



WELCOMING
AMERICA 
BUILDING A NATION OF NEIGHBORS

2016 in review

WELCOMING AMERICA AND ITS MEMBERS ARE CREATING INCLUSIVE PLACES SO THAT ALL RESIDENTS CAN THRIVE.

We are bridging divides so people can find common ground; helping communities plan and invest in being welcoming and building economically successful and resilient places for our shared future.

Here are a few voices from the communities we serve.



Osmany Chauvin Elias, a client of Kentucky Refugee Ministries (KRM), a recipient of technical assistance through Welcoming America's Welcoming Refugees grant with the Office of Refugee Resettlement, has formed a friendship with prominent jazz pianist and KRM volunteer Harry Pickens, who has mentored Elias as he develops as a professional musician. The two also play music together at KRM community events.

➤ *Osmany Chauvin Elias and Harry Pickens*

IN LOUISVILLE AND LEXINGTON

950

active volunteers help refugees feel welcome in Kentucky by preparing homes for newly arrived families, tutoring English-language learners and students, coaching job seekers, and engaging in cultural exchanges.



“From Cuba, I brought my saxophone, my aspirations as a musician, and my wife. The first time I played music with Harry, we made a connection where I wasn’t worried about the audience. It was just me and him connecting through music.”

➤ *Osmany Chauvin Elias*



“We’ve probably played a lot more notes together than we’ve exchanged words together, but it doesn’t really matter. Our relationship reinforces the realization that underneath all the artificial limits and labels of class, culture, creed, ethnicity, race, and age, there is common ground.”

➤ *Harry Pickens*



The Neighborhood Development Center provided technical assistance to the Jaras as they sought to grow their business, obtain a liquor license, and improve signage. NDC is a Welcoming America member that helps local entrepreneurs improve their lives and revitalize neighborhoods.

\$46 million

is returned to neighborhood economies every year by entrepreneurs assisted by the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC), a Welcoming America member, through rent, business expenses, payroll, taxes and payments to subcontractors.

“I teach my children all the time to say hello, to welcome people, to say bye. And this store, I feel that it is important to the neighborhood because people feel really welcome, and I try to do my best with them,”

➤ *Rosie Jara, who owns Mi Linda Tierra, a St. Paul, Minnesota, grocery store specializing in products from Mexico, with her husband, Lucio.*



Marcelo Asher Quarantotto

Nebraska's rural communities are working to value and engage new residents and their local contributions. One such resident is Mohamed Omar, whose African Store has grown from a small shop near the highway to a large, vital shop in the heart of Schuyler.

**IMMIGRANT-OWNED
BUSINESSES GENERATED**
\$126 million
IN NEBRASKA FROM 2006–2010.

Because of the dedication of these communities and programs like Nebraska is Home run by Welcoming America member Nebraska's Appleseed, welcoming efforts are thriving around the state.

The Dahir sisters, Halima, 21, Anisa, 18, and Asma, 18 years old, were born in the United States, and their parents came to Salt Lake County as refugees from Somalia.

"Salt Lake City is one of the most welcoming communities that I believe exists in the United States. A welcoming community is not only welcoming to one specific type of refugee, but to everyone and all of their family and their kids. The refugee community also is teaching the receiving community various things like how to become better humans and what it means to be a refugee," said Halima.

Feeling welcome helps immigrants and refugees gain a sense of belonging in their communities.





Youssef, 25, passed through five countries over four years before arriving in Stuttgart, Germany, where he is studying the German language at a local vocational school.

“I’m looking for work in a restaurant and hope to open my own restaurant one day. I am happy to live here and getting to know people in the community.”

Stuttgart is a Welcoming America partner that has long been at the forefront of working to create inclusive communities. Whether through workforce initiatives or innovative approaches to the arts, the city demonstrates how vibrant places are those that invest in their most important asset—their people.

