



COLORADO OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

Inaugural State Integration Plan

March 2023

Introduction

In 2021, through the passage of HB 21-1150, the state of Colorado mandated the Office of New Americans to “[i]mplement a statewide strategy to facilitate economic stability and promote successful economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration by investing in the success of immigrants in Colorado.” In June 2022, ONA hired its first Director.

New Americans have long played a vital cultural and economic role in Colorado, contributing to our shared prosperity and wellbeing through their hard work, dedication, and love for our state. The community is growing and diversifying; today, one in ten Coloradans is an immigrant. However, many New Americans in Colorado face challenges to realizing their full potential to thrive and contribute. Language, cultural and administrative barriers limit their economic, social and educational opportunities. This is to the detriment of all Coloradans.

The following is a robust plan to advance the integration and inclusion of immigrants and refugees in Colorado communities. It addresses high priority needs of the New American community, and includes numerous strategies and activities that ONA with its current capacity cannot accomplish on its own. However, with the full partnership and engagement of Colorado’s civil society, it can be done. ONA will treat the state integration plan as a working document and continue to hone it in furtherance of the overarching goal of helping New Americans thrive in Colorado.

“Supporting the integration¹ and inclusion of immigrants² and refugees in our communities helps the whole state thrive” - HB 21-1150

Strategic Goals

1. **Improve access to and awareness of existing resources and services which support the economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration of New Americans**
 - 1.1. Sustain a current “barriers to access improvement plan” for every service or benefits program that is supervised by the state and/or administered by the counties, which addresses barriers experienced by all Coloradans, including New Americans
 - 1.1.1. Partner with the Office of the Future of Work on the state’s Digital Equity plan to ensure the inclusion and impact to New Americans across all state agencies and programs
 - 1.1.2. Increase access to credentialing and licensing pathways through the Global Talent Task Force, which may include outreach,

¹ *“Integration” means a dynamic, two-way process in which immigrants and New Americans and the receiving community work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities without having to forego their own cultural identity. (HB 21-1150)*

² *“Immigrant” or “New American” means a Coloradan who has arrived, and a person who will arrive, to Colorado as an immigrant or refugee, and includes their children. The population includes: refugees, asylees, special immigrant visa holders, victims of trafficking, recipients of the federal deferred action for childhood arrival program, and all other immigrants and aspiring citizens seeking opportunity, safety, or reunification of family. (HB 21-1150)*

professional credential reviews and translation and interpretation

- 1.1.3. Enhance state agencies' language accessibility plans through work with the Department of Personnel and Administration and ensure that plans for every state program contain a Limited English Proficiency (or Language Assistance) plan to include all Coloradans. Ensure that each LEP or LAP plan is made public so that English language learners understand resources available to them. Implement a monitoring plan to ensure effective implementation of LEP and LAPs.
 - 1.1.4. Identify and address barriers to access that are specific to New Americans in rural CO communities
 - 1.1.5. Partner with workforce centers to troubleshoot barriers to outreach, trust and service delivery
 - 1.1.6. Respond to inquiries and serve as the point of contact for immigrant-serving agencies, state agencies, and the public about immigrant issues in Colorado
- 1.2. Identify a multilingual shared referral platform for state services and programs that can be accessed by any public or nonprofit organization, that is based on a "no wrong door" approach, that provides an accessible, seamless experience, that supports co-enrollment for services, that distinguishes prerequisites for and distinctions between services, that prioritizes translated videos and trusted messengers, and that includes referrals for health and mental health barriers
 - 1.2.1. Work with public and private partners to identify where this shared referral platform could be housed that would support co-enrollment for services

- 1.2.2. Develop a comparative catalog, dashboard, and service map of internal and external language services, with support to navigate the map
 - 1.3. Sustain a public relations campaign for all Coloradans, using non-traditional media, social media, trusted individuals and organizations, in order to increase awareness of and trust in state benefits, with particular emphasis on linguistic and cultural strategies to reach New Americans
 - 1.3.1. Partner with a research entity on community-level social network mapping to better understand the trusted conveyors and modalities of resources and information
 - 1.3.2. Utilize a community navigator model to establish New American community member outreach point-of-contacts across Colorado
 - 1.3.3. Utilize multilingual action-focused video and social media campaigns for outreach to New Americans about initiatives to increase access to opportunities
- 2. Enhance the capacity of government, community organizations and the private sector to further the economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration of New Americans**
 - 2.1. Implement a public-private grant funding program to build or enhance immigrant-serving nonprofits statewide, with a special focus on New Americans with the highest barriers to integration
 - 2.1.1. Leverage funds to build the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of community organizations providing culturally and linguistically appropriate welcome, intake, cultural orientation, case management, housing referrals and assistance, employment services including career coaching, job counseling, job placement, entrepreneurship pathways, health and mental health services, school enrollment, interpretation,

translation, immigration legal assistance, and language and digital literacy training

