



Mayors of the  
Americas  
Task Force on  
Migration

# Cities Leading Regular Migration Pathways in the Americas



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Report available at: [mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/news/migration-pathways-report](https://mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/news/migration-pathways-report)  
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# Executive Summary

In response to the growth of migratory flows in the Americas and the limited action taken by the national governments, cities have taken on a key role in promoting regular migration pathways.

Local governments—including municipalities, cities, states, counties, and provinces, among others—can play a more active role in increasing the availability of and access to regular migration pathways, provided they have the necessary resources, institutional support, and effective coordination mechanisms. Their role in migration governance, particularly in the implementation

of regular migration pathways, presents multiple opportunities, enabling them to leverage the economic, social, and cultural potential of migrants.

This report provides best local practices and puts forward recommendations to strengthen cities’ leadership to broaden those pathways and enhance migration governance.

The document **identifies three roles played by cities in building successful regular migration pathways:**

### 1. Incubators:

Cities proactively use available tools and regulations to design and foster innovative solutions, such as local identity cards to access legal status and services, or skills certification to access formal employment.

### 2. Implementers:

Cities facilitate access to existing migratory pathways by acting as implementing partners, enabling greater access to services such as regularization, legal assistance, and job placement.

### 3. Advocates:

Cities advocate vis-à-vis national governments or engage in regional or international fora to promote the creation or expansion of regular pathways for migrants.

The report explores **four categories of projects that cities in the Americas are developing** or could advance to improve regular migration pathways and proposes specific actions to consider for each type:

- **1. One-stop shop models.**
- **2. Local identity documents and data management.**
- **3. Workforce development programs.**
- **4. Labor mobility programs between cities.**

Given the complex funding landscape for migration and development, especially at the local level, the document identifies several **financing strategies that cities can explore**, including municipal funds, impact investment funds, guarantee funds, result-based payments, social bond issues, and debt swaps.

Finally, the report identifies **policy recommendations to strengthen and scale the role of cities** in the design, implementation, and expansion of regular migration pathways. These include:

- Strengthen cities’ advocacy role to continue innovating;
- Foster cooperation among cities in the Americas, specifically programs that advance regular migration pathways;
- Promote social cohesion and reduce discrimination;
- Explore innovative financing mechanisms;
- Encourage private sector involvement in migration management;
- Advance evidence-based policy making;
- Strengthen migratory governance;
- Build local and cross-cutting capacities;
- Implement a comprehensive and long-term vision;
- Foster orderly and inclusive urban growth.



# Introduction

*“City governments end up being the first point of contact, the first visible actor for the population, often without a clear national structure to support or coordinate them. Local governments end up taking many actions that should be structured at higher levels, but they do so because they are the ones present in the territory and the people turn to them.”*

**Natalia Durán Valbuena**, Innovations for Poverty Action and former official of the Bucaramanga, Colombia, Municipal Government

Forced displacement in the Americas has reached an unprecedented level of complexity and scale. By mid-2024, there were 120 million displaced people worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Of those, around 20.3 million were in the Americas, representing 17 percent of the global displaced population. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of migrants has increased substantially, nearly doubling from 8.3 million to 16.3 million between 2010 and 2022.<sup>2</sup>

Although people are displaced for numerous and varied reasons, including conflict and violence, poverty, organized crime, and the effects of the climate crisis, or the search for new opportunities, they share one thing in common: most of them arrive in cities. In fact, the 20 largest cities in Latin America and the Caribbean have seen their populations grow by 20 percent over the past five years. Cities like New York are home to approximately 3.1 million migrants, accounting for around 38 percent of the population.<sup>3</sup> Mexico City has an migrant population of around 1.6 million people, while Lima is the city with the largest population of Venezuelans outside their country of origin, with 1.15 million people.<sup>4</sup>

In response to large-scale displacement, national governments across the Americas have acknowledged and implemented regular migration pathways or channels to manage migration in a humane, safe, and orderly manner. These pathways include regional mobility agreements, circular migration schemes allowing temporary stays, regularization processes, temporary and humanitarian protections, and employment, family reunification, investment, or study visas. However, regional migration governance mechanisms and intergovernmental collaboration have proven insufficient in addressing changing migration dynamics and the needs of migrants and host communities. In fact, in recent years, governments in the region have adopted regressive migration policies, such as the militarization of borders, the suspension or non-implementation of accessible regularization channels, and the detention and criminalization of migrants.

In response to this situation, many cities are creating innovative solutions, not only to manage migration in a humane and orderly manner

<sup>1</sup> “Worldwide Levels of Forced Displacement Hit New High: UNHCR,” UN News, June 12, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/06/1150981>

<sup>2</sup> “UN Migration Chief Calls for Expanded Labour Pathways at Americas Meeting in Mexico,” IOM, June 2024, <https://www.iom.int/news/un-migration-chief-calls-expanded-labour-pathways-americas-meeting-mexico>.

<sup>3</sup> “2023 Annual Report on New York City’s Immigrant Population and Initiatives of the Office,” NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, 2023, [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/migrants/downloads/pdf/MOIA-Annual-Report-2023\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/migrants/downloads/pdf/MOIA-Annual-Report-2023_Final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “Población total inmigrante, emigrante, y saldo neto migratorio por entidad federativa, años censales de 2000, 2010 y 2020 [Total immigrant, emigrant, and net migration population by state, census years 2000, 2010, and 2020],” INEGI, [https://www.inegi.org.mx/app/tabulados/interactivos/?pxq=Migracion\\_Migracion\\_01\\_426da5e7-766a-42a9-baef-5768cde4fca9](https://www.inegi.org.mx/app/tabulados/interactivos/?pxq=Migracion_Migracion_01_426da5e7-766a-42a9-baef-5768cde4fca9), Peru: Factsheet, October 2023, Reliefweb.



◀ Mexico City, Mexico. Recipient of the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees and member of the Mayors of the Americas Task Force on Migration. Credit: Mexico City Government





Quito, Ecuador. Member of the Americas Task Force on Migration.  
Credit: Unsplash

but also because it is the most pragmatic and effective approach to supporting their communities. Although migration policy has traditionally been subject to national government authority, it is local governments that bear the responsibility of ensuring access to services and well-being for the entire population, including migrants. From the expansion of comprehensive services through one-stop shop service centers in São Paulo and Quito to regularization campaigns in Barranquilla and Cali, the implementation of local identity cards in Mexico City and San Francisco, job placement strategies in Denver and Mendoza, and labor mobility programs between Cúcuta and Bogotá, cities have implemented

innovative programs that contribute to the stabilization and integration of migrants and host communities, as well as to local development.

Local participation in the design of regular migration pathways remains limited due to approaches that view migration as a temporary and exceptional phenomenon, prioritizing immediate assistance over structural policies. This has resulted in fragmented responses, especially in border cities that operate with limited resources and support. To move toward more inclusive and sustainable cities with long-term institutional capacity and stability, it is necessary to adopt comprehensive policies that demonstrate

the central role cities play in promoting regular migration pathways as a driver of urban development.

The purpose of this report is to identify the role that cities in the Americas have played in promoting regular migration pathways, share concrete examples, and provide programmatic and policy recommendations to cities aimed at expanding these pathways and strengthening migration governance.

The report is based on a study by the Plural consulting firm, which conducted focus groups with six cities, interviewed 33 experts, and

analyzed 113 international initiatives. It is a document primarily aimed at cities and local actors, grounded in the understanding that migration is a complex phenomenon involving mixed movements. The report uses the term migrants for accessibility but with an expansive definition including all migrant peoples, refugees, returnees, and deportees. This paper discusses the role of local governments, including municipalities, cities, states, counties, regions, and provinces, among others. To keep the document accessible and easy to read, we will refer mostly to cities, which should be interpreted more broadly to include local governments at large.



# Cities’ Role in Regular Migration Pathways in the Americas

The United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) defines regular migration pathways as legal, policy, or administrative arrangements that allow the entry, stay, and regularization of migrants, even if their initial entry was temporary or irregular.<sup>5</sup> These pathways, which vary according to each country’s legislation, may

apply at different stages of the migration process. The Mayors Mechanism of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) has categorized these pathways in alignment with those recognized by twenty-two Latin America and Caribbean states.

Given their role as points of origin, transit, destination, and return, cities have become key actors in migration governance. They not only respond to the immediate needs of migrants but also actively participate in policy development alongside national governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia, and migrant communities.