OUR VALUE

Welcoming America shares new approaches to inclusion as we connect people and exchange ideas across our network to create an environment in which everyone can truly thrive.



WELCOMING WORKS

In 2016, **Welcoming America** grew partnerships to help **create communities that work better for everyone**, helping places show the value of welcoming in a way that helps all people put down roots and thrive.

Welcoming America is building, connecting, and changing, and so is our network of **161 local government and nonprofit members representing 500+ communities**.

Here's what we accomplished together.



600

welcoming policies

HAVE BEEN CREATED BY
WELCOMING AMERICA MEMBERS,
WITH MORE IN THE WORKS.

80% of Welcoming America
members said our support directly
impacted the development and
implementation of their inclusive,
welcoming policies.

OF MEMBERS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTING OR DEVELOPING
INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS:



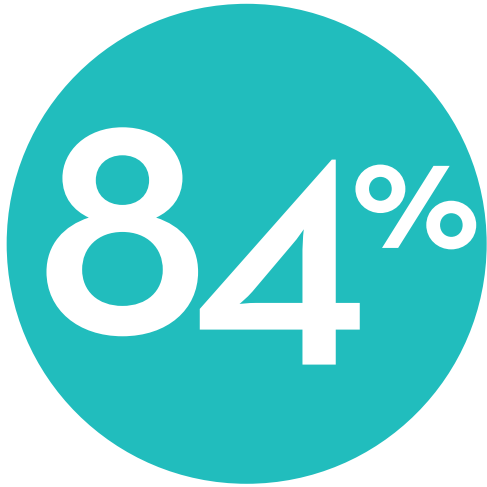
**ADDRESS EQUITY, DIVERSITY,
AND INCLUSION**

The mayor of Akron, Ohio, signed a comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinance to protect residents and visitors against discrimination based on factors—including race, religion, and age—so that all people have access to a healthy, productive life.



**GROW ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY FOR IMMIGRANTS**

In New York City, the YMCA provides entrepreneurship and small business development training, financial literacy workshops, and guidance for first-time homebuyers to empower immigrants and refugees as valued contributors to the city’s shared prosperity.



**BUILD CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN IMMIGRANT AND
U.S.-BORN RESIDENTS**

In Florida, Welcoming Gainesville offers a unique opportunity to foster understanding for new Americans through their Playback Theater Program, which brings stories of newcomers to life through theater workshops and performances. Through this program, newcomers get to share their story and challenges with their new hometown.



“Welcoming America continues to be a tremendous resource to our work. I appreciate the central role it plays in connecting our national peers and providing timely information and useful tools to advance our work. Without their assistance and leadership, our efforts would be a lot further behind.”

➤ *Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer*

“We sincerely appreciate having the Welcoming America network to turn to for messaging, guidance, and support during this incredibly difficult time. Using the language of welcoming and being able to point to positive accomplishments across the country is helping us mobilize local efforts.”

