



Building Sponsorship Infrastructure in States: Creating the Conditions for Success



Featured Image: Sponsor Kyle Varner welcomes newcomers from Venezuela to Spokane, Washington. Photo by Welcome.US / Luis Velez.

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1. Introduction & Executive Summary

As the number of people forcibly displaced globally reaches historic levels, the Biden Administration has introduced several programs to respond to this need and increase the ability of everyday Americans to sponsor people seeking safety. Announced in January 2023, the [Welcome Corps program](#) (also known as private sponsorship) allows U.S. citizens and permanent residents to provide logistical, social, and financial support to refugees in their first few months in the United States. Sponsors either apply to be matched with a refugee already in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) pipeline or, starting later this year, to sponsor someone they know (sometimes also called “Naming”), identifying a specific eligible refugee they would like to welcome. In addition to the Welcome Corps, there are also humanitarian parole programs that allow people from Ukraine, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to come to the United States through temporary humanitarian parole if they have a sponsor that will provide financial and other support after arrival.

Sponsorship programs can bring communities together, increase access to social capital, support accelerated economic integration, and foster more welcoming attitudes towards refugees and other forcibly displaced people. However, while the Welcome Corps and other sponsorship programs have provided a lifeline for many displaced people, they can also present new challenges for states and cities as they seek to accommodate newcomers and help them integrate successfully into life in their new communities. Although traditionally resettled refugees commonly access support services through programs run by resettlement agencies, those who come through different forms of sponsorship may not be aware of or have ready access to programs like English language classes, employment services, and other offerings from resettlement agencies or other nonprofits that help them orient to their new homes. Recognizing this gap, particularly in the context of the [Uniting for Ukraine](#) humanitarian parole program (U4U), several states have implemented initiatives to raise awareness of available programs and services, while also exploring alternative means of providing services to complement or add capacity to overwhelmed resettlement agencies.

U4U and other sponsorship programs have provided an important opportunity to glean lessons-learned and apply them towards establishing an infrastructure in states to create the conditions for successful sponsorship. In order to capture state-level efforts to support sponsorship, this report elevates best practices, highlights some key challenges, and shares recommendations on how the U.S. government, states, and national and local partners can collaborate toward ensuring the success of these programs and the newcomers they serve.

The findings and recommendations in this report result from a survey of State Refugee Coordinators (SRCs) conducted in early July 2023 by the Refugee Advocacy Lab, Welcome.US, and the Community Sponsorship Hub. The survey was distributed through the State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement (SCORR) network of SRCs across the country. The purpose of the survey was (1) to gain a deeper understanding of some of the challenges faced by states in meeting the needs of sponsored newcomers; and (2) to learn more about the initiatives SRCs have undertaken or plan to undertake to build out the infrastructure necessary to support sponsorship, and specifically, private sponsorship. Twenty-three SRCs responded to the survey, sharing thoughtful and innovative proposals to facilitate sponsorship in their states, as well as suggestions on further support they need from the U.S. government as well as national, state, and local partners as they seek to accommodate newcomers arriving through various sponsorship programs.

Already, several states have started creating state-specific resources for private sponsors, hired sponsorship coordinators to provide the public with information and services, provided training to public benefits eligibility workers, and developed plans to mobilize and encourage members of the public to become sponsors.

At the same time, several SRCs expressed that they needed more funding to build out infrastructure within their own offices and throughout the state to support private sponsorship or sponsorship generally; more flexible state government procurement processes so that they can hire staff and vendors to provide services; and more transparency and data sharing from the U.S. government so that states are prepared to adequately serve newcomers in non-resettlement or remote locations, among other challenges.

Based on their feedback, this report proposes several recommendations. These recommendations offer suggestions to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and other federal agencies, state and local governments, the Welcome Corps consortium partners, and resettlement agencies on how they can collaborate towards creating an environment where sponsors and the newcomers they are welcoming can succeed in their new home. With the imminent roll-out of “Naming” of the Welcome Corps program, another expansion of private sponsorship, it is imperative that lessons-learned from existing sponsorship programs are adapted and applied to ensure that sponsored newcomers have equitable access to the same services offered through traditional resettlement.

