

# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

*A Certified Welcoming Place For  
All Of Us To Call Home.*

## **Certified Welcoming: *Striving For Excellence*** **Strategic Plan** *2025-2027*

*Developed By*  
**Mayor's Office of  
Human Rights & Equity**





## City of New Orleans

### Mayor LaToya Cantrell



Dear Residents of New Orleans,

As Mayor of this great city, it brings me immense pride to share how we continue to affirm that New Orleans is — and always will be — a welcoming city of inclusion and belonging.

Since the beginning of my time in office, I have remained committed to building a New Orleans that says yes to diversity, unity, and to every resident regardless of cultural background. We are a world-class city, and part of what makes us so unique is the rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions that thrive right here in our neighborhoods.

Under my leadership, we have officially proclaimed Welcoming Week as a time to celebrate the invaluable contributions of our immigrant community. These contributions have helped shape the very identity of New Orleans, from our food and music to our economy and spirit. I am proud to say that our city is the first in Louisiana, and the only one in the Gulf South, to be recognized with a Certified Welcoming 1-Star Designation by Welcoming America.

This achievement is the result of collaborative work between my administration, the Office of Human Rights & Equity, community-based organizations, and our dedicated City departments. Together, we developed the Certified Welcoming: Striving for Excellence Strategic Plan, which outlines the findings, recommendations, and strategies we'll continue to use to ensure that New Orleans is a place where everyone — regardless of background — feels seen, heard, valued, and empowered.

Let us continue to work together to foster a community where every resident belongs, and where inclusion is not just an ideal, but a lived reality.

Sincerely,

LaToya Cantrell  
Mayor, City of New Orleans



# Message From The Mayor's Office Of Human Rights & Equity

We are proud to share the Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity's Certified Welcoming: *Striving for Excellence* Strategic Plan for the next two years—a bold and practical roadmap shaped by the voices, values, and visions of community and city leaders who believe in a more just and inclusive city.

This plan is the result of deep listening, reflection, and collaboration. We engaged with community leaders and City departments across the city in a series of sessions to understand the barriers to equity and the opportunities to advance meaningful change. What emerged was a shared desire for systems that center human dignity, improve access to services, and reflect the diversity of our communities.

In 2023, New Orleans earned the Certified Welcoming designation from Welcoming America—a national recognition of cities that foster inclusive policies and practices for immigrant and historically marginalized communities. This achievement would not have been possible without the extraordinary efforts of community-based organizations and City departments that partner with us to build a city where everyone feels at home.

This strategic plan builds on that momentum and serves as an action plan to move New Orleans further along the path to becoming a Certified Welcoming City with a 4-Star Certification by 2027. It outlines measurable actions, centers equity in city operations, and deepens our commitment to human rights for all who live, work, and study here.

We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed their insights, feedback, and time throughout this process. Your input has shaped a vision that belongs to all of us.

Together, we will continue to make New Orleans a national leader in equity, inclusion, belonging, and human rights—a city where everyone can thrive, regardless of where they're from or what language they speak.

We offer this plan as a shared call to action and a renewed commitment to the communities we serve. We look forward to continuing this journey with you.

With appreciation



Kahlida N. Lloyd  
Director



Shakira Cruz Gonzalez  
Equity & Inclusion Program Manager



## About The Office Of Human Rights & Equity

Established by executive order in 2019, the Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE) was created as part of Mayor Cantrell's commitment to building a more equitable, inclusive, and responsive city government. OHRE serves as the City's lead agency for advancing human rights, reducing disparities, and promoting equitable access to services and opportunities for all residents - regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, status, language, ability, or socioeconomic background.

Grounded in principles of equity, dignity, and justice, OHRE works across departments and in partnership with community stakeholders to shape policies, programs, and initiatives that uphold human rights and improve outcomes for historically marginalized populations. The office leads targeted efforts to engage with communities that face systemic barriers to full participation in civic life, including youth, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ residents, returning citizens, seniors, and long-term residents.

As part of its work, OHRE leads the City's Certified Welcoming initiative, a comprehensive effort to build a more inclusive New Orleans for all who call it home. In 2023, the City was officially recognized as a Certified Welcoming City by Welcoming America, an achievement that reflects the collective efforts of City staff and community partners to create a sense of belonging for all.

OHRE is committed to operationalizing equity within government, advocating for human rights, and ensuring that New Orleans continues to be a city where everyone—no matter their origin, identity, or language—can thrive.





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## Introduction & Background

The City of New Orleans has historically been a place of refuge for people worldwide. Since its inception in 1718, the City of New Orleans and its residents have welcomed people from diverse religious backgrounds, languages, cultures, and customs with open arms.

As a result of both voluntary and forced migration, New Orleans has been enriched by all who dwell here. As a Welcoming City and a City of Yes, New Orleans is on the path to becoming a more inclusive city for newcomers. Although changes have begun through various programs and legislation, we aim to further strengthen our goals of becoming a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community for all with the support of the Welcoming America network, city leaders, and community-based organizations.

During Mayor Cantrell's time as a council member in 2015, she advocated for a resolution creating benchmarks to establish a more welcoming city environment for all New Orleans residents. Resolution R-15-4541 acknowledges the contributions of immigrants and refugees to New Orleans, particularly the impact of the influx of immigrants following Hurricane Katrina. The benchmarks in this resolution are broken into four categories to establish and foster the following:

1. Language Access,
2. Police and Community Relations,
3. Cultural Competency, and
4. Economic Opportunity

As a continuation of these goals, Mayor Cantrell has approved and supported the Certified Welcoming designation, a Language and Communication Access Program, the Crescent City Identification Card Program, and a Certified Welcoming Task Force to improve access to services for all New Orleanians. The *Certified Welcoming: Striving for Excellence* Strategic Plan serves as an action plan to move the City further along the path of being a Certified Welcoming City and receive a 4-Star Certification by 2027.

In 2022, OHRE received a letter of recommendation from Home is Here NOLA, a community-based organization focused on cultivating communities of support with newly arriving immigrants in the Gulf South, to join the Certified Welcoming initiative through Welcoming America. **Welcoming America** is a nonprofit organization leading a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs, including immigrants. Through the Certified Welcoming program, cities and counties have the opportunity to review their programs, policies, and resources to ensure they're accessible to all residents – including immigrants and refugees. Part of this process includes a city-wide self-assessment, an audit, a report, and a certification. OHRE conducted the city's assessment in 2022, involving community-based organizations and City departments to review existing policies, programs, and services through the lens of the Welcoming Standard.

- ✔ Government & Community Leadership
- ✔ Civic Engagement
- ✔ Connected Communities
- ✔ Economic Development
- ✔ Safe Communities
- ✔ Education
- ✔ Equitable Access

These criteria have provided the City of New Orleans the opportunity to review its practices at the institutional level to ensure equitable and meaningful access to all residents.





## What Makes A Welcoming Community?



Welcoming communities ensure that all residents, including immigrants are included and encouraged to participate civically, socially, economically, and culturally. This means that all residents, including immigrants, have confidence in their local governments because trust, transparency, and communication demonstrate that the government is responsive and responsible in meeting their needs. In welcoming communities, stable relationships exist between long-term and native residents, the local government, and immigrants. It is our understanding, and belief, that a welcoming community encompasses all residents, and leaves no one behind or feeling excluded, regardless of who they are, or where they come from.

A welcoming community ensures that equity, inclusion, and access are values represented in policies, programs, services, and resources provided to city residents.



# Welcoming Standards

## Government & Community Leadership

For Welcoming Communities, the **Government & Community Leadership** standard describes an interconnected relationship between institutions, including local government, to prioritize and build capacity to implement immigrant participation, inclusion, and equity strategies through regular feedback from immigrants.



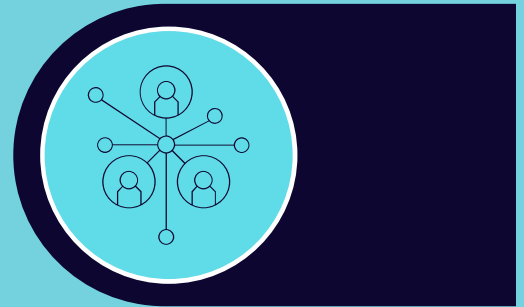
## Civic Engagement

The **Civic Engagement** standard describes communities that ensure that all residents, including immigrants, are able to fully participate in civic life. Meaning that immigrant residents have access to democratic spaces, and shape community priorities and policies.



## Connected Communities

The **Connected Communities** standard describes communities that build connections and trust between residents by creating opportunities and spaces for immigrant and non-immigrant residents to have constructive interactions, develop relationships, and deepen their understanding of one another.



