

Office of New Americans State Network Backgrounder

The Office of New Americans (ONA) State Network is a forum for state policy leaders who support immigrant and refugee integration into their local communities and economies. Convened by the American Immigration Council (the Council) and World Education Services (WES), the network brings together a **bipartisan group of 22 states that together represent more than 27 million immigrant residents**. This document provides background information on when, how, and for what purpose each ONA was established.

The ONA State

Network includes

members and

participating

states from:

► California

► Colorado

► Illinois

► Hawaii

► Maryland

► Maine

► Massachusetts

► Michigan

► Minnesota

► Nevada

► New Jersey

► New Mexico

► New York

► North Carolina

► North Dakota

► Ohio

► Oregon

► Pennsylvania

► Utah

► Virginia

► Washington

► Wisconsin

California



Senior Policy Advisor for Immigration

Year Created: 2015

Created by: Legislation

Overview: The Senior Policy Advisor for Immigration is required to monitor the implementation of statewide laws and regulations that serve immigrants.

[Link to Legislation](#)

*No Office Website

Colorado



Office of New Americans




Year Created: 2022

Created by: Legislation

Overview: The Office of New Americans serves as the point of contact for immigrant-serving state agencies, private sector organizations, and the public about immigrant issues in Colorado, and has as one of its central purposes the successful integration and inclusion of immigrants and refugees in our state's communities. As its main priority, the ONA is required to implement 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.

[Link to Legislation](#)

[Office Website](#)

<p>Hawaii</p> 	<p>Immigration and Services Access Unit</p> <p>Year Created: 2024 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The purpose of the Immigration Services and Access Unit is to promote immigrant economic self-sufficiency, community inclusion, and integration. The Unit provides statewide services, coordinates with relevant government and nonprofit agencies, and approves contracts with qualified nonprofit organizations to support integration and civic engagement. The Unit is also responsible for the immigrant resource centers, administration of the refugee program, and management of other programs relating to immigrants.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation *No Office Website</p>
<p>Illinois</p> 	<p>Office of New Americans</p> <p>Year Created: 2021 Created by: Executive Order</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office of New Americans is required to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(1) Convene and lead internal and external stakeholders to coordinate and develop a policies and practices blueprint to make Illinois a more welcoming and equitable state for immigrants and refugees,</i> <i>(2) identify, research, analyze, and address economic and demographic trends and issues related to immigrants and refugees to better serve immigrant and refugee communities,</i> <i>(3) make policy recommendations to the Governor on issues impacting immigrants and refugees, including strategies to eliminate employment barriers, improve health outcomes, and strengthen social services,</i> <i>(4) work with state agencies as part of an interagency effort to ensure that there is access to critical services and supports for resiliency and recovery for immigrant and refugee communities in Illinois,</i> <i>(5) develop and implement outreach campaigns, community resources and record gathering processes to ensure that immigrant and refugee communities have access to services and programs for which they are eligible at state and federal levels, and</i> <i>(6) promote and celebrate the success of Illinois' immigrant communities.</i> <p>Link to Executive Order *No Office Website</p>
<p>Maine</p> 	<p>Office of New Americans</p> <p>Year Created: 2023 Created by: Executive Order & Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office of New Americans is charged with making Maine a home of opportunity for all, by welcoming and supporting immigrants to strengthen Maine's workforce, enhance the vibrancy of Maine's communities, and build a strong and inclusive economy.</i></p> <p>Link to Executive Order Office Website</p> <p>Link to Legislation</p>

Maryland



Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Year Created: 2021

Created by: Legislation

Overview: The charge of the Maryland Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is to establish a network of neighborhood-based opportunity centers that provide immigration services. The Office assists immigrants in matters relating to immigration status and works to increase access to English for Speakers of Other Languages programs by engaging nonprofit organizations and other program providers. Through the Office, immigrants are connected to business resources that use immigrant skills, employment referral programs, and other workforce development programs. The Office also works to develop and leverage immigrants' skills to benefit immigrant communities and the State, strengthen the connection between immigrants and the immigrants' communities through civic engagement, and reduce exploitation of immigrants.

[Link to Legislation](#)

[Office Website](#)

New Americans Initiative Coordinator

Year Created: 2010

Created By: Administrative Change

Overview: The New Americans Initiative Coordinator leads integration efforts related to immigrants and language access for all the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning offices. The coordinator is a part of the Division's Senior Leadership Team and oversees this special initiative from within the Office of the Assistant Secretary. The New Americans Initiative is a single-person unit with only the coordinator on staff. Crucial functions of the position include working with State and local government leaders to improve workforce integration, sharing best practices related to oral and written translation services, and co-chairing the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force.

[Link to Admin Change](#)

*No Office Website

Massachusetts



Office for Refugees and Immigrants

Year Created: 1985

Created by: Executive Order

Overview: The MA Office for Refugees and Immigration's mission is to promote the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social, and civic life of Massachusetts. The Office administers programs that provide direct services to clients through a network of resettlement agencies, faith-based organizations and ethnic community-based organizations, which have the capacity to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of newcomer populations.