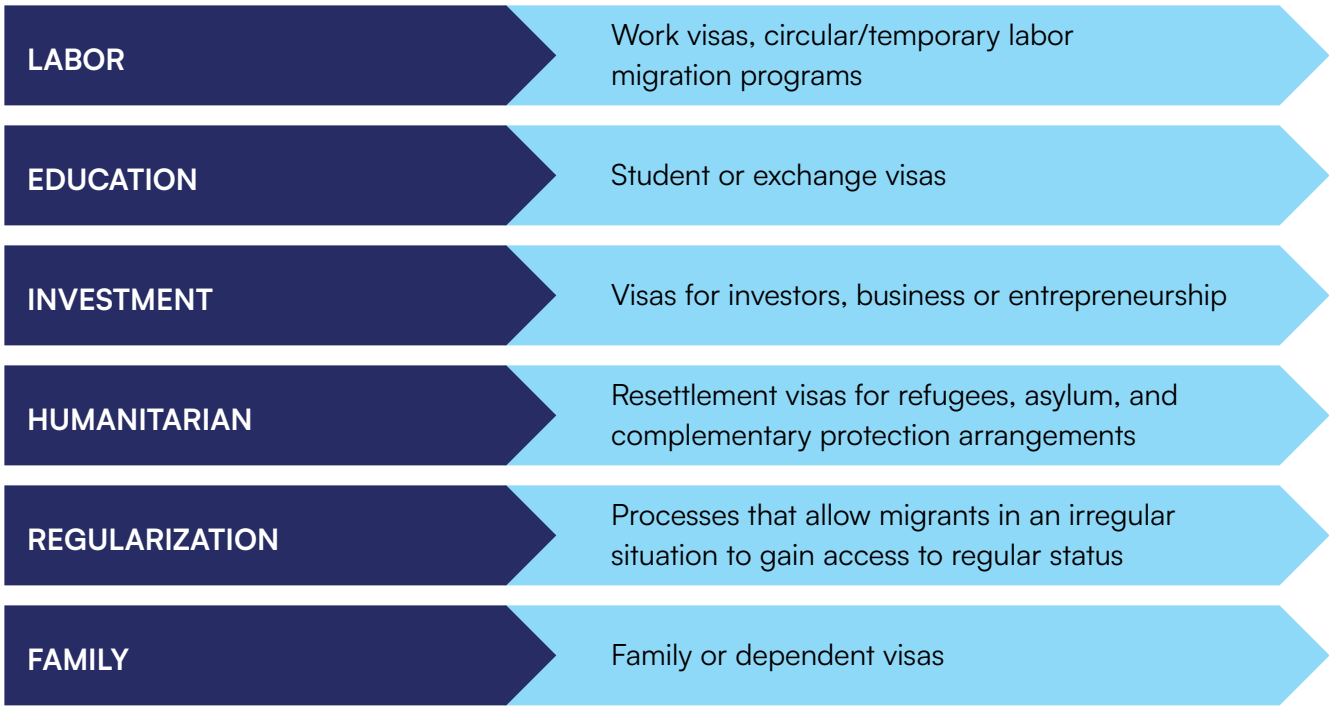
programs, such as local identification systems, access to services, support for family reunification, regularization processes, resettlement initiatives, and labor integration. Moreover, local actors also play a key role in informing migrants about available options to access regular pathways and navigate complex migration systems. These local initiatives emerge to fill gaps in national policies and address legal frameworks that restrict migrants in irregular situations from accessing public services, documentation, and formal employment, and consequently, processes that assure long-term integration.

Although the formal creation of regular migration pathways tends to fall under the authority of national governments, cities have leveraged the legal frameworks of their states and regional and international agreements to implement their own

*“Regular migration pathways are like alphabet soup: asylum, TPS, humanitarian permits, work permits, among others, and migrants often do not know where they fit in the soup. Cities may not always have the resources to offer everything, but at the very least, they can inform people about what is available in terms of regular migration pathways.”*

**Elizabeth Chacko,**  
George Washington University

## TYPES OF REGULAR MIGRATION PATHWAYS



<sup>5</sup> “Regular Pathways for Admission and Stay for Migrants in Situations of Vulnerability,” United Nations Network on Migration, July 2021, [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl416/files/docs/guidance\\_note\\_-\\_regular\\_pathways\\_for\\_admission\\_and\\_stay\\_for\\_migrants\\_in\\_situations\\_of\\_vulnerability\\_final.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl416/files/docs/guidance_note_-_regular_pathways_for_admission_and_stay_for_migrants_in_situations_of_vulnerability_final.pdf)

According to the GFMD’s Mayors Mechanism, local governments have developed innovative and inclusive solutions that serve all, regardless of migratory status. Cities have taken on the following roles regarding regular migration pathways:<sup>6</sup>

CITIES' ROLE IN ADVANCING REGULAR MIGRATION PATHWAYS

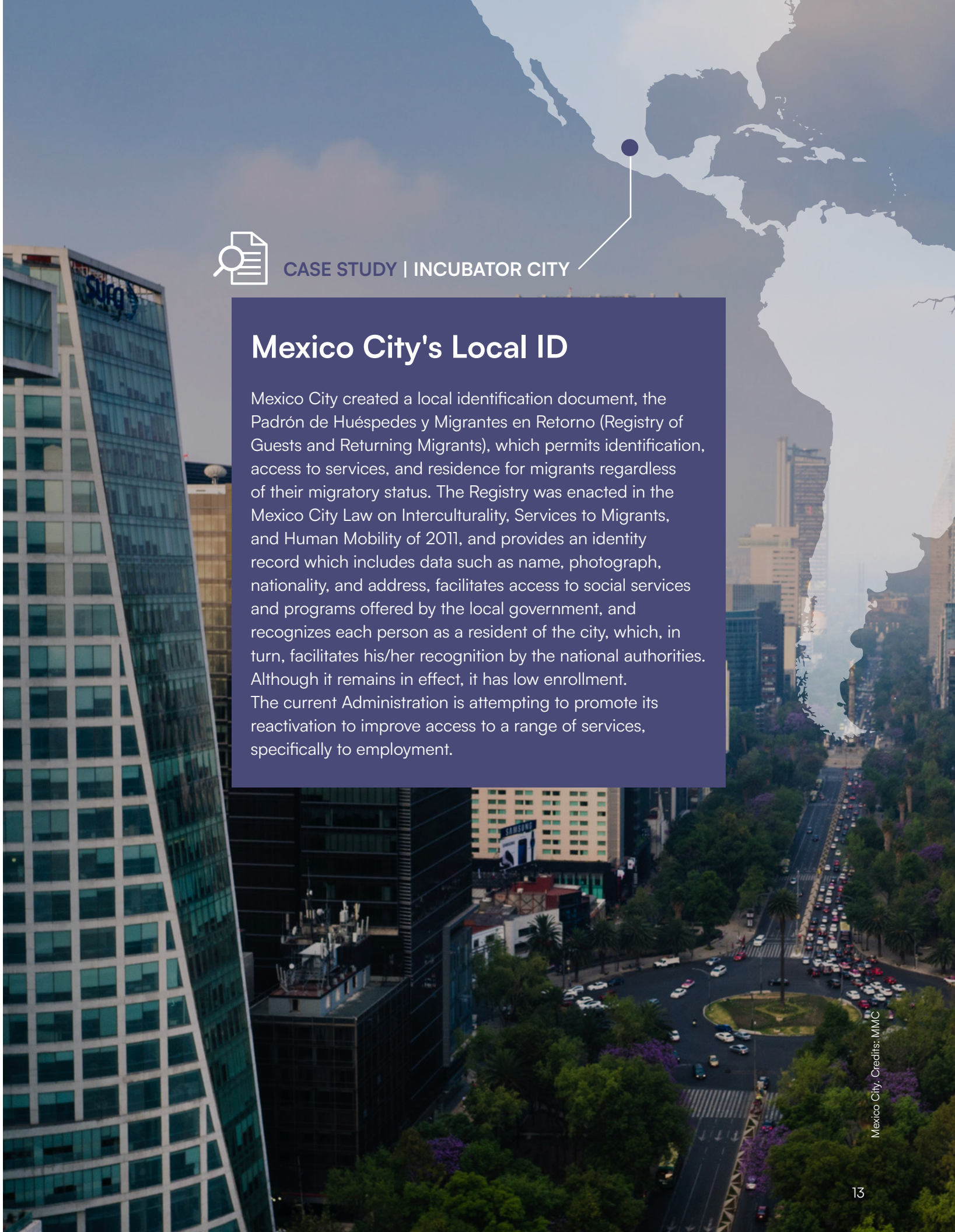
Role of cities	Characteristics
INCUBATOR CITIES	Cities proactively use the tools and regulations available in their national context to promote, establish, and identify new partnerships that, in turn, give rise to specific pathways tailored to the needs of the local population. Cities actively design these pathways to respond to specific needs and contexts.
IMPLEMENTER CITIES	Cities facilitate access to the available regular migration pathways by acting as implementing partners in national plans and by facilitating migrants’ access to city services.
ADVOCATE CITIES	Cities advocate vis-à-vis national governments or within regional and international spaces for the creation or expansion of regular migration pathways.

● INCUBATOR CITIES

Cities in the Americas have played the role of incubators by developing local initiatives that, while not creating new migration pathways per se, contribute to designing channels that respond to the needs of their populations. By leveraging existing legal frameworks, they have

implemented measures such as local identification cards, municipal registries, support for family reunification, and resettlement programs for asylum seekers and refugees, thereby expanding their role in migration governance.

<sup>6</sup> “Brokering Solutions: How Local and Regional Governments Shape Regular Migration Pathways,” GFMD Mayors Mechanism, February 2025), [https://mmc-production.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/22171012/MayorsMechanism\\_Pathways\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](https://mmc-production.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/22171012/MayorsMechanism_Pathways_White_Paper.pdf)



CASE STUDY | INCUBATOR CITY

Mexico City's Local ID

Mexico City created a local identification document, the Padrón de Huéspedes y Migrantes en Retorno (Registry of Guests and Returning Migrants), which permits identification, access to services, and residence for migrants regardless of their migratory status. The Registry was enacted in the Mexico City Law on Interculturality, Services to Migrants, and Human Mobility of 2011, and provides an identity record which includes data such as name, photograph, nationality, and address, facilitates access to social services and programs offered by the local government, and recognizes each person as a resident of the city, which, in turn, facilitates his/her recognition by the national authorities. Although it remains in effect, it has low enrollment. The current Administration is attempting to promote its reactivation to improve access to a range of services, specifically to employment.

Mexico City. Credits: MMC



## ● IMPLEMENTER CITIES

Most cities in the region act as implementers of regular migration pathways, incorporating components of those pathways into their local policies and operating within national legal frameworks. As part of this work, cities have adapted spaces to serve and provide services to

migrants, either through dedicated centers or by using existing municipal services. These actions reflect the ability of cities to operate in complex migration governance systems and in coordination with other levels of government.



