



S 194 - Offices of New Americans

Vermont Presentation

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WES Global Talent Bridge



World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in the United States and Canada. For more than 45 years, WES has set the standard of excellence in the field of international academic credential evaluation. Through WES Global Talent Bridge, the organization joins with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and policymakers to help immigrants and refugees who hold international credentials fully utilize their talents and education to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through its grantmaking, impact investing, and partnerships, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund seeks to advance economic and social inclusion for immigrants and refugees.

National Demographics

More than **two million** college-educated immigrants in the labor market are either **unemployed or underemployed**, representing **17%** of the total college-educated labor force in the U.S.

Maine Demographics

Immigrants make up 4.9% of the state's population and 5.8% of Vermont's labor force.

Collectively, immigrants paid \$438.5 million in state, local, and federal taxes in Vermont.

70.1%

of immigrants in Vermont are working age – compared to 63.1% of the United States born population.

Offices of New Americans

Many states across the country have established – or are considering establishing – an Office of New Americans to facilitate the economic and civic integration of their immigrant and refugee residents. An ONA can serve as a direct service provider and/or give technical assistance and guidance to relevant state agencies on how to meet the needs of diverse new American populations. These offices and their directors also provide advice and direction to the governor, legislators, and relevant state agencies, and are generally responsible for implementing any statewide immigration integration initiatives.

The Current Office of New Americans Network

Statutory or Executive Order

ONAs

- Colorado New York
- Illinois North Dakota
- Maine Ohio
- Maryland Oregon
- Massachusetts Virginia
- Michigan Utah
- Nevada
- New Jersey

Administrative Units

- California
- Minnesota
- North Carolina
- Wisconsin
- Washington
- Pennsylvania

GROWTH OF ONAs

While the oldest ONAs date back to the early 2000s, recent years have seen tremendous growth in the Network.

Between 2000 and 2009, ONAs in Maryland, California, and Massachusetts were created.

Between 2010 and 2019, entities were created in Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, New York and Washington.

In 2020, Virginia established an ONA.

In 2021, Colorado, Oregon, and Minnesota joined the network.

In 2022, Illinois, Wisconsin, and North Carolina joined the network.

In 2023, Utah, North Dakota, and Maine joined the network.

In 2024, Pennsylvania joined the network.

Pending ONA Legislation

Vermont

Delaware

Arizona

Hawaii

Pennsylvania

ONA Missions and Scopes

ONAs around the country differ in structure, placement, duties and budget. While most have a significant mission to further integration and inclusion in the state's economy, some have one or more of the following additional charges:

- I. Playing a convening role with state agencies, immigrant service providers, community groups, business and providers, and other stakeholders.**
- II. Language access.
- III. Legal representation
- IV. Expanding pathways to licensure and economic participation.
- V. Naturalization ceremony coordination
- VI. Management of Refugee Coordination Services
- VII. Serving as a state Point of contact for immigrants and refugees.**
- VIII. Employer outreach coordination.**

Typical “Quick Wins” of New ONAs

New Office of Americans oftentimes focus on organization and structure upon inception and then shift to creating wins for the state and the immigrant and refugee communities to build support and momentum. These early wins can include:

1. Licensing Guides or Pathways
2. WIOA or Assistance Navigators
3. Listening Sessions
4. Naturalization Ceremonies
5. Building advisory groups
6. Service Gap Analysis
7. State-wide language access protocols

Advisory Groups

Particularly for newly created ONAs, the composition of advisory councils or steering committees has been included in the statutes or executive orders. With the advisory councils vary in composition, they typically include:

- 1) State Ethnic Commissions
- 2) Relevant Departments and Agencies
- 3) Refugee and Immigrant Serving Organizations
- 4) Governor's Office and/or Legislative representation of nominees.
- 5) Public Members.

S 194 Does it Right

S 194 identifies the correct decision points and information gathering required for a new ONA:

- 1. Data Assessment of immigrant population**
- 2. Best-practice analysis**
- 3. Inclusion of existing service providers and community-based organizations**
- 4. Examination of existing barriers and additional services needed**
- 5. Efficiency analysis of existing state programs**
- 6. Analysis of proposed structure, funding, and resources required**

Need more information?

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