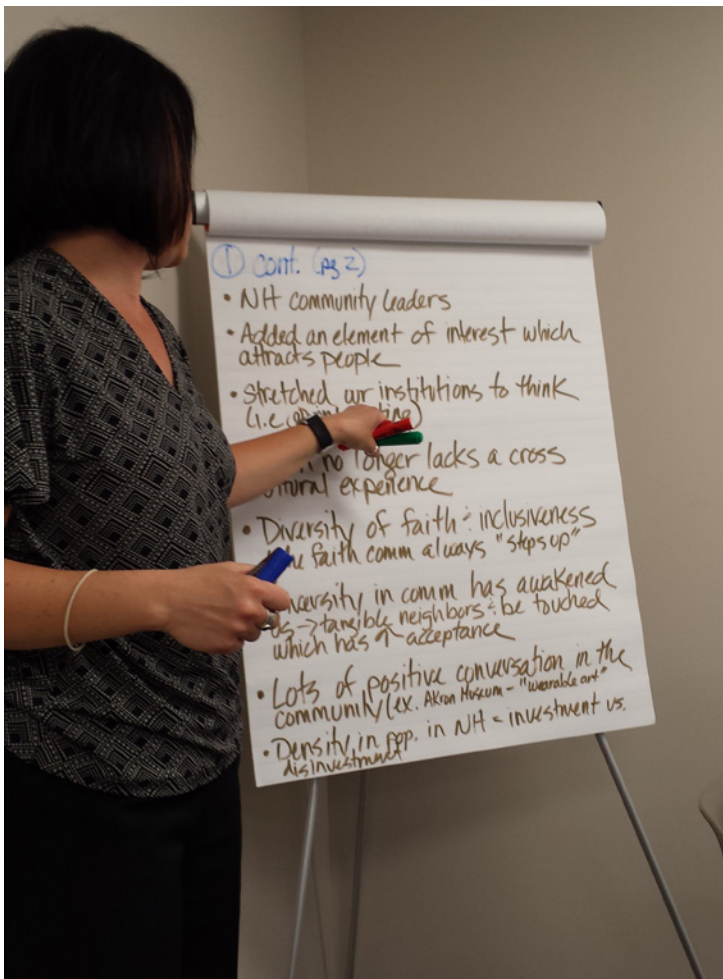
➤ *Eastside Refugee and Immigration Coalition in King County, Washington*

In 2016, Salt Lake County was one of several Welcoming America communities to establish an Office for New Americans to help newcomers integrate and contribute to their new communities.

“Welcoming communities are safer, stronger, and more vibrant. Our rapid growth includes many foreign-born residents who now call the county home. The goal of the new office is to improve the lives of Salt Lake County’s New American residents by maximizing their civic, social, and economic potential.”

➤ Ze Min Xiao, Director, Mayor’s Office for New Americans at Salt Lake County, pictured below with Mayor Ben McAdams





Gateways for Growth Challenge supports local welcoming plans

To encourage the development of robust community plans for attracting, retaining, and integrating immigrants and international talent, Welcoming America partnered in 2016 with New American Economy on the Gateways for Growth Challenge. This competitive opportunity for local governments, chambers of commerce, and nonprofit organizations provided tailored research, direct technical assistance, and matching grants for 20 recipients to help them find ways to reduce barriers to participation and help all residents be able to live up to their potential.

“Receiving the Gateways for Growth Challenge grant enabled us to create our first-ever community Welcoming Plan to outline the vision, goals, and strategies to move Akron/Summit County in a direction that maximizes opportunity to grow in population, diversity, and opportunity, and to be a welcoming community for all.”

➤ *Susan Berg Herman, Director of New Initiatives, The International Institute of Akron*



Spark Fellowship works to close racial disparities

Creating a welcoming community means helping all residents be able to participate fully and belong. In 2016, we launched our Spark Fellowship to help close the racial disparities that exist across education, income, housing, and more for receiving community members as well as immigrants and refugees.

“I came to the United States as an immigrant when I was 11 years old, but I had never really explored the intersection of racial justice and immigrant inclusion even though these things personally affected my life. The Spark Fellowship has helped me further develop my knowledge on racial equity, and more importantly, it has equipped me to be a more effective leader. Because of what I’ve learned, I have been able to help our community’s efforts on race and inclusion, racial literacy and equity and lead our town’s welcoming work with more confidence.”

➤ Spark Fellow Elisa Neira, Director of Human Services, Princeton, New Jersey

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Welcoming Communities brought together immigrants and receiving community members to address shared issues. When diverse neighbors get to know each other, they often find common ground and want to work together to build a more inclusive community for all.



> Sita Adhakari stands in the Seventh Street Garden, a community garden in Louisville, Kentucky, which connects refugees and receiving community members with land to grow food. She and her husband have been able to generate income for their family and gain a sense of belonging, as they build friendships with others in the community. The garden is an initiative of Welcoming America member Kentucky Office for Refugees — Catholic Charities of Louisville.