### CASE STUDY | IMPLEMENTER CITY

## Consolidation of Services in Bogotá's CADEs

Bogotá has been among the pioneering cities in the implementation of one-stop shop models, helping to expand regular migration pathways and socioeconomic integration of migrants. The city integrated the specialized services of the Centros Intégrate (Integration Centers) into a broader network of city services, the Centros de Atención Distrital Especializados (Specialized District Service Centers — CADEs), to facilitate access and foster social cohesion between migrants and host communities. This strategy enabled them to leverage the CADEs' infrastructure to strengthen migrant population assistance, providing services such as biometric registration, advice on regularization and access to documents, training in the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Apprenticeship Service — SENA), employability, education, legal advice, and psychosocial counseling. Since 2022, it has served more than 49,000 people—23 percent of the national total.

Bogotá. Credits: MMC

## ● ADVOCATE CITIES

In their advocacy role, cities across the Americas have demonstrated local leadership by articulating their interests and exerting influence at the national and international levels. Moreover, cities have connected through networks for sharing information and best practices. While

these networks do not directly create migration pathways, they have played a fundamental role in city diplomacy, facilitating collaboration, strategic dialogue, and pressure on national governments to implement or expand regular migration pathways<sup>7</sup>



### CASE STUDY | ADVOCATE CITIES

## Network of US Cities Request a New Visa to Fill Local Labor Shortages

In 2024, the United States Conference of Mayors approved a bipartisan resolution urging federal policymakers to adopt the Heartland Visa proposal aimed at revitalizing local economies through immigration of highly qualified workers. The Heartland Visa seeks to leverage the talents of highly qualified workers to revitalize areas suffering from de-industrialization by way of redistributing workers throughout the country. This visa would provide a new immigration pathway for highly qualified workers, entrepreneurs, and innovators, and would simplify the path migrants must tread on the way to permanent residence, in exchange for their willingness to live in communities experiencing economic decline.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Lacroix, "Migration-Related City Networks: A Global Overview," *Local Government Studies* 48, no. 6 (2021): 1027–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2021.1938553>.

Washington DC. Credits: MMC



# City Programs to Expand Regular Migration Pathways

Through the research conducted, four categories of programs were identified that cities are developing or could develop to expand and improve regular migration pathways: 1) one-stop shop models; 2) local identity documents and data management; 3) workforce development programs; and 4) labor mobility programs between cities.

This section outlines the opportunities each initiative offers, provides examples of successful

cities, and details recommendations for cities looking to advance these projects.

These initiatives, based on needs identified by local actors, help attract resources, improve institutional coordination, strengthen public services, boost the economy, and move toward more sustainable and inclusive urban models. Far from being isolated initiatives, the opportunities are interconnected.



## ONE-STOP SHOP MODELS

An increasing number of cities in the region are creating comprehensive service centers for migrants, known as one-stop shop models. These models bring together essential services in a single space, such as access to key information, registration, healthcare, education, legal, social,

and psychological assistance, legal status or regularization processes, and job placement. Through a comprehensive, multi-sector strategy, one-stop shops support the socioeconomic integration of migrants and host communities.

### INTEGRATION CENTER SERVICES



The use of this model reflects the effectiveness it has shown as a comprehensive strategy for migration management and migrant integration. By centralizing public and private services in a single place, it improves access to administrative procedures, information, and social programs; reduces administrative barriers; lowers migrants' vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse; and creates favorable conditions for the integration or reintegration of migrants while promoting equity. It also contributes to coordination among various city departments and with national government agencies, for example, regarding access to regularization processes.

The design of these centers varies depending on the local context, needs, and local capabilities.

In some cases, one-stop shop models are integrated into broader service networks, such as the Centros de Atención Distrital Especializados (Specialized District Service Centers — CADEs) in Bogotá or the Human Mobility House in Quito. This approach reinforces social cohesion, fosters connections with host communities, and serves as a comprehensive tool for integration grounded in access to fundamental rights, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities. In other cases, these comprehensive centers are focused explicitly on serving migrant populations by meeting their particular needs. In cities like São Paulo, the centers include mobile units that provide direct services in remote communities, reducing accessibility gaps (see Appendix).



## CASE STUDY | ONE-STOP SHOP

### The Immigrant Referral and Service Center in São Paulo

One of the pioneering cities in the opening of a comprehensive migrant service center was São Paulo, Brazil. The Centro de Referencia y Atención a Inmigrantes (Immigrant Referral and Service Center — CRAI), inaugurated in 2014, offers orientation on regularization, legal advice, social assistance, as well as referral for Portuguese classes at public schools, job intermediation services, and short-term housing accommodation, among other services. The CRAI also has a mobile unit that serves remote communities once a week, and it inspired the creation of other CRAIs in Brazil, such as the one in Rio de Janeiro. Aiming to endow this initiative with continuity and expanding the provision of available services, the city committed itself to opening a second CRAI on its east side, where the second-largest concentration of migrants and refugees is located. To date, the CRAI has served over 15,000 people.

São Paulo. Credits: MMC





- **Creation and expansion of one-stop shop service centers** in areas with a high concentration of migrant populations, ensuring equitable access to services. It is recommended to implement mobile centers to reach hard-to-access territories, thereby expanding territorial coverage and reducing potential tensions with local communities.
- **Strengthen coordination with the national government, international organizations, civil society, and legal clinics** around regularization and the issuance of identity documents and work permits.
- **Expand income-generation mechanisms for migrants**, including through access to formal jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **Strengthen referral services and systems** and reinforce coordination with other stakeholders capable of supporting assistance and case management for people seeking help with regularization, documentation, job counseling, accommodation, health, food, protection, legal services, and others.
- **Provide general training and intercultural mediation programs** for one-stop shop personnel to enable them to better understand the processes and respond to diverse cultural contexts. This helps to reduce discrimination and foster the integration of migrants.
- **Promote the digitalization of services and establish interoperable systems between local institutions and other cities** to enable more efficient case registration, facilitate key information sharing among stakeholders, and support the tracking of migrants throughout their integration or reintegration process, even when they move to another city.
- **Implement mechanisms for evaluation and continuous improvement** through data collection and analysis systems that provide insights into user profiles, service needs, and the results of the services provided. This information should be used to adjust procedures, improve service quality, and guide evidence-based decision making.



Cities can implement local identification card programs that include migrants, refugees, and returnees, regardless of their migratory status. These types of documents do not replace national identity documents, nor do they grant regular migration status beyond the city, but they can be crucial in contexts where migrants lack official documentation. They allow for recognition of individuals and their effective residence, facilitate access to local social services, and encourage participation in urban life.

For local governments, these IDs serve as a tool to strengthen the connection between residents and public institutions and to improve urban planning by generating reliable data on who actually inhabits the city. The records created through these programs can serve as strategic inputs for improving public policy, promoting more inclusive cities, and fostering a sense of belonging to the city (see Appendix).

### Local identity cards

The design and implementation of identification card programs can vary depending on each city's political priorities, institutional capacities, and specific characteristics. Some programs are targeted specifically at migrant and returnee populations, while others adopt a universal approach for all residents. In all cases, they must be accessible and inclusive, and they must foster institutional recognition as a foundation for local integration.<sup>8</sup>

To implement a local identity card, the model must be defined, a simple application process established, and strong safeguards put in place to ensure the protection of personal data. Once the system is in place, it is crucial to advance agreements with other entities such as healthcare centers, educational institutions, social programs, transportation services, and financial institutions, so they recognize the card as a valid document.<sup>9</sup> In addition, information campaigns are also required to promote its use, prevent stigmatization, and ensure consistent application across the city.

### Information collection

Administrative registries from local identification programs allow governments to collect detailed data on the migrant population (age, gender, country of origin, occupation, etc.), complementing official statistics. This information can help enhance both local and national statistical systems, especially in contexts where official censuses do not accurately reflect the presence of migrants and returnees.

Data analysis also facilitates the identification of areas with high concentrations of migrants, helps anticipate needs in key sectors such as healthcare, education, and housing, informs strategies for productive integration, and enables more efficient allocation of resources. To accomplish this, it is essential to guarantee the protection of personal data and use the information exclusively for purposes of integration and policy improvement.

<sup>8</sup> Tess Johnson and Eric Noggle, "Municipal IDs Offer Cities Lessons for COVID-19 Cash Assistance Programs," Center for Financial Inclusion, July 2020, <https://www.centerforfinancialinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Municipal-IDs-Brief-07-17-2020.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> "Building Identity: A Toolkit for Designing and Implementing a Successful Municipal ID Program," Center for Popular Democracy, December 2013, <https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Municipal-ID-Report-web.pdf>



### City-to-city cooperation on identification and data

Cooperation among local governments to collect, share, and analyze migration data—especially in border or transit areas—enables the generation of more comprehensive information, helps identify patterns, and supports the design of coordinated responses. Intermunicipal systems help share best practices, standardize criteria, and track migration trajectories without resorting to surveillance or criminalization.

A key action within this framework is coordination among cities to achieve mutual recognition of local identification cards issued by other municipal governments. This allows the reach of these documents to extend beyond the issuing territory. Such agreements can facilitate migrants’ access to services and programs in different parts of the national territory (or even between cities in different countries), without the need to duplicate administrative processes or face barriers due to the lack of document recognition.



### CASE STUDY | LOCAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS & DATA MANAGEMENT

#### IDNYC in New York

The IDNYC program, launched in 2015, is an initiative of the City of New York which provides an identity card free of charge to all residents, regardless of their migratory status. The card serves as an administrative tool that permits access to City and private services, such as libraries, cultural institutions, healthcare centers, and financial services of partner banks. It also serves as proof of identity to the local authorities. The program is operated by the Human Resources Administration, in coordination with the Office of the Mayor for Immigrant Affairs, and its design also encompasses legal protections in terms of privacy and data protection.