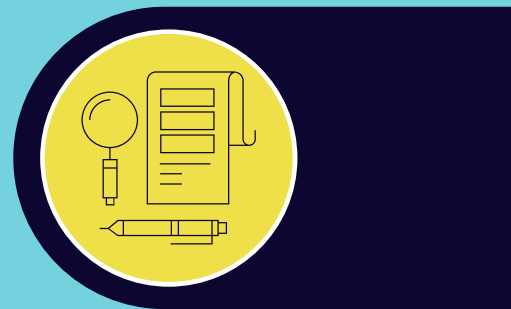
## Economic Development

In Welcoming Communities, **Economic Development** includes programs that support all residents, including immigrants, for entrepreneurship, business development, and workforce development.



## Education

The **Education** standard describes that the education system ensures that all students, including immigrants, have the support they need to thrive in school and the knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce.



## Equitable Access

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



## Safe Communities

The **Safe Communities** standard prioritizes the safety of all residents, including immigrants. Policies and practices are in place that prevent discrimination. Strong, trusting relationships are built between immigrant residents and local safety services.





## Certified Welcoming: City of New Orleans

★ In 2023, the City of New Orleans met the 16 criteria of a 1-Star Certification. To reach the 1-Star Certification, the City of New Orleans provided information and evidence on policies, programs, services, and resources available to all city residents, including immigrants. Some of these include:



The New Orleans Police Department's (NOPD) Community Engagement Plan, and its language access services which have been a tremendous help to the limited English proficient (LEP) community.



The Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, through the Mayor's Office of Youth & Families (OYF), is an exciting program for its ability to bring youth from across the community together to discuss and address issues of common interest.



The New Neighbor Project's (NNP) work, and its collaboration with the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) to recognize and address barriers to adult English classes, including location and time of day.



### ➔ 1-Star Certified Welcoming Report ↩

Click here to view the Certified Welcoming Report for the City of New Orleans

Although the City achieved certification, the work did not end there. Thanks to the framework provided by Welcoming America, the City has been given the opportunity to continue its progress and advancement as a welcoming and inclusive city, leading the Gulf South in this movement. In its pursuit of improvement, the Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE) conducted four consecutive outreach sessions to involve the community in identifying challenges and barriers to accessing services while also suggesting solutions to meet the needs of the community.





## Community Engagement & Outreach



These four outreach sessions created an opportunity for community members to come together and brainstorm ideas to create a community-informed strategic plan titled *Certified Welcoming: Striving for Excellence*, to move the City of New Orleans further along the path of being a Certified Welcoming City. Hosted at the Rosenwald Recreational Facility of the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC), we invited community leaders, representatives from community-based organizations, and city staff to attend these sessions to identify and address barriers that the community faces when accessing services and resources in New Orleans. To measure attendance and participation, invitations were sent out with details about the sessions, including dinner catered by Executive Chef Gary Netter from Next to Eat, and a stipend opportunity for the first 20 attendees from the community who attended all sessions consecutively. It is a mission and goal of OHRE to bring equity to our local government, including community benefit strategies to support community leaders.

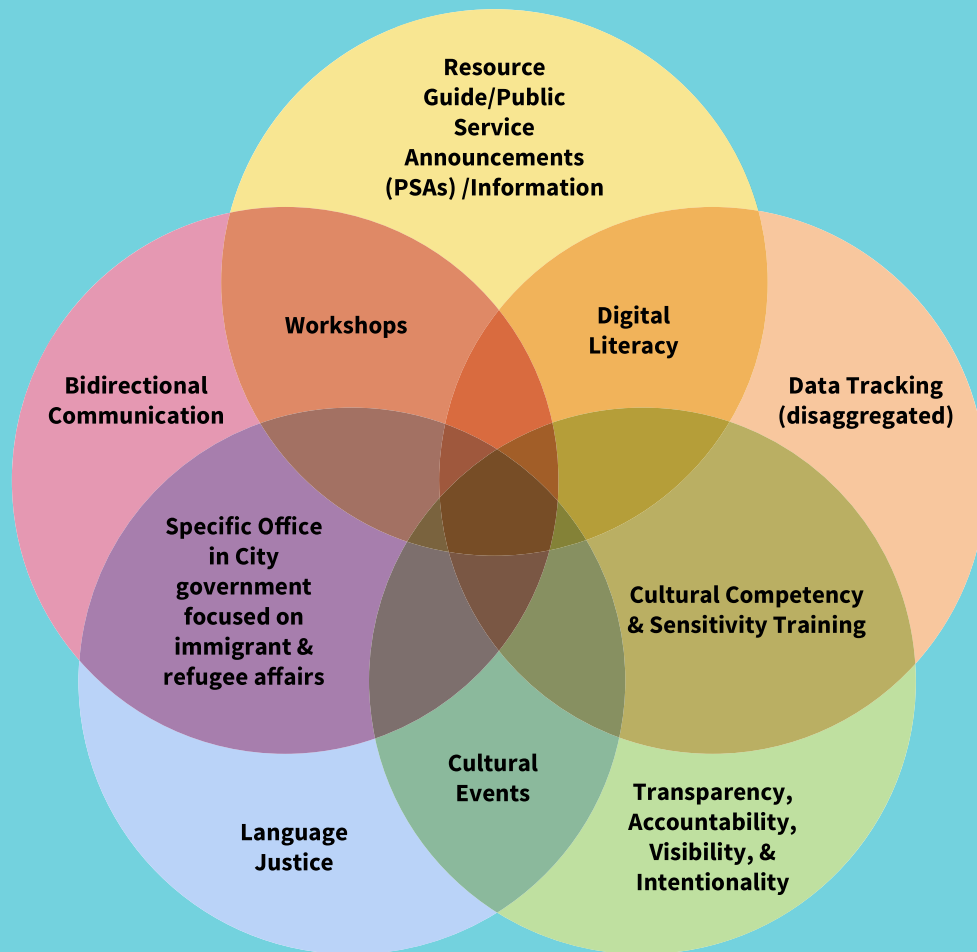
The sessions included four breakout groups, each focusing on a different set of standards led by OHRE staff.

- 👤 Group A, led by Director Kahlida Lloyd, focused on **Safe Communities & Connected Communities**.
- 👤 Group B, led by AmeriCorps VISTA Carlos Barona, focused on **Government & Community Leadership**.
- 👤 Group C, led by Language & Communication Access Coordinator Lauren Hall, focused on **Civic Engagement & Equitable Access**.
- 👤 Group D, led by Equity Program Manager Shakira Cruz Gonzalez, focused on **Education & Economic Development**.



## Common Themes

These groups worked to review the criteria and standards set forth by Welcoming America at each star tier. Each session is built upon the previous star standards, challenges, barriers, and recommended solutions. The outreach sessions illuminated the following common themes and overlaps across criteria:



As a result of these sessions, OHRE met with community-based organizations and city staff to ensure that the benchmarks and solutions recommended are actionable and aligned with SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound).



# THE PATH FORWARD

As a result of the community outreach sessions and the one-on-one sessions hosted by OHREs Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, the course forward for the City of New Orleans to continue its work on becoming a more inclusive and welcoming community for all city residents is charted in this plan.

The City of New Orleans is on the path to continuing to be a more welcoming and inclusive city where all residents belong and feel at home. As part of the Welcoming America Certified Welcoming initiative, New Orleans, like other cities, has the opportunity to be a 5-Star Certified Welcoming place. With this strategic plan, the path forward is charted for achieving a 4-Star Certification by 2027; this work is to be implemented from 2025 until recertification in 2027.

As a 1-Star Certified Welcoming City, New Orleans has the opportunity to use the Welcoming Standards and criteria to expand equity and access for all city residents, with an emphasis on our immigrant community. To become a 4-Star Certified Welcoming City, New Orleans has to go through each tier and meet the required criteria for each star certification. Below is the criteria for each star certification from 2 to 4-Star.