During our annual **Welcoming Week**, communities brought together immigrants, refugees, and native-born residents to **raise awareness of the benefits of welcoming everyone**. We are proud of the growing number of local and national hosts and partners who make this celebration a success.

WELCOMING WEEK 2016 AT A GLANCE

50,000
participants

400
events

150
communities

14 million
social media impressions



“How to welcome is something we need to help people with. Bringing people together with food creates a platform for international exchange where they are able to interact with one another on an equal footing.”

➤ Veena Prasad, co-organizer of Potluck for Peace, a Welcoming Week collaboration between Interfaith Community Sanctuary and Project Feast, based in greater Seattle.



Welcoming America was grateful in 2016 to launch a partnership with YMCA of the USA, which shares a vision with us of building more inclusive communities where new Americans and long-term residents can all thrive. The Y—founded in 1851 and one of the country’s largest nonprofits—joined more than 20 other organizations as an official Welcoming Week partner, and they hosted more than 50 events at local Ys across the country.

“The Y has a long history of serving immigrants and receiving communities, and we participate in Welcoming Week because it is a meaningful way to bring people together to celebrate the benefits of welcoming everyone and building bridges for more vibrant, cohesive communities.”

➤ Kevin Washington, President and CEO, YMCA of the USA



Welcoming Refugees

In 2016, our Welcoming Refugees project published two toolkits to fight backlash toward refugees and Muslim Americans and to help our audience proactively engage with community leaders and neighbors.

“These toolkits have been on my desk all year. They offer me strategies to focus our communications on the power of human stories. Highlighting a person’s struggles or dreams helps people connect, and linking these stories to the broader issues at hand gives our supporters context and the opportunity to fight for the refugee program.”

➤ *Christine Gosney, Grants and Communications Manager, Kentucky Refugee Ministries*

The Welcoming Standard

sets the bar for inclusive communities.

In 2016, Welcoming America created the Welcoming Standard to outline essential local policies, programs, and partnerships that are critical to successful integration. The Welcoming Standard serves as the backbone of the Certified Welcoming program, a formal recognition for city and county governments that meet the rigorous requirements set out in the Standard.

STANDING STRONG

In 2016, Welcoming America served as a resource for communities to embrace diversity and build resilient communities.

Inclusion is thriving at the local level

despite national policy, and our members are a **voice of welcoming** during times of crisis.

➤ More than 250 local leaders gathered for the 2016 Welcoming Interactive to advance immigrant inclusion in their communities.



Our 2016 events inspired attendees and gave them concrete tools, key networking opportunities, and resources at a time of national uncertainty.

The Welcoming Economies Convening was an opportunity to exchange and learn about the momentum of local Rust Belt initiatives to welcome, retain, and empower immigrants as valued economic contributors. It was hosted by the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, City of Philadelphia Office of Immigrant Affairs, and Welcoming Economies Global Network, Philadelphia. Mayor Jim Kenney wrote an op-ed about the Convening's importance and provided in-person remarks.



“How well Philadelphia succeeds in integrating immigrants – so that newcomers become Philadelphians in one generation, not two – will be the true measure of our success as a welcoming city.”

➤ *Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney*

At our Inaugural Welcoming Interactive, leading integration experts led discussions with 250 attendees, including delegations from Germany and Australia. The event was keynoteed by Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*, who encouraged attendees to see the intersection of welcoming work and race.



“We were honored to come together as a movement to exchange ideas and build relationships, continuing to build on the growing engine for change we’ve built together.”

➤ *David Lubell, Welcoming America Executive Director*



Sergio Martinez, one of 800,000 DREAMers granted relief under the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals program, arrived in the U.S. at age 3. Pictured here in front of his Detroit home, he has been an active part in revitalizing his community, starting a block club to improve the neighborhood and renovating other vacant homes on his block.