- 2.1.2. Support public-private training partnerships, invest dedicated funds in digital upskilling efforts to include providing digital literacy training with financial incentives, and identify incentives to advance short-term and nontraditional training and education programs that respond to job seeker and employer needs
- 2.1.3. Develop funding partnerships and a community of practice to ensure that community-based organizations that serve New Americans are mentored, funded, and listened to as partners
- 2.1.4. Increase non-financial support to organizations serving New Americans to complement funding, which may include collaboration or technical assistance
- 2.2. Coordinate with and make recommendations to the Governor, the General Assembly, and state agencies on ways to improve policies and programs to support immigrant integration across the state
 - 2.2.1. Recommend or support legislation which seeks to improve policies and programs to support immigrant integration across the state
 - 2.2.2. Recommend changes in the organization, management, programs, and budgets of state agencies in order to promote the integration of immigrants
 - 2.2.3. Elevate New American voices and perspectives in regards to state programs, policies and initiatives including but not limited to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and workforce communities of practice, wherever possible through the New American Community Advisory Committee
- 2.3. Regularly convene key stakeholders to enhance collaboration and efficiency

- 2.3.1. Initiate and regularly convene the New Americans Task Force (state agency staff)
- 2.3.2. Facilitate lean process reviews across state agencies and programs that have a shared interest in New Americans in order to enhance capacity for New Americans initiatives
- 2.3.3. Convene and engage with governmental (county, local) entities to:
 - Educate on New American populations, contributions, and issues
 - Amplify and streamline sharing of best practices
 - Collaborate on new initiatives
 - Share and promote ONA initiatives
 - Provide technical assistance as needed
- 2.3.4. Initiate and regularly convene meetings with immigrant serving community based organizations statewide
- 2.3.5. Engage private sector groups in order to identify and/or expand economic integration opportunities for New Americans

3. Implement new statewide opportunities to enhance the economic, social, linguistic, and cultural integration of New Americans

- 3.1. Target workforce development strategies and resources towards the inclusion of New Americans and English Language Learners, to include efforts related to work-based learning opportunities and services available at workforce systems
 - 3.1.1. Improve the ability of in-demand licensed occupations to harness the skills of foreign-trained professionals through

partnerships with licensing bodies, employers, and New Americans

- 3.1.2. Develop replicable upskilling and professional development models that will increase career pathways for New Americans
- 3.1.3. Create economic opportunities specific to New Americans in rural CO communities
- 3.2. Initiate an award for receiving community innovations that support the welcoming and inclusion of New Americans
- 3.3. Promote opportunities that combine language acquisition, digital literacy, cultural orientation, and social bridging initiatives
- 3.4. Implement Virtual Career-Aligned ESL program (SB 22-140)
 - 3.4.1. Provide career and sector-specific, adult English language courses via English learning digital platforms
 - 3.4.2. Provide New Americans with the tools they will need to upskill and reskill so that they can access and eventually work in specific sectors, while simultaneously meeting employers' needs for an increased talent pool
- 3.5. Implement Benefit Recovery Fund (BRF) Program (SB 22-234)
 - 3.5.1. Work with a Third Party Administrator to create a sustainable BRF that provides needed bridge assistance to eligible undocumented individuals that become unemployed through no fault of their own. Work with trusted community based organizations to spread the word and facilitate access.
- 4. Ensure that New Americans are included as priority populations in state and municipal plans, funding, and datasets so that all Coloradans see and appreciate New Americans as integral and valued community members**

- 4.1. Develop a research infrastructure to coordinate partnerships with researchers whose work will enhance data about New Americans and support data-informed decision making
 - 4.1.1. Build relationships with national organizations and state institutions of higher education to create a research learning agenda
- 4.2. Promote and celebrate the success and contributions of Colorado's immigrant community
 - 4.2.1. Develop and share infographics and other compelling data-informed media to continuously educate about New Americans
- 4.3. Enhance visibility, influence and outreach of ONA's efforts
 - 4.3.1. Produce a monthly newsletter that not only informs New Americans and Coloradans of ONA's efforts, but also celebrates accomplishments of Colorado's New Americans
 - 4.3.2. Regularly engage with civil society organizations across CO through listening sessions, dialogue, and shared events
- 4.4. Use the Welcoming America Welcoming Standard, and/or other metrics, to measure and celebrate the achievement of state plan goals