New York City. Credits: iStock



### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS | LOCAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS & DATA MANAGEMENT

- **Activate or re-activate the local issuance of identity documents** that recognize the place of residence of migrants and returnees in the city and facilitate their access to the different local services.
- **Integrate local identification documents into the city’s digital and service ecosystem** to eliminate administrative barriers to accessing services.
- **Establish partnerships with financial institutions** to ensure that local identifications are accepted as valid documents for accessing financial services.
- **Coordinate with other local governments** to promote mutual recognition of these documents across different territorial entities beyond their place of issuance.
- **Develop data confidentiality and protection protocols** to safeguard the personal information of migrants holding local identifications. This includes policies on data use, storage, and access; measures to prevent security breaches; and institutional firewalls to ensure that such data are not used for migratory control purposes.
- **Engage national governments to advocate for the creation of national information systems on migration that are integrated with local governments.** This would improve international data compatibility by applying common statistical definitions and enable the documentation of migration and return patterns, trends, and influencing factors.



### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Cities play a key role in connecting migrants to employment, thereby helping to meet local labor market needs and foster the socioeconomic integration of the migrant populations, as well as social cohesion. Despite the efforts of local governments, multiple barriers continue to hinder migrants’ access to employment, livelihoods, and economic inclusion, heightening the likelihood of subsequent voluntary or forced displacements.

Collaboration between local governments and the private sector can strengthen the match between labor supply and demand, facilitating access to livelihoods, financial services, and opportunities for inclusion in value chains. This, in turn, can generate economic and fiscal benefits for the cities (see Appendix).





Mexico City, Mexico. Recipient of the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees and member of the Mayors of the Americas Task Force on Migration. Credit: Mexico City Government

## Training and certification of job skills, and recognition of foreign qualifications

Training and certification of job skills seek to improve the employability of migrants and returnees through technical and professional programs tailored to the local labor market. These programs may include pre-employment training or certification of skills acquired previously or in the host country. By issuing certifications recognized by employers, they facilitate access to formal employment and foster inclusion in key sectors of the economy, aligning migrants' talents with the productive needs of the cities. At the same time, the recognition of foreign qualifications and acquired skills enables individuals to practice their professions, enter the labor market, or continue their education in another country.

## Job placement and local employment services

Cities can also strengthen their municipal employment services to facilitate the placement of migrants and returnees who already live in the city into available local labor market opportunities. Through job placement mechanisms such as digital labor platforms, employment fairs, and socio-occupational counseling, cities can facilitate connections between migrants and returnees and opportunities for formal employment.

## Private sector participation in labor market integration processes

Active participation of the private sector in the labor integration of migrants goes beyond awareness-raising. This component aims for companies to become directly involved through the creation of employment pathways, the financing of regularization or training processes, or the development of inclusive hiring policies. Public and private sector investments should be aligned with the labor market needs, occupational profiles, and training and certification pathways, targeting both migrants already residing in the city and those seeking to move through regular migration pathways.

## Business operating permits and support for entrepreneurship

Local governments can facilitate the legal registration of small businesses owned by migrants, thereby reinforcing their economic stability and access to municipal services, commercial networks, financing, training, and workspace. Legal recognition of migrant-owned businesses or entrepreneurial ventures can serve as a strategic tool to facilitate regularization processes by documenting individuals' economic activity, providing evidence of community ties, and demonstrating their contribution to the community. In the absence of work permits, some migrants have established LLC-type businesses to operate both as owners and workers, especially in sectors such as technology, food services, and e-commerce.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Choosing a Business Structure," Immigrants Rising, [https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising\\_Choosing-a-Business-Structure-Guide.pdf](https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_Choosing-a-Business-Structure-Guide.pdf).





## CASE STUDY | WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

### Support for Regularization and Job Placement Model in Nuevo León

The State of Nuevo León, Mexico, designed a migration management model focused on the regularization of migrants and job placement, which includes state funding, international support, social organizations, legal clinics, and the business community. The model relied on the framework offered by the National Registry of Foreigners to regularize individuals with expired documents prior to 2023 or who have engaged in unauthorized activities, provided they have a job offer and the money to cover the costs of issuing the documents. The model includes: 1) provision of information in an Information Hub; 2) evaluation of vulnerability; 3) referring cases to civil society organizations and legal clinics to grant legal support; 4) sustainable financing through a state trust operating with contributions from the state and international organizations; and 5) linkage with the business community to facilitate formal employment. This practice shows that, even though migration policy is a responsibility of the federal government, cities and states can create regular migration pathways within the existing legal frameworks.

Nuevo León. Credits: MMC



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS | WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

- **Review and analyze local employment strategies** to ensure they are inclusive of migrants and returnees and compatible with existing integration arrangements. This implies incorporating specific guidelines into the existing plans and programs, as well as promoting alliances with companies, chambers of commerce, and labor unions to facilitate the implementation of concrete actions for labor market integration.
- **Conduct labor market studies** to identify the economic sector needs of cities, available job openings, and the skills that will be required in the short, medium, and long term.
- **Strengthen coordination mechanisms between local governments and the private sector** to identify labor demand and to facilitate and fund job placement processes for migrants and returnees. This coordination may also include private sector involvement in funding and co-designing employment training programs tailored to migrants and returnees.
- **Address labor shortages by regularizing migrants**, strengthening labor registration and job-matching systems, as well as the recognition of foreign qualifications.
- **Incorporate Public Employment Services into job placement strategies**, which includes improving labor intermediation, providing occupational orientation, and coordinating with other stakeholders in the ecosystem to facilitate effective matching between labor supply and demand.
- **Improve financial inclusion through better access to banking and digital financial services** by strengthening national regulatory frameworks for recognizing immigration documentation for opening bank accounts and accessing financial services, as well as disseminating these guidelines at the subnational level to ensure their applicability. Moreover, strengthen the interoperability of identity verification systems between immigration authorities and banks.
- **Develop advocacy strategies to promote the creation, expansion, and enhancement of regular migration pathways** through a demand-driven approach that facilitates access to work permits and recognition of foreign documents, as well as the reduction of restrictions caps on hiring of foreigners.



## LABOR MOBILITY PROGRAMS BETWEEN CITIES

Labor mobility programs or labor pathways between cities provide safe and regulated channels for workers to move to other locations and fill job vacancies. These programs may involve both internal mobility (within the same country) and international mobility (between countries). When designed based on labor market needs and with strong protection safeguards, labor mobility programs benefit migrants, employers, and host countries. For migrants, these programs foster self-sufficiency, economic stability, and social integration by providing legal employment opportunities. For employers, they offer access to skilled talent and diversity to their staff. These programs drive economic development, strengthen social cohesion, and foster more inclusive communities.

Within a single country, cities can coordinate labor supply and demand to voluntarily relocate migrants, for example, from border cities to areas with high labor demand. This supports migrant integration and the development of host cities in

alignment with their capacities and labor market needs.

Experiences such as the temporary labor program between Cúcuta and Bogotá for flower cultivation, UNHCR's Program for Local Integration (PIL) and the relocation of individuals from the southern border of Mexico, as well as the Interiorization process in Brazil to more than 1,000 cities, offer a variety of guidelines for the formulation of these programs (see Appendix).

A new opportunity would be to develop pilot labor mobility programs between cities in Latin America that are part of regional integration blocs such as MERCOSUR,<sup>11</sup> the Andean Community (CAN),<sup>12</sup> or the Pacific Alliance.<sup>13</sup> These cities, embedded within supranational frameworks that recognize rights to residency, mobility, certification recognition, and employment among member countries, can explore existing pathways to promote local labor mobility initiatives.



Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Member of the Mayors of the Americas Task Force on Migration. Credit: Samer Saliba

<sup>11</sup> The member states of MERCOSUR are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The associated or observer states are Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname.

<sup>12</sup> The states that comprise the CAN are Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

<sup>13</sup> The Pacific Alliance is an articulation arrangement among Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES IN REGIONAL LABOR MOBILITY REGIMES

### Agreement

#### MERCOSUR



#### ANDEAN COMMUNITY



#### PACIFIC ALLIANCE



### Opportunities for Cities

Cities are well positioned to facilitate access to the free mobility regime which, since 2002, allows citizens of member states to obtain temporary residence for up to two years without needing to justify reasons beyond their nationality. This arrangement is an effective pathway for regularization which assures access to employment, education, and healthcare services, and it can be promoted and supported at the local level.<sup>14</sup> Its application can also be explored in cities of associated countries that have signed on to the Residency Agreement, such as Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile.<sup>15</sup>

Cities can promote the use of the Estatuto Migratorio Andino (Andean Migratory Charter), in force since 2021, which allows citizens of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru to settle and seek employment in any of the other member countries for a period up to two years. After that period, individuals may apply for permanent residence, provided they submit the application to the competent authority within the ninety days prior to the expiration of their temporary residence.<sup>16</sup>

Cities can consider the use of the Programa de Vacaciones y Trabajo (Working Holiday Program) as a complementary regular migration pathway for young people ages eighteen to thirty. This program allows participants to engage in paid activities for one year and could serve as a steppingstone toward more permanent forms of regularization.<sup>17</sup>

There is a pilot program for the recognition and validation of job skills among member countries. Cities can coordinate with the responsible institutions in each country to facilitate migrants' access to these mechanisms, which can improve their employment opportunities, and eventually, their eligibility for work visas.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> María Jesús Mora et al., "Building on Regular Pathways to Address Migration Pressures in the Americas," IOM & MPI, June 2024. MERCOSUR. [Circulación de personas](#) [Movement of People]; MERCOSUR. (2002) [Acuerdos emanados de la XII reunión de ministros del Interior del MERCOSUR, de la República de Bolivia y de la República de Chile](#) [Agreements arising from the XII meeting of the Ministers of the Interior of MERCOSUR, the Republic of Bolivia, and the Republic of Chile]. See example: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia. [Visa M Migrante Mercosur](#) [Mercosur Migrant Visa M].