<h3>2-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING</h3> <p>In addition to meeting all of the 1-star criteria, places seeking a 2-star designation should also fulfill the following:</p> <table> <tr> <td> <b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</b>  <b>CE 2.0</b> Programs support eligible immigrants in voting.  <b>CC 2.0</b> Programs bring together immigrant and non-immigrant residents to build relationships.  <b>CC 2.1</b> Arts and creative placemaking programs highlight the diverse artistic traditions of the community in public spaces.  <b>CC 2.2</b> Community efforts advancing immigrant inclusion are connected to broader equity work.         </td> <td> <b>EDUCATION</b>  <b>ED 2.0</b> Programs support immigrant family engagement in their child's education.  <b>ED 2.1</b> Programs support immigrant students in understanding and accessing higher education opportunities.  <b>ED 2.2</b> Programs address barriers to the adult education infrastructure for immigrant adults.         </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>  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inclusion efforts.  <b>GL 2.2</b> Participants of the group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) reflect the diversity of the community in demographics, constituencies, and sectors.  <b>GL 2.3</b> The group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) has a process in place to ensure regular bidirectional communication with immigrant communities.  <b>GL 2.4</b> The group (GL 2.1) informs local government staff and is able to provide direct feedback on issues impacting and priorities of the immigrant community.  <b>GL 2.5</b> Local recreational programs implement an immigrant inclusion strategy.         </td> <td> <b>SAFE COMMUNITIES</b>  <b>SC 2.0</b> Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with local law enforcement and the legal system.  <b>SC 2.1</b> Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with immigration enforcement and the detention system.  <b>SC 2.2</b> Local law enforcement agencies have programs to 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<b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</b> <b>CE 2.0</b> Programs support eligible immigrants in voting. <b>CC 2.0</b> Programs bring together immigrant and non-immigrant residents to build relationships. <b>CC 2.1</b> Arts and creative placemaking programs highlight the diverse artistic traditions of the community in public spaces. <b>CC 2.2</b> Community efforts advancing immigrant inclusion are connected to broader equity work.	<b>EDUCATION</b> <b>ED 2.0</b> Programs support immigrant family engagement in their child's education. <b>ED 2.1</b> Programs support immigrant students in understanding and accessing higher education opportunities. <b>ED 2.2</b> Programs address barriers to the adult education infrastructure for immigrant adults.																
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<b>GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP</b> <b>GL 2.0</b> The local government leadership has an immigrant inclusion strategy for its departments and agencies. <b>GL 2.1</b> A group of local leaders and residents regularly convenes to advance immigrant inclusion efforts. <b>GL 2.2</b> Participants of the group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) reflect the diversity of the community in demographics, constituencies, and sectors. <b>GL 2.3</b> The group advancing immigrant inclusion (GL 2.1) has a process in place to ensure regular bidirectional communication with immigrant communities. <b>GL 2.4</b> The group (GL 2.1) informs local government staff and is able to provide direct feedback on issues impacting and priorities of the immigrant community. <b>GL 2.5</b> Local recreational programs implement an immigrant inclusion strategy.	<b>SAFE COMMUNITIES</b> <b>SC 2.0</b> Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with local law enforcement and the legal system. <b>SC 2.1</b> Programs inform immigrants of their rights and responsibilities when interacting with immigration enforcement and the detention system. <b>SC 2.2</b> Local law enforcement agencies have programs to ensure regular communication with immigrant residents. <b>SC 2.3</b> Programs connect immigrant victims and witnesses of crime with community resources.																
<b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</b> <b>CE 3.0</b> Programs support immigrants in developing civic leadership skills and are accessible to speakers of languages other than English. <b>CE 3.1</b> A program connects immigrants with local government departments and community resources with the goal of supporting immigrants in navigating and accessing these services. <b>CE 3.2</b> The program (CE 3.1) is accessible to speakers of languages other than English.	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> <b>EC 3.0</b> Local workforce agencies have information on current and projected demographic trends of the local immigrant population and the unique barriers faced by immigrant job seekers. <b>EC 3.1</b> Programs support immigrant job seekers in communicating foreign work experience and skills for U.S. employers. <b>EC 3.2</b> Chambers of commerce and/or economic development agencies are engaged in immigrant inclusion work.																
<b>CONNECTED COMMUNITIES</b> <b>CC 3.0</b> Local government efforts to advance immigrant inclusion are connected to and reinforce the local government's broader equity work.	<b>GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP</b> <b>GL 3.0</b> Local government departments know the demographics of the immigrant population and have access to tools to serve these residents.* <b>GL 3.1</b> The local government has a language access policy that includes interpretation and translation protocols for all externally facing government departments.* <b>GL 3.2</b> The local government provides regular training to its staff about language access requirements, available resources to provide meaningful language access, and working with speakers of languages other than English.* <b>GL 3.3</b> The local government regularly assesses language access needs and usage across departments in order to improve each department's ability to conduct business in languages other than English.*																
<b>EDUCATION</b> <b>ED 3.0</b> Programs train K-12 educators and staff on teaching and supporting diverse student populations, including immigrant students. <b>ED 3.1</b> Programs support immigrant students in accessing career technical education. <b>ED 3.2</b> K-12 schools support immigrant students that have limited or interrupted formal education to attain their educational goals. <b>ED 3.3</b> Programs provide contextualized English language classes for adult English learners.	<b>SAFE COMMUNITIES</b> <b>SC 3.0</b> Law enforcement staff receive regular training over the course of their career, on working with diverse residents, including immigrants. <b>SC 3.1</b> A policy is in place that clarifies the jurisdiction and separation between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement agencies. <b>SC 3.2</b> Local emergency management agencies have a plan to inform immigrants of community emergencies, and that plan includes communication methods that are effective in reaching speakers of languages other than English.																
<b>EQUITABLE ACCESS</b> <b>EA 3.0</b> Information from the local government (EA 1.0) is provided in languages other than English. <b>EA 3.1</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing immigration legal services. <b>EA 3.2</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating maternal and infant healthcare.	<b>GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP</b> <b>GL 4.0</b> A community-wide strategy for immigrant inclusion is set through a feedback process, including immigrant and non-immigrant residents representing the diversity in the community. <b>GL 4.1</b> There is a process in place to regularly update the strategy (GL 4.0) with feedback from immigrant and non-immigrant residents. <b>GL 4.2</b> Local government departments annually set and monitor goals for immigrant inclusion informed by the needs of immigrant residents and the community-wide strategy (GL 4.0).*																
<b>EDUCATION</b> <b>ED 4.0</b> Programs work with K-12 schools to regularly collect feedback from immigrant families on the school environment. <b>ED 4.1</b> Programs address barriers to participation in family engagement programs for immigrant families. <b>ED 4.2</b> Programs address barriers to early childhood education and care for immigrant children.	<b>SAFE COMMUNITIES</b> <b>SC 4.0</b> Local emergency notification platforms are available in languages other than English. <b>SC 4.1</b> The local government has a process in place to identify the priorities and goals of immigrant residents for creating a safer community.																
<h3>4-STAR CERTIFIED WELCOMING</h3> <p>In addition to meeting all of the 1-star, 2-star, and 3-star criteria, places seeking a 4-star designation should also fulfill the following:</p> <table> <tr> <td> <b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</b>  <b>CE 4.0</b> Programs build immigrant youth leadership.  <b>CE 4.1</b> Programs address barriers to immigrant participation in public hearings and meetings.  <b>CE 4.2</b> Programs address language access needs for participation in public hearings and meetings.         </td> <td> <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>  <b>EC 4.0</b> Programs support immigrants in meeting occupational certification and/or credentialing requirements.  <b>EC 4.1</b> Programs support immigrant business owners in accessing capital to start, sustain, and grow their businesses.         </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <b>CONNECTED COMMUNITIES</b>  <b>CC 4.0</b> Programs that serve diverse immigrant and non-immigrant residents embed strategies to build relationships between immigrant and non-immigrant participants.  <b>CC 4.1</b> Programs work to address biases about others held by non-immigrant residents.  <b>CC 4.2</b> Programs work to address biases about others held by immigrant residents.         </td> <td> <b>EDUCATION</b>  <b>EA 4.0</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating mental health services.  <b>EA 4.1</b> Programs address barriers to accessing rental housing for immigrants.  <b>EA 4.2</b> Local mobility planning efforts address the needs and priorities of immigrant residents.  <b>EA 4.3</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants in accessing civil legal services.         </td> </tr> </table>	<b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</b> <b>CE 4.0</b> Programs build immigrant youth leadership. <b>CE 4.1</b> Programs address barriers to immigrant participation in public hearings and meetings. <b>CE 4.2</b> Programs address language access needs for participation in public hearings and meetings.	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> <b>EC 4.0</b> Programs support immigrants in meeting occupational certification and/or credentialing requirements. <b>EC 4.1</b> Programs support immigrant business owners in accessing capital to start, sustain, and grow their businesses.	<b>CONNECTED COMMUNITIES</b> <b>CC 4.0</b> Programs that serve diverse immigrant and non-immigrant residents embed strategies to build relationships between immigrant and non-immigrant participants. <b>CC 4.1</b> Programs work to address biases about others held by non-immigrant residents. <b>CC 4.2</b> Programs work to address biases about others held by immigrant residents.	<b>EDUCATION</b> <b>EA 4.0</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants accessing and navigating mental health services. <b>EA 4.1</b> Programs address barriers to accessing rental housing for immigrants. <b>EA 4.2</b> Local mobility planning efforts address the needs and priorities of immigrant residents. <b>EA 4.3</b> Programs address barriers to immigrants in accessing civil legal services.													
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# ACHIEVING 2-STARS ★ ★

To achieve the 2-Star Certification, the City of New Orleans must meet the following criteria and benchmarks, these are the recommendations by city staff and community leaders:



## Government & Community Leadership

The Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity, other city departments, and community-based organizations (CBOs) will collaborate to **create and implement an immigrant inclusion strategy**. Part of this strategy includes **establishing and convening the Certified Welcoming Task Force** with representation from community and city staff

- ✓ This group will meet regularly to brainstorm equity and inclusion efforts for all local government agencies and have language services available for community members.
- ✓ This group will also coordinate focus groups, surveys, and other forms of feedback loops for community members to provide insight on issues impacting the immigrant community and the community's priorities.