What is Sponsorship?

Sponsorship generally refers to an individual or group of individuals who commit to helping eligible individuals and families seeking refuge find safety and opportunity in the United States. Unlike in traditional refugee resettlement, these individuals, rather than government-funded refugee resettlement agencies, offer the majority of support to help newcomers adapt and thrive. In traditional resettlement, refugees resettle only in communities where there is a resettlement agency. In the past two years, sponsorship has expanded to include new programs and opportunities. Over two million Americans are participating in one form of sponsorship or another. There are a few different models of sponsorship active in the United States. This report refers primarily to three main sponsorship programs:

a. Welcome Corps: The [Welcome Corps program](#) (also referred to as the private sponsorship program) is part of the [US Refugee Admissions Program](#) (USRAP) and allows groups of five or more American citizens or lawful permanent residents to sponsor individuals who meet [requirements for refugee status](#). Sponsors are responsible for independently raising funds and directly providing essential assistance to refugees for their first 90 days in their new community, including providing housing, managing access to education, healthcare, and [more](#). These private sponsor groups can be assisted by [private sponsor organizations](#). Through the program, sponsor groups are matched with a person already in the USRAP pipeline. Later in 2023, sponsors will be able to identify specific refugees that they wish to sponsor. All refugees who arrive through Welcome Corps and USRAP can access ORR and public benefits, Social Security Number/Employment Authorization Document (SSN/EAD), and a path to citizenship.

b. Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan Parole Program: The Process for [Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans](#) (CHNV) allows certain nationals of these four countries to enter the United States on humanitarian parole status and stay for up to two years, if they have a financial sponsor. Those with CHNV parole status are eligible to apply for a SSN/EAD. Cuban and Haitian entrants are [eligible for ORR benefits](#). Although Nicaraguans and Venezuelans are not eligible for ORR benefits, they may be eligible for certain other federal and state benefits.

c. Uniting for Ukraine Parole Program: The [Uniting for Ukraine Program](#) (U4U) allows displaced Ukrainian citizens and their family members to enter the U.S. through humanitarian parole and stay for up to two years, with the possibility of renewal, if they have a financial sponsor. Ukrainians in this program who arrived before September 30, 2023, [qualify for ORR and public benefits](#); at the date of the publication of this report, U4U arrivals after this date (with some exceptions) are not eligible for ORR and some public benefits. All U4U arrivals are eligible to apply for a SSN/EAD.

2. State-Led Initiatives to Support Sponsorship

In the July survey, SRCs were asked [questions](#) about the various initiatives underway to support private sponsorship, as well as the support they needed to build out the infrastructure necessary to sufficiently support privately sponsored populations. The survey was followed by interviews with seven SRCs to gain a deeper understanding of their state plans for private sponsorship. Most SRCs who were interviewed spoke on building sponsorship infrastructure that is able to respond to the needs of all the various types of sponsored newcomers in their states. However, the complex and fragmented eligibility for public benefits and ORR funding makes their work incredibly challenging.

Based on the survey results and interviews, the most common state-led initiatives are described in the following sections, illustrated with examples. Examples of less common but innovative proposals are also included (for a complete list of initiatives from the survey, please see Appendix B). Several states saw value in adopting a more holistic approach towards building infrastructure supporting the needs of various populations of sponsored newcomers (not just those that are privately sponsored), while others waited to understand more about the Welcome Corps program before allocating scarce resources. For example, many SRCs saw value in having a staff person coordinate and respond to the needs of sponsored populations, particularly in states receiving significant numbers of sponsored Ukrainians or other populations in need of various services. With local resettlement agencies often at capacity, these SRCs have had to find new ways to fill gaps in services to ensure newcomers are able to successfully integrate into their new homes.

As the Welcome Corps program becomes more established, it is likely that many of the initiatives highlighted below will evolve and grow as the needs of sponsors and sponsored newcomers are better understood by SRCs, ORR, nonprofit partners such as PSOs, state governments, and others in the refugee service provider ecosystem. This report is meant to provide an overview of the current landscape, as well as the potential future initiatives states may want to consider as they seek to support their communities in welcoming refugees.

a. Webpages, Guides, Presentations, and Toolkits

All 23 respondents to the survey indicated that they have either created informational resources, such as webpages, toolkits, or explainers, or are planning to do so

in the near future. These resources are critically important because they help sponsors navigate local networks and services, information that has traditionally been the purview of resettlement agencies. Many SRCs are currently working with the [Refugee Welcome Collective](#) (RWC) to include state-specific resources in an interactive [state resource map](#). While the map remains in progress, states like [Missouri](#) and [Michigan](#) have created their own resource pages on private sponsorship, which are linked to the map. As resources and infrastructure to support sponsorship are being developed in many states, particularly for the Welcome Corps, these initial resources provide an important starting point for communities seeking to partake in the sponsorship process.

Examples

- **Webpages:** The [Missouri Office of Refugee Administration \(MORA\)](#)'s website contains an easy-to-navigate section on sponsorship, serving as a centralized location for information on how to access services such as healthcare, refugee cash assistance, integration programs, and food assistance.
- **Explainers and Toolkits:**
 - » The [Colorado Refugee Services Program's \(CRSP\) website](#) includes a [guide](#) for Private Sponsor Groups on accessing appropriate local resources and services, and an [FAQ](#) for Colorado-based refugee service providers on how to identify and provide services to privately sponsored refugees.
 - » Vermont similarly has a helpful [guide](#) on resources for sponsored newcomers.
- **Presentations:** The Office of Global [Michigan](#) has [presented](#) on the Welcome Corps and other sponsorship to community groups in an effort to provide reliable information and encourage communities to volunteer to be sponsors.

b. Access to Public Benefits Assistance

Navigating access to public assistance is a challenging experience for the majority of applicants and can be particularly amplified for immigrants and refugees. State-issued public benefits eligibility officers may erroneously deny refugees and other eligible noncitizens access to benefits due to a lack of awareness or understanding of their eligibility. While this is an issue that can occur irrespective of whether a refugee is privately sponsored, it is more likely to occur in situations where refugees do not have the assistance of experienced resettlement caseworkers used to advocating on behalf of their clients. To prevent wrongful denials and raise awareness around benefits eligibility, state refugee offices have spearheaded efforts to provide training and resources to public assistance workers, as well as to private sponsors and refugees.

From the survey responses received, 22 of 23 states indicated that they have either undertaken efforts to train/provide resources to public benefits eligibility workers or plan to do so in the near future. Almost all of the SRCs emphasized the importance of regular communication and/or training for eligibility workers or having off applications from privately sponsored refugees and having them processed by specialized staff.

Examples

- The Office of Global **Michigan** conducts [annual training](#) for eligibility workers and has at least one person designated as a point of contact in every county. They have a policy specialist on staff and a dedicated email address for questions on benefits eligibility.
- The Bureau of Refugee Programs with the **Wisconsin** Department of Children and Families conducts active outreach to private sponsor groups once they are approved. This outreach includes connecting the sponsor group with a Wisconsin Works (W-2) center where applications for public benefits are submitted. The Bureau monitors W-2 reports for refugee recipients and reaches back out to assist with the continuation of such benefits. Refugee benefits eligibility is also part of the state's new employee training for eligibility workers, and the Bureau keeps regular contact to ensure all information from ORR is up to date in state systems.
- **Missouri** has hired two dedicated staff to process TANF and healthcare applications for refugees arriving through sponsorship programs. **Minnesota** also has a dedicated person to process these applications.

c. Sponsorship Coordinators and Navigators

Of 23 respondents, 19 indicated that they either have someone on staff or plan to hire an individual or entity to serve as a sponsorship coordinator. The role of a sponsorship coordinator can vary greatly depending on the needs and budgeting resources of a particular state. Some states have hired a dedicated individual to coordinate sponsorship-related duties, while others have made it part of an existing staff member's portfolio. A common element in the duties of sponsorship coordinators includes providing housing navigator assistance. Duties of sponsorship coordinators can also include:

- Developing state sponsorship mobilization plans, including the recruitment of sponsors and sponsor groups, and supporting the implementation of sponsorship programming for the whole state.

