at donations: Physical donation goods and financial donations.

Best Practices and Recommendations

Physical Donation Goods:

- Establish a location space to allow for storage and operations. For example, faith partners in Denver have been a key player as their buildings often have the necessary space to support with an operation.
- Ensure you have a selected organization(s) who you have established to either fund or can volunteer to do this work. Once selected, guidance on volunteer requirement, operations (hours and duration of the site) and logistics (trash pick up and volunteers) of location may be needed.
- Work with community provider stakeholder groups and shelter operators in identifying needs and donation number goals. For example, coats, socks, and hygiene items. When possible, within your shelter sites, try to allow for some storage space for urgent needs to then be replenished as needed.
- Create a process in partnership with the shelters in which staff and/or newcomers can request donated items. Ideally if you could set this up electronically, it will allow for easier tracking and coordination between non-city and city partners.
- Develop a section within your web page that is specific to newcomer support so that people can easily access information on how to donate.

Financial Donations:

Decide and create a process on how you plan to request and seek out financial donations and how you
will receive them. For example, Denver decided to focus on the <u>Newcomers Fund</u> through a foundation.
We also promoted other financial donations from advocates and community via specific community

- partner links and funds helping do the work. Amazon Wish Lists through nonprofits have also been successful for specific needs.
- Again, develop a section within your web page that is specific to newcomer support so that people can easily access information on how to donate.
- When possible, work to set financial goals and communications around what your target is and what you are trying to accomplish.

Volunteers

Volunteer coordination is an integral part for nonprofits, CBO, and faith partner engagement and efforts. It will be important to decide where your areas of priority for volunteer recruitment should be with the primary goal of being able to connect public volunteers to opportunities that support and expand nonprofit or CBO responses to a particular need or gap.

Best Practices and Recommendations

Please keep in mind the following best practices when working through volunteer coordination:

- Assign a lead liaison/project manager to help coordinate and lead this area of work.
- Establish a central location on your website so that volunteer opportunities can be easily viewed and accessible. For example, Denver has also utilized this platform: justserve.
- When doing large community type events or mobilization efforts consider working with and/or contracting a community partner to lead the volunteer recruitment and training. For example, Denver worked with <u>Spark the Change Colorado</u>.
- Create a documented volunteer process that includes onboarding and post volunteer experience.
- Establish and document current volunteer needs and opportunities. For example, what skills they may need such as language, physical ability, timelines, and location.
- Work with your legal team and community partners on disclosures or signed documents needed by
 volunteers. There are specific volunteer roles that may require a background check, so it will be
 important that you identify these roles in advance and incorporate this into your onboarding process
 when necessary.
- Create a community engagement process and platform to recruit volunteers on all levels and share information. Ideally, you may want to also incorporate your community partner links who are also doing the work and how people can volunteer with those specific organizations.

Tips

- ✓ Avoid relying too heavily on volunteers for core functions, like sheltering, due to time limitations, reliability, etc.
- ✓ Volunteer shift should be no more than 3-4 hours per activity.
- ✓ Instructions and directions are key to having volunteers prepped and ready to help.
- ✓ Setting clear expectations for duration of commitment is important to longevity of effort.
- ✓ Support nonprofit and CBO efforts by encouraging the public to volunteer directly with the organization.

SECTION 2

Different approaches based on immigration factors

Support Specific to Temporary Protected Status (TPS)-Eligible Newcomers

To assist newcomers who are eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), legal clinics can be held to help newcomers file and obtain the necessary work authorization documents. The process could be expedited by coordinating with local federal immigration authorities to rapidly process applications. Additionally, mailing addresses are identified where individuals facing housing stability issues can receive mail from immigration authorities. Collaboration with other jurisdictions and stakeholders is done to secure funding sources, organize legal clinics, and identify eligible newcomers. Once work authorization is received, support can be provided to newcomers through employment fairs and job placement services.

Support Specific to CBP One

To assist newcomers who have been granted CBP One parolee status, this status is identified upon arrival through an online I-94 search. Work permit application clinics can then be held to help individuals file for parolee work authorization documents. This process is expedited by coordinating with the federal government. Additionally, mailing addresses are identified where individuals facing housing stability issues can receive mail from immigration authorities. Once work authorization is obtained, support is provided to these newcomers through employment fairs and job placement services.

Support Specific to Asylum Seekers who Entered Without Inspection

To support newcomers seeking asylum, Denver provides education on eligibility and holds legal clinics to help them file asylum applications for each family member. We may also partner with legal service providers to assist with the application process. After five months, we hold legal clinics to file for work authorization documents for asylum applicants. During the waiting period for work authorization, we offer intensive support to asylum seekers since they are not legally allowed to work until six months after filing their application. This support includes work readiness training such as ESL classes, digital literacy classes, resettlement classes, industry certifications, on-the-job training, and more. We ensure that these offerings are accessible by arranging transportation, child care, flexible schedules, multiple locations, onsite verbal training, cell phone and Wi-Fi access, and necessary technological equipment. Additionally, we provide assistance to asylum seekers waiting for work permits, such as rental assistance, food and personal item support, and case management. Once work authorization is received, we continue to support newcomers with employment fairs and job placement services.

Conclusion and Acknowledgment

We hope that the City and County of Denver's Newcomers Playbook proves to be a valuable resource for other cities that are embarking on a new chapter in supporting newcomers and providing these services at a large scale. In this landscape, we know things change all the time, so we will keep updating this playbook as needed. We would like to say a big thank you to all the Denver offices, departments, agencies, and community partners who have been at the frontlines of our city's newcomer response. These offices, departments, and agencies were particularly instrumental in creating this playbook:

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