



City of New Orleans

CERTIFICATION REPORT

October 2023



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Candidate Information

CERTIFICATION STATUS	1-Star Certified
NAME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT	City of New Orleans, LA
TYPE OF GOVERNMENT	City Government
TYPE OF ASSESSMENT	Initial Certification
CONTACT PERSON	Name: Shakira C Gonzales Organization: City of New Orleans Email: shakira.gonzalez@nola.gov
APPLICABLE STANDARD	Welcoming Standard 2.0
OBJECTIVE	Evaluation of local government's compliance with the criteria in the Welcoming Standard 2.0.
ASSESSMENT TEAM	Auditor(s): Jenny Diaz and Melissa Bertolo Analyst(s): Jenny Diaz and Melissa Bertolo
AUDIT DATE	November 30 - December 2, 2022
REPORT DRAFTED BY REPORT APPROVED BY	Jenny Diaz Melissa Bertolo



Certification Findings

The City of New Orleans applied to Certified Welcoming in February 2022 and received its initial audit in December of 2022. The initial analysis and certification report was provided in April 2023 with its assessment under the Welcoming Standard 1.0. Due to an extensive audit action plan, the City of New Orleans was interested in re-entering the Certified Welcoming program and being assessed under the updated Welcoming Standard 2.0 and starred certification system, which was published in May 2023. This report uses information provided from the initial self-assessment, audit interviews, and new information collected by the City of New Orleans to determine compliance. For additional information about the Welcoming Standard 2.0 and starred certification system, please visit

<https://bit.ly/welcoming-standard-certified-welcoming>

The following tables provide a brief overview of findings in each of the framework areas of the Welcoming Standard. For additional information regarding the audit findings, please see Appendix A, Certification Worksheet for both highlights and observations related to the criteria.

Framework Areas

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	<p><i>Welcoming communities ensure that all residents, including immigrants, are able to fully participate in civic life. Immigrant residents have access to democratic spaces, and shape community priorities and policies. Immigrants hold leadership roles in the community, and local institutions are invested in increasing access to leadership positions for immigrant residents.</i></p> <p>Community based organizations have invested in civic engagement work in New Orleans. Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI) and Power Coalition for Equity and Justice are highlights as they seek to educate and empower community members to take action, know their rights, and be civically engaged. There is an opportunity for the City of New Orleans to deepen its civic engagement work through increasing access, participation, and representation in democratic spaces.</p>
CONNECTED COMMUNITIES	<p><i>Welcoming communities build connections and trust between residents. Community institutions — including local government, businesses, faith communities, and nonprofits — create opportunities and spaces for immigrant and non-immigrant residents to have constructive interactions, develop relationships, and deepen</i></p>



	<p><i>their understanding of one another. Institutions support residents in building their personal capacity to engage with people different from themselves on equal footing and in sustained ways that reduce prejudice and strengthen diverse community relationships.</i></p> <p>Multiple partnerships, both by local government and community based organizations, create and build relationships between immigrant and non-immigrant residents. The Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council is an exciting program for its ability to bring youth from across the community together to discuss and address issues of common interest. As New Orleans continues to expand and deepen its work, there is an opportunity to consider more regular communication about its values and commitment as a welcoming city.</p> <p>Home is Here is a highlight for their work to create welcoming and belonging in New Orleans through systems level work as well as individual bridging.</p>
<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p><i>In welcoming communities, all residents — including immigrants — can participate fully in the economy. Workforce and economic development infrastructure address the priorities and needs of immigrant residents and immigrant jobseekers. Programs that support entrepreneurship, business development, and workforce development are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Local businesses are committed to diverse hiring and retaining employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.</i></p> <p>New Orleans undoubtedly experiences a large economic disparity. As the city examines ways to lessen the disparity, there is opportunity to ensure immigrant business owners and immigrant workers are not overlooked since they are a small percentage of the overall population.</p> <p>The New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice is a highlight for their community building around workers’ rights. Additionally, their continued feedback loops with their members provides the City of New Orleans with important information about the issues most pressing to the immigrant community. El Centro is also a highlight for their ability to fill gaps that immigrant business owners face.</p>
<p>EDUCATION</p>	<p><i>In welcoming communities, the education system ensures all students, including immigrant students, have the support they need to thrive in school and the knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. Schools and</i></p>