- Identifying and partnering with employers, faith-based groups, and Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs) to provide relevant information on sponsorship and mobilize sponsorship groups.
- Delivering relevant program information and awareness through community events, meetings, telephone conversations, and other means.
- Providing accurate eligibility information on Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) services and benefits available to eligible populations.
- Conducting outreach to ensure sponsors are aware of available community supports for those with humanitarian parole status.
- Connecting ORR eligible populations arriving via sponsorship programs to longer-term services.

Examples

- Office of Global **Michigan** Sponsorship Coordinator [Job Description](#).
- The **North Dakota** Refugee Resettlement Program is in the process of recruiting three Regional Integration [Facilitators](#) to be housed in local government in Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks.

d. Entities to Lead Statewide Sponsorship Response

Sponsorship coordination can extend beyond individual staff providing relevant information to also include the provision of direct services to sponsored refugees. Seven out of 23 state refugee coordinators surveyed indicated that they have funded or intend to fund an organization to provide services directly to sponsors or those welcomed through sponsorship. For example, **Colorado** Refugee Services Program (CRSP) recently posted a Request for Applications (RFA) for an organization affiliated with a Resettlement Agency to be responsible for the “coordination of public and private refugee sponsorship programs, as well as the support of those refugees arriving through such pathways.” This contract would include duties such as:

- Coordination and distribution of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) to all eligible cases via a flexible, non-localized method such as a vendor-issued reloadable debit card or electronic fund transfers;
- Coordination, education, and navigation of the public benefits system, specifically for cases that are defined as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligible, where applicable;
- Support of cases with identified needs following their initial sponsorship timeline through basic case management and referrals to additional services; and

- Additional support to remote placement cases, and other non-Reception & Placement type cases dependent upon need.

Examples

- **Colorado** Refugee Sponsorship Coordination [RFA](#).
- On October 16, the Office of Global **Michigan** [announced](#) that it awarded grants to two organizations to “support CHNV program sponsors in navigating the sponsorship process, and support humanitarian parolees arriving under the CHNV program to overcome barriers to integration and self-sufficiency.”
- In 2019, **Minnesota** diversified its funded service providers to include organizations outside of traditional resettlement agencies. To reduce inefficiencies and improve services, Minnesota consolidated certain services to specific providers, thus disincentivizing organizations from only serving their own clients. They partner with over 40 organizations throughout the state. This model lends itself well to privately sponsored individuals as they would have access to services regardless of whether they were an R&P client or not.
- The **Arizona** Refugee Resettlement Program indicated that they are developing partnerships with non-resettlement agencies to provide case management services to meet the needs of private sponsor groups and refugee newcomers.

i. Other forms of technical assistance for sponsors and ECBOs

Initial and 90-day follow-up assessments: The **Arizona** Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) is working closely with [WelcomeNST](#), a national Private Sponsorship Organization (PSO), to ensure private sponsors are aware of support and resources available. RRP will meet private sponsor groups to review their Welcome Plans. Upon receiving refugee newcomers, RRP conducts a Client Needs Assessment to identify current needs and enroll them in appropriate services. After 90 days, RRP will schedule a follow up with sponsors and sponsored refugees to assess their current and continued needs. This assessment will help RRP understand whether any additional services, resources, or support are needed to ensure that refugees are on a path toward economic self-sufficiency and social integration.

Working groups: Thirteen SRCs indicated they had plans to implement working groups to facilitate information sharing between sponsors and state/local stakeholders. For those who had working groups already in place, they indicated that they were established to facilitate Afghan and/or Ukrainian responses, but there are plans in place to expand or shift these groups towards including all types of sponsorship. Depending on need, these meetings are scheduled either weekly or monthly.

e. Mobilization of Sponsors

Over half of survey respondents (13) indicated that they have implemented or intend to implement sponsor mobilization plans in their states. Such plans can include information sessions, recruitment pamphlets, newsletters and email blasts, social media posts, and targeted meetings with community groups, such as faith organizations, diaspora groups, and employers.

