



HB 21-1150

Final Recommendations Regarding the Establishment of the Office of New Americans



A. Executive Summary

Colorado is home to over a half million immigrants, including refugees. These immigrants and refugees, in total, account for about 10% of Colorado's population, thus playing a crucial role in our state's cultural fabric and shared prosperity. Furthermore, over six-hundred thousand individuals, or eleven percent of the population of Colorado, are native-born Americans with at least one immigrant parent. According to the New Americans Initiative 2020 Annual Report:

- One in ten Coloradans¹, and one in eight Colorado workers, is an immigrant;
- The top countries of origin for Colorado's immigrants² include Mexico (40 percent of immigrants), India (5 percent), China, (3 percent), Vietnam (3 percent), Korea (2.8 percent), Germany (2.8 percent) and Canada (2.7 percent)³;
- At home, the top languages spoken by Coloradans other than English are Spanish 49.0%, Vietnamese 2.7%, Chinese 2.5%, Russian 2.1%, and Korean 2.0%⁴;
- Over 30% of Colorado immigrants have an advanced degree;
- Nearly half of all immigrants in Colorado are naturalized citizens⁵;
- Most (77 percent) immigrants are at least bilingual and report speaking English well or very well,⁶
- Over 50% of foreign-born Coloradans entered the U.S. before 2000⁷;
- Immigrants contribute \$5 billion in taxes every year, including \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes.⁸

To meet the needs of these populations, and to put Colorado in a better position to respond to changes in federal immigration policy as well as quickly respond as an effective partner to the federal government in times of need, such as with the Afghans and Ukrainians, the Office of New Americans (ONA) was established by HB 21-1150, signed by Governor Jared Polis in June 2021. HB 21-1150 codified the former New Americans Initiative (2019-2020) and placed the ONA at the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). Legislators and advocates understood the importance of the ONA's placement in the hierarchy of state government; the legislation ensures direct connection to the Executive Director at CDLE and the Governor's Office as the ONA is a "Type 1" entity. The ONA also has important convening powers, helping it work across state agencies efficiently and effectively and can be a resource for community members and communities alike, including for nonprofits and local governments. In addition, HB 21-1150 legislators and advocates highlighted the importance of employment to the integration process, and felt it was key to place the

¹[New American Economy Map the Impact.](#)

² For much of the data included in the report, the term immigrant includes all foreign-born populations.

³ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_colorado.pdf

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f4cqyyneeDpVePWUU6mpMvLwy2k_Wn1c/view

⁵ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_colorado.pdf

⁶ https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_colorado.pdf

⁷ American Community Survey 2019

⁸ <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/colorado/>

ONA in a Department that drives shared economic prosperity, as immigrant inclusion depends on the receiving communities' notion of welcoming. In addition, CDLE has cross-agency offices already functioning within the Executive Director's office, making the ONA, and its work, a good fit for the burgeoning ONA.

Overall, the ONA is intended to serve as a centralized location where state programs, initiatives, and policies focused on facilitating economic stability and promoting successful integration for immigrants are housed.

As mandated from HB 21-1150, a workgroup composed of members of state agencies and community based organizations (CBOs) formulated the following recommendations regarding the establishment of the ONA, including specifically how it should interact with the Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP) and other state programs that work with immigrants.

B. Background

Purpose of the workgroup per HB 21-1150: to deliver a recommendation to the Governor's Office on what state agencies or offices are best suited to administer CRSP and any related programs so that the ONA's integration goals are met or exceeded.

The location of the ONA within the state government was not discussed by the workgroup because in HB 21-1150, the General Assembly already determined that to be CDLE.

This decision was made by the legislators, bill sponsors and advocates based on conversations with state agencies, including the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and CDLE.