Sergio Martinez >

Immigrants Present Untapped Opportunity to Revitalize Communities

In 2016, our Welcoming Economies Global Network, a project in partnership with Global Detroit, published with the Fiscal Policy Institute research that demonstrates immigrants should be an important component of vacant and distressed housing revitalization, in addition to making our communities stronger and more vibrant. This will be a key asset to Rust Belt cities as they work to revitalize their communities, and the research was highlighted by CNN Money and *The Atlantic's* Renewal Project.

“I want a functioning city. Two years ago, there were no lights here. I want to come home and walk my dogs and not worry about blight.”

➤ *Sergio Martinez*

Welcoming Community Focus on Princeton, New Jersey

In the immediate aftermath of the 2016 U.S. election, the community of Princeton, New Jersey, set to work to reassure everyone in their community that they were welcome.

“The morning after the election results, I heard from two teachers that had witnessed kids as young as 3rd graders tell fellow students to ‘go home and pack your bags.’ We knew we had to do something to explore, ‘What does this election mean?’”

➤ *Elisa Neira, Director of Human Services, City of Princeton*

The City of Princeton brought together community leaders for a dialogue and to recommit to the values of their diverse community. They organized public listening sessions, brokered legal resources for immigrant families in immediate need, focused intently on the social and emotional needs of their local immigrant community, and then followed up with longer-term action planning when the national landscape became clearer.

“It was key for us to show our community that we are all in unity to respond and deal with any changes that could affect our progress as welcoming community,” said Neira.

Welcoming Community Focus on Anchorage, Alaska

Located at the center of global crossroads, Anchorage's population is dramatically transforming. The city is home to the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods and schools in the United States. More than 100 languages are spoken there, representing cultures from around the world and from across the North. Within this diversity lies an untapped asset: people.

Unfortunately, many residents face language, transportation, and other structural barriers that prevent full economic and civic engagement. Economic uncertainty compounds the impacts of environmental instability, and fiscal challenges mean less resources to build an economic future and to ensure the city can adapt to a changing climate.

In response, this Welcoming City is focusing on placing equity and inclusion at the heart of its environmental and economic resilience policies and practices.

Breaking down barriers opens access to capital and resources to more people in new ways and often for the first time. State and city economies will grow, as will opportunities for residents to forge fiscally secure futures.

Although the challenges of living in the largest northern urban center of the United States may be unique, the lessons learned in the incredibly diverse community—that resilience requires being ready, being connected, and being inclusive—are relevant to cities across the country and around the world.





“I was so inspired after visiting U.S. cities to learn the very practical integration approaches being implemented. I have shared many ideas with my colleagues and my hope is that we can implement some here in Stuttgart.”

➤ *Angelika Muenz, 2016 Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange participant. Stuttgart, Germany, has long been in the forefront of working to create inclusive communities. Whether through workforce initiatives or innovative approaches to the arts, the city demonstrates how vibrant places are those that invest in their most important asset—their people.*

In 2016, Welcoming America helped international and domestic partners exchange solutions that foster welcoming communities, globally.

The Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange was launched in partnership with Cultural Vistas and Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America. This reciprocal exchange program is focused on integration practitioners and leaders from the United States and Germany who work to integrate refugees and immigrants into their local communities. In 2016, more than 40 individuals from nine U.S. and German communities shared best practices and innovative approaches.



German participants of the Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange visited Clarkston, Georgia, in April 2016 to learn about innovative initiatives happening in this majority foreign-born community.



FINANCIALS

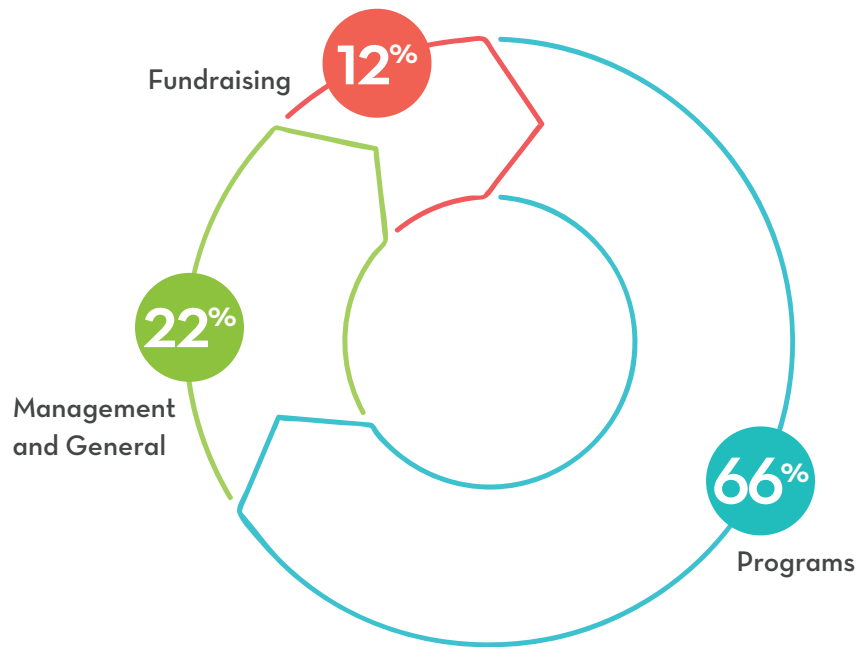
IN 2016, WE RAISED

\$3,291,958

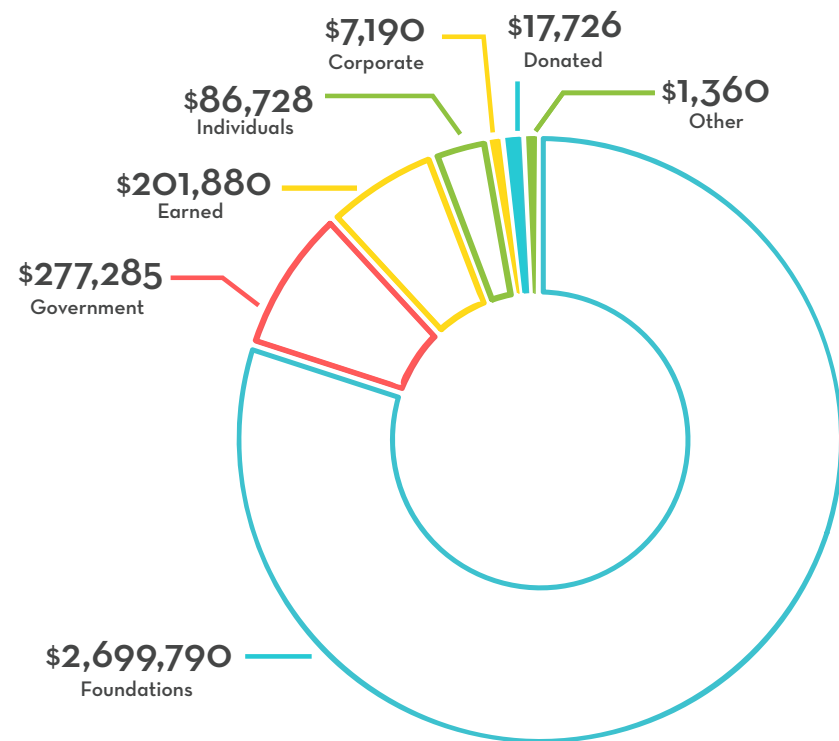
THAT GREW OUR REVENUE BY

29% OVER 2015.

EXPENSES



REVENUE



IN 2016, WELCOMING AMERICA INVESTED **\$3,310,857 IN BUILDING A STRONGER MOVEMENT AND ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORTING MEMBER COMMUNITIES.**

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info@welcomingamerica.org
404-631-6593

welcomingamerica.org