Examples

- Office of Global **Michigan** sponsorship [flier](#) and [two-pager](#).
- **Washington's** Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance [Welcome Corps Information Session PowerPoint](#).
- While not state-led, Catholic Charities of **Wisconsin** posted promotional YouTube [videos](#) on the Welcome Corps, including one such video translated into [Rohingya](#).

f. Workforce Partnerships

Several states indicated that they have created or intend to create resources for sponsors to help them access employment opportunities. For most states, this means providing information on [employment resources](#) to sponsors. However, some states have taken further steps to create recruitment programs or partner with employers with a history of hiring humanitarian populations.

Examples

- Experiencing severe workforce shortages, **North Dakota** has been taking steps to attract newcomers to the state. While not exclusive to sponsorship programs, the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services partnered with employers and community partners to launch the [New American Employment Program](#) to offer training, employment, and other career support to refugees and other new arrivals.

g. Funding and Resourcing for Sponsorship

A central piece of sponsorship is the obligation to financially support newcomer arrivals during the early stages of their arrival. For the Welcome Corps, sponsors must raise a minimum of \$2,425 in cash and in-kind contributions per refugee newcomer being welcomed to help secure housing and other basic needs. In reality, the cost of

living in most states requires sponsors to raise more than that minimum. This can create challenges for groups who wish to be sponsors but face financial barriers. To facilitate the sponsorship of newcomers in their state, some survey respondents established websites to collect donations or instituted housing assistance programs to ease the financial barriers faced by individuals wishing to become sponsors.

Examples

- Office of Global **Michigan** established two relevant programs:
 - » [Refugee and Humanitarian Parolee Resettlement Fund](#) to help support newcomers with housing, legal services, interpretation support, education services, and support to K-12 children.
 - » [Newcomer Rental Subsidy](#) which provides up to \$500 per month for up to 12 months to refugees, asylees, SIVs, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Afghan nationals, Ukrainian humanitarian parolees, those who enter through the CHNV process, and other immigrants on a case-by-case basis.
- **Utah** established two public-private funds to support refugee resettlement in the state: The Afghan Community Fund was founded in 2021 to support the resettlement of Afghans. The second is a general [Refugee Services Fund](#).

h. Virtual or Remote Services in Non-Resettlement Locations

Sponsored newcomers will typically be resettled into the communities of their sponsors, which may or may not be considered resettlement locations. Refugees typically have access to services in these resettlement locations that are not available in other parts of a state. This has created challenges in serving Ukrainian and CHNV populations in particular and is expected to grow with the roll out of the Welcome Corps.

Eight states indicated that they were exploring virtual services as a potential solution to reaching humanitarian populations in non-resettlement locations.

Examples

- The **Missouri** Office of Refugee Administration is exploring expanding sub-contractors to provide remote English language learning (ELL) courses through a Request For Information (RFI) process. They are also looking into the state library system to assist in teaching computer literacy to refugees in these remote locations to improve access to these remote ELL courses.
- The **Minnesota** Refugee Resettlement Programs Office is in the process of setting up a helpline, which will start by serving Ukrainian but will eventually expand to serve all populations in multiple languages.

- The **Maryland** Office for Refugees and Asylees is exploring potential mobile case management models that can process benefits remotely in any part of the state.

i. Medical and Mental Health Screenings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines recommend that refugees undergo health screenings within the first 30-90 days of their arrival within the United States. The screenings include mental health screenings, physical and nutritional health assessments, immunizations, lab tests, and several other types of medical evaluations. As such, refugees must seek these screenings at specialized clinics, appointments that are typically facilitated by resettlement agencies. For sponsored newcomers, some state departments of health have created more streamlined ways to access these screenings.