<sup>15</sup> "Evaluación del Acuerdo de Residencia del MERCOSUR y su incidencia en el acceso a derechos de los migrantes [Evaluation of the MERCOSUR Residence Agreement and its impact on migrants' access to rights]," IOM, January 2018, [https://lac.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1626/files/documents/Cuaderno\\_9-Evaluacion\\_del\\_Acuerdo\\_de\\_Residencia\\_del\\_MERCOSUR.pdf](https://lac.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1626/files/documents/Cuaderno_9-Evaluacion_del_Acuerdo_de_Residencia_del_MERCOSUR.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> María Jesús Mora et al., "Building on Regular Pathways to Address Migration Pressures in the Americas," IOM & MPI, June 2024. Comunidad Andina (2021) [Aprueban el Estatuto Migratorio Andino que establece Residencia Temporal y Permanente en países de la CAN](#) [Andean Migration Statute establishing temporary and permanent residence in CAN countries approved]

<sup>17</sup> "Acuerdo Interinstitucional de la Alianza del Pacífico para un Programa de Vacaciones y Trabajo [Inter-institutional agreement of the Pacific Alliance for a vacation and work program]," Pacific Alliance, 2014, <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/download/acuerdo-interinstitucional-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico-para-un-programa-de-vacaciones-y-trabajo>

<sup>18</sup> "La Alianza del Pacífico pone en marcha un sistema de reconocimiento y homologación de competencias laborales [The Pacific Alliance launches a system for recognizing and certifying job skills]," EUROSOCIAL, March 31, 2022, <https://eurosocial.eu/actualidad/los-paises-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico-ponen-en-marcha-el-sistema-de-reconocimiento-y-homologacion-de-competencias-laborales-con-apoyo-del-programa-eurosociat>; CONOCER. [Alianza del Pacífico - CONOCER](#) [Pacific Alliance — CONOCER]



### Labor market integration and interiorization strategies

In the context of migration, labor market integration refers to the process of efficiently connecting workers with employers. It is a mechanism that helps ensure an effective match between local labor market needs and the profiles, skills, and needs of migrants. In some cases, labor market integration includes internal relocation strategies allowing for migrants’ voluntary and cost-free movement from border cities to others that have a better absorption capacity and job opportunities, thereby helping to depressurize border zones or cities.

Voluntary resettlement or internal relocation strategies require coordination between national governments and other key stakeholders, including local governments, international organizations, cooperation agencies, the private sector, and civil society organizations. In this context, cities can take the lead in designing and promoting their own internal relocation strategies, leveraging their local capacities—for example, through the development and operation of job placement mechanisms (labor matching), and the creation of local reception and integration policies that include job placement and intermediation services, recruitment for job vacancies, and legal assistance for regularization, among others.

### Recognition and approval of competencies

This component promotes the establishment of agreements and protocols to validate credentials, knowledge, and skills acquired by migrants in their countries of origin. The adoption of standardized recognition mechanisms, in coordination with national institutions, chambers of commerce, and the private sector, helps reduce unemployment and overqualification and improves the alignment between labor supply and demand. It also enables the development of pilots among cities that share strategic economic sectors by facilitating the recognition of academic degrees, professional certifications, and educational or training experiences and by advancing toward a competency recognition system that supports regular labor mobility.

### Training and employment support

Labor orientation and employment support systems provide personalized training and guidance to improve migrants’ chances of entering the formal labor market. Through these systems, migrants gain access to information, tools, and practical support to navigate the job search processes, understand their labor rights, fulfill legal requirements, obtain documentation, and prepare for interviews or hiring processes. This component focuses on supporting migrants who are interested in relocating to cities with a stronger labor demand (see Appendix).

<sup>19</sup> “Brazil Plan of Action Final Implementation Report 2014-2024,” UNHCR, 2023, <https://www.acnur.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/Brazil-Plan-of-Action-final-implementation-report%202014-2024.pdf>; UNHCR and Aldeas Infantiles SOS Brasil. (2020) *Estudo sobre a interiorização na modalidade institucional* [The institutional integration of Venezuelans: lessons learned, challenges, and opportunities]

<sup>20</sup> “R4V,” Ministerio de Desarrollo y Asistencia Social, Familia y Combate al Hambre & Gobierno Federal Brasil [Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger & Federal Government of Brazil], 2023, *Interiorización: Una estrategia para apoyar la integración socioeconómica de personas refugiadas y migrantes en Venezuela* [A strategy to support the socioeconomic integration of refugees and migrants in Venezuela]; Interview with representatives of IOM Brazil, 19 February 2025.

<sup>21</sup> “La formación profesional y la certificación de competencias laborales como herramientas para lograr una migración laboral segura, ordenada y regular, así como una integración socioeconómica sostenible,” ILO, October 2024, [https://www.oitcinterfor.org/sites/default/files/file\\_publicacion/Nota%20técnica\\_migracion%20y%20CCL.pdf](https://www.oitcinterfor.org/sites/default/files/file_publicacion/Nota%20técnica_migracion%20y%20CCL.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> “Orientación Socioeconómica y laboral para personas refugiadas y migrantes del Servicio de Orientación para el Migrante [Vocational training and certification of job skills as tools for achieving safe, orderly, and regular labor migration, as well as sustainable socioeconomic integration],” ILO, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Guia%20SOM%20consultores.pdf>



### CASE STUDY | LABOR MOBILITY PROGRAMS BETWEEN CITIES

## City-to-City Labor Mobility Program in Colombia

Between 2017 and 2022, Cúcuta and Bogotá implemented a temporary labor migration program that connected Venezuelan migrants and returnees in Cúcuta to jobs in the flower-growing industry of Bogotá for a three-month period. The initiative was supported by UNHCR, which provided housing units for migrants’ accommodation. It also articulated cooperation among local and central government authorities, the Colombian Ministry of Labor, and the SENA. Thanks to this coordination and to the private sector’s involvement, the program relieved the pressure on the labor market in Cúcuta, satisfied labor demand in Bogotá, and facilitated access to formal employment for migrants and returnees.



### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS | LABOR MOBILITY PROGRAMS BETWEEN CITIES

- **Map local needs and reception capacity** by assessing cities’ abilities to welcome migrants and returnees. This diagnosis should evaluate their institutional infrastructure, demographic trends, and labor demand, identifying key sectors or industries with strong labor needs—such as food processing, construction, commerce, and personal care—especially in response to shifts like population aging.
- **Leverage voluntary relocation mechanisms** that align with migrants’ socioeconomic needs and address local demographic and labor challenges. Strategies like Brazil’s interiorization program, which connects migrants to job opportunities in other regions, can be replicated if local governments actively engage in coordinating and facilitating the relocation of individuals to cities with greater employment opportunities.
- **Forge partnerships for mutual recognition of competencies, making use of supranational regional frameworks or bilateral agreements.** These frameworks, whether enabling labor mobility between two countries (bilateral agreements) or broader free movement as in MERCOSUR and the Andean Community (CAN), increase the likelihood of one country recognizing certifications issued by another, thereby facilitating labor integration.



# Financing Strategies for City-Led Action

*“If migration has no place in the local budget, it has no place in public policy. Many cities do not have a budget specifically allocated to migration, but they do have funding for social inclusion, employment, or urban development. The key is to connect the issues to identify funding opportunities.”*

Ana Aguilera, World Bank

Access to financing is one of the main challenges cities face when implementing sustainable integration initiatives and regular migration pathways. To address this challenge, there are innovative financial mechanisms that can mobilize resources for the benefit of cities. Some of these models combine the provision of loans or non-reimbursable grants with results associated with performance-based outcomes. These financing strategies aim to generate financial returns while also achieving positive social and environmental

impacts. Examples of such mechanisms include municipal funds, impact investment funds, guarantee funds, results-based payments, social bond issuance, and debt swaps.

**Municipal funds** are designed to support migrants and host communities, addressing specific needs arising from migration at the community level. These funds may come from various sources, including federal grants, state funds, private donations, and local resources.



## CASE STUDY | FINANCING STRATEGIES FOR CITY-LED ACTION

### Municipal Reception Fund for Refugee and Immigrants in Esteio

Through a municipal law adopted in 2020, the Brazilian city of Esteio created the Fundo Municipal de Acogida a Refugiados e Imigrantes (Municipal Reception Fund for Refugees and Immigrants) aiming to finance, transfer, and apply resources linked to its Municipal Reception Policy. The fund is financed by various sources including individuals, entities, the municipality, the state and federal governments, and international organizations. This mechanism has played a key role in ensuring the sustainability of Operation Welcome's Interiorization Program in Esteio. The Fund has supported more than 1,000 individuals, contributing to their stay in Esteio and achieving economic autonomy. In parallel, the local government conducted a diagnosis of the sociodemographic needs of both the municipality and the newcomers. In 2022, Esteio's mayor declared that, after six months of work, migrants had been included in the healthcare, education, and social assistance systems, and that all of them had already found jobs in the labor market.



**Impact investment funds** are financial mechanisms designed to maintain stable levels of income and savings in the face of economic fluctuations. These funds seek to reduce volatility in the financing of local programs, ensuring a stable and sustainable source of funding over time to support human mobility projects. Additionally, the appeal of placing capital in impact investment funds lies in reduced risk for the investors, as the fund assets are placed within a diversified portfolio.

**Guarantee funds** offer a financial commitment that covers payment in case of loss, thereby reducing the risk for lenders and facilitating access to credit for sectors with limited collateral capacity. In this regard, CAF-Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, in collaboration with the Global Commission for Financing Sustainable Development Goals, is designing a guarantee fund to expand cities' access to financing. As this type of mechanism represents a relatively new innovation at the local level, its initial implementation is envisaged through pilot projects aimed at assessing its feasibility and potential for scalability.

**Results-based payments** link the disbursements of funds (or, in some cases, debt forgiveness) to the achievement of specific project outcomes.

Their remuneration logic, closely tied to the design of key performance indicators (KPIs), makes this approach focused on achieving lasting objectives and promoting the efficient use of financial resources. As such, it is considered one of the most promising options since it compels implementers to pursue innovative and sustainable solutions over time. Models that incorporate results-based payments often rely on return on investment (ROI) studies that account for earned income, fiscal contributions, and measurable reductions in migration intentions due to improved income-generating activities.

**Social bonds** are financial instruments used to fund projects with social impact. Unlike other models, bond issuance is not directly tied to project success or the achievement of specific goals, meaning investors assume the credit risks. Similarly, **debt-for-development swaps** are financial transactions in which part of a developing country's external debt is forgiven in exchange for local investments in social or environmental conservation initiatives.<sup>23</sup> Based on how these instruments work, there is potential to explore similar mechanisms in the migration context, such as issuing social bonds or implementing debt swaps aimed at financing programs for the care, integration, and protection of migrants.



## The Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees

The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) created the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF) to address systemic barriers to finance and deliver resources where they are needed most. The GCF channels financial and technical resources directly to city governments—too often overlooked by traditional donors—so mayors can address urgent needs while building the case for sustained investment and lasting change.

Since its launch in 2021, the fund has mobilized \$28 million—exceeding its target to reach \$25 million by 2025—and has helped 26 cities improve the lives of more than 100,000 people. Notably, 92 percent of city grantees have leveraged this initial funding to secure more resources and continue, expand, or replicate their projects, tripling the MMC's initial investment and expanding critical programs.

The GCF has made significant investment in city-led projects in the Americas, in Bogotá, Quito, Mexico City, and more. The GCF is a proven tool to support city-led projects on migration pathways to ensure dignity even in cases of return, such as in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Home to Ecuador's second-largest population of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, Guayaquil used the GCF to launch *Centro Municipal Ciudadanos Integrados*, the city's first municipal inclusion center. Strategically located at one of Guayaquil's busiest transit hubs, the center provides legal assistance, psychological support, and pathways to inclusion for migrants, refugees, and Ecuadorian returnees. It supported nearly 4,000 individuals, successfully delivering more than 8,000 direct services and 600 referrals. The center quickly proved essential beyond the grant term. For example, when 300 Ecuadorian returnees arrived in Guayaquil from the US, the city swiftly mobilized the center to provide medical care, legal assistance, shelter, and support in reuniting with their families across the country. Recognizing its impact, Guayaquil committed to sustaining the center through funding from municipal revenues alongside additional support from philanthropic donors and international institutions.

<sup>23</sup> "Financiamiento de la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible en América Latina y el Caribe: desafíos para la movilización de recursos [Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges for resource mobilization]," United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), 2017, <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8ac15cfa-118b-4b77-a375-0a3554f737ad/content>



# Recommendations & Conclusions

Cities are at the forefront of migration response. In the Americas, they have addressed new and complex migration dynamics by acting as incubators, implementers, and advocates—promoting institutional strengthening, the creation of strategic partnerships, and innovating in migration governance. Through a variety of initiatives, they have also facilitated and expanded access to regular migration pathways for migrants, thereby contributing to their long-term integration.

In their role as **incubators**, cities have creatively used their regulatory frameworks to develop initiatives that, while not granting formal national migration status, contribute to the creation of new pathways, as well as ensuring access to rights and fostering the socioeconomic integration of migrants.

As **implementers**, local governments have adapted or created spaces for providing services to migrants, including one-stop shop service centers, legal assistance, and job training programs. These initiatives have not only assured access to essential services but also help connect migrants to existing regular migration pathways. Beyond regularization processes, these spaces have played a key role in linking migrant

individuals to other forms of regular migration, such as labor migration schemes.

As **advocates**, cities have sought to strengthen their influence over national governments as a way to gain greater flexibility in managing migration. At the same time, they have demonstrated a strong political will to address the challenges they face and to capitalize on the opportunities that migration presents for local growth and territorial development.

The project proposals discussed in this report aim to reinforce and scale up the role of cities in the design, implementation, and expansion of regular migration pathways. Some of the recommendations focused on cities and local actors include:



Guayaquil, Ecuador. Recipient of the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees  
Credit: City of Guayaquil



# Recommendations & Conclusions

- **Strengthen cities' advocacy role to continue innovating:** Cities should deepen coordination and their ability to exert influence over the national governments to create and expand regular migration pathways. One way to accomplish this is by establishing formal frameworks or mechanisms for migration governance cooperation, as well as building collaboration networks with other cities. Within the scope of their authority, local governments can promote dialogs with national governments, multilateral institutions, and other stakeholders to ensure that migration policies and regulations better reflect their realities, needs, and capacities.
- **Foster cooperation among cities in the Americas, specifically programs that advance regular migration pathways:** Cities should design cooperation frameworks that address existing gaps in national and regional migration policies. Through sustainable inter-city partnerships, they can share knowledge, data, and best practices while promoting urban diplomacy based on the principle of shared responsibility. Cities across the Americas can also jointly advance initiatives and operational agreements that support regular migration pathways (e.g., inter-city training and employment programs), especially those that are part of supranational blocs such as MERCOSUR, the Andean Community, or the Pacific Alliance.
- **Promote social cohesion and reduce discrimination:** Cities should play a key role in shaping a more informed narrative around migration by incubating solutions and generating evidence. They should also ensure that host communities are included in all programming and funding efforts, and promote regional campaigns and programs aimed at preventing discrimination and xenophobia in host communities.
- **Explore innovative financing mechanisms:** Cities should design new funding mechanisms, including the creation of municipal funds, guarantee funds, stabilization funds, bond swaps, and direct financing from the private sector.
- **Encourage private sector involvement in migration management:** Cities should foster private sector participation in the design and implementation of migration policies, especially in areas related to labor market integration. The private sector can help identify labor demand and employment opportunities for migrants, strengthening its relationship with local governments and supporting the development of regular migration pathways and skills certification. Additionally, the private sector can directly contribute to financing regularization processes, recognizing certifications, training programs, and other initiatives.

- **Advance evidence-based policy making:** Given their proximity to local realities, cities are well positioned to collect and analyze information on migrants and local needs, enabling the identification of opportunities and design of more effective responses. Cities should develop tools for data collection, including censuses, surveys, population registries, administrative sources, and interoperable systems for analysis. The coordinated use of these sources strengthens decision-making, optimizes resource allocation, and facilitates the monitoring of policy impact.
- **Strengthen migration governance:** Cities should reinforce their institutional structures to develop migration policies and provide support to migrants. This includes establishing dedicated departments or focal points for migrant assistance, implementing urban inclusion policies, and fostering local coordination among agencies. Additionally, cities can enact local legislation or comprehensive policies to strengthen institutional capacity, as well as promote training programs for local government officials to support the development of public policies, local integration programs, and inclusion projects.
- **Build local and cross-cutting capacities:** Cities should strengthen their teams, including technical teams, and mainstream the migration perspective across all areas of municipal management. This helps institutionalize the issue within local government and prevent it from being treated as isolated or temporary.
- **Implement a comprehensive and long-term vision:** Cities should design and implement public policies based on a comprehensive approach tailored to the specific needs of the territory and the characteristics of migrant communities. Migration management can be integrated into local development plans, fostering a strategic vision that goes beyond immediate response, anticipates future dynamics, and supports the development of comprehensive public policies.
- **Foster orderly and inclusive urban growth:** Cities should promote urban development models that consider human mobility as a structural factor, fostering more inclusive, sustainable, and cohesive environments.



# Incubator Cities

## TIJUANA (MEXICO)

The city of Tijuana created the Temporary ID Card for Migrants, a process aimed at Mexican nationals repatriated to Mexico through the Programa de Repatriación (Repatriation Program) operated by the National Migration Institute (INM). This ID Card allows repatriated Mexicans who lack official identification to access administrative procedures and services, overcoming formal barriers and facilitating their social and economic reintegration.<sup>24</sup>

## SAN ANTONIO (UNITED STATES)

The San Antonio Public Library created the Enhanced Library Card. This optional version of the library card includes the holder’s name, photograph, address, area of residence, and other information, enabling access to library benefits and resources. It can also be used as a supplementary form of evidence of identification that is available to anyone regardless of migration status, for use with different local authorities.<sup>25</sup>

## NEW YORK (UNITED STATES)

The Northern New York State Relocation Program provides support for migrants by offering them the opportunity to move from temporary shelters to more permanent housing in counties with greater long-term reception capacity. It is currently funded by the City of New York and is being conducted in Erie County (Buffalo). Previously, the City of New York and the State of New York launched the Migrant Relocation Assistance Program (MRAP), which created relocation pathways for migrants and other eligible families to move from New York City shelters to permanent housing in Albany, Erie, Monroe, Suffolk, and Westchester.

## MENDOZA (ARGENTINA)

In response to the COVID-19 emergency and a request from the Venezuelan association VENCUYO, the Ministry of Health of Mendoza launched a temporary registry of Venezuelan healthcare professionals pending recognition of their degrees or titles through the Trámite a Distancia (Distance Procedure) system. This allowed them to practice for eighteen months, thereby ensuring continuity of medical care and avoiding administrative delays. The initiative highlighted the role of the Ministry in professional credentialing at the local level and the capacity of migrant organizations to advocate for labor integration.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Credencial Temporal a Migrante [Temporary Migrant ID Card],” Tijuana Municipal Government, March 17, 2022, <https://www.tijuana.gob.mx/tramite.aspx?tramite=35>

<sup>25</sup> “Enhanced Library Card,” Urban Libraries Council, 2021, <https://www.urbanlibraries.org/innovations/enhanced-library-card>

<sup>26</sup> “Crisis sanitaria por el coronavirus: Mendoza autorizó a médicos venezolanos a ejercer en la provincia [Coronavirus health crisis: Mendoza authorized Venezuelan doctors to practice in the province],” Infobae, September 11, 2020, <https://www.infobae.com/sociedad/2020/09/11/crisis-sanitaria-por-el-coronavirus-mendoza-autorizo-a-medicos-venezolanos-para-ejercer-en-la-provincia>



# Implementer Cities

## SAN ANTONIO (UNITED STATES)

The Migrant Resource Center (MRC) was a program of San Antonio, aiming to meet the needs of migrants that were referred to it with the aid of civil-society organizations. It operated until February 2025 as a one-stop shop of programs and services for this population, including case management of regularization processes, food aid, internet access, and support around socioeconomic integration.

## MARYLAND (UNITED STATES)

The State of Maryland opened the Gilchrist Center, a welcome center to give migrants easier access to Montgomery County's services, including food aid, medical care, legal services, and information on housing, among others.<sup>28</sup>

## SEVERAL CITIES (COLOMBIA)

Several cities of Colombia, including Barranquilla and Bogotá, have conducted regularization events to grant access to documentation and legal status for Venezuelans. In coordination with Migración Colombia (Colombia Migration) and the national authority, these events have been held in remote areas to facilitate access to services and reach more people.<sup>27</sup>

## TACNA (PERU)

In collaboration with the municipal authorities, the UNHCR and IOM opened an orientation center for migrants in Tacna, aiming to foster safe, orderly, and regular migration. This initiative includes the formulation of plans to move migrants occupying public spaces to decent shelters.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "Migrantes tramitan sus Estatutos Temporales de Protección en Barranquilla: Hay plazo hasta el 28 de mayo [Migrants process their Temporary Protection Status in Barranquilla: The deadline is May 28.]," Publimetro, April 18, 2022, <https://www.publimetro.co/noticias/2022/04/18/migrantes-tramitan-sus-estatutos-temporales-de-proteccion-en-barranquilla-hay-plazo-hasta-el-28-de-mayo>; El Venezolano, (2024) Colombia activa jornadas especiales para tramitar el PPT a venezolanos [Colombia activates special sessions for Venezuelans to process the PPT]; Interview with a representative of the Inter-American Development Bank, 13 December 2024.

<sup>28</sup> "Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center," Montgomery County, Maryland, <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gilchrist>

<sup>29</sup> "Perú: ACNUR y la OIM alertan de la grave situación en Tacna para personas refugiadas y migrantes [Peru: UNHCR and IOM warn of serious situation in Tacna for refugees and migrants]," UNHCR, April 20, 2023, <https://www.acnur.org/noticias/peru-acnur-y-la-oim-alertan-de-la-grave-situacion-en-tacna-para-personas-refugiadas-y>; UNHCR, (2023) Descanso en un largo camino: un centro diurno ofrece servicios a personas en tránsito en el sur de Perú [Rest on a long journey: a day center provides services to people in transit in southern Peru]



# Advocate Cities

## QUITO PROCESS (ECUADOR)

The Quito Process recommended that member states introduce the Tarjeta de Información Migratoria (Migration Information Card — MIC) as a tool to record information of migrants in the region and facilitate traceability, without replacing the identity or travel documents required by each country. Though this initiative has not yet gone into operation, its inclusion among the recommendations makes it clear that, at the time, there was political openness to developing regional registration mechanisms to facilitate human mobility. From their advocacy role, cities can revisit this proposal and call on national governments to adopt it.

## SEVERAL CITIES (COLOMBIA)

Asocapitales is an organization that brings together the capital cities of Colombia, promoting their development through dialog and collaboration across levels of government. In the sphere of migration governance, it has strengthened the capacities of cities such as Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, and Medellín to respond to migration flows by providing technical assistance to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling, while fostering institutional coordination between governments, encouraging international cooperation for the management of migration policies, and identification of funding sources for related projects.<sup>30</sup>

## SEVERAL CITIES (BRAZIL)

The National Network of Welcoming Cities is a network of cities focused on the reception and integration of migrants. It works in coordination with the federal government, international agencies, and civil-society organizations. Its objective is to support and strengthen local capacities for the reception and integration of this population through experience-sharing, the provision of technical and political support for the development and implementation of policies, and the implementation of the Política Nacional de Migración, Refugio y Apátrida (National Policy on Migration, Refuge, and Stateless-Persons).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> “Gobernanza migratoria [Migration Governance],” Colombian Association of Capital Cities, <https://www.asocapitales.co/2025/02/gobernanza-migratoria>

<sup>31</sup> “Rede Nacional de Cidades Acolhedoras [National Network of Welcoming Cities],” Brazilian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, <https://www.gov.br/mj/pt-br/assuntos/seus-direitos/migracoes/rede-nacional-de-cidades-acolhedoras-1>



# One-Stop Shop Models

## BARRANQUILLA, BOGOTÁ, BUCARAMANGA, CALI, CARTAGENA, CÚCUTA, MEDELLÍN, SANTA MARTA, AND RIOHACHA (COLOMBIA)

The Intégrate Centers offer orientation, referrals, and support to Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as to Colombians returning from Venezuela, to facilitate their access to procedures and services. Their principal objectives are: 1) strengthen the Centers as permanent spaces where the city, national organizations, and international cooperation organizations can offer centralized services; 2) achieve socioeconomic, cultural, and urban integration of migrants and host communities through access to rights, social protection, humanitarian services, and job placement; and 3) articulate all levels of society to strengthen migration policies and governance.

## QUITO (ECUADOR)

Quito's Casa de la Movilidad Humana (Human Mobility House) is a comprehensive care model for migrants in the southern part of the Ecuadorian capital. The House is located within Casa Somos, a community center which promotes social cohesion. Coordination among twenty-five municipal agencies, international organizations, and civil-society partners enables the delivery of more integrated services, including a socioeconomic inclusion strategy aimed at increasing employability and partnering with the private-sector actor Conquito.

## CÓRDOBA (ARGENTINA)

The Centro de Atención a Personas Migrantes y Refugiadas (Migrant and Refugee Service Center — CAPEM) of the Municipality of Córdoba was inaugurated in March 2022. It provides a broad range of services for migrants and refugees who live in the city and need support. Its work is articulated with the Municipal Plan, under the axis of Sustainable Local Development, and envisions a comprehensive approach to migration management. In addition, CAPEM also serves as coordination hub for various stakeholders, public institutions, private entities, international organizations, and civil-society entities, to facilitate the social, economic, and cultural integration of migrants and returnees in the city.<sup>32</sup> Between 2022 and 2024, approximately 11,488 people were served.

<sup>32</sup> "CAPEM: 16 meses de acompañamiento y apoyo a la comunidad migrante y refugiada en Córdoba [CAPEM: 16 Months of Accompaniment and Support for the Migrant and Refugee Community in Córdoba]," Municipality of Córdoba Secretariat for Regional Integration and Institutional Relations, August 14, 2023, <https://rrii.cordoba.gob.ar/capem-16-meses-de-acompanamiento-y-apoyo-a-la-comunidad-migrante-y-refugiada-en-cordoba>; Municipality of Córdoba. (2025) *Hitos de gestión: Programa Acompañamiento al Inmigrante: Atención a personas migrantes y refugiadas (CAPEM)* [Management milestones: Immigrant Support Program: Assistance for migrants and refugees (CAPEM)]

# Local Identity Documents & Data Management

## SEVERAL CITIES (UNITED STATES)

Since 2007, several cities of the United States have implemented local identification cards accessible to all residents, regardless of their migration status, starting with New Haven (Connecticut) and followed by San Francisco, which launched the SF City ID in 2009. These cards facilitate access to public services and spaces, thereby fostering social inclusion. These initiatives paved the way for other cities such as Phoenix, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and others to adopt and promote similar programs. The cards are offered to the entire resident population, not exclusively to migrants in irregular situations—which has been a key legal argument in their defense. There is no federal law prohibiting local governments from issuing their own identity cards, nor has it been determined that these programs are subject to federal pre-emption.

## CHOLOMA (HONDURAS)

In 2023, Honduras launched the Migrant Returnee Assistance Registration Information System — SIAMIR), to collect data on returned migrants. Administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international cooperation, the system gathers detailed information at Migrant Returnee Assistance Centers (CAMR). The system strives to better understand return dynamics and the living conditions of returnees, including economic, health, education, housing, and personal aspects. To broaden its reach, its application is being expanded to the municipal offices without a CAMR, which will enable coordinated tracking among different localities. One example is Choloma Municipality, which is currently in the process of integrating itself into the system.

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In 2021, the Directorate of Migration of the Dominican Republic created a pilot project for the introduction of the Border Resident Card in Pedernales Province. This initiative is intended to create a sustained policy for the formalization, organization, and modernization of the day-to-day border-crossing processes for small-scale merchants from Haiti, who will obtain a temporary status under the subcategory of Border Resident. The goal is to strengthen migration governance, establish institutional normalcy in small-scale border trade, and generate registries that will make it possible to collect data on the migrant population and their patterns of entry and return.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “Inician diseño piloto de carnet de habitante fronterizo para identificar comerciantes en la frontera con República Dominicana [Pilot design of border resident card begins to identify merchants on the border with the Dominican Republic],” IOM, April 29, 2021, <https://dominicanrepublic.iom.int/es/news/inician-diseno-piloto-del-carnet-de-habitante-fronterizo-para-identificar-comerciantes-en-la-frontera-con-republica-dominicana>, *Diario Libre*, (2022) ¿En qué consiste el carnet del habitante fronterizo que se dará a los haitianos? [What does the border resident card that will be given to Haitians consist of?]



# Workforce Development Programs

## DENVER (UNITED STATES)

As a part of Denver's Asylum Seekers Program, the WorkReady pilot program was launched. Its goal is to prepare asylum-seekers for employment through certifications aligned with local labor market needs. The pilot's implementation relies heavily on partnerships with the private sector to generate job openings and combine classroom learning, mentoring, and internship opportunities with local companies, facilitating the socioeconomic integration of migrants.<sup>34</sup>

## BOGOTÁ (COLOMBIA)

Bogotá has offered training and skills development courses for informal vendors, in alliance with the Instituto para La Economía Social (Institute for Social Economy — IPES) and SENA. The objective is to help individuals working in the informal sector strengthen their skills, improve their entrepreneurial ventures, and increase their income.<sup>35</sup>

## BOGOTÁ AND CALI (COLOMBIA)

Bogotá and Cali have developed coordination strategies with the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Learning Service — SENA), educational institutions for work and human development (EDTH), foundations, corporations, labor unions, and non-governmental organizations to train and certify people. Examples are the Yo te Cuido (I Take Care of You) and Me Certifico (I Get Certified) programs, launched in 2024 to certify personal caregivers, including migrants. Another initiative focuses on training informal vendors in areas such as technology, organizational strengthening of productive units, English, and photography.<sup>36</sup>

## SEVERAL CITIES (BRAZIL)

In Brazil, IOM'S Somos Parte (We are Part) project has conducted pilot training programs for migrants in the green and digital transition sectors. In alliance with the Federation of Industries of Brazil, 131 migrants with experience in electrical work were trained free of charge in solar panel installation. The two- to three-month course included technical models and support for meals and transportation, which facilitated migrants' participation and completion.<sup>37</sup>

## SÃO PAULO (BRAZIL)

In São Paulo, the city hosts Employment and Income Week for Immigrants, an event aimed at fostering socioeconomic integration of migrants living under conditions of vulnerability. Organized by the Municipal Working Group, the initiative offers workshops on the labor market, résumé writing, support for microentrepreneurs, and assistance for regularization. In its first event in 2019, 493 registered, and in 2020, 532 people participated, 347 of whom were referred to jobs in sectors such as food, construction, and commerce. The initiative receives support from IOM, UNHCR, Misión Paz, the Municipal Council of Immigrants, Caritas, and private companies.

<sup>34</sup> "WorkReady Denver Program," Denver, The Mile High City, <https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directories/Economic-Development-Opportunity/Search-Job-Opportunities-and-Top-Talent/For-Employers/WorkReady-Denver-Program>

<sup>35</sup> "Cursos de formación y capacitación para vendedores informales [Training and education courses for informal vendors]," Bogotá Mayor's Office, 2022, <https://bogota.gov.co/servicios/oportunidades-y-apoyos/cursos-de-formacion-y-capacitacion-para-vendedores-informales>

<sup>36</sup> "El Sena y el IPES trabajan por la formación de poblaciones vulnerables en la capital [SENA and IPES work to educate vulnerable populations in the capital]," SENA, April 12, 2021, <https://www.sena.edu.co/es-co/Noticias/Paginas/noticia.aspx?IdNoticia=4739>

<sup>37</sup> "Projeto Somos Parte impulsora a contribuicao de migrantes para a economia verde [Somos Parte Project boosts migrants' contribution to the green economy]," IOM, December 15, 2023, <https://brazil.iom.int/pt-br/news/projeto-somos-parte-impulsiona-contribuicao-de-migrantes-para-economia-verde>

# Labor Mobility Programs Between Cities

## DENVER (UNITED STATES)

The city of Denver established the Denver Informational Hub within the Migrant Support Service Center in El Paso, Texas, with the goal of providing migrants with clear information about the services available in Denver, enabling them to make informed decisions about potential relocation. This initiative was developed in coordination with the local authorities in El Paso, facilitating the exchange of information and distribution of resources.

## COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR

Colombia and Ecuador have designed a pilot project for mutual recognition of labor certifications between Colombia's National Learning Service (SENA) and the Ecuadorian Occupational Training Service (SECAP), with support from the ILO and the government of Canada. This initiative is intended to grant migrants, refugees, and returnees easier access to employment in key sectors such as construction, agriculture, and services. In parallel, Colombia is implementing the C-Reconoce tu Talento (Your Talent is Recognized) strategy, which promotes the certification of job skills and the hiring of migrants.<sup>38</sup>

## SEVERAL CITIES (MEXICO)

In May 2016, UNHCR launched the Programa de Integración Local (Local Integration Program — PIL) in Mexico, bringing together more than 600 private-sector employers and the cities of Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, Guadalajara, Querétaro, León, Irapuato, Guanajuato, and Torreón. The program supports refugees located in southern Mexico who wish to relocate to cities in the center and north that offer greater employment opportunities. As of October 2023, more than 35,000 refugees have benefited from solutions through the PIL.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "Relatoria Encuentro Regional Tripartito "Talento en Movimiento": Reconocimiento de certificaciones de competencias laborales y movilidad laboral regular en América Latina y el Caribe [Report on the Tripartite Regional Meeting "Talent on the Move": Recognition of job skills certifications and regular labor mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean]," ILO, 2025, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/Memoria\\_Encuentro\\_Tripartito\\_CCL\\_migracion\\_2024.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/Memoria_Encuentro_Tripartito_CCL_migracion_2024.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> "Mexico: hope of a new home. 2023 Highlights UNHCR Mexico," UNHCR, April 2024, <https://www.acnur.org/mx/sites/es-mx/files/2024-10/UNHCR%20Mexico%20Annual%20Report%202023.pdf>; UNHCR. (2023) 35,000 personas refugiadas encuentran soluciones en México gracias a acceso a empleo formal [35,000 refugees find solutions in Mexico thanks to access to formal employment.]



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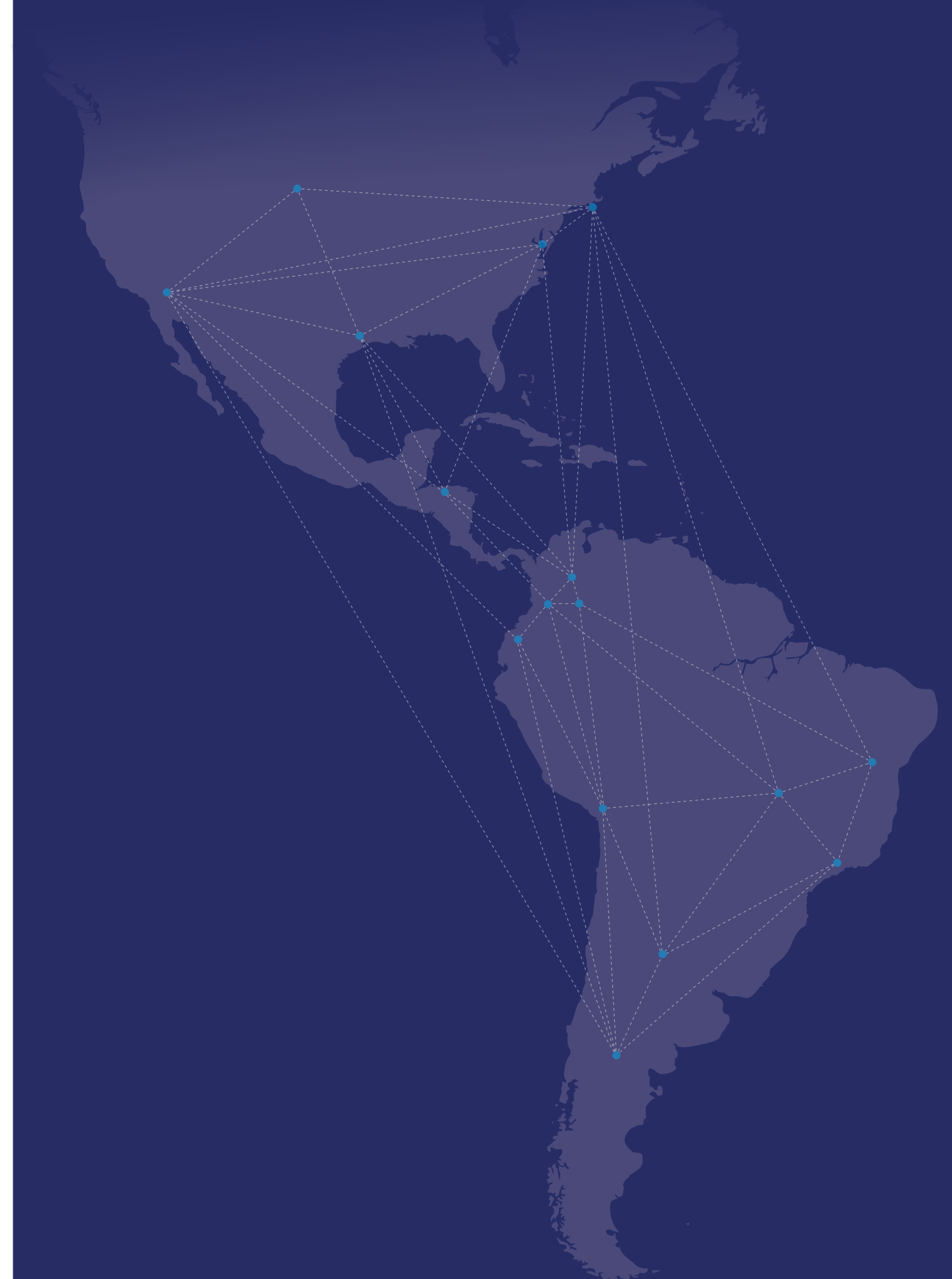
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*“Regular migration pathways are like alphabet soup: asylum, TPS, humanitarian permits, work permits, among others, and migrants often do not know where they fit in the soup. Cities may not always have the resources to offer everything, but at the very least, they can inform people about what is available in terms of regular migration pathways.”*

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