Additionally, it is recommended that youth be engaged in various activities, programs, services, and resources offered through the City, including recreational activities. We heard from the community that it is challenging for parents and youth to engage in the New Orleans Recreational Centers (NORDC) due to language barriers across the board. **It is recommended that the NORDC implement a language access strategy through the assistance of the Language & Communication Access Coordinator who can provide handheld devices and other language services.**

### Recommended Action 1

Create and implement an immigrant inclusion strategy by establishing and convening the Task Force.

#### Lead

Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

#### Involved

CBOs, all public-facing City Departments, City Council

### Recommended Action 2

NORDC creates and implements a language access strategy.

#### Lead

Program Managers, NORDC

#### Involved

Language & Communication Access Coordinator, OHRE







## Safe Communities

To foster a safe community, residents must be aware of their rights and responsibilities. The community stated that it would be helpful to **collaborate with local law enforcement and other agencies to host events and workshops** where the community can interact with local law enforcement and learn about their rights and responsibilities, including access to resources like the U-VISA, T-VISA, and reporting processes. Local law enforcement agencies need to be kept in the loop to communicate and share information with the community. As such, **it's recommended that they have representatives in the Immigrant & Refugee Inclusion Task Force.**

The NOPD hosts and collaborates with other stakeholders to host their annual Night Out Against Crime. **It is recommended that the NOPD and their partners expand the community's awareness of Night Out Against Crime and how they can participate.** Community members can apply to participate in Night Out Against Crime, through the nola.gov website once applications open.

### Recommended Action 1

Local law enforcement hosts and co-hosts workshops and events to provide opportunities for residents to interact with local law enforcement and learn about their rights & responsibilities.

#### Lead

Neighborhood Engagement Unit, NOPD

#### Involved

CBOs, Office of Criminal Justice Coordination (OCJC), Neighborhood Engagement Office (NEO), and other law enforcement agencies.

### Recommended Action 2

Local law enforcement has a representative to the Task Force.

#### Lead

Neighborhood Engagement Unit, NOPD

#### Involved

OHRE

### Recommended Action 3

NOPD and their partners expand the community's awareness and access to Night Out Against Crime and how they can participate by translating their sign-up sheet, event requirements, etc.

#### Lead

Community Engagement Unit, NOPD

#### Involved

Information Technology and Innovation (ITI), OHRE, OCJC, CBOs, NEO, public-facing City Departments, other.





## Connected Communities

The Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy is commended for their **“Embrace the Culture”** program, which engages the diverse communities in the City of New Orleans and beyond. From welcoming artists and culture bearers, to hosting, co-hosting, sponsoring, and co-sponsoring events like the Reggae Festival, Jazz Fest, and French Quarter Fest, the Office has made great strides. It’s recommended that **the city provide permit fee waivers for small, BIPOC-owned, local businesses to participate as vendors during festivals and other events.**

The Mayor’s Office of Human Rights & Equity will partner with CBOs and other stakeholders like the Office of Cultural Economy to **expand the World Refugee Day Celebration hosted annually in June.** The goal is to find a better location with parking, highlight funding opportunities provided by Cultural Economy, and expand partnerships with businesses, and culture bearers for the cultural performances.

Additionally, the Cultural Economy’s **Funding Program** supports individuals and organizations that are engaging in activities that promote the cultural economy through educating our youth, training cultural producers, providing networking opportunities, creating cultural events, and other projects aligned with the Office’s mission. It is recommended by the community that, to expand these programs and opportunities, that the **Office of Cultural Economy translate grant applications, and other necessary documents for broader reach.** The Office of Cultural Economy is commended for their partnerships and relationships with **immigrants and non-immigrant residents and is recommended to continue their expansion through partnerships with CBOs like the Ashe Cultural Center.**



### Recommended Action 1

Expand the World Refugee Day Event Celebration by finding a different location, highlighting funding opportunities provided by Cultural Economy, and expanding partnerships.

#### Lead

Equity & Inclusion  
Program Manager, OHRE

#### Involved

Cultural Economy, NEO,  
public-facing City  
Departments, CBOs, other

### Recommended Action 2

The Office of Cultural Economy translates grant applications and other necessary documents to expand their reach.

#### Lead

Development &  
Communications Manager,  
Cultural Economy

#### Involved

Language & Communication  
Access Coordinator, OHRE

### Recommended Action 3

The Office of Cultural Economy expands their relationships with local CBOs that focus on various

#### Lead

Development &  
Communications Manager,  
Cultural Economy

#### Involved

Ashe Cultural Center, CBOs,  
OHRE, other

## Education

Education is something extremely valued in the community, New Orleans Louisiana Public Schools (NOLA PS) partners with community organizations like Puentes and Our Voice, Nuestra Voz to provide information to parents and guardians about how to engage with the school system, despite the challenges posed by the charter school system. Furthermore, NOLA PS has created Family Resources Centers (FRCs) located across the city to provide resources for students and their families, from Birth to Pre-K-12 and higher education opportunities. The FRCs offer language services and provide opportunities for city residents to submit complaints and access other resources.

For adult education, there's a partnership fostered by NOLA PS between the University of Holy Cross and the University of San Miguel Arcangel in Honduras. There are also opportunities through the Louisiana Extension Academy Program and Launch for students seeking more education opportunities. But NOLA PS is not the only agency working to provide education opportunities to the community. CBOs, like the New Neighbor Project, provide English language classes for adults. Some of these CBOs also incorporate access to the HiSet (GED), citizenship classes, and Know Your Rights (KYR) training for community members. The New Neighbor Project offers these language classes at various locations across the city, including some New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) branches.

It's recommended that **NOLA PS partners with more City departments and CBOs to expand community awareness of the FRCs** and encourage community members to feel comfortable and safe in these spaces.

### *Recommended Action 1*

NOLA PS partners with more City departments and CBOs to expand community awareness of the FRCs.

### *Lead*

NOLA PS

### *Involved*

OYF, NORDC, NEO, OHRE, other







## Economic Development

Many small, and local businesses in New Orleans have been established by entrepreneurs, including both non-immigrant and immigrant residents. The Offices of Workforce Development and Supplier Diversity offer opportunities for business owners to open and expand their businesses.

**It is recommended that these departments establish a partnership and collaborate with ElCentro, Thrive, and other CBOs** that focus on business and economic development to ensure the community has access to information and program opportunities. This **information should be translated and interpreted** (where possible), and workshops or sessions should be hosted for the community to understand the processes of opening a business or expanding a business.



### Recommended Action 1

The Offices of Workforce Development and Supplier Diversity collaborate with ElCentro, Thrive, and other CBOs that focus on business and economic development to ensure the community has access to information and program opportunities through workshops and sessions with language services.

#### Lead

Office of Workforce Development & Supplier Diversity

#### Involved

ElCentro, Thrive, OHRE, CBOs, other





## EQUITABLE ACCESS

The City of New Orleans will expand access to information by **collaborating with local news sources like JambalayaNews, Telemundo, and other journalistic methods** to communicate with immigrant residents. Information on preventative healthcare will be made accessible to the community in multiple languages – including **hosting health fairs and clinics in partnerships with CBOs, healthcare providers, and universities.**

Equitable access also includes educating and informing immigrants about worker's rights. Local CBOs and City departments will **collaborate to host workshops in multiple languages and provide digital access.** As such, the City of New Orleans, through the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL), will lead an awareness campaign for immigrant residents about digital access opportunities through the NOPL.