Examples

- The **Minnesota** Department of Health set up an [online referral process](#), initially for Ukrainians, which now has been expanded to all sponsored populations. The referral form can be filled out by sponsors, resettlement agencies, medical providers, community based organizations, or anyone else acting on behalf of the sponsored person. The Department of Health then coordinates with the county where the patient resides to arrange an appointment.
- The **Colorado** Refugee Services Program (CRSP) has put aside \$700,000 of additional funding for what they anticipate will be an increase in rural health screening appointments from sponsorship programs. New arrivals resettled to remote locations are flagged to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), which then coordinates appointments.

3. Recommendations

There were common themes that emerged across the responses of many SRCs. Several SRCs acknowledged that their states' capacity to accommodate additional newcomers was strained due to significant numbers of asylum seekers who arrived from the southern border. In these states, local resettlement agencies and partner affiliates simply did not have the capacity to plan for or resource additional arrivals. Other challenges shared by SRCs include:

- Overburdened LRAs who are unable to provide long-term services to newcomers

who do not arrive through their R&P programs.

- Concerns that sponsors may lack awareness of services available or fail to enroll sponsored newcomers for benefits and programs for which they are eligible.
- Refugees being resettled in non-traditional resettlement areas or remote parts of the state with access to fewer resources and programming.
- Need for more information and data sharing on who is being sponsored and what support services they might require.
- Inflexible state procurement processes that do not allow SRCs to hire staff quickly enough or contract with vendors and limited funding to build out infrastructure within state refugee offices to meet the growing needs of sponsorship.
- The unavailability of ORR funding for all populations arriving through various sponsorship programs.
- A need for outreach materials, resources, training, and technical assistance on the various sponsorship programs.

Despite these challenges, and as can be seen from the many initiatives underway, State Refugee Coordinators were examining their existing infrastructure and capacitating it to respond to the unique needs of sponsored populations, particularly those coming through Welcome Corps, which is intended to be a permanent program. To better support state refugee offices, the following is recommended:

To the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and Other Federal Agencies

- **Clarify available use of existing funding:** Continue to clarify existing guidance to SRCs on what federal funding is available to help build out state infrastructure to support sponsorship programs. ORR can continue to encourage states to hire staff/entities to coordinate sponsorship programs, conduct outreach and education, train benefit eligibility workers, etcetera.
- **Remind states that they can submit a revised budget to ORR:** Remind states that ORR allows revisions to their refugee resettlement State Plans (which can include how sponsored newcomers access services). SRCs can submit a revised Cash & Medical Assistance (CMA) budget and State Plan to ORR at any time should unmet needs arise, as several state refugee coordinators indicated that it was difficult to gauge needs for the Welcome Corps program at this early juncture in the roll-out of the program. ORR can approve these updated budget requests to address unmet needs.
- **Encourage states to combine efforts in welcoming:** Combine guidance related to building out infrastructure for sponsored newcomers to include how to improve the ways states welcome all eligible newcomers who arrive outside the Reception & Placement (R&P) program. Some states may see the value in hiring an Alterna-

tive Pathways Coordinator to serve all populations who arrive outside of the R&P/resettlement agency pipeline to address the needs of populations like Cuban and Haitian entrants or asylees.