There are a few key reasons this decision was made including:

- The sponsors and advocates believe that immigrants and refugees provide mutual benefit to the state and that enhancing their participation in Colorado's economy moves the whole state forward.
 - *All immigrants, regardless of immigration status, seek better economic opportunities for themselves and their families; it is something that binds the New American community together, no matter how they arrived.*
 - *The ONA's position in CDLE underscores the fact that immigrants bring mutual benefit to the state and is an important counterpoint to those that believe that immigrants come to the United States at a cost to the taxpayer through their use of government services.*

- *CDLE can leverage partnerships with business, industries and other diverse stakeholders, solidifying the fact that Colorado can be both humanitarian and business minded when it comes to immigrants and immigration policy.*
- CDLE houses cross-agency offices that focus on holistic topics relevant to multiple state agencies and programs, much like ONA.
 - *The Office of the Future of Work and the Office of Just Transition work seamlessly with other state agencies to advance their priorities which affect numerous departments.*
- CDLE agreed to place the ONA in the Executive Director's office so that ONA's statutory power to convene would be implemented correctly.
- CDLE is a smaller agency than other agencies that could house the ONA, which creates more opportunities for the ONA to grow and develop.
 - *State agencies must prioritize legislative and budget priorities; smaller agencies have greater ability to move priorities regarding New Americans while also balancing other agency needs.*

C. Purpose of Report

Per HB 21-1150, a workgroup composed of members of state agencies and CBOs created these recommendations. This group convened twice a month for four months (August-December 2021). Specifically, HB 21-1150 required the ONA to convene this workgroup to develop a recommendation to the Governor's Office on what state agencies or offices are best suited to administer the CRSP and any related programs so that the ONA's refugee integration goals are met or exceeded.

Per HB 21-1150, the ONA shall complete a draft recommendation by January 1, 2022 and a final recommendation by June 25, 2022. **This is the final recommendation.** The Governor is supportive of the workgroup's efforts. The Governor's office suggests that if CRSP remains at CDHS, that both agencies work together to explore options to support New Americans.

The following recommendations reflect the perspectives and feedback of group members on the issues explored as part of the recommendation development and submission process, such as: values and goals of the ONA, fiscal planning, leveraging of existing staff and resource capacity, ONA's expected effects on clients, and leveraging of current agency and programmatic strengths. These grounded the workgroup in mission and vision in order to make a decision that worked best for Colorado and Coloradans.

The workgroup members who formulated these recommendations are listed below. They meet the requirements in HB 21-1150. These members were approved by the Governor's Office and associated departments in August 2021.

Table #1 - HB 21-1150 Workgroup Members

Name	Title	Organization
Caitlin Adams	Senior Legislative and Policy Analyst	Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE)
Geoff Alexander	Principal Analyst	Governor's Office
Carlos Anderson	Operations Advisor for Economic Recovery	Governor's Office
Eleni Angelides	Legislative Advisor	Governor's Office
Nate Brown	Policy Analyst	Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)
Noyes Combs	State Refugee Coordinator	Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)
Heather Craiglow	Director, Head Start Collaboration Office	CDHS
Yumiko Doherty	Director of Strategic Planning and Implementation	CDHS
Linda Van Doren	Vice President of Education	Emily Griffith Technical College
Victoria Francis	State Advocacy Director	International Rescue Committee
Brock Herzberg	Consultant	Colorado Business Coalition for Immigration Solutions
Jan Jenkins	Director, Colorado Refugee Wellness Center	Aurora Mental Health Center
Iman Jodeh	Representative	Colorado Legislature
Katherine Keegan	Director, Office of the Future of Work	CDLE
Lori Kennedy	Refugee Health Manager	Colorado Department of Public

		Health and Environment (CDPHE)
Atim Oti	Director of Immigrant and Refugee Health Affairs Office	City of Denver
Barry Pardus	Deputy Director of the Division of Economic Security	CDHS
Ricardo Perez	Executive Director	Hispanic Affairs Project
Lisa Taylor	Executive Director	Immigrant and Refugee Center of Northern Colorado
Elise Lowe Vaughn	Acting Director, Division of Employment and Training	CDLE
Josh Winkler	Disability Funding Committee Coordinator and Policy Advisor	Governor's Office
Mike Zimmer	Advisor	World Education Services
Kit Taintor*	Senior Advisor of New American Integration	Governor's Office
Nikky Patel*	Special Projects, Operations	Governor's Office
Monica Sutherland*	Intern	Governor's Office
<p><i>* Indicates facilitators of the workgroup.</i></p> <p><i>After the workgroup completed its work in December 2021, various workgroup members have since transitioned and now have different positions/titles.</i></p>		

D. Values and Goals

The work group developed the following vision, mission, values and guiding principles to ground the work and center conversations on a shared purpose.