[Link to Executive Order](#)

[Office Website](#)

Michigan



Office of Global Michigan

Year Created: 2014

Created by: Executive Order & Legislation

Overview: The Office of Global Michigan takes the lead in advancing equity and inclusion initiatives throughout the state, while spearheading programs for the seamless integration of newcomers. The Office's goal is to strengthen connections between communities by ensuring state programs and opportunities are accessible, inclusive, and positioned to have the best possible impact. OGM achieves this through partnerships and community engagement, effective state operations, and strategic advocacy initiatives. As an integral part of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, OGM shares a collective charge to champion economic and community development. OGM actively collaborates with state agencies and community-based partners, diligently working to dismantle barriers that may hinder access to services for immigrant and ethnic communities.

[Link to Executive Order](#)

[Office Website](#)

[Link to Legislation](#)

Minnesota



Office of New Americans

Year Created: 2023

Created by: Legislation

Overview: The Office of New Americans is focused on coordinating state government efforts to bring together New Americans, employers, local governments, nonprofits and other partners to create welcoming communities and engage all Minnesotans more fully in a successful state economy. ONA staff serve as the state's specialists on issues relating to immigrants, refugees and evacuees – working across state agencies and with the governor's office, as well as with community and business leaders throughout Minnesota to break down barriers and build connections. ONA staff play a significant role in fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive society that benefits all Minnesotans.

[Link to Legislation](#)

[Office Website](#)

Nevada



Governor's Office of New Americans




Year Created: 2019




Created by: Legislation


Overview: The Governor's Office for New Americans is dedicated to fostering opportunities for immigrants and refugees to thrive in Nevada. Established to promote the civic and economic integration of these communities, the Office works diligently to ensure that every new Nevadan has the chance to achieve economic self-sufficiency and contribute to the state's growth and prosperity. The ONA's mission is to support the integration of new and aspiring Americans into Nevada's communities and economy.

[Link to Legislation](#)

[Office Website](#)

<p>New Jersey</p> 	<p>Office of New Americans</p> <p>Year Created: 2019 Created by: Executive Order</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office of New Americans in the Department of Human Services supports new Americans through outreach and education, and works on priorities to build trust, improve access to social services, workforce development and employment services, and legal services for immigrants. The ONA seeks to increase accessibility to state programs available to new Americans, including those who speak languages other than English. The ONA also serves as a resource for other state agencies to amplify education and outreach on state initiatives and programs to ensure they reach all new American communities in our state.</i></p> <p>Link to Executive Order Office Website</p>
<p>New York</p> 	<p>Office for New Americans</p> <p>Year Created: 2014 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office for New Americans works to assist newcomers to New York State to fully participate in the state's civic and economic life. The ONA is committed to strengthening New York State's welcoming environment for New Americans and facilitating their success. Through its statewide network of community-based providers, ONA assists all new Americans in accessing and navigating a variety of free services and supports their inclusion as an integral part of New York State's diverse cultural fabric.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation Office Website</p>
<p>North Dakota</p> 	<p>Office of Legal Immigration</p> <p>Year Created: 2023 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office of Legal Immigration champions a statewide strategy to attract, retain, and integrate global talent from around the world, fostering a robust and diverse workforce for North Dakota.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation Office Website</p>

<p>Ohio</p> 	<h3>Office of Opportunities for New Americans</h3> <p>Year Created: 2018 Created by: Executive Order</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Office of Opportunities for New Americans was created to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) inventory state agencies' existing services that help new immigrants ascend the economic ladder and identify services that could be especially beneficial to the immigrant community with a specific focus on occupational licensing, workforce training and education, (2) align policies, programs and resources across state government to better attract new immigrants to Ohio and share best practices involved in working with new legal migrants, (3) distribute information and develop a one-stop website for those existing services to communities to increase awareness and engagement with new immigrants and ensure they recognize Ohio is a Welcoming place for them and their families, and (4) conduct outreach to representatives of nonprofit organizations, state and local government agencies, elected officials and other interested persons in support of the above objectives. <p>Link to Executive Order Office Website</p>
<p>Oregon</p> 	<h3>Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement</h3> <p>Year Created: 2021 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The mission of the Oregon Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement is to identify, develop and operate a statewide immigrant and refugee integration strategy. OIRA advocates for and partners with immigrant and refugee communities to meet the needs of these populations across Oregon.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation Office Website</p>
<p>Virginia</p> 	<h3>Office of New Americans</h3> <p>Year Created: 2020 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Virginia Office of New Americans was established in 2020 to promote the economic and civic success of Virginia's diverse immigrant communities. The Office is comprised of an Immigrant Services unit and Refugee Services unit (formerly known as the Office of Newcomer Services). The Office is responsible for the implementation of a statewide strategy to provide immigrants with comprehensive assistance related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, citizenship and other services for which they may be eligible.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation Office Website</p>

<p>Utah</p> 	<h3>Center for Global Talent and New Americans</h3> <p>Year Created: 2021 Created by: Legislation</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Utah Center for Global Talent and New Americans assists individuals and businesses in navigating pathways to recruit and retain global talent. It also engages with state and federal government partners to convene, facilitate, and advise on immigration policy and strategies that promote economic opportunity for New Americans or foreign-born individuals living in Utah.</i></p> <p>Link to Legislation Office Website</p>
<p>Washington</p> 	<h3>Legal Advisor on Immigration Issues</h3> <p>Year Created: 2018 Created by: Administrative</p> <p>Overview: <i>The Governor's Legal Advisor on Immigrant Issues works with agencies to ensure unnecessary personal information is not being collected or retained, and reviews agency processes for interacting with law enforcement and responding to related records requests.</i></p> <p>Link to Admin Change * No Office Website</p>