The NOPL is a valuable resource that is often overlooked or underused by immigrant residents due to uncertainty about the atmosphere of libraries as government entities. **It's recommended by the community that the NOPL partners with CBOs and other entities to build awareness of the resources it offers and empower communities to utilize all the library has to offer.**



### Recommended Action 1

Mayor's Office of Communications collaborates with local news sources like Jambalaya News, Telemundo, and other journalistic methods to communicate information to immigrant residents. This information should include preventative healthcare events, health fairs, and clinics being hosted or sponsored by the Department of Health (DOH).

#### Lead

Mayor's Office of Communications

#### Involved

DOH, OHRE, CBOs, other

### Recommended Action 2

The NOPL collaborates with CBOs and other entities to build awareness of the resources and services offered at their various locations and empowers communities to utilize all the library has to offer.

#### Lead

Branch Managers at NOPL locations

#### Involved

CBOs, all public-facing City Departments, other

### Recommended Action 3

The NOPL hosts workshops in multiple languages focused on digital access on how to use the Library's tools/resources. Part of these workshops includes collaborating with CBOs to share KYRs resources for workers, and other topics.

#### Lead

Branch Managers at NOPL locations

#### Involved

ITI, NNP, Familias Unidas en Acción, other



## Civic Engagement

CBOs like the Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI), Geaux Vote, and others work to support city residents in voting. These organizations help register eligible immigrants and new Americans to vote in Louisiana, and ensure the communities know where their polls are located.

**It's recommended that City departments collaborate with these organizations to expand access to information for civic participation at City Hall and with other organizations.**

### *Recommended Action 1*

OHRE collaborates with these organizations to expand access to information for civic participation at City Hall and with other organizations.

#### *Lead*

Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

#### *Involved*

LORI, Geaux Vote, VOTE, CBOs, public-facing City Departments, other



# ACHIEVING 3-STARS ★★

To achieve the 3-Star Certification, the City of New Orleans must meet the 2-Star Criteria, the additional criteria outlined below, and the benchmarks recommended by city staff and community leaders:



## Government & Community Leadership

The City of New Orleans will partner with CBOs and other stakeholders to **remain-up-to-date on the demographics of the immigrant population**. This will include requesting reports from programs and services, conducting surveys and focus groups, accessing data from the US Census Bureau (including the American Community Survey -ACS), and NOLA Public Schools.

This data will also inform the City's Language & Communication Access Program. In addition to managing the Language & Communication Access Program, the Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity will **draft and implement a Language & Communication Access Policy**. This policy will outline procedures, training requirements, and the necessary steps to ensure equitable access to city services for non-English speakers. Part of this policy will include training for city staff on how to interact with community members who speak languages other than English, how to work with interpreters and devices, and other specific training requirements set by OHRE's Language & Communication Access Coordinator.

### Recommended Action 1

The Certified Welcoming Task force will remain up-to-date on the demographics of the immigrant population.

#### Lead

Certified Welcoming Task Force

#### Involved

Participating City Departments, CBOs, other

### Recommended Action 2

OHRE drafts and implements a Language & Communication Access Policy.

#### Lead

Language & Communication Access Coordinator, OHRE

#### Involved

Chief Administrative Office (CAO), Human Resources (HR)







Local law enforcement agencies, including NOPD, and local emergency management agencies such as the New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD), New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (NOEMS), and New Orleans Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP), will **receive cultural competency training** from OHRE and other culturally engaged stakeholders. This training will focus on understanding diverse communities and addressing implicit and explicit bias throughout their careers. NOPD, for example, provides cultural training and survival Spanish training for officers to improve communication with Spanish-speaking community members. NOPD is also commended for its language access services and is encouraged to hire and **retain more bilingual staff, who receive a 5% incentive for their language skills by increasing that incentive.**

In addition to cultural competency training, local emergency management agencies **will establish a plan to inform immigrants about community emergencies.** This will include communication methods effective in reaching non-English speakers., such as multilingual messages sent via NOLA Ready and coordinated outreach with Jambalaya News and Telemundo, to name a few. Expanding communication efforts is essential to ensuring that all New Orleans residents, including immigrants, are well-informed and safe during emergencies.



Local law enforcement agencies, including NOPD, will need a clear policy outlining their jurisdiction and their separation from federal immigration enforcement agencies. Currently, NOPD operates under an anti-bias policing policy, developed due to the Department of Justice (DOJ) consent decree, which prohibits officers from asking New Orleanians about their immigration status. For clarity, this anti-bias policy does not prevent NOPD from cooperating with the Department of Homeland Security when a detainer is issued.

Recommended Action 1	
OHRE creates, or outsources, cultural competency training for city staff, including law enforcement and emergency management agencies.	
Lead	
Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE	
Involved	
NOPD, NOFD, EMS, Code Enforcement, HR, CAO, other	

Recommended Action 2	
NOPD is recommended to recruit and retain more bilingual staff, who will receive a 5% incentive for their bilingual skills.	
Lead	
Recruitment & Hiring Managers, NOPD	
Involved	
NOPD, NOEMS, NOFD, NOHSEP, NEO, Jambalaya News, Telemundo, other	

Recommended Action 3	
Law enforcement and emergency management agencies establish a communication plan for emergencies, public safety notices, etc. to inform the community in an efficient and timely manner.	
Lead	
Law enforcement and emergency management agencies establish a communication plan for emergencies, public safety notices, etc. to inform the community in an efficient and timely manner.	
Involved	
Ashe Cultural Center, CBOs, OHRE, other	



## Connected Communities

To create a more welcoming community, it's essential to foster relationships, understanding, and connections between immigrants and non-immigrant residents. Equity work in local government includes encouraging community members to engage civically, culturally, and socially, reinforcing the interconnectedness of the community. This can be achieved through information-sharing across multiple media platforms, including radio, podcasts, newsletters, and social media.

The City of New Orleans is committed to embedding equity and inclusion frameworks across various areas, including policymaking, programs, resources, and services. **Establishing a clear equity and inclusion framework** will encourage city staff to consistently apply this lens when developing policies, programs, and services.

### *Recommended Action 1*

Establish a clear equity and inclusion framework.

#### *Lead*

Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

#### *Involved*

All City Departments, City Council, CBOs, other



New Orleans operates a predominantly charter school system, with the Orleans Parish School Board overseeing one public school in the city. The remaining schools fall under the jurisdiction of various charter school boards, meaning training for educators and staff may vary. Despite these challenges, **NOLA Public Schools (NOLA PS) has established Family Resource Centers (FRCs)** in the Westbank, N.O. East, and Uptown.

These centers provide language services for parents or guardians, who can file complaints, gather information, and receive assistance navigating the public school system, from birth through K-12 and higher education opportunities.

To ensure quality education, NOLA PS contracts with edCount to develop high standards, assessments, and accountability systems. Additionally, NOLA PS schools are part of the Title III cohort in Louisiana, a group of school systems that receive Title III funds for English language learners and immigrant students.

**It's recommended that reminders be sent out to parents and guardians about FRCs resources to increase access and engagement in student life. As a next step, NOLA PS, the New Neighbor Project, the NOPL, and other stakeholders should collaborate to expand adult education services, particularly English language classes.**

## Recommended Action 1

OHRE collaborates with these organizations to expand access to information for civic participation at City Hall and with other organizations.

### Lead

Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

### Involved

LORI, Geaux Vote, VOTE, CBOs, public-facing City Departments, other







## Economic Development

In partnership with city departments, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans (CCANO), and other stakeholders, local workforce agencies will exchange information on current and projected **demographic trends of the immigrant population and the unique barriers faced by immigrant job seekers**. These challenges include understanding how to navigate the U.S. job such as using job search websites, building resumes, drafting cover letters, and preparing for interviews.

To foster a more inclusive and welcoming economic development environment, **workshops and events should be held and promoted in multiple languages for job seekers**. This includes providing interpretation services at job fairs and ensuring that information is available in multiple languages both digitally and in physical formats. These workshops include collaborating with City departments, CBOs, and organizations like **Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans (CCANO)** to establish opportunities for job seekers to understand the job market in the U.S.



### Recommended Action 1

The Task Force will remain up-to-date in current and projected demographic trends of the immigrant population and the unique barriers faced by immigrant job seekers.

#### Lead

Certified Welcoming Task Force

#### Involved

participating City Departments, CBOs, other

### Recommended Action 2

The Office of Workforce Development, through their JOB1 initiative will collaborate with City departments and CBOs to host workshops and job fairs that

#### Lead

Workforce Development, JOB 1

#### Involved

CCANO, OHRE, NOPL, NEO, NORDC, public-facing City Departments, CBOs, other





To create a more accessible community, the City of New Orleans is expanding language access services. OHRE is currently spearheading the Language & Communication Access Pilot Program in partnership with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) managers. To ensure meaningful and equitable access, all city-shared information will be translated and provided in languages other than English.