Table #2 - HB 21-1150 Workgroup's Vision, Mission, Values and Guiding Principles



Vision	Mission	Values	Guiding Principles
<p>The vision of the ONA is that all immigrants and refugees have equitable access to opportunity and well-being.</p>	<p>The mission of the ONA is to facilitate the integration and inclusion of immigrants and refugees into Colorado's civic, social, and economic life.</p>	<p>We believe in equitable access and opportunity for New Americans that are person centered.</p> <p>We believe in the facilitation, integration, and inclusion of New Americans while connecting them with new and existing communities in our state.</p> <p>We value streamlined efficiency and access to resources for New Americans.</p> <p>We believe in data driven research with equal emphasis on qualitative data in order to best serve New Americans.</p> <p>We believe in utilizing a holistic services approach with wrap-around support for whole families.</p> <p>We believe in respecting the diversity and strengths of different organizations, including organizations of</p>	<p>Client/community-centered</p> <p>Equitable access and opportunity</p> <p>Facilitation, integration, and inclusion</p> <p>Coordinated collaboration among organizations</p> <p>Streamlined efficiency</p> <p>Data informed</p> <p>Holistic services approach</p> <p>Respect of diversity and strengths of different organizations</p> <p>Impact focused</p>

		<p>different sizes and geographic regions.</p> <p>We believe in impact focused work with consideration for additional needs or services, such as LGBTQ+, aging, disability, criminal history, etc.</p>	
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E. Planning

1. Relevant Bill Requirements

- A. The ONA, per HB 21-1150, will be overseen by a Director, who is appointed by the Executive Director of CDLE.
- B. The ONA Director, per HB 21-1150, has regular access to the Office of the Governor and has the power to convene other state agencies.
- C. The ONA and its Director shall exercise their powers, duties and functions under CDLE as if transferred by a Type 1 transfer.
 - 1. *The Office shall be administered under the direction and supervision of CDLE, but it shall exercise its prescribed statutory powers, duties, and functions, including rule-making, regulation, licensing, and registration, the promulgation of rules, rates, regulations, and standards, and the rendering of findings, orders, and adjudications, independently of the head of the principal department.*
 - 2. *Any powers, duties, and functions not specifically vested by statute in the ONA, including, but not limited to, all budgeting, purchasing, planning, and related management functions of any transferred department, institution, or other agency, or part thereof, shall be performed under the direction and supervision of the Executive Director of CDLE.*
- D. The ONA shall develop a Community Advisory Committee to provide input to the state from Colorado’s immigrant and refugee community.
- E. Per HB 21-1150, CRSP shall assist the ONA in carrying out its duties and goals, including in the sharing of outcomes, partnerships, and the alignment of mission and purpose.

2. Funding

One of the goals of the ONA is to utilize existing resources available while also maximizing federal funds. Stakeholders have agreed that utilizing blending and braiding methods would be

the best way to accomplish this. Blending occurs when financial assistance is combined under a single set of reporting and other requirements, and resources contributed from each individual funding stream lose their original award-specific identity. Braiding occurs when financial assistance from several sources is coordinated to support a single initiative or strategy, while each individual award maintains its award-specific identity. Blending and braiding provide the optimal amount of opportunity with funding for the ONA due to historic levels of investments including state and federal funding, a historic level of understanding and need for investments, and alignment of goals and strategies across departments/agencies and programs.

The ONA should make the following commitments:

- Blend and braid funding by maximizing private fundraising through elevating public and private partnerships, utilizing state and federal stimulus opportunities, continuous appropriations, and existing federal funding such as the Office of Refugee Resettlement funding, as is possible.
- Accomplish mission and vision through coordinated collaboration across departments/agencies and with local partners, funding and functions should be consolidated and centralized in the ONA to ensure that resources meet the unique needs of New Americans in a streamlined fashion. Any transfer of state funds will be evaluated as part of the annual budget process.
- Determine opportunities for consolidation. Eliminating areas of duplication may enable more funding to address service gaps and high priorities including the language access efforts outlined under Executive Order D 2020 175. Currently, departments/agencies cite the lack of resources and expertise as a major impediment to ensuring language access.
- Focus its coordination of funding from disparate sources in order to ensure that resources are available to refugees and immigrants so that these communities have equitable access to state and federal programs. This includes funding from existing appropriations and grants at departments/agencies as functions are consolidated and centralized, general fund appropriations, and interagency agreements to share resources and responsibilities with other state programs that serve, or want to serve, immigrants. Funding decisions will be evaluated through the annual budget process.
- Structure itself, its money, and its programs to empower immigrant and refugee communities to lead and innovate based on the community's context. The Community Advisory Committee should provide regular input and expertise through their infrastructure, and CBO partner input and expertise should also be regularly engaged. Other state programs should also work with the ONA to ensure input from the advisory committee and CBOs. The burden should not be placed on community members or CBOs to know how to access people or programs across and inside state agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

To address funding challenges, the ONA will:

- Identify opportunities for consolidation and efficiencies including programs, resources and funds from other departments, agencies, and programs to maximize services, outreach, and engagement with immigrant communities through the ONA. Funding decisions will be evaluated as part of the annual budget process.
- Blend and braid funds before releasing funds through grants to CBOs, where possible, in order to allow CBOs to serve holistically and to serve individuals with varied immigration statuses.
- The state should blend funds upstream rather than requiring CBOs to apply to different departments, agencies, and programs to serve their community to reduce provider burden.
- In collaboration with state departments/agencies and the Governor's Office identify opportunities in the state budget for program consolidation that would further the state's immigration goals. This may include expanding existing programs, offsets from other departments/agencies, and other tools such as interagency agreements. The Governor's Office of State Planning and Budget should explore such commitments with the ONA staff. Funding decisions will be evaluated as part of the annual budget process.

F. Leveraging of Existing Staff and Resource Capacity

- a. The ONA seeks to leverage existing staff in order to maximize resource capacity. Per HB 21-1150: Our goal is to develop recommendations to the Governor's Office on the organization of the ONA, to include the overlap and administration of CRSP. This conversation is in service to the state's immigrant integration goals and in service to the bill's goal of implementing immigrant support through community-based initiatives and nonprofit organizations where immigrants can access formal and informal support (8-3.7-103 (3)). By fiscal year 2022-23, the ONA seeks to onboard the following staff members:
 1. Office Director: sets forth vision through a statewide integration plan
 2. Project Manager: reports to Office Director, manages cross-agency collaborations to ensure outcomes
 3. Program Assistant: reports to Office Director, shared with other CDLE executive-level offices, manages day to day duties including support for project manager to ensure efficient outcomes

4. Community Liaison: reports to project manager, ensures collaborative partnership with community leaders and agencies and staffs the Community Advisory Committee
5. Global Talent Solutions Advisor: reports to Office Director, Office of State Apprenticeships, and Colorado Workforce Development Council, concentrates on developing global talent pipelines for Colorado business and industry
6. Program specific staff as appropriated from current and future legislative efforts

This proposed staffing structure will allow the ONA to run effectively, while providing the infrastructure to operate a holistic approach to working with immigrants and refugees. Additionally, the staffing will provide ample opportunity to connect with grassroots efforts and CBOs to maintain a wide perspective on both the issues related to immigrants and the current efforts in the state. Furthermore, with this staffing, the ONA will have the opportunity to host new programs created through legislation, while effectively keeping the impacted communities updated as policies that affect them evolve.

However, there may be various struggles with which the ONA grapples, and ultimately works to overcome. Many New American communities face nuanced struggles, so working toward the overall good for all immigrants and refugees tends to become complicated while honoring the specific needs of particular communities. Similarly, recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the influx of Afghan evacuees have demonstrated the need and struggles of expanding capacity for immigrant services in the state.

Despite these complexities, the ONA will strive to obtain the resources to address them effectively. Namely, through the proposed holistic approach for this office, and collaborative coordination among offices, the ONA will tackle the struggles that come their way. The ONA will also work to create funding opportunities to develop new collaborations with partner organizations to address issues that immigrants and refugees encounter.

b. Refugee Program Support and Staffing

Per HB 21-1150, CRSP shall assist the ONA in carrying out its duties and goals, including sharing of outcomes, partnerships, and the alignment of mission and purpose. The state legislature inserted this language into the governing statute of CRSP.

Partnership between these two offices is crucial to the mission and vision of the ONA. Both the ONA Director and the State Refugee Coordinator share similar goals for their populations, and with coordinated efforts, could open doors for collaboration across sister divisions and departmental staffing. For example, the Program Manager in the ONA and the Grant Supervisor at CRSP, and the Community Liaison (ONA) and Integration Partnerships (CRSP), have similar potential outcomes, making their collaboration and coordination essential for the functions of the ONA.

The ONA and CRSP teams can support each other in various ways. If housed under the same umbrella, these offices could create a joint external facing platform that would act as a one-stop shop for immigrants and refugees, making services more accessible to impacted communities across the state. Furthermore, the offices can collaborate to develop shared databases, intakes, and outcomes, and streamline ways to report these outcomes, while also creating interagency agreements. Advocacy and legislative efforts can be enhanced through the union of these two offices as well.

RECOMMENDATION

To leverage existing staff and funding resources, the ONA will:

- Hire strategically, utilizing the budget to fill the needs of the ONA that cannot be met through recommendations (below), and allow maximum support of immigrants and refugees in our state.
- House CRSP (programs currently in CDHS's Office of Economic Security, which is employment-focused) under the ONA in order to streamline services, data, and outcomes for affected populations.
 - *HB 21-1150 codifies the ONA in CDLE. This ensures immigrants are understood to be additive to Colorado's prosperity.*
 - *Explore implications for programs such as the CDPHE Refugee Health Program and the Unaccompanied Minor Program, currently funded by CRSP or with shared FTE with other CDHS offices.*
- Determine if staff from other departments or agencies may be able to contribute dedicated time (partial FTE) to the goals of the ONA. To this end, the Governor's Operations Team will review and make recommendations to the ONA Director and other applicable state leaders.

G. Effects on Clients

The ONA seeks to be mindful and aware of the effects on clients. Centering decisions on client outcomes is crucial to the mission and success of the ONA. The workgroup identified several factors for consideration, including but certainly not limited to the following: currently, there are no centralized resources which encompass all issues that New Americans face; connecting immigrants to resources leads to shared prosperity and wellness over time; focusing on the effects on clients allows us to evaluate the efficiency (or lack thereof) in our current agencies working with New Americans.

New Americans encounter several obstacles when adjusting to life in Colorado, one of these obstacles is connecting to the state government and the services available to them therein. Some of these barriers include language and cultural obstacles, access to technology/digital literacy, and

knowledge of what programs are available and how to access them. It is important to note that many New Americans may not trust state agencies, nor the likelihood of receiving assistance from them, due to previous experiences in their countries of origin.

The ONA aims to mitigate the effects of these barriers for New Americans in Colorado by providing support, information, and access to partners, providers, and other state agencies. Ideally, the ONA will serve as both a connector to other state agencies and partners while also providing the convenience of a one-stop shop for a variety of services for New Americans, consolidating access to resources from separate agencies under the umbrella of the ONA. Additionally, this process will include relationship building between the ONA, state agency partners, and non-profit organizations in order to facilitate referrals and connections for New Americans across a wide variety of services. CBO representatives report challenges and inefficiencies that the ONA can solve through consolidation.

Ideally, the ONA would provide new pathways for New Americans to connect with state resources. These new pathways could include walk-in services for New Americans who are seeking in-person, real-time support, as well as updated web, phone, and text options for accessing services. Furthermore, the ONA seeks to provide current information to New Americans on what services are available and how to best utilize them.

RECOMMENDATION

To maximize positive outcomes for clients, the ONA will:

- Serve as a connector for New Americans to the services that they need to achieve success in Colorado;
- Consolidate resources, as possible, and information on available programs and communication to New Americans into the ONA to provide for streamlined connection by New Americans and the CBOs that serve them.
- Provide new pathways for New Americans to connect with state resources.
- Advise partner departments, agencies and programs on immigrant inclusive programming.

H. Leveraging of Agency and Programmatic Strengths

The ONA seeks to leverage current agencies and programmatic strengths in order to enhance its operations. HB 21-1150 defines the agencies with which the ONA will partner and work to leverage these strengths, which include: CDHS, CDLE, DORA, CDPHE, and the Governor's Office.

These agencies have several strengths that will ultimately be utilized to work towards the greater goals of the ONA. HB 21-1150 placed the ONA in CDLE and set specific requirements that the ONA have direct contact with the Governor's Office and the ability to convene other state agencies in order to accelerate achievements. In addition, HB 21-1150 initiated a Type 1 transfer. HB 21-1150 created the ONA in a way that it can operate independently, with authority, and cross-agency, setting it up to draw on the strengths of multiple departments, agencies and programs. This arrangement is key to the ONA's successful establishment, and CDLE's concurrence with the need for such authority was a key element in the decision by bill sponsors and advocates to place the ONA within CDLE.

Partner strengths include aspects of agencies called out as collaborators in the bill. Many state agencies work with New Americans.

CDLE has the capacity to provide assistance to New Americans with items such as unemployment insurance and workers compensation, pave the way for improving work conditions for New Americans, maintain relationships between immigrants and local businesses, and capitalize on the assets that New Americans bring to the state's economy through job training and work supports. CDLE serves all immigrants in its programs, and, arguably, has the most programs of any department or agency that serve immigrants without lawful presence, such as through wage and labor protections. None of its programs are considered public benefits, and CDLE has additional discretion in terms of eligibility, such as by ensuring unemployment insurance is open to those on temporary status. Immigrant advocates, nationally and locally, prioritize worker protections as the most pressing issue for their communities. Importantly, other states and local advocates recognize that there are important optics to consider in terms of how the public views its immigrant community; immigrant work in an agency focused on economic development helps further the understanding that immigrants add to shared prosperity. CDLE partners with immigrant-serving CBOs and local partners to ensure Colorado can capitalize on the skills of all Coloradans, including through funded partnerships towards shared goals. Likewise, CDLE already houses collaborative cross-agency offices, such as the Office of Just Transition and the Colorado Workforce Development Council; successes and lessons learned from each can be brought to bear to help guide the ONA's establishment and reach.

CDPHE manages a large portfolio including public health surveillance and response as well as climate and health equity work. Immigrants and refugees are often adversely affected by climate change to a disproportionate degree, and they often have worse health outcomes than the general population. As such, CDPHE can provide insight and guidance into areas of health equity and disparities, as well as other social determinants of health. Its Office of Health Equity (OHE) focuses on historically excluded communities, such as immigrants and refugees, and has long worked alongside immigrant-serving CBOs to address challenges such as housing and employment. Equity issues and immigrant integration issues often overlap, and partnership with OHE can facilitate the

advancement of ONA's priorities. In addition, CDPHE has recently advanced important work on the Earned Income Tax Credit, with a focus on New Americans; partnership with CDPHE in discrete efforts like these can accelerate the state's ability to meet its immigrant integration goals. Importantly, CDPHE's programs often can serve all immigrants, as public health funding has long been understood to be inclusive of all residents and none of its programs are considered public benefits.

CDHS supervises many public benefit programs that support low-income Coloradans, including eligible New Americans. As Colorado is state-supervised, county-administered, the role of CDHS is to set policies and create conditions that allow low-income Coloradans to connect with resources, such as food assistance. Some New Americans are also low-income and struggle to connect with resources for which they are eligible. Importantly, per SB 19-230, CRSP is housed by CDHS, and CRSP has existing strong networks with various CBOs already working with refugees across the state. Such funded partnerships can also help support the broader work of the ONA to ensure that all immigrants, not just those that arrive as refugees, receive comprehensive integration support. However, as many of CDHS's programs are federally defined, there is less ability for the department and its programs to serve all immigrants, regardless of status, and many of its programs are not available for newcomers for their first five years in the country.

DORA has a focus on minimizing the regulatory burden on re-credentialing for foreign-trained professionals, and importantly, houses other key divisions that support immigrant integration, such as the Division of Real Estate, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, and the Division of Insurance. Each of these divisions or commissions currently emphasizes the immigrant population's needs and access to support. Partnering with DORA helps the ONA achieve goals related to skills re-credentialing, access (e.g., health insurance and homeownership) and importantly, the protection of the rights of New Americans.

The **Governor's Office** adds a big picture and a birds eye view on opportunities for enhanced immigrant integration. Oftentimes, agency work is siloed, and the Governor's Office can assist in helping agency staff see opportunities for cross collaboration. The Governor's Office also can help ensure policy goals of ONA are achieved.

The strengths of all of these agencies, both together and separately, will help the ONA reach its goals. Specifically, these agencies working together can support the greater narrative surrounding the ONA by supporting the storytelling aspect of the ONA, while providing the community at large, members, and stakeholders with a sense of "why" this office is so essential. As mentioned previously, the ONA can act as a connector between these agencies by bringing together all the necessary parties to the table in case of a crisis, so that each agency can play upon each other's strengths.

Similarly, programs such as: CDLE's Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers and New Americans Initiative; DORA's Division of Professions and Occupations; CDHS' Colorado Refugee Services Program; CDPHE's Office of Health Equity and Refugee Programs; and the Colorado Department of Education's Migrant Education Program will provide support to the ONA to reach its goals. Currently, these programs serve as connections to impacted communities in order to ensure that New Americans receive information they need about other services and programs. CDHS' CRSP provides assistance to a subset of New Americans in gaining initial stability in their new home areas, while also maintaining existing contracts and agreements with CBOs. Furthermore, DORA's programs will expand the number of professions which can be fast tracked for licensure and certification. Finally, CDE's ESL programs are already working with CDLE workforce programs such as WIOA, which help immigrants connect to services.

All of these programs and their strengths, being leveraged by the ONA, will solidify ONA as a one-stop shop and a trusted resource for New Americans, state agencies, and CBOs alike.

RECOMMENDATION

To leverage agency and programmatic strengths, the ONA will:

- Utilize the current strengths, resources and staff of agencies and programs to provide best services to New Americans.
- Leverage the experience of CBOs through consolidation of services, information and communications and through the facilitation of their input and expertise.
- Build upon these existing strengths and utilize them as a way to cement ONA as a one-stop shop and connector of various programs, agencies, stakeholders, and CBOs.

I. Lessons from Other States

As Colorado looks into implementing its ONA, it is important to look into what other states who have a similar office have done. States such as Virginia, Washington, Michigan, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, and Oregon can be looked to as examples of how to best go about the creation and implementation of this office. Below is a summary of how these other states have organized their corresponding offices and what each of these offices have chosen to concentrate on.

Since there are so many issues that an Office of New Americans could focus on, each state has made choices. Most newer offices are employment and economic development focused, with host agencies such as CDLE.

Virginia

Virginia's ONA was established quite recently, in 2020, and consists of an Immigrant Services Unit and a Refugee Services Unit. In addition to these two units, Virginia's ONA has established an advisory board which advises the Governor on ways to improve state policies and programs to support the integration of immigrants in Virginia. Overall, Virginia's ONA aspires to be responsible for the implementation of a statewide strategy to provide immigrants comprehensive assistance related to employment, housing, healthcare, education, citizenship, and other services. It is housed in Virginia's Department of Social Services, which oversees programs such as food assistance. It leverages federal funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement alongside state dollars to amplify impact.