- **Work with states to offer creative solutions and flexibility around recurring challenges relating to providing services to sponsored populations:**
 - » Continue to issue guidance that helps states find alternatives to state procurement processes, which often create unnecessary barriers to add capacity through hiring of vendors or contractors.
 - » Foster conversations that ask whether states can set up contracts/payment systems that allow a list of approved vendors to bill on a case-by-case basis, which can assist states in offering services in non-resettlement locations without the burden of a full contract.
 - » Encourage states to consider funding an entity (preferably a private sponsor organization (PSO)) to lead the delivery of services and benefits.
 - » Explore national-level contracts to provide certain types of services such as telehealth, English language instruction, or other similar services that lend themselves to virtual providers to eliminate the need for a state-by-state approach.
- **Encourage participation of ORR-funded Resettlement Agencies (RAs) and local Resettlement Agencies (LRAs) in serving this eligible population:**
 - » Encourage greater willingness from LRAs to be an active partner with private sponsors, especially as they (for the most part) have received funding to do so.
 - » Ensure that RAs understand and are incentivized to serve all ORR-eligible cases in programs like Matching Grant and Preferred Communities and standardize outreach and awareness on such programs to ensure non-R&P arrivals can access them equitably.
- **Facilitate opportunities for information and resource sharing/creation:**
 - » Facilitate or participate in opportunities for information sharing on best practices and provide technical assistance to states on a regular basis.
 - » Support resources (such as through the resource hub for refugee service providers in the United States, Switchboard) to assist states in developing materials to promote awareness, education, recruitment, and mobilization efforts around sponsorship programs.
- **Coordinate with other federal partners:**
 - » Work with other federal agencies such as Administration for Children & Families (ACF) to issue complementary guidance relating to income eligibility for public assistance benefits similar to those issued by ORR.
 - » Continue to support the development of a national Office of New Americans (ONA) and the coordination and alignment of ONAs and SRC offices at the state level.
- **Continue to push for improved data sharing with states, particularly with U.S.**

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) programs, including information on the numbers and locations of sponsors in a given state.

To State and Local Governments

- **Build more flexibility into the state hiring and procurement processes** to allow SRCs to hire staff and contract with vendors on relatively short notice in order to respond to emergency situations or changing needs of sponsored newcomers.
- **Implement policies and programs that reduce barriers to housing for newcomers** by increasing affordable housing stock, funding housing assistance programs, and strengthening anti-discrimination laws.
- **Partner with state refugee offices and civil society organizations to fund and facilitate more services and integration programming** such as English language training or employment services, particularly in underserved areas seeing higher arrivals of sponsored newcomers to non-resettlement locations.
- **Establish and/or continue to adequately fund a state Office for New Americans (ONA)** to develop a whole-of-government approach to providing information, outreach, and services to newcomers.

To Welcome Corps consortium partners and Resettlement Agencies

- **Distribute best practices and messaging guidance on effective ways to mobilize the public to become sponsors.**
- **Advocate with ORR on behalf of states for flexible funding.** Besides identifying and funding Private Sponsor Organizations (PSO), states should receive additional and flexible funds that can be used to implement initiatives benefiting multiple populations across different sponsorship pathways.
- **Collaborate directly with newly hired and existing sponsorship coordinators** who can be empowered to become the sponsorship experts in their states, adding capacity for mobilization and information-sharing efforts.
- **Address concerns about private sponsor groups and newcomers being able to connect to services if they are in a location that has not been a traditional resettlement site** by clarifying that PSOs are available or identifying what other substitutes exist in remote locations that meet ORR requirements.
- **Consider a notification process that provides more than adequate advance notice for the arrival of sponsored newcomers.** Several SRCs indicated that they want to be notified at the earliest possible opportunity when a private sponsor group is formed and when sponsored newcomers are expected to arrive. This also can include ensuring that the sponsorship coordinators in states have the same access to information as SRCs, who may be too busy to focus on this issue.

- **Work with states to offer creative solutions and flexibility around recurring challenges relating to providing services to sponsored populations.** This can be done through technical assistance and material development to cover marketing, recruitment, and information-sharing needs based on the target audience of each state.
- **Continue to facilitate and participate in opportunities for information sharing and provide technical assistance to states on a regular basis.** Support resources (such as through the resource hub for refugee service providers in the United States, Switchboard) to assist states in developing materials to promote awareness, education, recruitment, and mobilization efforts around the Welcome Corps program.

4. Conclusion

As the “Naming” phase of the Welcome Corps nears its launch, and as the demand for other sponsorship programs continues to grow, it is important that states create the infrastructure needed to successfully welcome sponsored newcomers. As illustrated through the various examples in this report, making minor adjustments to the existing state resettlement system can go a long way towards ensuring that sponsored newcomers have equitable access to the same supports offered through traditional resettlement. Furthermore, when states make investments to expand services to non-resettlement locations, they not only contribute to better integration outcomes for new Americans, but also set the groundwork for a more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming state. Immigration may be the purview of the federal government, but it is state and local leaders that determine how well we as a nation integrate newcomers and support their ability to thrive.