**Information regarding maternal and infant healthcare, for example, will be translated and provided in multiple languages for community members.** Communication efforts will be streamlined to ensure access to information on immigration legal services, public health resources, and other community needs.

Recommended Action 1
The Department of Health will translate and provide information regarding maternal and infant healthcare to community members in collaboration with healthcare providers and other CBOs.
Lead
DOH – Women and Children Programs
Involved
Language & Communication Access Coordinator, OHRE, CBOs, local healthcare providers, City Departments, other





## Civic Engagement

Voter turnout has been low in New Orleans due to various barriers and challenges. To encourage civic engagement, **it's recommended that the City support classes offering English language learning and citizenship classes for immigrants.** To support these classes, OHRE and NOPL will partner to highlight the community organizations offering these services, including adding them to the OHRE newsletter.

The Certified Welcoming Task Force should be activated as a key resource for stakeholders to share resources and provide transparency on how to assist immigrants in navigating different spaces, such as the library, NORD Centers, and more.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and the Civic Leadership Academy (CLA) are two well-regarded programs provided at City Hall. **It's recommended that these programs be expanded to include a larger number of participants, and that language services be provided to accommodate non-English speakers.**

### Recommended Action 1

The NOPL partners with CBOs like the New Neighbor Project (NNP) to host English language classes and citizenship classes for city residents at various locations.

#### Lead

Branch Managers, NOPL

#### Involved

NNP, LORI, CCANO, CBOs, OHRE, other

### Recommended Action 2

The Office of Youth & Families offers a Parent Leadership Training Institute and the Neighborhood Engagement Office offers a Civic Leadership Academy; it is recommended for both offices to expand their access to have more participants and incorporate language access in their training.

#### Lead

Office of Youth & Families, Neighborhood Engagement

#### Involved

NNP, LORI, CCANO, CBOs, public-facing City Departments, OHRE, other

## CITIZENSHIP CLASS

*with The New Neighbor Project*

In collaboration with USA LEARNS, The New Neighbor Project provides the tools you need to take the exam and to be prepared for your citizenship interview.



**Thursdays, 4pm-5pm**

**April-August**

**REACH Center**  
2022 St. Bernard Ave.  
in the Corpus Christi-Epiphany  
Community Resource Center





# ACHIEVING 4-STARS ★★★★★

To achieve the 4-Star Certification, the City of New Orleans must meet the 2-Star and 3-Star criteria, the following criteria, and the benchmarks recommended by city staff and community leaders:



## Government & Community Leadership

**It is recommended that, through the Certified Welcoming Task Force a community-wide strategy for immigrant inclusion be created.** This strategy will incorporate feedback from both immigrant and non-immigrant residents. **It is suggested that the task force include representatives from both immigrant and non-immigrant communities,** including youth and the 60+ population, to better represent the diversity of the community. Furthermore, the Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE) should collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs) and city departments to create an immigrant inclusion strategy for local government.

### *Recommended Action 1*

The Certified Welcoming Task Force creates a community-wide strategy for immigrant inclusion.

#### *Lead*

DOH – Women and Children Programs

#### *Involved*

Language & Communication Access Coordinator, OHRE, CBOs, local healthcare providers, City Departments, other





Typically, the emergency notification platform used in New Orleans includes various outlets, including NOLA Ready. **It is recommended that NOLA Ready begin sending notifications in multiple languages** at the same efficiency and rate as notifications in English. The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and other local government agencies responsible for emergency notifications must also ensure that information is made available in multiple languages, including American Sign Language (ASL).

## Recommended Action 1

NOLA Ready begins to send emergency notifications in multiple languages, including Vietnamese and Spanish.

### Lead

NOLA Ready

### Involved

Mayor's Office of Communications, OHRE, NOHSEP, other

## Recommended Action 2

Emergency management agencies have representatives in the Certified Welcoming Task Force.

### Lead

Equity and Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

### Involved

NOHSEP/NOLA Ready, NOPD, NOFD, Code Enforcement, NOEMS, other

To ensure that community members are receiving this information, **it is recommended that agencies responsible for emergency notifications have representatives on the immigrant & refugee inclusion task force.** This will help better understand and identify the priorities and goals of immigrant residents to create a safer community. Additionally, these agencies should collaborate with Telemundo, Jambalaya News, and other media outlets that focus on the immigrant community.







## Connected Communities

During the outreach sessions, the community mentioned that there is bias and misinformation between immigrant and non-immigrant residents. This misinformation leads to a negative perspective between the two groups. The lack of understanding results in both sides feeling there is a scarcity of resources. To create a welcoming community, the City of New Orleans, including city departments and community organizations, should come together to host cultural exchange events. These events and workshops will focus on cultural competency, information sharing, and providing community members the opportunity to address biases.

**It is recommended that the Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity collaborate with CBOs such as the Ashe Cultural Center, Familias Unidas en Acción (FUA), and other stakeholders to establish and foster relationships between these communities through such events.**

### *Recommended Action 1*

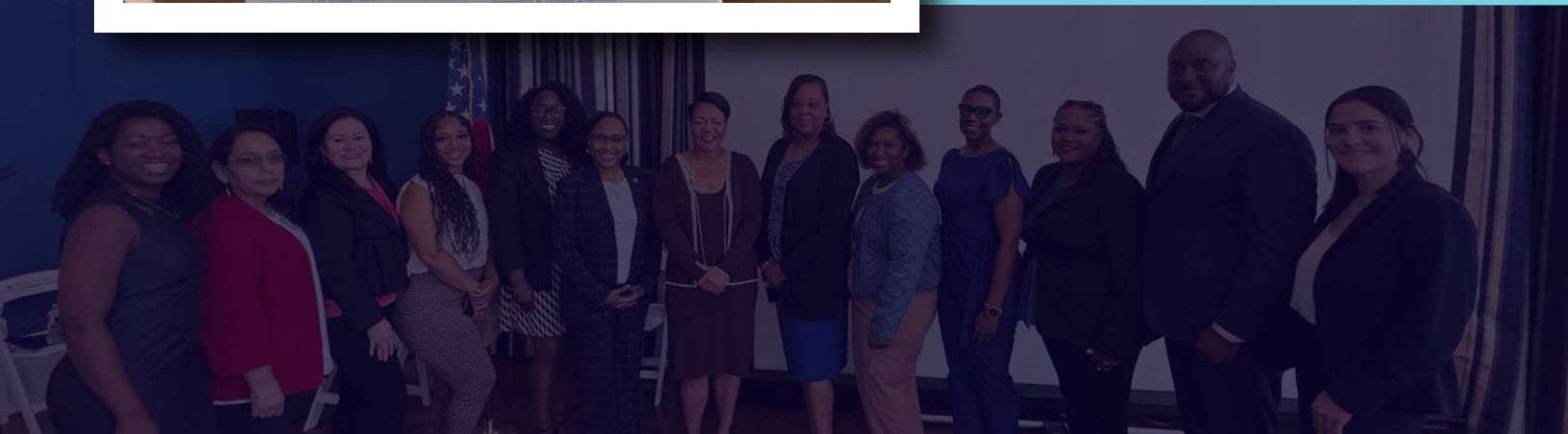
OHRE collaborates with CBOs and other stakeholders to establish and foster relationships between communities through such events..

#### *Lead*

OHRE

#### *Involved*

Cultural stakeholders, CBOs, City Departments, other





The NOLA PS Family Resource Centers (FRCs) regularly collect feedback from immigrant families through partnerships with organizations like Our Voice Nuestra Voz. However, **it is recommended that the community be engaged more by collaborating with other CBOs and city departments to raise awareness about the FRCs.** The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), Our Voice Nuestra Voz (OVNV), and Puentes are valuable methods for immigrant families to become more engaged in the school environment.

## Recommended Action 1

NOLA PS Family Resource center managers need to collaborate with CBOs and city departments to raise awareness about the FRCs by attending events, sharing blurbs, or sending representatives to trainings that reach various audiences.

### Lead

NOLA PS Family Resource Center Managers

### Involved

OVNV, OHRE, OYF, NEO, CBOs, City Departments, other





## Economic Development

During outreach sessions, the community expressed that it is difficult for immigrant community members to access occupational certifications and credentialing programs. CBOs serving immigrant workers **recommend that information and public service announcements (PSAs) regarding these certification opportunities be shared in multiple languages**, and that these programs incorporate language access to better serve the community.