Washington

Washington's Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) is notably housed within the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). DSHS oversees social services, such as TANF, as well as workforce centers. One of ORIA's main initiatives/focus areas is their PRIME program, which stands for "Promoting Refugee Integration, Mobility, and Empowerment." PRIME includes case management services, self-sufficiency education workshops, asylee outreach, mental health support for those struggling to adjust to life in the United States, and immigration assistance such as completing USCIS application. ORIA also oversees a Refugee Advisory Council, in which voting members include representatives from each DSHS region of the state. The overarching goal of this council is to ensure coordination of issues encountered by refugees and immigrants, as well as raising awareness of issues that affect these communities. ORIA houses both immigrant and refugee programs. It leverages federal funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement alongside state dollars to amplify impact.

Michigan

The Office of Global Michigan (Office) consists of two key programs: Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) and their various refugee services. MITS supports highly educated refugees and immigrants who desire to return to their professional field. As for refugees, the Office partners with local agencies such as Bethany Christian Services, Jewish Family Services, Samaritas, St. Vincent Catholic Charities, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and other organizations to assist with refugee resettlement. Furthermore, the Office leverages federal, state, and local resources to ensure refugees can contribute to society and utilize their talents therein. The Office resides in Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. The refugee program moved into the Office in 2019. It leverages federal funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement alongside state dollars to amplify impact.

Ohio

In 2018, Governor John Kasich established Ohio's Office of Opportunity for New Americans (Office) by executive order. Through this order, the Office was determined to be housed in the Development and Services Agency. Key programs that this Office provides include: job search assistance, workforce training and education programs, and assistance in growing businesses. The Office has also established a 12 member advisory group composed of representatives from

immigrant communities, business leaders, and non-profit organizations. To formulate their agenda, this advisory group partners with the Ohio Departments of Education, Higher Education, Jobs and Family Services, Commerce, Development Service Agency and Office Workforce Transition. The Office partners with the refugee program but does not have a formal relationship.

New York

New York's ONA was established in 2012, making it the nation's first statutorily established immigrant services office. Since its establishment, the ONA has created a network of 27 neighborhood based opportunity centers across the state, which provide services such as ESL training, naturalization and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals assistance, federal immigration laws and policies information and referrals, and business development training. New York's ONA sits within the Department of State. The ONA partners with the refugee program but does not have a formal relationship.

New Jersey

New Jersey's Office of New Americans (ONA) was created by executive order in 2019, and is housed within the Department of Human Services. Key programs within this office include: information on rights given to New Americans, partnerships with local organizations and policy groups to increase access to state programs, access to employment and education services, legal access, and a Skilled Immigrant Integration Project. The ONA oversees the refugee program.

Oregon

Oregon's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (OIRA) was established in June 2021 through a bill passed by the state legislature. OIRA is relatively new, and thus is currently in the process of collecting data on immigrants and refugees who are new to Oregon to better understand their needs and to track progress in reducing social, economic, and health disparities. Moreover, the office is monitoring investments by the state to make sure resources are being allocated effectively. OIRA sits in the Office of the Governor.

Utah

In development, the Office of New Americans (or similarly named) is in their agency that promotes economic development and has indicated plans to merge with their refugee services team.

Illinois

In August 2021, through an executive order, the Welcoming Illinois Office (Office) was created in the Department of Human Services with direct reporting to the Secretary and Governor's Office. The Office works with Illinois' Division of Refugee and Immigrant Services but is not consolidated within it at this time.

Nevada

The Office of New Americans (ONA) sits within the Governor's office. By concentrating on civic and economic integration of new and aspiring Americans, Nevada's ONA seeks to foster opportunities for these populations to ascend the economic ladder.

Minnesota

Minnesota's Office of New Americans is under consideration at the state legislature and would house the program at their Department of Employment and Economic Development. This office would address critical workforce challenges that currently constrain growth.