	<p><i>community education programs are informed by the needs and priorities of immigrant students and families, and are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Welcoming and inclusion efforts are not siloed within a single school or program, but incorporated into the schools and school districts that serve the community.</i></p> <p>The all-charter school system in New Orleans may complicate families' understanding of where to go to receive information on school enrollment and their student's education. Although Ed Navigator provides services to families to navigate the schools, there is still an opportunity to engage community organizations and members to ensure families are not lost in the system, particularly for older students and families who speak languages other than English or Spanish.</p> <p>The New Neighbor Project's work to recognize and address barriers to adult English classes, including location and time of day, is noteworthy.</p>
<p>EQUITABLE ACCESS</p>	<p><i>Welcoming communities ensure local services are accessible to all residents, including immigrants. Immigrant residents provide feedback to local government and community based organizations to identify and address demographic disparities and gaps in services, and to improve access to programs, particularly in the areas of housing, health, transportation, financial services, and the justice system.</i></p> <p>Equitable access is an area of opportunity for the City of New Orleans. The Mayor's Neighborhood Engagement Office regularly disseminates information but inconsistent evidence was provided for ensuring language accessible information. For recertification, there is an expectation that evidence clearly demonstrates information is communicated in a way that is accessible to immigrant residents.</p> <p>Home is Here is again a highlight for their work to create more equitable and accessible systems, including housing and legal aid.</p>
<p>GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP</p>	<p><i>Welcoming communities have infrastructure in place to support immigrant participation, inclusion, and equity. The local government and community-based organizations regularly seek feedback from immigrant residents to understand the challenges and priorities of immigrant residents. Institutions work closely together to prioritize and build capacity to implement immigrant participation, inclusion, and equity strategies.</i></p>



	<p>Government and community leadership is an area of continued growth for New Orleans. Despite multiple director transitions in the Office of Human Rights and Equity, there is commitment from staff and government leadership to continue the welcoming work.</p> <p>There are several independent partnerships between city departments, city staff, and community based immigrant serving organizations. Through these partnerships, communication with immigrant residents occurs.</p>
SAFE COMMUNITIES	<p><i>Welcoming communities prioritize safety for all residents, including immigrants. Policies and practices are in place that prevent discrimination. Strong, trusting relationships are built between immigrant residents and local safety services, such as law enforcement, fire departments, code enforcement, and emergency response. Effective bidirectional communication between safety services and immigrant residents exists, and programs are in place to address implicit and structural bias. Community partnerships are built to identify and address needs and gaps in services.</i></p> <p>The New Orleans Police Department has gone through great efforts to improve community relations and improve internal training and processes through its Consent Decree. They show commitment to language access and cultural awareness through various community partnerships and their Community Engagement Plan.</p> <p>Since the City of New Orleans was initially assessed under the Welcoming Standard 1.0, auditors had the opportunity to learn about emergency notification systems. Although not required for certification at the 1-star designation, there is great opportunity to improve language access for emergency management and response.</p>



Compliance

New Orleans meets 16/16 of the 1-star criteria in the Welcoming Standard, which means the City of New Orleans may receive its certificate and designation as 1-star Certified Welcoming.

1-Star Criteria Compliance

Category	Total Criteria	Complied
GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP	3	3
EQUITABLE ACCESS	1	1
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	1	1
CONNECTED COMMUNITIES	4	4
EDUCATION	3	3
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	2	2
SAFE COMMUNITIES	2	2
OVERALL COMPLIANCE	16	16



Appendix A: Certification Worksheet

New Orleans's Certification worksheet contains the responses to the self-assessment and your certification team's final assessment of compliance for all criteria. Additionally, the worksheet contains information about reasons for compliance, and highlights and observations pertaining to the work. To view the certification worksheet, please visit <https://bit.ly/NOLA-1-Star-Worksheet>

Explanation of Highlights: During the audit process, our team identified particularly innovative or effective programs and strategies that set New Orleans apart in its pursuit of the Welcoming Standard. Welcoming America would like to engage your team around the possibility to amplify, share, and learn more about these practices.

Explanation of Observations: During the certification process, our team identified opportunities for growth and improvement, which are described in the observations column. We typically require observations to be substantially improved to be considered compliant for recertification. If you would like to discuss any of the observations, please contact your certification team at certified@welcomingamerica.org.



Appendix B : Audit Interviewees

Name	Organization
Currin Wallis	504 Health Net
Emily Remington	504 Health Net
Janet Lopez	Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans
Anamaria Villamarin-Lupin	City of New Orleans
Andres Acuna	City of New Orleans
Carly Sipes	City of New Orleans
Edwin Holmes	City of New Orleans
Eva Hurst	City of New Orleans
Faith Butler	City of New Orleans
Isis Casanova	City of New Orleans
Janick Lewis	City of New Orleans
Jeff Schwartz	City of New Orleans
Kate Hoadley	City of New Orleans



Lori Barthelemy	City of New Orleans
Margrett Magee	City of New Orleans
Mashaera Alexander	City of New Orleans
Natalie Kearney	City of New Orleans
Peter Edmondson	City of New Orleans
Quentin Jackson	City of New Orleans
Shakira Cruz Gonzalez	City of New Orleans
Taylor Jackson	City of New Orleans
Nelida Garcia	EdNavigator
Lindsey Navarro	El Centro Inc
Leticia Casildo	Familias Unidas en Acción
Mayra Pineda	Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Julie Yael Ward	Home is Here
Karla Sikaffy	Language Access Coalition
Dauda Sesay	Louisiana Organization for refugees and Immigrants
Robin Goldblum	New Orleans Public Library
LaToya Johnson	New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice