



The Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs

OIRA

Strategic

Plan

2023-2026



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Message from the Mayor of Seattle

Dear Community Members,

As your mayor, I am honored to serve a city with such a vibrant and diverse community, and I want to recognize the invaluable contributions you make to our city. As the first biracial and Asian American mayor of Seattle, I draw inspiration from my Japanese American mother, who taught me the importance of standing up for yourself and your community, something she learned when she was incarcerated during the Japanese internment.

As a City Councilmember, I was proud to help establish the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to better support our community. As mayor, I am committed to advocating on behalf of immigrant and refugee communities, removing barriers, and increasing access to city programs and services. Our team at the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs works tirelessly to ensure we live up to our **One Seattle** values of being a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable city.

We know that Seattle is stronger because of our diversity, and we are committed to making sure that every member of our community feels valued and supported. We must seek sustained and meaningful input from our immigrant and refugee communities, learn from their experiences to address unique needs, and work in partnership to develop solutions. This plan details programs to provide language access services, legal assistance, citizenship services, workforce development, and more to residents, and puts us on the path to success for the future.

Thank you for being a part of our vibrant and diverse community. We will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that our immigrant and refugee residents have access to the resources and support they need to thrive and will continue to welcome and support all immigrants and refugees in our Seattle community.

Sincerely,

Bruce Harrell
Mayor of Seattle





Letter from the OIRA Director

I have the great honor and privilege of serving as the Director of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA). With over a decade of experience in immigration issues on local and federal levels, as well as having come to the United States as a refugee, this work is both personal and professional to me. OIRA is dedicated to promoting policies and providing programs that empower Seattle’s immigrant and refugee communities by addressing their needs.

For refugees who have just arrived, navigating our government bureaucracy can be an obstacle that involves complex forms and eligibility criteria. We recognize that immigrants come from diverse backgrounds, and therefore, have unique experiences and needs. They may seek safety, economic opportunities, or family reunification, and encounter challenges such as discrimination, cultural differences, and complex bureaucracies. It is essential to respect and address these cultural differences to support successful integration and well-being in our communities.

Informed by ongoing discussions with our communities and City of Seattle departmental partners, the first- ever OIRA Strategic Plan has been developed by our office to address the specific challenges and barriers faced by the diverse communities we serve. This plan establishes high-level goals, priorities, and strategies that enable us to allocate resources, prioritize actions, and measure progress toward our mission of promoting the thriving of our immigrant and refugee communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already significant barriers that immigrants and refugees face. Language barriers, limited access to healthcare, and a lack of social support networks can make everyday living challenging. Therefore, implementing programs, policies, and practices that support integration and enhance the quality of life for these communities is crucial and high-priority commitment of the City of Seattle.

Immigrants and refugees remain an essential part of the fabric of our city and its economy. Immigrants start businesses, work in essential sectors, and fill labor shortages. They bring unique skills, experiences, and perspectives, leading to innovation and economic growth. Our commitment is to ensure all immigrant and refugee communities not only survive but thrive in our city.

Hamdi Mohamed

Director, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs



Introduction

The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) was established in 2012 by Seattle Ordinance 123822 to recognize the importance and need for a stronger relationship and increased accountability between the City of Seattle and immigrant and refugee communities. The office serves as the backbone and coordinator of key City efforts across all departments to advance equity and access for immigrants and refugees.

From Seattle Ordinance 123822 Adopted February 15, 2012:



AN ORDINANCE relating to the organization of City government; creating an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; establishing the powers and duties of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs; renaming the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board to the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission; establishing the responsibility to provide staffing for the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission; amending Chapter 3.14 and repealing Sections 3.35.090, 3.35.100, 3.35.110, and 3.35.120 of the Seattle Municipal Code.



This new ordinance created the OIRA office to guide the City's services for immigrant and refugee communities. OIRA has served immigrant and refugee Seattle residents in the areas of language access, immigration legal services, workforce development, cash assistance distribution, and more. OIRA is focused on incorporating community needs and direct feedback in policy decisions and program development.

In the coming years, we will continue to invest in our communities through programs and policies that strengthen and empower our workforce, while applying an equity lens in our actions, processes, and decisions. We will invest in the areas of greatest need and ensure that we are collaborating with other City of Seattle departments. We will also invest in community partnerships as a strategy to better understand and address inequities throughout our region. Our office recognizes that progress can only be achieved through collaboration across departments and through accountability and transparency of all governmental organizations.

Acknowledgments

OIRA expresses our gratitude for the valuable partnerships and insights provided by the organizations and coalitions with whom we collaborate. Our internal and external stakeholders play a critical role in our strategic planning process, providing valuable input on the operating environment, and contributing to our vision for the organization's future. We recognize that there are many key stakeholders who have a vested interest in the success of our office. We are grateful for the support and guidance of our stakeholders and recognize that their contributions are essential to our ability to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee communities in Seattle. A full list of our stakeholders is detailed in **Appendix A**.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the consultants we worked with: Glenn Davis, Derek Vowles of Sometimes Y Productions, and Headwater People.







OIRA's

Values,

Mission,

and Vision

Core Values

As an office dedicated to serving immigrants refugees, our core values and shared agreements are centered around integrity, humility, communities, innovation, gratitude, respect, accountability, partnership, and transparency. We address the underlying causes of inequities and develop policies and programs that empower our community partners and those they serve.

By centering our work based on these values, we ensure that our office is committed to providing equitable and effective services to the communities we serve.



CORE VALUES

Integrity
Hu**M**ility
Com**M**unities
Innovation
GratITUDE
Respect
Accountability
Part**N**ership
Transparency



OIRA

Core

Values

- **Integrity** is imperative to OIRA's operations. By consistently adhering to ethical principles, the office can establish trust with the communities it serves by demonstrating honesty and consistency.
- **Humility** reflects a willingness to listen and learn from the communities being served. It shows respect for their expertise, culture, and perspectives.
- **Communities** comprised of diverse immigrant and refugee residents are at the heart of the office's work, so it is essential to prioritize their needs, engage with them, and build strong relationships to support their empowerment and success.
- **Innovation** enables OIRA to be adaptive, responsive, and creative in finding new solutions to support the communities it serves.
- **Gratitude** is essential to show appreciation for the OIRA team(s) and communities being served by OIRA and recognize everyone's contributions to the work.
- **Respect** and recognition of the dignity, rights, and worth of every individual promotes inclusivity, diversity, and equity in all our services.
- **Accountability** reflects the office's commitment to its goals and responsibilities, and it ensures that the office operates transparently and efficiently.
- **Partnership** is essential because it reflects the importance of collaboration, communication, and coordination with city departments, national organizations, and all stakeholders. It also enables the office to leverage shared resources to achieve a more significant impact.
- **Transparency** with community partners about our decision-making processes promotes trust, honesty, and clarity. It is also a core function of our role as a government agency committed to serving our residents.



Mission

The mission of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is to improve the lives of Seattle’s immigrant and refugee communities through policies, programs, services, and community engagement.

Vision

We envision a society where equity and inclusion foster a shared sense of belonging for Seattle’s diverse immigrant and refugee communities. Our commitment is to ensure equal access to information and opportunities for immigrant and refugee families, children, and workers. Our work is to promote transformative systems, structures, and practices across city agencies to ensure equitable outcomes for immigrant and refugee communities. As an office, our shared dedication is advancing policies and programs that strengthen racial, social, and economic equity.





Part One:

Immigrant

Integration

Immigrant Integration and Determinants of Equity

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children number approximately 84.8 million, or 26% of the U.S. population.

2.3 million residents of Washington—equivalent to 30% of out state’s population—were immigrants or had at least one parent who was an immigrant. In the Seattle metropolitan area. (King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties) nearly 40% of the populations are foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent.

Immigrant integration is an important process that involves the acquisition of legal status and the successful incorporation of immigrants into the social, economic, and political fabric of the receiving society. The process of integration can be challenging for immigrants, as they face barriers such as discrimination, language differences, and limited access to social and economic opportunities.



Factors that determine the success of immigrant integration include access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities. Policies that promote equity and inclusivity, such as comprehensive immigration reform, can help facilitate the process of immigrant integration and ensure that all members of society have access to the resources necessary to thrive.

Social determinants of equity and health are also important considerations in the integration process. Immigrants often face disparities in access to healthcare and experience poorer health outcomes than their non-immigrant counterparts. Addressing these disparities requires a focus on social determinants of health, such as access to education and employment opportunities, as well as policies that ensure equity in access to healthcare services. Recognizing the unique needs of immigrant communities, and working to address these needs through policy and practice, can help improve health outcomes and promote greater equity in our society.

Our office is focused on the integration of immigrants and refugees because we recognize the immense value they bring to our city. Immigrants and refugees have diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives that enrich our society and economy.

Through our work, we aim to support the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into our city's social, economic, and cultural fabric. By doing so, we strive to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all.

Immigrant Integration occurs when immigrants and their children become full and active members of the society they have immigrated to, while also maintaining their cultural identities. Integration is a two-way process involving both the immigrant and the receiving society, where immigrants acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and cultural understanding to become fully engaged in their new communities, as the receiving society welcomes their unique skills, knowledge, and cultural individuation.

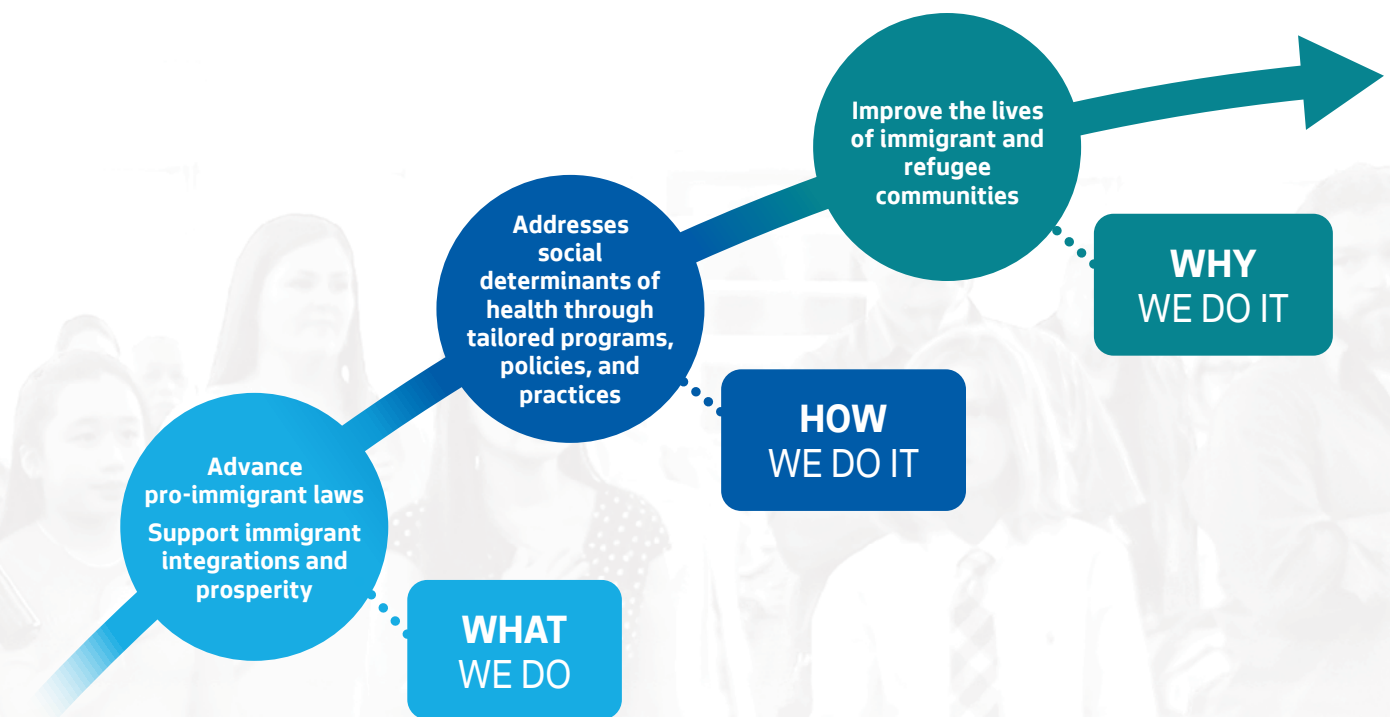
Thriving Communities through Immigrant Integration

The Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) is committed to promoting immigrant integration. We work to ensure that immigrants and refugees have the necessary resources to thrive. OIRA focuses on enhancing

social and economic benefits such as citizenship services, employment, and language access. Immigrants' and refugees' quality of life is determined by several social determinants of equity, such as access to:

- Immigration Services
- Language Services
- Healthcare Benefits
- Public Transportation Resources
- Housing and Safe Environments
- Justice in Law-Making Institutions
- Employment Security and Fair Wages
- Financial Literacy and Socioeconomic Mobility
- Childcare and Early Learning Education
- Green Space, Clean Water, and Air

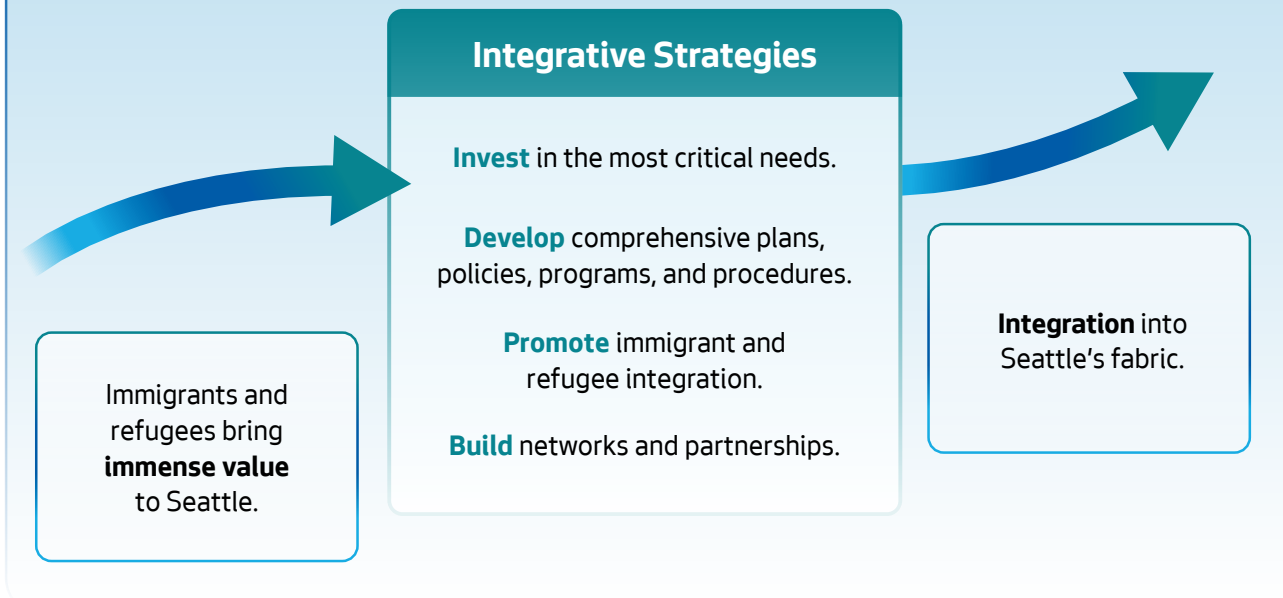
OIRA aims to improve the lives of immigrant and refugee communities by promoting integration through tailored programs, policies, and practices that address these social determinants of equity and health. The office's focus areas include advancing pro-immigrant laws and policies and developing programs that support integration and future prosperity for immigrant families.



UNHEALTHY ACCULTURATION



HEALTHY ACCULTURATION





Part Two: OIRA's Programs & Services

New Citizenship Campaign (NCC)

The New Citizenship Campaign (NCC) seeks to increase the number of immigrants and refugees who naturalize and engage in civic processes. NCC provides naturalization assistance through group clinics and workshops, conducts broad-based outreach, promotes the benefits of citizenship, and engages with local and national partners. NCC also builds collaboration among its network of citizenship service providers in Seattle.

For 2022, NCC and partner organizations supported 257 people in achieving the following:

- **257 people** were screened by a legal representative
- **191 N-400 citizenship applicants** completed the necessary forms
- **99 fee waivers** were completed to allow low-income community members apply for citizenship for free



New Citizen Program

The New Citizen Program (NCP) partners with community-based organizations to provide free naturalization services to low-income immigrants and refugees, including many who are elderly, disabled, pre-literate, or have limited English skills. Located throughout Seattle and King County, NCP organizations offer assistance throughout the entire naturalization process, including screening community members to see if they are eligible to apply for citizenship, preparing of citizenship applications and waivers, providing free classes to help individuals prepare for their citizenship interviews, having legal representatives attend citizenship interviews, and troubleshooting with participants as any challenges arise in their naturalization cases.

In 2022, NCP supported approximately **1,950 people** with the following:

- **445 people** became new US citizens
- Over 200 individuals received a total of **5,832 hours** of citizenship classes to help them prepare to pass their US citizenship interviews
- Over **300 people** received help from legal representatives to submit their N-400 citizenship applications and fee waivers
- **113 disabled community members** received support preparing and submitting an N-648 disability waiver to request an exemption from the required citizenship exams
- Over **400 people** received help preparing for their citizenship interviews
- Another **200 individuals received support** from an attorney or legal representative during their citizenship interviews
- **38 people** received assistance with submitting N-600 applications for citizenship certificates for their children



Description of Citizenship Services

Intake & Screening	Determine participant eligibility through interviewing and completing the NCP Intake Screening Form or another form approved by COS/OIRA.
N-400 Applications	Prepare and submit the N-400 citizenship application and supporting documents to the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS).
Fee Waivers	Prepare and submit a I-912 fee waiver form or I-942 reduced fee application along with supporting documents to the USCIS.
Citizenship Training	Provide culturally and linguistically relevant citizenship instruction through classes and/or individual tutoring aimed at preparing the participant to pass their naturalization interview.
N-648 Disability Waiver	Assist the participant with completion and submission of a disability waiver application and supporting documents to the USCIS. This includes obtaining documentation from medical professionals and reviewing documentation to ensure it has been completed properly according to USCIS requirements.
Interview Preparation	Assist the participant to prepare for their upcoming naturalization interview, which may include arranging interpreters, preparing additional documents requested by USCIS, providing a mock interview.
Interview Assistance	Provide support and legal representation during a participant's naturalization interview by having an attorney or legal representative attend.
Naturalization	Confirm a participant's successful naturalization by obtaining a copy of their citizenship certificate, copy of their oath ceremony appointment notice, copy of their US passport, or online verification through USCIS case status tool.
N-600 Applications	Assist the naturalized participant with completion and submission of an N-600 application forms and supporting documents to the USCIS for their eligible children to request proof of their children's US citizenship.



Immigrant Safety and Access Network (ISAN)

The Immigrant Safety and Access Network (ISAN) is a partnership between OIRA and the King County Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ).

The purpose of this partnership is to fund interventions and activities that help young immigrants, children of immigrants, and their families know their rights, navigate victim support services, understand law enforcement systems, and ensure that in-language communications are available throughout criminal-legal processes. This work will be performed by community organizations under contract to OIRA, expanding upon strategies and objectives previously pursued through its Immigrant Family Institute. To capture this expanded reach, the program will be renamed the **Immigrant Safety and Access Network**.

According to the 2021 year-end incident report from the King County Prosecutor's Office, the total number of "shots fired" incidents in King County in 2021 (1,405) was up around 54%. The number of overall shooting victims (460) was up 70% over the four-year average for 2017-2020. Of the 460 shooting victims in 2021, 85% were male (390); 28% were between the ages of 18-24 (133); and 81% were people of color (379). Like in previous years, 48% of the shooting victims, both fatal and non-fatal, were Black or African American (225) and more than 35% were under 24 years of age.

The impacts of shots fired incidents are physical, psychological, and economic. And their costs are both direct and indirect. As violent crime has increased, immigrant and refugee community members have continued to call on the City of Seattle and King County to reduce barriers to accessing information and receiving services.

It is imperative to improve access to and delivery of services including but not limited to culturally relevant outreach, victim and family support services, criminal-legal systems navigation, critical incident response, court and hospital accompaniment, violence prevention, restorative justice, and community healing.



Legal Defense Network (LDN)

The Legal Defense Network (LDN) provides critically needed legal representation to low-income Seattle residents, students, and workers who are in immigration detention, facing deportation, or are at-risk because of their immigration status. The overarching goal of this program is to increase access to legal services so that immigrants and refugees are protected from deportation and can remain safely in their communities with the ones they love.

OIRA contracts with legal service providers who offer removal defense services and help with filing for immigration relief and permanent status. Our current legal partners are Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) in partnership with Colectiva Legal del Pueblo and Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). LDN also provides access to free mental health evaluations which are an important part of legal immigration cases when filing for some humanitarian relief (currently offered by Lutheran Community Services Northwest).

In each quarter of 2022, over 160 people received full direct representation in legal immigration cases, including:

- Termination of Removal Proceedings
- Asylum
- Withholding of Removal
- Relief Under Convention Against Torture
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
- UVisa
- Cancellation of Removal



2022 Impact by the Numbers:

- 48 new unaccompanied minors received full direct representation in immigration proceedings
- 73 new people enrolled in the new Dedicated Docket program at the Seattle Immigration Court received legal services including in-depth screening, legal advice, and pro se form assistance
- 52 people obtained work authorization
- 66 people obtained permanent or temporary immigration status
- Our partners attended 140 court hearings and USCIS interviews to represent their LDN clients



Ready to Work Program (RTW)

OIRA's Ready to Work (RTW) program is a nationally-recognized model for helping immigrants increase their English-language skills and get better jobs. Operated by Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS), Neighborhood House, and Literacy Source, RTW is a free, classroom-based program for adult immigrants that offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes (Levels 1-4), culturally competent case management, digital literacy skills training, and other employment training with the goal of attaining better, more well-paying jobs.

In 2022, RTW served 166 immigrant residents originating from various Latin American, African, and Asian countries including Somalia, Honduras, and Vietnam. A total of 134 participants graduated from the program, allowing them to acquire new employment opportunities in such industries as healthcare, education, and food services.



Another recent RTW highlight was this Seattle Times article profiling 71-year-old Ethiopian immigrant Alem Birhan Teye who graduated from ACRS' RTW program to move on to a well-paying job at Lumen Field. Today, he is a U.S. citizen and was able to petition for two of his children to immigrate to the U.S. He is proud to share his story and encourage other immigrants to access the assistance they need.

"If it helps one person to change themselves and change their families, I'm so grateful for that," Teye said.

Ethnic Media Program

The goal of the Ethnic Media Program is to help City of Seattle departments integrate ethnic media campaigns into their outreach and engagement strategies. To this end, the program coordinator works across departments, including the Mayor's Office, to provide technical assistance and resources to make it easier for staff to invest in these community institutions, the majority of which are led by and for BIPOC community members.

OIRA also works with the Mayor's Office to organize regularly scheduled ethnic media roundtable discussions where reporters and producers are invited to these intimate events to ask the Mayor questions about any City issue. Over the past two years, the Ethnic Media Program has invested a total of \$355,156.39 for paid ad campaigns in Amharic, English, Korean, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese to 40 media outlets that serve BIPOC and immigrant and refugee communities in the Seattle area.

The last few Mayor's Ethnic Media Roundtables saw a total of 45 reporters, producers, and editors in attendance representing 32 local outlets from Black and POC immigrant and refugee communities. The national grassroots nonpartisan organization Common Cause has highlighted the City of Seattle Ethnic Media Program (EMP) as a best practice for local governments and program replication.



Language Access Program

Through its Language Access program, OIRA collaborates with City departments to ensure that every city resident, especially immigrants and refugees, can access City of Seattle services and information, regardless of the language they speak. The Language Access Team supports a network of language access liaisons from all city departments to strengthen language access and offer departments training and resources. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the team has streamlined the city's translation system by utilizing Smartcat, a cloud-based translation management system, to manage translation projects, translated content databases, and invoicing processes.

Since the launch of Smartcat in mid-2021, the team has trained and onboarded over 50 translators to use the new system. The team has supported 25 City of Seattle Departments and has translated 2.3 million words in the city's top-tier languages. The numbers continue to grow. The program is recognized as one of the leading language access programs nationally.





Part Three: OIRA's Theory of Change & Listening to Community

Theory of Change

Our office is committed to promoting immigrant integration and creating thriving communities. We believe that by advancing local, state, and federal laws and policies that support immigrants, as well as developing and maintaining programs that support integration and future prosperity for immigrant families, we can help individuals and communities achieve greater social, economic, and civic success.

To achieve this goal, we recognize that immigrant integration can be measured using different criteria. At one end of the spectrum are unauthorized or undocumented immigrants who face significant barriers to social, economic, and civic participation. At the other end are naturalized citizens who are fully integrated into society, with access to quality jobs, good healthcare, education, and a safe environment.



Our theory of change involves a series of steps that help move individuals and communities along the integration spectrum toward greater social, economic, and civic success. These steps include:

- **Providing Access to Information and Resources**

Access to information and resources is critical for immigrant integration. We provide information and resources to individuals and families to help them navigate the complex legal, social, and economic systems they encounter.

- **Building Networks and Relationships**

Social networks and relationships lay the foundation for successful integration. We work to build relationships between immigrants and their communities, as well as between immigrants and policymakers, employers, and other key stakeholders.

- **Creating Pathways to Economic Opportunity**

Access to quality jobs and economic opportunity is necessary for immigrant integration. We work to create pathways to economic opportunity for immigrants, including job training, education, and entrepreneurship programs as a means towards such economic opportunity.

- **Promoting Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is critical for successful integration. We work to promote civic engagement among immigrants, including through voter education, citizenship preparation, and advocacy for pro-immigrant policies.

By following this pathway to change, we believe we can help immigrants and their communities achieve greater social, economic, and civic success, and create thriving communities for all.



Listening Sessions & Community Meetings

Community organizations contracted with the City of Seattle play a crucial role in providing essential programs and services. OIRA, like other City departments, relies on community organizations to inform our efforts and policy directions. To inform our strategic plan, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) conducted a series of internal and external discussions. The Director of OIRA, Hamdi Mohamed, led this outreach effort that engaged with over 45 community organizations and their respective leadership teams during her first year at OIRA.

These engagements included individual listening sessions, community conversations, participation in walking tours, and visits to organizational program sessions. OIRA gathered meaningful information and data about the ground-level activities of our community partners. During these meetings, community organizations shared their perspectives on areas of progress and challenges, and provided recommendations on resource allocation and OIRA investments. Insights gained from these discussions were instrumental in shaping many aspects of the strategic plan and action plans throughout our programs.

OIRA staff members maintain regular communication and meetings with community partners. This includes the thirty organizations that are contracted in ongoing programs in 2023 as well as engaging with government agencies, faith-based institutions, businesses, the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission, and other City departments. Through collaboration, OIRA aims to achieve desired outcomes for City investments in support of immigrants and refugees.



Issues and Urgent Needs Voiced in These Sessions

- Systemic barriers limit opportunities available to help immigrant refugee communities thrive.
- Increased access and availability of legal services to assist with immigration cases are necessary.
- Communities desire affordable housing to ensure access to services and better community partnerships throughout the region.
- Transparency and accessibility to governmental services is imperative to immigrant and refugee communities thriving across the region.

Better Support to Address Barriers

- Developing and strengthening partnerships between local, state, and federal agencies, as well as community-based organizations, to better coordinate the delivery of services and resources.
- Improving communication and collaboration among stakeholders involved in immigrant and refugee response services.
- Sharing data and best practices among stakeholders to identify and address challenges faced by immigrant and refugee communities. Providing more targeted and comprehensive support to immigrant and refugee communities is needed.
- Maximizing resources by blending federal funding with local and private funding is needed. This can include partnering with philanthropic organizations, private businesses, and other community stakeholders to supplement government funding. By blending funding sources and tailoring investments to the unique needs of immigrant and refugees, direct-service-organizations can provide more effective and sustainable support.



Reducing Administrative Burdens on Community Partners

- Streamlining lengthy government contracts that may not be designed for grassroots nonprofit organizations to function effectively. These contracts can be difficult to navigate and can place an undue administrative burden on community partners.
- Streamlining reporting requirements and process of funded partners. Community partners must be required to submit extensive reports to demonstrate their progress and use of funding. While reporting is important for transparency and accountability, overly complex reporting systems can take away valuable time and resources from organizations that could be better spent serving their communities. Simplifying reporting requirements and creating more user-friendly systems can help community partners spend more time on direct service and less on administrative tasks.

Community Partners Prioritize Their Support Needs Including:

- Employment and small business assistance to address equitable economic development and displacement.
- The accessing of services to overcome language and cultural barriers and conduct deeper outreach.
- Programs to help families navigate the criminal justice system, including in-language services.
- Long commute times: travel long distances to access work or other essential services, which can be time-consuming and costly.
- Tailored programs for Black immigrant youth, as many of these young people have multiple identities that are marginalized and criminalized.
- Programs that address the unique challenges faced by immigrant and refugee populations and provide culturally competent support to help them overcome systemic barriers.
- Targeted resources and services that help improve the well-being and safety of immigrant and refugee communities.



Childcare & Early Learning

- Many immigrant and refugee communities operate childcare facilities and many are childcare providers.
- Childcare providers serving immigrants need city attention and support for their unique challenges.
- Providers seek to engage with the City to advocate for policies that improve their lives and the services they provide.
- Providers seek policies that expand families access to services by approving more childcare facilities in the region.

Transportation and Accessibility

- Greater access to public transportation for immigrants in locations where it is currently limited or unavailable.
- Supply the transportation system with adequate resources to address language and cultural barriers so that newly arrived immigrants and refugees can better understand schedules, routes, and fare systems.





Part Four:

Strategic Goals

&

Objectives

Strategic Goals and Objectives (2023-2027)

Goal 1: Empower the Workforce and Strengthen Internal Operations

OIRA is moving forward to expand and deepen our impact in supporting the wellbeing and agency of immigrant and refugee community members. We intend to build the internal operational and relational capacity to expand upon the work the office has already done.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Maintain an inclusive workplace at OIRA that fosters a sense of value, respect, and support for all our staff members.

To achieve this, we aim to enhance recruitment, retention, and staff development initiatives while continuing to integrate the City's Race and Social



Justice principles into our processes. We prioritize accountability and trust in our organizational culture by promoting open communication, constructive feedback, transparency in decision-making, and ethical behavior and integrity among all our staff.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Cultivate a sense of ownership in the OIRA workplace by empowering our professional staff to take initiative and ownership of their work.

To achieve this objective, we prioritize regular communication and collaboration between employees and management, providing opportunities for feedback and input. We also seek to provide ongoing training and development opportunities that help employees to build skills and increase their sense of mastery over their work.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Commitment to fiscal stewardship of resources and community contracts and strong operational controls.

We prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our employees, contractors, and stakeholders, and work diligently to minimize any potential risks that may arise. Through our commitment to fiscal stewardship, strong operational controls, and risk reduction, we aim to promote a culture of responsibility and accountability that serves to enhance the trust and confidence of all stakeholders in our office.

OBJECTIVE 1.4: Implement greater efficiency to increase the impact of our work.

We will identify areas where processes can be simplified and implement technology to streamline and complete tasks.

Goal 2: Regional and Cross- Departmental Collaboration

OIRA works to improve the lives of Seattle’s immigrant and refugee communities by engaging them in decisions about the City of Seattle’s future and improving the City’s programs and services to meet the needs of all constituents. This successful interdepartmental collaboration needs to grow. OIRA will establish



partnerships that can effectively coordinate through the siloed nature of the city departments and expand regional partnerships, resources, and capacities.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Prioritize cross-jurisdictional collaboration with King County to support the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee communities in our region.

Our objective is to implement our strategies in a manner that includes the City of Seattle, neighboring cities, King County, and other regional and national partners. To achieve this, we will focus on policy development, the exchange of best practices, and the identification of areas where collaborative efforts can be advantageous. By leveraging the strengths and expertise of each partner, we can work together to address common regional challenges and opportunities through the alignment of our respective investments, programs, and services.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Cross-Departmental Collaboration: Invest in and support tools that facilitate internal City of Seattle, cross-departmental collaboration, streamline programs, and enhance services for immigrant and refugee communities.

By prioritizing collaboration and serving on Interdepartmental Teams (IDTs), we can better allocate resources, including staff, funding, and technology, to meet the needs of these communities more effectively and efficiently. Ultimately, by working together, we can achieve greater results and have a stronger collective impact than we could alone with OIRA playing a leading role within the City government by supporting all City departments in serving immigrant and refugee communities.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Support City and Region-Wide Initiatives: Provide consultation, policy recommendations, and support for city and region-wide initiatives that promote culturally responsive, inclusive, and equitable services for immigrant and refugee communities.

Our office has the expertise and leadership necessary to advance community priorities and serve as a bridge to connect them with the resources and services they require. We aim to provide our expertise as needed to ensure that all

services and programs are adaptive and responsive to the unique needs of immigrant and refugee communities, ultimately promoting greater equity and inclusion throughout the city and region.

Goal 3: Optimizing Community Programs and Opportunities

OIRA already has accomplished much in its relatively short history. In 2023 and beyond, OIRA seeks to expand our impact in immigrant and refugee communities as we develop new initiatives to meet the growing needs in our communities. We want to be bold in preparing for tomorrow's challenges, as well as today's urgent needs. To that end, we have identified the following initial objectives:

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Citizenship Programs: Conduct an review audit of OIRA's citizenship programs to assess areas for potential improvement and streamlining.

This objective may include the redesign the program to reach more people, increase impactful civic engagement, and develop a seamless process to connect participants with resources such as financial literacy, homeownership programs, and employment and training opportunities. These efforts will help promote inclusivity and engagement within communities and support individuals on their path to citizenship and economic stability for greater long-term impacts.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Legal Defense Program: Develop a plan to provide ongoing support to community-based organizations to build capacity and continue their work in providing legal services to individuals facing deportation and navigating the immigration court system.

The objective recognizes the importance of legal representation in ensuring that constitutional rights are guaranteed to all, regardless of their immigration status. Many individuals facing deportation, including unaccompanied children, do not have access to legal representation. Without legal representation, these individuals are at a disadvantage in navigating the complex immigration court system and are at risk of being deported without due process.



OBJECTIVE 3.3: Ready to Work Program and Workforce Development:

Prepare a new report to provide OIRA with an updated comprehensive analysis and understanding of the needs of the immigrant and refugee workforce with recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on what actions OIRA can take to support the City of Seattle's new Workforce Strategic Plan.

1. This report will be conducted in partnership with both internal and external partners and will include the following key elements: Regional Economy and Existing Labor Conditions for Immigrants and Refugees Since COVID-19.
2. Profile & Assessment of State, Regional Workforce and Seattle Investments in Immigrant Workforce.
3. Document Unmet Needs in the Immigrant and Refugee Workforce.
4. Identify Best Practice Workforce Services that Can Be Replicated and Scaled in Future Years.
5. Assess the Ready to Work Program with recommendation to deepen its impact in future years.

OBJECTIVE 3.4: Immigrant Safety and Access Network Program (ISAN): Establish the Immigrant Safety and Access Network Program and enhance public safety by creating a network of community partners.

This network will strive to offer fair access to grief support services and protection to immigrant victims and their families, with a particular focus on those who require language access. Moreover, it aims to improve safety and access to information for this vulnerable population.

Goal 4: Strengthen Communication and Community Partnership

OIRA's most significant impacts result from coordinating resources and elevating the voices and interests of our Immigrant and Refugee community members. Our ability to create and sustain strong and trusted partnerships is paramount. In the next five years, we envision OIRA serving as a model to be replicated by other cities because of the trust, successes, and partnerships we have developed with Immigrant and Refugee communities in Seattle and the surrounding region. Goal four will be guided by OIRA's theory of change, which is exemplified by four



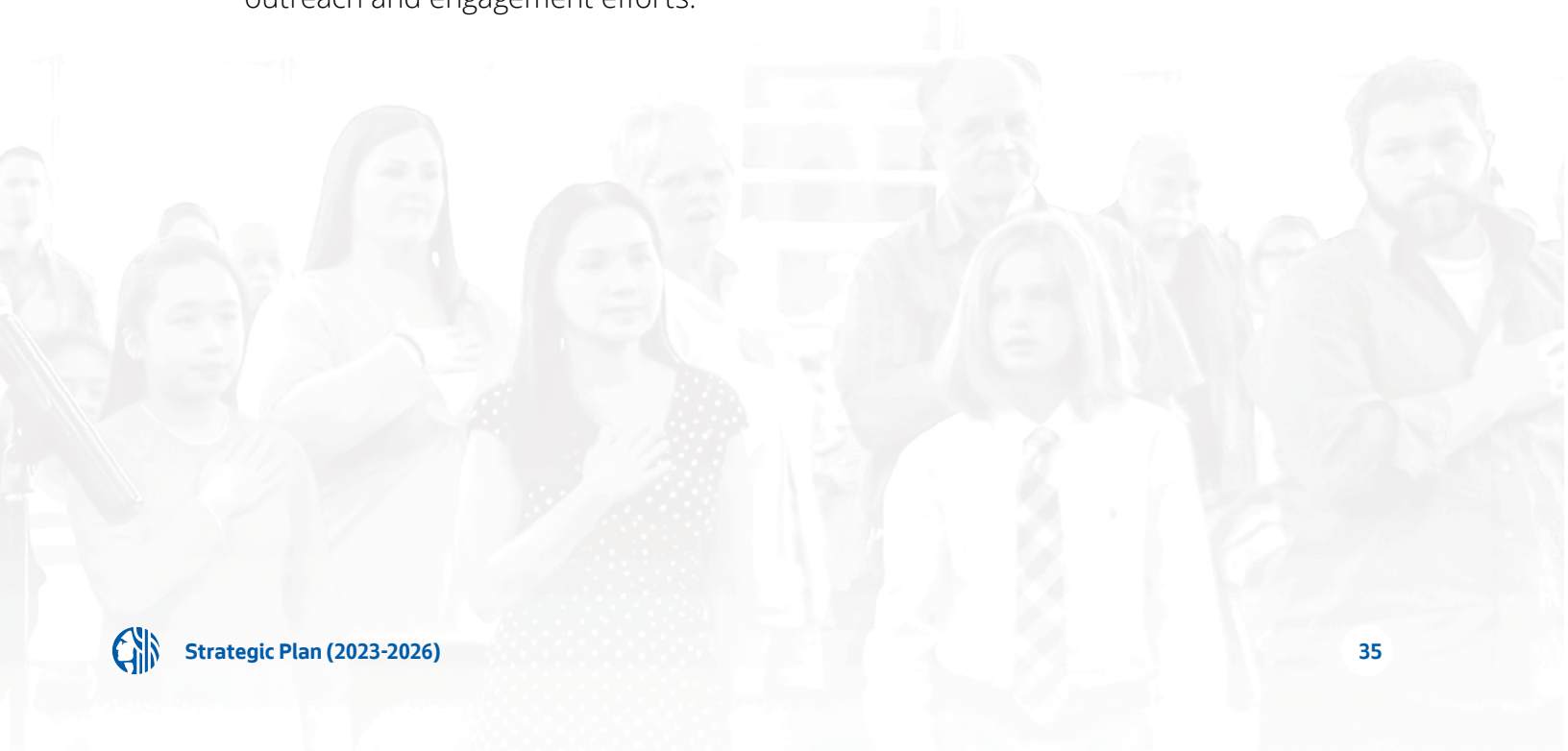
inter-connected initiatives: language access programs, ethnic media outreach, authentic community engagement, and policy development.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Policy Development: In partnership with community organizations, OIRA will create an ongoing policy development agenda and plan focused on the current and emerging needs of immigrants and refugees in Seattle and the surrounding region. OIRA will work closely with the City Council and Mayor’s Office to advance sustainable and effective policy solutions.

Recognize and address the diverse needs of immigrant communities and by seeking their input in policy development. To accomplish this, OIRA will establish trust-based partnerships by involving community partners early in the process to co-create workable, effective, and sustainable solutions.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Supporting City of Seattle Departments: Support the efforts of other City of Seattle departments to expand the effectiveness of their engagement and work with immigrant and refugee communities and organizations.

Centralize and streamline city-wide language service systems to ensure that all members of the community have access to important information and resources. Collaborate with City of Seattle departments to share ideas, best practice-models, and collaboration in the design, implementation, and evaluation of targeted outreach and engagement efforts.



OBJECTIVE 4.3: Ethnic Media: increase awareness of city programs and services through community engagement and partnerships with ethnic media.

Ensure that diverse immigrant and refugee communities have access to important information and resources and can engage with city programs and services in an inclusive manner. This objective will be achieved through building partnerships with ethnic media outlets and promoting equitable community engagement initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 4.4: Authentic Engagement: Building Stronger Community Relationships.

OIRA will invest in consistent and meaningful interactions with community members to promote trust and build stronger relationships. This objective aims to prioritize consistent engagement and relationship-building through hosting events that bring together members of different ethnic and language groups such as cultural festivals, neighborhood gatherings, and forums that address important community matters. By fostering authentic engagement, the objective is to establish a foundation of trust between the city and the community, promoting stronger relationships and mutual understanding.



Appendix

A special thank you to the present and past directors and staff of OIRA for their contributions to the success of the office. Additionally, we extend our thanks to the community leaders who were instrumental in the inception of the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board, along with the contributions made to the Immigrant and Refugee Report and Action Plan released in 2007, which shed light on numerous community needs prior to the establishment of the office. It requires the collective effort to drive progress within the community and we recognize that.

Washington Immigration Solidarity Network (WAISN)
Villa Comunitaria
Utopia Washington
Ukrainian Community Center of Washington (UCCWA)
Tigrean Community Association
St. James Cathedral
South Park Senior Center
Somali Health Board
Somali Family Safety Task Force
Somali Community Services of Seattle
Seattle Foundation
Sea Mar Community Health Centers
Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)
OneAmerica
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Northwest Cooperative Development Center

Neighborhood House
Muslim American Youth Foundation (MAYF)
Multicultural Self-Sufficiency Movement
Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Literacy Source
Lake City Collective
Korean Community Services Center
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Kandelia
Jewish Family Services
International Rescue Committee
Horn of Africa Services
HOPE Academy
HomeSight
Highpoint Community Center
Friends of Little Saigon
Filipino Community Center



Eritrean Community of Seattle
Episcopal Migration Ministries
Entre Hermanos
East African Community Services
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Colectiva Legal del Pueblo
Coalition of Immigrants, Refugees, and
Communities of Colors (CIRCC)

Chinese Information and Service Center
Catholic Community Services of Western
Washington (CCSWW)
Casa Latina
Asian Counseling and
Referral Service (ACRS)
African Community and Housing
Development (ACHD)
Afghan Health Initiative

City of Seattle Departments and Governmental Organizations

City of Seattle Office of International
Religious Freedom
City of Seattle Department
of Neighborhoods
Office of U.S. Congresswoman Jayapal
Office of U.S. Congressman Adam Smith
Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray
Office of U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
United States Citizenship and
Immigration Services
Seattle and King County Public Health
Immigrant and Refugee Services
Washington State Department of
Social and Services
King County Office of Equity
and Social Justice

City of Seattle Office of
Economic Development
City of Seattle Department
of Neighborhoods
City of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture
City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights
City of Seattle Office of
Intergovernmental Relations
City of Seattle Office of
Emergency Management
City of Seattle Office of Housing
City of Seattle Office of Human Services
City of Seattle Office of
Information Technology
City of Seattle Office of Labor Standards
City of Seattle Police Department





**The Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs**

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