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APPENDIX A:

Abbreviations

ACF: Administration for Children & Families, a division of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDPHE: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

CHNV: Process for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans

CMA: Cash & Medical Assistance

CRSP: Colorado Refugee Services Program

ECBO: Ethnic Community-Based Organizations

ELL: English language learning

LRA: Local Resettlement Agency

ONA: Office of New Americans

ORR: Office of Refugee Resettlement

PPP: Public-Private Partnership

PSO: Private Sponsor Organization

R&P: Reception & Placement

RA: Resettlement Agency

RCA: Refugee Cash Assistance

RFA: Request for Applications

RFI: Request for Information

RFP: Request for Proposal

RWC: Refugee Welcome Collective

SRC: State Refugee Coordinator

SCORR: State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

U4U: Uniting for Ukraine

USCIS: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USRAP: U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

W-2: Wisconsin Works

APPENDIX B:

Survey Results

The below chart summarizes the initiatives currently in place or under development in states to support sponsorship programs:

| Initiative | States (* indicates initiative is still in the planning stages) |
|---|--|
| Created a toolkit, FAQ, webpage, or another type of explainer document | AK, AZ, CA, CO, KS*, LA*, ME*, MD, MI, MN, MO, MT, NH*, NY, NC, ND*, SD, TN, TX*, UT, WA, WI |
| Created a webpage/section of webpage | AK*, AZ, CA, KS, ME*, MD*, MI, MN, MO, MT, NH*, NY, ND*, SD, TN*, TX*, UT*, WA*, WI |
| Hired a person or designated an existing staff person to coordinate sponsorship or serve as a community navigator | AZ*, CA*, CO*, KS, ME, MD*, MI, MN*, MO*, MT*, NC*, ND*, NY, SD*, TN*, TX*, UT, WA*, WI* |
| Funded an organization to meet the needs of sponsors and sponsored newcomers | AZ*, MD*, MI, MT*, NY, TX*, WA* |
| Provided technical assistance to Ethnic Community-Based Organizations (ECBOs) around sponsorship pathways | AZ*, CA*, ME*, MD*, MI, MN, MO*, MT, NH*, NC*, UT, WA, WI |
| Provided technical assistance to public benefits eligibility workers in state government | AZ, CA*, CO, LA, ME*, MD, MI, MN, MO, MT, NH, NY, NC*, ND, TN*, TX*, UT*, WI. |
| Used a virtual platform to provide services in non-resettlement locations | AK*, AZ*, LA*, MI, MN, NH*, TN*, UT* |
| Developed employment resources | AK, AZ, CA, MD*, MI, WI, MT, MO, NY, ME*, ND, CA, NH, NC*, ND, MN*, AZ, UT, WA*, WI |
| Engaged employers with a track record of hiring humanitarian populations | AZ*, ME*, MD*, MN*, NH*, ND, UT |

| Initiative | States (* indicates initiative is still in the planning stages) |
|---|--|
| Developed plans to mobilize the public to consider becoming sponsors | AZ, CA*, ME*, MD*, MI, MO*, NC*, ND, UT, WI* |
| Created a working group for sponsors/newcomers | AZ*, MD*, MI*, NC*, MT*, MO*, KS*, ND*, NH*, SD, WA, MN, UT |
| Designed a domestic screening program that can provide Domestic Medical Exams (e.g., refugee medical screenings) in non-resettlement locations | AZ, MD*, MN, MT, NH, NY, ND, WI* |
| Funded a non-governmental entity to lead statewide sponsorship response | CO*, MD*, SD, WA*, WI* |
| For Public-Private Partnership (PPP) states, pursued a waiver to offer Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) through a mechanism other than the resettlement agencies | AZ, CO, ME, MO*, TX |
| Developed a hotline for sponsors to call with questions | CA*, MN*, SD*, UT*, WA* |