Organizations like ElCentro already collaborate with various city departments to provide information and education to immigrant business owners on how to access capital to start, sustain, and grow their businesses. A challenge mentioned was that keeping up with changes in processes to apply for or participate in these programs can be difficult when guides or video modules are not translated or interpreted in a timely manner. **It is recommended that city departments collaborate with CBOs that support immigrant business owners to host workshops and provide information on how to access programs to start, sustain, and grow a business.**

### Recommended Actions 1 & 2

The Office of Workforce Development and the Office of Supplier Diversity collaborate with CBOs that support immigrant business owners to host workshops and provide information on how to access programs to start, sustain, and grow a business.

#### Lead

CBOs, Workforce Development, & Supplier Diversity

#### Involved

ElCentro, CBOs, NOPL, NEO, OHRE, City Departments, other







Equitable access goes beyond language access; it encompasses access to information on navigating mental health services, housing, and civil legal services. **It is recommended that the Health Department and other agencies collaborate to provide symposiums, health fairs, or workshops to share information and services for immigrants.** Additionally, OHRE should partner with the Office of Criminal Justice Coordination (OCJC) and other public safety agencies to **disseminate information about free civil legal services.** Organizations like Home is Here and Familias Unidas en Acción often work with immigrant residents on civil legal services, and **it is recommended that city departments collaborate with these organizations to ensure the community receives timely and efficient information on events, workshops, legal clinics, health fairs, and other opportunities.**

## Recommended Action 1

The Health Department and other agencies collaborate to provide symposiums, health fairs, or workshops to share information and services for immigrants.

### Lead

Department of Health

### Involved

Universities, CBOs, Healthcare Providers, public-serving City Departments, other



## Recommended Action 2

City departments, like OCJC and OHRE, collaborate with organizations to ensure the community receives timely and efficient information on events, workshops, legal clinics, and other opportunities.

### Lead

Equity & Inclusion Program Manager, OHRE

### Involved

OCJC, Legal Service Providers, CBOs, City Departments, other





## Civic Engagement

The Mayor's Office of Human Rights & Equity is establishing a robust and sustainable Language & Communication Access Program to support immigrant residents' civic participation in public hearings and meetings. This program, which the community advocated to be funded through ARPA, was developed with input from community members to understand their needs regarding communication with local government. **It is recommended that the city provide information to community members in multiple languages, including for public hearings, meetings, changes to the municipal code, and other relevant policy or program changes that impact the community.**

To encourage civic engagement, **it is recommended that the city collaborate with media outlets that connect with the immigrant community, such as JambalayaNews, Telemundo, and other communication methods.**



### *Recommended Action 1*

The City provides information to community members in multiple languages, including for public hearings, meetings, changes to the municipal code, and other relevant policy or program changes that impact the community. This information should be shared with media outlets that connect with the immigrant community.

#### *Lead*

Language & Communication Access Coordinator, OHRE

#### *Involved*

All City Departments, CBOs, Media Outlets, other

## ***Additional Recommendations***

- ✓ Establish an office of multicultural, immigrant, and refugee affairs
- ✓ Hire a community engagement liaison for the immigrant community
- ✓ Incorporate the Neighborhood Engagement Office to expand access to information
- ✓ Create a one-stop website for resources for immigrants and new Americans

**NOTE:** This strategic plan is a living document that will be used by the City to follow the suggestions and benchmarks recommended to move the City further along the path of being a welcoming and inclusive community.



## Acknowledgements

A very special thank you goes out to all who were able to participate and join OHRE at the NORDC of Rosenwald for the outreach sessions. Your work and dedication are extremely inspirational and empowering to making the City of New Orleans a more inclusive and welcoming community.

### Community-Based Organization

Home is Here  
PUENTES NOLA  
Catholic Charities & Archdiocese of New Orleans  
Cooperation NOLA  
ALAS  
EdNavigator  
ElCentro  
Louisiana Language Access Coalition (LLAC)  
New Neighbor Project (NNP)  
New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice (NOWCRJ)  
Familias Unidas en Acción (FUA)  
Ashe Cultural Center  
St. Charles Community Center for Faith & Action  
VAYLA  
V.O.T.E  
ECCO



### City Departments

Office of Human Rights & Equity  
Office of International Relations  
Office of Youth and Families  
Office of Criminal Justice Coordination  
Office of Workforce Development  
Office of Economic Development  
Health Department  
New Orleans Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP)  
NOLA Ready  
New Orleans Public Library (NOPL)  
New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC)  
New Orleans Police Department (NOPD)  
New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD)  
EMS

### Other Stakeholders

Orleans Parish Defense Attorneys Office







January 29, 2024 | From [City of New Orleans](#)

# Welcoming in the Crescent City: How nonprofits helped New Orleans become Certified Welcoming

*In October 2023, New Orleans became the [first place in Louisiana](#) to earn the Certified Welcoming designation. Notably, New Orleans is also the first 1-star Certified Welcoming city under the [new star designation system](#). We talked with leaders across the city to learn how community partnerships helped achieve the designation.*

Relationships, trust, and power-sharing are at the heart of strong communities. As New Orleans deepens its commitment to welcoming, marked by the recent achievement of the Certified Welcoming designation, partnerships with local nonprofits and advocacy groups are one of the forces making the Crescent City a home for immigrants and refugees.

In many [Certified Welcoming](#) communities, the local government office that sets the strategy for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is responsible for welcoming initiatives. This is the case in New Orleans. The [Mayor's Office of Human Rights and Equity](#) led the certification process for the community, bringing together and relying on the contributions of many community-based organizations.

"Creating a space in a specific office that's thinking about human rights, people's dignity, and their quality of life within a city is at the core of [our office's] goals and values," says **Kahlida Lloyd**, the director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights, reflecting on the role of the office in immigrant inclusion efforts and beyond. "When we think about equity, as Mayor Cantrell says, we think about 'meeting people where they are,' but also connecting and identifying the disparities that we see societally. A city government has the onus and the responsibility to help bridge that gap."

Once the city saw how Certified Welcoming aligned with the [mayor's vision and goals](#) of improving access to services across the community, the Office of Human Rights and Equity team moved forward with the process.

Together, the community met [16 criteria](#) required to become 1-star Certified Welcoming. Initially, New Orleans sought certification under the original Welcoming Standard, which required communities to meet 45 core criteria. Once the [new system](#) rolled out, the city was excited for the opportunity to transition their assessment to the Welcoming Standard 2.0, become certified at 1-star, and have a clear path to continue improving their welcoming efforts.

"The new designation system made it easier for the city of New Orleans to gain that certification because there were a lot of changes that we needed to complete under the previous [system]," says **Shakira Cruz Gonzalez**, equity program manager at the city. "The new report was more digestible because it was broken up into tangible goals. With the new system, it's little by little, you're improving, and you have four years to move up those [stars]."

Most importantly, the certification process also gave the city the chance to lean into relationships with community organizations and partners that are already doing this work, but may not have had the chance to connect with the local government..

Shakira reflects, "We don't have to reinvent the wheel. We just have to keep oiling it, adding more support to community organizations, and showing that the city is interested in making those policies and programs more accessible."



NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

## New Orleans becomes first Certified Welcoming city in Louisiana

Welcoming America | October 13, 2023



Welcoming America, a national nonprofit organization, announces the City of New Orleans as a [Certified Welcoming](#) place, the first in Louisiana to achieve the designation.

Rachel Perić, executive director of Welcoming America, said: “We are thrilled to recognize New Orleans in becoming a Certified Welcoming place, affirming its leadership in building policies and partnerships that enable all those making the city home — including people with immigrant and refugee backgrounds — to thrive and belong. As the first city in Louisiana to receive the designation, and the 19th in the nation, we look forward to celebrating and supporting the people of New Orleans and its leadership in continuing to build on ongoing efforts to make the city a welcoming place for all.”



**Mayor LaToya Cantrell** said: “New Orleans has historically been a welcoming hub for various visitors and a home to a diverse immigrant population. The work to become ‘Certified Welcoming’ builds upon the resolution I passed as a City Councilmember in 2015 to make New Orleans a Welcoming City. Openly celebrating and embracing diversity has been a part of my mission not only because everyone matters, but also because that is what makes up the beautiful fabric of our city. With the certification from Welcoming America, we are continuing the path to becoming a more inclusive city for immigrants and refugees, and we will further strengthen our goals of becoming a safe, equitable and welcoming community for all.”

Remarks by the mayor on the designation and a presentation of a framed certificate will be delivered tomorrow October 14 at the [Little Amal event](#) held at Lafitte Greenway Plaza and scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Central Time.

New Orleans is one of 19 cities and counties in the U.S. with the designation. In Welcoming America’s audit, the city demonstrated a “clear commitment to building a welcoming infrastructure” and creativity in program development and services. The city also maintains strong community partnerships that support and welcome immigrants and refugees.

**Home is Here NOLA Co-Director Julie Yael Ward** said: “We are supportive of and encouraged by the city’s commitment to this rigorous process to support immigrant community members and equitable community-building for all in New Orleans.” Home is Here NOLA is a community-based organization working with immigrants and refugees, and referred the Certified Welcoming program to the city, encouraging it to apply and writing a letter of recommendation.

**EICentroLA Executive Director Lindsey Navarro** said: “Becoming a Certified Welcoming city means that New Orleans is where Latino-owned businesses are supported and encouraged to pursue the American dream of financial stability through entrepreneurship regardless of immigration status. As the fastest-growing small business group in the United States, Latinos have the potential to fuel the New Orleans economy through entrepreneurship and job creation. Kudos to the City of New Orleans for leading the charge in Louisiana towards building a welcoming place for all.”

Certified Welcoming is a formal designation by Welcoming America for cities and counties that have created policies and programs reflecting their commitment to immigrant inclusion. Since 2017, Certified Welcoming and its operating framework, the [Welcoming Standard](#), have served as a roadmap for local governments seeking to build truly welcoming communities.

In addition to being the first city in Louisiana to achieve the Certified Welcoming designation, New Orleans is also the first to achieve it under the [new star system](#) implemented by Welcoming America earlier this year, making it the first 1-star Certified Welcoming city. Far from being a “rating system,” the new Certified Welcoming star system creates a roadmap for communities to advance welcoming work with transparency and accountability.

**Mayor’s Office of Human Rights & Equity Director Kahlida Lloyd**, said: “As a daughter of an immigrant mother, I am thrilled to be part of a city striving to be a welcoming city to all. The Office of Human Rights & Equity is proud to be leading the work of welcoming immigrants and refugees to our city alongside outstanding, resourceful and dedicated community partners.”

**Equity Program Manager of the Mayor’s Office of Human Rights & Equity Shakira Cruz Gonzalez** said, “When I first moved to America, I didn’t know English, I didn’t fit into the culture and society, and I personally have always felt like an impostor (neither from here nor there).



Knowing that our city is working toward fostering spaces where everyone is welcome and belongs is a reminder that there’s a place for all of us here.”

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## About Welcoming America

Welcoming America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs. We believe that all people, including immigrants, are valued contributors and vital to the success of our communities and shared future. Learn more

## About Certified Welcoming

Certified Welcoming is a formal designation for local governments that have created policies and programs reflecting their values and commitment to immigrant inclusion. This innovative program assesses local governments on their efforts to include and welcome immigrants in all areas of civic, social, and economic life in their communities. With a Certified Welcoming designation, communities distinguish their local efforts, build a competitive advantage, and gain access to opportunities to share their welcoming practices on a regional, national, and global stage. Learn more

Contacts: Lola Pak, [lola@welcomingamerica.org](mailto:lola@welcomingamerica.org); John Lawson, [john.lawson@nola.gov](mailto:john.lawson@nola.gov)

### Related News & Resources

**Crete, NE**  
A Certified Welcoming place for all of us to call home.

**Crete, NE, earns Certified Welcoming designation for its commitment to inclusion and belonging**

February 28, 2025

**Salt Lake City**  
A Certified Welcoming place for all of us to call home.

**Salt Lake City becomes first Certified Welcoming city in Utah**

September 16, 2024

**Cuyahoga County, OH and Roanoke, VA latest cities to become Certified Welcoming**

February 20, 2024

# Certified Welcoming

← [See all Blog Posts](#)

**RESOLUTION**

**NO. R-15-454**

**CITY HALL: September 17, 2015**

**BY: COUN**

**SECONDED BY:**

**WHEREAS**, New Orleans' immigrant population has increased dramatically over the past decade; and

**WHEREAS**, immigrants have made significant contributions to the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and to the local economy through their entrepreneurial efforts on our main streets; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of New Orleans is working to increase economic opportunity and eliminate barriers to employment that have affected many of the long-term residents of the city;

**WHEREAS**, the City of New Orleans has agreed to participate in the White House's Building Welcoming Communities Campaign and the national network of Welcoming Cities and Counties to create a more inclusive, receptive city environment for all local populations; **NOW THEREFORE**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**, That the New Orleans City Council hereby establishes the following benchmarks, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office in order to create a more welcoming city environment for all of New Orleans' residents:

**Language Access: Immediate and no cost actions to be taken**

1. Increased utilization of the services offered by the Spanish-speaking operators and translation services access line offered via the general complaint line (311),

SEP 10 6

2. Increased utilization of the City's language directory, which lists employees proficient in 18 languages including American Sign Language.
3. Prioritize translation of Homeland Security's Ready for Hurricane Season messages and translations in the One Stop Shop.

**Language Access: Important activities that would require additional funding**

1. Bilingual operators in Vietnamese and Spanish for 911 calls to supplement the language lines currently used to take emergency phone calls.
2. Expanded translation services for high need city departments.
3. Pay incentives for bilingual city and NOPD employees who are regularly expected to be on call for translation services for their department.
4. A multilingual static board in the City Hall lobby which would indicate for the public the location of departments and offices in multiple languages in City Hall 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby.
5. Additional basic medical Spanish training for Emergency Medical Technicians
6. A comprehensive marketing and outreach plan to ensure that New Orleans residents are aware of the availability of these services.

**Police and Community Relations**

1. Regular reports regarding the use and effectiveness of devices that the NOPD uses to provide real time translation services, as required by the consent decree.
2. Regular reports of the number occasions in which translation was required for police incident reports.
3. Increased outreach and education of NOPD officers and community members about the NOPD's bias free policing policy that provides police services regardless of immigration status and builds trust between the City and its immigrant residents.
4. Diligent efforts to ensure that the police department reflects the diversity of the community in its composition, especially ensuring the hiring of multilingual officers
5. NOPD acceptance of certain forms of identification in lieu of state-issued identification.



### **Cultural Competency**

1. The addition of multicultural holidays to City Council calendar
2. More country flags displayed from the second floor balcony at City Hall.
3. More opportunities for diverse religious leaders to participate in the invocations of City Council and other formal events of the City.

### **Economic Opportunity**

1. Increased advertisement and outreach about the partnerships between the Office of Economic Development and Office of Supplier Diversity and community organizations that provide information, technical assistance and financing opportunities to small businesses and entrepreneurs from immigrant communities.
2. Increased Disadvantaged Business Enterprise outreach to Spanish-speaking and other non-English speaking business owners.
3. Increase banking opportunities by conducting outreach to foreign consulates, community organizations, residents, and banking institutions on accepted forms of identification to access financial services.
4. Ensure policies are in place to ensure open access for all residents to job training and placement services.

**THE FOREGOING RESOLUTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED ON THE ADOPTION THEREOF AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:**

**YEAS:**

**NAYS:**

**ABSENT:**

**AND THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

# PROCLAMATION



*Whereas, New Orleans is recognized throughout the world as a diverse and inclusive city. Its success depends on ensuring that every New Orleanian feels welcomed by the city that they call home; and*

*Whereas, new residents are a vital part of sustaining the City's communities with fresh perspectives and new ideas, starting businesses that grow the City's economy, and by contributing to the City's unique cultural landscape that is valued here and across the globe; and*

*Whereas, regardless of where we are born or what we look like, we are united in our efforts to build a resilient, thriving and connected New Orleans that recognizes the impact we have in creating a vibrant culture with a strong economy; and*

*Whereas, the City of New Orleans will always welcome and strive to make our city more prosperous and more inclusive for all its residents. Let us come together to build a city where every member of our communities has the chance to contribute at their best; and*

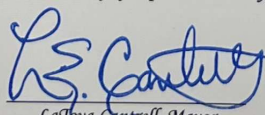
*Whereas, by working together, we can all achieve greater prosperity and make New Orleans a city where people from around the world feel valued and put down roots. Reaffirming that our city still stands as a beacon of freedom, opportunity, unity and belonging.*

*Now, Therefore, I, LaToya Cantrell,  
Mayor of the City of New Orleans, do hereby proclaim the week of September 9 through September 18, 2022 as*

## ***Welcoming Week 2022***

*I invite all New Orleanians to join this movement of communities nationwide by renewing our commitment to our values and taking action in the spirit of welcoming and belonging.*

*In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand  
and caused the great seal of the City of New Orleans  
to be affixed this 14<sup>th</sup> day of September in the year 2022.*

  
LaToya Cantrell, Mayor  
City of New Orleans









*A Certified Welcoming Place For  
All Of Us To Call Home.*

